

THE WESTERN OCEAN

I'm a Western Ocean mariner and I'll tell you if I can,
Of awesome winter weather encountered here by
man,
The seas build up with fury over miles of storm
tossed waves,
Hulls of ships are pounded and steering misbehaves.

Clouds are tattered rags amid the frequent squall,
Merging with the streaking peaks many storey's tall,
The air it feels like buckshot in the form of spray,
Wind is banshee howling, through rigging in the way.

A `hogging and a `sagging we ride the raging main,
Fore and aft with shaking mast the vessel wracks
with strain,
Rolling and a pitching in vast and lengthy swells,
Thundering seas crashing down, filling up the wells.

We dare not run before it - we'd poop our stern
asunder,
We must not run along it - we'd roll ourselves right
under,
The motion of a corkscrew she spirals up and round,
Crashing into head seas with a `whooping` sound.

Half a mile from crest to crest in rolling hills of brine,
Ship trembling now but climbing - only just in time,
Arriving on a summit, we take a diving plunge,
Dropping down into a trough with stomach churning
lunge.

The stern would lift, engine race, the screw would
clear the water,
Speeding in its freedom - vibrating through the
quarter,
Shovelled up the hawse pipes, a green sea thumps
the prow,
Shooting tons to leeward off the flooded bow.

Battened down and hove-to waiting out the weather,
Standing tricks and watches working there together,
A sturdy ship beneath me and doughty crew beside,
A Western Ocean seaman takes it in his stride.

Joe Earl