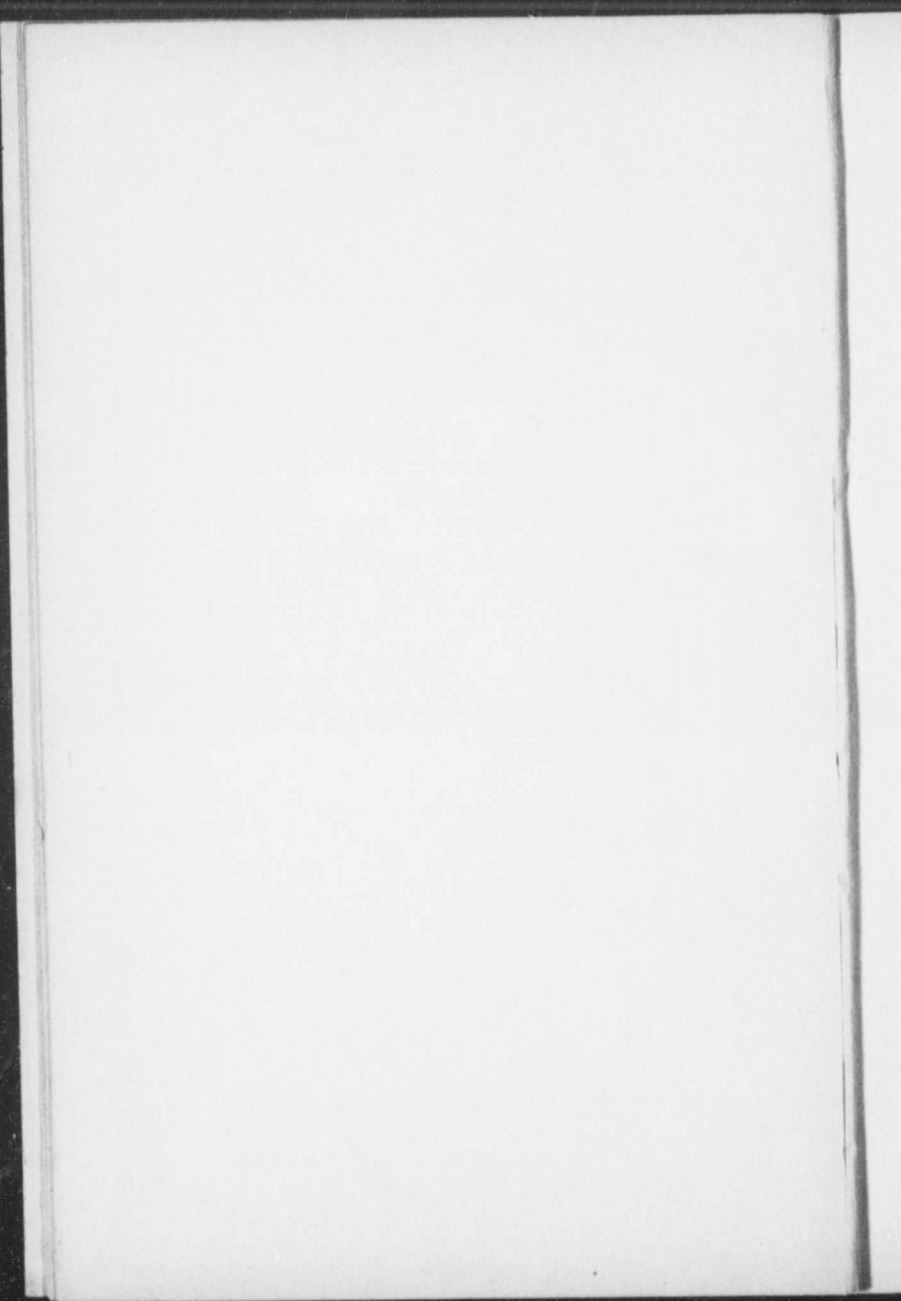


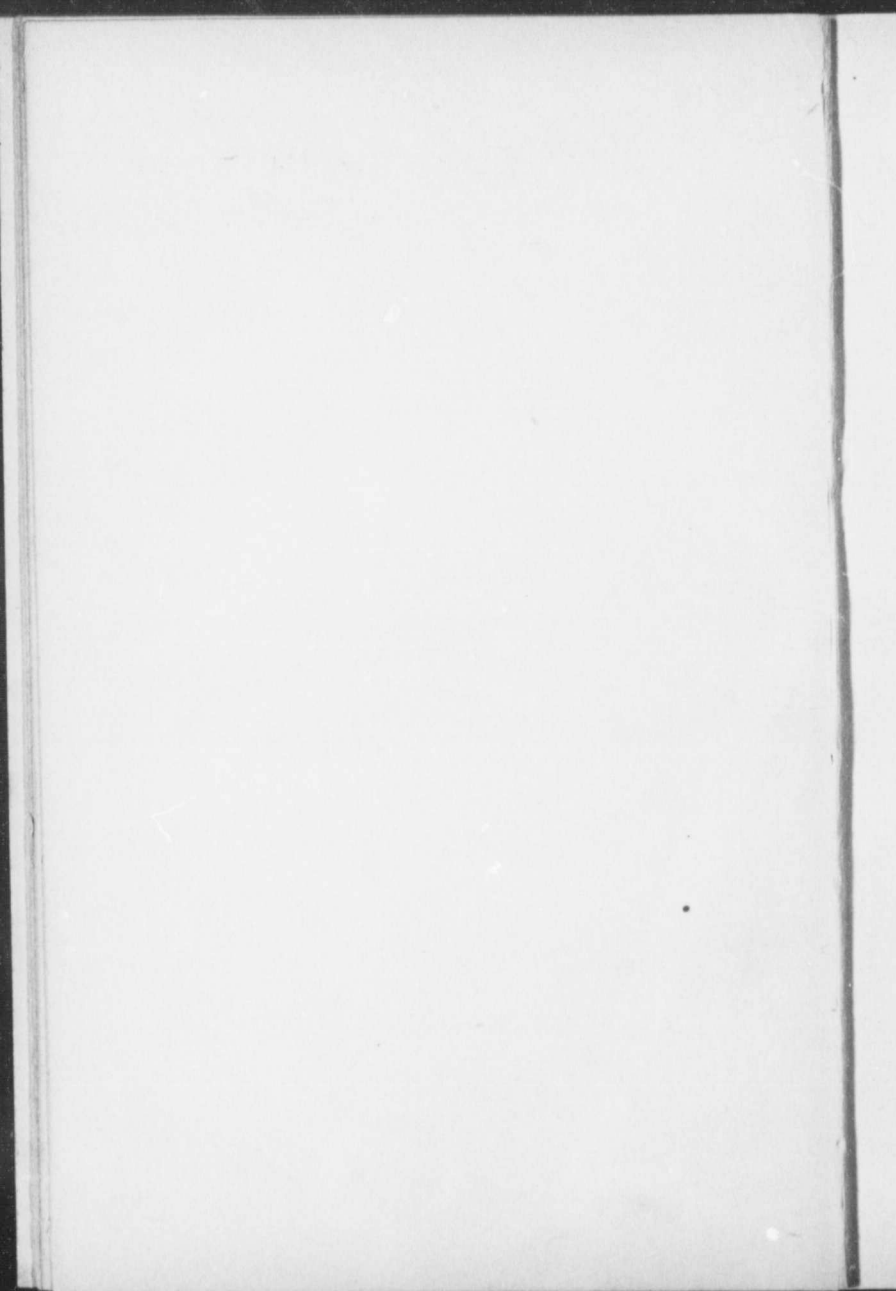
FOR THE SCEPTRE OF THE SEA

G.B. WARREN

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For the Sceptre
of the Sea



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By
G. B. Warren

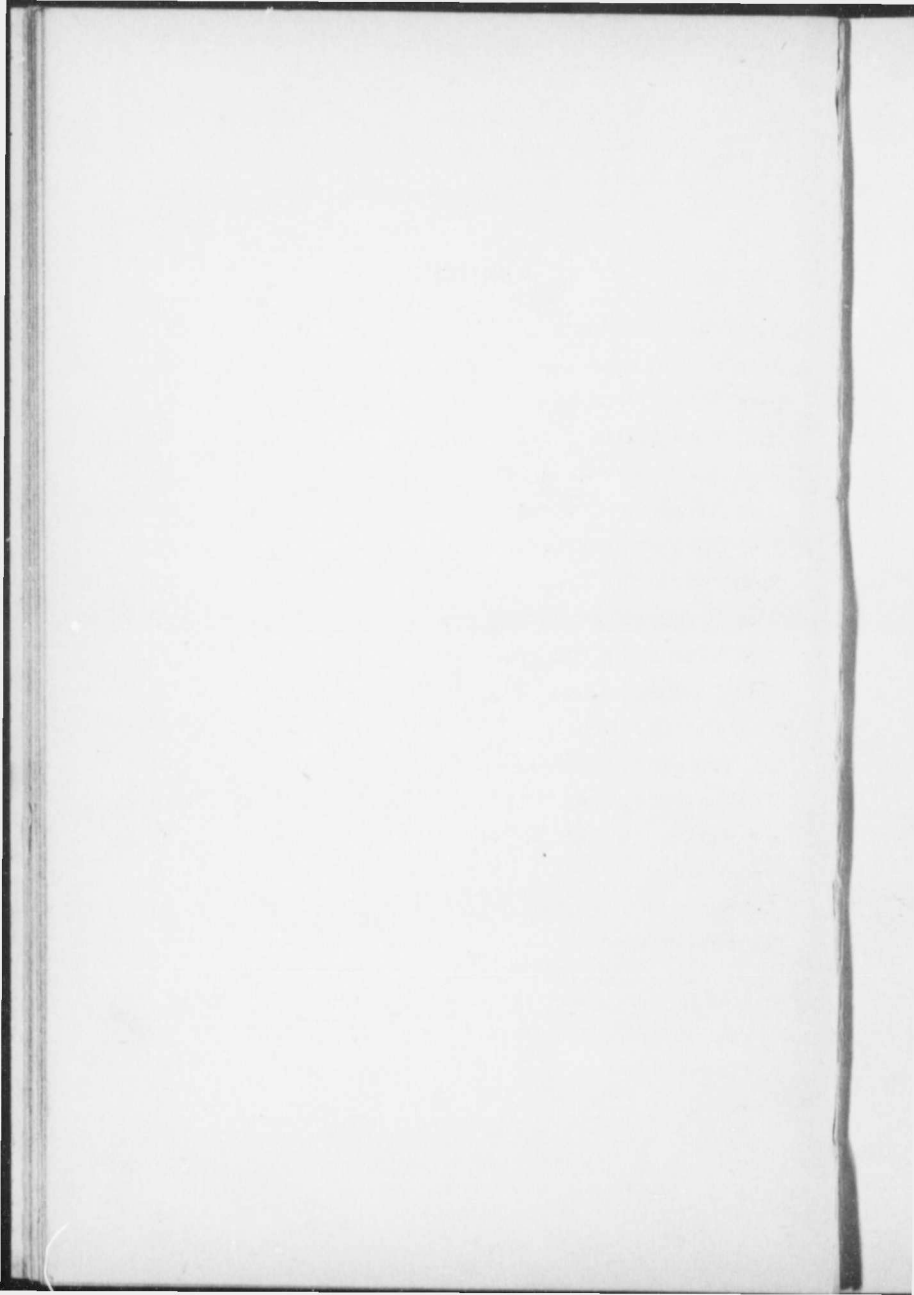


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FOR THE SCEPTRE OF THE SEA

True to the Empire

Be British all who do allegiance give
With honour to Great Britain's noble king.
Though far across the world our camps we've pitched
From loyal hearts and true our voices ring.
Who, who will dare to raise a threatening hand
When firm united stands the Lion's band?

Join Britons now to cheer your comrades on,
The far flung line of Empire calls to-day
For unity of purpose to maintain
The bonds that strengthen your imperial sway.

Shoulder to shoulder where the Union Jack
Is floating brave and free upon the breeze,
Unto your trust be true by land and sea,

12 For the Sceptre of the Sea

Where tropic suns do scorch, or snowfields freeze.
You know full well your destiny is high,
So trust in God and guard each British tie.

Justice with mercy tempered is your aim,
And though you're mortal and do sometimes fall,
The British word of honour far is known
Among the lands deceit doth yet enthrall ;
And British law the evil doers fear ;
Its arm is long, its warning soundeth clear.

The British flag is seen on every sea,
Britannia proudly claims to rule the waves,
Emblem of freedom and of liberty
That flag has been to many shackled slaves ;
And further deeds of chivalry and fame
Shall it inspire in British honour's name.

War is Declared, 1914

War is declared,
The British Empire firm united stands ;
From every colony in distant lands
The Lion's cubs leap forth to take their place
Beside the monarch of the British race.

War is declared,
The armed bands of Europe draw the sword ;
For self-aggrandisement the German lord
His ally Austria does now support
In her demands upon the Servian court.

War is declared.
"Hands off the Serbs," the Russian sternly cries,
"Peace without honour's not for our Allies ;
"We stand to see fair play and cannot wait
"While Austrian troops invade an allied State."

14 For the Sceptre of the Sea

War is declared.

And France her army mobilizes now ;
This Germany resents with frowning brow,
And leaps to strike the tricolour to earth
Before the Russian bear can show his worth.

War is declared.

'Tis little Belgium blocks the Kaiser's hordes ;
And Liege feels the shock and clash of swords.
The battlefield of Europe once again
Yet Belgium still will freedom's cause maintain.

War is declared.

The Triple Entente resolutely stands
Against the German and the Austrian bands.
Britain must keep the pathways of the sea
And treaties guard that freedom guarantee.

War is declared.

Britannia holds the sceptre of the waves
And Britons sing " We never shall be slaves."
Lord, God of Hosts, be thou our guardian yet
Lest trusting our own might we should forget.

The Silent Navy, 1914

In silence save the music of the bands
That sounds upon the breeze in martial strain ;
With orders sealed and decks for action cleared
Each ship in turn heaves in her anchor chain,
And steaming seaward slips below the rim,
Where sea and sky merge in the distance dim.

Impenetrable secrecy surrounds
Their destination and the part they'll play
In keeping clear the pathways of the sea
For Britain, while war clouds are looming grey.
The " Silent Navy " will their watchword be
Till Britain's foes are banished from the sea.

And now at length, like bolt from out the blue
" The Day " has come of many a German toast
Born of the boastful confidence that they

16 For the Sceptre of the Sea

Would triumph over Britain's naval host
When on the seas they'd meet and in the clash
Of naval combat would the British smash.

But where are they? Discreet they seek their holds,
Or neutral commerce wreck with floating mines.
Of all the fleet that they did loudly boast
While quaffing lager beer and Rhenish wines
The British sailors have but little seen
Save raiders or a skulking submarine.

While "Britain's Bulwark's" ride the open sea,
And with the grim unyielding bulldog grip
Keep close blockade upon the German ports,
Destroyer, submarine and battleship
Waiting like dusky shadows, slaty grey,
Challenging Germany to prove "The Day."

holds,

The Submarines

Silently drifting under the shifting
Waves of the restless sea ;
Coming and going, fading not knowing
What will the outcome be.

Deep in the twilight of submarine skylight,
Dread of all foes afloat ;
True to the traditions and best definitions
British from times remote.

Once British sailors on clippers and whalers,
Traders that plowed the foam,
Bent on prevailing, dared storms while sailing
Realms of the waves they called home.

Davy Jones' locker, without bell or knocker,
Meant their last resting place ;
But times are changing and Britons go ranging
Reckless of sea or space.

The Battle of the Bight

August 29th, 1914

After teasing the German navy,
Baiting it day and night,
Asking for nothing better
Than a meeting in open fight,
The men of the British squadron
At last got a crack at the foe
By daring the mines and fortress
Where the Elbe and Weser flow.

Lest the enemy be stampeded
And fly to his sheltered base,
The saucy "Arethusa"
With destroyers started the chase ;
And early that misty morning

For the Sceptre of the Sea 19

The German cruisers met
And lured them to action
Where Beatty's trap was set.

Ship after ship, the Germans
Out of the fog-banks came
With submarines and aircraft
That well might win them fame,
And straightway started shelling
Their saucy little foes,
Who showed a disconcerting
Desire to come to blows.

The destroyers and their leaders
Were giving blow for blow,
And desperate waxed the battle
With the cruisers of the foe,
Till steaming to the conflict
Came a battle-cruiser fleet,
The "Lion" and her consorts,
The German ships to meet.

Steaming on till the range was certain
The "Lion" her silence broke,
And swinging fired a broadside

20 For the Sceptre of the Sea

That fell with a deadly stroke,
That fell with a blasting impact
On a cruiser's iron frame,
Leaving the German vessel
In a state of wreck and flame.

Some fought while their ships were sinking
Till the waves closed overhead ;
The toast to which they'd been drinking
Proved a day but to mourn the dead,
For five of the German cruisers
And destroyers went down in the seas,
And at last the British ensign
Alone waved supreme on the breeze.

The Battle of Coronel

November 5th, 1914

The news that "Good Hope" had vanished
'Neath the South Pacific wave
And the crew of the cruiser "Monmouth"
Had gone to an ocean grave,
Left a shade of pain and sadness
On our hearts for the brave who died,
For the gallant crews and their vessels
That rest beneath the tide.

They followed the best examples
Of heroes of the past,
And took their desperate chances
While life and strength did last ;
Fighting on blazing platforms

22 For the Sceptre of the Sea

Swept by the German shells,
And a tempest wild that feathered
The long Pacific swells.

'Twas Admiral Craddock's squadron
Of British cruisers three
That met off the coast of Chili
Five of the enemy,
The whole Pacific squadron
The German flag that flew.
All fame to the British sailor
That attacked, though the odds he knew.

"Monmouth," "Good Hope" and "Glasgow,"
They bore the British flag ;
And never for a moment
Did the British sea dogs lag
When Craddock gave the signal
To steam to the attack
Ere night and storm should cover
The German cruisers' track.

The foe evaded conflict
Till eve began to fall,
And darkness hid their vessels

For the Sceptre of the Sea 23

Within its gloomy pall ;
While 'gainst the West horizon
The paling afterglow
The British line of battle
In strong relief did throw.

The "Gneisenau" and "Scharnhorst"
With eight-inch guns let fly ;
And soon the British vessels
Made spirited reply ;
But German guns outranged them
By more than six to one,
And ere they closed the distance
The deadly work was done.

"Good Hope" by shells set flaming
Blew up and disappeared,
And "Monmouth," wrecked and burning,
Her own last moments neared,
And lost in the storm and darkness
With her crew in the deep went down.
"Glasgow" alone of the little fleet
The Germans could not drown.

24 For the Sceptre of the Sea

Now the foe shall know which ensign
Means a fight wherever met ;
That Sir Richard Grenville's spirit
Inspires the navy yet ;
That the " Watch on the Brine " is sleepless,
And in battle or close blockade
The Meteor Flag of England
On the ocean waves is stayed.

For the Southern Cross

Duel off Cocos Keeling Islands,
November 10th, 1914

Like circling hawks that manœuvre for vantage
ground,
Wheeling and swooping, sweeping the compass
round,
Darting and striking, spitting out steel and flame,
The "Sydney" and "Emden" fierce at each other
came.

A raiding terror of ocean, on traders that
preyed,
Fierce as the sombre eagle her flag displayed,
The German "Emden" was cutting a cable
strand
When met by the "Sydney" and driven sinking
to land.

26 For the Sceptre of the Sea

She had raided the seas from Penang to far Bombay
Sinking the British vessels she met on her way.

The Russians and the French had a score to settle
too

Till "Sydney" came with her staunch Australian
crew.

"Emden" was cutting the cable at Cocos Isle
When a vessel appeared, though distant many a mile ;
It was the "Sydney" steaming into sight,
Which made it certain that there would be a fight.

Long immunity from capture made him bold :
" If it's the Australian flag we see unfold,"
Said the captain of the "Emden," " she is ours,
And we'll send her to the bottom, by the Powers !"

Not a whit less eager was the "Sydney's" crew ;
Of the "Emden's" reputation, well they knew ;
But like young knights of old in battles din
They fought with high resolve their spurs to win.

A rain of shells came hurtling through the air
Raising the sea in geysers everywhere,
Scarring the armour on the "Sydney's" side,
A hail of death, but most of it going wide.

For the Sceptre of the Sea 27

The "Sydney's" guns with better aim were trained,
And on the foe their six-inch missiles rained ;
While closing in or bearing swift away
She deftly dodged their ranges to the foe's dismay.

Still fighting, the "Emden" was beached on the
nearby land ;

Escape there was none, and she'd failed in her
final stand ;

Reluctant then her colours were lowered away,
Struck to the "Sydney" the "Emden" awash in
the spray.

Swept from the Seas

Swept from the seas, swept from the seas,
Swept from the open main,
Cleared from the South Atlantic
Never to fight again ;
The German cruiser squadron that made Tsingtau its
base
Is sunk off the Falkland Islands by a British fleet in
chase.

Swept from the seas, swept from the seas,
Hunted through all the zones ;
From the face of the furthest oceans
Banished to Davy Jones ;
The flag that the German Kaiser supreme o'er the
world would unfold,
That gaunt old Prussian eagle, feathered in black and
gold.

For the Sceptre of the Sea 29

Swept from the seas, swept from the seas,
Swept from each vaunted post ;
Swept from the wide Pacific,
Swept from its every coast ;
For ships of the British Empire with Russians, French
and the Jap
Spread a net for the German raiders and caught them
fast in the trap.

The Battle of the North Sea

(Dogger Bank)

January 24th, 1915

Emboldened by their raid of Hartlepool
On babes in arms and children bound for school,
The "Baby Killers" drank another toast,
And started out once more to raid that coast
The Kaiser hated most.
Their battle cruisers ranged in stately line
With scouts that felt the way across the brine.
Were far upon their course when dawning day
Discovered other ships upon their way.
If it had been a barge or trawler's sail
No doubt a victory had marked their trail ;
But, horrors ! those were British men-of-war,
A battle-cruiser fleet, the Germans saw.
Forgotten were the villages they'd plan'd
To blow to pieces on the British strand,

For the Sceptre of the Sea 31

They did not even wait to make a stand.
At once their dreadnought-cruisers took to flight.
Leaving the slower ships to yield or fight,
A truly noble sight !
The British seamen hailed the chance with joy
And started out the Germans to destroy.
'Twas Beatty in the "Lion" set the pace,
Four other battle-cruisers joined the chase ;
Tyrwhitt's destroyer squadron swept the course
Chasing the enemy's torpedo force.
The "Derflinger" and "Seydlitz" had the speed,
And with the "Moltke" swiftly gained the lead,
Leaving the cruiser "Blutcher" to her fate ;
Each for himself and devil take those that were late,
They had no time to wait.
Swiftly the "Lion," gaining in the race,
Stormed on the "Blutcher," and then passed in chase
Of "Moltke" and her sister ships ahead.
Still dangerous and fighting though they fled.
"Tiger" and "Princess Royal" steaming fast
The raging "Blutcher" riddled as they passed,
And dodging submarines kept on their way
To hear what other Germans had to say
Who'd toasted to "The Day."
At length the Germans gained the sheltering field

32 For the Sceptre of the Sea

Sown thick with mines ; their wounded vessels reeled
Beneath the shock of shells that screaming fell ;
Aflame and silent it was just as well
For them that " Lion " crippled fell behind,
And others shunned the waters that were mined.
The " Blutchter " shot to pieces had gone down,
Blown up by " Arethusa " of renown
That bravely fought in battles of the Bight,
And ready was for any other fight.
New Zealand glories in the ship whose name
Bears witness to the colony that came
Foremost to strengthen Britain's naval might,
And show the world the Lion's cubs would fight ;
While " Princess Royal " and the " Tiger " too,
With the " Indomitable " and the crew
Of many a swift destroyer vied that day
In bringing Britain's enemies to bay.
Now Beatty is the idol of the hour,
And Fisher's cruiser fleet has proved its power.
The German Navy has been dealt a blow
That well may warn it not to raiding go
Where Britain's guns say No !

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The Battle off Jutland

May 31st, 1916

The silent fleet that braved the North Sea tempests,
The submarines, the snow and fog and spray,
Through sleepless nights and weary months of waiting,
Spoke with its guns to-day.

Sir David Beatty's cruisers did discover
The presence of a German force at sea ;
Where by the verdict of the British nation
It had no right to be.

He first engaged a battle-cruiser squadron,
Which showed unusual eagerness to fight ;
For in support their naval strength was gathered
To challenge Britain's might.

34 For the Sceptre of the Sea

The only anxious thoughts that troubled Beatty
Were lest they should escape the British fleet ;
Though fresh divisions soon his foes had doubled,
He scorned to bid retreat.

More fiercely raged the fight as other units
Out of the mists appeared on either side ;
Great German battleships into the conflict
Were flung to turn the tide.

On either side proud ships were seen to stagger,
Then disappear beneath the waves in flame.
To Beatty by o'erwhelming foes imperilled
Our super-dreadnoughts came.

The "Warspite," "Valiant," "Barham" and "Malaya":
What cheers for hard pressed comrades bravely ring ;
What deeper voices to that stern engagement
Their mighty weapons bring.

Another cloud loomed dark o'er the horizon,
Like growing storm, 'Twas Jellicoe's grand fleet ;
Before its deadly hail and wrathful thunders
The German ships retreat.

For the Sceptre of the Sea 35

Darkness shut down with mist upon the ocean :
Such dreadful night the sea had never known ;
But in the wild *melée* the British triumph,
The foe is overthrown.

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The Long Blockades

By ceaseless watch, by long and stern blockade
On hostile coasts, through fog and storm and rain
The British seamen gained the hardihood
That made them masters on the restless main.

Flashes of brilliant victory that crowned
The sleepless vigilance of weary years
Were but as breakers on a coral reef
Which indicate a growth that scarce appears.

Horatio Nelson, Hawke and Collingwood
Their tireless watch had kept on hostile sails ;
Cruising the North Atlantic, tempest tossed,
Braving the Gulf of Lyons' north-west gales.

Each time Napoleon's master mind did plan
To join the scattered continental fleet,
His deep-laid schemes were always brought to wreck
By close blockade or ruinous defeat.

For the Sceptre of the Sea 37

The British Admiralty his subtlest plans
Fathomed, and met his every ruse ;
Their close blockades with swiftly striking fleets
Checked every move that Bonaparte did choose.

Those weather-beaten ships on distant coasts,
By the "Grand Army" never even seen,
Between it and dominion of the world
With stern untiring watch did intervene.

Exhaustless of resource, with iron frame
And courage neither storm nor war could shake,
A race of seamen from those blockades came
Whose spirit England's foes could never break.

The Old Sea Dogs

'Twas Blake who beat the Dutchmen
That swept the narrow seas
With brooms and other insults
Displayed upon the breeze.

Hawke mid the surf and quicksands
Broke up a threatened raid ;
And Nelson thrashed Napoleon
Where e'er he met his blade.

And many other seamen
Great Britain's honour saved ;
Frobisher, Drake and Hawkins
The Spanish galleons braved.

Lord Howard, the Armada,
Invincible they claimed,
Chased hotly to the Northward
Helpless and cowed and tamed.

For the Sceptre of the Sea 39

St. Vincent in the dawning
Of St. Valentine's day
Met Don Cordova's squadron
And won a hard fought fray.

And then Lord Cochrane's daring
Burned like a vivid flame ;
His scintillating genius
Added to Britain's fame.

The British line of battle
Upon the heaving seas
Is still a mighty weapon
To make oppression cease ;

To check the wild ambitions
Of overbearing States,
To guard religious freedom
And hold the ocean gates.

St. Vincent

The morning mists are lifting like a curtain,
A scene is staged upon the ocean floor,
Two fleets are there, and they will fight 'tis certain ;
For British tars are eager as of yore
To keep the sceptre of the rolling wave
And from invasion England's borders save.

A Spanish fleet, the mightiest since the day
The Great Armada started on its quest,
Off Cape St. Vincent now is under weigh
To raise the blockades of Toulon and Brest. -
A hundred sail the British ships would chase,
The British flag they reckon to erase.

But Sir John Jervis laying in their track
With fifteen ships their passage will oppose.
The odds are two to one, but nothing lack

For the Sceptre of the Sea 41

The Britishers of zeal to thrash their foes ;
Their eager lookouts watch those ships that loom
Like monsters in the early morning gloom.

The Spanish fleet in two divisions lies
Scattered and formless on the heaving main.
The British admiral takes it by surprise,
And as with rapier thrust cleaves it in twain,
Two British columns merging into one,
Ship following hard on ship, gun backing gun.

The "Principe de Asturias" tries the feat
Of blocking that determined stroke.
But "Victory" goes in stays, the foe to meet,
And flings defiance couched in flame and smoke,
From which with shattered crew and rigging torn
The Spaniard shrinks, battered and overborne.

Then Jervis signals to engage the mass
Of ships that form the windward fleet of Spain ;
Their leeward squadron fails his guns to pass
And disconcerted sheers away again ;
Till ship on ship the column passing by
At length their path no longer does deny.

42 For the Sceptre of the Sea

The Spaniard sees his chance and hastes to close
His sundered fleet, and solid fight or fly ;
But Nelson's watchful eye detects these foes,
The mightiest ships afloat, come sweeping by ;
And swinging out of line he sails to meet
Alone, the flower of the Spanish fleet.

The " Captain " is the smallest " seventy-four "
Of all the British fleet engaged that day.
Horatio Nelson, now her commodore,
The hostile squadron's charge essays to stay ;
And doubling back its course to intercept,
His vessel is with withering fire swept.

But pulsing with repeated blasts of flame
The " Captain " scourges those leviathans,
Whose combined fire cannot the " Captain " tame ;
But Nelson on her quarter-deck remains,
And when his spars and sails are shot away
Two first-rate ships his borders take that day.

The " Excellent " had swept into the storm
Of battle that around the " Captain " raged ;
At ten yards distance was the fighting warm,

For the Sceptre of the Sea 43

And Collingwood a brilliant duel waged ;
Tormenting a four-decker till she struck,
Then sought another foe to try his luck.

Four prizes had the British squadron won,
And though the Spaniards now their fleets unite,
In council called, their captains choose to run ;
But two of all that fleet do vote to fight.
Spain met her masters in those Viking's sons,
And feared to face at sea their deadly guns.

The Battle of the Nile

Of Nelson and the Nile
Let us keep the mem'ry bright ;
And of British tars who won
In that famed historic fight,
When the fate of nations in the balance lay.

On Egypt and the East
Had Napoleon set his heart ;
His troops were landed safe,
And the fleet had played a part,
But anchored waits within Aboukir Bay.

Here the French for many weeks
Have eluded Nelson's eye ;
But his gliding topsails show
Now at length against the sky,
In the cloudless August sunshine flashing white.

For the Sceptre of the Sea 45

Bruey's fleet in battle form
Is prepared for an attack.
He knows the British well,
That 'tis Nelson's on his track ;
But has chosen his position and will fight.

Thirteen battleships in line,
Cabled like a chain of beads,
Stretch across Aboukir Bay
Facing those that Nelson leads,
As the sun sinks low behind that curving strand.

Without a pause or check
Leaps Nelson on the foe ;
But ten ships of his line
Does he into action throw ;
The other four are many miles from land.

"Where an enemy can swing
We can sail and anchor there ;
And we'll double on their line
Though there's not much room to spare.
That we'll succeed there is no question now."

46 For the Sceptre of the Sea

As the British fleet comes on
The "Goliath" leads the van.
In the chains a leadsman stands
And her yards the sailor's man,
Taking in the sails while shots crash through her bow.

In silence till they reach
Pistol shot length of the foe,
The determined British ships
On with deadly purpose go ;
Then breaks their fire like overwhelming spray.

The flash of guns grows bright
As night gathers o'er the sea ;
And triumphant is the stroke
Of Nelson's strategy
That Bruey's line of battle sweeps away.

By dawn that curving line,
A mighty battle fleet
That held Napoleon's hopes,
Was crumpled in defeat,
Where yester eve they'd floated proudly gay.

For the Sceptre of the Sea 47

"L'Orient" had flamed
With a roar that stilled the fight ;
And a thousand men went down
When she vanished in the night,
While her sister ships were reaped like waving grain.

Four French ships did escape
Of the seventeen that fought
In that picked position strong,
Inaccessible they thought ;
But scattered now or prizes they remain.

When the battle's din was o'er
Admiral Nelson orders gave
To return thanksgiving then
Unto God whose arm did save ;
And for victory, which strengthened British sway.

For England fought for life
And she stemmed a threatened flood
Of Napoleon's armed hosts
And his naval force destroyed ;
"More than victory, 'twas conquest," crowned
that day.

“Of Nelson and the North”

“Five score and five engagements I have fought,”
Quoth Nelson when that glorious day was done ;
“But fiercest of them all and dearest bought
“Has been this victory we now have won.”
There, sons of Vikings, ranged before the walls
Of Copenhagen, sought through deadly strife
To test again by force of cannon balls
British supremacy, her very life.

The League of Armed Neutrality was planned
To challenge Britain's power on the sea ;
And every Continental port was manned
To bar the entry of those seamen free.
Against the Island Nation's strong defence
Napoleon's fierce attacks so often hurled
Again gave Britain's rulers grave offence ;
And now she stood alone against the world.

For the Sceptre of the Sea 49

The shallow sound a tangle is of shoals
With twisted channels scoured by the tide.
Across the waterfront a challenge rolls
Where Danish ships and batteries do ride.
The British had no local knowledge there,
And daring seamanship alone could bring
Their battle squadron through the maze to where
The Danish line they could with broadsides sting.

A flash of high resolve was in the smile
Of British tars that at their stations lay.
The hero of the Battle of the Nile,
Horatio Nelson, was to lead that day.
The fire of his gallant spirit ran
Throughout the fleet like an electric flame ;
And nerved to deeds of valour every crew
That fought those lofty ships for Britain's fame.

In spite of fog and rain through bitter nights
Of March the thirtieth and thirty-first
Was Nelson in his boat with hidden lights,
Sounding the channels that he feared the worst.
The Danes had moved the buoys before that dawn
But British seamen now the shallows dared ;
And where some ships did ground they served to warn
And from mistortune thus the others spared.

50 For the Sceptre of the Sea

By night the fleet had passed the Outer Deep
And anchored southward of the Danish line ;
So when the wind blew fair their course to keep,
In battle order they obeyed the sign ;
And weighing anchor in procession swept,
The " Edgar " leading all that stately fleet
Which grimly steadfast on its course was kept,
And swiftly moved the Danish force to meet.

A cable length away the Danish fleet
Made answer to the thunder of each gun
As on their line Lord Nelson did repeat
The tactics that Aboukir Bay had won.
An eddying battle cloud of whirling smoke
Scored by the flame of guns in crimson bars
Lay over all but where the topmasts broke
Above the pall, a line of swaying spars.

The Danes, what e'er the cause that made the war,
Had gathered at their country's call ;
And Danish valour and endurance saw
Their highest limit 'neath that smoky pall ;
While wives and children watched the battle tide
That ebbed and flowed upon the narrow Sound ;
And Copenhagen waited to decide
Its final action by that fatal round.

Two hours of furious cannonade had wrought
Its deadly havoc on the Danish fleet,
The Danish flagship had on fire caught
But stubborn valour would not own defeat.
Then while the thunder of the battle rolled
In deepest tones of heavy broadsides' roar
A signal from Hyde Parker did unfold
Its message to the British to withdraw.

For he did anxious in the offing lay
With eight great liners of the British fleet.
The lighter vessels had to fight that day
And 'mid the shoals the Danish navy meet.
The signalman on board the "Elephant"
Told Nelson of the signal that was made.
"Leave off the action, hang me but I shan't,
"Is mine for closer fighting still displayed?"

Then putting to his sightless eye his glass
Nelson exclaimed; "I don't the signal see :
"But damn the signal anyway! that pass ;
"Keep mine for closer action floating free."
The little sloops and frigates that engaged
The three Crown Batteries the signal saw ;
And though heart-broken and enraged
The officers attempted to withdraw.

52 For the Sceptre of the Sea

'Twas there, upon that deadly battle's brink
The gallant, good Riou his life did lose,
Exclaiming : " What will Nelson think
To see us thus the battle gauge refuse ? "
His ship, the " Amazon," had ceased to fight
And drawing off, the signal to obey,
The Danish batteries got her in sight
As clouds of powder smoke were blown away.

By hail of solid shot and flying chain
The " Amazon " was struck with deadly force ;
But Riou on his deck did still remain
To guide the frigate squadron on its course ;
Then from the battery a chain shot came
That cut him down, and Riou perished there,
A sailor having some of Nelson's flame
And of Lord Nelson's battle genius rare.

By two o'clock the Danish fire dies,
One half their line is but a chain of wrecks,
Upon the scene a flag of truce now flies
And British seamen clear their battered decks
And toil to float the stranded ships and save
Their shattered prizes ; and the cripples guide
Clear of the shoals. Daring as well as brave
Proved those who were Great Britain's hope and pride.

Trafalgar

“The winds and waves occasioned us some losses
After a battle fought imprudently.”
This was Napoleon’s summing of an action
That crushed his navy finally at sea ;
Putting an end to all his hopes and toil
To land an army on the English soil.

’Twas off the Spanish coast at Cape Trafalgar
Lord Nelson caught the French and Spanish Fleet ;
And with his customary skill and daring
Lead in the “ Victory ” the foe to meet,
Determined then to strike a final blow
Napoleon’s power at sea to overthrow.

By craft and skilful angling he coaxed them
To venture out upon the open deep.
His fleet is kept below the dim horizon,

54 For the Sceptre of the Sea

But frigates still their sleepless watches keep ;
And rockets flare at night or signal gun
Acquaint him with what Villeneuve has done.

Soon Villeneuve, confiding in his squadron,
With thirty-three great warships sails from port ;
And Nelson's eager lookouts signal
The tidings of the enemy long sought,
Who now at length takes up the offered gauge
And comes prepared a battle fierce to wage.

Ground swells presaging storm are swinging landward
While faintest airs propel each mighty fleet ;
As picturesque a scene of naval splendour
As ever did the light of morning greet :
The French and Spanish in far stretching line,
While British ships in columns twain combine.

With every stitch of widespread canvas drawing
The British come with flagships in the van,
Drifting to battle while Lord Nelson signals :
"England expects duty from every man."
Then as the ships close with the allies' line
Their broadsides flash across the heaving brine

For the Sceptre of the Sea 55

'Tis Collingwood, whose flag the "Royal Sovereign"
Bears proudly at one British column's head,
First draws the raking fire of the warships
In curving line athwart his pathway spread ;
But soon the British bulldog gets its grip
And crushes Santa Anna's Spanish ship.

The "Victory" slowly drifts into the action,
The hub of a converging hail of ball
Which she endures without a gun replying
Though fifty of her crew are seen to fall ;
Till cutting all his studding sails away
Lord Nelson gives the word to start the day.

The thunder of the battle deepens
As each ship grapples her antagonist.
The deadly fire of the British seamen
Their valiant enemies in vain resist ;
And bravely though the allies fight them back
Undaunted is the British Fleet's attack.

Pacing the "Victory's" deck, grown red with
slaughter,
Lord Nelson falls, pierced by a musket ball.
Death calls him at his crowning triumph

56 For the Sceptre of the Sea

When his life's work is done for good and all.
He's vanquished England's foes upon the sea,
And from invasion for the time she's free.

Some eighteen ships the British vessels capture,
But night and storm are coming on apace ;
And soon the victors and their shattered prizes
Are battling in a hurricane's embrace.
And many a comrade true and many a foe
Those fierce Atlantic billows overthrow.

Trafalgar doubtless changed the course of hist'ry
And 'stablished Britain's power on the deep.
It justified the audacious boast of Nelson :
"The fleets of England can their island keep,
And equal are in midst of war's alarms
To meet the navies of the world in arms."

Quiberon

Where the league long rollers of the Bay of Biscay
Fling themselves in spray upon the Breton shore,
There "the Great Lord Hawke" one wild November
evening
With his broadsides' thunders swelled a tempest's
roar.

It was that year far famed in British hist'ry
When Canada by British arms was won ;
And British infantry in line at Minden
Put cavalry to route upon the run.

For six long months Conflans had been blockaded,
By Hawke's storm-battered British ships, in Brest ;
At length by tempest driven Hawke ran for shelter ;
The coast was clear : the sequel Hawke had guessed.

58 For the Sceptre of the Sea

Though soon before the gale the French were running,
The British ships had struggled grimly back,
And o'er the stormy rim of the horizon
Their topsails showed upon the Frenchman's track.

Hawke signalled to his ships to start the action
When e'er they brought the enemy in range.
And Conflans, too gallant to leave his laggards,
Was soon compelled his former plans to change.

The gale blew now more furious than ever ;
The winter sky with flying clouds was black ;
And on the Breton hills spectators clustered
To watch the Frenchmen beat the English back.

Then Conflans did adopt a stroke whose daring
Might well have baffled many another foe.
He turned and ran towards the Vilaine river,
Where reefs and quicksands thick the waters sow.

Hawke had no pilots, but he saw before him
Half hidden in the driving spray and mist,
The great hulls of the ships which he'd blockaded
For half a year within the port of Brest.

For the Sceptre of the Sea 59

"Where their pilots take the daring Frenchmen,"
Argued Lord Hawke, "There's room to pass for
me ;

And if they go to pieces on the quicksands
Their vessels shall for us good beacons be."

The British ships came rolling on determined,
Throwing from their bluff bows huge sheets of
spray ;

And wilder yet the surf and tempest answered
The thunder of the guns they brought to play.

The "Royal George" sailed in stern and majestic ;
She as his flagship Hawke's blue ensign bore,
And seeking out Admiral Conflans' pennon
Added her broadsides to the battle's roar.

The battle raged till winter daylight faded ;
By dark the French were crushed or put to flight,
But signal guns from wrecks along the shore line
At intervals did call throughout the night.

Seven great liners of the French retreated
For shelter o'er the bar of the Vilaine.
The British sailed in chase till certain wreckage
Their eagerness to close could scarce restrain.

60 For the Sceptre of the Sea

Full many ships the hungry sea had swallowed,
Their topmasts gleaming wet above the tide
A moment e'er they disappeared from vision
With crews at quarters, fighting as they died.

Hawke with his fleet had anchored after nightfall
In shelter of the Isle of Dummet's lee ;
Here Conflans' flagship "Soleil Royal"
To gain some respite from the storm did flee.

But when dawn's cold light came, revealing
The presence of her enemies around,
"Le Soleil Royal" cut away her cables
And in the surf went hard and fast aground.

There's scarce another naval fight on record
Contested 'mid such wild and stormy scenes ;
And few results achieved were more decisive
Than Hawke's destruction of the French marines.

"Considering the fury of the tempest,
"The early fading of the light away,
"A flying enemy 'mid shoals and quicksands,
"All man could do," Hawke claimed, "Was done
that day."

To the Victors

R. V. Y. C.

We meet to-night the laurels to bestow
That fitly grace the victors in the strife
For races won on many an open course
Where that variety, the spice of life,
Abounds in calm or drift or stormy blow ;
Developing in all a fund of keen resource.

To thrash again out to the windward mark
In reminiscent strain some contest keen ;
Or to recall some distant signal gun
When fleets were gathered in the sunset's sheen ;
Or twilight slowly faded into dark,
And twinkling stars peered from the heavens one
by one.

62 For the Sceptre of the Sea

Of late a sterner call came to the fleet
To man the craft that do on pleasure stray ;
And guard against attack by German foes
Who drink in steins of lager to "The Day,"
And such response that call at once did meet
As no regatta day or cruise did e'er disclose.

And many comrades true have gone abroad
To fight for Britain where the nations meet.
May victory crown the efforts of their arms
And safe returned devoted shipmates greet
When sheathed is the cutlass and the sword ;
And Britain's empire safe from war and war's alarms.

