

■ SARATOGA REGINA"

Ye men of the land, ye men of the soil
Will not understand when you hear us say
That we're proud of the blood in the ocean's green,
Proud of the horrors we all have seen:
You will not understand when you hear us pray
"God bless the 'Sara',--- Our Queen:"

They caught her halfway between the fleets
Where there were none to see.
None but yellow, slanted eyes,
That measured her length from up the skies
And laughing like maniacs in crazy glee,
Wondered how an aged queen dies.

At the first rending shock she leaped and shrank,
"WE'RE HIT!" I heard someone say,
Or was it myself? --- I can't recall ----
For beneath the debree that blandeted all
Godless and Christians knelt to pray
In the fear that heaven and sky would fall.

Flame and smoke, in stiffling waves
Draped her form like a funeral shroud,
And scorching decks, with water aboil,
Cooked gutted bodies like fish in oil,
I tell you now, by God, I was proud
That she would not pause or recoil.

Once and twice and ever again,
She would gasp and shudder and groan,
Then, witha a gurge of her queenly head,
Spewing white flame and molten lead,
She leaped and ran to the awful drone
Of those falcon-like Kamis overhead.

Suicide planes dived into the deck,
And bombs exploded her side.
And as each Nippon dived with a scream,
We on the "Sara " thought it all a dream,
That this was happening to our joy and pride
Who an hour before had so quietly steamed.

Twisting and turning, desperately she ran,
Thrashing screws churned the ocean's deep,
While a widening slick---like blackened blood,
Gushed from her side in a sooty flood,
Listing hard on the starboard sweep,
She screamed in agony, her hanger aflood,

Straight through the maelstrom of flaming hell,
Furiously she swept like an enraged queen,
Her battered, bleeding head held high.
We knew, even then, she could never die:
We also knew what a prize she would mean
To those maddened maggots in the sky.

A chattering gun, like frozen rain---
A roar, an instant of eternal silence---
Men blasted high, to heaven or hell:
I know not which, only that they fell
Into tongues of flames and roaring violence.
We and Christ know they died well.

We on the "Sara" knew three hours of hell,
Watching our comrades roast and drown.
Hearing them scream in mortal pain,
Fall in bloody vomit, nor rise again,
And we know how regally she wore her crown
In her glorious hour,--- Her baptismal reign.

In gun galleries number two and three
Men died at their post, nor reasoned why
Their blood should now so freely flow
To serve as a drop for that awful show
They felt their draw and fry,
Yet---only feared that their "Sara" might go.

One Marine sargent: he was known by all
Who, true to the best on Naval tradition,
Manned his gun. It was set afire.
He lighted the scene--a flaming pyre,
Ere leaping overboard, There is no perdition
For men like that---only a seaweed bier.

Hysterical men?---No, there were none.
But the horrors they lived will never dim.
Like the man who clutched at his balless eye,
While dazed and stunned for thread did cry,
To sew it back--or the lad with lips so grim,
With one arm saying--"GO ON! OTHERS ARE WORSE THAN I".

"Blood and sweat and tear" you say?--
No tears, of that we are rightly proud,
Only streams of blood--and rivers of sweat--
And mounds of ashes--. God, let us forget!
Let us only recall we were beaten and bowed
But thankfully alive to repay the debt.

With the dawning of day, bleat as the rest,
A message was sent to half the world
That a U.S. carrier had sustained an attack,
A few lives were lost--but she beat them back,
But only we saw our flag unfurled,
Carressing the bodies, charred and black,

Only we weresstanding by
When the burial squad counted "ONE--TWO--THREE--"
And a canvas bag in an arc would sweep,
While the trumpets' taps bid them quietly sleep.
"And the body shall be cast into the sea--"
One hundred and twenty counts of "ONE--TWO--THREE--"

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