

# Old Ironsides

BY **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!

O, 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 thread-bare sail,  
And give her to the god of storms,—  
The lightning and the gale!

