

Homeward Bound

They will take us from the moorings
They will tow us down the Bay
They will pluck us up to windward when we sail.
We shall hear the keen wind whistle
We shall fee the sting of spray
When we've dropped the deep-sea pilot o'er the rail.

Then it's Johnnie heave an' start her
Then it's Johnnie roll and go
When the mates have picked the watches
There is little rest for Jack.
But we'll raise the good old chanty
That the Homeward Bounders know
For the girls have got the tow-rope
An' they're hauling in the slack.

In the dusty streets and dismal
Through the noises of the town
We can hear the West wind humming through the shrouds;
We can see the lightning leaping
When the tropic suns go down
And the dapple of the shadows of the clouds.

And the salt blood dances in us
To the tune of Homeward Bound.
To the call to weary watches
To the sheet and to the tack.
When they bid us man the capstan
How the hands will walk her round! –
For the girls have got the tow-rope
An' they're hauling in the slack.

Through the sunshine of the tropics
Round the bleak and dreary Horn
Half across the little planet lies our way

We shall leave the land behind us
Like a welcome that's outworn
When we see the reeling mastheads swing and sway.

Through the weather fair or storm
In the calm and in the gale
We shall heave and haul to help her
We shall hold her on her track
And you'll hear the chorus rolling
When the hands are making sail
For the girls have got the tow-rope
An' they're hauling in the slack.

Gordon says:

Roger Ilott and Penny Davies of Queensland, Australia, sent this song (and many others) in trade for royalties. The pictures ring true to the waters and vessels I've seen, and it speaks well of the trust sailors gave the old vessels, no matter how hard set they were. I deliberately changed only one line: "When we've dropped the deep-sea pilot o'er the rail." I know we "drop the tugs" and I'll take the "deep-sea pilot" on faith (not having sailed in Australian waters), but with the exception of certain "State Pilots," dropping the chap over the rail still seems a bit harsh. G.B.

G: cellamba

C: 12-string and heave

poem by D.H. Rogers / music © John Broomhall APRA
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