

The Wreck of Rivermouth.

in the handwriting of

John G. Whittier.

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Rivermouth Rocks are fair to see

By dawn or sunset shone across,
When the orb of the sea has left them free
To dry their fringes of gold-green moss.

For there the trees cones sliding down,
From salt sea meadows ^{upon} ~~upon~~ ~~the~~ ~~down~~,
And waves in the outer bar afoam,
Shout to its waters, welcome home!

And fair are the sunny isles in view
East of ^{the} grisly Head of the Boar,
And Argonauticus lifts its blue
Disk of a cloud the woodlands o'er.
And southerly when the tide is down,
Twixt white sea-waves & sand hills brown,
The beach-birds lane & the grey gulls wheel
Over a floor ofurnished steel.

Once, in the old colonial days,
Two hundred years ago and more,
A boat sailed down through the winding ways
Of Hampton river to that low shore,
Full of a goodly crew
Sailing out at the summer sea,
Vexing to catch the land-breeze light
With the Boar to left & the Rocks to right.

¹⁸¹¹
In Hampton meadows where mowers laid
Their scythes to the swaths of salted grass,
"Ah well-a-day! ben key must be made!"
A young man seethed who saw them pass,
Laid laughing his fellows, to see him stand
Whetting his scythe with a listless hand,
Hearing a voice in a far off song,
Watching a white hand beckoning!

Fire on the watch, and a many guil-
lets they wounded the frank when Goddy Cole
Fell by her door with her wheel in a troul,
A look & clean eyes from old soul,
"Oho!" she muttered, "ye're brave to day,
But I hear the little waves laugh & say,
"The birds will be cold, that wait at home,
For it's one to go, and another to come!"

"She's aunt," said the skipper, "I speak her fair,
I'm ~~not~~ ^{not} always to see her shole,
Her arched head with its wild grey hair
And nose like a hawk & eye like a snake,
But merrily still, ~~with~~ ^{with} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~thout~~ ^{thout}
From Hampton, the river, the boat sailed out,
Till the fishermen's hut on Star, comes nigh,
And there lost the sound of her voice."

They drop on their knees in the lay of tide,
Drawing up ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~head~~ ^{head} ~~clock~~ ^{clock} & mottos ead,
They saw not the shadow that walked beside,
They heard not the feet with silken shod,
But thicker & thicker a hot mist grew
Shot by the lightning through the sky
And muffled grow, like the growl of a beast
Crawling the sky from west to east.

The skipper
Then ~~he~~ ^{he} looked from the darkening sea
Up to the dimmed & wading sun
But ~~he~~ ^{he} ~~is~~ ^{is} like a brave man cheerily,
"Yet there is time for our homeward run!"
Veering and tacking they backward wore,
And, just as a breath from the woods ashore
Drew out to whisper of danger past
The wrath of the storm came ~~down~~ ^{down} ~~at~~ ^{at} ~~last~~ ^{last}.
Turn at last!

The skipper hailed ³⁰⁷ at the heavy sea:
"God be our keep," he only said & cried,
As the merrily gale like the stroke of a blade
Smote the boat on its starboard side,
The fishermen looked but saw a low
Sack of fumes & rain-cloves shrouded blue,
The rocks lit up by the lightning's glare,
The stuff & stern of the sea's sea.

Goddy Cole looked out from her door,
The Isles of the Shetlands were drowned & gone,
Sea-cay she saw the head of the Boar
Toss the foam from his tasks of sleep,
She clasped her hands with a ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~eye~~ ^{eye} of pain,
The ~~gray~~ ^{gray} on her cheek was not of rain:
"They are lost," she muttered, "boat & crew!
I told you so, my words were true!"

Suddenly seaward swept the Spectator,
The low sun smote through cloudy rack,
The Shetlands stood clear in the light, & a
The trend of the coast lay hard & black,
But far aside as did eye could reach,
No life was seen upon wave or beach,
The boat that went out at morning never
Sailed back again into Hampton river.

O, merrily, when they landed South,
Look from the meadows green & low:
The wind of the sea is a craft of death,
The waves are seizing a song of woe!
By silent rain, my mourning sea
Lay & vain shall they watching be,
When again shall the heart's voice call
Near the white head rise & fall!

U. Ham-mouth Book, - how send a light
 Ye saw in the light o' breaking day.
 I see you looking aft' cold & white
 How ~~the~~ said & remained where they lay!
 The men all with their hands & feet
 And curled the ^{hands} that backward crept:
 "Gave back, could back
 "Back to give ^{me} the blue water - make!"
 "Lead your dead for the hearts that break."

Solenn it was in that del day
 In Hampton town & its lag, built church
 Where side lay side the coffin lay
 And ^{the} minister stood in aisle & porch.
 In the singing seats young eyes were dim
 The voices fallen that raised the hymn,
 And Father Dalton grave & stern
 Told him through his prayer & text in turn.

His ancient & challenge
 But ~~the~~ ~~man~~ ~~had~~ ~~not~~ ~~pray~~
 Because of his sin at fourscore years,
 He stood apart, with the win. grey
 Of his strong sinners' knitted to hide his tears.
 In the noble house of ~~his~~ guilt discovered
 How the eyes of his flock upon him turned
 As the woman to whom his name belonged,
 Looked at the dead they both had wronged.

Apart with him, like him forbidd,
 Old Gordy Cole looked ^{upward} ~~madly~~ ~~ruined~~
 As, two by two, with their faces hued,
 The minister walked to the burying ground.
 He let the staff ^{from} his clasped hands fall:
 "Lord forgive us, sinners all!"
 And the voice of the sea man answered him:
 "Amen!" said ^{the} ~~man~~ ~~in~~ ~~his~~ ~~voice~~
 Father "Preceder!"

So, as I sat upon Apple dock 310
 In the ~~darkest~~ ^{clay} ~~colony~~ on a summer day,
 And the broken lines of Hampton spoke
 In purple mist of cloud land lay,
 The River mouth Book, thin strong told
 And was a glow with ~~the~~ sunset gold
 Rising and breaking in steady change
 Be at ^{to} ~~the~~ shy, then & kept the time.

And the sunset cold, red warmed once more
 With a softer tender after-glow,
 In the east was sun-rise, with boats off-shore
 And sails in the light tower, fighting glow,
 The Beacon glimmered for Portsmouth bar,
 The white lile kilder, its great red star.
 And the life & death ⁱⁿ of my old time lay
 Mingled ^{as} like the night & day!