

Lloyd

"The Ship In Distress"

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The Ship in Distress
You seamen bold that plough the ocean,
What dangers landsmen do never know.
The sun gangs over old England's nation;
No tongue can tell what you go through.
Through bitter storms in the height of battle,
Now mark you well what I do say,
Where thund'ring cannons loudly rattle
There's no back door to run away.
Of a merchant ship there was a captain;
A long time they had been drove on sea.
The weather proved to them so uncertain,
Which brought them to extremity.
Nothing on board poor souls to nourish,
Nor to strengthen their feeble arms;
The whole ship's crew were nearly starving,
The men were nothing but skin and bone.
The cats and dogs how they did eat them,
Hunger proving to them severe;
Captain and men of one direction
They all of them went equal shares.
At length, at length the hour came on them,
The hour came on them most bitterly.
Poor fellows all stood titter totter,
Casting lots which of them should die.
The lot was cast on one poor fellow
Which had a wife at home on shore,
But to think of eating our fellow creatures

It was that which grieved us ten times more.
'I am willing to die,' this young man answered,
But to the topmast haste away,
For perhaps some help you may discover
While I unto the Lord do pray.'
The captain said he spied a vessel
About a league from us or more,
Some signals of distress were fired
And soon for us away she bore.
And soon we got provisions plenty,
And far from all such deadly fear,
To see such pity they took upon us
You could not help but shed a tear.

But now we're happy in old England
And far from all such deadly fear,
We'll drink unto our wives and sweethearts
And unto all we love so dear.
May God protect all jolly sailors
And all that plough the raging main;
May they never see no more such trials
And never know the like again.
From Oxford Book of Sea Songs, Palmer
Somewhat different version recorded by Killen, 40
North to 40
North and by Lloyd (Haul on the Bowline)?
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