

The Tempest

Cease rude Bor - eas blus - t'ring rail - ers List ye_ lands - men all to
me. Mess-mates, hear a broth-er sai - lor Sing the dan - gers of the sea.
Second Verse
From bound - ing bil - lows, Un - to the tem - pes - tuous troub - led o - cean.

From bounding billows first in motion,
Where the distant whirlwinds rise,
Unto the tempestuous troubled ocean,
Where the seas contend with skies.

Now don't you hear the bos'n calling,
"By topsail sheets and halyards stand.
Down top gallants quick be hauling,
Down your stay sails hand, boys, hand."

Now she freshes, set the braces,
The lee topsail sheets let go,
Luff, boys, luff. Don't make wry faces,
Up your topsails nimbly clew."

Now you all on down beds sporting,
Safely locked in beauty's arms,
Fresh enjoyments, wonton courting,
Free from all but love's alarms,

Whilst round us roars the tempest louder.
Think what fear our mind entralls.
Harder yet it still blows harder;
Hark! once more the bos'n calls.

"Your topsails' yards point to the wind, boys,
See all's clear to reef each course.
Let the foresheet go. Don't mind, boys,
Though the weather should be worse."

Oh, don't you hear the thunder's roaring
Peal on peal contending clash?
Whilst on our heads fierce rain falls pouring
And in our eyes blue lightnings flash.

Whilst all around us one dark water;
All above us one dark sky.
Different deaths at once surround us.
Hark! What means that dreadful cry?

"The foremast's gone!" cried every tongue out,
Whilst on the lee twelve feet 'bove deck
A leak beneath the chest tree's sprung out,
Call hands to clear the wreck.

"Quick, the lanyard's cut to pieces.
Come, my hearties stout and bold,
Plumb the well; the leak increases;
Four feet of water in the hold!

Whilst o'er the ship the waves are beating,
We, our wives and children mourn.
Alas! From hence there's no retreating,
Alas! To them there's no return.

Still the leak is gaining on us,
Both chain pumps are choked below,
Heaven have mercy here upon us,
Only this can help us now.

O'er the lee beam is the land, boys,
Let the guns o'er board be thrown,
To the pumps call every hand, boys,
See, our mizzen mast is gone.

The leak we've found, it can not pour fast,
We've lightened her a foot or more.
Up and rig a jury foremast,
She rights! She rights! Boys, we're off shore!

Note: I can remember hearing my father sing this song ever since I can remember, and something in the way he sang it always gripped me and made feel the tragedy of it even before I was old enough to understand the meaning of it all. My sister says it always made her feel the same way. He would sit gazing into space, or out of the window, with a far away expression in his eyes. I have often wondered if while singing this song he was not reliving a terrific storm at sea, the worst he ever experienced.

He was sailing as Able Seaman on board a sailing vessel, and as he was an extra good helmsman the captain asked him if he could take a second trick at the wheel, for the man who was to take his place at the helm had been taken sick and had to go below. If I remember, a trick at the wheel meant standing at the helm and steering the vessel for four hours, when another man would take it for four hours. So, for eight consecutive hours my father steered the vessel with the lightning dancing up and down the spokes of the wheel as he held it, on the railings around the deck and on the waves in front of him. He said the lightning was blue. When he was relieved, he went below and threw himself face down, and to use his own words he was stone blind for a fortnight.

Mother said that for years after they were married he would throw himself down on a bed or couch during an electrical storm because of the severe pain in his eyes, and ever since I can remember his eyes would pain and the flesh seem to puff up around them every time there was a thunder storm.