



Rime
OF THE
ANCIENT
MARINER



Illustrated



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THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

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BY

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THIS poem is unique, not only in English, but in the modern literature of the world. It is one of the masterpieces of poetry, as it is the most powerful and imaginative of modern ballads. Every reader remembers the strange and overpowering sensations which came over him when in his youth he first ran through the story; the series of delightful or startling surprises as he encountered the bold images, the phosphoric epithets, and the unexpected strokes that mark the successive stanzas. The mature reader who looks over the poem anew finds that certain lines have become a part of his inner life, and are wont to come up, uncalled, like biblical aphorisms or Shakespearean gems. The men of seventy years, as they look back over their long past, stored with memories of striking thoughts and picturesque high-lights of expression, agree that, upon the whole, no poem dealing with the supernatural—clothed in natural forms—has so well stood the test of time, and presents so many instances of fresh and imperishable beauty and grandeur. Time may tarnish marble and bronze, may crumble Gothic carving and Grecian ornament, but it has no power over an ideal creation like the Rime of the Ancient Mariner.

In many great poems the strokes of genius are few, and there are necessary intervening

levels which are comparatively devoid of interest; but in this the reader feels that Coleridge's imagination never once drooped, for every line bears witness to the keenness of his spiritual sight, and in a half-dozen simple words there is often a tremendous force which the rhetorician or the rhymester may wonder at, but never attain.

It is impossible to make adequate citations from lines which are vitally connected like members of the body—lines whose beauty and force are in their environment as well as in themselves—lines whose energy accumulates and rolls on like a long incoming wave. It is as a whole that the poem must be considered. It is one entire conception—an edifice, a realm, a land of splendor and terror and mystery, with its own airs, sights and sounds, and atmospheric laws, and yet not beyond the rule of the Eternal.

It may be well to try to show how this poem exemplifies the working of the imagination. This faculty is associated in some minds only with dazzling conceptions, and surprises which come like thunderbolts; but that is a limited view: imagination may have free play even in tranquil scenes or in movements not in themselves startling. This faculty takes its place *on the spot* where the scene or action is represented, and by its vivid and creative force makes the reader see what is going on, as if it were under his eyes. How different is such a moving and life-like tableau from an ordinary colorless narration!

Let the reader rouse himself and endeavor to form a mental picture of the opening scene, when the Ancient Mariner interrupts the wedding procession. The bride paces into the hall, and the merry minstrelsy, with nodding heads, goes before her. *Nodding their heads!* The scene is instantly grasped, and the shapely youths, in festive array, are moving to the music. How annoying to be singled out and arrested at such a time by an unknown mariner with long beard

and glittering eye! Yet such is the luck of the Wedding Guest; and no wonder he beats his breast as he hears the loud bassoon.

Or if we turn to the account of the departure of the ship, see how the convexity of ocean is *felt* in the simple lines:

“Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the light-house top.”

The shooting of the albatross is duly emphasized, but it is only in the light of subsequent events that its fateful significance is seen.

As the mysterious voyage proceeds, the poet's eye takes in and pictures every movement, shape, and color. There are few unusual words, but how strange and thrilling their effect! Who can forget his sensations when he came upon the lines:

“We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.”

or upon these:

“All in a hot and copper sky
The bloody sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the moon!”

or upon this:

“At one stride comes the dark!”

But all the stanzas have become familiar as household words, and are not only set in the books, but are photographed into the memories of men.

As another instance of imaginative power, notice, when the spectre-ship drives before the face of the setting sun, how its ribs are seen to fleck the great orb as with bars, through which he peers with burning face. No poet, not even Milton, has conceived a grander image.

The changes of scene, as the story moves on, are effected with incomparable art, and, as it were, by successively interposed dissolving views. All wonders of sky and sea, and of the spirit-world, are at the poet's command; and the long panorama becomes almost oppressive in its sublimity. The hornèd moon holds one bright star beneath her nether tip, and as she goes up into the sky, she looks down placidly upon the horrors of the burning ship, and the play of the water-snakes, whose elfish light falls off in hoary flakes.

When the albatross fell off the mariner's neck a new scene was unfolded. The dead men rose and worked the ship, and the sails murmured softly, though never a breeze was blowing. In this description there is a tingling sense of immensity and endlessness. The poetry is not alone in what is said, but also in what is suggested.

Another instance of shivering suggestiveness is in the off-quoted passage beginning:

“Like one that on a lonesome road
Doth walk with fear and dread.”

When the land comes in sight, how intense is the feeling of deliverance and joy! The breath of the land-breeze is a caress upon the wan cheeks. The glassy harbor, the well-known

rock, the weather-cock of the kirk steeped in moonlight, the white light of the bay with its coming shadows of crimson,—all these familiar sights make the mind swim in ecstasy.

Turn then to the Hermit, and look with his eyes upon the weird vessel as it comes into port, with its warped planks hanging like brown skeletons of leaves! See the strange craft sink like lead, while the Mariner escapes in the pilot's boat! And then mark how

“Upon the whirl where sank the ship
The boat spun round and round;
And all was still, save that the hill
Was telling of the sound.”

What an echo! The soul of the reader feels its rebounding blow.

When the phantasmal procession has passed into vacancy, and the agencies of the other world have disappeared, the soul comes back to its equilibrium, and then the chief moral lesson of the poem begins to glow like a castle seen through a mist of rainbows. Though quoted again and again, the lines may be quoted once more :

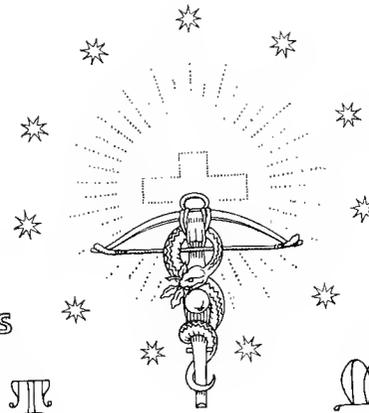
“Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding Guest!
He prayeth well who loveth well
Both man, and bird, and beast.

“He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.”

It would not do to assert that Coleridge set in motion all the stupendous forces of nature, and enlisted the powers of the unseen, solely to inculcate a moral precept. The precept, it is true, is set in a heavenly light, and will shine for future generations; but the poem, like beauty, is its own excuse for being. It was inspired by his grand and restless genius, and he could not do otherwise than attempt to seize and eternize the splendid, awful, and un-worldly visions by which his mind was haunted. That it touches the grotesque at times is no derogation from its merit. Milton and Michelangelo are witnesses that grandeur, sublimity, and dread may sometimes be associated with what is monstrous and grotesque. The full apprehension of this poem, as well as of the *Paradise Lost*, and of the frescoes of the Last Judgment, will come only to receptive minds.

The story readily lends itself to illustration, and the designs of Sir Noel Paton, so free, so large and masterly, furnish a certain effective interpretation. They cannot equal in vividness the poet's transcendent images, but they will enable most readers to follow the Mariner upon his long and marvellous voyage.

FRANCIS H. UNDERWOOD



COLERIDGE'S
ANCIENT

RIME OF THE
MARRIAGE

ILLUSTRATED BY
J. NOEL PATON, R.S.A.



PART THE FIRST

An ancient
Mariner
meeteth three
Gallants
bidden to a
wedding-feast,
and detaineth
one.

IT is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
“By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp’st thou me?

“The Bridegroom’s doors are opened wide,
And I am next of kin;
The guests are met, the feast is set:
May’st hear the merry din.”

He holds him with his skinny hand,
“There was a ship,” quoth he.
“Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!”
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years’ child:
The Mariner hath his will.

The Wedding-Guest is spell-bound by the eye of the old seafaring man, and constrained to hear his tale.



*"It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three."*

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone :
He cannot chuse but hear ;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

The Mariner
tells how the
ship sailed
southward
with a good
wind and fair
weather, till it
reached the
line.

The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the light-house top.

The Sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he !
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.

Higher and higher every day,
Till over the mast at noon—
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.



*“The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:
He cannot chuse but hear.”*

The Wedding-Guest heareth the bridal music; but the Mariner continueth his tale.

The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she;
Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry minstrelsy.

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot chuse but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

The ship drawn by a storm toward the south pole.

And now the STORM-BLAST came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong:
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.

With sloping masts and dipping prow,
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe,
And forward bends his head,
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
And southward aye we fled.

And now there came both mist and snow
And it grew wondrous cold:
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.



*“The bride had paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she.”*

The land of
ice, and of
fearful sounds,
where no
living thing
was to be seen.

And through the drifts the snowy clifts
Did send a dismal sheen :
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken —
The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around :
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound !

At length did cross an Albatross,
Thorough the fog it came
As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God's name.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
And round and round it flew.
The ice did split with a thunder-fit ;
The helmsman steered us through !

Till a great
sea-bird, called
the Albatross,
came through
the snow-fog,
and was
received with
great joy and
hospitality.



*"At length did cross an Albatross,
Thorough the fog it came."*

And lo! the
Albatross
proveth a
bird of good
omen and
followeth the
ship as it
returned north-
ward through
fog and
floating ice.

And a good south wind sprung up behind;
The Albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariners' hollo!

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
It perched for vespers nine;
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmered the white Moon-shine.

“God save thee, ancient Mariner!
From the fiends, that plague thee thus!—
Why look'st thou so?”—With my cross-bow
I shot the ALBATROSS.

The ancient
Mariner
inhospitably
killeth the
pious bird of
good omen.



*“ And a good south wind sprung up behind ;
The Albatross did follow.”*

PART THE SECOND

THE sun now rose upon the right:
Out of the sea came he,
Still hid in mist, and on the left
Went down into the sea.

And the good south wind still blew behind.
But no sweet bird did follow,
Nor any day for food or play
Came to the mariners' hollo!

His shipmates
cry out against
the ancient
Mariner, for
killing the bird
of good luck.

And I had done a hellish thing,
And it would work 'em woe:
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.

Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow!

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious Sun uprist:
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist.
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,
That bring the fog and mist.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

But when the
fog cleared off,
they justify
the same, and
thus make
themselves
accomplices in
the crime.

The fair breeze
continues; the
ship enters the
Pacific Ocean,
and sails
northward,
even till it
reaches the
line.



*“Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist.”*

The ship hath
been suddenly
becalmed.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
'Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea!

All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.

Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

And the
Albatross
begins to be
avenged.

Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, every where,
Nor any drop to drink.

The very deep did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!

Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.

About, about, in real and rout
The death-fires danced at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue, and white.

And some in dreams assured were
Of the spirit that plagued us so;
Nine fathom deep he had followed us
From the land of mist and snow.

And every tongue, through utter drought,
Was withered at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.

Ah! well-a-day! what evil looks
Had I from old and young!
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.

A Spirit had followed them; one of the invisible inhabitants of this planet, neither departed souls nor angels; concerning whom the learned Jew, Josephus, and the Platonic Constantino-politan, Michael Psellus, may be consulted. They are very numerous, and there is no climate or element without one or more.

The shipmates, in their sore distress, would fain throw the whole guilt on the ancient Mariner; in sign whereof they hang the dead sea-bird round his neck.



*“ Ah! well-a-day! what evil looks
Had I from old and young!”*

PART THE THIRD

THERE passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parched, and glazed each eye.

A weary time! A weary time!

How glazed each weary eye,

When looking westward, I beheld

A something in the sky.

At first it seemed a little speck,

And then it seemed a mist;

It moved and moved, and took at last

A certain shape, I wist.

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!

And still it neared and neared:

As if it dodged a water-sprite,

It plunged and tacked and veered.

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,

We could not laugh nor wail;

Through utter drought all dumb we stood!

I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
And cried, A sail! a sail!

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call:

Gramercy! they for joy did grin,

And all at once their breath drew in,

As they were drinking all.

See! see! (I cried) she tacks no more
Hither to work us weal;

Without a breeze, without a tide,

She steadies with upright keel!

The western wave was all a-flame.

The day was well nigh done!

Almost upon the western wave

Rested the broad bright Sun;

When that strange shape drove suddenly

Betwixt us and the Sun.

freeth his
speech from
the bonds of
thirst.

A flash of joy;

And horror
follows. For
can it be a
ship that
comes onward
without wind
or tide?

The ancient
Mariner
beholdeth a
sign in the
element afar
off.

At its nearer
approach, it
seemeth him to
be a ship; and
at a dear
ransom he



*“With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
We could not laugh nor wail.”*

It seemeth
him but the
skeleton of a
ship.

And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,
(Heaven's Mother send us grace!)
As if through a dungeon-grate hest peered
With broad and burning face.

Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)
How fast she nears and nears!
Are those her sails that glance in the Sun,
Like restless gossameres?

And its ribs
are seen as
bars on
the face of
the setting
Sun. The
Spectre-woman

Are those her ribs through which the Sun
Did peer, as through a grate?
And is that Woman all her crew?

Is that a Death? and are there two?
Is Death that Woman's mate?

and her
death-mate,
and no other,
on board the
skeleton-ship.

Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Night-mare Life-in-Death was she,
Who thicks man's blood with cold.

Like vessel,
like crew!

The naked hulk alongside came,
And the twain were casting dice;
"The game is done! I've won, I've won!"
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

Death, and
Life-in-Death
have diced for
the ship's
crew, and she
(the latter)
winneth the
ancient
Mariner.



*“The naked hulk alongside came,
And the twain were casting dice.”*

No twilight
within the
courts of the
Sun.

The sun's rim dips; the stars rush out:
At one stride comes the Dark;
With far-heard whisper o'er the sea,
Off shot the spectre-bark.

We listened and looked sideways up!
Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
My life-blood seemed to sip!
The stars were dim, and thick the night,
The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed white;
From the sails the dew did drip—
Till clomb above the eastern bar
The hornèd Moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip.

At the rising
of the Moon.

One after one, by the star-dogged Moon,
Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,
And cursed me with his eye.

Four times fifty living men
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan),
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropped down one by one.

The souls did from their bodies fly,—
They fled to bliss or woe!
And every soul it passed me by,
Like the whizz of my cross-bow!

One after
another,

His shipmates
drop down
dead;

But Life-in-
Death begins
her work on
the ancient
Mariner.



*“The souls did from their bodies fly,—
They fled to bliss or woe!”*

PART THE FOURTH

The Wedding-Guest feareth that a spirit is talking to him;

“ I FEAR thee, ancient Mariner!
I fear thy skinny hand!
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sand.¹

But the ancient Mariner assureth him of his bodily life, and proceedeth to relate his horrible penance.

I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
And thy skinny hand, so brown.”—
Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!
This body dropt not down.

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide, wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.

The many men, so beautiful!
And they all dead did lie:
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on; and so did I.

He despiseth the creatures of the calm.

I looked upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away;
I looked upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

And envieth that they should live, and so many lie dead.

I looked to heaven, and tried to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.

¹ For the two last lines of this stanza, I am indebted to Mr. Wordsworth. It was on a delightful walk from Nether Stowey to Dulverton, with him and his sister, in the autumn of 1797, that this poem was planned, and in part composed.

I closed my lids, and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat;
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky
Lay like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.

But the curse
liveth for him
in the eye of
the dead men.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Nor rot nor reek did they:
The look with which they looked on me
Had never passed away.

In his
loneliness and
fixedness he
yearneth
towards the
journeying
Moon, and the
stars that still
sojourn, yet
still move
onward; and

An orphan's curse would drag to hell
A spirit from on high;
But oh! more horrible than that
Is a curse in a dead man's eye!
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,
And yet I could not die.

The moving Moon went up the sky,
And no where did abide:
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside —

Her beams bemoaned the sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost spread;
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
The charmed water burnt always
A still and awful red.

Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watched the water-snakes:
They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

everywhere
the blue sky
belongs to
them, and is
their appointed
rest, and their
native country
and their
own natural
homes, which
they enter
unannounced,
as lords that
are certainly
expected, and
yet there is a
silent joy at
their arrival.

By the light of
the Moon he
beholdeth
God's creatures
of the great
calm.

Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire :
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

Their beauty
and their
happiness.

He blesseth
them in his
heart.

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare :
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware :
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

The self same moment I could pray ;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.

The spell
begins to
break.



*“The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.”*

PART THE FIFTH

OH sleep! it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole!
To Mary Queen the praise be given!
She sent the gentle sleep from heaven,
That slid into my soul.

By grace of
the holy
Mother, the
ancient Mariner
is refreshed
with rain.

The silly buckets on the deck,
That had so long remained,
I dreamt that they were filled with dew;
And when I awoke it rained.

My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
My garments all were dank;
Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
And still my body drank.

I moved, and could not feel my limbs:
I was so light — almost
I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a blessed ghost.

And soon I heard a roaring wind:
It did not come anear;
But with its sound it shook the sails,
That were so thin and sere.

He heareth
sounds and
seeth strange
sights and
commotions in
the sky and
the element.

The upper air burst into life!
And a hundred fire-flags sheen,
To and fro they were hurried about!
And to and fro, and in and out,
The wan stars danced between.



*"Oh sleep! it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole!"*

And the coming wind did roar more loud,
And the sails did sigh like sedge ;
And the rain poured down from one black cloud ;
The Moon was at its edge.

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still
The Moon was at its side :
Like waters shot from some high crag,
The lightning fell with never a jag,
A river steep and wide.

The bodies of
the ship's crew
are inspired,
and the ship
moves on ;

The loud wind never reached the ship,
Yet now the ship moved on !
Beneath the lightning and the Moon
The dead men gave a groan.

They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes ;
It had been strange, even in a dream,
To have seen those dead men rise.

The helmsman steered, the ship moved on ;
Yet never a breeze up blew ;
The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
Where they were wont to do :
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—
We were a ghastly crew.

The body of my brother's son
Stood by me, knee to knee :
The body and I pulled at one rope,
But he said nought to me.

But not by the
souls of the
men, nor by
demons of
earth or middle
air, but by a
blessed troop
of angelic
spirits, sent
down by the
invocation of
the guardian
saint.

“I fear thee, ancient Mariner!”
Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest,
'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
Which to their corsers came again,
But a troop of spirits blest:

For when it dawned—they dropped their arms,
And clustered round the mast;
Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths,
And from their bodies passed.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,
Then darted to the Sun;
Slowly the sounds came back again,
Now mixed, now one by one.

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
I heard the sky-lark sing;
Sometimes all little birds that are,

How they seemed to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning!

And now 'twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute;
And now it is an angel's song,
That makes the heavens be mute.

It ceased; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

Till noon we quietly sailed on,
Yet never a breeze did breathe:
Slowly and smoothly went the ship,
Moved onward from beneath.

The lonesome spirit from the south-pole carries on the ship as far as the Line, in obedience to the angelic troop, but still requireth vengeance.

Under the keel nine fathom deep,
From the land of mist and snow,
The spirit slid: and it was he
That made the ship to go.
The sails at noon left off their tune,
And the ship stood still also.

The Sun, right up above the mast,
Had fixed her to the ocean:
But in a minute she 'gan stir,
With a short uneasy motion—
Backwards and forwards half her length,
With a short uneasy motion.

Then like a pawing horse let go,
She made a sudden bound:
It flung the blood into my head,
And I fell down in a swoond.

How long in that same fit I lay,
I have not to declare;
But ere my living life returned,
I heard, and in my soul discerned
Two voices in the air.

“Is it he?” quoth one, “Is this the man?
By him who died on cross,
With his cruel bow he laid full low
The harmless Albatross.

The spirit who bideth by himself
In the land of mist and snow,
He loved the bird that loved the man
Who shot him with his bow.”

The Polar Spirit's fellow demons, the invisible inhabitants of the element, take part in his wrong; and two of them relate, one to the other, that penance long and heavy for the ancient Mariner hath been accorded to the Polar Spirit who returneth southward.



*“The spirit who bideth by himself
In the land of mist and snow.”*

The other was a softer voice,
As soft as honey-dew :
Quoth he, "The man hath penance done,
And penance more will do."

PART THE SIXTH

FIRST VOICE

BUT tell me, tell me! speak again,
Thy soft response renewing—
What makes that ship drive on so fast?
What is the ocean doing?

SECOND VOICE

Still as a slave before his lord,
The ocean hath no blast;
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the Moon is cast—

If he may know which way to go;
For she guides him smooth or grim.
See, brother, see! how graciously
She looketh down on him.

FIRST VOICE

But why drives on that ship so fast,
Without or wave or wind?

SECOND VOICE

The air is cut away before,
And closes from behind.

Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high!
Or we shall be belated:
For slow and slow that ship will go,
When the Mariner's trance is abated.

I woke, and we were sailing on
As in a gentle weather:
'Twas night, calm night, the Moon was high;
The dead men stood together.

The Mariner
hath been cast
into a trance;
for the angelic
power causeth
the vessel
to drive
northward
faster than
human life
could endure.

The super-
natural motion
is retarded; the
Mariner
awakes, and
his penance
begins anew.



*“The other was a softer voice,
As soft as honey-dew.”*

All stood together on the deck,
For a charnel-dungeon fitter :
All fixed on me their stony eyes,
That in the Moon did glitter.

The pang, the curse, with which they died,
Had never passed away :
I could not draw my eyes from theirs,
Nor turn them up to pray.

The curse
is finally
expiated;

And now this spell was snapt; once more
I viewed the ocean green,
And looked far forth, yet little saw
Of what had else been seen—

Like one that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round walks on,

And turns no more his head ;
Because he knows, a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

But soon there breathed a wind on me,
Nor sound nor motion made :
Its path was not upon the sea,
In ripple or in shade.

It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek
Like a meadow-gale of spring—
It mingled strangely with my fears,
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,
Yet she sailed softly too :
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—
On me alone it blew.

And the
ancient
Mariner
beholdeth his
native country.

Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed
The light-house top I see?
Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree?

We drifted o'er the harbour-bar,
And I with sobs did pray—
O let me be awake, my God!
Or let me sleep away.

The harbour-bay was clear as glass,
So smoothly it was strewn!
And on the bay the moonlight lay,
And the shadow of the Moon.

The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,
That stands above the rock:
The moonlight steeped in silentness
The steady weathercock.

And the bay was white with silent light,
Till rising from the same,
Full many shapes, that shadows were,
In crimson colours came.

The angelic
spirits leave
the dead
bodies,

And appear
in their own
forms of light.

A little distance from the prow
Those crimson shadows were :
I turned my eyes upon the deck—
Oh, Christ! what saw I there!

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
And, by the holy rood!
A man all light, a seraph-man,
On every corse there stood.

This seraph-band, each waved his hand :
It was a heavenly sight!
They stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light;

This seraph-band, each waved his hand,
No voice did they impart—
No voice; but oh! the silence sank
Like music on my heart.

But soon I heard the dash of oars,
I heard the Pilot's cheer;
My head was turned perforce away,
And I saw a boat appear.

The Pilot and the Pilot's boy,
I heard them coming fast:
Dear Lord in Heaven! it was a joy
The dead men could not blast.

I saw a third—I heard his voice:
It is the Hermit good!
He singeth loud his godly hymns
That he makes in the wood.
He'll shrieve my soul, he'll wash away
The Albatross's blood.



*“ This seraph-band, each waved his hand :
It was a heavenly sight ! ”*

PART THE SEVENTH

The Hermit of
the wood,

THIS Hermit good lives in that wood
Which slopes down to the sea:
How loudly his sweet voice he rears!
He loves to talk with marineres
That come from a far countree.

He kneels at morn, and noon and eve—
He hath a cushion plump:
It is the moss that wholly hides
The rotted old oak-stump.

The skiff-boat neared: I heard them talk,
“Why this is strange, I trow!
Where are those lights so many and fair,
That signal made but now?”

“Strange, by my faith!” the Hermit said—
“And they answered not our cheer!
The planks look warped! and see those sails,
How thin they are and sere!
I never saw aught like to them,
Unless perchance it were

Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
My forest-brook along,
When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,
And the owlet whoops to the wolf below,
That eats the she-wolf’s young.”

“Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look—
(The Pilot made reply)
I am a-feared”—“Push on, push on!”
Said the Hermit cheerily.

Approacheth
the ship with
wonder.



“ ‘Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look’ —
(The Pilot made reply).”

The boat came closer to the ship,
But I nor spake nor stirred;
The boat came close beneath the ship,
And straight a sound was heard.

Under the water it rumbled on,
Still louder and more dread:
It reached the ship, it split the bay;
The ship went down like lead.

The ship
suddenly
sinketh.

The ancient
Mariner is
saved in the
Pilot's boat.

Stunned by that loud and dreadful sound,
Which sky and ocean smote,
Like one that hath been seven days drowned
My body lay afloat;
But swift as dreams, myself I found
Within the Pilot's boat.

Upon the whirl, where sank the ship,
The boat spun round and round,
And all was still, save that the hill
Was telling of the sound.



*“ Upon the whirl, where sank the ship,
The boat spun round and round.”*

I moved my lips—the Pilot shrieked
And fell down in a fit;
The holy Hermit raised his eyes,
And prayed where he did sit.

I took the oars: the Pilot's boy,
Who now doth crazy go,
Laughed loud and long, and all the while
His eyes went to and fro.
“Ha! ha!” quoth he, “full plain I see
The Devil knows how to row.”

And now, all in my own countree,
I stood on the firm land!
The Hermit stepped forth from the boat,
And scarcely he could stand.

“Oh, shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man!”
The Hermit crossed his brow.
“Say quick,” quoth he, “I bid thee say—
What manner of man art thou?”

The ancient
Mariner
earnestly
entreateth the
Hermit to
shrieve him;
and the
penance of
life falls on
him.

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
With a woeful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale;
And then it left me free.



“ ‘Say quick,’ quoth he, ‘I bid thee say—
What manner of man art thou?’ ”

And ever
and anon
throughout his
future life
an agony
constraineth
him to travel
from land to
land,

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns:
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.

I pass, like night, from land to land;
I have strange power of speech;
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me:
To him my tale I teach.

What loud uproar bursts from that door!
The wedding-guests are there:
But in the garden-bower the bride

And bride-maids singing are:
And hark the little vesper bell,
Which biddeth me to prayer!

O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide, wide sea:
So lonely 'twas, that God himself
Scarce seemed there to be.

O sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company!—



*“But in the garden-bower the bride
And bride-maids singing are.”*

To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends,
And youths and maidens gay!

And to teach,
by his own
example, love
and reverence
to all things
that God made
and loveth.

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest,
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
Whose beard with age is hoar,
Is gone: and now the Wedding-Guest
Turned from the bridegroom's door.

He went like one that hath been stunned,
And is of sense forlorn:
A sadder and a wiser man,
He rose the morrow morn.



*“While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends.”*

