

Richard Garnett (1835-1926)

3 *The stream was as smooth as glass; or, the Sandy Bar*

The stream was as smooth as glass: we said, "Arise and let's away:"  
The Siren sang beside the boat that in the rushes lay;  
And spread the sail, and strong the oar, we gaily took our way.  
When shall the sandy bar be crossed? When shall we find the bay?

The broadening flood swells slowly out o'er cattle-dotted plains, 5  
The stream is strong and turbulent, and dark with heavy rains;  
The labourer looks up to see our shallop speed away.  
When shall the sandy bar be crossed? When shall we find the bay?

Now are the clouds like fiery shrouds; the sun, superbly large,  
Slow as an oak to woodman's stroke sinks flaming at their marge. 10  
The waves are bright with mirrored light as jacinths on our way.  
When shall the sandy bar be crossed? When shall we find the bay?

The moon is high up in the sky, O now no more we see  
The spreading river's either bank, and surging distantly  
There booms a sullen thunder as of breakers far away. 15  
Now shall the sandy bar be crossed, now shall we find the bay!

The sea-gull shrieks high overhead, and dimly to our sight  
The moonlit crests of foaming waves gleam towering through the night.  
We'll steal upon the mermaid soon, and start her from her lay,  
When once the sandy bar is crossed, and we are in the bay. 20

What rises white and awful as a shroud-enfolded ghost?  
What roar of rampart tumult bursts in clangour on the coast?  
Pull back! pull back! The raging flood sweeps every oar away.  
O stream, is this the bar of sand? O boat, is this thy bay?

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