

# **BOWER JOHN GRAHAM**

ON PATROL

John Bower

**On Patrol**

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**Bower J.**

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# **John Graham Bower                   , Klaxon On Patrol**

**TO**

**D. V. B**

THEY watch us leaving harbour for the greatest game of all,  
And wonder if we're coming back across the greedy sea;  
They never know the fighting thrill or high adventure's call —  
I rather think the women folk are better men than we.  
But I suspect they say of us as out to sea we go,  
In all our panoply of pride from Orkney to the Nore:  
"It keeps them quiet, we suppose – they like the work, we know —  
And soon perhaps they'll tire and play some safer game than War."

## TO —

HE went to sea on the long patrol,  
Away to the East from the Corton Shoal,  
But now he's overdue.  
He signalled me as he bore away  
(A flickering lamp through leaping spray,  
And darkness then till judgment day),  
"So long! Good luck to you!"

He's waiting out on the long patrol,  
Till the names are called at the muster-roll  
Of seamen overdue.  
Far above him, in wind and rain,  
Another is on patrol again —  
The gap is closed in the Naval Chain  
Where all the links are new.

Over his head the seas are white,  
And the wind is blowing a gale to-night,  
As if the Storm-King knew,  
And roared a ballad of sleet and snow  
To the man that lies on the sand below,  
A trumpet-song for the winds to blow  
To seamen overdue.

Was it sudden or slow – the death that came?  
Roaring water or sheets of flame?  
The end with none to view?  
No man can tell us the way he died,  
But over the clouds Valkyries ride  
To open the gates and hold them wide  
For seamen overdue.

But whether the end was swift or slow,  
By the Hand of God, or a German blow,  
My messmate overdue —  
You went to Death – and the whisper ran  
As over the Gates the horns began,  
*Splendour of God! We have found a man—*  
Good-bye! Good luck to you!

## OLD WOMEN

FAINT against the twilight, dim against the evening,  
Fading into darkness against the lapping sea,  
She sailed away from harbour, from safety into danger,  
The ship that took him from me – my sailor boy from me.

He went away to join her, from me that loved and bore him,  
Loved him ere I bore him, that was all the world to me.  
"No time for leave, mother, must be back this evening,  
Time for our patrol again, across the winter sea."

Six times over, since he went to join her,  
Came he to see me, to run back again.  
"Four hours' leave, mother – still got the steam up,  
Going on patrol to-night – the old East lane."

"Seven times lucky, and perhaps we'll have a battle,  
Then I'll bring a medal back and give it you to keep."  
And his name is in the paper, with close upon a hundred,  
Who lie there beside him, many fathom deep.

And beside him in the paper, somebody is writing,  
– God! but how I hate him – a liar and a fool, —  
"Where is the British Navy – is it staying in the harbours?  
Has the Nelson spirit in the Fleet begun to cool?"

## CHIN UP

ARE the prices high and taxes stiff, is the prospect sad and dark?  
Have you seen your capital dwindle down as low as the German mark?  
Do you feel your troubles around you rise in an endless dreary wall?  
Well – thank your God you were born in time for the Greatest War  
of all.

It will be all right in a thousand years – you won't be bankrupt then.  
This isn't the time of stocks and shares, it's just the age of men.  
The one that sticks it out will win – so don't lie down and bawl,  
But thank your God you've helped to win the noblest War of all.

Away to the East in Flanders' mud, through Dante's dream of Hell,  
The troops are working hard for peace with bayonet, bomb, and shell,  
With poison gas and roaring guns beneath a smoking pall;  
Yes – thank your God your kin are there – the finest troops of all.

You may be stripped of all you have – it may be all you say,  
But you'll have your life and eyesight left, so stow your talk of pay.  
You won't be dead in a bed of lime with those that heard the Call;  
So thank your God you've an easy job in the Greatest War of all.

It isn't the money that's going to count when the Flanders' men return,  
And a shake of your hand from Flanders' men is a thing you've got to  
earn.

Just think how cold it's going to be in the Nation's Judgment Hall;  
So damn your troubles and find your soul in the Greatest War of all!



## "... THAT HAVE NO DOUBTS"

– *Rudyard Kipling.*

*THE last resort of Kings are we, but the voice of peoples too—  
Ask the guns of Valmy Ridge —  
Lost at the Beresina Bridge,  
When the Russian guns were roaring death and the Guard was charging  
through.*

*Ultima Ratio Regis, we – but he who has may hold,  
Se curantes Dei curant,  
Hear the gunners that strain and pant,  
As when before the rising gale the Great Armada rolled.*

*Guns of fifty – sixty tons that roared at Jutland fight,  
Clatter and clang of hoisting shell;  
See the flame where the salvo fell  
Amidst the flash of German guns against the wall of white.*

*The sons of English carronade or Spanish culverin—  
The Danish windows shivered and broke  
When over the sea the children spoke,  
And groaning turrets rocked again as we went out and in.*

*We have no passions to call our own, we work for serf or lord,  
Load us well and sponge us clean —  
Be your woman a slave or queen —  
And we will clear the road for you who hold us by the sword.*

*We come into our own again and wake to life anew—  
Put your paper and pens away,  
For the whole of the world is ours to-day,  
And we shall do the talking now to smooth the way for you.*

*Howitzer gun or Seventy-five, the game is ours to play,  
And hills may quiver and mountains shake,  
But the line in front shall bend or break.  
What is it to us if the world is mad? For we are the Kings to-day.*

## SKY SIGNS

WHEN all the guns are sponged and cleaned, and fuzes go to store,  
when all the wireless stations cry – "come home, you ships of war" —  
"come home again and leave patrol, no matter where you be."  
We'll see the lights of England shine,  
Flashing again on the steaming line,  
As out of the dark the long grey hulls come rolling in from sea.

The long-forgotten lights will shine and gild the clouds ahead,  
Over the dark horizon-line, across the dreaming dead  
That went to sea with the dark behind and the spin of a coin before.  
Mark the gleam of Orfordness,  
Showing a road we used to guess,  
From the Shetland Isles to Dover cliffs – the shaded lane of war.

Up the channel with gleaming ports will homing squadrons go,  
And see the English coast alight with headlands all aglow  
With thirty thousand candle-power flung up from far Gris-nez.  
Portland Bill and the Needles' Light —  
Tompions back in the guns to-night —  
For English lights are meeting French across the Soldiers' Way.

When we come back to England then, with all the warring done,  
And paint and polish come up the side to rule on tube and gun,  
We'll know before the anchor's down, the tidings won't be new.  
Lizard along to the Isle of Wight,  
Every lamp was burning bright,  
Northern Lights or Trinity House – we had the news from you!

## AN ENTENTE

AS we were running the Channel along, with a rising wind abeam,  
Steering home from an escort trip as fast as she could steam,  
I'd just come up, relieving Bill, to look for Fritz again,  
When I turns to the Skipper an', "Sir," I says, "I 'ears an aeroplane."  
An' sure enough, from out o' the clouds astern, we seed 'im come,  
An' down the wind the engine sang with a reg'lar oarin' 'um.  
The Skipper 'e puts 'is glasses down, an' smilin' says to me,  
"We needn't be pointin' guns at 'im – 'e's one o' the R.F.C.  
We don't expect to meet the Boche, or any o' his machines,  
From here to France an' back again – except for submarines."  
An' 'e looks again at the 'plane above, an' says, "I do believe  
It's a fightin' bus – good luck to them – an' lots of London leave."

An' jolly good luck, says I, says I,  
To you that's overhead;  
An' may you never go dry, go dry,  
Or want for a decent bed.  
With yer gaudy patch, says I, says I,  
Of Red an' White an' Blue —  
Oh, may the bullets go by, go by,  
An' not be findin' you.  
Astonishing luck, says I, says I,  
To you an' yer aeroplane;  
An' if it's yer joss to die, to die,  
When you go back again —  
May the enemy say as you drop below,  
An' you start your final dive:  
"Three of us left to see him go,  
An' it must be nice for him to know,  
That wasn't afraid o' five."

## **A BATTLE-PRAYER**

### **SUBMARINES**

WHEN the breaking wavelets pass all sparkling to the sky,  
When beyond their crests we see the slender masts go by,  
When the glimpses alternate in bubbles white and green,  
And funnels grey against the sky show clear and fair between,  
When the word is passed along – "Stern and beam and bow" —  
"Action stations fore and aft – all torpedoes now!"  
When the hissing tubes are still, as if with bated breath  
They waited for the word to loose the silver bolts of death,  
When the Watch beneath the Sea shall crown the great Desire,  
And hear the coughing rush of air that greets the word to fire,  
We'll ask for no advantage, Lord – but only we would pray  
That they may meet this boat of ours upon their outward way.

### **THE BATTLE-FLEET**

THE moment we have waited long  
Is closing on us fast,  
When, cutting short the turret-gong,  
We'll hear the Cordite's Battle-song  
That hails the Day at last.  
The clashing rams come driving forth  
To meet the waiting shell,  
And far away to East and North  
Our targets steam to meet Thy Wrath,  
And dare the Gates of Hell.  
We do not ask Thee, Lord, to-day  
To stay the sinking sun —  
But hear Thy steel-clad servants pray,  
And keep, O Lord, Thy mists away  
Until Thy work is done.

### **DESTROYERS**

THROUGH the dark night  
And the fury of battle  
Pass the destroyers in showers of spray.  
As the Wolf-pack to the flank of the cattle,

We shall close in on them – shadows of grey.  
In from ahead,  
Through shell-flashes red,  
We shall come down to them, after the Day.  
Whistle and crash  
Of salvo and volley  
Round us and into us while we attack.  
Light on our target they'll flash in their folly,  
Splitting our ears with the shrapnel-crack.

Fire as they will,  
We'll come to them still,  
Roar as they may at us – Back – Go Back!  
White though the sea  
To the shell-flashes foaming,  
We shall be there at the death of the Hun.  
Only we pray for a star in the gloaming  
(Light for torpedoes and none for a gun).  
Lord – of Thy Grace  
Make it a race,  
Over the sea with the night to run.

## AN ADMINISTRATIVE VICTORY

A tale is told of a captain bold  
Of E-boat Seventy-two;  
She steered to eastward – pitched and rolled, and Poulson swore at her,  
damp and cold,  
As E-boat captains do.

And off the mouth of the German Bight,  
With Borkum on the bow,  
She saw the smoke of a German fleet – MIND YOUR FINGERS –  
SEVENTY FEET!  
We're in for business now...

(For enemy ships are hard to find —  
You have to take them quick;  
So copy the Eastern culture's rule, that waits for days for an Army mule  
—  
Always ready to click.)

Out to the west from Helgoland  
The big grey cruiser steered,  
And the glinting rays of a rising sun flashed on funnel and mast and  
gun,  
And – Admiral Schultz's beard.

Down the wind the E-boat came  
And passed the searching screen;  
Nobody guessed the boat was there, till they heard the wallop and saw  
the flare —  
Where the pride of the fleet had been.

'Twixt white and green of dancing waves  
The racing tracks were seen,  
And Poulson watching them get there, cried — *Hold the crockery –*  
*Starboard side!*  
*For the kick of a magazine!*

The escort ran and the cruisers ran  
At the thought of an English snare;  
Scattered and spread to left and right, to the friendly arms of the  
German Bight,  
And left the ocean bare.

Then the coffee was spilt, the E-boat rolled  
To a deuce of a shaking bang;  
To the sound of the hammer of Aser-Thor, victory-song of Naval War,

The hull of the E-boat rang.

And Poulson swinging the eye-piece round,  
Lifted eyebrows high,  
For far aloft, when the smoke had cleared, he saw the flash of a golden  
beard  
Against the empty sky.

"Admiral over! *Surface*, lads!  
He's flying a belted sword;  
Pipe the side or stern or bow, stand to attention smartly now —  
Wherever he comes aboard."

The Admiral landed Cabré-wise  
And high the fountains burst —  
(What is the meaning of Cabré-wise? To men of the air it signifies —  
His after-end was first).

They piped the side, and still they stood  
To watch him struggle and heave,  
As he fought the slope of the rounded deck (for none could pull at an  
Admiral's neck  
Without the Admiral's leave).

They took him below, and sat him down  
On the edge of the Captain's bed, —  
Treatment vile for a foemen caught, they gave him a bottle of Navy  
Port —  
Fiery, dark, and red.

They landed him at a Naval Base,  
With S. two-twenty D.  
*Supplied – a large and bearded Hun: Grosse Admirals, angry, One —  
For draft to Admiraltee.*

And Grosse-Admiral Schultz von Schmidt,  
Graf von Hansa-Zoom,  
Faded away to Donnington Hall, to an English park with a guarded wall  
– To an elegant private room.

And there he paced the carpet up,  
And paced the carpet down,  
"Alte Himmel!" – the prisoners cried – "Some one's trod on the  
German pride,  
And dared the Hansa frown!"

The Admiral called for a fountain pen

And Reference Sheets<sup>1</sup> galore,  
And silence fell on the smoking-room – for Grosse-Admiral Hansa-  
Zoom  
Was throwing a Gage of War.

*"Can I believe your Lordships mean  
To stand so idly by —  
When a young lieutenant of twenty-four, pleading the need of Naval  
War,  
Shall make an Admiral fly?"*

*Never shall I believe it true  
That I should have to fall  
On an icy sea with an awful spank, by the act of one of a junior rank,  
I – Schultz, of Donnington Hall."*

Their Lordships read – and bells were heard  
That woke the echoing past;  
And Scouts and messengers jumped and fled – till all was still as a  
world of dead  
Beneath the wireless mast.

My Lords in solemn conclave drew  
Behind a bolted door,  
Threshing it out in full debate – "Is it a case for an Acting Rate?  
Or use of Martial Law?"

At four o'clock in the afternoon,  
With tea-cups clattering past,  
Along the echoing Portland floor the whisper passed from door to door  
—  
*"They've settled it all at last!"*

And I have the word of a lady fair  
In Room Two Thousand B —  
(A perfect peach, I beg to state), who typed the letter in triplicate  
And passed it on to me.

*"We find the Enemy Admiral's Note  
Is based on Service Law —  
That disrespect to a Flag afloat has sullied the fame of Poulson's boat  
Despite the Needs of War.*

*But he erred unknowing – so we shall mask  
His breach of Service pomp, —  
We'll make him an Admiral, D.S.B. <sup>2</sup> – Acting – payless – biscuit free,*

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<sup>1</sup> A letter-form which enables the sender to address his Seniors more abruptly than he would dare to do without its assistance.

<sup>2</sup> D.S.B. = Duty Steam Boat.



*In lieu of lodging and Comp.*

*We'll rate him at once as an A.I.O.<sup>3</sup>  
With a K.R.A. and an I,<sup>4</sup>  
We'll make him a deputy C.P.O.,<sup>5</sup> with Rank of Admiral, whether or no,  
And a beautiful Flag to fly."*

And now when Poulson sails to war  
In E-boat Seventy-two,  
The boatswains pipe and the bugles blare, "*Stand to attention – forward  
there!*  
*The Admiral's passing you!"*

That is the tale as told to me  
By a friend from Beatty's Fleet,  
When over a glass (or even two), he swore to me that the tale was true,  
In a Tavern in Regent Street.

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<sup>3</sup> A.I.O. = Admiralty Interim Order.

<sup>4</sup> K.R.A.I. = King's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions.

<sup>5</sup> C.P.O. = Chief Petty Officer.

## A NIGHTMARE

THE Council of Democracy around the table drew  
(The table was a beauty – it was polished – it was new,  
Twenty feet from side to side and half a mile in length,  
Built of rosewood and mahogany of double extra strength.  
The C in C had gone to jail to answer to the charge  
Of saying what he thought about Democracy at large.  
So the Council of Democracy had taken on the job,  
After voting the removal of his Autocratic nob.  
And the table was erected in a calm secluded spot,  
Well away from any trenches, lest a voter should be shot).  
And the Chairman raised a hammer and he hit the board a whack,  
No one paid the least attention, so he put the hammer back.  
Then he read the lengthy minutes of the gathering before,  
To the ever-growing murmur of the Democratic snore.  
And he put before the meeting all the questions of the day,  
Such as "Shorter hours for Delegates, and seven times the pay."  
With a minor matter for the end – "What shall the Council do  
About this fellow Mackensen? they say he's coming through  
With a hundred thousand hirelings of the Hohenzollern Line,  
And breaking all the Union Rules by working after nine."  
At this a group of Delegates departed for the door,  
To consult with their constituents the conduct of the War.  
The remainder started voting on the Delegation Pay,  
And agreed with unanimity to seven quid a day.  
They decided that unless the Germans travelled very fast,  
There'd be time for all the speeches – so they took the matter last.  
But just as Mr Blithers to the Chairman had addressed  
His opinion – he departed for the Country of the Blest,  
(Both in body and in spirit to the heavens he departed,  
And the Council looked dispirited, though hardly broken-hearted).  
All the delegates were wondering from whence the shell had come;  
One arose to ask a question – Bang!! – he went to Kingdom Come.  
"Mr Chairman," cried a Delegate. "A point of order! I  
Don't believe the Huns are coming – it's an Autocratic lie.  
I shall move the Army question do be left upon the Table,  
And I'm going home to England just as fast as I am able."  
Then he gathered up his papers, and was pushing back his chair,  
When a heavy high explosive sent him sailing in the air.  
The Chairman beat his hammer on the table all the while,  
Yelling oaths and calling "Order" in a Democratic style.  
But the Delegates were started on the question of the War,  
(So as not to waste the speeches that they'd written out before).  
And the Council of Democracy – a thousand fluent tongues —  
Let the Germans have it hearty from its Democratic lungs.

## **Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.**

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