

# AENEAS AT SEA: CHARYBDIS AND AETNA

*Aeneid* III, vv. 554-587

(In the Metre of the Original).

Then, o'er the wave afar,  
Trinacrian Aetna is sighted,  
And, with a mighty moan  
of the deep, we hear in the distance  
Beaten rocks and strand—  
wrecked voices fitfully calling:  
Shoals are leaping aloft,  
and sands with surge are commingled.

Father Anchises then:—  
“In good sooth, here's that Charybdis,  
“These are the terrible rocks—  
these crags that Helenus warned of:  
“Rescue now, O fellow mates,  
and as one man rise to your oar-hafts.”

Just as 'twas bid, they do,—  
Palinurus, leading the vessels,  
Turned his roaring prow  
right round to the waves on the lefthand,—  
Leftward all of the fleet  
with oars and winds came a-bending;

Up to the sky we're borne,  
on arching billow, and likewise  
Sunk to deepest shades,  
when passed the wave from beneath us.

Thrice did the hollow rocks  
resound in their craggy recesses,  
Thrice, with high-flung foam,  
beheld we the stars all a-dripping.

Meanwhile, the wind and sun  
have sunk and left us aweary,  
And, not knowing our way,  
we drift to shores of the Cyclops.

Spacious a harbour lies—  
    itself unmoved by the wind-blast's  
Entrance; but Aetna is near  
    by, thund'ring with fearsome destruction.

Sometimes, lo, it flings  
    out, up to the heavens, a black cloud,  
Smoking in pitch-dark whirl,  
    and with ashes glowing in whiteness:  
Balls of flames it uplifts  
    and licks the clusters of star-land.

Other times, and the rocks,  
    the innermost torn from the mountain,  
Belching, it vomits up;  
    and the stones that are massed into liquid  
Heaves, with a groan, to the light,  
    and boils from depth the profoundest.

'Tis said, Encela-dus,—  
    his frame half burned by the lightning—  
Lies beneath this mass,  
    and giant Aetna, above him  
Superimposed, breathes fire  
    from bursted furnaces blazing:

And when, wearied he shifts  
    his side, the Sicilian island  
Quakes with his murmured groan  
    and veils the sky with a smoke-cloud.

That night we endure  
    throughout these measureless portents,  
Sheltered in woods, nor see  
    what cause is creating the din, for  
Neither were blazing stars  
    nor heaven bright with their clustered  
Radiance, visible, a  
    dark veil obscuring the sky, while  
Deepest night the moon  
    detained, imprisoned in rainclouds.