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Attributed to "Josephine"

In North America once lived
A man unknown to fame;
(Methinks, that very few have heard
Of brave John Maynard's name!)

A skilful pilot he was bred; –
In God was his delight; –
His head was clear – his hands were strong –
His hopes seemed ever bright.

Once, from Detroit to Buffalo
A steamer plied her way;
And honest John stood at the helm,
That lovely summer day.

Well filled with joyous passengers –
She cut the waters wide;
Leaving a silver line of light
Along the foaming tide.

But suddenly her captain starts!
His cheek is white as snow!
O, sight of dread! – Light wreathes of smoke
Come curling from below!

Then rose the horrid shout of fire!
Appalling, wild and drear!
A boat the steamer carried not –
Nor human aid was near!

All hands to instant work were called!
Alas! All toil was vain!
The fury of the raging flames
No effort might restrain!

"How long 'ere Buffalo be reached?"
Arose an eager cry;
"About three quarters of an hour,"
John Maynard made reply.

Then forward rush the passengers –
Dismayed with terror sore!
John Maynard at the helm still stands,
As stedfast as before!

Now dreadful clouds of smoke arise,
And sheets of flame divide!
"John Maynard, are you at the helm?"
The captain loudly cried.

"Ay, aye, sir!" was the quick reply.
"Then say, how does she head?"
"South-east by east," – the answer came
Above the uproar dread.

"Head her south-east!" the captain shouts,
"And run her quick ashore."
"Ay, aye, sir!" but the quick response
Was feebler than before.

"John Maynard! can you yet hold on
Five minutes longer still?"
The captain's ear scarce caught the words, –
"By God's good help I will!"

Scorched were the old man's face and hair;
One hand disabled hung; –
Yet with the other to the wheel
As to a rock he clung!

He beached the ship! – to all on board
A landing safe was given; –
But as the latest leaped on shore,
John Maynard rose to heaven.