

The Green Sheaf

THE GALLEY SLAVE.

My Galley rocks close in to shore, and waits for me, and waits for me
To spring aboard and seize the helm and set the purple pennon free
And put her head straight out to sea ;
But long she waits, for woe is me,
I toil below a foreign deck, and strain, and labour day by day
Pulling the oar unceasingly, as back and forth in rhythmic sway,
Chanting in monotone, we swing
And time the oar-strokes as we sing.
Another toils in front of me, behind I hear another sigh
And catch his breath as if in pain, each time we hear the sea-bird's cry.
Chained to our posts we cannot rise
To watch where the horizon lies ;
Nor can we tell to what strange port the ship is bound, we never know
What merchandize we bear on board, or on what empty quest we go.
Too large for me the heavy oar
My grasping hands are stiff and sore,
But yet thro' all the ceaseless noise of creaking wood, and straining cords,
Of flapping sails, and shouts and cries, and pattering feet upon the boards,
I hold a silence round my heart,
Where, at my toil, I dream apart
Of Tir-nan-oge and Avalon and the Far Islands in the West,
I see those golden shores, and watch each tiny wave with silver crest
That turns and falls upon the sand,
I see the swelling green upland—
Hereafter dawns a glorious day when I no longer slave shall be,
But set my purple pennon free,
And sail away across the sea ;
For this I wait in stubborn hope, and labour on unceasingly,
For this my galley hugs the shore, and waits for me—and waits for me.

Alix Egerton.