

## Sloop John B

We come on the sloop John B  
 My grandfather and me  
 'Round Nassau town we did roam  
 Drinkin' all night, got into a fi-i-ight  
 I feel so break up, I want to go home

So hoist up the John B sails  
 See how the main sail sets  
 Send for the Captain ashore, let me go home  
 Please let me alone, I want to go ho-o-ome  
 I feel so break up, I want to go home

The first mate, oh, he got drunk  
 He broke up the people's trunk  
 Constable had to come and take him away  
 Sheriff Johnstone please let me alo-o-one  
 I feel so break up, I want to go home

The cook he got the fits  
 Ate up all of my grits  
 Then he went and ate up all of my corn  
 O let me go home, please let me go ho-o-ome  
 This is the worst trip I've ever been on

*Trad. Bahamian, c.1903*

## The Water Is Wide

The water is wide, I cannot get o'er  
 And neither have I wings to fly  
 Give me a boat that will carry two  
 And both shall row, my love and I

Oh down in the meadows, the other day  
 A-gathering flowers both fine and gay  
 A-gathering flowers both red and blue  
 I little thought what love can do

I put my hand into one soft bush  
 Thinking the sweetest flower to find  
 I pricked my finger right to the bone  
 And left the sweetest flower alone

I leaned my back up against some oak  
 Thinking that he was a trust-y tree  
 But first he bended and then he broke  
 And so did my false love to me

A ship there is and she sails the sea  
 She's loaded deep as deep can be  
 But not so deep as the love I'm in  
 I know not if I can sink or swim

Oh love is handsome and love is fine  
 And love's a jewel while it is new  
 But when it is old, it groweth cold  
 And fades away like morning dew

## Thousands or More

The time passes over more cheerful and gay  
 Since we've learnt a new act to drive sorrows away  
 Sorrows away, sorrows away, sorrows away-ay-ay  
 Since we've learnt a new act to drive sorrows away

Bright Phoebe awakes so high up in the sky  
 With her red, rosy cheeks and her sparkaling eye  
 Sparkaling eye, sparkaling eye, sparkaling eye  
 With her red, rosy cheeks and her sparkaling eye

If you ask for my credit you'll find I have none  
 With my bottle and friend you will find me at home  
 Find me at home, find me at home, find me at ho-me  
 With my bottle and friend you will find me at home

Although I'm not rich and although I'm not poor  
 I'm as happy as those that's got thousands or more  
 Thousands or more, thousands or more, thousands or more  
 I'm as happy as those that's got thousands or more

*Trad. English, c.1850*

## Bold Riley

• Oh the rain it rains all day lo-ng  
 Bold Riley-o, Bold Ri-il-ey  
And the northern wind it blows so stro-ng  
 Bold Riley-o has gone away

Goodbye my sweetheart, goodbye my dear-o  
 Bold Riley-o, Bold Ri-il-ey  
 Goodbye my darlin', goodbye my dear-o  
 Bold Riley-o has gone away

The anchor's weighed and the rags we've all se-t  
 Bold Riley-o Bold Ri-il-ey  
Them Liverpool judies we'll never forge-t  
 Bold Riley-O has gone away

Well come on Mary, don't look gl-um  
 Bold Riley-o, Bold Ri-il-ey  
Come White-stocking Day you'll be drinkin' ru-m  
 Bold Riley-O has gone away

We're outward bound for the Bengal Ba-y  
 Bold Riley-o, Bold Ri-il-ey  
Get bending me lads, it's a hell-of-a-wa-y  
 Bold Riley-O has gone away

*Trad. halyard shanty, 1800s*

## Down Where the Drunkards Roll

• See the boys out walking, the boys they look so fine  
 Dressed up in green velvet, their silver buckles shine  
 Soon they'll be bleary-eyed under a keg of wine

Down where the drunkards roll  
 Down where the drunkards roll

See that lover standing staring at the ground  
 He's looking for the real thing, lies were all he found  
 But you can get the real thing, it will only cost a pound

There goes a troubled woman, she dreams a troubled dream  
 She lives out on the highway, she keeps her money clean  
 Soon she'll be returning to the place where she's the queen

You can be a gambler who never drew a hand  
 You can be a sailor, never left dry land  
 You can be Lord Jesus, all the world will understand

*Richard Thompson, UK, 1974*

## The Bay of Biscay

My Willy sails on board the tender  
 And where he is I do not know  
 For seven long years I've been constantly waiting  
 Since he crossed the Bay of Biscay-o

One night as Mary lay a-sleeping  
 A knock came to her bedroom door  
 Crying arise, arise, my dearest Mary  
 For to catch one glance of your Willy-o

Young Mary rose, put on her clothing  
 And to her bedroom door did go  
 And there she found her Willy standing  
 His two pale cheeks as white as snow

Oh Willy dear, where are those blushes  
 Those blushes I knew long years ago?  
 Oh Mary dear, the cold clay has them  
 I am only the ghost of your Willy-o

Oh Mary dear, the dawn is coming  
 Don't you think it's time for me to go?  
 I am leaving you quite broken-hearted  
 For to cross the Bay of Biscay-o

If I had all the gold and silver  
 And all the money in Mexico  
 I would grant it all to the King of Heaven  
 If he'd bring me back my Willy-o

*Trad. British, c1860*

## Fields of Athenry

By a lonely prison wall  
 I heard a young girl calling  
 "Michael, they have taken you away  
 For you stole Trevelyan's corn  
 So our young might see the morn  
 Now a prison ship lies waiting in the bay"

Low lie the fields of Athenry  
 Where once we watched the small free birds fly  
 Our love was on the wing we had dreams and songs to sing  
 It's so lonely 'round the fields of Athenry

By a lonely prison wall  
 I heard a young man calling  
 "Nothing matters, Mary, when you're free  
 Against the famine and the crown  
 I rebelled, they cut me down  
 Now you must raise our child with dignity"

By a lonely harbour wall  
 She watched the last star falling  
 As that prison ship sailed out against the sky  
 For she lived to hope and pray  
 For her love in Botany Bay  
 It's so lonely 'round the fields of Athenry

*Pete St. John, 1979*

## No Man's Land

Well how do you do, Private William McBride  
 Do you mind if I sit here down by your grave side  
 And rest for a while in the warm summer sun?  
 I've been walking all day and I'm damn nearly done  
 And I see by your gravestone you were only nineteen  
 When you joined the glorious fallen in nineteen-sixteen  
 Well I hope you died quick and I hope you died clean  
 Or Willie McBride, was it slow and obscene?

Did they beat the drum slowly, did they play the fife lowly?  
 Did the rifles fire o'er you as they lowered you down?  
 Did the bugles sound the Last Post in chorus?  
 Did the pipes play the Flowers o' the Forest?

And did you leave a wife or a sweetheart behind  
 In some loyal heart is your memory enshrined?  
 And though you died back there in nineteen-sixteen  
 To that faithful heart are you forever nineteen?  
 Or are you a stranger without even a name  
 Forever enclosed behind some glass pane  
 In an old photograph torn and tattered and stained  
 And fading to yellow in a brown leather frame?

But the sun shining now on these green fields of France  
 The warm wind blows gently and the red poppies dance  
 The trenches have all vanished under the plough  
 No gas, no barbed wire, no guns firing now  
 But here in this graveyard it's still no man's land  
 The countless white crosses in mute witness stand  
 To man's blind indifference to his fellow man  
 And a whole generation who were butchered and damned



And I can't help but wonder now, Willie McBride  
Do all those who lie here know why they died?  
Did you really believe them when they told you the cause?  
Did you really believe that this war would end wars?  
The suffering, the sorrow, the glory, the shame  
The killing, the dying, it was all done in vain  
For Willie McBride it all happened again  
And again and again and again and again

*Eric Bogle, UK, 1976*