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Ship Magic

By A. LESLIE

Out of the East, the wine-gold East,
Out of the crimson West,
Like hastening guests to a wedding feast,
Like knights on an errant quest—
The tall ships come as the wheat-white gulls
That wreath in the wind-washed blue,
While the green wastes thunder on phantom hulls
In the mists of a dream come true:
Galleon, dragon, sun-warped dhow,
Sampan, and broad bireme—
From the gutted log in the freshet flow
To the canvas-cloud and steam!
Oh Raven Flag and clanking bench,
Shield-wall and flashing blade;
Choking reek of the slaver's stench,
Spice of the booming Trade—
They throng where the purple shadows wrap
The lee of the moon-drenched yards
As the sheets draw taut and the reef-points tap
The silvered silence to shards.
And ghostly sails blot out the stars
And darken the winy seas,
While the night wind hums on the shadowy spars
Of phantom argosies.