

## IRELAND TO AUSTRALIA

Why is it that when oceans we have crossed  
O'er which the winds of half the world may rage,  
We seem to tremble lest our ship be tossed  
On inky waves to blot the final page?

For all this journey we've a record kept  
Of whar each changing day in us inspired;  
The deep-felt fear that to our hearts has leapt,  
Or else the peace that tranquil seas inspired.

The mild initial stage, the Irish Sea,  
No terrors for us held, so occupied  
Were we with thoughts of home and family,  
And that green isle for which great men have died.

But apprehension keen held pride of place,  
As, sailing down the Channel's brief expanse,  
We thought of how ere long we'd have to face  
Dread Biscay's roll, to pass the coast of France.

Thus we at once seasickness felt so vile  
That mental worries seemed to us as naught;  
Along the passage we would slowly file,  
Our heads a whirl and all our minds distraught.

At length on deck we struggled to impress  
On memory's mould the heaving rollers wide;  
To starboard and to port, full of distress,  
We saw -- a sea as placid as the Clyde!

So further onwards, ever southward borne,  
We slid along the European coast;  
We passed Gibraltar close one bright spring morn,  
Then Mare Nostrum crossed, the Romans' boast.

Malta, Tobruck, Rosetta one by one  
Along the starboard side we saw quite near;  
But then we thought about the tropic sun,  
With days of burning heat our constant fear.

Suez Canal in daylight was a sight  
Supreme in interest, on a glorious day,  
And passing through the Bitter Lakes at night,  
We thought of how the Jews there paused to pray.

The Red Sea waters, coloured blue, we cleft,  
As Egypt gently faded from our view;  
In Aden's burial-ground a friend we left,  
And onward pressed to cross an ocean new.

The sun poured down its all-consuming rays,  
And we, not even left with strength to groan,  
Could find no other occupation than to gaze  
Across the empty equatorial zone.

By day no sheltered spot could keep us cool,  
While through the torrid nights we lay awake,  
With perspiration streaming in a pool  
From those who journeyed on for Jesus' sake.

For though we all through unaccustomed heat  
Could find no energy for mental prayer,  
We could at least with hearts resigned repeat:  
"Our merits, Lord, we would with sinners share".

Thus they who with a missionary zeal  
Have left their country for anotherland  
Can through all trials at least in spirit kneel,  
And seek to stay the Lord's chastising hand.

But just as seas we feared did not fulfil  
Their threat, so in a compensating way  
'Twas preordained that waters often still  
Should emulate the rolling of the Bay.

We then against fierce heat and rolling seas  
At once did strive, with ever-present too  
The search to get a chair on which to ease  
Our weary frames, and daytime sleep to woo.

Relief for all came with the breezes cool,  
As West Australia's coastline we approached;  
Though avid storms still sought our ship to rule,  
The waves in vain on all our decks encroached.

The Sunny Southern Land in joking mood  
Thought best to greet us with a rainy day;  
We all ignored this salutation rude,  
For now in peace we to our God could say:

"O Lord who made our distant Irish Land,  
And that on which we now in gladness tread,  
We freely here accept from Thy just hand  
The trials and combats which may lie ahead".

"We know not what the future has in store,  
But grant us strength our crosses to surmount;  
Give us the grace to love Thee more and more,  
So that when we at death must give account,  
Our hearts, rejoicing at the trials we bore,  
May find their homes in Thee, Love's living Fount".

Two thousand miles of ocean that remain  
no terrors hold, for we go trustingly;  
Though they the Great Australian Bight contain,  
Though we may meet yet wilder storms at sea,  
We offer this that Christ supreme may reign,  
That we may all God's faithful servants be.

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S.S. Asturias 16-6-47.