

## Off to Sea Once More



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 las, I - spent - too fast, Got drunk as  
 drunk could be — And when my mon - e - y  
 was - all gone 'Twas then I - want - ed  
 more But a man must be blind - to  
 make up his mind To - go to sea once more.

1. When first I came to Liverpool  
 I went upon a spree.  
 Me money, alas, I spent too fast,  
 Got drunk as drunk could be  
 And when my money was all gone  
 'Twas then I wanted more  
 But a man must be blind to make up his mind  
 To go to sea once more.
2. I spent the night with Angeline,  
 Too drunk to roll in bed.  
 My watch was new and my money too,  
 In the mornin' with 'em she fled  
 And as I roamed the streets about  
 The whores they all would roar,  
 "Here comes Jack Rack, the young sailin'  
 lad.  
 He must go to sea once more."

3. As I was walkin' down the street  
I met with Rapper Brown.  
I asked for him to take me in  
And he looked at me with a frown.  
He said "Last time you was paid off  
With me you jobbed no score  
But I'll take your advance and I'll give ya's a  
    chance  
And I'll send you to sea once more."
4. I hired me aboard of a whaling ship  
Bound for the Artic seas  
Where the cold winds blow through the frost  
    and the snow  
And Jamaican rum would freeze  
And worst to bear I'd no hard weather gear  
For I'd lost all my money ashore.  
'Twas then that I wished that I was dead  
So I'd gone to sea no more.
5. Some days we're catching whales me lads  
And some days we're catching none  
With a twenty foot oar cocked in our hands  
From four o'clock in the morn  
And when the shades of night come in  
We rest on our weary oar  
'Twas then I wished that I was dead  
Or safe with the girls ashore.
6. Come all you bold seafarin' men  
And listen to my song.  
If you come off of them long trips  
I'd have ya's not go wrong.  
Take my advice, drink no strong drink,  
Don't go sleeping with no whores.  
Get married lads and have all night in  
So you'll go to sea no more.

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"Off to Sea Once More" is a forebitter about the hardships of a sailor' life. He loses his money to whores and boarding-house masters and has to return to sea, in this case to the 1850s Bering sea bowhead whale fishing.

Stan Hugill said this song in "known to every seaman". During the latter days of sail, many lodging-house keepers encouraged seamen to fall in debt to them, then signed them aboard a hardcase ship in return for the "advance note" loaned by the company to the sailor ostensibly to buy gear for the voyage. Paddy West of Great Howard Street, Liverpool, was well-known for this, likewise John da Costa of the same seaport. (There is a song about Paddy West in this collection.)

Whaling boats, like many of the transatlantic packet ships, had reputations of being "blood-boats", with bad food and pay, worse conditions and hard masters who maintained authority with the hard end of a belaying pin. As a result, most of them were crewed by men in debt to (if not shanghaied by) boarding-house masters. This forebitter, with its advice to give up the sea — advice inevitably thwarted by pimps, whores, drunkenness, and boarding-house masters — was sometimes used as a pump or capstan chantey. Many versions of the song had a chorus and may have been used as shanties, however, Hugill asserts that this version was a forebitter, "since it had no all-hands-in chorus". The lack of a chorus lets the poignant story stand out more clearly and effectively.

It is listed in the **Roud Index of Folksongs** as #644. It was printed in Stan Hugill's Shanties from the Seven Seas.

It was recorded by A.L. Lloyd, Ewan MacColl, Louis Killen and Jerry Garcia and David Grisman on their **Shady Grove** album which is where I learned it.