

Long Drag Shanty

"...The custom of 'burying the dead horse', observed in many sailing ships, was the occasion on which the first month's sea service had been completed, and the seaman, having worked his advance of one month's pay, felt himself free of debt. His creditor, tailor or boarding-house master, who had cashed his 'month's advance note,' was living in affluence on the proceeds while he, the seaman, was the 'horse' supporting the creditor in indulgence!

"...The crowd aboard would stage a celebration. A hatch or grating, on which a dummy figure clothed in discarded rags or attire was placed, would be dragged aft by all hands, to exaggerated lusty pulls - that moved the grating no more than an inch or two at each affected strain. On completion of the exploit, the grating and its burden hauled aft to the cabin door, it was expected that a further payment in the shape of a bottle or two would be tendered by the master. David Bone, Capstan Bars.

Hugill says the this was followed by 'tricing the effigy up to the main yard-arm, and firing a blue flare at the same time as a seaman on the yard cut the gantline to allow the horse to drop into the drink.

A poor old man came riding by,
And they say so and we hope so.
They say old man your horse will die,
Poor old man.

And if he dies we'll tan his hide,
And if he don't we'll ride him again.

One month this rotten life we've led,
While you lay on your, feather bed.

But now your month is up old turk,
Get up you swine and look for work!

Get up you swine and look for graft,
Me and the crew will drag you aft.

We'll drag you aft to the cabin door,
Here's hopin' that we'll see you no more

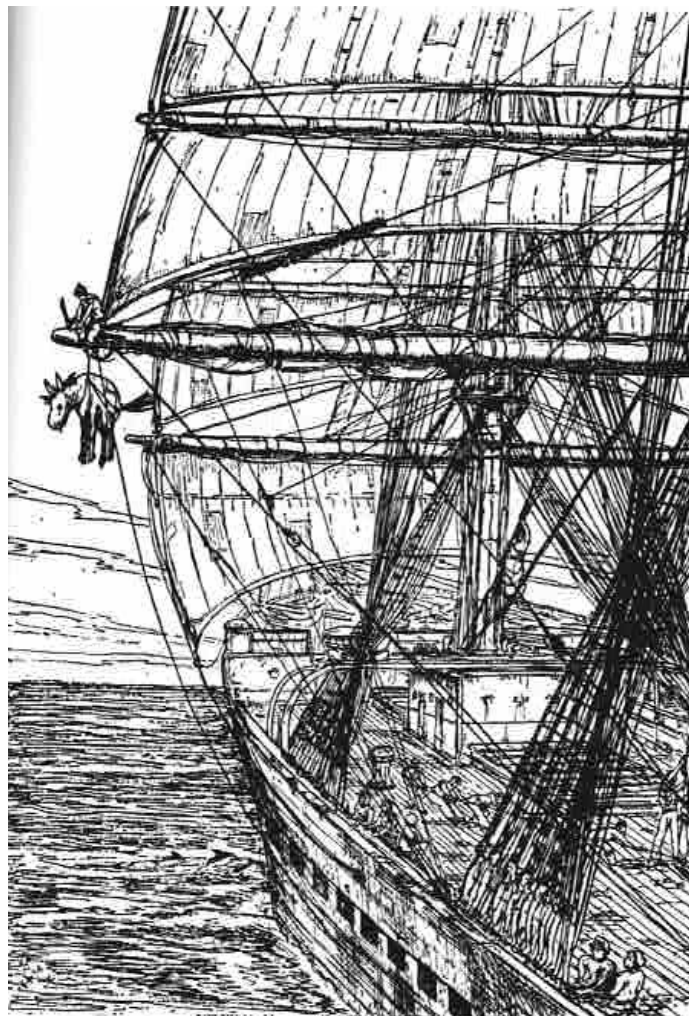
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He's dead as a nail in the lamp room door,
He's dead as a nail, that son of a whore.

We'll hoist him up to the main yard arm,
High aloft to the main yard arm.

We'll drop him off in the bottom of the sea,
Right down deep in the bottom of the sea.

The waves will make him roll and roll
Where the sharks'll have his body
and the devil take his soul.



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