

Sea Sorrow

by Celia Loughton Thaxter

Editors

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Introduction

In the summer of 1896, Sarah Orne Jewett, at the height of her career, worked simultaneously on several challenging literary projects. Best known of these was her most successful novel, *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896), for which she composed several new chapters. At the same time, she was reading with enthusiasm Mary Augusta (Mrs. Humphry) Ward's seventh novel, *Sir George Tressady*, which was serialized in *Century Magazine*, and corresponding with Ward about it.* And, also, she was helping with the publication of works by her recently deceased, dear friend Celia Loughton Thaxter (1835 - 25 August 1894). In that summer, she oversaw the preparation of Appledore editions of *The Poems of Celia Thaxter*, for which wrote a preface, and of Thaxter's *Among the Isles of Shoals* (1873).

Jewett's work on *Among the Isles of Shoals* was substantial, and she finally recommended that "Sea Sorrow" be appended to the new edition. She made corrections in the text of *Shoals*, she worked through unpublished materials, looking for items that might be added to Thaxter's collection of sketches, and she presented the manuscript of "Sea Sorrow" with her own penciled editing and with the proviso that she would read proof of it before publication. She also seemed to recommend appending one other piece, but she did not name it in the available correspondence, and it is not clear exactly what she meant. She seems definitely to have rejected another unpublished piece she had considered seriously, "The Last Days of William Hunt." Ultimately, much of her work was fruitless, for the new edition of *Shoals* included no new material. Whether any of her recommended textual changes were made is not yet known.

The account of Thaxter's composition and attempted publication of "Sea Sorrow" was muddled by her granddaughter, Rosamund Thaxter. In *Sandpiper* (1962), R. Thaxter quotes a letter from Celia Thaxter to Annie Adams Fields of 4 March, 1876, in which Thaxter reports that she has written 40 pages of a new manuscript, "Sea Sorrow." R. Thaxter also reports that on 8 March, C. Thaxter told Fields that *Atlantic Monthly* editor, William Dean Howells, "... returned my M.S. Wants me to set my constructive faculty to work on it."

Many of Celia Thaxter's letters to Fields are held by Archives and Special Collections at the Boston Public Library. BPL's catalog description of the 4 March letter (Box 1, Folder 4, Item 89, Call Number: MS C.1.38) tallies with R. Thaxter's account. C. Thaxter reports there that she is sending "Sea Sorrow" to Howells. But R. Thaxter

mistakes the date of the letter she quotes about Howells's response. Fields published that letter in full in *Letters of Celia Thaxter* (1897), with the correct date of 22 March. The portion that R. Thaxter quotes reads:

Mr. Howells returned my M.S. and wants me to make it more imaginative, -- set my "constructive faculty" to work upon it, for it is full of fine material. He is right, but supposing one hasn't any constructive faculty! Du lieber Gott! then one must live without any gowns. Plain facts won't earn them. (Box 1, Folder 4, Item 92, Call Number: MS C.1.38)

Correcting the date makes it possible to imagine Howells actually giving "Sea Sorrow" careful attention before his reply.

A more significant observation arising from R. Thaxter's account is that in the manuscript of "Sea Sorrow" transcribed here, C. Thaxter describes the wreck of the *Asa Porter*, which took place on 26 March 1876, three weeks after the 4 March letter in which she reports sending the manuscript to Howells. This is an important detail, for it shows that the manuscript we have has been revised and expanded from the one she sent Howells, presumably reflecting Howells's critique. Indeed, as our notes for the transcription show, Celia Thaxter exercised her "constructive faculty," working through her account of the *Asa Porter* in letters to Fields and to Anna Eichberg immediately after the wreck.

We currently have two documents by Sarah Orne Jewett showing her work and her recommendations for the new 1896 edition of *Among the Isles of the Shoals*. These include an undated set of notes and a letter, both intended for editors at Houghton, Mifflin & Co. Jewett's changing opinion about appending "The Last Days of William Morris Hunt" would seem to show that the notes precede the letter in time.

Jewett's Notes*

These two papers should be kept with care. The beginning of the Story Hjelma* is full of promise and beauty -- it has a greater breadth than any thing Mrs Thaxter ever did in certain ways -- though it calls for unusual powers as a story writer to carry it on as it begins. It is autobiographical to a certain extent like most of her prose work --

Sarah Orne Jewett

I should use this Hunt paper certainly, & perhaps the two others* in making up the prose volume or volumes

Sarah Orne Jewett to Houghton Mifflin & Company -- 20 June 1896*

Messrs Houghton Mifflin & Co.

Gentlemen

I return the copy of Among the Isles of the Shoals with very few slight corrections.* I have decided that these papers and the one I left with you in manuscript called Sea Sorrow had better be printed by themselves leaving out entirely The Last Days of William Hunt, and also the Memorable Murder* which (as I have happily remembered in good season!) was reprinted in a volume of short stories for summer reading* by Messrs. Scribner & Co. some years since. I am sure that Mrs. Thaxter spoke to me of that arrangement and of some payment being made her.

It does not seem to me that this volume will need any preface or introduction other than the brief one already given by the author. I shall give you a footnote to end the first page of Sea-Sorrow, merely to say the Mrs. Thaxter left it among her papers and that it seems to ~~end~~ belong to the Shoals book &c.

I shall hope to receive the proof of the book of Poems soon, with the Preface.* I mean to attend to them and return them at once. Please remember that I should like to see the proof of Sea Sorrow as it goes to the Press in manuscript. Among the Isles of the Shoals need not be sent to me.

Believe me with very kind regards

Yours sincerely
S. O. Jewett

I have, since writing the above note received the Preface & the volume of Poems which I shall return today.

Foot-note at the beginning of Mrs. Thaxter's paper called Sea Sorrow: (To follow among the Isles of the Shoals

These two sketches were found among Mrs. Thaxter's papers after her death. They seem to the editor to make a most interesting additional chapter* to Among the Isles of the Shoals, giving a picture of her later own life on Appledore in winter weather.

Notes

Sir George Tressady: See Terry Heller, "Sarah Orne Jewett reads *Sir George Tressady*" in *Dunnet Landing: Three Papers on Sarah Orne Jewett* (Cedar Rapids, IA: Sarah Orne Jewett Press, 2023).

Notes: The manuscript of this note is held by Colby College Special Collections, Waterville, ME: JEWE.1 Series B: Folder B8: Thaxter, comments. Undated. 2 p. Comments by SOJ about two papers by Celia Thaxter.

Story Hjelma: This Thaxter manuscript has not yet been identified. Thaxter's poem, "Hjelma," was first published in *The Independent* (1875) and collected in the 1896 *Poems of Celia Thaxter* pp. 245-7. The poem tells a story that appears as part of "Sea Sorrow," where Hjelma is an important character. It may well be that Jewett is speaking of "Sea Sorrow" here, or perhaps part of it.

two others: Presumably, one of these was "The Last Days of William Morris Hunt," for which Harvard's Houghton Library holds a typescript. We have not been able to learn the title of the third piece Jewett mentions.

1896: The manuscript of this letter is held by the Houghton Library of Harvard University in Houghton Mifflin Company correspondence and records, 1832-1944, Jewett, Sarah Orne, 1849-1909. 68 letters from; 1870-1907 and [n.d.]. MS Am 1925 (962). Transcription and notes by Terry Heller, Coe College.

The Last Days of William Hunt... Memorable Murder: Thaxter's piece on the death of American artist William Morris Hunt (1824-1879) remains unpublished. Thaxter discovered Hunt's body, after his apparent suicide. Thaxter's mentor and friend had unsuccessfully sought relief from depression in the Isles of the Shoals.

"A Memorable Murder" by Thaxter appears in *Stories by American Authors* 3 (1884-5), published by Charles Scribner's Sons.

Harvard's Houghton Library collection of Houghton Mifflin Correspondence and Records includes two of these pieces: a hand-revised typescript of "The Last Days of William Morris Hunt" [MS Am 1925.4 (21), undated, 56 pages] and "Sea-sorrow," [MS Am 1925.4, (22), undated 45 pages]. This collection also contains a third manuscript entitled, "A Day by the Mediterranean." Whether this is the unnamed manuscript in this letter is not yet known, but the title suggests that is unlikely.

Preface: Jewett wrote introductions for two of Thaxter's books. This one, the posthumous collection, *Poems of Celia Thaxter*, appeared in 1896.

additional chapter: Given how Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs* was revised after her death, it probably is of some interest that Jewett seems to have decided not to interpolate the sketches she has chosen, but to append them as an "additional chapter." Jewett might easily have found a rationale for interpolation in Thaxter's original 1873 preface for *Among the Isles of Shoals*. Thaxter wrote very modestly, characterizing her

sketches as "fragmentary and inadequate," and the collection as "imperfect" and "better than nothing."

For an account of the revisions of *Pointed Firs*, see Terry Heller, "Editions of *The Country of the Pointed Firs*" in *Dunnet Landing: Three Papers on Sarah Orne Jewett* (Cedar Rapids, IA: Sarah Orne Jewett Press 2023).

Editorial Notes

This manuscript of "Sea Sorrow" is held by the Houghton Library of Harvard University: Thaxter, Celia (Laighton) 1835-1894. Sea-sorrow. A.MS.s.; [n.p., n.d.]. 45s.(45p.) Box: 161, (22).

Houghton Library MS link:

https://hollisarchives.lib.harvard.edu/repositories/24/resources/1256/search?utf8=%E2%9C%93&filter_q%5B%5D=%22Sea+sorrow%22&commit=Search&op%5B%5D=&field%5B%5D=&limit=&q%5B%5D=*%&from_year%5B%5D=&to_year%5B%5D=

We have preserved Thaxter's lines and her page divisions and numbers. Notes appear at the end of the transcription.

Key to editorial notation

^ ^: The author has inserted text.

ab̸e: The author has deleted text.

{ } : Editorial insertions in pursuit of clarity.

[] : Editorial comments and descriptions. [Ordinary text indicates guessing the author's intent; italics is editorial commentary.]

< penciled insertions, almost certainly by Sarah Orne Jewett >

Thaxter's handwriting

Thaxter, like Sarah Orne Jewett and Annie Adams Fields uses what appears to be an em-dash in place of a variety of punctuation marks, most often where we would place a period, but also where we could place commas and dashes. In this transcription, we have attempted to present the punctuation she actually uses rather than what today's readers would expect.

Insertions and deletions

We have assumed that inked insertions and deletions were made by Thaxter as she composed, and that penciled insertions were made by Jewett in preparing the manuscript for inclusion in *Among the Isles of Shoals*.

**Annotated Transcription of Celia Thaxter, "Sea-Sorrow."
After 4 March 1876**

'Sea-Sorrow --

Prospero – “Sit still and hear the last of our sea-sorrow” [Tempest.*

Austere of feature! Wast thou ever fair,
O Nature! Hadst thou voices of delight,
Who shriekest with thy winds and day and night
Rendest with arrowy cold the shuddering air?*

~~Thus meditating~~ I looked from the storm dimmed ^window^
eastward over that portion of the wintry world
visible from the Isles of Shoals, late in the
afternoon of the 24th day of March, 1875. A
very small portion of the world it was, for the
snow swirled around the house in narrowing or
widening circles, that showed us the leaden face
of the sea at one moment & the next [smothered?
] ^it^ with the blinding drift. And the long deliberate
breakers, rolling in without cessation,
tossed their white clouds so high that it was
difficult to determine what was snow and
what spray. The dull roar of wind & water
was augmented every few moments by the
muffled thunder of a larger wave than usual:
the windows rattled drearily, and where the gale

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found crack or loop hole of entrance, it
wailed with a voice of irrepressible sorrow.
I thought of Browning's lines,*

“Still ailing, wind? Wilt be appeased or no?

I know not any tone
so fit as thine to falter forth a sorrow:
Dost think men would go mad without a moan,
If they knew any way to borrow
A pathos like thy own?”

And I turned from the pale, distracted outer
world and heaped more fuel on the open fire,

drew my writing desk into the cheerful circle of four gathered around the blaze, and as the night descended swiftly, strove to forget the storm. But the thought of shipwreck and death must always connect itself with such rage of the elements when one exists, as it were, in the very centre of the battle. The fire murmured and crackled and threw ruddy gleams about the pleasant room, three student lamps were burning clearly, all was bright, still, secure and cheerful within, but I found myself

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continually watching the white flakes at the black windows (We never drew* the curtains or shut the blinds <at Appledore>, security from observation was so absolute, no living thing being near beside ourselves) sometimes listening to the hiss of ice, like sand, flung more furiously than usual against the glass,

“Now ^to^ the scream of a maddened beach dragged down by the wave{”)*

or to the sullen, interrupted cannonading of the breakers eastward. We all breathed a hope that no vessel might be near us, knowing well what her fate was like to be among the cruel rocks & ledges of the Shoals ^on such a night^, & by eleven oclock we were all asleep ~~for the night~~, unconscious of death & misery close at hand. At that time a large three-mast schooner, the Birkmyre* Capt Keen, from Gonaives, Hayti, loaded with logwood, for Boston, struck on Duck island, close by us in the black night & storm, and went to pieces, her capt & one of the crew were drowned, five others clung

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to the rock all night, swept by the freezing breakers, beaten by the remorseless whips of brine & snow & stinging winds. We knew nothing of it at all. Next morning the sun rose clear, the thermometer was at zero, and the demon of the north west was let

loose upon the defenceless world; the N. W.
wind, compared to which Euroclydon at its
worst ~~was~~ ^{is} welcome as a summer zephyr.
The rage and fury of the hurricane cannot be
told, its insensate roar filled hollow
heaven with thunder. This is the wind that in
winter blows three weeks at a time without taking
breath. Straight down from the open Polar
sea, across all the snow fields, over Hudson's
Bay & all ^{the whole} of the ~~winter~~ ice-locked space between
^{that} it & New England, it comes howling more horridly
than a horde of wolves, & wreaks itself with
savage wrath on the inert Atlantic, bringing
with it all the cold it can gather on its way.
Its voice is no passive wail of despair, but like the

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shriek of souls in torment. Against every-
thing that bars its way it screams amain.
About all the gables, eaves, pillars, railings, roofs,
chimneys, angles of the long, rambling, empty
house it raves, expostulates, till it seems almost
to break into articulate curses. The long and
broad piazza railings it seizes & shakes as
if with a gigantic, angry hand, till they give
back a sharp staccato sound, clear above
all the other tumult. Of the whole struc-
ture it makes a kind of hideous harp whereon
to play, and we within ^{hear and} hate it with a pa-
tient & unflagging hatred. We might as well
be living in another planet so far as the American
Continent is concerned: no matter how desperate
the need, no hope nor help from humanity is
within our reach while this mad demon has
possession of the world. The sea answers to it ^{as if}
with passionate resentment, its surface dull
green and sullen indigo, streaked with exas-
perated foam, ploughed into short, angry
waves, the crest of which are torn off

scattered in wild white spray far & wide.
 The long stretch of distant coast from Cape
 Ann to Cape Elizabeth, is a shapeless,
 blurred and wasted line; the sky as hard as
 adamant and clear from rim to rim of the
 [*deleted word*] horizon. On this day of the 25th of
 March the islands were all sheathed in
 snow, [*deleted word*] the glare of salt ice where the rocks
 met the waves [*deleted punctuation*] giving back a ghastly glitter to
 the sun which shone with a cold and blinding
 [*blaze or glare?*], like a lidless eye in the wide and lifeless
 heaven -- Beauty had fled affrighted off the face
 of the earth; except for the gulls there was no
 sign of life on sea or shore, but these indomitable
 creatures, defying all the elements, soared
 above the tumult, forever alert, powerful,
 graceful, victorious [*deleted punctuation and word*]. We turned our
 backs on the forbidding face of nature. Occupying
 sunny and sheltered rooms in the ^an^ angle of the
 large buildings, we thus succeeded in making of
 them a rampart behind which to defend ourselves
 from the merciless North-West -- we made the

most of every ray of light. In the lower &
 larger room, ten double windows and two skylights
 [*tinted?*] the sunshine, and into these windows we
 had coaxed a wealth of summer greenness and
 cheer: vines climbed about, smilax, nasturtiums,
 ivies, delicate [*unrecognized name*] with blossom* of white &
 pink & purple, passion flowers & [*unrecognized name*] vines &
 one passion flower after running ~~across~~ ^around^ the tops
 of the windows, shot like a long green rocket
 across the ceiling and ~~broke~~ ^burst^ into purple stars of
 splendor in the skylight -- Geraniums blossomed
 in sultry scarlet, or pink, or white, roses, callas
 fuchsias, heliotropes, white & pink primroses, ~~heliotropes~~
 & all the well known sisterhood of house plants
 grew & flourished vigorously in those ten windows.
 In one an oxalis hung like a rosy cloud, the same
 plant in another window unfolded flowers of gold.
 Nasturtiums flamed up over another with ~~flowers~~ ^blossoms^
 of quaint & fascinating shapes -- on another, spikes

of tall white annunciation lilies stood strong & fair,
[boxes?] of crocuses made a glory of purple, gold, &
white and amber; snow drops hung their frail

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emerald-streaked bells, and hyacinths
were sprinkled about wherever a place
for them could be found -- Hardly would the
outside world be seen beyond this flowing
barrier, and the glimpses of wild ocean and
stark snow visible here and there between
leaves and flowers made the inner bloom
and quite more precious and delightful.

A few singing birds warbled softly and sweetly
the ~~comical~~ grey parrot made cynical
remarks & comments as if upon all that
went on, somewhat after the fashion of the
fool in tragedy, causing sudden & unexpected
intrusions of merriment every now and then --
And so the bitter day wore on to afternoon --
Then one of the family looking toward Duck
island from the higher windows, discovered the
wreck, the huge broken hull heaving and
swaying against Mingo rock, and across
the island the long masts lying prone,
~~tossed~~ ^flung^ there by

"The cataract seas that snap the three decker's oaken spine" *

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and left rent and ruined. At once all
was excitement and distress. When she
had struck, how long she had lain there,
whether her crew were saved or drowned,
whether anything living yet existed on the
island, all were question eagerly discussed
and not one answered, for no boat could
cross the tumbling gulf between us and the
scene of the disaster. We could see nothing
moving upon the ragged surface of the
rock, and [we *deleted in pencil*] concluded <that> if any living thing
were left upon it we should surely see some
signal of distress, some rag of clothing hoisted
on an oar blad in mute entreaty for suc-

cor. A boat was hauled down to the eastern cove to be in readiness ^to start^ the moment the wind should lull, and a watch was set till the sun went down, and if <there had been> any sign of life ~~had transpired~~ an attempt would have been made at rescue spite of the fury of the gale -- How we longed & prayed for that senseless hurricane to cease<!>

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We dared to hope it might slacken as the sun sank, for thus late in the spring it seldom raged through such hopeless spaces of time as in the winter. But it never lulled for an instant -- When I climbed the stairs for a last look before night should shroud the whole, "sad Hesper over the buried sun"* was glittering high, & in the east the melancholy violet of winter sunset brooded over the wide desolation. I saw the black wreck heaving slowly up & down and the long straight lines of the masts glimmering through the dusk where they lay -- Very far away a sail or two, dark & colorless, broke the monotonous sea-line. Heaven & earth seemed empty aught save sorrow: the sadness of the whole was crushing. Life seemed so futile, so hardly kept, so easily lost, of so little worth. Of what use was this mad wind blowing with mindless fury since time began, driving good ships and stout hearts to wreck and ruined since men were born and ships were fashioned?

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Of what use the enormous power of those slow, ponderous, cruel breakers, rolling in eternally, crushing our the lives of men and mussels alike indifferently, <with> a* deadly, dreadful, blind and savage force. Alas, well might the evening sky take on that color of infinite pathos, and

"Tears from the depths of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes"*

at sight of it.*

Heavy-hearted we went to rest
and not till three o'clock next morning did
the gale abate, then, though it still blew
heavily, the heads of the family, taking with
them one man <only>, pushed off the boat and rowed
toward Duck island. It was still dark, with
as yet no sign of day break, and zero-cold.
A crested moon shone with weird, greenish
light on the unbroken [glass or glare] of the snow,
the sea was blacker than midnight darkness,
blacker than ink in contrast with the stark
snow, & its surface was still torn into

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waves, longer and lazier now, but edged

"With foam white as the bitten lip of hate."*

The night was full of tempestuous noises,
but the dark heaven was crystal clear and
starry, the great planets and constellations
burned bright in awful stillness about the
bending dome -- We women, left upon
our rock, waited anxiously for the re-
turn of the voyagers. Arrived at the wreck
they sought in vain through the darkness
for any sign of life.* At sunrise a fishing
steamer the "Belle and Hattie," appeared on
the scene from Portsmouth, & the Captain
gave them the name & history of the vessel
& told how he had sighted the signals of the
drowning men early the morning before and
had taken them off in safety -- It is curious
how ill luck seems to dog a vessel when
once it begins. The Birkmyre ^left^ Gonaives on
the 12th of January and was twenty-three
days making the south channel, then the
wind began to head them off & they had to

turn about. When they arrived off Cape

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Sable* the vessel was so clogged with ice that they were obliged to run to the northern edge of the gulf to thaw out, and their provisions being short, they hoped to fall in with a vessel -- This however they did not do, and after the ice had thawed, they headed for the coast, taking the north channel. The Capt^{ain} could not make an observation ~~for~~ for two days, when instead of being in Boston bay as he supposed, he found himself off Cape Elizabeth in freezing weather with the wind blowing heavily. He turned around and ran south again to thaw out, and ^{while} going south found it necessary to throw off the deck load, the vessel being laden with ice and in great danger of sinking. They kept sailing south till the vessel thawed out again. On this trip the sea was running heavily and the wind strong, the sails and fore boom and gaff were carried away -- As soon as he had repaired damages the Capt steered for the coast of Nova

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Scotia. While on this course, provisions ran short, the crew had nothing to eat except some old codfish and spoiled barley; during the last week they had no water; and they became severely frost-bitten. The vessel arrived at Shelburne, Nova Scotia, on the 29th of February, in great distress. She lay in Shelburne till the 22nd of March when they again started for Boston. While sailing down the coast everything went well until the 24th when the thick snow storm arose, & at eleven oclock they sighted Duck island and in attempting to clear it, missed [stays?] twice, and finding all attempts to save the vessel useless strove only to save themselves. When she struck, the unfortunate Captain cried:

"Boys we must die here! If I have
injured any man, may God forgive me

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for it." Poor fellow, in a few minutes
he was knocked from the fore-rigging
overboard and drowned. Shortly after
she struck, the top of the mainmast broke,
and afterwards ^the rest of it^ down to the deck. When
the foremast broke it split [*deleted word*] ^the vessel^ open
forward, the bowsprit dropped into the
water, and William [Coward/Conroad?], who was
on it at the time, was lost. The ^schooner^ [*deleted word*]
righted after the foremast went by the
board, and fell with her starboard bow
on the island, so that the rest of the crew
managed to get off on to the rocks --
where they remained in great distress
till [taken *corrected*] off by the fishing steamer on
the morning of the 25th.

So the wreck was left on the lonely
ledge, slowly breaking up. Shy sea birds
wheeled about her, eying her with curious
And suspicious glances, and every quiet
day the handful of human beings inhabiting
the Shoals hurried in their dories to the spot

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to gather her freight of costly logwood,
her ropes and sails & rigging and val-
uable timbers, enriching their poverty with her misfortune.

[*Break inserted by Jewett. See note.*]

A few <native born> Shoalers
were still left on Star island <at this time> and upon
the southern edge of Appledore ^lived the Ingebertsens^ a family
of Norwegians ~~lived~~, and upon Smutty-
nose still another ^family of the Norsemen^. The husband and father
of this family, Axel, ^for most of his life a sailor[^,} had found his way to
the Shoals and entered our service several
years before, leaving his ~~family~~ ^wife and children^ in Norway for
Norway was growing too poor to keep her
people, and it was necessary that he should

go away to earn bread for his family ^{^flock^} &
send them the means of living from a distance
of thousands of miles. ^{^At home meantime^} [the *corrected*] wife and six
children strove patiently with want and
sorrow. Lars the elder son, worked in a
telegraph office and kept them from
actual starvation, and [*Hjelma corrected*], the

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elder girl, was out at service, but
all the two would earn was little enough
for the support of seven ~~people~~ ^{^persons^}. Often
the children fainted from hunger and the
mother looked despair in the face till
the shadow it cast upon her grew per-
manent and never to be lifted by any
after joy. But after Axel was settled
here, ^{^the aspect of^} things grew a little brighter for them,
& he was able to send them money from
time to time. I noticed how this taciturn
foreigner strove to please his employers,
wrestling desperately with the difficulties
of the new language, striving with pathetic
& unflagging persistence to fulfill all and
more than was expected of him, going through
his days like a machine, steady, silent, alert,
energetic, never showing signs of fatigue or
impatience under any circumstances.
The one eager, absorbing purpose of his

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life was to ~~bring~~ ^{^earn^} enough to bring his
flock across the sea and make a
home for them here. He was a strong,
broad, thickset man, blue-eyed like most
of his ~~race~~ ^{^race^} and with the gentle manners
most of the Norwegians bring with them
from that far country. None of us
ever passed him without his lifting his
cap so high that heaven was visible
between it and his head. One night
at sunset returning from a ramble
over the rocks, I met him hurriedly
making his way to the Ingebertsen's
cottage. And I saw that the mysterious

and reticent creature [wore *corrected*] an aspect of almost wild agitation. "What is the matter with Axel tonight^?^" I said as I joined the family circle, "I met him looking so moved amd strange." "They have news from Norway at

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Ingebertsen's today," was the reply -- "Probably he expects to learn something from his family" --

At last the time came when he could send them the money for their journey. & he kmew they had started and were on their way to America. And one day in September they arrived, with all their earthly possessions in the compass of two small wooden boxes -- Unable to speak a word of English, through endless tribulations they had ^finally^ found their way ~~at last~~ to this lonely spot, and here at last their troubles were to end. I saw them disembark, the weary mother, the stout son carrying a baby girl of four years, <(=as radiant as the morning, a daughter whom her father had never seen<=)>, and little Nils trotted along with his three

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yellow-haired sisters -- Axel was at work in the engine-room at the back of the ^great^ house, unconscious of their arrival. A friendly country-man piloted the pathetic little troop to their place, and into his presence suddenly rushed all he held most dear on earth, after four years of separation. What joy, what tears, what speechless emotion! But scarcely would he give himself time for joy, with stern heroism he sent them all over to Ingebertsen's cottage and kept at his work till six oclock, the regular time for leaving off. Then I saw him flying across the hill like a distracted

man and I rejoiced to think of all the delight awaiting him.

His wife & the children were at once made comfortable in one of the empty houses at the next island, Smutty-nose{,}

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Lars taking his father's place as head of the family, Axel remaining here and spending his Sundays with them. Soon his two eldest daughters were taken into service here, and they made a very charming addition to the family -- "Sweet are the uses of adversity,"* and if their sorrows had given them a gravity beyond their years, they had gained a gentleness, a patience and sweetness of disposition most beautiful to witness -- Their lovely manners were most attractive & we soon grew really attached to them. Both had the Norse characteristics of coloring and features, handsome blond braided hair and fair complexions. Hjelma, the eldest, became at once a power in the house, she was so conscientious, steady, and responsible, with a

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capacity for persistent hard work inherited from her father. The feminine inhabitants of Norway seem to have a positive genius for the use of the scrubbing brush -- They scour and sweep and dust and polish all the available household furniture and the house itself till it really seems as if there might be danger of ^the^ disappearance of all earthly things from their force of attrition -- We found it necessary to check this indomitable little creature's career of hard labor, and strive to save her from going beyond her strength continually -- And she never

took advantage of the kindness shown her,
but was ever alert, wise, sweet and
quiet, ready for anything at an
instant's notice. Both sisters learned to
speak English very soon in the most

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bewitching manner --

Lars, their elder brother, a fine, tall fellow
with ruddy color and strong white teeth,
tried hard to content himself in his enforced
exile, working at fishing when the
weather permitted and taking kind care
of his mother & younger sisters and little
Nils, a charming boy of six -- The first
year, novelty and a sense of the respon-
sibility of the situation made it endura-
ble for him, but the next, all the
strength and fiery energy of youth
made life intolerable to him in that
empty wilderness of desolation: there
were times when he wept and gnashed
his teeth with fruitless wrath and
sorrow that he could not go out into the
world and fight to make a place for
himself among his fellows.

"God help me! Save I take my part

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Of danger on the stormy sea,
A devil rises in my heart
That's worse than any death to me," --*

I thought, applying Tennyson's lines to the
situation when his sisters spoke of it in
my presence. And I was so sorry for
the brave, bold youth!

When the schooner was wrecked,
There was unexpected material on
which Lars might expend some of his superfluous
energy -- It was a godsend to all the
poor islanders. They haunted the ledge

whereon she lay early and late whenever
the sea was sufficiently quiet, and gathered
enough wood to last each family a year; ^&^ ropes
and iron and the long, misshapen, richly-
colored sticks of logwood which were* very
valuable to sell again. They speared
these with a long harpoon as they lay
in the clear water scattered about the
coast of the island. At noon one day

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Jörgen, one {of} the Ingebertsen boys,
came running over from their cottage
and standing cap in hand on the
threshold of our door, said, "Please,
would you like to send a mail?
Father has speared a dead man ^among the logwood^ and
is going to carry him to Portsmouth."
So the mail and the dead man went
together. It was William [Coward/Conroad?], who
was lost off the bowsprit when the
Birkmyre struck.

One gray and colorless day all the
poor people were at work about the wreck
as usual. The few Shoalers & the In-
gebertsens had gone down to Duck island
in their whaleboats, & Lars and Nils
in their little wherry: they all looked till
nearly nightfall when we saw their
sails fluttering past the eastern cove in
view from one leaf-screened windows,

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returning home. Hardly could they have
gained their homes when the air suddenly
became thick with snow and the wind
rose, threatening from the south east --
In an instant everything was hidden
from sight, and a tumult of snow
grew every moment louder and deeper.
I went out ~~on~~ to the western piazza;
the heads of the house and two men servants
were standing there in a group together,
looking eagerly forward into the stormy

twilight. At once I noticed Axel's expression of miserable anxiety.

"What is it?" I cried.

"It can do no good and they might as well be spared. Lars and Nils are caught and carried off and we're afraid there's no hope for them. Lars didn't keep her close enough to the wind, he doesn't know how to manage a boat very well, and the gale took them and we're afraid it's

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all over with them!

The words struck me with heavier chill than did the wintry blast which fiercely assailed me. Nothing was visible except the ghastly tumult of snow and spray. It was of no use striving to pierce that hopeless veil behind which heaven only knew what was taking place. Nothing could be done -- Axel walked up and down in speechless anxiety. The only thing he could do was to go home to his wife and cheer her as best he could, the next island being so near that [*deleted words*] ^it was possible for him^ to [*deleted letter*] cross the narrow channel ~~without~~ danger. So he departed though the storm & we returned to the large bright room putting on a cheerful aspect we were far from feeling, to save the rest of

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the family from unavailing distress. The two sisters, Hjelma and Ingeborg, moved lightly hither and thither, laying the table for supper, and lighting the lamps and otherwise busying themselves, ~~every~~ now and then singing in a soft undertone snatches of their sweet Norwegian songs. Ingeborg was taller and slighter than her sister, with slower movements and graver expression.

"Meek the full lips and mild the luminous eyes"*
I said to myself as I watched her quietly
passing to and fro. Both wore an expression
of serenity and content which was inex-
pressibly touching when I thought what their
distraction of grief would be could they
know the peril of the two brothers they
loved so dearly --

Supper was served. Hjelma stood

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by her mistress' chair waiting on
her. A pretty, quaint little picture
she made. The knot of lilac ribbon
tied below the neat ruffle of muslin she
wore round her neck, brought out
the gold glint in her hair and
heightened the soft, fugitive rose in
her round cheek. Most pleasant was
she to look upon -- A sudden roar
and rattle sounded above, it seemed
mingled with wild shrill voices:
"What is that, Hjelma?" her mistress
cried, looking up in apprehension.

"'Tis the squall, Ma'am," answered
the little maid, gently, "don't you hear
how it shakes your chamber windows!
O isn't it lucky Lars and Nils got
in before the storm came down!"

I turned my eyes away from her:
Alas, that moment Lars and Nils

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were tossing in their cockle shell of
a boat in hopeless bewilderment,
Lars striving to keep the boat from
swamping in the long swift billows,
and the little fellow* trying with all
his might to bail out the water which
was flung continually over the
gunwale. But the poor child soon

succumbed to weariness and cold, the fatal & resistless drowsiness overpowered him and Lars had all he could do at the helm to keep the boat steady & to prevent his little <^young ^> brother from sinking into the sleep of death. "Heavens!" I heard Hjelma cry under her breath at a louder explosion than usual of the mighty artillery of the storm, as the breakers charged up the eastern shore. And I wondered

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if the little skiff were lying shattered on some lonely beach of the distant west, or if it had veered off into the vast turbulent spaces of water down the grey terrible slope of the world, reeling to its destruction -- It was hard to keep a cheerful face with so many dreadful thoughts and I was glad when bed time came -- "I wonder why father has gone home tonight," I heard one sister saying to the other. (For he only went home on Saturday nights usually, to spend Sunday --) "Can any thing be the matter?" And the two golden heads turned a little anxiously toward each other. Not much sleep could there have been for poor Axel and his wife through

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the hours of that long, dark, wretched night!* Next morning rose blue and still and clear, a foretaste of the coming peace of summer. Very cold it was still, but the sea gleamed with a more tender azure, and the coastline had shrunk back into its legitimate proportions, and best of all, no wind blew from any point of the compass. The ocean was still restless when it met the rocks,

though calm beyond, and there was a delicate crash of crystal water through the icy air where the light breakers girdled the islands. All this I perceived standing alone on the wide piazza, and I also saw what I came to find, namely Axel. He was in the cove which the ebbing tide had left empty, caulking

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the seams of one of the yachts as she lay on her side, high and dry. I called to him -- "Axel, is there any news?" He turned to me his weather-beaten sorrowful face and eyes blinded by tears, and shook his head, for he could not speak. And he patiently went on with his work in the shadow of the black hull of the stranded vessel. The sun shown clear and peacefully upon the picture, the smiling waves played gently, dancing in the light --

"For men must work and women must weep
Though storms be sudden and waters deep"*

I thought, and the sadness of my meditations was unspeakable.

At breakfast Hjelma and Ingeborg waited on me, fresh as the morning, [*deleted word*] ^bright^ as the "dawn which skimmed the sea with flying feet", * serene and

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utterly unconscious of any sorrow near.

There was but one hope for the missing lads; that Lars had been able, perhaps, to make Portsmouth harbor, for the gale had blown in that direction. In this case he would appear, if not on the ^early^ morning's ebb of the tide, then at noon on the

second change -- He could not sail down the three miles of the Piscataqua river between Portsmouth and the sea, except on the ebb of the tide. But we scanned in vain [*deleted comma*] the span of water within the ring of the wide horizon, every few minutes the whole morning.

Before noon a fishing yacht came sailing gaily out from the town. With eager haste Axel pushed off a little boat, & rowing out to her as she passed by, tremblingly asked, "Had they seen his

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sons? They were blown off the night before: had they reached Portsmouth? Could they tell him?" The fishermen answered him with rough pity. "No, nothing had been seen of them -- They surely would have been seen had they reached Portsmouth." ~~Axel~~ He rowed back in complete despair and weeping bitterly, he cried, "They are gone, they are gone!" Both his handsome boys at once! It was almost too much to bear -- A few hours more of misery for the poor fellow, and then some one discerned a tiny sail emerging from betwixt the light houses of the far off harbor -- Very slowly it crept over the surface of the sea, all our eyes watching it with breathless intensity & steered straight for the Shoals; very soon we were convinced it was the

36 [*corrected from 35*]

missing boat. Poor Axel rowed off to meet them in a transport of joy and I went in to tell the "other women" all about it. Great was the excitement. Hjelma broke into passionate weeping, though the danger was all over, hut Ingeborg turned away her face head that I might not see

her face, and was silent --

Lars had more wisdom than one gave him credit for, & knew at once his only hope was to run before the wind for Portsmouth harbor, which he reached at last in safety through the blinding darkness. Little Nils was unconscious ^when the boat touched the shore,^ and he carried him to the house of a country man, John Houtvet,* who welcomed them kindly, & the poor child soon revived under comforting warmth and care. Then the storm-tossed voyagers slept and next day came "back from the jaws of death" to the anxious hearts that mourned them as lost.

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< III >

This spring of the year 1876 has been most particularly disastrous on the coast of New England. The Shoals & all the coasts within reach ^sight^ of them have been strewn with wrecks and many men have gone down to death within reach of helping hands that longed but were powerless to save -- Again on Saturday March 25th, as on the year before at the same time, a heavy easterly snow-storm set in about as at night -- In the morning the gale abated & the snow ceased, but a fog as thick as wool had settled over the world -- At eight o'clock the wind fell almost to a dead calm but the roused breakers continued to roll in and burst in shattered thunder against cliff & reef the whole day long. I sought among the dank, torn drift-[filed?] beaches for the delicate crimson seaweeds that are often uprooted & cast up by the waves. The sound of the water was deafening, dazing: it was as if a huge hollow shell were held at either ear & the vast, resounding, echoing, dreamy murmur seemed to shut out all reality of existence. Along the shore the shining brown kelps lay knotted together, twisted in long sinuous masses, contorted like writhing monsters & where the spent waves reached & crept beneath these

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solid-woven, dull green heaps, they stirred with a stealthy motion till they seemed to live and breathe -- Knots and tangles of ropes were bound among them, [the?] spoil of some poor fisherman's broken trawls; long white fingers of delicate sponge were scattered everywhere, logs & planks, bolts & iron, pieces of wreck, & shells & stones, & brightening all the beach, the red, feathery moss, *Ptilota plumosa*, glowed, with here & there a sea-rose, half flower, half oyster, with red fringed stem. But no sea rose was ruddy-bright enough to gladden that suggestive desolation & I turned away from the roaring sea & sought to forget the wild work I knew the storm must have done the night before. The day crept on, growing warmer & calmer; in the afternoon a drowsy yellow light suffused the fog & overhead the sky lightened with promise of fair weather. At five oclock one of our men perceived freshly broken wood floating into one of the sheltered coves, pushed off a boat & presently loaded her with fragments of wreck, seamen's clothing, bedding, large <round> round* mast [hoops?] & beside these several loose leaves torn from a vessels logbook, which were brought to me -- They were merely part of a record

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of a voyage taken last August from Annapolis N.S. to Barbados, W.I.,* but I read with melancholy interest from the torn & blotted, brine soaked leaves the words set down. "Friday, Aug. 20th 1875 -- Harsh S.W. gales & rough seas -- saw a schooner steering S. Westerly. 2 P.M.. Moderating -- passed a number of fishermen at anchor off Georges banks. 8 P.M Heavy cross seas, vessel laboring heavily, sky overcast -- [Frid?] night -- thick fog -- light breeze -- 4 A.M. set fore-top-gallant sail & light sails -- Later, fresh breezes & clear weather -- Pumps carefully attended to. -- 1 point west variation allowed" - - & so on day after day -- One day, "Light airs & calm weather throughout this twenty-four hours -- People variously employed -- Found by O.B.S.* a current setting E. by N this 24 hours 15 miles -- 1 point west variation allowed." &c. Alas, this ship should mind no longer wind or current or command of

any Captain more! About us the fog lifting
presently, discovered her wrecked utterly – hopelessly
upon a ~~little~~ low island called Londoners lying
a little to our left. Some of our people rowed

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to the scene of the disaster already occupied
by the Star islanders who being nearer had per-
ceived the wreck first -- I watched the men
push off and row away, a difficult & dangerous
process on account of the breakers about the rocks.
But the [mid?] sea, spite of a long swell, was
smooth as glass & the ^low^ sun burned with intense
gold in floods over the face of the world --
Upon the sea & coast & islands strips of soft
mist yet lay, but above, the sky was crystal
clear, pale, tranquil green, & in it floated
a few light clouds of ^most^ vividest scarlet & ~~such~~
such peace possessed the earth it seemed impos-
sible death could have been ^close by^ so violently busy
a few short hours before. How sweetly the small
brown birds sang, sitting on rock & bush, & pour-
ing their blissful song out on the peaceful air!
Our men came back to tell us it was the brig
Asa Porter, forty days out from London for
<?> Liverpool <N.S.>, which was lost utterly on Londoners,
all her crew drowned but one man, the mate,
who escaped by a miracle. All that fearful
night the vessel had driven before the storm – at

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eight oclock in the morning had struck in the
fog on a reef just under the light house, carry-
ing away her stern posts & rudder, which rendered
her at once helpless. Five men were drowned
there & on she rolled to Londoners where three
more men were lost & she was thrown high
& dry on the rough shore. Of all her men only
the mate was saved to tell the tale. A day or
Two after I went over to look at the [*deleted word*] ^wreck.^
Never had I so realized the power of the sea.
The great hull was crushed like an egg shell
broken in two, the forward half set up on its
broken base with the shattered bowsprit pointing

to the zenith as if protesting to heaven against
a fate so cruel & uncalled for. The tall, stout
masts snapped like pipe stems, the huge beams
likewise, the broken ends frayed like broom
straw, the heavy iron bolts twisted, bent like
leaden wire, & the broad thick sails torn into
bits as large as a lady's handkerchief, [*deleted word*]
[*deleted words*] fluttering from every point of
the vessel's bristling desolation, strewing

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the whole shore, beaten into pulp for the
paper mill -- Seamen's clothes strewed the beach
also, ^all torn to rags^; ~~from~~ ^in^ a little pool <lay> a vest <waist coat> with grey
horn
buttons lay.* They <These buttons> looked up at me through the
water like so many dead eyes & made me
shudder to think eight men were lying
drowned close by. Ropes lay twisted into
inextricable knots, anchors, cables, stools &
furniture broken into fragments, the bits of ^a^ com-
pass here & there, & sections of ^the^ brass-ornamented
wheel, -- in short the whole ghastly parapher-
nalia of destruction scattered far & wide -- What
did it mean, I thought, as I scanned the wild,
sad scene, the great broken body of ^the^ strong
young brig (for she was only three years old)
bristling with splinted timbers, her blackened,
broken shrouds trailing forlornly over her, while
beyond her the slow, sullen breakers every now &
then rolled to where she lay with a roar like a
malediction. Coming back to our own island
we crossed a tiny skiff wherein a man was
drawing lobster traps, & as I sought his dark
weather-beaten face I was struck with its hard,

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sad, hopeless look & fell to pondering there-
upon. To dwellers by the sea anxiety & sorrow
seem most especially to belong, for they live
under the shadow of an element of tragedy which
is proven imminent & of which they never can
cease to be conscious. Fishermen & especially
their wives, & indeed most sea-faring people,
wear an expression which is unmistakable,

a look, sometimes beneath the surface, but none the less apparent to accustomed eyes, a look [sown or worn?] into the substance of their being, of apprehension, of uncertainty, as if all the issues of life were continually at stake, as indeed they are, and as if with them more than with others it were probable that at any moment a blow might descend which should devastate existence for them.

“Well roars the storm to those that have
A deeper voice across the storm” – *
Glorious indeed are the ears that hear that
voice & divine the faith that lifts men
above the infinite pain of life. But when

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I study these worn, weather-beaten faces, if I do not find them hard with recklessness, it seems to me that simple endurance is the key note of existence with most of these patient & long tried souls. There is no flicker of light or hope when once their youth is passed. Well, patience is a grand thing, it is much if that is left them where withal to wrestle with their “sea-sorrow”. As I look out this evening of early spring on the cold & ashen sea, its pallid monotony unbroken to the [*deleted words*] far, faintly-flushed horizon, still stained with the sorrowful purple of dying day, I rejoice for them that, at least for this season, the winter weariness is nearly at an end, & the bliss of sweet color & melodious sound & gracious warmth so near. No longer shall the mighty blasts rend & rip their ice clad canvas, but

“Winds of all the corners kiss their sails
To make them nimble”*

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And Nature will caress whom she has hurt before. For May is near, when “the breaker breaking on the beach”* will roll in mellow music, & the sandpipers delicious note thrill

the enchanted silence of soft twilights; when
sunset will no longer sadden the waiting
world with chilly color, but will blush
divinely over sky & sea,
"A rosy warmth from marge to marge".*

Celia Thaxter*

Notes for Sea Sorrow

Page 1

Tempest: The opening bracket represents a partial bracket inserted by Thaxter. She quotes from William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* Act 1, Scene 2.

air: Having tried to locate this passage without success, we suspect Thaxter composed it. See for example her poems, "Wherefore?" in *Poems of Celia Thaxter* (1896), and in *Drift-Weed* (1878), "Heart's-Ease" and "Submission." None of these three uses the same stanza form as this quotation, but each has similar themes & vocabulary.

Page 2

Browning's lines: "Under the Cliff" by Robert Browning.

Page 3

drew: Above this word is a penciled "a" that appears to be deleted, suggesting that Jewett considered changing this to "draw."

wave: Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "Maud" Part 1, Section 3.

Birkmyre: See *Letters of Celia Thaxter*, To Anna Eichberg. Shoals, March 26, 1875. There the schooner is said to be from Goniss, Hayti, but this ms. is correct. To the right is a news report of this wreck from the *Boston Evening Transcript*,

NEW HAMPSHIRE.

Further particulars of the loss of the schooner Birkmyre, at Duck Island, are given in a special of the Advertiser. She went to pieces half an hour after she struck, and Captain Kings, who was standing in the fore-rigging, and a sailor named Bradley, on the bowsprit, were carried over with the spars, and were seen no more. Mr. England, one of the owners, and the other survivors, clumbed on the rocks at Duck Island, and were exposed to the sea and storm all night, the waves often coming knee deep and several times lifting them off their feet. The fishing steamer Belle and Hattie, Captain Jackson, brought the survivors to Portsmouth. The vessel was detained in the ice floes, in Boston Bay, twenty-two days, and was obliged to put into Shelburne, N. S., for repairs, leaving there on the 22d on account of the prevalence of a thick snow storm. Captain Kings was unable to make the land until too late to alter his course. The Birkmyre was owned in Miramichi, N. B., was of 161 tons burthen and was one year old. She was valued at \$6500 and was insured for \$4000. She was loaded with logwood, and had lost a deck load several days before, and the vessel and cargo are now a total loss, and the crew lose all their clothing, etc. The cargo was valued at \$15,600, and was consigned to Messrs. A. S. & W. G. Lewis & Co. of Boston.

Friday 26 March 1875, p. 8. Note that Thaxter & the reporter differ on the captain's name.

Page 7

blossom: Jewett appears to have penciled an "s" at the end, to make this "blossoms."

Page 8

spine: Tennyson, "The Shell."

Page 10

buried sun: Tennyson, *In Memoriam* 121.

Page 11

a: Deleted in pencil.

to the eyes: Tennyson, "Tears, Idle Tears."

of it: There are a rough penciled line between these paragraphs and several unrecognized marks in the left margin, perhaps indicating an intention to merge the two.

Page 12

lip of hate: Browning, *Paracelsus*.

life: There are here a penciled line between this and the next sentence and a paragraph mark in the left margin.

Page 13

Cape Sable: Nova Scotia.

Page 16

Break inserted by Jewett: Jewett has indicated in pencil that this will be the end of a section. Two paragraph marks emphasize that the next sentence will begin a new paragraph, and in the left margin is the Roman numeral II, indicating the beginning of a new section of the piece.

Page 21

adversity: Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, Act 2; Scene 1.

Page 24

death to me: Tennyson, "The Sailor Boy."

were: This word appears to be deleted, presumably unintentionally.

Page 28

luminous eyes: Thaxter paraphrases from part 7 of Tennyson's "The Princess":

Pale was the perfect face;
The bosom with long sighs laboured; and meek
Seemed the full lips, and mild the luminous eyes,...

Page 30

little fellow: This is what Thaxter wrote. Jewett's pencil has deleted "fellow" and inserted "brother" and then thought better of it, deleting "brother." "Stet." is noted in the left margin next to this line.

Page 32

night: Jewett has indicated that a new paragraph should begin after "night."

Page 33

waters weep: Thaxter quotes from Charles Kingsley, "The Three Fishers" (1851).

flying feet: Thaxter paraphrases from the first stanza of Algernon C. Swinburne, "A Lost Vigil" (1867):

"Dawn skims the sea with flying feet of gold."

Page 36

John Houtvet: Norwegian immigrant John Houtvet is remembered as the man who in 1873 lost two of his family members in the Smutty Nose murders at Isles of the Shoals. Celia Thaxter published an account of the event, titled "A Memorable Murder," in *Atlantic Monthly* in May 1875. Library of America reprinted it in its volume *True Crime: An American Anthology* (2008), pp. 131-155.

Page 38

round: It appears that Jewett found Thaxter's handwriting difficult at this point and penciled in what Thaxter probably has written.

Page 39

N.S. ... W.I.: Nova Scotia and West Indies.

O.B.S.: The meaning of these initials has not yet been discovered.

Page 40

Asa Porter: Wrecksite, (www.wrecksite.eu/wreck.aspx?264585), says that the SV Asa Porter ran aground on 26 March 1876, with Captain Johnson and a crew of 7. Thaxter describes this wreck in three letters, one to Annie Adams Fields and two to Anna Eickberg, in *Letters of Celia Thaxter*.

26 March 1876 to Annie Adams Fields, pp. 73-4

Sunday. Oh, Annie, this morning a brig went ashore on White Island ledge in the fog, at eight o'clock. The breakers tore off her stern and drowned five men there, then tossed the vessel upon Londoners', close by us, and drowned three more. Only one man escaped to tell the tale, and he says he knows not how he saved his life; he found himself on shore, banged and bruised, all his mates gone and the great brig a heap of bristling ruins, broken in half, high and dry on the iron rocks. There is a little deserted hut on the island, and he made his way to that, found a stove and fuel within and kindled a fire there. The smoke of this fire was seen soon as the fog lifted, but the vessel was so smashed to pieces it wasn't visible from a distance. Part of the vessel's log drifted to our island, a couple of loose pages; and a huge round hoop, one of those which hold a sail to a mast. I cannot describe to you how dreadfully we feel about it, so near us! That one survivor is at Star Island; how he must feel to- night! The leaves of the log-book were records of days last August, on a voyage from Annapolis, N. B. [*corrected to N.S. for Nova Scotia in the sketch*], to Barbadoes. All sorts of things drift ashore. I am afraid of the beaches. Eight men are lying drowned about these remorseless rocks. Poor mother is so distressed with it all! The storm was so tremendous in the night she could hardly sleep at all. I never heard a more frightful tumult. It seemed as if we must be thrust off into the sea with the might of the wind.

26 March 1876 to Anna Eichberg, pp. 75-6

You remember Londoners' Island, where you and I went for morning glories? where your papa pursued the pensive perch on summer afternoons? Alas, how can I stop to think of jests! A brig lies there smashed to atoms, eight men drowned, but one alive to tell the tale, of all the crew. She struck this morning at

eight o'clock, in broad daylight (but there was a thick fog), on the outlying rocks of White Island; a breaker carried off part of her stern and drowned five of her crew! Then she rolled and wallowed to Londoners' and went ashore there on the western slope of the beach, where the tender green morning- glory vines and rosy blossoms blow gently in the summer time, as you and I found them, don't you remember? -- like a soft, green cascade down the beach. There the brig was tossed and smashed in two, the two halves lying jammed together on end. There three more men were drowned. Think of the force of the sea that could use the huge hull of a vessel like a child's toy! The mate alone escaped: he says he knows not how he did it, but he found himself lying bruised and aching there on the beach, the brig a mass of bristling timbers, sails torn to ribbons and rags, masts entirely vanished, his mates all drowned. He crept up to that little house, you know, now deserted, and found there a stove and fuel and he lit a fire. It was the smoke of this fire which was seen when the fog lifted in the afternoon, and the people from Star went over to Londoners '. We did not know anything of it till nearly sunset, for the fog lingered low and the wreck is such a heap of ruins as hardly to be visible from afar. Part of her log, a few loose sheets, drifted over here, and one of the great wooden rings that held her sails to the masts. The storm was beyond description frightful last night. Such a month of March as this I have never known.

28 March 1876 to Anna Eichberg pp. 76-8

Dear child, I have been over to see the wreck! My brother Cedric rowed me over to Londoners ' this afternoon. It was perfectly still and bright. The huge vessel lay on the western side of the beach, not far from our morning-glory garden. Oh, such a sight! Crushed like an eggshell, broken in two, with the forward half standing upright and pointing to heaven with its splintered timbers. Her huge beams were snapped like sticks of macaroni, and frayed at the ends like crossway ravelings; such a total and gigantic destruction is not to be described. Her sails strewed the whole beach in tatters not larger than a handkerchief, and the whole island seemed to have been the scene of some giant's preparations for kindling his kitchen fire, one heap of splintered fragments. When we landed, my eyes swept the distracted beach with keen inquiry. Eight dead men are lying about the ledges: everywhere I feared to see a ghastly face, a hand, a foot, beneath the water or upon the shore. Cables, chains, ropes, rigging, anchors, ruins of all sorts, were half buried in the rough beach.... One thick gray vest lay in a pool, and stared up at me with ghastly white horn buttons, like dead eyes. Iron bolts four feet long were curved and twisted like leaden hairpins; the heaviest timbers smashed, broken into squares. I never imagined anything like it. I brought home a bit of the tremendous thick, stout sails. I saw a single perch dragged from the deepest deeps and flung high and dry to die in a dry agony, all black and scarlet. No perch yet dare to haunt the shores within reach of man, but next month they will make their appearance, coming in from deep water. ...

[from "March 30, Thursday]
Did I tell you? the brig was forty days out from Liverpool to Boston, loaded with salt.

Page 42

vest ... lay: These two words are deleted with pencil; Jewett has penciled in "waistcoat" and placed "lay" before "a vest."

Page 43

the storm: Tennyson, *In Memoriam* 127.

Page 44

nimble: Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, Act 2, Scene 4.

"And winds of all the corners kiss'd your sails, to make your vessel nimble."

Page 45

beach: Tennyson, *In Memoriam* 71.

marge: Tennyson, *In Memoriam* 46.

Thaxter: Thaxter's signature is deleted in pencil.