

**Columbus** by Joaquin Miller

Behind him lay the gray Azores,  
Behind him the gates of Hercules;  
Before him not the ghost of shores,  
Before him only shoreless seas.  
The good mate said: "Now must we pray,  
For lo! the very stars are gone.  
Brave Admiral, speak; what shall I say?"  
"Why, say: 'Sail on! sail on! and on!'"

"My men grow mutinous day by day;  
My men grow ghastly wan and weak,"  
The stout mate thought of home; a spray  
Of salt wave washed his swarthy cheek.  
"What shall I say, brave Admiral, say,  
If we sight naught but seas at dawn?"  
"Why, you shall say, at break of day,  
'Sail on! sail on! sail on! and on!'"

They sailed and sailed as winds might blow,  
Until at last the blanched mate said:  
"Why, now not even God would know  
Should I and all my men fall dead.  
These very winds forget their way,  
For God from these dread seas is gone.  
Now speak, brave Admiral, speak and say—"  
He said: "Sail on! sail on! and on!"

They sailed. They sailed. Then spake the mate:  
"This mad sea shows his teeth to-night.  
He curls his lip, he lies in wait,  
With lifted teeth, as if to bite!  
Brave Admiral, say but one good word:  
What shall we do when hope is gone?"  
The words leapt as a leaping sword:  
"Sail on! sail on! sail on! and on!"

Then, pale and worn, he kept his deck,  
And peered through darkness. Ah, that night  
Of all dark nights! And then a speck--  
A light! a light! a light! a light!  
It grew, a starlit flag unfurled!  
It grew to be Time's burst of dawn.  
He gained a world; he gave that world  
Its greatest lesson: "On! sail on!"

