

Thomas Campbell (1777-1844)

1 *The Battle of the Baltic*

I.

Of Nelson and the North,
Sing the glorious day's renown,
When to battle fierce came forth
All the might of Denmark's crown,
And her arms along the deep proudly shone; 5
By each gun the lighted brand,
In a bold determined hand,
And the Prince of all the land
Led them on.

II.

Like leviathans afloat, 10
Lay their bulwarks on the brine;
While the sign of battle flew
On the lofty British line:
It was ten of April morn by the chime:
As they drifted on their path, 15
There was silence deep as death;
And the boldest held his breath,
For a time.

III.

But the might of England flushed
To anticipate the scene; 20
And her van the fleeter rushed
O'er the deadly space between.
"Hearts of oak!" our captains cried, when each gun
From its adamant lips
Spread a death-shade round the ships, 25
Like the hurricane eclipse
Of the sun.

IV.

Again! again! again!

And the havoc did not slack,
Till a feeble cheer the Dane 30
To our cheering sent us back;
Their shots along the deep slowly boom –
Then ceased – and all is wail,
As they strike the shattered sail;
Or, in conflagration pale, 35
Light the gloom.

V.

Out spoke the victor then,
As he hailed them o'er the wave:
“Ye are brothers! ye are men!
And we conquer but to save; 40
So peace instead of death let us bring;
But yield, proud foe, thy fleet,
With the crews, at England's feet,
And make submission meet
To our king.” 45

VI.

Then Denmark blessed our chief,
That he gave her wounds repose;
And the sounds of joy and grief
From her people wildly rose,
As death withdrew his shades from the day, 50
While the sun looked smiling bright
O'er a wide and woeful sight,
Where the fires of funeral light
Died away.

VII.

Now joy, old England, raise! 55
For the tidings of thy might,
By the festal cities' blaze,
Whilst the wine-cup shines in light;
And yet amidst that joy and uproar,
Let us think of them that sleep, 60
Full many a fathom deep,
By thy wild and stormy steep,
Elsinore!

VIII.

Brave hearts! to Britain's pride
Once so faithful and so true; 65
On the deck of fame that died;
With the gallant good Riou;
Soft sigh the winds of heaven o'er their grave!
While the billow mournful rolls
And the mermaid's song condoles, 70
Singing glory to the souls
Of the brave!

1801

(From George Barnett Smith, ed. *Illustrated British Ballads, Old and New*. Vol. 1. London, 1881)