

Owen Seaman (1861-1936)

Pro Patria

England, in this great fight to which you go
Because, where Honour calls you, go you must,
Be glad, whatever comes, at least to know
You have your quarrel just.

Peace was your care; before the nations' bar
Her cause you pleaded and her ends you sought;
But not for her sake, being what you are,
Could you be bribed and bought.

Others may spurn the pledge of land to land,
May with the brute sword stain a gallant past;
But by the seal to which you set your hand,
Thank God, you still stand fast!

Forth, then, to front that peril of the deep
With smiling lips and in your eyes the light,
Steadfast and confident, of those who keep
Their storied scutcheon bright.

And we, whose burden is to watch and wait--
High-hearted ever, strong in faith and prayer,
We ask what offering we may consecrate,
What humble service share.

To steel our souls against the lust of ease;
To find our welfare in the common good;
To hold together, merging all degrees
In one wide brotherhood;--

To teach that he who saves himself is lost;
To bear in silence though our hearts may bleed;
To spend ourselves, and never count the cost,
For others' greater need;--

To go our quiet ways, subdued and sane;
To hush all vulgar clamour of the street;
With level calm to face alike the strain
Of triumph or defeat;--

This be our part, for so we serve you best,
So best confirm their prowess and their pride,
Your warrior sons, to whom in this high test
Our fortunes we confide.

Owen Seaman was best known as the editor of the humorous and satirical magazine *Punch* from 1906 to 1932. Most of his poetry and writing was accordingly in a satiric and parodic vein. John M. Munro, the editor of the anthology *English Poetry in Transition: 1880-1920* (Pegasus, 1968) says that during the 1914-1918 war Seaman wrote a "number of verses of a somewhat mindless, patriotic kind, reflecting the optimism and devotion to his native land rather than the stirrings of poetic genius." Elsewhere in the same anthology Munro refers to Seaman's book of poems *War Time* (1915) as "a mixture of satiric verse and patriotic doggerel."