

Crossing the Bar

In the British Parliament, the lower house is known as the House of Commons. It is essentially where all the work of the English law-making body is done. Inside the room, there is a railing that divides the central portion from the rest of the House. Within the railing, space is reserved for only those having special privileges. That railing is known as the bar.

In English courts, the courtroom is divided in much the same way. The Queen's counsel and only certain privileged barristers can plead their case within the bar.

In the United States, the bar is the railing that encloses the place where the judge sits. In order to be able to go through the bar, a person must first finish a difficult course of study and then pass what is known as the bar exam. Then he may literally "pass the bar" because he is now one of the privileged.

We also know that a bar is an accumulation of sand or gravel, often beneath a body of water. Once one has passed the bar, he is better able to reach his destination without difficulty.

I've said all of this for one reason. Perhaps understanding what "the bar" is will help us better understand the words that Alfred, Lord Tennyson wrote so many years ago.

"Sunset and evening star, and one clear call for me! And may there be no moaning of the bar when I put out to sea. But such a tide as moving seems asleep, too full for sound and foam, when that which drew from out the boundless deep turns again home, turns home.

Twilight and evening bell, and after that the dark! And may there be no sadness of farewell when I, when I embark; for tho' from out our borne of time and place the flood may bear me far, I hope to see my Pilot face to face when I have crossed the bar."

Complete your course of study. Cross over any hindrance that might try to slow your journey. Join the privileged who have also done what you have done. Hear Jesus' words:

"Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world...."

and

"Well done, good and faithful servant! ...Come and share in your Master's happiness!"

...when (you) have crossed the bar.