

**THE OLD WAY:
AND OTHER POEMS**

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The old way: and other poems by Ronald A. Hopwood

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RONALD A. HOPWOOD

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BY

CAPTAIN RONALD A. HOPWOOD, R.N.

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THE OLD WAY

"I deeply regret to report the loss of H.M. ships. . . ."—*Sir John Jellicoe's Despatch* ("The Times," July 7, 1916).

THE OLD WAY

THERE'S a sea that lies uncharted far beyond the setting sun,
And a gallant Fleet was sailing there whose fighting days are done,
Sloop and Galleon, Brig and Pinnace, all the rigs you never met,
Fighting Frigate, grave Three-decker, with their snowy canvas set;
Dozed and dreamed, when, on a sudden, ev'ry sail began to swell,
For the breeze has spoken strangers, with a stirring tale to tell,
And a thousand eager voices flung the challenge out to sea:
"Come they hither in the old way, in the only way that's free?"

And the flying Breeze called softly: "In the old way,
Through the winters and the waters of the North,
They have waited, ah the waiting, in the old way,
Strong and patient, from the Pentlands to the Forth.
There was fog to blind and baffle off the headlands,
There were gales to beat the worst that ever blew,
But they took it, as they found it, in the old way,
And I know it often helped to think of you."

THE OLD WAY

'Twas a Frigate, under stun-sails, as she gently gathered way
Spoke in jerks, like all the Frigates, who have little time to stay:
" We'd to hurry, under Nelson, thank my timbers I was tough,
For he worked us as he loved us, and he never had enough
Are the English mad as ever ? were the Frigates just as few ?
(Will their sheets be always stranding, ere the rigging's rove anew ?)
Just as Saxon slow at starting, just as weirdly wont to win ?
Had they Frigates out and watching ? Did they pass the signals in ?"

And the laughing Breeze made answer: " In the old way;
You should see the little cruisers spread and fly,
Peering over the horizon, in the old way,
And a seaplane up and wheeling in the sky.
When the wireless snapped ' The enemy is sighted,'
If his accents were comparatively new,
Why, the sailor men were cheering, in the old way,
So I naturally smiled, and thought of you."

THE OLD WAY

Then a courtly voice and stately from a tall Three-decker came—
She'd the manners of a monarch and a story in her name;
“ We'd a winter gale at even, and my shrouds are aching yet,
It was more than time for reefing when the upper sails were set.
So we chased in woful weather, till we closed in failing light,
Then we fought them, as we caught them, just as Hawke had bid us fight;
And we swept the sea by sunrise, clear and free beyond a doubt.
Was it thus the matter ended when the enemy was out ?”

Cried the Breeze: “ They fought and followed in the old way,
For they raced to make a record all the while,
With a knot to veer and haul on, in the old way,
That had never even met the measured mile—
And the guns were making merry in the twilight,
That the enemy was victor may be true,
Still—he hurried into harbour—in the old way—
And I wondered if he'd ever heard of you.”