

Go to Sea no More

In the hard years of 1850-75 competition between sailing ship lines was at its fiercest and at the same time the companies were trying to cut back their overheads in the face of the growing threat of steam. Companies whose ships had a reputation for being hard and hungry found it difficult to man their vessels, and as a consequence this period was the high era of the rimping game. The unscrupulous sailor boarding-house master would render the seaman unconscious with drink, drug or blackjack, deliver the body to a waiting ship, and pocket his fee. Or more commonly, he might arrange for the man to be robbed, put the penniless fellow in his debt, and - in return for the seaman's advance note, loaned by the company to buy gear for the voyage - he would 'use his influence' to sign the man aboard any hard ship that was wanting hands. From that time comes this common ballad ('known to every seaman', says Stan Hugill).

This ballad is a forebitter – meaning it lends itself more to dogwatch singing than to muscular effort - although it was used at the capstan according to sleeve notes on The Spinners 'Songs of the Tall Ships'.

When first I landed in Liverpool I went upon a spree
While money last I spent it fast, got drunk as drunk could be
And when my money it was all spent, on whisky and on whores
I made up my mind that I was inclined *to go to sea no more*
No more, no more to go to sea once more
I made up my mind that I was inclined to go to sea no more

As I was a'walking down the street I met with Angeline
She said "Come home with me my lad, we'll have a bloody good
time"
But when I awoke it was no joke, I found I was all alone.
Me silver watch, me money, me gear. *The whole ruddy lot were gone.*
Were gone, were gone. The whole ruddy lot were gone.
Me silver watch, me money, me gear. The whole ruddy lot were gone.

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And as I was a' walking down the street, I met old Napper Brown
I asked if he would take me in, he eyed me with a frown
The last time that you was paid off, 'twas then you ran up a score
But I'll take your advance and I'll give you a chance *to go to sea once
more*

*Once more, once more. You'll go to sea once more.
I'll take your advance and I'll give you a chance to go to sea once more*

Well sometimes we catch whales me lads, but mostly we catch none.
With a twenty foot oar in every paw from five o'clock in the morn.
When the sun goes down and the night comes on.

We rest upon our oars.

But oh me lads we wish we were dead, *or back with the girls on the shore*
The shore, the shore, were back with the girls on the shore
But oh me lads we wish we were dead, or back with the girls on the shore

So come all ye bold sea-faring lads and listen to my song
For when you goes big boating lads I pray you do no wrong
You take my tip when you come off a ship. Don't go with any
whores.

But get married, lads, spend all night in, *and go to sea no more*
No more, no more, don't go to sea no more
But get married, lads, spend all night in, and go to the sea no more