As The Tide Goes Out

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by Paul Kratoska

So man has tamed the sea. Why, there’s the pier
He’s planted in the bay, and there the wall
That sternly calms the water’s strength. Don’t fear
It now. It rests, with all its spirit quelled.
Yet see our yoke. It scarcely roughs a feather
Of the tide. And many a time the waters rise
With glee to toss about in stormy weather;
And then our hold she readily denies.
You look so hard at me. I know of such,
This woman’s moods. She’s calm and lovely now,
Her waves caress the shore, a lover’s touch
To lure, entice; but mark, she makes no vow.
I’ve seen her show another mood as well.
The murmur of her voice speaks otherwise
As maelstrom roars and shows a bit of hell
With shrieking power hurled upward at the skies.
No lover this but maddened beast which dares
Defy the gods and laughs at mortal terrors.
A time when men at sea will cringe in pairs
To cry and rue their lot as wayfarers.
You mock me, now. 'Tis old man’s fear you hear?
The young and strong should fear the windy gale
For age comes soon in icy sea, and near
Seems end of life as strength begins to fail.
But go, my son. 'Tis in your breath and blood
To sail, and see this wondrous earth throughout.
To feel the thrill when tide is at the flood
And oarlocks creak behind the boatman’s shout.
It’s soon enough the life reaps its rewards
And sends you home still young but very old.
Then you, like me, will live with memory’s hoards;
No longer strong, your life’s small story told.