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# **The Battle of the Bays**

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**The Battle of the Bays.**

*By the same Author*

IN CAP AND BELLS

HORACE AT CAMBRIDGE

TILLERS OF THE SAND

THE BATTLE  
OF  
THE BAYS



BY OWEN SEAMAN

JOHN LANE  
THE BODLEY HEAD  
LONDON & NEW YORK  
1902

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*Eighth Edition*

## I. THE BATTLE OF THE BAYS.

### 1.

#### A SONG OF RENUNCIATION.

(AFTER A. C. S.)

In the days of my season of salad,  
When the down was as dew on my cheek,  
And for French I was bred on the ballad,  
For Greek on the writers of Greek,--  
Then I sang of the rose that is ruddy,  
Of 'pleasure that winces and stings,'  
Of white women and wine that is bloody,  
And similar things.  
Of Delight that is dear as Desi-er,  
And Desire that is dear as Delight;  
Of the fangs of the flame that is fi-er,  
Of the bruises of kisses that bite;

### 2

Of embraces that clasp and that sever,  
Of blushes that flutter and flee  
Round the limbs of Dolores, whoever  
Dolores may be.  
I sang of false faith that is fleeting  
As froth of the swallowing seas,  
Time's curse that is fatal as Keating  
Is fatal to amorous fleas;

Of the wanness of woe that is whelp of  
The lust that is blind as a bat--  
By the help of my Muse and the help of  
The relative THAT.

Panatheist, bruiser and breaker  
Of kings and the creatures of kings,  
I shouted on Freedom to shake her  
Feet loose of the fetter that clings;  
Far rolling my ravenous red eye,  
And lifting a mutinous lid,  
To all monarchs and matrons I said I  
Would shock them--and did.

3

Thee I sang, and thy loves, O Thalassian,  
O 'noble and nude and antique!'  
Unashamed in the 'fearless old fashion'  
Ere washing was done by the week;  
When the 'roses and rapture' that girt you  
Were visions of delicate vice,  
And the 'lilies and languors of virtue'  
Not nearly so nice.  
O delights of the time of my teething,  
Félise, Fragoletta, Yolande!  
Foam-yeast of a youth in its seething  
On blasted and blithering sand!  
Snake-crowned on your tresses and belted  
With blossoms that coil and decay,



Ye are gone; ye are lost; ye are melted  
Like ices in May.

Hushed now is the bibulous bubble  
Of 'lithe and lascivious' throats;  
Long stript and extinct is the stubble  
Of hoary and harvested oats;

4

From the sweets that are sour as the sorrel's  
The bees have abortively swarmed;  
And Algernon's earlier morals  
Are fairly reformed.

I have written a loyal Armada,  
And posed in a Jubilee pose;  
I have babbled of babies and played a  
New tune on the turn of their toes;  
Washed white from the stain of Astarte,  
My books any virgin may buy;  
And I hear I am praised by a party  
Called Something Mackay!

When erased are the records, and rotten  
The meshes of memory's net;  
When the grace that forgives has forgotten  
The things that are good to forget;  
When the trill of my juvenile trumpet  
Is dead and its echoes are dead;  
Then the laurel shall lie on the crumpet

And crown of my head!

5

2.

## FOR THE ALBUMS OF CROWNED HEADS ONLY.

(AFTER SIR E. A.)

1. *From the third Sa'dine Box of the eighth Gazelle of Ghazal.*

Yá Yá! Best-Belovéd! I look to thy dimples and drink;  
Tiddlihi! to thy cheek-pits and chin-pit, my Tulip, my Pink!  
See my heart rises up like a bubble, and bursts in my throat,  
And the dimples that draw it are Three, like the Men in a  
Boat.

Thrice Three are the Muses, and I that begat her should  
guess

That the Tenth is the Tële-Ephēmera, Pride of the PRESS!

6

And the Graces were triplets till lately the fruitful Diti

Propagated a Fourth, and the infant was W. G.

From my post of Propinquity prone on my languorous knees

My tears slither down like the Gum of Arabia's trees.

"Am I drunk?" Heart-Entangler! By Hafiz, the Blender of  
Squish!

'Tis the camel that sits on the prayer-mat is drunk as a fish.

As I hope for the future Uprising, deny it who can,

Two years I have worn the Blue Ribbon, come next Rama-  
dan!

7

Chest-Preserver! thou knowest thine eyes, they alone, are my  
drink,  
Blue-black as the sloes of the Garden or Stephens his Ink.  
On thy sugar-sweet liplets, my Cypress! I browse like a bee,  
And am aching, as after a surfeit of Melon, for thee!  
Low laid at thy feet--little feet--in the dust like a worm,  
Round the train of thy skirt, O my Peacock, I fitfully squirm.  
By Allah! I swoon, I rotate, I am sickly of hue!  
And the Infidel swore that Jam-Jam was a Temperance brew!  
Heart-Punisher! Surely I think it was jalapped with gin!  
Aha! Paradise! I am passing! So be it! Amin!

8

*2. From a little thing by the Princess Onono Goawai.*

The bulbul hummeth like a book  
Upon the pooh-pooh tree,  
And now and then he takes a look  
At you and me,  
At me and you.  
Kuchi!  
Kuchoo!

*3. From the Sanskrit of Matabilwaijo.*

Wind! a word with thee! thou goest where my Well-  
Preserved lies

On her bed of bonny briars keeping off the wicked flies.  
Thou shalt know her by th' aroma of her bosom, which is  
musk,

And her ivories that glisten like an elephantine tusk.

9

Seek her coral-guarded tympanum and whisper "Poppinjai!"

And (referring to her lover) kindly add "A-lal-lal-lai!"

Breeze! thou knowest my condition; state it broadly, if you  
please,

In a smattering of Indo-Turco-Perso-Japanese.

Say my youth is flitting freely, and before the season goes

From the garden of my Tûtsi I am fain to pluck a rose.

Tell her I'm a wanton Sufî (what a Sufî really is

She may know, perhaps--I count it one of Allah's mysteries).

Fly, O blessed Breeze, and hither bring me back the net re-  
sult;

Fly as flies the rude mosquito from Abdullah's catapult.

10

Fly as flies the rusty rickshaw of the Kurumayasan,

When he scents a Hippopotam down the groves of Gulistan.

Fly and cull, O cull, a section of my Pipkin's purple tress;

Thou shalt find me drinking deeply with the Lords that rule  
the Mess;

Quaffing mead and mighty sodas with the Johnís, Lords of  
War,

Talking 'jungle in the gun-room,' underneath the deodar.

Hoo Tawâ! I go to join them; he that cometh late is curst,

For the Lords of War (by Akbar) have a most amazing thirst!

11

3.

### MARSYAS IN HADES.

(AFTER SIR L. M.)

Next I saw  
A pensive gentleman of middle age,  
That leaned against a Druid oak, his pipe  
Pendent beneath his chin--a double one--  
(Meaning the pipe); reluctant was his breath,  
For he had mingled in the Morris dance  
And rested blown; but damsels in their teens,  
All decorous and decorously clad,  
Their very ankles hardly visible,  
Recalled his motions; while, for chaperon,  
Good Mrs. Grundy up against the wall  
Beamed approbation.

On his face I read  
Signs of high sadness such as poets wear,  
Being divinely discontented with  
The praise of *jeunes filles*. Even as I looked,  
He touched the portion of his pipe reserved

12

For minor poetry of solemn tone,

Checking the humorous stops intended for  
Electioneering posters and the like;  
And therewithal he made the following  
Addition to his *Songs Unsung*, or else  
His *Unremarked Remarks*:  
“Dear Sir,” he said,  
“Excuse my saying ‘Sir’ like that; it is  
Our way in Hades here among the damned;  
For you must know that some of us are damned  
Not only by faint praise but full applause  
Of simple critics. Take my case. In me  
Behold the good knight Marsyas, M.A.,  
Three times a candidate for Parliament,  
And twice retired; a Justice of the Peace;  
Master of Arts (I said), and better known  
In literary spheres as Master of  
The Mediocre-Obvious; and read  
By boarding-misses in their myriads.  
These dote upon me. Sweetly have I sung  
The commonplaces of philosophy  
In common parlance.

13

You have read perhaps  
The Cymric Triads? Poetry, they say,  
Excels alone by sheer simplicity  
Of language, subject, and invention. Sir!  
The excellence of mine lay that way too.

But fate is partial. Heaven's fulgour moulds  
 'To happiness some, some to unhappiness!'  
 (Look you, the harp was Welsh that figured forth  
 That excellent last line.) I ask you, Sir,  
 What would you? Ill content with mortal praise,  
 And haply somewhat overbold, I sought  
 To be as gods be; sought, in fact, to filch  
 Apollo's bays!  
 Ah me! Dear me! I fain  
 Would use a stronger phrase, but hardly dare,  
 Being, whatever else, respectable.  
 I say I tired of vulgar homage, gift  
 Of ignorance. 'High failure overleaps  
 The bounds of low successes' (there, again,  
 The harp that twanged was Welsh, but with an echo  
 Of Browning). Godlike it must be, I thought,  
 14  
 To climb the giddy brink; to pen, for instance,  
 An Ode to the Imperial Institute,  
 And fall, if bound to, from a decent height.  
 I did and missed the laurel; still I go  
 On writing; what you hear just now is blank,  
 Distinctly blank, and might be measured by  
 The kilomètre; yet I rhyme as well  
 A little; but it takes a lot of time,  
 And checks the lapse of my pellucid stream  
 Not all conveniently."

Thereat he paused,  
And wrung the moisture from his pipe; but I,  
As one that was intolerably bored,  
Took even this occasion to be gone;  
And, going, marked him how he took his stile,  
Polished the waxen tablets, and began  
To make a Royal Pæan *by request*,  
Or so he said.

15

4.

## THE RHYME OF THE KIPPERLING.

(AFTER R. K.)

[N.B.--No nautical terms or statements guaranteed.]

Away by the haunts of the Yang-tse-boo,  
Where the Yuletide runs cold gin,  
And the rollicking sign of the *Lord Knows Who*  
Sees mariners drink like sin;  
Where the *Jolly Roger* tips his quart  
To the luck of the *Union Jack*;  
And some are screwed on the foreign port,  
And some on the starboard tack;--  
Ever they tell the tale anew  
Of the chase for the kipperling swag;  
How the smack *Tommy This* and the smack *Tommy That*

16



They broached each other like a whiskey-vat,

And the *Fuzzy-Wuz* took the bag.

16

Now this is the law of the herring fleet that harries the northern main,

Tattooed in scars on the chests of the tars with a brand like the brand of Cain:

That none may woo the sea-born shrew save such as pay their way

With a kipperling netted at noon of night and cured ere the crack of day.

It was the woman Sal o' the Dune, and the men were three to one,

Bill the Skipper and Ned the Nipper and Sam that was Son of a Gun;

Bill was a Skipper and Ned was a Nipper and Sam was the Son of a Gun,

And the woman was Sal o' the Dune, as I said, and the men were three to one.

There was never a light in the sky that night of the soft mid-summer gales,

But the great man-bloaters snorted low, and the young 'uns sang like whales;

17

And out laughed Sal (like a dog-toothed wheel was the laugh that Sal laughed she):

"Now who's for a bride on the shady side of up'ards of forty-three?"

And Neddy he swore by butt and bend, and Billy by bend and bitt,

And nautical names that no man frames but your amateur

naautical wit;

And Sam said, "Shiver my topping-lifts and scuttle my  
foc's'le yarn,

And may I be curst, if I'm not in first with a kipperling slued  
astarn!"

Now the smack *Tommy This* and the smack *Tommy That* and  
the *Fuzzy-Wuz* smack, all three,

Their captains bold, they were Bill and Ned and Sam respec-  
tivelee.

And it's writ in the rules that the primary schools of kippers  
should get off cheap

For a two mile reach off Foulness beach when the July tide's  
at neap;

18

And the lawless lubbers that lust for loot and filch the year-  
ling stock

They get smart raps from the coastguard chaps with their  
blunderbuss fixed half-cock.

Now Bill the Skipper and Ned the Nipper could tell green  
cheese from blue,

And Bill knew a trick and Ned knew a trick, but Sam knew a  
trick worth two.

So Bill he sneaks a corporal's breeks and a belt of pipeclayed  
hide,

And splices them on to the jibsail-boom like a troopship on  
the tide.

And likewise Ned to his masthead he runs a rag of the  
Queen's,

With a rusty sword and a moke on board to bray like the  
Horse Marines.

But Sam sniffs gore and he keeps off-shore and he waits for

things to stir,

Then he tracks for the deep with a long fog-horn rigged up  
like a bowchasér.

19

Now scarce had Ned dropped line and lead when he spots  
the pipeclayed hide,

And the corporal's breeks on the jibsail-boom like a troop-  
ship on the tide;

And Bill likewise, when he ups and spies the slip of a rag of  
the Queen's,

And the rusty sword, and he sniffs aboard the moke of the  
Horse Marines.

So they each luffed sail, and they each turned tail, and they  
whipped their wheels like mad,

When the one he said "By the Lord, it's Ned!" and the other,  
"It's Bill, by Gad!"

Then about and about, and nozzle to snout, they rammed  
through breach and brace,

And the splinters flew as they mostly do when a Govern-  
ment test takes place.

Then up stole Sam with his little ram and the nautical talk  
flowed free,

And in good bold type might have covered the two front  
sheets of the *P. M. G.*

20

But the fog-horn bluff was safe enough, where all was weed  
and weft,

And the conger-eels were a-making meals, and the pick of  
the tackle left

Was a binnacle-lid and a leak in the bilge and the chip of a  
cracked sheerstrake

And the corporal's belt and the moke's cool pelt and a portrait of Francis Drake.

So Sam he hauls the dead men's trawls and he booms for the harbour-bar,

And the splitten fry are salted dry by the blink of the morning star.

And Sal o' the Dune was wed next moon by the man that paid his way

With a kipperling netted at noon of night and cured ere the crack of day;

For such is the law of the herring fleet that bloats on the northern main,

Tattooed in scars on the chests of the tars with a brand like the brand of Cain.

21

And still in the haunts of the Yang-tse-boo

Ever they tell the tale anew

Of the chase for the kipperling swag;

How the smack *Tommy This* and the smack *Tommy That*

They broached each other like a whiskey-vat,

And the *Fuzzy-Wuz* took the bag.

22

5.

## A BALLAD OF A BUN.

(AFTER J. D.)

'I am sister to the mountains now,