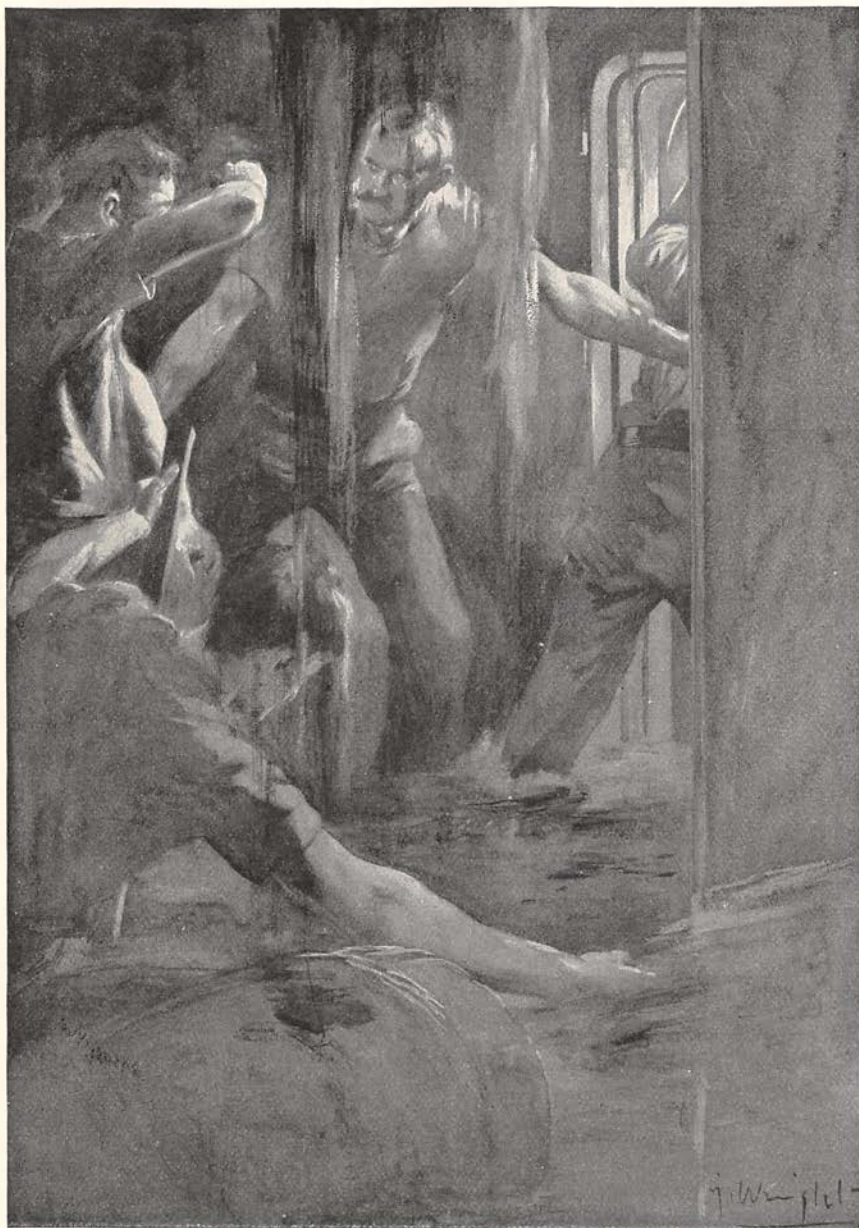


## EVERY-DAY HEROISM.

HEROES OF PEACE.

BY GUSTAV KOBBE.



DRAWN BY G. WRIGHT.

«AS EACH MAN CAME ALONG, HE PUSHED . . . HIM . . . INTO THE AIR-LOCK.» (SEE PAGE 405.)

**I**T is often reserved for «every-day people,» as we are apt to call them, to illustrate one of the facts of life—that a crisis produces the man to meet it.

This article deals with a few such people —people who led simple and unpretentious lives, and in whom their most intimate friends had probably never suspected a strain of the

heroic. The soldier, the fireman, or the policeman is apt, through the very nature of his employment, in which heroism is the main-spring of honor and advancement, to be called upon to risk his life in the line of duty; and he should, indeed, be ever on the lookout for opportunity thus to distinguish himself. But the people of whom I now tell wore no uniforms which faltering would have disgraced; the occupations of all were pre-eminently peaceful, and in the case of several involved nothing that might have familiarized them with the thought of danger, let alone eventual heroism.

Yet once in their lives there came to these every-day people a moment when they were suddenly confronted with the question whether or not they would risk death to save the lives of others; and the manner in which they met, without preparation or forethought, that supreme moment furnishes evidence of a heroic strain in our every-day humanity, often latent, yet likely to flash up, when a crisis comes, even in the humblest of those we daily pass. That workman swinging his kit and lunch-box, that miner in his overalls about to descend the shaft, that negro loitering at the street-corner—any one of these may before sunset develop into a hero, and prove to us, even better perhaps than the man in uniform, that beneath this common clay of ours there beats a spirit waiting only the moment to rouse us to heroic action.

One of the heroes I have in mind was Thomas Hovenden, the artist, who sacrificed his life in attempting to save a little girl. She was no relative of his; he had never even seen her before her moment of peril—circumstances which combine to make his sacrifice peculiarly heroic.

Hovenden's heroism raises, in fact, a question. In the more material occupations a man is little more than a cog in a machine. He drops out, another takes his place, and the machine runs smoothly on, and this whether his cog was near the bottom or the top. But there are men whose intellectual or artistic gifts are so peculiarly personal that their death means an irreparable public loss. For when death stays, for instance, the hand of the poet or the painter, there is no one who can take up the pen or the brush and give to the result those individual touches which distinguished that one poet or that one painter from his brothers in art. And the question arises if, from the mere standpoint of profit and loss, the world would not excuse men whose gifts are so peculiarly their own from risking their lives. Fortunately for the

glory of art, Hovenden was only the latest man of his stamp to answer that question in the spirit of a hero—as it was answered centuries ago by Sophocles when he accepted a command in the Samian war, and in our century by men like Körner, the poet-soldier who fell in the German uprising against Napoleon; the American author Winthrop, who was killed in the Civil War; and the French artist Regnault, who fell at Buzenval. These were men who turned from letters and from art to face the dangers of war; and as it is the glory of heroism in war that it obliterates every impulse save that of patriotism, so it is the glory of heroism in peace that it obliterates every impulse save that of humanity.

It was this impulse that caused Thomas Hovenden, at the height of his powers and in the full tide of his success, to give his life in an attempt to save that of a child. Hovenden was Irish by birth, but he had come to New York in 1863, when eighteen years old, and had studied at the National Academy of Design. He had then taken a studio in the house of his friend Bolton Jones, in Philadelphia, where he remained until 1874. From there he went to Paris, and studied under Cabanel, of whom he was a favorite pupil. His "Breton Interior of 1793" (showing a family molding bullets and sharpening swords), "Puzzled Voter," "Last Moments of John Brown," and "Elaine" were widely known; while his "Breaking Old Ties" has probably been more frequently engraved than any other American painting.

One August afternoon in 1895, Hovenden was returning by trolley-car from his country residence to Norristown, Pennsylvania. The trolley ran to what was known as the "Trenton cut-off" of the Pennsylvania Railroad, where the passengers were obliged to alight and cross the railroad-track at grade to take trolley on the other side.

The passengers had just alighted from the first trolley when a fast freight-train came thundering down the track. A little girl who failed to notice the train ran ahead of her mother and right in front of it. The engineer gave a shrill blast of the whistle. The child, seeing the train bearing down upon her, became dazed, and stood as if rooted to the spot.

A moment later Hovenden had rushed forward and snatched up the child. But before he could take the leap that would have saved them both, the engine struck them and hurled them across the track. They were found lying side by side. The artist was dead; the

little girl died as she was lifted from the ground. The fatal outcome showed how desperate a chance he took.

Through a sacrifice as noble as Hovenden's, a woman in one of the humblest walks of life heroically met her death.

Ellen McGaugh was a servant employed in Montclair, New Jersey. On one of her afternoons «out» she was visiting in Newark. While she was standing at a street-corner with a group of friends, they heard her give a sudden scream, and saw her rush toward the middle of the street. A little girl was on the trolley-track, and speeding toward her was a car.

Ellen sprang in front of the car, and pushed the child from the track; but before she could save herself she was struck by the car and was under the wheels. The child was only slightly bruised; but Ellen died of her injuries in the ambulance on the way to the hospital.

For her to see the little girl's peril, to spring to the child's rescue, and to be herself crushed beneath the wheels, was the act of only a moment; but in that moment this serving-woman was transformed into a heroine. Her body did not lie in state, and no public memorial bears witness to her deed. Yet is not the difference between her heroism and that of a public hero a difference, not in degree, but only in result? Where the public hero saves a nation, the every-day hero may save only a life; but where the public hero finds an incentive for his act in the possible acclaim of a whole nation, the every-day hero sacrifices his life with no incentive save that of humanity.

One of the medals awarded by the government for heroism displayed in saving life at sea is worn by a negro, and one of my every-day heroes also belongs to that race. That he escaped with his life from the rescue in which he figured was not due to any caution on his part, but simply to lucky chance.

Scott Brown is a hard-working, honest negro of Montgomery, Alabama; and if all of his race had set about improving their lot as he has, the «negro question» would have been eliminated long ago: for Scott has a little home for which he has finished paying, a wagon, two horses and two mules, and the necessary utensils for running a small farm. In winter he drives a dray.

One day recently Scott was standing at a corner of Court street. Two little girls, six and eight years old, were crossing. At that moment a runaway horse came dashing down the street. The runaway was almost

upon the children when Scott became aware of their peril. On the instant he sprang to their rescue. One he pushed out of the horse's way with the impetus that had carried him to the spot. Realizing that there was no time to get the other child out of the runaway's path, he deliberately shielded her with his body, he himself receiving the blow that would have struck her. While his own injuries were fortunately not fatal, they were severe; and there is no doubt that his action saved two children surely from great bodily harm, and probably from death.

These children were members of the Court Street Methodist Episcopal Sunday-school, which unanimously voted to show some recognition of Scott's brave deed. So a committee was appointed, which bought a watch and chain; and this gift, suitably inscribed, was presented to Scott in the Sunday-school room, which had rarely been so crowded.

As this modest, unassuming negro left the Sunday-school after the presentation, he was loudly cheered; and one of the many who took him by the hand remarked, «Scott, I'd rather shake your hand than the President's.»

This scene is not wholly unlike the closing incident of James Lane Allen's «King Solomon of Kentucky,» and suggests that Mr. Allen may have found King Solomon's prototype in real life, as F. Hopkinson Smith did Captain Joe's, and Colonel Hay, Jim Bludso's. The negro ne'er-do-well who remained behind in a plague-stricken community to help nurse the dying and bury the dead when his «betters» had deserted; the river-captain who stopped a leak in a crowded ferry-boat with his arm, at the risk of losing it by freezing; and the Mississippi deck-hand who lost his life on a burning steamboat because determined to

Hold her nozzle ag'in' the bank  
Till the last galoot 's ashore,

are perhaps only a few of the fiction heroes drawn from the every-day heroes of real life.

About a year ago, a young coal-miner, John Anderson, Jr., fell from a train which he was attempting to board, and was killed beneath the wheels. There were many households in the Pennsylvania coal-region to which his tragic death came as a personal loss; for he had, a few years before, at the risk of his own life, saved forty-eight miners from death. His heroism was perhaps not as dramatic as that which involves instantaneous and concentrated action; but it was all the more remarkable because he had had time to deliberate upon its possible consequences.

Anderson and one or two other men were about half-way down the shaft, repairing a brattice. They were using naked lamps, the man in charge carrying his on his head as he went into the column-way. While he was testing a leak, the current of air drew the flame into the crevice, and the brattice took fire. There was a pool of water in the bottom of the shaft-cage on which the men were standing, but this was not enough to extinguish the flames. More time was lost in further vain efforts to get the fire under control. When it became apparent that it was bound to spread, the men with Anderson fled for safety.

Not so Anderson. Down the burning shaft he went; through the slopes he dashed, a Paul Revere of the mines, shouting to the men in the seams to flee for their lives. He thus gathered forty-eight men about him. From the last gang he learned that they had been unable to get up the traveling-way, and that escape by the old shaft had been cut off. Fortunately, he knew the location of a shaft that had lately been sunk, and was thus able to guide his fellow-workmen out of the mine.

«It is hard to make any one not acquainted with mining understand how much courage it required for young Anderson to do what he did,» the manager of the Pennsylvania Railroad's Coal Companies writes me. «He had to traverse possibly a mile of subterranean workings, notifying one party here, and another there, of the danger above them. He was not certain that he himself could get out alive. Had any of the air-currents reversed, and the fumes overtaken him, death would have been certain.» That his heroism undoubtedly saved the forty-eight men whom he led out appears from the fate of three men who disregarded his warning, and of two whom he could not reach. These five were suffocated.

Before the fast steamship *City of Paris* had changed her name to the *Paris*, she met, on one of her eastward trips, with an accident which imperiled the thousand lives aboard her, and kept many more people on two continents in a state of anxious suspense for several days.

The steamer was making what promised to be a record-breaking run. It was half-past five in the evening of the day before that on which she was expected to steam gaily into Queenstown harbor.

That moment, with a smooth sea and a clear sky, there was a sudden crash of machinery and timber, an outpour of steam from the engine-room hatches, a trembling

of the ship from stem to stern, an almost immediate list to starboard, and on deck the sharp command, «Clear the life-boats!»

Seven men, engineers and «greasemen,» had rushed up from the engine-room to escape the scalding steam and flying machinery. What had happened none of them could tell. But what was happening? For down there was still a crashing and thrashing, as if everything were being smashed to pieces. Into that roaring, steaming hell there plunged a man. A few moments later the uproar had ceased, and he emerged again. He had stopped the machinery, and, as investigation showed, probably saved the ship.

The engine-room was a water-tight compartment—virtually, in fact, two water-tight compartments in one; for a steel bulkhead separated the starboard from the port engine, and it was supposed that with this arrangement, whatever might happen to one engine, the other would remain intact. But the accident to the *Paris* was one that wrought havoc with all the calculations of human ingenuity. The starboard engine had broken. Its wreck continued revolving. Part of this was a broken rod, which acted like a giant flail, beating down everything in its way, among other things battering and breaking through the steel bulkhead between the two engines.

It was the destructive work of this flail that John Gill, one of the second assistant engineers, checked when he shut off the steam. Some of the broken pieces of machinery had already dropped below. Had they been followed by other and more massive portions, which doubtless would have smashed through the bottom of the ship, she would probably have sunk like an iron pot. When, at the imminent risk of his own life, Gill stopped the machinery, he saved the ship and the souls it bore. He is now one of the chief engineers of the American Line.

It sometimes happens that in recalling a critical situation one can also remember some humorous incident that for the moment relieved it. When the steamer *Mosel*, aboard which I was at the time, was wrecked on the Lizard on the Cornish coast, an affrighted passenger, rushing on deck valise in hand, was greeted with shouts of «Cab, sir? Cab!» When, after Gill had stopped the machinery, the captain and the chief engineer descended into the engine-room to ascertain what had occurred, the passengers, with life-preservers adjusted, were grouped about the various life-boats to which they had been assigned; for the

vessel had not only listed, but had settled somewhat. At this solemn moment there appeared upon deck a woman who, fearing the vessel would sink, had not only adjusted her life-preserver, but, as a further precaution, had put on her rubbers—an incident that caused an explosion of laughter, and for the moment broke the backbone of apprehension.

James Bain, chief engineer of the ill-fated steamer *State of Florida*, not only risked his life, but deliberately sacrificed it, to save a woman. The disaster was most pitiful. The steamer collided with a bark in mid-ocean, and both vessels sank almost immediately. Only two men were saved from the bark, and only a handful of passengers and part of the ship's company from the steamer. Bain was safely in one of the life-boats, which was about to cast off, as there were as many people in it as it could hold. At that moment he saw a woman at the steamer's rail. She was too dazed to move. The steamer's deck was almost level with the water. Bain deliberately left his place in the boat, stepped on to the steamer's deck, lifted the woman over the taffrail, placed her on the seat he had occupied, cast off the boat, and went down with the steamer.

An enterprise that attracted wide attention at the time was the attempt to tunnel the Hudson River between Jersey City and New York. It was of the first importance to commerce, for it would afford direct access to New York to the railroads having their termini on the New Jersey side of the river. It involved a novel and difficult feat of engineering, and for the public it had the added fascination of danger. The veriest layman appreciated the peril in which the workmen would be the moment the tunnel penetrated beyond shore under the river's bed. Night and day would be one to them; above them the great fleet of steamers, tugs, ferry-boats, and sailing craft of all kinds would pass and re-pass; over them, as they dug and picked and hammered and welded down there in the depth and the darkness, would roll the billows of one of the great waterways of the Western hemisphere. What would be between them and this ever-threatening flood? At the extreme end, where the work was being extended out farther and farther under the bed of the river, a mere shell of silt and mud and ooze, sustained by compressed air—a device as yet untried in exactly this class of work, and considered by some engineering authorities of doubtful value. If these doubts proved true, if that thin shell gave way, the Hudson River

would pour in upon the men in the tunnel, and they would be drowned like rats in a hole. It was man against nature, with nature represented by a great river directly overhead.

Into this narrow tube of brick and iron under the bed of the river the workmen descended in shifts of twenty-eight each, at intervals of eight hours. They knew that every time they entered the tunnel they took their lives in their hands; but each shift took the chance that the accident, if any, would happen to the others.

One midnight twenty-eight men went into the tunnel. Only seven came out alive. They owed their escape to the fact that of the twenty-one who perished, one deliberately sacrificed his life to save theirs.

In order to understand just what took place at that time, it is necessary to know how work was carried on in the tunnel. It was begun on the New Jersey side of the river. Here a deep circular well was sunk. The men descended into this, and passed from it into the tunnel through an air-lock, designed to prevent the escape of compressed air from the tunnel, and also to equalize the pressure of air for the men as they entered or left it. The air-lock was filled with or emptied of compressed air according as the men were to enter or leave the tunnel, just as a canal-lock is filled or emptied according as a boat is to be raised or lowered.

This air-lock was a cylindrical chamber of heavy iron, fifteen feet long and six feet in diameter, closed at each end by massive doors swinging inward toward the tunnel, as otherwise the air pressure would have forced them open, with the result that the compressed air would have escaped and the roof of the tunnel have fallen in. The men having entered the air-lock from the shaft, the door was closed upon them, and before the door at the tunnel end was opened the lock was slowly filled with compressed air until the pressure was equal to that in the tunnel, which the men were then prepared to enter. The work had been pushed forward several hundred feet. The braces, aided by an air pressure of twenty pounds to the square inch, had so far sufficed to support the iron roof-plates, and there had been no accident. But there was one point of danger. Where the iron roof-plates and the wall of the shaft came together near the tunnel end of the air-lock, the joining was not fairly plumb. A watch was supposed to be constantly maintained there. Leaks had been discovered,

but had been quickly stopped with clay, of which there was plenty in the bottom of the tunnel.

One midnight a shift of men went down the shaft as usual, entered the air-lock, remained there the customary length of time, and then went into the tunnel. They were in charge of a foreman named Peter Woodland, a Dane, who had been in this country nine years, and had been employed at the tunnel since the beginning of the work. At half-past four in the morning some of the men prepared to go up for lunch. At that time the danger-point must have remained unguarded for a fatal interval.

Suddenly there was a sound like the blowing off of steam. Woodland sprang to the spot, crying:

«Back, men, and stop the leak!»

But, where a moment before there had been a hole that might have been stopped with a pinch of clay, there was now a rapidly widening gap. Under it stood Peter Woodland. The foul bottom of the river was pouring in upon him; ooze and slime were blinding him; he felt the water rising about his feet. One step would have taken him safely into the air-lock; of all the men, he was nearest safety. He did not move toward it. Standing there by the entrance, he shouted:

«Quick, boys! Get into the lock!»

But he did not lead the retreat. As each man came along, he pushed and shoved him through the rising ooze and water into the air-lock. Seven men had passed him. As he was helping the eighth, the iron roof-plates gave way, felled the man in the doorway, and pinned the door against him. Several men inside the air-lock grasped the prostrate man and tried to draw him in. He was dead, and pinned fast. The heavy iron plates against the door made it impossible to open this, and the man's body in the doorway made it impossible to close it by a few inches. Through this narrow space water began pouring from the tunnel into the air-lock. Escape had been cut off for Woodland and the twenty men behind him, and the men in the air-lock were in danger of drowning; for the compressed air which had entered it from the tunnel made it impossible for them to open the inward-swinging door at the other end.

«Take off your clothes and stop up the doorway!» shouted Woodland, who was now above his waist in water.

The men in the air-lock stripped themselves and thrust their clothing into the crack. The air-lock was now half full of water, and while the inflow was checked, it

was not wholly stopped. This water and the pressure of the air made their frantic efforts to tear open the door at the shaft end of the lock still unavailing.

There was a bull's-eye in each door. The man nearest the door leading into the tunnel was attracted by a sound, and, looking, saw Woodland peering at him through the bull's-eye. The water was up to his armpits. Beyond him were blurred, watery heads. Then he heard Woodland's voice:

«Break open the outside bull's-eye!»

The men in the air-lock were not cowards; it had required a certain degree of courage to work in the tunnel. They knew if they knocked out the bull's-eye, and the air escaped through it, their chances of tearing open the door would be improved; but they also knew that with the outrush of air from the lock and the tunnel the roof about the leak would come crashing down, and the last desperate chance for Woodland and his twenty hemmed-in men be gone. They hesitated. Woodland must have noticed their hesitation, for he called:

«Knock it out! It's your only chance!»

Then for the first time his voice wavered as he added: «And if you're saved, try and do what you can for the rest of us!»

They smashed the bull's-eye, and tore at the door. At the same time they felt pressure applied from the outside. The door yielded slightly. The water began pouring out of the lock into the shaft. Relieved of this weight and of the air pressure, the door swung in, and seven nude and terrified men were literally shot into the shaft, where the water gained upon them so rapidly that they had to take to the ladder for safety. The caving in of a shed near the water's edge had given warning to two men above that something was wrong below. They had hurried down the shaft, and had reached the air-lock door just as the bull's-eye was smashed.

The nine men paused at the brink of the shaft. As they looked down into it, and then cast a glance at the river, they saw that both were on a level. The water of the Hudson had filled the tunnel and the air-lock, and risen in the shaft to the height of the tide. That the twenty-one men in the tunnel had met their doom there could be no doubt.

Before Woodland came to this country he had been a sailor. For nine years he had been employed, chiefly in bridge-building, by the superintendent of the tunnel work. Once before, while working on a bridge at Little Rock, Arkansas, he had had a chance to show his grit. Part of the structure was

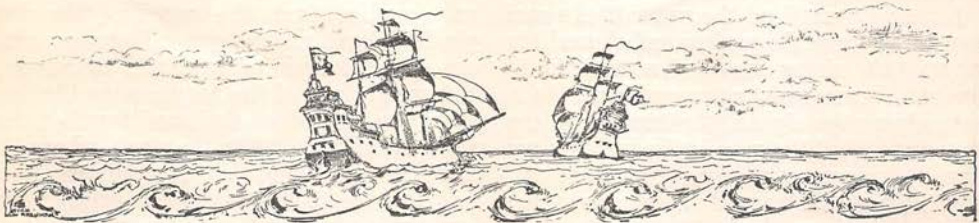
carried away by a flood during a savage electrical storm. Woodland, by staying while most of the others fled, saved much of the remaining portion. One of his arms was partly paralyzed by the lightning that played about the iron trestles at the height of the storm; but he only smiled at those who had sought safety, and stuck to his post.

To appreciate fully what Peter Woodland did in the tunnel disaster, one must recall for an instant the circumstances under which he met his death. It was not on the field of battle. There was no trumpet-call, no hurrah from a thousand throats to urge him on, no surging army to carry him to the front with its own momentum, no flag flashing in the sun to stir his soul—not one of those dramatic effects that sometimes lift a man out of himself and inspire him to play a part, with the world for an audience. This catastrophe was shrouded in gloom. About it there was not one touch of the dramatic to inspire heroism. Peter Woodland stood in a tunnel under the bed of a great river. In that bed above him was an ever-widening gap through which the river was pouring in upon him. There was but one step between him and safety. He never took it; for there were men—*his* men—behind him! And so he stood there by the air-lock door, helping one after another in,

till the crash came. Then, under circumstances that would have converted almost any man into a tiger fighting for his life, he coolly, to his dying breath, directed the men he had helped into the air-lock how to save themselves. Weighing well all these things, I say deliberately that Peter Woodland, a plain man but little above his own workmen in rank, performed an act of heroism as sublime as any of which the history of the world contains a record.

At Marion, Alabama, is a shaft erected in 1855 to a negro slave named Harry, who had belonged to President Talbird of Howard College, and who died of injuries received at the burning of the college building on the night of October 3, 1854. When Harry was awakened and warned to flee from the burning building, he replied, «I must wake the boys first.» So he dashed through the corridors, shouting to the students to save themselves, until, overcome by the flames, he fell unconscious upon the floor; but not until many students had been enabled, through his warning cries, to escape. He was borne out of the building, but died after a few days of severe suffering.

Of the heroes here mentioned he was in life the humblest—less than a servant, a slave!



## SPEAKING THE SHIPS.

BY EDITH M. THOMAS.

UNTRAVELED dweller by the haven-side,  
 I saw the great ships come, sojourn a day,  
 Then set their eager sails, their anchor weigh,  
 And give themselves to rocking wind and tide.  
 I spake them not, nor they to me replied,  
 Of where their void and lonely journey lay;  
 Now, since my lips have tasted mid-sea spray,  
 In common speech I hail those wanderers wide.  
 To this: «Proud Scotia gave thy ribs to thee!»  
 To this: «Thy masts have known the Apennines!»  
 Or, «Tagus empties where thy frame was planned.»  
 Or, «Say, thou gallant one, if true it be,  
 Thou hither cam'st with hoard of Levant wines  
 And dulcet fruits from many a sun-loved land!»