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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ON PATROL ***

Transcriber's note:

Minor spelling and punctuation inconsistencies, mainly quotes that had not been closed, have been harmonized. Missing page numbers are page numbers that were not shown in the original text.

ON PATROL

ON PATROL

BY

KLAXON

AUTHOR OF 'H. M. S. —'

**William Blackwood and Sons
Edinburgh and London
1919**

TO

D. V. B.

THEY watch us leaving harbour for the greatest game of all,
And wonder if we're coming back across the greedy sea;
They never know the fighting thrill or high adventure's call—
I rather think the women folk are better men than we.
But I suspect they say of us as out to sea we go,

In all our panoply of pride from Orkney to the Nore:
"It keeps them quiet, we suppose—they like the work, we know—
And soon perhaps they'll tire and play some safer game than War."

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ix

TO——

TO——.

3

HE went to sea on the long patrol,
Away to the East from the Corton Shoal,
But now he's overdue.
He signalled me as he bore away
(A flickering lamp through leaping spray,
And darkness then till judgment day),
"So long! Good luck to you!"

He's waiting out on the long patrol,
Till the names are called at the muster-roll
Of seamen overdue.
Far above him, in wind and rain,
Another is on patrol again—
The gap is closed in the Naval Chain
Where all the links are new.

Over his head the seas are white,
And the wind is blowing a gale to-night,
As if the Storm-King knew,
And roared a ballad of sleet and snow
To the man that lies on the sand below,
A trumpet-song for the winds to blow
To seamen overdue.

Was it sudden or slow—the death that came?
Roaring water or sheets of flame?
The end with none to view?
No man can tell us the way he died,
But over the clouds Valkyries ride
To open the gates and hold them wide
For seamen overdue.

But whether the end was swift or slow,
By the Hand of God, or a German blow,
My messmate overdue—
You went to Death—and the whisper ran
As over the Gates the horns began,
Splendour of God! We have found a man—
Good-bye! Good luck to you!

OLD WOMEN

OLD WOMEN.

FAIN'T against the twilight, dim against the evening,
Fading into darkness against the lapping sea,
She sailed away from harbour, from safety into danger,
The ship that took him from me—my sailor boy from me.

He went away to join her, from me that loved and bore him,
Loved him ere I bore him, that was all the world to me.
"No time for leave, mother, must be back this evening,
Time for our patrol again, across the winter sea."

Six times over, since he went to join her,
Came he to see me, to run back again.
"Four hours' leave, mother—still got the steam up,
Going on patrol to-night—the old East lane."

"Seven times lucky, and perhaps we'll have a battle,

Then I'll bring a medal back and give it you to keep."
And his name is in the paper, with close upon a hundred,
Who lie there beside him, many fathom deep.

And beside him in the paper, somebody is writing,
—God! but how I hate him—a liar and a fool,—
"Where is the British Navy—is it staying in the harbours?
Has the Nelson spirit in the Fleet begun to cool?"

CHIN UP

9

CHIN UP.

11

ARE the prices high and taxes stiff, is the prospect sad and dark?
Have you seen your capital dwindle down as low as the German mark?
Do you feel your troubles around you rise in an endless dreary wall?
Well—thank your God you were born in time for the Greatest War of all.

It will be all right in a thousand years—you won't be bankrupt then.
This isn't the time of stocks and shares, it's just the age of men.
The one that sticks it out will win—so don't lie down and bawl,
But thank your God you've helped to win the noblest War of all.

12

Away to the East in Flanders' mud, through Dante's dream of Hell,
The troops are working hard for peace with bayonet, bomb, and shell,
With poison gas and roaring guns beneath a smoking pall;
Yes—thank your God your kin are there—the finest troops of all.

You may be stripped of all you have—it may be all you say,
But you'll have your life and eyesight left, so stow your talk of pay.
You won't be dead in a bed of lime with those that heard the Call;
So thank your God you've an easy job in the Greatest War of all.

It isn't the money that's going to count when the Flanders' men return,
And a shake of your hand from Flanders' men is a thing you've got to earn.
Just think how cold it's going to be in the Nation's Judgment Hall;
So damn your troubles and find your soul in the Greatest War of all!

13

"... THAT HAVE NO DOUBTS"

"... THAT HAVE NO DOUBTS."

17

—RUDYARD KIPLING.

THE last resort of Kings are we, but the voice of peoples too—
Ask the guns of Valmy Ridge—
Lost at the Beresina Bridge,
When the Russian guns were roaring death and the Guard was charging through.

Ultima Ratio Regis, we—but he who has may hold,
Se curantes Dei curant,
Hear the gunners that strain and pant,
As when before the rising gale the Great Armada rolled.

18

Guns of fifty—sixty tons that roared at Jutland fight,
Clatter and clang of hoisting shell;
See the flame where the salvo fell

Amidst the flash of German guns against the wall of white.

The sons of English carronade or Spanish culverin—

The Danish windows shivered and broke

When over the sea the children spoke,

And groaning turrets rocked again as we went out and in.

We have no passions to call our own, we work for serf or lord,

Load us well and sponge us clean—

Be your woman a slave or queen—

And we will clear the road for you who hold us by the sword.

19

We come into our own again and wake to life anew—

Put your paper and pens away,

For the whole of the world is ours to-day,

And we shall do the talking now to smooth the way for you.

Howitzer gun or Seventy-five, the game is ours to play,

And hills may quiver and mountains shake,

But the line in front shall bend or break.

What is it to us if the world is mad? For we are the Kings to-day.

SKY SIGNS

SKY SIGNS.

23

WHEN ALL THE GUNS ARE SPONGED AND CLEANED, AND FUZES GO TO STORE,
WHEN ALL THE WIRELESS STATIONS CRY—"COME HOME, YOU SHIPS OF WAR"—
"COME HOME AGAIN AND LEAVE PATROL, NO MATTER WHERE YOU BE."

We'll see the lights of England shine,

Flashing again on the steaming line,

As out of the dark the long grey hulls come rolling in from sea.

THE LONG-FORGOTTEN LIGHTS WILL SHINE AND GILD THE CLOUDS AHEAD,

OVER THE DARK HORIZON-LINE, ACROSS THE DREAMING DEAD

THAT WENT TO SEA WITH THE DARK BEHIND AND THE SPIN OF A COIN BEFORE.

Mark the gleam of Orfordness,

Showing a road we used to guess,

From the Shetland Isles to Dover cliffs—the shaded lane of war.

24

UP THE CHANNEL WITH GLEAMING PORTS WILL HOMING SQUADRONS GO,

AND SEE THE ENGLISH COAST ALIGHT WITH HEADLANDS ALL AGLOW

WITH THIRTY THOUSAND CANDLE-POWER FLUNG UP FROM FAR GRIS-NEZ.

Portland Bill and the Needles' Light—

Tompions back in the guns to-night—

For English lights are meeting French across the Soldiers' Way.

WHEN WE COME BACK TO ENGLAND THEN, WITH ALL THE WARRING DONE,

AND PAINT AND POLISH COME UP THE SIDE TO RULE ON TUBE AND GUN,

WE'LL KNOW BEFORE THE ANCHOR'S DOWN, THE TIDINGS WON'T BE NEW.

Lizard along to the Isle of Wight,

Every lamp was burning bright,

Northern Lights or Trinity House—we had the news from you!

25

AN ENTENTE

AS we were running the Channel along, with a rising wind abeam,
 Steering home from an escort trip as fast as she could steam,
 I'd just come up, relieving Bill, to look for Fritz again,
 When I turns to the Skipper an', "Sir," I says, "I 'ears an aeroplane."
 An' sure enough, from out o' the clouds astern, we seed 'im come,
 An' down the wind the engine sang with a reg'lar oarin' 'um.
 The Skipper 'e puts 'is glasses down, an' smilin' says to me,
 "We needn't be pointin' guns at 'im—'e's one o' the R.F.C.
 We don't expect to meet the Boche, or any o' his machines,
 From here to France an' back again—except for submarines."
 An' 'e looks again at the 'plane above, an' says, "I do believe
 It's a fightin' bus—good luck to them—an' lots of London leave."

30

An' jolly good luck, says I, says I,
 To you that's overhead;
 An' may you never go dry, go dry,
 Or want for a decent bed.
 With yer gaudy patch, says I, says I,
 Of Red an' White an' Blue—
 Oh, may the bullets go by, go by,
 An' not be findin' you.
 Astonishing luck, says I, says I,
 To you an' yer aeroplane;
 An' if it's yer joss to die, to die,
 When you go back again—
 May the enemy say as you drop below,
 An' you start your final dive:
 "Three of us left to see him go,
 An' it must be nice for him to know,
 That wasn't afraid o' five."

31

A BATTLE-PRAYER

A BATTLE-PRAYER.

35

SUBMARINES.

WHEN the breaking wavelets pass all sparkling to the sky,
 When beyond their crests we see the slender masts go by,
 When the glimpses alternate in bubbles white and green,
 And funnels grey against the sky show clear and fair between,
 When the word is passed along—"Stern and beam and bow"—
 "Action stations fore and aft—all torpedoes now!"
 When the hissing tubes are still, as if with bated breath
 They waited for the word to loose the silver bolts of death,
 When the Watch beneath the Sea shall crown the great Desire,
 And hear the coughing rush of air that greets the word to fire,
 We'll ask for no advantage, Lord—but only we would pray
 That they may meet this boat of ours upon their outward way.

36

THE BATTLE-FLEET.

THE moment we have waited long
 Is closing on us fast,
 When, cutting short the turret-gong,
 We'll hear the Cordite's Battle-song
 That hails the Day at last.

The clashing rams come driving forth
To meet the waiting shell,
And far away to East and North
Our targets steam to meet Thy Wrath,
And dare the Gates of Hell.
We do not ask Thee, Lord, to-day
To stay the sinking sun—
But hear Thy steel-clad servants pray,
And keep, O Lord, Thy mists away
Until Thy work is done.

37

DESTROYERS.

THROUGH the dark night
And the fury of battle
Pass the destroyers in showers of spray.
As the Wolf-pack to the flank of the cattle,
We shall close in on them—shadows of grey.
In from ahead,
Through shell-flashes red,
We shall come down to them, after the Day.
Whistle and crash
Of salvo and volley
Round us and into us while we attack.
Light on our target they'll flash in their folly,
Splitting our ears with the shrapnel-crack.
Fire as they will,
We'll come to them still,
Roar as they may at us—Back—Go Back!
White though the sea
To the shell-flashes foaming,
We shall be there at the death of the Hun.
Only we pray for a star in the gloaming
(Light for torpedoes and none for a gun).
Lord—of Thy Grace
Make it a race,
Over the sea with the night to run.

38

AN ADMINISTRATIVE VICTORY

AN ADMINISTRATIVE VICTORY.

41

A tale is told of a captain bold
Of E-boat Seventy-two;
She steered to eastward—pitched and rolled, and Poulson swore at her, damp and cold,
As E-boat captains do.
And off the mouth of the German Bight,
With Borkum on the bow,
She saw the smoke of a German fleet—MIND YOUR FINGERS—SEVENTY FEET!
WE'RE IN FOR BUSINESS NOW....
(For enemy ships are hard to find—
You have to take them quick;
So copy the Eastern vulture's rule, that waits for days for an Army mule—
Always ready to click.)
Out to the west from Helgoland
The big grey cruiser steered,
And the glinting rays of a rising sun flashed on funnel and mast and gun,

42

And—Admiral Schultz's beard.

Down the wind the E-boat came
And passed the searching screen;
Nobody guessed the boat was there, till they heard the wallop and saw the flare—
Where the pride of the fleet had been.

'Twixt white and green of dancing waves
The racing tracks were seen,
And Poulson watching them get there, cried—*Hold the crockery—Starboard side!*
For the kick of a magazine!

The escort ran and the cruisers ran
At the thought of an English snare;
Scattered and spread to left and right, to the friendly arms of the German Bight,
And left the ocean bare.

43

Then the coffee was spilt, the E-boat rolled
To a deuce of a shaking bang;
To the sound of the hammer of Aser-Thor, victory-song of Naval War,
The hull of the E-boat rang.

And Poulson swinging the eye-piece round,
Lifted eyebrows high,
For far aloft, when the smoke had cleared, he saw the flash of a golden beard
Against the empty sky.

"Admiral over! *Surface*, lads!
He's flying a belted sword;
Pipe the side or stern or bow, stand to attention smartly now—
Wherever he comes aboard."

The Admiral landed Cabré-wise
And high the fountains burst—
(What is the meaning of Cabré-wise? To men of the air it signifies—
His after-end was first).

44

They piped the side, and still they stood
To watch him struggle and heave,
As he fought the slope of the rounded deck (for none could pull at an Admiral's neck
Without the Admiral's leave).

They took him below, and sat him down
On the edge of the Captain's bed,—
Treatment vile for a foemen caught, they gave him a bottle of Navy Port—
Fiery, dark, and red.

They landed him at a Naval Base,
With S. two-twenty D.
Supplied—a large and bearded Hun: Grosse Admirals, angry, One—
For draft to Admiraltee.

And Grosse-Admiral Schultz von Schmidt,
Graf von Hansa-Zoom,
Faded away to Donnington Hall, to an English park with a guarded wall
—To an elegant private room.

45

And there he paced the carpet up,
And paced the carpet down,
"Alte Himmel!"—the prisoners cried—"Some one's trod on the German pride,
And dared the Hansa frown!"

The Admiral called for a fountain pen
And Reference Sheets^[1] galore,
And silence fell on the smoking-room—for Grosse-Admiral Hansa-Zoom
Was throwing a Gage of War.

"Can I believe your Lordships mean

*To stand so idly by—
When a young lieutenant of twenty-four, pleading the need of Naval War,
Shall make an Admiral fly?*

*Never shall I believe it true
That I should have to fall
On an icy sea with an awful spank, by the act of one of a junior rank,
I—Schultz, of Donnington Hall."*

46

Their Lordships read—and bells were heard
That woke the echoing past;
And Scouts and messengers jumped and fled—till all was still as a world of dead
Beneath the wireless mast.

My Lords in solemn conclave drew
Behind a bolted door,
Threshing it out in full debate—"Is it a case for an Acting Rate?
Or use of Martial Law?"

At four o'clock in the afternoon,
With tea-cups clattering past,
Along the echoing Portland floor the whisper passed from door to door—
"They've settled it all at last!"

And I have the word of a lady fair
In Room Two Thousand B—
(A perfect peach, I beg to state), who typed the letter in triplicate
And passed it on to me.

47

*"We find the Enemy Admiral's Note
Is based on Service Law—
That disrespect to a Flag afloat has sullied the fame of Poulson's boat
Despite the Needs of War.*

*But he erred unknowing—so we shall mask
His breach of Service pomp,—
We'll make him an Admiral, D.S.B.^[2]—Acting—payless—biscuit free,
In lieu of lodging and Comp.*

*We'll rate him at once as an A.I.O.^[3]
With a K.R.A. and an I,^[4]
We'll make him a deputy C.P.O.,^[5] with Rank of Admiral, whether or no,
And a beautiful Flag to fly."*

48

And now when Poulson sails to war
In E-boat Seventy-two,
The boatswains pipe and the bugles blare, "Stand to attention—forward there!
The Admiral's passing you!"

That is the tale as told to me
By a friend from Beatty's Fleet,
When over a glass (or even two), he swore to me that the tale was true,
In a Tavern in Regent Street.

A NIGHTMARE

A NIGHTMARE.

51

THE Council of Democracy around the table drew
(The table was a beauty—it was polished—it was new,
Twenty feet from side to side and half a mile in length,
Built of rosewood and mahogany of double extra strength.

The C in C had gone to jail to answer to the charge
Of saying what he thought about Democracy at large.
So the Council of Democracy had taken on the job,
After voting the removal of his Autocratic nob. 52
And the table was erected in a calm secluded spot,
Well away from any trenches, lest a voter should be shot).
And the Chairman raised a hammer and he hit the board a whack,
No one paid the least attention, so he put the hammer back.
Then he read the lengthy minutes of the gathering before,
To the ever-growing murmur of the Democratic snore.
And he put before the meeting all the questions of the day,
Such as "Shorter hours for Delegates, and seven times the pay."
With a minor matter for the end—"What shall the Council do
About this fellow Mackensen? they say he's coming through
With a hundred thousand hirelings of the Hohenzollern Line,
And breaking all the Union Rules by working after nine." 53
At this a group of Delegates departed for the door,
To consult with their constituents the conduct of the War.
The remainder started voting on the Delegation Pay,
And agreed with unanimity to seven quid a day.
They decided that unless the Germans travelled very fast,
There'd be time for all the speeches—so they took the matter last.
But just as Mr Blithers to the Chairman had addressed
His opinion—he departed for the Country of the Blest,
(Both in body and in spirit to the heavens he departed,
And the Council looked dispirited, though hardly broken-hearted).
All the delegates were wondering from whence the shell had come;
One arose to ask a question—Bang!!—he went to Kingdom Come. 54
"Mr Chairman," cried a Delegate. "A point of order! I
Don't believe the Huns are coming—it's an Autocratic lie.
I shall move the Army question do be left upon the Table,
And I'm going home to England just as fast as I am able."
Then he gathered up his papers, and was pushing back his chair,
When a heavy high explosive sent him sailing in the air.
The Chairman beat his hammer on the table all the while,
Yelling oaths and calling "Order" in a Democratic style.
But the Delegates were started on the question of the War,
(So as not to waste the speeches that they'd written out before).
And the Council of Democracy—a thousand fluent tongues—
Let the Germans have it hearty from its Democratic lungs. 55
Through the bursting of the shrapnel they were constant to the end,—
Kept referring to each other as "My honourable friend."
And in groups of ten and twenty they were blasted into space
By the disrespectful cannon of an Autocratic race,
Till the gathering had dwindled to an incoherent few,
Who were still explaining volubly what England ought to do,
When the cannon ceased abruptly and they heard the Germans cheer,
And a sergeant entered roaring, "Himmel, Ach! was Schmutz ist hier!
Mask your faces, pig-dogs, quickly—all the room is full of gas.
Vorwärts, Carl der Kindermörder—use your bayonet, Saxon ass!"
Faithful to the last, the Chairman, spying strangers all around,
Told them they were out of order; hardly seemed to touch the ground. 56
Told them of his best intentions, how with love of them he burned,
Shouted as the bayonet caught him, "Ow! the Council is adjourned!"

RELEASED

RELEASED.

WE are drifting back from the End of Hell to the home we long for so,—
WBack from the land of fear and hate that jeers at wounded men;
Maimed and crippled are we to-day, but free from curse or blow—
That we knew too well in the land of Cain, the guarded prisoners' den.

We drift away to the homes we left a thousand years ago,
And there we wait in the Truce of God for the hand of Death to fall,
Waiting aside in hovel or hall—where only neighbours know—
The broken men that the War has left to shun the gaze of all.

60

Is it nothing to you that pass us by—hurrying on your way,
Whispering low of peace and rest to the tune of a German song?
Only but for the Grace of God you might be where we lay—
With festering wounds in a truck for beasts, the butt of a laughing throng.

Peace and Rest? The peace will come when God shall stay His hand,
And change the heart of the German race that mocks at wounded men.
The rest you seek? What need of that? you fight for a Christian land,
And all Eternity waits for you—what need of rest till then?

61

We are broken and down in the fight of the world for an end to heathen lust,
But the sword we dropped when the darkness came is yours to handle yet.
If you sheathe the sword for a greed of gold or suffer the steel to rust,
The curse of the captive men be yours—the day when you forget—!

REGULUS

REGULUS.

65

(Written after reading the story of that name in 'A Diversity of Creatures'
by Kipling.)

OUT to the wharf where the long ship lay with her beak to the open sea,
He went by the way of the merchantmen that trade to the ports of Spain;
Clamouring folk beside him ran with sorrowing voice or wailing plea:
"Hero—Pride of the Roman State! Turn again at the Harbour-Gate,
Back and away from Tyrian hate with us to Rome again."

Out on the wharf he walked from those—that wailed and wept to see him go;
And hand in his she walked with him—her royal head on high.
And the crowd was still as she turned and spoke—her hand in his and her eyes aglow:
"Here where the tide and Tiber foam, I turn from you to an empty home.
But alone of women of wailing Rome I have no tears to dry;

66

"Pass to the sea and the Death beyond to the home of the Gods you left for Earth;
Of all the women of Rome to-night, no pride shall equal mine.
A God, the man that leaves me now—but ah! a lover that thought me worth—
The whispered word of a husband true—I thank the Gods that I hold from you
The right that fair Eurydice knew—the love of a man Divine."

A NORTH SEA NOTE

A NORTH SEA NOTE.

69

THE wind that whispered softly over Kiel across the Bay,
Died away as the dark closed down,
Till the Dockyard glare showed the ending of the day

In the Fortress-Town.

In the silence of the night as the big ships swung
To the buoys as the flood-tide made,
Came a clamour from the wind like a shield that is rung
By a foemen's blade.

Far above the masts where the wireless showed,
Traced out against a star-lit sky,
A voice called down from the Whist-hound's road
Where the clouds went by—

70

Listen down below—In the High Sea Fleet,
For a signal that was shouted up to me
By the sailors that I left on the old, old beat,
Far out in the cold North Sea.

They shouted up to me as the glass went down,
And they ducked to the North-West spray,
"Will you take a message to the Fortress-Town,
And the Fleet that is lying in the Bay?"

"Say that we are waiting in the waters of the North,
And we'll wait till the seas run dry—
Or the High Sea Fleet from the Bight comes forth,
And the twelve-inch shells go by.

71

"We have waited very long, but we haven't any doubt
They are longing for the day we'll meet.
But tell 'em as you pass that the sooner they are out,
All the better for the English Fleet.

"For when we see 'em sinking—(they'll be fighting to the last,
And for those that are lost we'll grieve,)
We will cheer for a signal at the Flagship's mast—
On arrival at the Base—Long Leave!"

SOMETHING WRONG

SOMETHING WRONG.

75

"THE German Fleet is coming,"
The Sunday papers say,
"And the shell will soon be humming
When they fix upon the Day."
All the Sunday experts write,
Working very late at night—
"They are coming—they'll be on you any day."

Though it's very cheery reading,
And we hear it ev'ry week;
Yet the Hun is still unheeding,
And is just as far to seek.
And it seems so unavailing
They should write and tell us so—
If the Hun is shortly sailing,
Couldn't *some one* let him know?

76

We are ready, and we're waiting,
And we know they're going to fight;
And we're just as good at hating
As the Brainy Ones that write.

But they talk of Information
They have gathered unbeknown—
That "the mighty German Nation
Is a mass of skin and bone."
And they take their affidavit
That a fight is due at sea:
Dammit—tell the German Navy,
What's the use of telling me?

WE

WE.

79

ALL our fighting brothers are away across the foam,
Hats off to the Englishman!
Here's a chance for Englishmen living safe at home,
Make a lot of money while you can!

We are fighting for the Right and the Honour of the Race
With the Bulldog Grip they know;
Who's the silly novice there putting on the pace?
You'll be taken for a Yank—Go slow!

All the Nations know us as the finest of the Earth;
Three cheers for the lads in blue!
An' we're drawing extra wages that are more than we are worth—
But a half-day's work will do.

80

The shades of England's fighting men are watching us with pride
As we live for England's fame;
To save us for posterity was why they went and died—
Oh! The War is a real fine game!

Let the War go rolling on alone for awhile,
Let the line stand fast in the West;
Let 'em learn to use the bayonet in the grand old style,
While the Bulldog Boys have a rest.

What's the good of hurrying? British pluck'll win;
We can stand to the strain all right.
What about another rise? Send the notice in—
Just to show how the Bulldogs fight.

81

Chorus! all together—We're the finest race of all,
So beware of the English Blade;
Now the fighting men are gone—why, however many fall,
All the more for the lads that stayed.

THE SAILOR'S VIEW

THE SAILOR'S VIEW.

85

(1916).

TOO proud to fight? I'm not so sure—our skipper now and then
Has lectured to us on patrol on foreign ships and men,

And other nation's submarines, when cruising round the Bight;
And 'seems to me—when they begin—the Yankee chaps can fight.
Why, if I was in the army (which I ain't—and no regrets)
And had my pick of Generals—from London's latest pets,
To Hannibal and Wellington—to follow whom I chose,
I wouldn't think about it long—I'd give the job to those
Who fought across a continent for three long years and more
(I bet the neutral papers didn't say in 'sixty-four
Of Jackson, Sherman, Lee and Grant—"The Yanks can only shout"—
That lot was somewhere near the front when pluck was handed out);
But what the Skipper said was this; "There's only been but one
Successful submarine attack before this war begun,
And it wasn't on a liner on the easy German plan,
But on a well-found man-of-war, and Dixon was the man
Who showed us how to do the trick, a tip for me and you,
And I'd like to keep the standard up of Dixon and his crew,
For they hadn't got a submarine that cost a hundred thou',
But a leaky little biscuit-box, and stuck upon her bow
A spar torpedo like a mine, and they and Dixon knew
That if they sank the enemy they'd sink the *David* too.
She'd drowned a crew or two before—they dredged her up again,
And manned and pushed her off to sea.—My oath, it's pretty plain
They had some guts to give away, that tried another trip
In a craft they knew was rather more a coffin than a ship;
And they carried out a good attack, and did it very well.
As a model for the future, why, it beats the books to Hell,
A tradition for the U.S.A., and, yes—for England too;
For they were men with English names, and kin to me and you,
And I'd like to claim an ancestor with Dixon when he died
At the bottom of the river at the *Housatonic's* side."

86

87

STONEWALL JACKSON

STONEWALL JACKSON.

91

OVER the low Virginian farms the smoke of the ev'ning rose and flowed,
The scent of cedar hung in the air—the scent of burning sap,
And up the valley the murmur died, the sound of feet on a dusty road—
A clatter and ring of horse and guns that led to Ashby's Gap.

And the Blue Ridge called to the Shenandoah stream,
As the Massanutton hills grew black—
"Look your last, Shenandoah—where the bayonets gleam,
On your man who is never coming back.

92

"Ah! Manassas, look again on the glimmer of the steel
That you lit with the red fires' glow,
When the Grey men roared at an all-night meal,
Look again as the Grey men go.

"He is looking back at us with a hand across his eyes,
Look your last, Shenandoah, as he rides
To a death beyond the Gap where the dust-clouds rise,
O'er the road that the greenwood hides.

"He will send a message back as the dark clouds lower,
And you'll hear it in the sighing of the breeze,
*Let us pass across the river (can you hear me, Shenandoah?)
To a rest in the shadow of the trees.*"

WET SHIPS

WET SHIPS.

95

"... And will remain on your Patrol till the 8th December...."—(*Extract from Orders.*)

THE North-East Wind came armed and shod from the ice-locked Baltic shore,
The seas rose up in the track he made, and the rollers raced before;
He sprang on the Wilhelmshaven ships that reeled across the tide.
"Do you cross the sea to-night with me?" the cold North-Easter cried—
Along the lines of anchored craft the Admiral's answer flashed,
And loud the proud North-Easter laughed as the second anchors splashed.
"By God! you're right—you German men, with a three-day gale to blow,
It is better to wait by your harbour gate than follow where I go!"

96

Over the Bight to the open sea the great wind sang as he sheered:
"I rule—I rule the Northern waste—I speak, and the seas are cleared;
You nations all whose harbours ring the edge of my Northern sea,
At peace or war, when you hear my voice you shall know no Lord but me."
Then into the wind in a cloud of foam and sheets of rattling spray,
Head to the bleak and breaking seas in dingy black and grey,
Taking it every lurch and roll in tons of icy green
Came out to her two-year-old patrol—an English submarine.
The voice of the wind rose up and howled through squalls of driving white:
"You'll know my power, you English craft, before you make the Bight;
I rule—I rule this Northern Sea, that I raise and break to foam.
Whom do you call your Overlord that dares me in my home?"
Over the crest of a lifting sea in bursting shells of spray,
She showed the flash of her rounded side as over to port she lay,
Clanging her answer up the blast that made her wireless sing:
"I serve the Lord of the Seven Seas. Ha! Splendour of God—the King!"

97

Twenty feet of her bow came out, dripping and smooth it sprang,
Over the valley of green below as her stamping engines rang;
Then down she fell till the waters rose to meet her straining rails—
"I serve my King, who sends me here to meet your winter gales."
(Rank upon rank the seas swept on and broke to let her through,
While high above her reeling bridge their shattered remnants flew);
*"If you blow the stars from the sky to-night, your boast in your teeth I'll fling,
I am your master—Overlord, and—Dog of the English King!"*

98

THAT BLINKIN' CAT

THAT BLINKIN' CAT.

101

(Late of H.M.S. *Maidstone.*)

IN the Diving-room, where the
O.O.D.^[6] his weary vigil keeps,
Battered and scarred with years of strife behind the door she sleeps,
Fighting her battles o'er again as ancient warriors may,
With bristling fur as she dreams anew of many a noble fray.
Savage and Silent,
Swift in the onslaught
As the great eagle
Stoops to the victim;
Guard of the Gangway,

102

Dreadful—prolific,
Mother of hundreds,
Terrier-Strafer,
Messenger-biter.

Hail to the guard of the *Maidstone's* Gangway—Skoal!

Sing of the day the air was full of words like "Alabaster,"
When she ate a piece of the Corporal's hand and bit the Quartermaster;
The day she fought with an Airedale dog and drove him back to shore—
For the sake of her sixty little ones, she fought—and had some more.

Faithful and loyal,
Guard of the Gangway,
Turning the dogs back—
Yelping and howling.
Biting her masters—
Corporals—any one
Fiercely domestic,
Easily queen of—
Pugnacious obstetrics—
Motherly War.

103

Hail to the terror and pride of the *Maidstone*—Skoal!!

Sing of the day she won the fray with a new "Pandora" dog,
And the Quartermaster shone with pride as he entered in the log:
"At 10 P.M. we doused our pipes and drew the *Nettle's* fires,
At 10.15 six births aboard—*that blinkin' cat of ours!*"

1797.

1797.

107

OUR brothers of the landward side
Are bound by Church and stall,
By Councils Œcumenical,
By Gothic arches tall;
But we who know the cold grey sea,
The salt and flying spray,
We praise the Lord in our fathers' way,
In the simple faith of the sea we pray,
To the God that the winds and waves obey
Who sailed on Galilee.
We pray as the Flag-Lieutenant prayed,
At St Vincent's cabin door
(Twenty sail of the line in view—
South-West by South they bore):
"O Lord of Hosts, I praise Thee now,
And bow before Thy might,
Who has given us fingers and hands to fight,
And twenty ships of the line in sight;
Thou knewest, O Lord, and placed them right—
To leeward, on the bow."

108

AFTER THE WAR

AFTER THE WAR.

THAT far-off day when Peace is signed (and all the papers say—

"A most important by-election starts at Kew to-day;

We urge our readers one and all to loyally support

The Independent Candidate—Count Katzenjammerdordt")

Will change a lot of little things—perhaps we'll get some leave,

And hear a yarn of extra pay, which no one will believe;

The salvage ships will hurry out, two thousand wrecks to find,

The monuments to Kultur that the Huns have left behind.

112

We'll watch the sweepers put to sea ten million mines to seek,

And—Patrol Flotilla Exercise will start within a week;

Someone Big will say to Someone: "Time for work and time for play,

(Rub his hands together briskly) We'll commence the work to-day;

They have had their fun and fighting, and they must be getting slack,

Stop all leave and start manœuvres—for the good old times are back."

Then destroyers and torpedo-boats and submarines and oilers

Will receive a little notice headed "Maintenance of Boilers,"

"To economise in fuel while the ships are out at sea

Each pound of steam will count as two, and every knot as three."

We'll have the old manœuvre Rules to show us what to do.

"I rose within two thousand yards and have torpedoed you,"

113

My counter-claim is obvious—to port you must retire,"

"I sank you with a Maxim gun just as you rose to fire."

Ships will carry navigation lights—"Precautionary Measure,"

"An infringement of this solemn rule incurs My Lords' Displeasure."

Yes, the after-war manœuvres will be fearful to behold,

Not been held since nineteen—"half a minute, surely you've been told"),

Hush, you'll get me into trouble ("it was eighteen months ago—

And the whole Grand Fleet was in it—I was there, I ought to know:

Red Fleet to start from Helgoland and Blue from Udsire Light,

To meet in sixty-twenty North and have a morning fight.

No ship should cross a line between the Jahde and Amrum Bank,

But should a German flag be seen (unless of junior rank),

114

No captain can do very wrong who indicates by guns—

We won't have our manœuvres spoilt by interfering Huns.

Perhaps the wording isn't right, perhaps it isn't true,

But we've got to have manœuvres when there's nothing else to do.")

And when the Censor fades away and leaves the presses clear

For all the "Truths about the War," by "One who has no fear,"

And all the "Contract Scandals," by "A Clerk behind the Door,"

The book I want to see in print is "Humours of the War,"

Though I fear the other Censor (Morals, Cinemas, and Vice)

Would expurgate the best of them as being hardly nice;

Still, even with the cream suppressed a volume could be filled

With the epigrams of killing and the jokes of being killed,

115

With a preface by the officer we rescued from the wave,

When a cloud of steam and lyddite smoke lay o'er the "Bluecher's" grave,

Who, as the bowmen fished him out and passed him aft to dry,

Read the name upon their ribbons with a twinkle in his eye,

And said: "A Westo ship, I think—I guess my luck is in,

I'm sick of German substitutes—now for some Plymouth gin."

And a picture of the sailor in a certain submarine,

Which was diving through the waters where the sweepers hadn't been,

And who heard a muffled bumping noise that passed along the side—

A noise that many men have heard an instant ere they died;

And broke the silence following the last appalling thud

With "Good old ruddy Kaiser! there's another bloomin' dud!"

116

There's a story too of Jutland, or perhaps another show,

When the cruisers and destroyers had a meeting with the foe;

And as the range was closing, and they waited for the word,

From a sailor at an after-gun the following was heard:

"It isn't *that* that turns me up—'e's not the only one"—

But then the roar of ranging guns—the action had begun—

And for twenty awful minutes there was undiluted hell,

With flame and steam and cordite smoke and high-explosive shell.

Then as the bugle-call rang out, the savage fire to check,
The loading numbers wiped their brows and looked around the deck:
"As I was saying," came the voice, "before this row began,
I think 'e should 've married 'er—if 'e'd bin 'alf a man."

LOW VISIBILITY

LOW VISIBILITY.

119

*We sailed from the sand-isles,
In Sea Hawk and Dragon,
Over the White Water,
War-ready all of us.
Soon came the sea-mist,
Soft was the wind then,
Lay there the long-ships,
Lifting and falling.
Then cried the Captain:
"Cold is the sea-fog,
Weary is waiting-time,
Wet are the byrnies;
Burnish the breastplates,
Broadswords and axes!
Hand we the horns round,
Hail to the Dragon!"*

120

OUR gentle pirate ancestors from off the Frisian Isles
Kept station where we now patrol so many weary miles:
There were no International Laws of Hall or Halleck then,
They only knew the simple rule of "Death to beaten men."
And what they judged a lawful prize was any sail they saw
From Scarboro' to the sandy isles along the Saxon shore.
We differ from our ancestors' conception of a prize,
And we cruise about like Agag 'neath Sir Samuel Evans' eyes;
But on one eternal subject we would certainly agree:
It's seldom you can see a mile across the Northern sea,
For as the misty clouds came down and settled wet and cold,
The sodden halliards creaked and strained as to the swell they rolled.
Each yellow-bearded pirate knew beyond the veil of white
The prize of all the prizes must be passing out of sight;
And drearily they waited while metheglin in a skin
Was passed along the benches, and the oars came sliding in;
Then scramasax and battleaxe were polished up anew,
And they waited for the fog to lift, the same as me and you;
Though we're waiting on the bottom at the twenty fathom line,
We are burnishing torpedoes to a Sunday morning shine.
The sailor pauses as he quaffs his tot of Navy rum,
And listens to a noise that drowns the circulator's hum:
"D'y 'ear those blank propellers, Bill—the *blinking female dog*—
That's Tirpitz in the 'Indenburg gone past us in the fog!"

121

HANG ON

HANG ON.

125

TWO o' the morn, and a rising sea, I'd like to ease to slow,
But we're off on a stunt and pressed for time, so I reckon it's Eastward Ho!
So pick up your skirts and hustle along, old woman, you've got to go—
Look-out, you fool. Hang on!

Up she comes on a big grey sea and winks at the misty moon,
Then down the hill like a falling lift, we're due for a beauty soon;
And here it comes—she'll be much too late—yes, damn it, she's out of tune—
Look-out, you fool. Hang on!

126

You can feel her shake from stem to stern with the crash of her plunging bow,
And quiver anew to the thrusting screw, and the booming engines' row;
Then *rah-rah-rah* on a rising note—my oath, they're racing now—
Look-out, you fool. Hang on!

The streaky water rushes by as the crest of the sea goes past,
And you see her hull from the hydroplanes to the heel of her wireless mast
Stand out and hang as she leaps the trough to dive at the next one—Blast—!
Look-out, you fool. Hang on!

In the hollow between she stops for breath, then starts her climb anew—
"I can see your guns and wireless mast, old girl, but I can't see you,
And you'd better be quick and lift again—she won't, she's diving through"—
Look-out, you fool. Hang on!

127

The Lord be thanked, it's my relief—Cheer up, old sport, it's clean;
No, just enough to wash your face—you could hardly call it green;
A jolly good sea-boat this one is, at least, for a submarine—
Look-out, you fool. Hang on!

TO FRITZ

TO FRITZ.

131

I wish that I could be a Hun, to dive about the sea—
I wouldn't go for merchantmen, a man-of-war for me;
There are lots of proper targets for attacking, little Fritz,
But you seem to like the merchantmen, and blowing them to bits.
I suppose it must be easy fruit to get an Iron Cross
By strafing sail and cargo ships—but don't you feel the loss
Of the wonderful excitement when you face a man-of-war,
And tearing past you overhead the big propellers roar?
When you know that it's a case of "May the fish run good and true,"
For if they don't it's ten to one it's R.I.P. for you?
Although perhaps you can't be blamed—your motives may be pure—
You're rather new to submarines—in fact, an amateur;
But we'd like to take your job awhile and show you how it's done,
And leave you on the long patrol to wait your brother Hun.
You wouldn't like the job, my lad—the motors turning slow,
You wouldn't like the winter-time—storm and wind and snow;
You'd find it weary waiting, Fritz—unless your faith is strong—
Up and down on the long patrol—How long, O Lord, how long?
We don't patrol for merchant ships, there's none but neutrals there,
Up and down on the old patrol, you can hear the E-boat's prayer:
"Give us a ten-knot breeze, O Lord, with a clear and blazing sky,
And help our eyes at the periscope as the High Sea Fleet goes by."

132

133

TO THE SCOTTISH REGIMENTS

TO THE SCOTTISH REGIMENTS.

137

*L*AND of sorrow—war and weeping,
Granite rock and falling snow,
Where Romance is never sleeping,
Where the fires of freedom glow.

Where the spark has never died, be the cause however lost,
Be the breath however humble that would fan it to a flame;
From the shieling, from the castle, did they ever count the cost
Ere they went to meet a rebel's death and perished for a name?

138

While England learnt the Roman tongue and paid her tax to Gaul,
The Caledonian tribute clashed along the Roman wall—
From East to West the sentinels looked out towards the North—
"Amboglanna has sent for aid,
For the heather is bright with targe and blade
Away to the silvery Forth."

When the Scottish host looked down and scorned to charge the foe
That filed around the fatal hill and crossed the stream below,
When the flowers of the forest fell and withered in the fight—
"Shoulder to shoulder around the King,
Hear the Claymore whistle and sing
Our funeral song to-night."

139

The English knew it at Prestonpans—the wall against their backs,
When down the slope the clansmen came with the long Lochaber axe,
The dew on the grass and the morning mist and a roar of charging men,—
Pipers playing on either flank—
"Steady the volleys, the leading rank!"
The fires were blazing then.

And the spark has gone to Flanders, as the Prussian butchers know,
For they learnt at Loos and Hulluch from the Caledonian sword
The prayer of Anglo-Saxon priests a thousand years ago—
"From the fury of the Northern men, deliver us, O Lord."

PRIVILEGED

PRIVILEGED.

143

THEY called across to Peter at the changing of the Guard,
At the red-gold Doors that the Angels keep,—
"Send us help to the Portal, for they press upon us hard,
They are straining at the Gate, many deep."

Then Peter rose and went to the wicket by the Wall,
Where the Starlight flashed upon the crowd;
And he saw a mighty wave from the Greatest Gale of all
Break beneath him with a roar, swelling loud—

144

"Let us in! Let us in! We have left a load of sin
On the battlefield that flashes far below.
From the trenches or the sea there's a pass for such as we,
For we died with our faces to the foe."

*"We haven't any creed, for we never felt the need,
And our morals are as ragged as can be;
But we finished in a way that has cleared us of the clay,
And we're coming to you clean, as you can see."*

Then Peter looked below him with a smile upon his lips,
And he answered, "Ye are fighters, as I know
By your badges of the air, of the trenches, and the ships,
And the wounds that on your bodies glisten so."

145

And he looked upon the wounds, that were many and were grim,
And his glance was all-embracing—unafraid;
And he looked to meet the eyes that were smiling up to him,
All a-level as a new-forged blade.

"Ye are savage men and rough—from the fo'c'sle and the tent;
Ye have put High Heaven to alarm;
But I see it written clear by the road ye went,
That ye held by the Fifteenth Psalm."

And they shouted in return, "*Tis a thing we've never read,
But you passed our friends inside
That won to the end of the road we tread
Long ago when the Mons Men died.*"

146

*"Let us in! Let us in! We have fallen for the Right,
And the Crown that we listed to win,
That we earned by the Somme or the waters of the Bight;
You're a fighting man yourself—Let us in!"*

Then Peter gave a sign and the Gates flung wide
To the sound of a bugle-call:
"Pass the fighting men to the ranks inside,
Who came from the earth or the cold grey tide,
With their heads held high and a soldiers stride,
To a Friend in the Judgment Hall."

"OUR ANNUAL"

"OUR ANNUAL."

149

UP the well-remembered fairway, past the buoys and forts we drifted—
Saw the houses, roads, and churches as they were a year ago.
Far astern were wars and battles, all the dreary clouds were lifted,
As we turned the Elbow Ledges—felt the engines ease to "Slow."

Rusty side and dingy paintwork, stripped for war and cleared for battle—
Saw the harbour-tugs around us—smelt the English fields again,—
English fields and English hedges—sheep and horses, English cattle,
Like a screen unrolled before us, through the mist of English rain.

150

Slowly through the basin entrance—twenty thousand tons a-crawling
With a thousand men aboard her, all a-weary of the War—
Warped her round and laid alongside with the cobble-stones a-calling—
"There's a special train awaiting, just for you to come ashore."

Out again as fell the evening, down the harbour in the gloaming
With the sailors on the fo'c'sle looking wistfully a-lee—
Just another year of waiting—just another year of roaming
For the Majesty of England—for the Freedom of the Sea.

MASCOTS

MASCOTS.

153

WHEN the galleys of Phœnicia, through the gates of Hercules,
Steered South and West along the coast to seek the Tropic Seas,
When they rounded Cape Agulhas, putting out from Table Bay,
They started trading North again, as steamers do to-day.
They dealt in gold and ivory and ostrich feathers too,
With a little private trading by the officers and crew,
Till rounding Guardafui, steering up for Aden town,
The tall Phœnician Captain called the First Lieutenant down.
"By all the Tyrian purple robes that you will never wear,
By the Temples of Zimbabwe, by King Solomon I swear,
The ship is like a stable, like a Carthaginian sty.
I am Captain here—confound you!—or I'll know the reason why.
Every sailor in the galley has a monkey or a goat;
There are parrots in the eyes of her and serpents in the boat.
By the roaring fire of Baal, I'll not have it any more:
Heave them over by the sunset, or I'll hang you at the fore!"
"What is that, sir? *Not* as cargo? *Not* a bit of private trade?
Well, of all the dumbest idiots you're the dumbest ever made,
Standing there and looking silly: *leave the animals alone.*"
(Sailors with a tropic liver always have a brutal tone.)
"By the crescent of Astarte, I am not religious—yet—
I would sooner spill the table salt than kill a sailor's pet."

154

155

A HYMN OF DISGUST

A HYMN OF DISGUST.

159

YOU wrote a pretty hymn of Hate,
That won the Kaiser's praise,
Which showed your nasty mental state,
And made us laugh for days.
I can't compete with such as you
In doggerel of mine,
But this is certain—*and* it's true,
You bloody-handed swine—

We do not mouth a song of hate, or talk about you—much,
We do not mention things like you—it wouldn't be polite;
One doesn't talk in drawing-rooms of Prussian dirt and such,
We only want to kill you off—so roll along and fight.

160

For men like you with filthy minds, you leave a nasty taste,
We can't forget your triumphs with the girls you met in France.
By your standards of morality, gorillas would be chaste,
And you consummate your triumphs with the bayonet and the lance.

You give us mental pictures of your officers at play,
With naked girls a-dancing on the table as you dine,
With their mothers cut to pieces, in the knightly German way,
In the corners of the guard-room in a pool of blood and wine.

161

You had better stay in Germany, and never go abroad,
For wherever you may wander you will find your fame has gone,

For you are outcasts from the lists, with rust upon your sword—
The blood of many innocents—of children newly born.

You are bestial men and beastly, and we would not ask you home
To meet our wives and daughters, for we doubt that you are clean;
You will find your fame in front of you wherever you may roam,
You—who came through burning Belgium with the ladies for a screen.

You—who love to hear the screaming of a girl beneath the knife,
In the midst of your companions, with their craning, eager necks;
When you crown your German mercy, and you take a sobbing life—
You are not exactly gentlemen towards the gentle sex.

162

With your rapings in the market-place and slaughter of the weak,
With your gross and leering conduct, and your utter lack of shame,—
When we note in all your doings such a nasty yellow streak,
You show surprise at our disgust, and say you're not to blame.

We don't want any whinings, and we'd sooner wait for peace
Till you realise your position, and you know you whine in vain;
And you stand within a circle of the Cleaner World's Police,
And we goad you into charging—and we clean the world again.

163

For you should know that never shall you meet us as before,
That none will take you by the hand or greet you as a friend;
So stay with it, and finish it—who brought about the War—
And when you've paid for all you've done—well, that will be the End.

A TRINITY

A TRINITY.

167

THE way of a ship at racing speed
In a bit of a rising gale,
The way of a horse of the only breed
At a Droxford post-and-rail,
The way of a brand-new aeroplane
On a frosty winter dawn.
You'll come back to those again;
Wheel or cloche or slender rein
Will keep you young and clean and sane,
And glad that you were born.

The power and drive beneath me now are above the power of kings,
It's mine the word that lets her loose and in my ear she sings—
"Mark now the way I sport and play with the rising hunted sea,
Across my grain in cold disdain their ranks are hurled at me;
But down my wake is a foam-white lake, the remnant of their line,
That broke and died beneath my pride—your foemen, man, and mine."
The perfect tapered hull below is a dream of line and curve,
An artist's vision in steel and bronze for gods and men to serve.
If ever a statue came to life, you quivering slender thing,
It ought to be you—my racing girl—as the Amazon song you sing.

168

Down the valley and up the slope we run from scent to view.
"Steady, you villain—you know too much—I'm not so wild as you;
You'll get me cursed if you catch him first—there's at least a mile to go,
So swallow your pride and ease your stride, and take your fences slow.
Your high-pricked ears as the jump appears are comforting things to see;

169

Your easy gallop and bending neck are signals flying to me.
You wouldn't refuse if it was wire with calthrogs down in front,
And there we are with a foot to spare—you best of all the Hunt!"
Great sloping shoulders galloping strong, and a yard of floating tail,
A fine old Irish gentleman, and a Hampshire post-and-rail.

The sun on the fields a mile below is glinting off the grass
That slides along like a rolling map as under the clouds I pass. 170
The early shadows of byre and hedge are dwindling dark below
As up the stair of the morning air on my idle wheels I go,—
Nothing to do but let her alone—she's flying herself to-day;
Unless I chuck her about a bit—there isn't a bump or sway.
So *there's* a bank at ninety-five—and here's a spin and a spiral dive,
And here we are again.
And *that's* a roll and twist around, and that's the sky and there's the ground,
And I and the aeroplane
Are doing a glide, but upside down, and that's a village and that's a town—
And now we're rolling back.
And *this* is the way we climb and stall and sit up and beg on nothing at all,
The wires and strainers slack.
And now we'll try and be good some more, and open the throttle and hear her roar
And steer for London Town. 171
For there never a pilot yet was born who flew a machine on a frosty morn
But started stunting soon,
To feel if his wires were really there, or whether he flew
on ice or air,
Or whether his hands were gloved or bare,
Or he sat in a free balloon.

IN THE MORNING

IN THE MORNING.

BACK from battle, torn and rent,
Listing bridge and stanchions bent
By the angry sea.
By Thy guiding mercy sent,
Fruitful was the road we went—
Back from battle we.

If Thou hadst not been, O Lord, behind our feeble arm,
If Thy hand had not been there to slam the lyddite home,
When against us men arose and sought to work us harm,
We had gone to death, O Lord, in spouting rings of foam. 176

Heaving sea and cloudy sky
Saw the battle flashing by
As Thy foemen ran.
By Thy grace, that made them fly,
We have seen two hundred die
Since the fight began.

If our cause had not been Thine, for Thy eternal Right,
If the foe in place of us had fought for Thee, O Lord!
If Thou hadst not guided us and drawn us there to fight,
We never should have closed with them—Thy seas are dark and broad.

Through the iron rain they fled,
Bearing home the tale of dead,

Flying from Thy sword.
After-hatch to fo'c'sle head,
We have turned their decks to red,
By Thy help, O Lord!

177

It was not by our feeble sword that they were overthrown,
But Thy right hand that dashed them down, the servants of the proud;
It was not arm of ours that saved, but Thine, O Lord, alone,
When down the line the guns began, and sang Thy praise aloud.

Sixty miles of running fight,
Finished at the dawning light,
Off the Zuider Zee.
Thou that helped throughout the night
Weary hand and aching sight,
Praise, O Lord, to Thee.

IN FORTY WEST

IN FORTY WEST.

181

WE are coming from the ranch, from the city and the mine,
And the word has gone before us to the towns upon the Rhine;
As the rising of the tide
On the Old-World side,
We are coming to the battle, to the Line.

From the valleys of Virginia, from the Rockies in the North,
We are coming by battalions, for the word was carried forth:
"We have put the pen away,
And the sword is out to-day,
For the Lord has loosed the Vintages of Wrath."

182

We are singing in the ships as they carry us to fight,
As our fathers sang before us by the camp-fires' light;
In the wharf-light glare
They can hear us Over There,
When the ships come steaming through the night.

Right across the deep Atlantic where the *Lusitania* passed,
With the battle-flag of Yankeeland a-floating at the mast,
We are coming all the while,
Over twenty hundred mile,
And were staying to the finish, to the last.

We are many—we are one—and we're in it overhead,
We are coming as an Army that has seen its women dead,
And the old Rebel Yell
Will be loud above the shell
When we cross the top together, seeing red.

A RING AXIOM

A RING AXIOM.

185

WHEN the pitiless gong rings out again, and they whip your chair away,
When you feel you'd like to take the floor, whatever the crowd should say,
When the hammering gloves come back again, and the world goes round your head,
When you know your arms are only wax, your hands of useless lead,
When you feel you'd give your heart and soul for a chance to clinch and rest,
And through your brain the whisper comes,

"Give in, you've done your best,"—

Why, stiffen your knees and brace your back, and take my word as true—

If the man in front has got you weak, he's just as tired as you.

186

He can't attack through a gruelling fight and finish as he began;

He's done more work than you to-day—you're just as fine a man.

So call your last reserve of pluck—he's careless with his chin—

You'll put it across him every time—Go in—Go in—*Go in!*

THE QUARtermaster

THE QUARtermaster.

189

I mustn't look up from the compass-card, nor look at the seas at all,
I must watch the helm and compass-card,—If I heard the trumpet-call
Of Gabriel sounding Judgment Day to dry the Seas again,
I must hold her bow to windward now till I'm relieved again—

To the pipe and wail of a tearing gale,

Carrying Starboard Ten.

I must stare and frown at the compass-card, that chases round the bowl,
North and South and back again with every lurching roll.

190

By the feel of the ship beneath I know the way she's going to swing,

But I mustn't look up to the booming wind however the halliards sing—

In a breaking sea with the land a-lee,

Carrying Starboard Ten.

And I stoop to look at the compass-card as closes in the night,

For it's hard to see by the shaded glow of half a candle-light;

But the spokes are bright, and I note beside in the corner of my eye

A shimmer of light on oilskin wet that shows the Owner nigh—

Foggy and thick and a windy trick,

Carrying Starboard Ten.

Heave and sway or dive and roll can never disturb me now;

Though seas may sweep in rivers of foam across the straining bow,

191

I've got my eyes on the compass-card, and though she broke her keel

And hit the bottom beneath us now, you'd find me at the wheel—

In Davy's realm, still at the helm,

Carrying Starboard Ten.

IN THE BARRED ZONE

IN THE BARRED ZONE.

195

THEY called us up from England at the breaking of the day,
And the wireless whisper caught us from a hundred leagues away—

"Sentries at the Outer Line,

All that hold the countersign,

Listen in the North Sea—news for you to-day."

All across the waters, at the paling of the morn,
The wireless whispered softly ere the summer day was born—
 "Be you near or ranging far,
 By the Varne or Weser bar,
The Fleet is out and steaming to the Eastward and the dawn."

196

Far and away to the North and West, in the dancing glare of the sunlit ocean,
Just a haze, a shimmer of smoke-cloud, grew and broadened many a mile;
Low and long and faint and spreading, banner and van of a world in motion,
Creeping out to the North and West, it hung in the skies alone awhile.

Then from over the brooding haze the roar of murmuring engines swelled,
And the men of the air looked down to us, a mile below their feet;
Down the wind they passed above, their course to the silver sun-track held,
And we looked back to the West again, and saw the English Fleet.

Over the curve of the rounded sea, in ordered lines as the ranks of Rome,
Over the far horizon steamed a power that held us dumb,—
Miles of racing lines of steel that flattened the sea to a field of foam,
 Rolling deep to the wash they made,
 We saw, to the threat of a German blade,
 The Shield of England come.

197

WHO CARES?

WHO CARES?

201

THE sentries at the Castle Gate,
 We hold the outer wall,
 That echoes to the roar of hate
 And savage bugle-call—
Of those that seek to enter in with steel and eager flame,
To leave you with but eyes to weep the day the Germans came.

 Though we may catch from out the Keep
 A whining voice of fear,
 Of one who whispers "Rest and sleep,
 And lay aside the spear,"
We pay no heed to such as he, as soft as we are hard;
We take our word from men alone—the men that rule the guard.

202

 We hear behind us now and then
 The voices of the grooms,
 And bickerings of serving-men
 Come faintly from the rooms;
But let them squabble as they please, we will not turn aside,
But—curse to think it was for them that fighting men have died.

 Whatever they may say or try,
 We shall not pay them heed;
 And though they wail and talk and lie,
 We hold our simple Creed—
No matter what the cravens say, however loud the din,
Our Watch is on the Castle Gate, and none shall enter in.

THE UNCHANGING SEX

WHEN the battle-worn Horatius, 'midst the cheering Roman throng—
 All flushed with pride and triumph as they carried him along—
 Reached the polished porch of marble at the doorway of his home,
 He felt himself an Emperor—the bravest man of Rome.
 The people slapped him on the back and knocked his helm askew,
 Then drifted back along the road to look for something new.
 Then Horatius sobered down a bit—as you would do to-day—
 And straightened down his tunic in a calm, collected way. 206
 He hung his battered helmet up and wiped his sandals dry,
 And set a parting in his hair—the same as you and I.
 His lady kissed him carefully and looked him up and down,
 And gently disengaged his arm to spare her snowy gown.
 You *are* a real disgrace, you know, the worst I've ever seen;
 Now go and put your sword away, I *know* it isn't clean.
 And you must change your clothes at once, you're simply wringing wet;
 You've been doing something mischievous, I hope you lost your bet....
 Why! you're bleeding on the carpet. Who's the brute that hurt you so?
 Did you kill him? *There's a darling!* Serve him right for hitting low."
 Then she hustled lots of water, turning back her pretty sleeves,
 And she set him on the sofa (having taken off his greaves). 207
 And bold Horatius purred aloud, the stern Horatius smiled,
 And didn't seem to mind that he was treated like a child.
 Though she didn't call him Emperor, or cling to him and cry,
 Yet I rather think he liked it—just the same as you and I.

LOOKING AFT

LOOKING AFT.

211

I 'M the donkey-man of a dingy tramp
 They launched in 'Eighty-one,
 Rickety, old, and leaky too—but some o' the rivets are shining new
 Beneath our after-gun.

 An' she an' meself are off to sea
 From out o' the breaker's hands,
 An' we laugh to find such an altered game, for devil a thing we found the same
 When we came off the land.

 We used to carry a freight of trash
 That younger ships would scorn,
 But now we're running a decent trade—howitzer-shell and hand-grenade,
 Or best Alberta corn. 212

 We used to sneak an' smouch along
 Wi' rusty side an' rails,
 Hoot an' bellow of liners proud—"Give us the room that we're allowed;
 Get out o' the track—the Mails!"

 We sometimes met—an' took their wash—
 The 'aughty ships o' war,
 An' we dips to them—an' they to us—an' on they went in a tearin' fuss,
 But now they count us more.

 For now we're "England's Hope and Pride"—
 The Mercantile Marine,—
 "Bring us the goods and food we lack, because we're hungry, Merchant Jack"
 (As often I have been).

"You're the man to save us now,
We look to you to win;
Wot'd yer like? A rise o' pay? We'll give whatever you like to say,
But bring the cargoes in."

213

An' here we are in the danger zone,
Wi' escorts all around,
Destroyers a-racing to and fro—"We will show you the way to go,
An' guide you safe an' sound."

"An' did you cross in a comfy way,
Or did you have to run?
An' is the patch on your hull we see the mark of a bump in 'Ninety-three,
Or the work of a German gun?"

"We'll lead you now, and keep beside,
An' call to all the Fleet,
Clear the road and sweep us in—he carries a freight we need to win,
A golden load of wheat."

Yes, we're the hope of England now,
And rank wi' the Navy too;
An' all the papers speak us fair—"Nothing he will not lightly dare,
Nothing he fears to do."

214

"Be polite to Merchant Jack,
Who brings you in the meat,
For if he went on a striking lay, you'd have to go on your knees and pray,
With never a bone to eat."

But you can lay your papers down
An' set your fears aside,
For we will keep the ocean free—we o' the clean an' open sea—
To break the German pride.

We won't go canny or strike for pay,
Or say we need a rest;
But you get on wi' the blinkin' War—an' not so much o' your strikes ashore,
Or givin' the German best.

A MAXIM

A MAXIM.

217

WHEN the foe is pressing and the shells come down
In a stream like maxim fire,
When the long grey ranks seem to thicken all the while,
And they stamp on the last of the wire,
When all along the line comes a whisper on the wind
That you hear through the drumming of the guns:
"They are through over there and the right is in the air,
And there isn't any end to the Huns,"—
Then keep along a-shooting till you can't shoot more,
And hit 'em with a shovel on the head.
Don't forget a lot of folk have beaten them before,
And a Hun'll never hurt you if he's dead.
If you're in a hole and your hopes begin to fail,
If you're in a losing fight,
Think a bit of Jonah in the belly of the whale,
'Cause-he-got-out-all-right.

218

THE CRISIS

THE CRISIS.

221

WHEN the Spartan heroes tried
To hold the broken gate,
When—roaring like the rising tide—
The Persian horsemen charged and died
In foaming waves of hate.

When with armour hacked and torn
They gripped their shields of brass,
And hailed the gods that light the morn
With battle-cry of hope forlorn,
"We shall not let them pass."

While they combed their hair for death
Before the Persian line,
They spoke awhile with easy breath,
"What think ye the Athenian saith
In Athens as they dine?"

222

"Doth he repent that we alone
Are here to hold the way,
That he must reap what he hath sown—
That only valour may atone
The fault of yesterday?"

"Is he content that thou and I—
Three hundred men in line—
Should show him thus how man may try
To stay the foemen passing by
To Athens, where they dine?"

"Ah! now the clashing cymbal rings,
The mighty host is nigh;
Let Athens talk of passing things—
But here, three hundred Spartan kings
Shall greet the fame the Persian brings
To men about to die."

A SEA CHANTY

A SEA CHANTY.

225

THERE'S a whistle of the wind in the rigging overhead,
And the tune is as plain as can be.
"Hey! down below there—d'you know it's going to blow there,
All across the cold North Sea?"

And along comes the gale from the locker in the North
By the Storm-King's hand set free,
And the wind and the snow and the sleet come forth,
Let loose to the cold North Sea.

Tumble out the oilskins, the seas are running white,
There's a wet watch due for me,
For we're heading to the east, and a long wet night

See the water foaming as the waves go by
 Like the tide on the sands of Dee;
 Hear the gale a-piping in the halliards high
 To the tune of the cold North Sea.

See how she's meeting them, plunging all the while,
 Till I'm wet to the sea-boot knee;
 See how she's beating them—twenty to the mile—
 The waves of the cold North Sea.

Right across from Helgoland to meet the English coast,
 Lie better than the likes of we,—
 Men that lived in many ways, but went to join the host
 That are buried by the cold North Sea.

Rig along the life-lines, double-stay the rails,
 Lest the Storm-King call for a fee;
 For if any man should slip, through the rolling of the ship,
 He'd be lost in the cold North Sea.

227

We are heading to the gale, and the driving of the sleet,
 And we're far to the east of Three.
 Hey! you German sailormen, here's the British Fleet
 Waiting in the cold North Sea.

A.D. 400

A.D. 400.

231

A long low ship from the Orkneys' sailed,
 With a full gale driving her along,
 Three score sailormen singing as they baled
 To the tune of a Viking song—

*We have a luck-charm
 Carved on the tiller,
 Cut in the fore-room
 See we Thor's Hammer;
 Gods will protect us
 Under a shield-burgh,
 Carved in the mast we—
 The Runes of Yggdrasil!*

But the Earl called down from the kicking tiller-head,
 "Six hands lay along to me!
 Tumble out the hawsers there, Skallagrim the Red!
 For a battle with a Berserk sea;
 Sing a song of work, of a well-stayed mast,
 Of clinch and rivet and pine,
 Of a bull's-hide sail we can carry to the last
 Of a well-built ship like mine.
 Never mind the Runes on the bending tree
 Or the charms on the tiller that I hold,
 Trust to your hands and the Makers of the Sea,
 To the gods of the Viking bold!

232

*Thor of the Hammer—
 King of the Warriors,
 We are not thralls here
 —Men of the sea;*

*We are not idle,
Fight we as seamen,
Worthy your aid then
—Men of the Sea!"*

OVERDUE

OVERDUE.

235

IN the evening—in the sunset—when the long day dies,
Out across the broad Atlantic, where the great seas go,
When the Golden Gates are open and the sunlight flies,
The fairy Islands drift and fade against the crimson glow.

In the evening, when the fiery sun was sinking in the West,
St Brandan and the chosen few went sailing out to sea,—
To the Westward—to the sunset—to the Golden Isle of rest,
The haven of the weary men, the land of Fairie.

236

Is it only in the sunset we may find the Golden Fleece?
Is it only to the Westward that the Fairyland is found?
And those who went away from us and passed from war to peace—
Are they looking still for Fairyland the wide world round?

Then as I gazed across the dark the morning answer came—
To Eastward stretched the golden sea for many a golden mile;
The far horizon joined the sky in dancing lines of flame—
And drifting on the seas of dawn, I saw St Brandan's Isle.

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FOOTNOTES:

[1] A letter-form which enables the sender to address his Seniors more abruptly than he would dare to do without its assistance.

[2] D.S.B. = Duty Steam Boat.

[3] A.I.O. = Admiralty Interim Order.

[4] K.R.A.I. = King's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions.

[5] C.P.O. = Chief Petty Officer.

[6] O.O.D.—Officer of the day.

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