

ON THE VERGE

HERE begins the sea that ends not till the world's end.
 W here we stand,
Could we know the next high sea-mark set beyond these
 waves that gleam,
We should know what never man hath known, nor eye
 of man hath scanned.
Nought beyond these coiling clouds that melt like fume
 of shrines that steam
Breaks or stays the strength of waters till they pass our
 bounds of dream.
Where the waste Land's End leans westward, all the seas
 it watches roll
Find their border fixed beyond them, and a worldwide
 shore's control :
These whereby we stand no shore beyond us limits :
 these are free.
Gazing hence, we see the water that grows iron round
 the Pole,
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all
 the sea.

Sail on sail along the sea-line fades and flashes ; here on
land

Flash and fade the wheeling wings on wings of mews
that plunge and scream.

Hour on hour along the line of life and time's evasive
strand

Shines and darkens, wanes and waxes, slays and dies :
and scarce they seem

More than notes that thronged and trembled in the
brief noon's breath and beam.

Some with crying and wailing, some with notes like
sound of bells that toll,

Some with sighing and laughing, some with words that
blessed and made us whole,

Passed, and left us, and we know not what they were,
nor what were we.

Would we know, being mortal ? Never breath of answering
whisper stole

From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all
the sea.

Shadows, would we question darkness ? Ere our eyes
and brows be fanned

Round with airs of twilight, washed with dews from
sleep's eternal stream,

Would we know sleep's guarded secret ? Ere the fire
consume the brand,

Would it know if yet its ashes may requicken ? yet we
deem

Surely man may know, or ever night unyoke her starry
team,

What the dawn shall be, or if the dawn shall be not : yea,
the scroll

Would we read of sleep's dark scripture, pledge of peace
or doom of dole.

Ah, but here man's heart leaps, yearning toward the
gloom with venturous glee,

Though his pilot eye behold nor bay nor harbour, rock
nor shoal,

From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all
the sea.

Friend, who knows if death indeed have life or life have
death for goal ?

Day nor night can tell us, nor may seas declare nor skies
unroll

What has been from everlasting, or if aught shall always
be.

Silence answering only strikes response reverberate on
the soul

From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all
the sea.