

# THE BELLMAN

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## SONGS OF THE CHANTY-MAN: II

CAPTAIN JOHN ROBINSON

In my previous articles for The Bellman I have told something of the nature and use of the sailors' chanties with which I became familiar during my half-century of service at sea, and particularly during the earlier part of it, when I was learning my profession before the mast in various sailing ships.

As in the case of the songs recorded previously, the chanties of which the words and music are given herewith are only individual and fragmentary versions. In some cases I recall two or more entirely different airs which were used for the same song, and I have given some of these variant versions of the music. More often, the music remained pretty much unchanged—so far as the particular chanty-man was able to sing it,—while the words underwent all sorts of variations. How easy this was can be readily seen by looking at the words of the chanties which follow.

Shenandoah is an American chanty. Additional verses are:

"I love the murmuring of your waters,  
I love the beauty of your daughters.

"Seven long years since I lost Dinah;  
I've searched seven years. I cannot find her.

"'Twas down in Shenandoah's sweet valley  
Where first I met and courted Sally.

"To Shenandoah I am returning,  
My heart for thee is ever burning.

"When wide Missouri's call is over,  
I will go back and stay forever."

The "Blackball Line" was a great favorite among the sailors and very well known. It was used on the windlass or capstan. Here are some additional verses:

"I've crossed the line full many a time,  
And have seen the line both rise and shine.

"You will surely find a rich gold mine,  
Just take a trip in the Blackball Line.

"The ships are fast, they make good time,  
With clean long runs and entrance fine.

## Sacramento.

The musical score for "Sacramento" is presented in three systems. Each system includes a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The first system begins with a "Solo." section marked *f* (forte) and a "Chorus." section marked *ff* (fortissimo). The lyrics for the first system are: "A bul - ly ship and a bul - ly crew, With a Hood - a..... and a Dood - al". The second system also features a "Solo." and "Chorus." section. The lyrics are: "A bul - y mate, and a cap - tain, too, With a Hood - a Dood - a Day - Then". The third system is entirely a "Chorus." section. The lyrics are: "Blow, my lads, Heigh Ho! For Ca - li - for - nia Ho! There's plen - ty of gold, as I've been told, on the banks of Sa - cra - men - to." The piano accompaniment consists of chords and rhythmic patterns that support the vocal melody.



"I've sailed the seas full many a mile  
In wintry cold and sultry clime.

"A few more pulls, and that will do,  
A few more pulls to pull her through."

One of the earliest chanties in my memory is "Catting the Anchor," given on page 70. The tune is a good one

and very catchy. A few verses of this old and popular melody were sufficient to bring the anchor to the cathead. Verses besides the one given with the music are:

"To the cathead,  
We'll raise the dead,  
As we have said."

### Shenandoah!

*Slow and sustained.*

*Solo.* Shen - an - doah! I long to hear you— *Chorus f* Hur - - rah! you roll - ing riv - er.

*Solo.* Oh, Shen - an - doah! I long to hear you— *Chorus.* And hur - rah! we're bound a - way! On the wide Mis - sou - ri! *Rit.*

### The Blackball Line.

*Solo.* *Boldly.* I served my time in the Black - ball line, *Chorus.* To my way!..... Hur - - rah - - yah!

*Solo.* In the Black - ball line I served my time; *Chorus.* Hur - - rah! for the Black - ball line.

"Now once again,  
With might and main  
Pay out more chain.

"Ring stopper bring,  
Pass through the ring,  
Still haul and sing.

"'Vast there, avast!  
Make the fall fast.  
Make it well fast."

I think every sailor used to know all about the unfortunate Reuben Ranso (page 71). It was a very good hoisting song. The words were repeated by the chanty-man in order to spin out the song long enough for its purpose:

"Oh, poor Reuben Ranso,  
Ranso was no sailor.  
He shipped on board a whaler,  
He could not do his duty.  
They took him to the gangway,  
And gave him five and forty.

### Sally Brown.

*First Setting.*

Sal - ly Brown's a bright-eyed beau - ty. Way,..... roll and go. Oh

Sal - ly Brown is sweet and pret - ty, I'll spend my mon - ey on Sal - ly Brown.

### Sally Brown.

*Second Setting.*

Sal - ly Brown's a bright Mu - - lat - to,..... Way,..... yah, Oh

Sal - ly Brown's a bright Mu - - lat - to.... Oh walk a - long, you Sal - ly Brown.



"Oh poor Reuben Ranso,  
Ranso, boys, Ranso!  
Oh poor Reuben Ranso,  
Ranso, boys, Ranso!"

"Poor Old Man" is a good hoisting chanty; after the four verses were sung, the chanty-man would improvise until the work was finished:

"As I was walking down the street—  
And they say so, and they hope so—

A poor old man I chanced to meet,  
Oh, poor old man!

"The old man heaved a mighty sigh  
When I told him that his horse would die.

"If he dies it will be my loss,  
But if he lives, he is still my hoss.

"If he dies, I shall have his skin,  
But if he lives, I can ride him again."

## Rio Grande.

*Broad, swaying rhythm, Windlass*

*Chorus.*

The an - chor is up and we're sail - ing a - way, Way..... you Ri - o - -

This system contains the first musical staff with vocal melody and piano accompaniment. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 6/8. The melody is in a broad, swaying rhythm. The piano accompaniment features a steady bass line and chords. The system ends with a double bar line.

*Solo.*

And the wind it is fair to sail out of the bay, for we're bound for the Ri - o - Grande!

This system continues the musical score with a solo section. The vocal melody and piano accompaniment follow the same style as the first system. The system ends with a double bar line.

*Chorus.*

And a - way..... you Ri - o!..... Oh!..... you Ri - o..... Then

This system contains the third musical staff, featuring a chorus section. The vocal melody and piano accompaniment continue. The system ends with a double bar line.

fare you well, my bon - ny young girl, for we're bound for the Ri - o - Grande!.....

This system contains the fourth musical staff, concluding the piece. The vocal melody and piano accompaniment follow the same style. The system ends with a double bar line.



It is hard to say how far back into nautical history the chanty reaches. As early as the year 1414 Henry V was building for his fleet "great ships, cogs, carracks, ships, barges and ballingers," and the sailors thereon may well have heartened themselves at their work with chanties. The Sovereign of the Seas, a picture of which appears on the following page, was built in 1637, and represented the highest perfection of early seventeenth-century naval construction. Who knows whether or not Shake-

speare's song in "The Tempest" was not sung on board of her as a chanty? Stephano's song runs like this:

"The Master, the Swabber, the Boatswain and I,  
The Gunner and his Mate,  
Loved Moll, Meg, Marion and Margery,  
But none of us cared for Kate."

The last line, "Then to sea, boys, and let her go hang!" finishes as a chanty should.

### Sailors Like the Bottle o'!

*Lively.*

When you get to Bal-ti-more, Give my love to Su-zan-na, my dear. So ear-ly in the morn-ing. Sailors like the bot-tle o',

*Chorus.*

Bot-tle o'! Bot-tle o'! Bot-tle of ver-y good Bran-dy o. So ear-ly in the morn-ing. Sail-ors like the Bot-tle o!

### Catting the Anchor.

*With vigor.*

*Solo.* Pull one and all. *Chorus.* Hoy, Hoy, *Solo.* Cheer-y men! *Chorus.* On this cat fall! *Solo.* Hoy! *Chorus.* Hoy! *Solo.* Cheer-y men!

*Solo.* An-swer the call! *Chorus.* Hoy, Hoy! *Solo.* Cheer-y men! *Chorus.* Hoy, Hau-lee, Hoy! *Solo.* Hoy!! *Chorus.* Oh Cheer-y men!





The Sovereign of the Seas, Built in 1637

## Haul away, Joe!

Once I had a yel - low girl, She grew fat and la - zy. Way, Haul a - way, Haul a - way, Joel

Musical score for the song "Haul away, Joe!". It features a melody line in treble clef and a piano accompaniment in bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The melody includes various musical notations such as eighth notes, quarter notes, and rests. The piano part consists of chords and single notes. The lyrics are written below the melody line.

## Reuben Ranso.

*Solo.* Oh! poor Reu - ben Ran - so, *Chorus.* Ran - so boys, Ran - so! *Solo.* Oh, poor Reu - ben Ran - so; *Chorus.* Ran - so boys, Ran - so!

Musical score for the song "Reuben Ranso.". It features a melody line in treble clef and a piano accompaniment in bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The melody includes various musical notations such as eighth notes, quarter notes, and rests. The piano part consists of chords and single notes. The lyrics are written below the melody line, with "Solo." and "Chorus." markings.

## Poor Old Man.

*Solo.* As I was walking down the street, and they say so and they hope so, *Chorus.* A poor old man I chanced to meet, *Chorus.* Oh poor old man.

Musical score for the song "Poor Old Man.". It features a melody line in treble clef and a piano accompaniment in bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The melody includes various musical notations such as eighth notes, quarter notes, and rests. The piano part consists of chords and single notes. The lyrics are written below the melody line, with "Solo." and "Chorus." markings.

# "Hanging Johnny."

*Solo.* *Chorus.* *ff* *Solo.*

They call me Hang - ing John - ny ..... Oh! way ..... aye ..... They

say I hang for mon - ey ..... Oh! Hang. Boys hang!.....

*Ped.* \*

# Highland Laddie.

*Solo.* *Chorus.* *Solo.*

Where have you been all the day? Bon-ny laddie! Highland laddie! Where have you been all the day? My bon-ny Highland lad - die!

*Chorus.* *cresc.*

Oh! Oh! my heart is sair, 'Bon-ny lad-die, Highland laddie! Oh! Oh! my heart is sair, my Bon-ny Highland lad-die.