

Thomas B. Macaulay (1800-59)

1 *The Armada*

Attend, all ye who list to hear our noble England's praise;
I tell of the thrice famous deeds she wrought in ancient days,
When that great fleet invincible against her bore in vain
The richest spoils of Mexico, the stoutest hearts of Spain.

It was about the lovely close of a warm summer day, 5
There came a gallant merchant-ship full sail to Plymouth Bay;
Her crew hath seen Castile's black fleet, beyond Aurigny's isle,
At earliest twilight, on the waves lie heaving many a mile.
At sunrise she escaped their van, by God's especial grace;
And the tall *Pinta* till the noon had held her close in chase. 10
Forthwith a guard at every gun was placed along the wall;
The beacon blazed upon the roof of Edgcumbe's lofty hall;
Many a light fishing-bark put out to pry along the coast,
And with loose rein and bloody spur rode inland many a post.

With his white hair unbonneted, the stout old sheriff comes; 15
Behind him march the halberdiers; before him sound the drums;
His yeomen round the market-cross make clear an ample space,
For there behoves him to set up the standard of Her Grace.
And haughtily the trumpets peal, and gaily dance the bells,
As slow upon the labouring wind the royal blazon swells. 20
Look how the Lion of the Sea lifts up his ancient crown,
And underneath his deadly paw treads the gay lilies down.
So stalked he when he turned to flight, on that famed Picard field,
Bohemia's plume, and Genoa's bow, and Cæsar's eagle shield;
So glared he when at Agincourt in wrath he turned to bay, 25
And crushed and torn beneath his claws the princely hunters lay.
Ho! strike the flag-staff deep, Sir Knight; ho! scatter flowers, fair maids;
Ho! gunners, fire a loud salute; ho! gallants, draw your blades;
Thou sun, shine on her joyously; ye breezes, waft her wide —
Our glorious SEMPER EADEM, the banner of our pride. 30

The freshening breeze of eve unfurled that banner's massy fold;
The parting gleam of sunshine kissed that haughty scroll of gold;

Night sank upon the dusky beach and on the purple sea —
Such night in England ne'er had been, nor e'er again shall be.
From Eddystone to Berwick bounds, from Lynn to Milford Bay, 35
That time of slumber was as bright and busy as the day;
For swift to east and swift to west the ghastly war-flame spread —
High on St. Michael's Mount it shone: it shone on Beachy Head.
Far on the deep each Spaniard saw, along each southern shire,
Cape beyond cape, in endless range, those twinkling points of fire. 40
The fisher left his skiff to rock on Tamar's glittering waves;
The rugged miners poured to war from Mendip's sunless caves;
O'er Longleat's towers, o'er Cranbourne's oaks, the fiery herald flew —
He roused the shepherds of Stonehenge, the rangers of Beaulieu.
Right sharp and quick the bells all night rang out from Bristol town, 45
And ere the day three hundred horse had met on Clifton down;
The sentinel on Whitehall Gate looked forth into the night,
And saw o'erhanging Richmond Hill the streak of blood-red light.
Then bugle's note and cannon's roar the death-like silence broke,
And with one start, and with one cry, the royal city woke. 50
At once on all her stately gates arose the answering fires;
At once the wild alarum clashed from all her reeling spires;
From all the batteries of the Tower pealed loud the voice of fear,
And all the thousand masts of Thames sent back a louder cheer;
And from the furthest ward was heard the rush of hurrying feet, 55
And the broad streams of pikes and flags rushed down each roaring street.
And broader still became the blaze, and louder still the din,
As fast from every village round the horse came spurring in;
And eastward straight from wild Blackheath the warlike errand went,
And roused in many an ancient hall the gallant squires of Kent. 60
Southward from Surrey's pleasant hills flew those bright couriers forth;
High on bleak Hampstead's swarthy moor they started for the north;
And on, and on, without a pause, untired, they bounded still:
All night from tower to tower they sprang; they sprang from hill to hill,
Till the proud peak unfurled the flag o'er Darwin's rocky dales, 65
Till like volcanoes flared to heaven the stormy hills of Wales;
Till twelve fair counties saw the blaze on Malvern's lonely height;
Till streamed in crimson on the wind the Wrekin's crest of light;
Till broad and fierce the star came forth on Ely's stately fane,
And tower and hamlet rose in arms o'er all the boundless plain; 70
Till Belvoir's lordly terraces the sign to Lincoln sent,
And Lincoln sped the message on o'er the wide vale of Trent;
Till Skiddaw saw the fire that burned on Gaunt's embattled pile,

And the red glare on Skiddaw roused the burghers of Carlisle.

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1833

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