

Rudyard Kipling, 1880
Adapted for singing by Charlie Ipcar 7/4/12
Tune after *Home with the Girls in the Morning*
Key: Em (9/Gm)

The Ballad of *Bolivar*-3

-Em-----D-----Em-----D
Seven men from all the world, on the Docks a-gain,
-Em-----D-----D--A--G--D--Em
Rollin' down the Ratcliffe Road, drunk an' rais-in' Cain!
-----D-----Em-----D
"Give the girls a-nother round 'fore we sail a-way!"
Em-----D-----D--A--G--D--Em
We that took the *Bolivar*, out a-cross the Bay!
G-----D-----Em-D--Em-G-----D-----Em/Bm
We steamed out from Sun-der-land, loaded down with rail;
G-----D-----Em-D--Em-----D--A--G--D---Em
We steamed out from Sun-der-land, in a ris-in' win-t'ry gale!
G-----D----Em--D-Em--G-----D-----Em/Bm
Leakin' like a lob-ster-pot, steer-in' like a dray —
G-----D-----Em-D-Em-D-A--G----D--Em
When we took the *Bol-i-var*, out a-cross the Bay!

One by one the Lights came up, winked and let us pass;
Met a blow that laid us low, heard a bulkhead smash!
Just her funnel and her mast lurchin' through the spray —
As we thrashed the *Bolivar*, out across the Bay!
Sliding 'cross the slimy decks, bilges choked with coal;
Flayed and frozen hand and foot, sick of heart and soul!
How we prayed she'd buck herself into Judgment Day —
How we cursed the *Bolivar*, knockin' round the Bay!

Achin' for an hour's sleep, dozing in between;
Heard her rotten rivets draw, when she shipped it green!
Watched the compass chase its tail like a cat at play,
As we snaked the *Bolivar*, south across the Bay!
Once we saw between the squalls, lyin' head to swell —
Some damned Liner's lights go by like a grand hotel!
Mad with work and weariness, wishin' they was we,
Cheered her from the *Bolivar*, swampin' in the sea!

Then a greybeard cleared our decks, how our skipper laughed,
"Boys, the wheel has gone to Hell! — Rig the winches aft!
Yoke the kickin' rudder-head! — Get her under way!"
We pulley-hauled the *Bolivar*, out across the Bay!
Just a pack o' rotten plates, puttied up with tar,
In we came, with time enough, 'cross Bilbao Bar!
Overloaded, undermanned, meant to founder, sure;
Give a cheer for the *Bolivar*, lashed up and secure!

Seven men from all the world, on the Docks a-gain,
Rollin' down the Ratcliffe Road, drunk and raisin' Cain!
Seven men from Hell and back! – Ain't the owners gay,
'Cause we took the *Bolivar*, safe across the Bay!
Seven men from all the world, on the Docks a-gain,
Rollin' down the Ratcliffe Road, drunk and raisin' Cain!
Seven men from Hell and back! – Ain't the owners gay,
'Cause we took the *Bolivar*, safe across the Bay!

Notes:

Some sailors celebrate their safe return from a perilous voyage from Sunderland in northern England to Spain, in bad weather, in an ill-found, unseaworthy and over-insured vessel, by getting drunk and creating a disturbance. It is not clear if the owners intended them to be scuttled or overwhelmed by the storm, but they survived and brought the *Bolivar* safely into Bilbao.

Rudyard Kipling, 1880

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The Ballad of 'Bolivar'

Seven men from all the world back to Docks again,
Rolling down the Ratcliffe Road, drunk and raising Cain;
Give the girls another drink 'fore we sign away —
We that took the *Bolivar* out across the Bay!

We put out from Sunderland loaded down with rails;
We put back to Sunderland 'cause our cargo shifted;
We put out from Sunderland — met the winter gales —
Seven days and seven nights to The Start we drifted.

Racketing her rivets loose, smoke-stack white as snow,
All the coals adrift a deck, half the rails below,
Leaking like a lobster-pot, steering like a dray —
Out we took the *Bolivar*, out across the Bay!

One by one the Lights came up, winked and let us by;
Mile by mile we waddled on, coal and fo'c'sle short;
Met a blow that laid us down, heard a bulkhead fly;
Left the Wolf behind us with a two-foot list to port.

Trailing like a wounded duck, working out her soul;
Clanging like a smithy-shop after every roll;
Just a funnel and a mast lurching through the spray —
So we threshed the *Bolivar* out across the Bay!

'Felt her hog and felt her sag, betted when she'd break;
Wondered every time she raced if she'd stand the shock;
Heard the seas like drunken men pounding at her strake;
Hoped the Lord 'ud keep His thumb on the plumber-block.

Banged against the iron decks, bilges choked with coal;
Flayed and frozen foot and hand, sick of heart and soul;
'Last we prayed she'd buck herself into judgment Day —
Hi! we cursed the *Bolivar* knocking round the Bay!

O her nose flung up to sky, groaning to be still —
Up and down and back we went, never time for breath;
Then the money paid at Lloyds' caught her by the heel,
And the stars ran round and round dancin' at our death!

Aching for an hour's sleep, dozing off between;
'Heard the rotten rivets draw when she took it green;
'Watched the compass chase its tail like a cat at play —
That was on the *Bolivar*, south across the Bay!

Once we saw between the squalls, lyin' head to swell —
Mad with work and weariness, wishin' they was we —
Some damned Liner's lights go by like a grand hotel;
Cheered her from the *Bolivar* swampin' in the sea.

Then a greybeard cleared us out, then the skipper laughed;
"Boys, the wheel has gone to Hell — rig the winches aft!
Yoke the kicking rudder-head — get her under way!"
So we steered her, pully-haul, out across the Bay!

Just a pack o' rotten plates puttied up with tar,
In we came, an' time enough, 'cross Bilbao Bar.
Overloaded, undermanned, meant to founder, we
Euchred God Almighty's storm, bluffed the Eternal Sea!

Seven men from all the world back to town again,
Rollin' down the Ratcliffe Road drunk and raising Cain:
Seven men from out of Hell. Ain't the owners gay,
'Cause we took the *Bolivar* safe across the Bay?

Notes: http://www.kipling.org.uk/rg_bolivar1.htm