

Except always John-Joe,  
My French Indian Esquimaux,  
And he's off setting traps,  
In one himself perhaps.

Give a head shake  
Over so much bay  
Thrown away  
In snow and mist  
That doesn't exist,  
I was going to say,  
For God, man or beast's sake,  
Yet does perhaps for all three.

Don't ask Joe  
What it is to him.  
It's sometimes dim  
What it is to me,  
Unless it be  
It's the old captain's dark fate  
Who failed to find or force a strait  
In its two-thousand-mile coast;  
And his crew left him where he failed,  
And nothing came of all he sailed.

It's to say, "You and I"  
To such a ghost,  
"You and I  
Off here  
With the dead race of the Great Auk\*\*!"  
And, "Better defeat almost,  
If seen clear  
Than life's victories of doubt  
That need endless talk talk  
To make them out."

1923 "New Hampshire".