

Yangtse River Shanty

Chorus:

G-----Am
A-way-ay, boys, a-way-o!
C-----G
Blow me down this Yang-tse Riv-er,
-----D7---G
A-way, boys, lift and walk a-way!

G-----C-G
My lo-tus lady, I'll see no more,
-----C---G/Am
A-way, boys, a-way-o!
C-----G
Since I left her on the Chi-na shore,
-----D7---G
A-way, boys, lift and walk a-way!

When we first met, she was like a queen,
A-way, boys, a-way-o!
Prettiest little thing I'd ever seen,
A-way, boys, lift and walk a-way! (CHO)

She'd flashing eyes and long black hair,
A-way, boys, a-way-o!
All I could do was stand and stare,
A-way, boys, lift and walk a-way!

I bought her silks and a golden comb,
A-way, boys, a-way-o!
Trouble's over now, the anchor's home,
A-way, boys, lift and walk a-way! (CHO)

I blowed my silver for to win her,
A-way, boys, a-way-o!
Now there's nothing left but donkey's dinner,
A-way, boys, lift and walk a-way!

We're homeward bound, cookie's in the galley,
A-way, boys, a-way-o!
Farewell, Young Moon, of the Yangtse Valley,
A-way, boys, lift and walk a-way! (CHO)(2X)

We don't know a lot about Hamish Maclaren, the composer of this song. His parents in northern Scotland sent him at the age of twelve to the Royal Naval College in Dartmouth where he trained to become a "Naval Officer and a Gentleman," and got his hands-on sailing experience aboard a black cutter called the *Wideon*. He graduated in 1917, in time to serve as a gunnery officer aboard a destroyer in a skirmish with German armoured cruisers. After the war Maclaren continued to serve in the Royal Navy and was sent out to the China Station, where he mustered out in Shanghai during the late 1920's to follow a life of personal adventure, beginning with a White Russian dancer. His first novel was *The Private Opinions of a British Bluejacket* in 1929. His articles appeared in magazines such as *The Spectator*, *The Blue Peter*, and *The Cornhill Magazine*. His sailor's folk opera *Sailor with Banjo* was published in 1930, and his semi-autobiographic book *Cockalorum* in 1936. According to a young cousin who was named after him, Maclaren rejoined the Royal Navy in World War II, saw action as a lieutenant commander, and lived to about 1970.

The original words composed for "Yangtse River Shanty" by Maclaren are as follows. Unfortunately, there is no clue to what his tune may have been. He notes that:

"Strictly speaking, this type of song – from the shanty model – is, I suppose, now quite out of date; but personally I like to think that it has some life in it yet, and may note, in support of this whim, that I have myself helped to weigh anchor by hand, tramping round the capstan to music."

YANGTSE RIVER SHANTY

(Words for one more old bold out-of-date air)

O I'll never see my lotus lady more,
Away boys, walk away together!
Since I left her by the shore, the China shore,
Thrice again for luck and better weather!
Sweetest river flower, my Yangtse honey,
Walk away boys, walk away!
She was my good girl, she took my money,
Away boys, lift and walk away!

She spent my shining dollars like a queen,
Away boys, walk away together!
Her eye 'twas blacker than was ever seen,
Twice again for luck and better weather!
Sure I blowed my silver fortune for to win her,
Walk away boys, walk away!
And now there's nothing left but pork for dinner,
Away boys, lift and walk away!

To my beauty I bequeathed a golden comb,
Away boys, walk away together!
But trouble's over now the anchor's home.
Once again for luck and better weather!
We're bound afar and cookie's in the galley,
Walk away boys, walk away!
Fare thee well, young moon of all the Yangtse valley,
Away boys, lift and walk away!