

He understood the ways of winds and tides,
The terms that seamen use for ropes and sails,
To read a compass and ship's chart besides,
And how to reef a ship to meet stiff gales. . . .
Still was I but a boy the day we crept
About him as he lay all silent there,
And there were many there who quietly wept
And said his loss would be full hard to bear,
A man so kindly it was rare to know,
Scarce had he left his mother for a day
Since years long past her sight began to go.
I said, "But surely he has been away
For many voyages upon the sea?"
They stared at me and smoothed the white
sheet down
And said, "Why, we have never known him be
More than a day or so outside the town."