

By Harry Kemp, tramp poet and sometime sailor, ©1920.

Chanteys & Ballads by Harry Kemp, 1920, pp. 34-36

Adapted by Charles Ipcar 2004

Tune: "Huckleberry Hunting"

Key: G

The Chantey of the Cook-2

The Devil take the cook, that greasy-bearded feller,
Way, hey, haul 'im away!
Who feeds us scraps and bones and biscuits whiskered yellor,
And the home port's a thousand miles away.

The hardtack's moldy and the spuds they all are rotten,
Way, hey, haul 'im away!
And the salt horse we get is forty years forgotten,
And the home port's a thousand miles away.

Now each in his heart has marked the cook for slaughter,
Way, hey, haul 'im away!
For the coffee's only chickory, soaked in luke-warm water,
And the home port's a thousand miles away.

So lay on your fancy duds and join the delegation,
Way, hey, haul 'im away!
Oh, we're gonna ask the Skipper for a decent daily ration,
And the home port's a thousand miles away.

But is it the cook's fault we eat one day in seven?
Way, hey, haul 'im away!
It's the owners of this hooker – may they never get to Heaven,
And the home port's a thousand miles away.

The owners of this hooker bought us meat as hard as teak,
Way, hey, haul 'im away!
While the cook eats the same truck seven days a week,
And the home port's a thousand miles away.

Oh great God in Heaven, when their souls and bodies sever,
Way, hey, haul 'im away!
May the owners fry in Hell, gnawing old salt-horse forever,
And the home port's a thousand miles away.

From CHANTEYS AND BALLADS, by Harry Kemp, published by Brentano's, New York, US,
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THE CHANTEY OF THE COOK (dithyramb of a discontented crew)

The Devil take the cook, that old grey-bearded fellow,
Yo ho, haul away!
Who feeds us odds and ends and biscuits whiskered yellow,
And the home port's a thousand miles away.

The Devil take the cook, that dirty old duffer,
Yo ho, haul away!
Each day he makes the captain fatter and bluffer,
But we'll have to eat hardtack for many a day.

The ship-biscuit's moldy and the spuds we get are rotten,
Yo ho. haul away!
And the tinned goods that's dished up is seven years forgotten,
Yo ho. haul away

And each, in his heart, has marked the cook for slaughter,
And it won't do him any good to pray.
For the coffee's only chickory half-soaked in luke-warm water,
Yo ho. haul away!

It's put on your best duds and join the delegation;
Yo ho, haul away!
We're aft to ask the captain for a decent ration,
And to drop the cook at Botany Bay.

Look here, you cabin boy, what has set you laughin'?
Yo ho, haul away!
Don't tell us no lies or we'll clout your ears for chafin'
For we're not a lot of horses that can live on hay.

What's this you're tellin'! Is it plum duff and puddin'?
Yo ho, haul away!
Why not make it roast beef an' let it be a good 'un?
For plum duff and rum's not a feast for every day.

Oh, it ain't the cook's fault that we eat one day in seven.
Yo ho, haul away!
It's the owners of the ship – may they never get to heaven,
No matter how hard they pray.

It's the owners of the ship that give us meat that's yellow,
Yo ho, haul away!
And after all, the cook's a mighty decent fellow,
Though we'll have to eat rotten grub for many a day.

O Lord up in heaven, when their souls and bodies sever,
Yo ho, haul away!
May the owners squat in Hell, gnawing at salt-horse forever,
And the grub that they give us every day.

Excepting for one thing, oh Lord God in heaven,
Yo ho, haul away!
Don't let them have no plum duff one day in seven,
*But forever and forever and unto eternity the truck that
we're fed every day, Amen!*

Harry Kemp was a published author and poet, known as the Tramp Poet, and The Poet of the Dunes, among other names. He wrote a number of chanteys, and a book of chanteys has his introduction. He became a slave to alcohol sometime in the 1930s, was divorced, and lived on the largesse of those who had admired his work of earlier years. His work deteriorated and I don't believe anything from his last 20-odd years received any attention.