

The Greenland Fishery

Source:

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Roll and Go

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"Twas in eigh - teen hun - dred and fif - ty three

And of June the thir - teenth day,

That our gal - lant ship her an - chor weighed,

And for Green - land bore a way, brave boys,

And for Green - land bore a way.

2. The lookout in the crosstrees stood,
With his spyglass in his hand.
"There's a whale, there's a whale, there's a whalefish,"
he cried,
"And she blows at every span, brave boys,
And she blows at every span."
3. The captain stood on the quarterdeck,
And a fine little man was he.
"Overhaul! Overhaul! Let your davit-tackles fall,
And launch your boats for sea, brave boys,
And launch your boats for sea."
4. Now the boats were launched and the men aboard,
And the whale was in full view;
Resolv-ed was each seaman bold
To steer where the whalefish blew, brave boys,
To steer where the whalefish blew.
5. We struck the whale, the line paid out,
But she gave a flourish with her tail;
The boat capsized and four men were drowned,
And we never caught that whale, brave boys,
And we never caught that whale.
6. "To lose the boat," our captain said,
"It grieves my heart full sore;
But oh! to lose four gallant men,
It grieves me ten times more, brave boys,
It grieves me ten times more."
7. "The winter star doth now appear,
So, boys, we'll anchor weigh;
It's time to leave this cold country,
And homeward bear away, brave boys,
And homeward bear away."
8. Oh, Greenland is a dreadful place,
A land that's never green,
Where there's ice and snow, and the whalefishes blow,
And the daylight's seldom seen, brave boys,
And the daylight's seldom seen.

Background Information

"Greenland Fishery" or "The Whale" was not more popular on whaling ships than in the ships of the merchant marine. It arose in the British, not the American, whaling trade, probably in the latter part of the eighteenth century, and in the earlier British versions, the ship's name, the *Lion*, and the captain's, Speedicutt, are both preserved.