Excerpt of poem by Celia Laighton, whose father Thomas B. Laighton, was keeper of the White Island Light, Isles of Shoals, New Hampshire. This was written after the wreck of the brig Pocohantas on the sand bar off Plum Island during the storm of Dec. 22, 1839. All aboard perished. Celia herself lit the lamps that night; the doomed vessel was swept so close to White Island that the signal gun could be heard as it was destroyed.

I lit the lamps in the lighthouse tower
   For the sun dropped down and the day was dead.
They shone like a glorious clustered flower,—
   Ten golden and five red.

The thick storm seemed to break apart
   To show us, staggering to her grave,
The fated brig. We had no heart
   To look, for naught could save.

The sails that flecked the ocean floor
   From east to west leaned low and fled;
They knew what came in the distant roar
   That filled the air with dread!

One glimpse of black hull heaving slow
   Then closed the mists o'er canvas torn
And tangled ropes swept to and fro
   From masts that ranked forlorn.

Flung by a fitful gust, there beat
   Against the window a dash of rain;
Steady as tramp of marching feet
   Strode on the hurricane.

And when at last from the distant shore
   A little boat stole out, to reach
Our loneliness, and bring once more
   Fresh human thought and speech,

It smote the waves for a moment still,
   Level and deadly white for fear;
The bare rock shuddered,— an awful thrill
   Shook even my tower of cheer.

We told our tale, and the boatman cried;
   "Twas the 'Pocohantas,'— all were lost!
For miles along the coast the tide
   Her shattered timbers tossed."

When morning dawned, above the din
   Of gale and breaker boomed a gun!
Another! We who sat within
   Answered with cries each one.

And while the day died, sweet and fair,
   I lit the lamps again.