

Snipe's Lament

Now each of us from time to time, has gazed upon the sea, and watched the warships pulling out, to keep this country free.

And most of us have read a book; or heard a lusty tale, about the men who sail these ships, through lightnin', wind and hail.

But there's a place within each ship, that legend fails to teach, it's down below the water line; and takes a living toll; a heated metal living hell, that sailors call 'the hole'.

It houses engines, run by steam; that makes the shaft go 'round.

A place of fire, noise and heat, that beats your spirits down. Where boilers are the hellish heart, with blood of angry steam, are molded gods without remorse, and nightmares in a dream.

The roaring fires pose a threat, like living life in doubt, for any minute without scorn, could escape and crush you out. Where turbines scream like tortured souls, alone and lost in hell, with orders from somewhere above, they answer every bell.

The men who keep these fires lit, and make the engines run, are strangers to the world of light, and rarely see the sun. They have no time for man or God, no tolerance for fear; their aspect pays no living thing, the tribute of a tear.

There is little that men can do, that these men haven't done, beneath the decks, deep in the hole, to make the engines run. And every hour of every day, they keep their watch in hell, for if the fires ever fail, their ships' a useless shell.

When ships converge, to have a war, upon an angry sea, the men below just grimly smile, at what their fate might be. They're locked below, like men 'for doomed, who hear no battle cry.

It's well assumed that if they're hit, the men below will die.

For every day's a war down there, when the gages all read red twelve-hundred pounds of heated steam can kill you mighty dead.

So if you ever write their son's, or even try to tell their tale, the very words will make you hear, the fired furnace wail.

These "Men of steel" they are the best, though the public never gets to know.

So little's known about the place that sailors call the hole.

But I can sing about this place, and try and make you see, the hardened life of men down there, 'cause one of them is me.

I've seen those sweat soaked heroes fight, in superheated air, to keep the ship alive and right, though no one knows they're there.

And thus they'll fight for ages on, 'till steamships sail no more, amid the boilers mighty heat and the turbines hellish roar.

So when you see a ship pull out, to meet a warlike foe, remember faintly, if you can, the men who sail below.

Author Unknown