

Charles Sackville (1638-1706)

1 *Song*

Written at Sea, in the first Dutch War, 1665, the Night before an Engagement.

To all you ladies now at land,
We men at sea indite;
But first would have you understand
How hard it is to write:
The Muses now, and Neptune too, 5
We must implore to write to you.
With a fa, la, la, la, la.

For though the Muses should prove kind,
And fill our empty brain;
Yet if rough Neptune rouse the wind, 10
To wave the azure main,
Our paper, pen, and ink, and we,
Roll up and down our ships at sea.
With a fa, & c.

Then if we write not by each post, 15
Think not we are unkind;
Nor yet conclude our ships are lost,
By Dutchmen, or by wind:
Our tears we'll send a speedier way,
The tide shall bring them twice a-day. 20
With a fa, & c.

The king, with wonder and surprise,
Will swear the seas grow bold;
Because the tides will higher rise,
Than e'er they used of old: 25
But let him know, it is our tears
Bring floods of grief to Whitehall stairs.
With a fa, & c.

Should foggy Opdam chance to know

Our sad and dismal story; 30
The Dutch would scorn so weak a foe,
And quit their fort at Goree:
For what resistance can they find
From men who've left their hearts behind?
With a fa, & c. 35

Let wind and weather do its worst,
Be you to us but kind;
Let Dutchmen vapour, Spaniards curse,
No sorrow we shall find:
'Tis then no matter how things go, 40
Or who's our friend, or who's our foe.
With a fa, & c.

To pass our tedious hours away,
We throw a merry main;
Or else at serious ombre play: 45
But why should we in vain
Each other's ruin thus pursue?
We were undone when we left you.
With a fa, & c.

But now our fears tempestuous grow, 50
And cast our hopes away;
Whilst you, regardless of our woe,
Sit careless at a play:
Perhaps, permit some happier man
To kiss your hand, or flirt your fan. 55
With a fa, & c.

When any mournful tune you hear,
That dies in every note;
As if sigh'd with each man's care,
For being so remote; 60
Think how often love we've made
To you, when all those tunes were play'd.
With a fa, & c.

In justice you cannot refuse
To think of our distress, 65

When we for hopes of honour lose
Our certain happiness;
All those designs are but to prove
Ourselves more worthy of your love.
With a fa, & c. 70

And now we've told you all our loves,
And likewise all our fears,
In hopes this declaration moves
Some pity from your tears;
Let's hear of no inconstancy, 75
We have too much of that at sea.
With a fa, la, la, la, la.

1701

(From *Specimens of the British Poets*. With Biographical and Critical Notices and an Essay on English Poetry by Thomas Campbell. A New Edition. Philadelphia, 1855)