

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Admiral Hosier's Ghost

Admiral Hosier's Ghost
(R Glover)

As, near Porto Bello lying,
On the gently swelling flood,
At midnight, with streamers flying,
Our triumphant navy rode;
There, while Vernon sate, all glorious
From the Spaniards' late defeat,
And his crew, with shouts victorious,
Drank success to England's fleet,

On a sudden, shrilly sounding,
Hideous yells and shrieks were heard;
Then, each heart with fears confounding,
A sad troop of ghosts appear'd;
All in dreary hammocks shrouded,
Which for winding sheets they wore;
And with looks by sorrow clouded,
Frowning on that hostile shore.

On them gleam'd the moon's wan lustre,
When the shade of Hosier brave,
His pale band was seen to muster,
Rising from their wat'ry grave:
O'er the glimmering wave he hied him,
Where the Burford rear'd her sail,
With three thousand ghosts beside him,
And in groans did Vernon hail.

'Heed, oh heed! my fatal story,
'I am Hosier's injur'd ghost;
'You who now have purchas'd glory
'At this place where I was lost;
'Tho' in Porto Bello's ruin
'You now triumph, free from fears,
'Yet to hear of my undoing,
'You will mix your joys with tears.

'See yon mournful spectres sweeping,
'Ghastly, o'er this hated wave,
'Whose wan cheeks are stain'd with weeping;
'These were English captains brave;
'And these numbers pale and horrid,

'Were my sailors once so bold;
'Lo, each hangs his drooping forehead,
'While his dismal fate is told.

'I, by twenty sail attended,
'Did this Spanish town affright,
'Nothing then its wealth defended
'But my orders not to fight;
'Oh that, with my wrath complying,
'I had cast them in the main,
'Then, no more unactive lying,
'I had low'red the pride of Spain.

'For resistance I could fear none,
'But with twenty ships had done,
'What thou, brave and happy Vernon,
'Did'st achieve with six alone.
'Then the Bastimento's never
'Had our foul dishonour seen,
'Nor the sea the sad receiver
'Of these gallant men had been.

'Thus, like thee, proud Spain dismaying,
'And her galleons leading home,
'Tho', condemn'd for disobeying,
'I had met a traitor's doom;
'To have fall'n, my country crying,
'He has play'd an English part,
'Had been better far than dying
'Of a griev'd and broken heart.

'Unrepining at thy glory,
'Thy successful arms we hail,
'But remember our sad story,
'When to Britain back you sail!
'All your country's foes subduing,
'When your patriot friends you see,
'Think on vengeance for my ruin,
'And for England sham'd in me.

To the Tune of "Come and Listen to my Ditty"

Looking round for the email address of the present Weymouth MP I found this rather splendidly ferocious ballad by one of his predecessors in the 18th century. (It's an attack on the government of the day for it's naval cutbacks).

KMcG