

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Bold Dighton

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Come all you bold heroes that plough the rough main,
Give ear to our story, the truth I'll explain.
It was our misfortune which happened in great war,
And how we escaped from the French at Bastar.

We were then confined on the Guadaloupe shore,
Of true valiant seamen four hundred or more,
Shut up in a small compass being greatly distressed,
With painful disease and famine oppressed.

A gallant young hero, from Saint Lucia he came,
Both generous and wealthy, called Dighton by name.
He had the heart of a lion, the soul of a prince,
And friends's kind impulse to us did evince.

He came to our prison, he mourned our sad fate,
He launched out his gold to relieve our sad state.
Five hundred bright guineas he gave, I am sure,
Which did greatly relieve us in this distressed hour.

At this generous action the French did complain.
They soon did confine him with fetters and chains
With us in the prison, it was them we might see,
But from his chains and fetters we soon set him free.

Says Dighton, "My boys, if you'll take my advice,
Now if you'll prove constant it is done in a trice.
Down by the Umpire[1] the Tiger doth lie,'
A stout and fine coaster, she is fit for the sea.

"The captain's on shore and we have all things on board,
A plenty of cannons, pikes, pistols, and swords.
Now if you will prove constant and stand by my side,
We will board her, my boys, and we will sail the next tide."

Then at this adventure we all did agree,
Each breast loaded with ardor to fight and be free.
"Come give us your signal," each sailor replied,
"We are ready to conquer, or die by your side."

"Prepare for the conflict, no longer delay.
But keep yourselves cool, boys, my orders obey."

Three gallant young seamen as seconds he chose.
Our signal for freedom was, "Death to our foes!"

Then out of prison we all rushed amain.
The three guns were fired, the French guards were slain.
On board of the Tiger we soon rushed our way.
We cut both her cables and stood out to sea.

Which caused a sad rumpus, it being midnight.
The Frenchmen bawled out in a terrible fright,
"Mon Dieu, fracter engie! [2]" Drums beat and bells toll,
Our hero shouts, "Freedom!" to each valiant soul.

Their fortress was open, their cannon did play,
Their shot flew iike hail as we got under way.
They shattered our spars as we sailed from the shore.
To bid them good-bye we a broadside let pour.

Then out of all danger we thought ourselves clear,
But for this mistake we did pay very dear.
Next morning at dayiight it was there we espied
The Lion, a corvette, hang down on our side.

She plied us with grapeshot with broadside so sore,
Which caused the Tiger to make her guns roar.
With thirty-six eighteens the Lion did growl,
And eighteen brass nines the fierce Tiger did bowl.

Yard-arms and broadsides, for three glasses we lay,
At length our broadside cut her mainmast away.
Says Dighton, "My boys, if you are tired of this fun
You now have your choice, to fight or to run!"

To spare blood and slaughter the crew did incline.
To run down the corvette it was our design.
But at this same moment she grappled us fierce,
And then sword in hand was our only resource.

To board and to slaughter they were fully bent.
To give us no quarters was their sole intent.
To board us thrice over they tried with this view,
But they were repulsed by the Tiger's bold crew.

Then Dighton cried out as each hero should feel,
Whose eyes transferred fury like bright burnished steel,
"There is death to each man on the point of my sword.
Come all my bold heroes, let us jump overboard!"

Then over the bulwark he jumped like a roe.

One stroke from his sabre laid two Frenchmen low.
On board of the corvette we all rushed so fierce
That soon from their quarters the French did disperse.

Steel sparkle, pikes rattle, and swords loudly clash,
And the blood on her decks like salt water did dash.
Her scuppers with huge streams of crimson did pour,
And the blue seas all round us rolled purple with gore.

Three hundred brave seamen were slain of their crew,
When the Frenchmen gave out and they cried, "Mon Dieu!"
They fell on their knees and their weapons let fall,
And then our boid hero for quarter did call.

We soon gave them quarter and then we did hear
That for to engage us they did volunteer.
They trebled our metal with e'en two for one,
But Fortune's kind favor saved Freedom's bold son.

Then Dighton cried out, "Now the battle is o'er,
Let the French learn this lesson and teach it on shore,
Go back to their country and friends and take care
To treat well in future each prisoner of war!"

To conduct the French back we the Tiger then gave,
Our seamen were generous and valiant and brave;
Then down to Antigua with our corvette we bore,
And on the next morning we all jumped ashore,

Drink a health to each seaman that ploughs the rough main.
May each, crowned with laurels, return home again.
May the fair of our country some gratitude show
To the sons of the ocean that fight the proud foe.

And as for brave Dighton, our true valiant friend,
May glories pursue him while honors attend,
And when he does die may each seaman draw near,
Come kneel at his tombstone and let fall a tear.

[1] Originally "For 'tis down by yon pier the Tyger does lay"
[2] What an English ear heard the French say.

From Ballads and Sea Songs from Nova Scotia, Mackenzie
From the singing and recitation of Alexander Harrison, Cumberland County.

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