

"JOHN MAYNARD" (A. J.)

The anonymous poem for which you ask is doubtless the following, although you spell the bold helmsman's name in a different way.

'Twas on Lake Erie's broad expanse,  
One bright midsummer day—  
The gallant steamer Ocean Queen  
Swept proudly on its way,  
Bright faces glistened on the deck  
Or leaning o'er the side,  
Watched carelessly the feathery foam,  
That socked the rippling tide.

Ah! who beneath that cloudless sky  
That smiling beads serene,  
Could think that danger, awful—vast,  
Impended o'er the scene,  
Could think, that e'er an hour had passed,  
That frame of sturdy oak,  
Would sink beneath the flames, blue waves,  
Blackened with fire and smoke.

A seaman whose heroic soul the hour should  
yet reveal,—  
By name John Maynard—Eastern born—stood  
calmly at the wheel,  
Head her southeast, the Captain shouts above  
the smothering roar,  
Head her southeast—without delay—make for  
the nearest shore—  
No terror fills that dauntless heart, nor clouds  
that dauntless eye  
As in a sailor's measured tones—his voice re-  
sounded: Aye, Aye—  
Three hundred souls, the steamer's freight-  
crowd forward, white with fear—  
As at the stern those dreadful flames above  
the deck appear.

John Maynard, with an anxious voice—the Cap-  
tain shouts once more,  
Stand by that wheel five minutes yet, and we  
shall reach the shore,  
The flames approach in giant strides—they  
scorch his hands and brow,  
One arm disabled—locks his side—Ah! he is  
conquered now,  
But no—his teeth are firmly set—he crushes  
down the pain.—  
His knee, upon the stanchion pressed, he  
gullies the ship again,  
One moment yet—One moment yet—brave  
heart, thy task is o'er,  
The pebbles grate beneath the keel—the steamer  
touches shore.

Three hundred grateful voices rise—in praise  
to God that He  
Hath saved them from that terrible fire—and  
from the engulfing sea,  
HU! where is he—the helmsman bold—the  
Captain saw him reel,  
His lifeless hands release their task—He fell  
beside the wheel,  
The waves received his lifeless corpse black-  
ened with smoke and fire,  
God rest him—Here never had a nobler funeral  
pyre.