My Favorite Old-Time Poem

"THIS HAS always been a favorite poem of mine," writes Martha K. of Orland, Indiana. "It was in one of my schoolbooks in the lower grades."

Ballad of the Tempest

We were crowded in the cabin,
Not a soul would dare to sleep—
It was midnight on the waters,
And a storm was on the deep.

'Tis a fearful thing in winter
To be shattered by the blast,
And to hear the rattling trumpet
Thunder, "Cut away the mast!"

So we shuddered there in silence,
For the stoutest held his breath,
While the hungry sea was roaring
And the breakers talked with Death.

As thus we sat in darkness,
Each one busy with his prayers,
"We are lost!" the captain shouted
As he staggered down the stairs.

But his little daughter whispered,

As she took his icy hand,
“Isn’t God, upon the ocean,
Just the same as on the land?”

Then we kissed the little maiden.
And we spoke in better cheer,
And we anchored safe in harbor
When the morn was shining clear.
—James T. Fields

James T. Fields (1817-1881) went to work at the age of 17 in a Boston, Massachusetts bookseller’s shop and moved into publishing. Later, he edited “The Atlantic Monthly,” then wrote of his friendships with Wordsworth, Thackeray, Dickens, Hawthorne and other writers of note.