

Yet said he, 'Nay — I must away,
On the rock to set my feet;
My debts are paid, my will I made,
Or ever I did thee greet. 160

'If I must die, then let me die
By the rock and not elsewhere;
If I may live, O let me live
To mount my lighthouse stair.'

The old Mayor look'd him in the face, 165
And answered: 'Have thy way;
Thy heart is stout, as if round about
It was braced with an iron stay:

'Have thy will, mercer! choose thy men,
Put off from the storm-rid shore; 170
God with thee be, or I shall see
Thy face and theirs no more.'

Heavily plunged the breaking wave,
And foam flew up the lea,
Morning and even the drifted snow 175
Fell into the dark grey sea.

Winstanley chose him men and gear;
He said, 'My time I waste,'
For the seas ran seething up the shore,
And the wrack drave on in haste. 180

But twenty days he waited and more,
Pacing the strand alone,
Or ever he set his manly foot
On the rock — the Eddystone.

Then he and the sea began their strife, 185
And work'd with power and might:
Whatever the man rear'd up by day
The sea broke down by night.

He wrought at ebb with bar and beam,
He sail'd to shore at flow; 190
And at his side, by that same tide,
Came bar and beam alsò.

'Give in, give in,' the old Mayor cried,
'Or thou wilt rue the day.'
'Yonder he goes,' the townsfolk sigh'd, 195
'But the rock will have its way.

'For all his looks that are so stout,
And his speeches brave and fair,
He may wait on the wind, wait on the wave,
But he 'll build no lighthouse there.' 200

In fine weather and foul weather
The rock his arts did flout,
Through the long days and the short days,
Till all that year ran out[.]

With fine weather and foul weather 205
Another year came in:
'To take his wage,' the workmen said,
'We almost count a sin.'

Now March was gone, came April in,
And a sea-fog settled down, 210
And forth sail'd he on a glassy sea,
He sail'd from Plymouth town.

With men and stores he put to sea,
As he was wont to do;
They show'd in the fog like ghosts full faint — 215
A ghostly craft and crew.

And the sea-fog lay and wax'd alway,
For a long eight days and more;
'God help our men,' quoth the women then;
'For they bide long from shore.' 220

They paced the Hoe in doubt and dread:

‘Where may our mariners be?’
But the brooding fog lay soft as down
Over the quiet sea.

A Scottish schooner made the port, 225
The thirteenth day at e’en:
‘As I am a man,’ the captain cried,
‘A strange sight I have seen:

‘And a strange sound heard, my masters all,
At sea, in the fog and the rain, 230
Like shipwrights’ hammers tapping low,
Then loud, then low again.

‘And a stately house one instant show’d,
Through a rift, on the vessel’s lee;
What manner of creatures may be those 235
That build upon the sea?’

Then sigh’d the folk, ‘The Lord be praised!’
And they flock’d to the shore amain;
All over the Hoe that livelong night,
Many stood out in the rain. 240

It ceased, and the red sun rear’d his head,
And the rolling fog did flee;
And, lo! in the offing faint and far
Winstanley’s house at sea!

In fair weather with mirth and cheer 245
The stately tower uprose;
In foul weather, with hunger and cold,
They were content to close;

Till up the stair Winstanley went,
To fire the wick afar; 250
And Plymouth in the silent night
Look’d out, and saw her star.

Winstanley set his foot ashore:
Said he, ‘My work is done;

I hold it strong to last as long
As aught beneath the sun. 255

‘But if it fail, as fail it may,
Borne down with ruin and rout,
Another than I shall rear it high,
And brace the girders stout. 260

‘A better than I shall rear it high,
For now the way is plain,
And tho’ I were dead,’ Winstanley said,
‘The light would shine again.

‘Yet, were I fain still to remain, 265
Watch in my tower to keep,
And tend my light in the stormiest night
That ever did move the deep;

‘And if it stood, why then ’t were good,
Amid their tremulous stirs, 270
To count each stroke when the mad waves broke,
For cheers of mariners.

‘But if it fell, then this were well,
That I should with it fall;
Since, for my part, I have built my heart 275
In the courses of its wall.

‘Ay! I were fain, long to remain,
Watch in my tower to keep,
And tend my light in the stormiest night
That ever did move the deep.’ 280

With that Winstanley went his way,
And left the rock renowned,
And summer and winter his pilot star
Hung bright o’er Plymouth Sound.

But it fell out, fell out at last, 285
That he would put to sea,
To scan once more his lighthouse tower

On the rock o' destiny.

And the winds woke, and the storm broke,
And wrecks came plunging in; 290
None in the town that night lay down
Or sleep or rest to win.

The great mad waves were rolling graves,
And each flung up its dead;
The seething flow was white below, 295
And black the sky o'erhead.

And when the dawn, the dull, grey dawn, —
Broke on the trembling town,
And men look'd south to the harbour mouth,
The lighthouse tower was down. 300

Down in the deep where he doth sleep,
Who made it shine afar,
And then in the night that drown'd its light,
Set, with his pilot star.

Many fair tombs in the glorious glooms 305
At Westminster they show;
The brave and the great lie there in state:
Winstanley lieth low.

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