

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

www.traditionalmusic.co.uk

Sir Francis Drake (Eighty-Eight)

Sir Francis Drake (Eighty-Eight)

In eighty-eight, ere I was born,
As I can well remember,
In August was a fleet prepared,
The month before September.

Spain, with Biscayne, Portugal,
Toledo and Granado,
All these did meet and make a fleet,
And called it the Armado.

Where they had got provision,
As mustard, peas and bacon,
Some say two ships were full of whips,
But I think they were mistaken.

There was a little man of Spain
That shot well in a gun, a,
Don Pedro hight, as good a knight
As the Knight of the Sun, a.

King Philip made him admiral
And charg'd him to stay, a
But to destroy both man and boy
And then to run away, a.

The King of Spain did fret amain,
And to do yet more harm, a
He sent along, to make him strong,
The famous Prince of Parma.

When they had sailed along the seas
And anchored upon Dover,
Our Englishmen did board them then
And cast the Spaniards over.

Our queen was then at Tilbury,
What could you more desire, a?
For whose sweet sake Sir Francis Drake
Did set them all on fire, a.

But let them look about themselves,
For if they come again, a,

They shall be served with that same sauce
As they were, I know when, a.

Roy Palmer's note and glosses

The ballad looks back at the armada, possibly from the time of James 1. Some of the details have become blurred, though the picture of victory remains clear enough.

August the main fighting was in fact over by the end of July.

Biscayne Vizcaya, one of the Basque provinces

full of whips a widely-held belief. Cf. Deloney's 'New Ballet of the strange and most cruel Whippes which the Spanyards had prepared to whippe and torment English men and women'.

Don Pedro the Spanish commander-in-chief was in fact Don Alonso Perez, Duke of Medina Sidonia. hight called Knight of the Sun hero of a Spanish romance, The Mirrour of Princely Deedes and Knighthood, which was widely known in England through translations.

amain with all his might

Parma the Duke of Parma's fleet was to have joined the armada from the Netherlands, but failed to do so.

Tilbury Queen Elizabeth delivered a rousing triumphal speech there in August 1588. She was mounted on a white horse, thus giving rise, it is said, to the nursery rhyme, 'Ride a cock horse'.

JM

oct00