

Adapted for singing by Mike Kennedy, ©2010

Key: C (7/F)

As sung 10/25/12

Rathlin Head

G--C-----G-----C-----F
We left the murk of Mersey-side, we left the flaring town;
----C-----Am-----F-----G
All smouldering red by Spanish Head the stormy sun went down;
----Am----F-----Am--C-----F
We saw the lamp blink out by the Mull o' Gallo-way,
-----C-----Am-----F-----G
And in the dead of night to Rathlin's Light a long good-bye did say –
----F-----G
Be-fore the light of morning.

Black deep the night without a star, both sky and sea did fill;
So cautious crept we through the dark, our engines near stood still;
All salt like tears on rope and rail, the sea mist clinging grey . . .
And Rathlin Island close to port, Kintyre to starboard lay –
Before the light of morning.

We heard across the blind black tide the lighthouse boom forlorn;
All night we heard a Glasgow barque blowing the old cow's horn;
And groping slow we passed her by, a bare ship's length away –
"A close thing with that barque," was all I heard the Old Man say –
Before the light of morning.

All houseless stand the unfenced fields that cold and green do roll,
Where the winds do herd the berg and floe that calve around the Pole;
Oh, peace be on the small green fields in a land that's far away,
And on the little farms wherein folks a-sleeping lay –
Before the light of morning.

And, oh, good-bye the narrow seas and the forelands loud with foam!
There's many the turning in the road that brings the sailor home;
Full speed once more our engines throbbed as faint the east grew grey,
And I turned my face to Rathlin Head, and a long good-bye did say –
---F-----G-----Am
In the cold grey light of morning.

Notes:

From **Songs and Chanties: 1914-1916**, edited by Cicely Fox Smith, published by Elkin Mathews, London, UK, © 1919, pp. 95-97.

"Rathlin Light" is located on Altacarry Head, Rathlin Island, North Channel, Northern Ireland, while "Kintyre" is a peninsula in western Scotland.