

# The Answer

By Elizabeth Stuart Phelps

“That we together may sail,  
Just as we used to.”—CARLETON’S BALLADS.

And what if I should be kind?  
And what if you should be true?  
The old love could never go on,  
Just as it used to do.

The wan, white hands of the waves  
That smote us swift apart,  
Will never enclasp again,  
And draw us heart to heart.

The cold, far feet of the tides  
That trod between us two,  
Can never retrace their steps,  
And fall where they used to do.

Oh, well the ships must remember,  
That go down to the awful sea,  
No keel that chisels the current  
Can cut where it used to be.

Not a throb of the gloom or the glory  
That stirs in the sun or the rain,  
Will ever be *that* gloom or glory  
That dazzled or darkened—again.

Not a wave that stretches its arms,  
And yearns to the breast of the shore,  
Is ever the wave that came trusting,  
And yearning, and loving, before.

The hope that is high as the heavens,  
The joy that is keen as pain,  
The faith that is free as the morning,  
Can die—but can live not again.

And though I should step beside you,  
And hand should reach unto hand,  
We should walk mutely—stifled—

Ghosts in a breathless land.

And what if I should be kind?  
And though you should be true?  
The old love could never, never  
Love on as it used to do.