

SAILORS' SONGS.

BY CAPT. R. C. ADAMS.

"Odd's life! must one swear to the truth of a song."—*Matthew Pryor.*

The songs of the sea offer a field for research, and one who could trace the origin and use of some of them would doubtless discover interesting, romantic histories. No information can be obtained from sailors themselves on this point. No one knows who their favorite "Reuben Ranzo" was, or whether "Johnny Boker" ever did what he is so often requested to "do," nor can any one say more concerning the virtues and vices of "Sally Brown" than is declared in song.

Sailors' songs may be divided into two classes. First, are the sentimental songs sung in the fore-castle, or on the deck in the leisure hours of the dog watch, when the crew assemble around the fore-hatch to indulge in yarns and music. Dibdin's songs, which the orthodox sailor of the last half century was supposed to adhere to as closely as the Scotch Presbyterian to his Psalter, are falling into disuse, and the negro melodies and the popular shore songs of the day are now most frequently

heard. The other class of songs is used at work, and they form so interesting a feature of life at sea, that a sketch of that life would be incomplete without some allusion to them. These working songs may be divided into three sets :—

First, those used where a few strong pulls are needed, as in boarding a tack, hauling aft a sheet, or tautening a weather brace. "Haul the Bow-Line," is a favorite for this purpose. The shantyman, as the solo singer is called, standing up "beforehand," as high above the rest of the crew as he can reach, sings with as many quirks, variations and quavers as his ingenuity and ability can attempt, "Haul the bow-line, Kitty is my darling;" then all hands join in the chorus, "Haul the bow-line, the bow-line haul," shouting the last word with great energy and suiting action to it by a combined pull, which must once be witnessed by one who desires an exemplification of "a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull altogether."

HAUL THE BOW-LINE.

CHORUS.



Haul the bow-line, Kitty is my dar-ling; Haul the bow-line, the bow-line haul.

Then the song is repeated with a slight change in words, "Haul the bow-line, the clipper ship's a rolling," &c., and next time perhaps, "Haul the bow-line, our bully mate is growling."

Great latitude is allowed in the words and the shantyman exercises his own discretion. If he be a man of little comprehension or versatility, he will say

the same words over and over, but if he possesses some wit, he will insert a phrase alluding to some peculiarity of the ship, or event of the time, which will cause mouths to open wider and eyes to roll gleefully, while a lively pull follows that rouses the sheet home and elicits the mate's order "Belay!"

Another common song is :—