

The Flag and the Mast

*Yesterday I watched a flag gambolling in a breeze
Now stiffened at attention, now gracefully at ease*

*The banner flapped and flew and froze, wilted, drooped and sagged,
Then slowly rose up with the wind, aloft, with edges ragged*

*The rigid mast off to the side heeded not the wind
Bowling to, but slightly, the moving air's command.*

*Men are like that, too, I thought, some fly and some are flown,
Some carried by the winds of life, some not at all so blown*

*Man the master, man the pawn, what different men are these
One is anchored for the gale, one driven on the breeze*

*Which kind am I, I wondered, which must I try to be
A constant, solid, anchored rock, or flotsam on the sea*

*And then I thought this parallel too simple to be true
For earth hosts every shade of man between these clear-cut two*

*There are those who may be strong in their works or arts
And yet be sorely lacking in living's other parts*

*Take the businessman who's bold, strong beyond compare
But with the morals of a cat, and so what have we there?*

*Then take the lazy, shiftless wretch who's wasted all his time
And yet gives back a fortune found, asking not a dime*

*Here's a man who may be by some regarded as a fool
But yet he has the honesty to live the golden rule*

*And so now this plain reflection leads me to believe
Rare's the man so hollow that he has no reprieve*

*On what issues will my Judge on that breathless day
Decide my further final fate and my everlasting way?*

*And so I trust myself to be the flag on things that do not last
But in truthfulness and honesty I must be the mast.*