

OLD IRONSIDES

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES



Ay, tear her tattered ensign down! _____

Long has it waved on high, _____

And many an eye has danced to see _____

That banner in the sky; _____

Beneath it rung the battle shout, _____

And burst the cannon's roar; — _____

The meteor of the ocean air _____

Shall sweep the clouds no more. _____

Her deck, once red with heroes' blood, _____

Where knelt the vanquished foe, _____

When winds were hurrying o'er the flood, _____

And waves were white below, _____

No more shall feel the victor's tread, _____

Or know the conquered knee; — _____

The harpies of the shore shall pluck _____

The eagle of the sea! _____

Oh, better that her shattered hulk _____

Should sink beneath the wave; _____

Her thunders shook the mighty deep, _____

And there should be her grave; _____

Nail to the mast her holy flag, _____

Set every threadbare sail, _____

And give her to the god of storms, _____

The lightning and the gale! _____