Casabianca.

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Young Casabianca, a boy about thirteen years old, son to the Admiral of the

Orient, remained at his post (in the battle of the Nile) after the ship had

taken fire, and all the guns had been abandoned; and perished in the explosion

of the vessel.

The boy stood on the burning deck,

Whence all but him had fled;

The flame that lit the battle's wreck

Shone round him o'er the dead.

Yet beautiful and bright he stood,

As born to rule the storm;

A creature of heroic blood,

A proud though childlike form.

The flames rolled on -he would not go

Without his father's word;

That father, faint in death below,

His voice no longer heard.

He called aloud "Say, father, say,

If yet my task is done!"

He knew not that the chieftain lay

Unconscious of his son.

"Speak, father!" once again he cried,

"If I may yet be gone!"

And but the booming shots replied,

And fast the flames rolled on.

Upon his brow he felt their breath,

And in his waving hair;

And looked from that lone post of death

In still yet brave despair;

And shouted but once more aloud

"My father! must I stay?"

While o'er him fast, through sail and shroud,

The wreathing fires made way.

They wrapped the ship in splendour wild,

They caught the flag on high,

And streamed above the gallant child,

Like banners in the sky.

There came a burst of thunder sound -

The boy -oh! where was he?

Ask of the winds that far around

With fragments strewed the sea;

With mast, and helm, and pennon fair,

That well had borne their part -

But the noblest thing that perished there

Was that young faithful heart.