The Sailor's Grave

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Our bark was far, far from the land
When the bravest of our gallant band
Went deadly pale, an' pined away
Like the twilight5 of an autumn day.

We watched him through long hours of pain
Our hopes were great, our task in vain.
His end was near, we felt sad qualms
But he smiled and died in his shipmates' arms.

He had no costly winding sheet
We placed two round shot at his feet,
And we sewed him up, he was canvas-bound
Like a king he lay in his hammock sound.

We proudly decked his broken chest
With the "Blood'n'Guts (1)" across his breast
The flag we gave as a mark o' the brave
And he was ready for a sailor's grave.

Our voices broke, our hearts were weak
And wet was seen on the toughest cheek
We lowered him down o'er the ship's dark side
And he was received by the rollin' tide.

With a splash and a plunge and our task was o'er
And the billows rolled as they rolled before,
And many a wild prayer hallowed the wave
As he sank deep to a sailor's grave.

(1) Sailor's name for the red ensign of Britain
From Songs of the Sea, Hugill
Note: Original composed in 1859 by Eliza Cook (words) and John C. Baker (music). According to Hugill, heavily folk-processed. RG