

Extract from "Lays of the Deep" – An Unpublished Work

THE WHALER

Tis thirty seasons past and gone
Since, careless, bold and free,
I sailed on board a whaling-ship
Was bound for the South Sea
For the morn of life was bright,
And all around was joy,
With buoyant heart and footsteps light,
A wild and reckless boy.
What time we saw the Western Isles
Rise o'er the Atlantic blue,
I loved to mark the pine trees dark
That on their ridges grew.
A fair and prosperous run we had,
Our canvass ne'er was furled
'Till we seen the setting sun go down
O'er the girdle of the world!
And seen the forked lightning fly,
And heard the thunder peal;
Where the fierce Pampeiro bursts upon
The lime trees of Brazil.
Beneath that bright and sunny sky
The hours flew swift away,
While our good ship lay watering there
In Rio's glorious bay.
And oft across its surface clear,
And round its sandy shore,
We plied the whale-boat's swift career,
For practice at the oar.
And in the midnight hour I loved,
Leant o'er the vessel's rail,
To watch the Negro fisherman
Spread the light cotton sail;
And listen to their farewell song,
In language strange to me,

On the light night-breeze borne along,
As they stood out sea.
I little dreamt, in those sweet hours,
Of danger, want, and woe,
And perils upon the stormy deep
'Twas mine to undergo.
We left that fair and happy shore
On a bright and burning day,
And on the waves embarked once more
To wend our watery way.
We had a strong ship's company
Of two and forty hands:
They were a strange variety
Gathered from many lands.
The wild Norwegian and the Swede
From their dark rocks had fled,
To follow fortune o'er the waves
Under the Union red.
The skilful fishers of the North
From Zetland, bleak and bare,
The dark browned Spaniard, and the Dane,
Were met together there.
And of the true-born English tars
We mustered but twice ten;
And seven sons of the sister isle
My own brave countrymen!

Rosstrevor Y. S.

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