

SEASIDE BURIAL

CAPE BRETON THRENODY

F. W. GRAY*

Gray gravestones, leaning, cluster on the verge
Of the tall crumbling cliff around whose base,
With thudding impact, smite the Atlantic waves,
Beating as distant drumfire on the ear.

Troubling the silence of long-buried men,
Shaking new graves by which new mourners wait;
Wait voiceless, for the coming of the dead
Through empty streets, swept by the booming gale.

Rain-brimming runnels through the moss-clad brink,
Spread wind-torn veils down to the flying spume
Cast high by thwarted waves that fain would all
O'erwhelm in death, and common ruin spread.

The serried miners come their dead to lay,
Brothers of toil, all brethren of the clay:
From sunless noon to black nightfall they walked,
In column four strode onward with their dead.

In swaying files from church to church they marched,
Wet garments clinging, shining cold with rain.
Footsore, bone-chilled; a last sad duty paid,
The colliers' "Fare Well" to the collier dead.

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1. On December 6, 1938, a runaway "Man-rake" in Princess Colliery, Sydney Mines, killed 16 men and fatally injured five others.