

**THE CRUISE OF THE
MYSTERY AND
OTHER POEMS**

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The Cruise of the Mystery and Other Poems by Celia Thaxter

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CELIA THAXTER

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CRUISE OF THE MYSTERY

AND OTHER POEMS

BY
CELIA THAXTER



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THE CRUISE OF THE MYSTERY.

THE children wandered up and down,
Seeking for driftwood o'er the sand;
The elder tugged at granny's gown,
And pointed with his little hand.

"Look! look!" he cried, "at yonder ship
That sails so fast and looms so tall!"
She turned, and let her basket slip,
And all her gathered treasure fall.

"Nay, granny, why are you so pale?
Where *is* the ship we saw but now?"
"Oh, child, it was no mortal sail!
It came and went, I know not how.

6 *THE CRUISE OF THE MYSTERY.*

“But ill winds fill that canvas white
That blow no good to you and me.
Oh, woe for us who saw the sight
That evil bodes to all who see!”

They pressed about her, all afraid:
“Oh, tell us, granny, what was she?”
“A ship’s unhappy ghost,” she said,
“The awful ship, the *Mystery*.”

“But tell us, tell us!” “Quiet be!”
She said. “Sit close and listen well,
For what befell the *Mystery*
It is a fearful thing to tell!”

She was a slave-ship long ago.
Year after year across the sea
She made a trade of human woe,
And carried freights of misery.

One voyage, when from the tropic coast
Laden with dusky forms she came, —

A wretched and despairing host, —
Beneath the fierce sun's breathless flame

Sprang, like a wild beast from its lair,
The fury of the hurricane,
And sent the great ship reeling bare
Across the roaring ocean plain.

Then terror seized the piteous crowd:
With many an oath and cruel blow
The captain drove them, shrieking loud,
Into the pitch-black hold below.

Shouting, "Make fast the hatchways tight!"
He cursed them, "Let them live or die,
They'll trouble us no more to-night!"
The crew obeyed him sullenly.

Has hell such torment as they knew?
Like herded cattle packed they lay,
Till morning showed a streak of blue
Breaking the sky's thick pall of gray.