

The Wharf Rat

By Fitz-James O'Brien

I.

The wharf is silent and black, and motionless lie the ships;
The ebb-tide sucks at the piles with its cold and slimy lips;
And down through the tortuous lane a sailor comes singing along,
And a girl in the Gallipagos isles is the burden of his song.

II.

Behind the white cotton bales a figure is crouching low;
It listens with eager ears, as the straggling footsteps go.
It follows the singing sailor, Stealing upon his track,
And when he reaches the river-side, the wharf rat's at his back.

III.

A man is missing next day, and a paragraph tells the fact;
But the way he went, or the road he took, will never, never be tracked!
For the lips of the tide are dumb, and it keeps such secrets well,
And the fate of the singing sailor boy the wharf rat alone can tell.