

HMS Foudroyant by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle



HMS FOU DROYANT

By Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

(Being an humble address to Her Majesty's Naval advisers; who sold Nelson's old flagship to the Germans for a thousand pounds.)

Who says the Nation's purse is lean
Who fears for claim or bond or debt,
When all the glories that have been
Are scheduled as a cash asset?
If times are bleak and trade is slack,
If coal and cotton fail at last,
We've something left to barter yet
Our glorious past.

There's many a crypt in which lies hid
The dust of statesman or of king;
There's Shakespeare's home to raise a bid,
And Milton's house its price would bring.
What for the sword that Cromwell drew?
What for Prince Edward's coat of mail?
What for our Saxon Alfred's tomb?
They're all for sale!

And stone and marble may be sold
Which serve no present daily need;
There's Edward's Windsor, labelled old,
And Wolsey's palace, guaranteed.
St. Clement Danes and fifty fanes,
The Tower and the temple grounds;
How much for these? Just price them, please,
In British pounds.

You hucksters, have you still to learn,
The things which money will not buy?
Can you not read that, cold and stern
As we may be, there still does lie
Deep in our hearts a hungry love
For what concerns our island story?
We sell our work perchance our lives,
But not our glory.

Go barter to the knacker's yard
The steed that has outlived its time!
Send hungry to the pauper ward
The man who served you in his prime!
But when you touch the nation's store,
Be broad your mind and tight your grip.
Take heed! And bring us back once more
Our Nelson's ship.

And if no mooring can be found
In all our harbours near or far,
Then tow the old three-decker round
To where the deep-sea soundings are;
There, with her pennon flying clear,
And with her ensign lashed peak high,
Sink her a thousand fathoms sheer.
There let her lie!

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