

the bellman's speech
the bellman himself they all praised to the skies—
such a carriage, such ease and such grace!
such solemnity, too! one could see he was wise,
the moment one looked in his face!
he had bought a large map representing the sea,
without the least vestige of land:
and the crew were much pleased when they found it to be
a map they could all understand.
"what's the good of mercator's north poles and equators,
tropics, zones, and meridian lines?"
so the bellman would cry: and the crew would reply
"they are merely conventional signs!"
"other maps are such shapes, with their islands and capes!
but we've got our brave captain to thank:"
(so the crew would protest) "that he's brought us the best—
a perfect and absolute blank!"
this was charming, no doubt; but they shortly found out
that the captain they trusted so well
had only one notion for crossing the ocean,
and that was to tingle his bell.
he was thoughtful and grave—but the orders he gave
were enough to bewilder a crew.
when he cried "steer to starboard, but keep her head larboard!"
what on earth was the helmsman to do?
then the bowsprit got mixed with the rudders sometimes:
a thing, as the bellman remarked,
that frequently happens in tropical climes,
when a vessel is, so to speak, "snarked."
but the principal failing occurred in the sailing,
and the bellman, perplexed and distressed,
said he had hoped, at least, when the wind blew due east,
that the ship would not travel due west!
but the danger was past—they had landed at last,
with their boxes, portmanteaus, and bags:
yet at first sight the crew were not pleased with the view,
which consisted of chasms and crags.
the bellman perceived that their spirits were low,
and repeated in musical tone
some jokes he had kept for a season of woe—
but the crew would do nothing but groan.
he served out some grog with a liberal hand,
and bad them sit down on the beach:
and they could not but own that their captain looked grand,
as he stood and delivered his speech.
"friends, romans, and countrymen, lend me your ears!"
(they were all of them fond of quotations:
so they drank to his health, and they gave him three cheers,
while he served out additional rations).
"we have sailed many months, we have sailed many weeks,
(four weeks to the month you may mark),
but never as yet ('tis your captain who speaks)
have we caught the least glimpse of a snark!"
"we have sailed many weeks, we have sailed many days,

(sevendaystotheweekiallow),
butasnark,onthewhichwemightlovinglygaze,
wehaveneverbeheldtillnow!
"come,listen,mymen,whileitellyouagain
thefiveunmistakablemarks
bywhichyoumayknow,wheresoeveryougo,
thewarrantedgenuinesnarks.
"letustaketheminorder.thefirstisthetaste,
whichismeagreandhollow,butcrisp:
likeacoatthatisrathertootightinthewaist,
withaflavourofwill-o'-the-wisp.
"itshabitogettinguplateyou'llagree
thatitcarriestoofar,whenisay
thatitfrequentlybreakfastsatfive-o'clocktea,
anddinesonthefollowingday.
"thethirdisitsslownessintakingajest.
shouldyouhappentoventureonone,
itwillsighlikeathingthat isdeeplydistressed:
anditalwayslooksgraveatapun.
"thefourthisitsfondnessforbathing-machines,
whichisconstantlycarriesabout,
andbelievesthattheyaddtothebeautyofscenes—
asentimentopentodoubt.
"thefifthisambition.itnextwillberight
todescribetheeachparticularbatch:
distinguishingthosethathavefeathers,andbite,
andthosethathavewhiskers,andscratch.
"for,althoughcommonsarksdonomannerofharm,
yet,ifeelitmydutyto say,
someareboojums—"thebellmanbrokeoffinalarm,
forthebakerhadfaintedaway.