

DAVID GWYNN—HERO OR 'BOASTING LIAR' ?  
(From 'Historical Problems')

- I 'A GALLEY lie ' ye call my tale ; but he  
Whose talk is with the deep kens mighty tales.  
The man, I say, who helped to keep you free  
Stands here, a truthful son of truthful Wales.  
Slandered by England as a loose-lipped liar,  
Banished from Ireland, branded rogue and thief,  
Here stands that Gwynn, whose life of torments dire  
Heaven sealed for England, sealed in blood and fire—  
Stands asking here Truth's one reward, belief!
- II I see—I see ev'n now—those ships of Spain  
Gathered in Lisbon Bay to make the spring,  
I feel the curséd oars, I toil again,  
And trumpets blare, and priests and choir-boys sing ;  
And morning strikes with many a golden shaft,  
Through ruddy mist, four galleys rowing out,  
Four galleys built to pierce the English craft,  
Each swivel-gunned for raking fore and aft,  
Snouted like sword-fish, but with iron snout.
- III And one we call *The Princess*, one *The Royal*,  
*Diana* one ; and last that fell *Basana*  
Where I am toiling, Gwynn, the true, the loyal  
Thinking of mighty Drake and Gloriana.  
By Finisterre God sends a hurricane ;  
Down comes the captain, and quoth he to me—  
His Hell-lit eyes blistered with spray and rain—  
'Freedom and gold are thine, and thanks of Spain,  
If thou canst take the galley through this sea.'

'Ay!

☛ Professor Laughton's introduction to 'State Papers relating to the defeat of the Spanish Armada' lends a revived interest to David Gwynn's 'galley yarn,' which the Professor repudiates. It is treated by Motley as an important episode in the great naval struggle between England and Spain.



- IV Ay! ay!' quoth I. The fools unlock me straight,  
 And soon 'tis I give orders to the Don,  
 Laughing within to hear the laugh of Fate :  
 'Soldiers must go below,' quoth I, 'each one !'  
 Death whispers thus : 'While soldiers sit below  
 'Twixt slaves, whose hate turns nails and teeth to knives,  
 Seize thou the muskets ; turn them on the foe ;  
 But watch with me, before thou strike the blow,  
 Till thou canst free the stoutest from their gyves.'
- V The four queen-galleys pass Cape Finisterre :  
 The Armada, dreaming but of ocean storms,  
 Thinks not of British slaves with shoulders bare  
 Chained, bloody-whealed, and pale on galley forms.  
 Each, as he rows, hath this my whispered plan  
 Deep-scriptured in his brain in words of fire :  
 'Rise every man, and tear to death his man,  
 Yea, tear as only galley captives can,  
 When "God's Revenge" sings loud to Ocean's lyre.'
- VI Past Ferrol Bay I see each galley stoop,  
 Shuddering before the Biscay demon's breath—  
 Down goes a prow—down goes a gaudy poop :  
 'The Don's *Diana* bears the Don to death,'  
 Quoth I, 'and, see the *Princess* plunge and wallow  
 Down purple troughs o'er snowy crests of foam :  
 See! see! the *Royal*, how she tries to follow  
 By many a glimmering crest and shimmering hollow,  
 Where gull and petrel scarcely dare to roam.'
- VII And now Death signs to me mid Ocean's din ;  
 The captain sees the skeleton and pales ;  
 And when the slaves cry 'Ho for Drake and Gwynn !'  
 'Teach them,' quoth I, 'the way we swim in Wales!  
 Sweet strokes are they we deal for old love's sake  
 When slaves are turned to lords, and lords to slaves.  
 When captives hold the whip, let drivers quake !  
 Make every Don, athirst for blood of Drake,  
 Toast England's Queen in wine of foaming waves.'



VIII Far off, the *Royal's* captain sees the strife ;  
 Her slaves see too—see Freedom coming on.  
 'Ye scourge in vain,' quoth I, 'scourging for life  
 Slaves who shall row no more to save the Don.'  
 'Captives,' I cry, 'your hour is coming swift :  
 Through David Gwynn God frees you from your pain ;  
 Show Heaven and me your lives are worth the gift !'  
 Full soon the captured *Royal* rides adrift :  
 'Ask Gwynn,' quoth I, 'for four queen-galleys, Spain—'

IX Spain, who shalt tell, with ashen lips of dread,  
 The Welshman's tale—shalt tell in future days  
 How Gwynn, the galley slave, once fought and bled  
 For England, when she moved through perilous ways !  
 And, now, ye Plymouth seamen, heroes sprung  
 From loins of men whose spirits haunt the sea,  
 Doth England, she who loves the loudest tongue,  
 Remember sons of hers whose deeds are sung  
 By yon green billows sworn to hold her free ?

X To think the great new thought or do the deed  
 That gilds with richer light the mother-land,  
 Or lend her strength of arm in hour of need,  
 When eyes of Doom gleam fierce on every hand,  
 Is bliss to him whose bliss is working well—  
 Is goal and guerdon, too, though boasters loud  
 Make brazen music for the leaden crowd,  
 Dazzled and deafened by the babbler's spell.

THEODORE WATTS.