The Fisherman's Wife

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Fa wid be a fisherman's wife
Tae work wi' a tub an a scrubber an' a knife
A deid oot fire an' a raivel'd bed
An' awa tae the mussels in the mornin.

cho: Here we come scoorin in,
Three reefs tae the foresail in.
There's nae a dry stick tae pit on wer back,
But still we're aa teetotllers.

Noo, fa'll gie's a hand tae rin a ripper lead
Tae try for a coddie in the bay o' Peterheid?
They're maybe at the Lummies or the clock on Sautis'eid
Fen we gaun tae the sma lines in the mornin.

Ma puir aul father's in the middle o' the flair
Beatin heuks ontae tippets an they're hingin on his chair.
They're made wi horses' hair, man, for that's the best o' gear
Tae be gyan tae the fishin in the mornin.

Syne it's doon the Geddle Braes in the middle o' the nicht
Wi an aul seerup tin an a can'le for a licht,
Tae gaither up the pullars, ev'ry een o' them in sicht
So we'll get the linie baited for the mornin.

It's easy to the cobbler, sittin in his neuk,
His big copper kettle hingin on a crook.
But we're in the boo and we cannae get a heuk
It's sair hard work in the mornin.

It's nae the kin o' life that a gentle quine can thole
Wi her fingers reid raw wi the scrubbin oot a yole
An a littlen on her hip, she's awa tae cairry coal,
She'll be caaed sair deen in the mornin.

Still an aa she widnae change for the gran'est o' yer gear
For she never kens the minute when her hairt'll loup wi fear.
For he's awa tae the sea an he's aa that she has dear
She qued be a widow wi his bairn in the mornin.

Fa wid = Who would
deid oot fire = no time to light it

raivel'd bed = no time to make it
scoorin = skelpin' (driving)
Three reefs tae the foresail in = under high winds
teetotllers = teetotalers
gie's = give us
ripper = metal bar with hooks, tied to a sea line
coddie = codfish
Lummies & Salt House Head = local landmarks
gaun, gyan= going
puir aul = poor old
flair = floor
Beatin heuks ontae tippets = attaching hooks to leaders
syne = in time
Wi an aul seerup tin an a can'le for a licht =
    With an old syrup can (to hold the bait) & a candle for a light
pullars = peeler crabs - soft-shelled for bait
boo = bow
quine = quean (young woman)
thole = endure
yole = fishing yawl
littlen = little one
caaed sair deen = get up for work too early
gran'est o' yer gear = the best one might have
loup = flip-flop
qued = could
bairn = child

An Aberdeen song, still current. See Sheila Douglas, _The Sang's the Thing_. (Polygon, Edinburgh, 1992) Sung by "The Shipping News" at the Mystic Sea Music Festival, June 1998. AJS
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