



Our Rhine is not the Thames

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"After this, it was noised about that Mr. Valiant-for-truth was taken with a Summons. . . . Then said he, I am going to my Father's; and tho' with great Difficulty I am got hither, yet now I do not repent me of all the Trouble I have been at to arrive where I am. My Sword, I give to him that shall succeed me in my Pilgrimage, and my Courage and Skill, to him that can get it. My Marks and Scarrs I carry with me, to be a witness for me, that I have fought his Battels, who now will be my Rewarder.

"When the Day that he must go hence was come, many accompanied him to the River side, into which, as he went, he said, Death, where is thy Sting? And as he went down deeper, he said, Grave; where is thy Victory? So he passed over, and the Trumpets sounded for him on the other side." (The Pilgrim's Progress).

But there are serious, good folk who would paraphrase

Good-bye, Piccadilly,
Farewell, Leicester Square

into

Good-bye, Self-indulgence!
Farewell, the soft arm-chair!

and to these the British infantryman responds

Have a banana!

Yes, and truly (when one comes to think) it were hard to find, in a few, words, a better answer.

Send for the boys of the girls' brigade

To set old England free:

Send for my mother, and my sister and my brother,

But for heaven's sake don't send me!

Rule Britannia!

That is "merry England." The enemy wonders that our men march—and so obstinately, too—to this stuff while by rights they should be chanting *Rule, Britannia!* and it would seem that not a few cultivated Englishmen, who of late years have lent too much of their minds to Germanic ways of thought, suffer from an uneasy suspicion that we ought to be answering the perpetual *Deutschland über alles!* with a perpetual *Rule, Britannia!* Nay, the late Professor Cramb—who felt the German hypnotism none the less for resenting it—conveys the reproach in passages like this:

"It is hard for us in England to understand what the Rhine really means for a German, the enthusiasm which he feels for that river. Treitschke himself says of it, for instance, when he has to leave Bonn: 'To-morrow I shall see the Rhine for the last time. The memory of that noble river,'—and this

is not in a poem, observe, but simply in a letter to a friend—the memory of that noble river will keep my heart pure and save me from sad and evil thoughts throughout all the days of my life.' Try (writes Professor Cramb) to imagine anyone saying that of the Thames!"

Well, I dare say some old Etonians have felt something like that about the Thames, and have confessed it in private letters. But how could Professor Cramb have missed to see that when we Englishmen lift our thoughts to their stature, our Rhine is not the Thames? Come, I will answer for once with a *Rule, Britannia!*

Our Rhine, our king's frontier, is no Thames but the royal sweep of seven oceans. The waters of our baptism flow past Dover through the Straits of Hercules, down past the Cape of Storms, to divide again to reach, to coast, to claim Hindostan, Australia. *There* (if you will have it so) runs our Rhine: our Bonn and Bingen and Drachenfels are the Heads of Sydney, the ramparts of Quebec, the citadel rock of Gibraltar:

rock which Hercules
And Goth and Moor bequeathed us. At this door
England stands sentry, God! to hear the shrill
Sweet 'treble of her fife upon the breeze,
And at the summons of the rock gun's roar
To see her red coats marching from the hill!



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