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The Mackerel Fishermen

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THE MACKEREL FISHERMEN

New England mackerel fishermen they were

Tall rigged, fast and able

fishing off Prince Edward Island

In the Gulf of Saint Lawrence

Off The Labrador

When that tell-tale ripple of their finny

prey ruffled the water's surface

They crowded on all sail

flung the seines over

And sailed into the schools with

deadly course and steady hand

But quick as they were these schooners were no match

for the great wind that swept down from the north

They felt the danger

Felt the awful seas begin to build

Shortened sail and flew to the nearest harbor of refuge

Wheeling around to plunge through the entrance they tacked about

Looking for room to dock along the shore

for room to anchor among the fleet of schooners

already moored

Helpless as wind dismantled them and

flung them high upon the strand

Outside the harbor all along the Island shore

was a forest of masts askew

tatters of sails clinging to spars

broken backs and shattered hulls

Spewing their crews into sandy surf to their deaths

All is quiet.

The Island cemeteries

are soft beds for sailors

of the Great Mackerel Fleet

Laid to rest by strangers who knew them not

Respected as men of great courage

men of great faith that their strength

And the wonders of their schooners

would keep them alive

would make it all right

would see them through the night.