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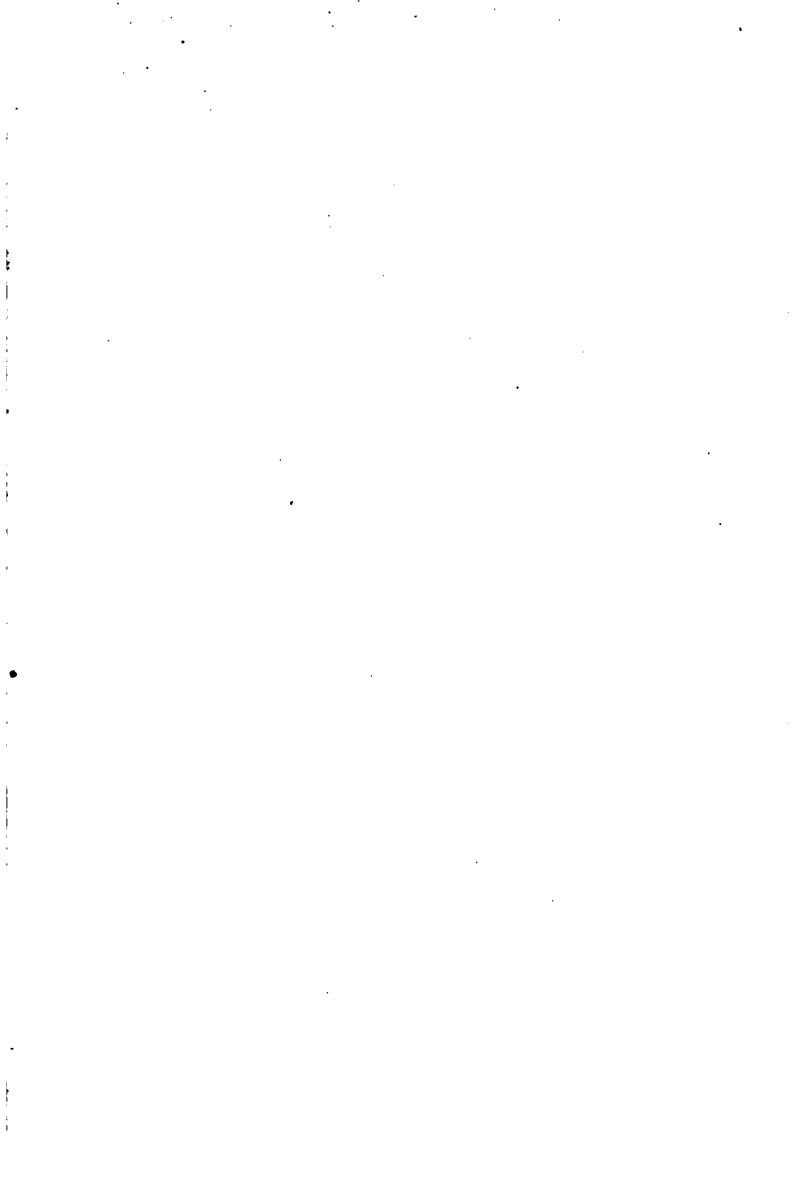
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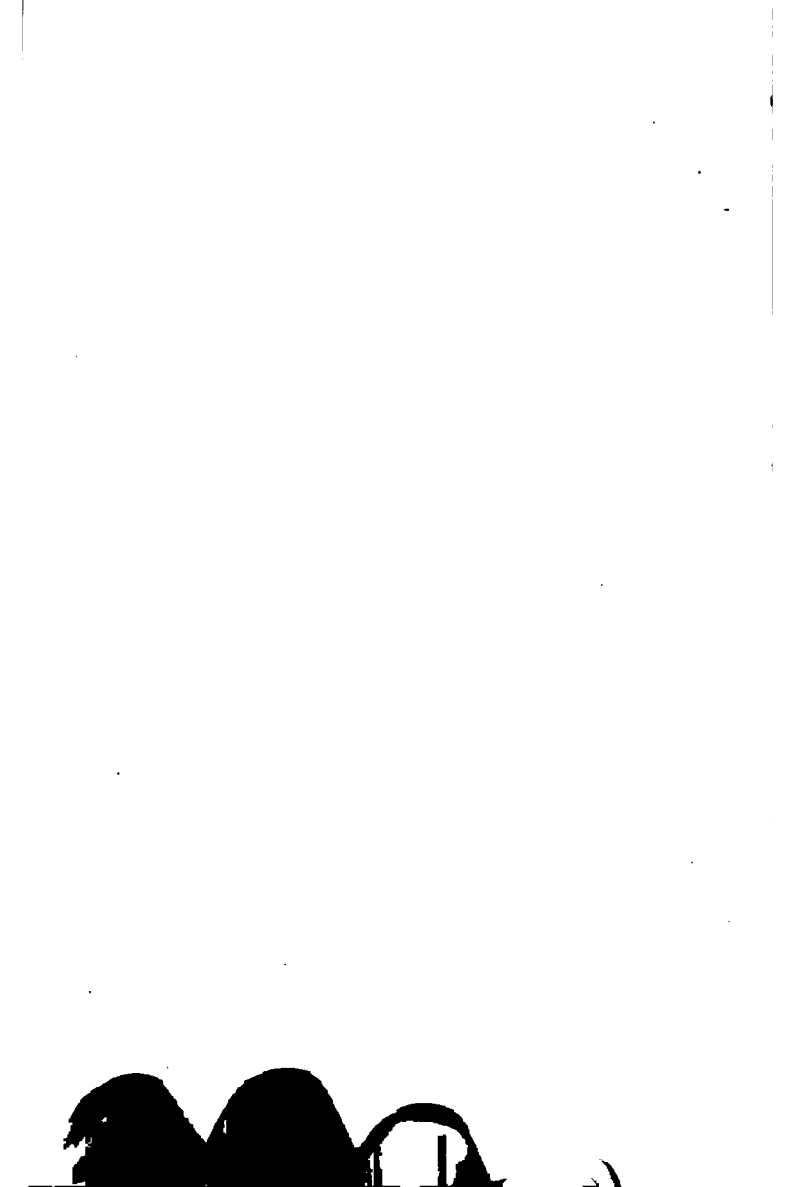
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S. T. Coleridge

GATEWAY SERIES

o
THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT
MARINER

BY
SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

EDITED BY
GEORGE EDWARD WOODBERRY
PROFESSOR OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

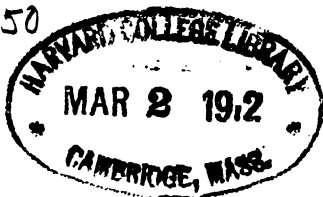


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THE ANCIENT MARINER.

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PREFACE BY THE GENERAL EDITOR

THIS series of books aims, first, to give the English texts required for entrance to college in a form which shall make them clear, interesting, and helpful to those who are beginning the study of literature ; and, second, to supply the knowledge which the student needs to pass the entrance examination. For these two reasons it is called *The Gateway Series*.

The poems, plays, essays, and stories in these small volumes are treated, first of all, as works of literature, which were written to be read and enjoyed, not to be parsed and scanned and pulled to pieces. A short life of the author is given, and a portrait, in order to help the student to know the real person who wrote the book. The introduction tells what it is about, and how it was written, and where the author got the idea, and what it means. The notes at the foot of the page are simply to give the sense of the hard words so that the student can read straight on without turning to a dictionary. The other notes, at the end of the book, explain difficulties and allusions and fine points.

6 Preface by the General Editor

The editors are chosen because of their thorough training and special fitness to deal with the books committed to them, and because they agree with this idea of what a Gateway Series ought to be. They express, in each case, their own views of the books which they edit. Simplicity, thoroughness, shortness, and clearness, — these, we hope, will be the marks of the series.

HENRY VAN DYKE.

PREFACE

THE editor has aimed only to make the meaning of the poem, here illustrated and commented upon, plain to the student, so far as it makes an appeal to the imagination and the heart. Enough has been added, in the way of biography, to yield a living impression of Coleridge's career and character, for the poet's own sake. If the method seems simple, and perhaps unusually direct, it is that which the editor has used in his own classes for several years.

GEORGE E. WOODBERRY.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION :

	PAGE
I. Samuel Taylor Coleridge	11
II. The Poem	24
III. The History of the Poem	29
IV. Conclusion	37
 THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER	 39
 NOTES	 69

APPENDIX :

Hazlitt's <i>My First Acquaintance with Poets</i> ; Lamb's <i>Christ's Hospital Five-and-thirty Years Ago</i> . . .	73
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INTRODUCTION

I. SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE was born October 21, 1772, at Ottery St. Mary, a Devonshire village. His father was the vicar of the parish and had married a second wife; Coleridge was the youngest of their nine sons. As a child he was brought up affectionately, and he was both a home-boy and a book-boy from the start. "The school boys," he says of these days when he went to a dame-school, "drove me from play, and were always tormenting me. And hence I took no pleasure in boyish sports, but read incessantly. I was accustomed to run up and down the churchyard, and act over again all I had been reading to the docks and the nettles and the rank grass." He read *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Arabian Nights*, little gilt-covered books of *Jack the Giant-killer*, and the like tales of adventure. So he became full of imagination, excitable, and given to dreaming when he was awake; and he had no skill at play, and despised the other boys who were not so good at their books as he was. It is the common history of such boys who are precocious and prodigies in their childhood. When he was about nine

12 Coleridge's Rime of the Ancient Mariner

years old his father died, and he was soon after sent to London as a charity-boy to a famous school,—Christ's Hospital. The boys (there were seven hundred of them) wore a sort of livery or uniform,—a long belted coat buttoned to the throat, yellow silk stockings, low shoes, white stock, and no hats. They were under strict discipline, as in an institution, and their food was homely and scant, they were flogged often and hard, and they were well taught. Charles Lamb, who was a mate of Coleridge there, told all about it in his *Essays of Elia*. It was a hard life, but the boys, when the older ones were not persecuting the younger ones, had some pleasures at odd times,—on whole holidays for example: "How merrily," says Lamb, "we would sally forth into the fields; and strip under the first warmth of the sun; and wanton like young dace in the streams; getting us appetites for noon, which those of us that were penniless (our scanty morning crust long since exhausted) had not the means of allaying—while the cattle, and the birds, and the fishes, were at feed about us, and we had nothing to satisfy our cravings—the very beauty of the day, and the exercise of the pastime, and the sense of liberty, setting a keener edge upon them!—How faint and languid, finally, we would return, towards nightfall, to our desired morsel, half-rejoicing, half-reluctant, that the hours of our uneasy liberty had expired! It was worse in the days of winter," he goes on,—but you must read it in his own words, if you want to, in *Christ's Hospital Five-and-Thirty Years Ago* (see Appendix). Wordsworth, another famous friend

of Coleridge in manhood, describes him at this school, lying upon the roof and dreaming of home : —

“ Who, yet a liveried school-boy, in the depths
Of the huge city, on the leaded roof
Of that wide edifice, thy school and home,
Wert used to lie and gaze upon the clouds
Moving in heaven ; or, of that pleasure tired,
To shut thine eyes, and by internal light
See trees, and meadows, and thy native stream,
Far-distant.”

I visited the school once, for the sake of Lamb and Coleridge, and found it as cheerless and dismal a place as I ever saw for children to live in ; I only wonder that Lamb's memories were not blacker than they were. Here, however, Coleridge learned his lessons and became one of the best scholars ; and he kept reading everything he could lay hands on, medical and philosophical books, too, and he also began to be what he never left off being, a great talker. “ Did you ever hear me preach ? ” he said once to Lamb in later life. “ I never heard you do anything else, ” was the answer. It is to this stream of talk and to the reading of old books of philosophy that Lamb refers, in the most famous passage of his essay : —

“ Come back into memory, like as thou wert in the dayspring of thy fancies, with hope like a fiery column before thee — the dark pillar not yet turned — Samuel Taylor Coleridge — Logician, Metaphysician, Bard ! How have I seen the casual passer through the Cloisters

14 Coleridge's Rime of the Ancient Mariner

stand still, entranced with admiration (while he weighed the disproportion between the *speech* and the *garb* of the young Mirandula), to hear thee unfold, in thy deep and sweet intonations, the mysteries of Jamblichus, or Plotinus (for even in those years thou waxedst not pale at such philosophic draughts), or reciting Homer in his Greek, or Pindar — while the walls of the old Grey Friars re-echoed to the accents of the *inspired charity-boy!*”

This picture of the boy Coleridge, say at sixteen or seventeen, discoursing in the school Cloisters to his mates, stands in the front of his biography as a figure to be remembered; it could be painted by an artist with great effect. He was already full of imagination and intelligence, a great reader, a great talker, and these remained his life-long characteristics. They are the traits to be borne in mind. He was also subject to whims, with a lack of good sense that gives a comic turn to some passages of his life. Thus, at school, he tried to get apprenticed to a cobbler when he was fifteen. He had many friends among the boys, and he was made at home in the family of one of them where he visited a good deal, and fell in love with the boy's sister. By the time he left the school he was well-grown and on his own feet.

He went up to Jesus College, Cambridge, still as a charity student, having won what we should call a scholarship, in the autumn of 1791, being nineteen years old. He studied at first, and won some prizes; but, though he continued to read and talk, and wrote and planned poetry and prose, he soon lost steadiness. He became

radical in his opinions, both religious and political, a good deal of a Unitarian and a democrat, and his mind was seething with new ideas. He fell into some kind of trouble, in his second year, and with that comic turn I spoke of, ran away from college and enlisted in the Light Dragoons under the name of Silas Tomkyn Comberbach ; he knew nothing about horses and was wholly unfit for soldiering, and besides he soon got tired of it, and his relatives had to come to his rescue and buy him out of the army. He went back to college at once, and soon after made a visit to Oxford, where he met Southey, who was later to be his brother-in-law. Southey then was a wild young radical, just such another as Coleridge, and they became intimate friends. Together with some others of the set they planned a scheme by which they were to come to America and set up a new kind of society on the banks of the Susquehanna, a name that pleased them. This is the scheme called Pantisocracy. There were to be twelve gentlemen with twelve ladies ; each man was to labour two or three hours a day, the produce to be common property, and on this they were to live ; they were also to have a good library and ample leisure, and every one to enjoy his own opinions. Such schemes were not uncommon in the last century, but this one is particularly remembered because the two chief movers, Southey and Coleridge, became distinguished poets and also because it is an amusing piece of foolishness. It came to nothing, of course ; but while it was hatching, the two young poets and another friend

16 Coleridge's Rime of the Ancient Mariner

became engaged to three sisters, named Fricker. In September of this year, 1794, Southey and Coleridge published a drama, *The Fall of Robespierre*, which they had written together, — a worthless piece of wild rhetoric, — and in December Coleridge left Cambridge for good with no degree. He had been at college three years in all. He lived now in London for a while, and spent a good deal of time at taverns, talking and drinking, in places that Lamb recalls, — “the little smoky room at the ‘Salutation and Cat’ where we have sat together through the winter nights, beguiling the cares of life with Poesy,” — and with a comradeship the nobler side of which is found reflected in Lamb's *Old Familiar Faces*, one of the best of what might be called “men's poems.” There was a good deal of drinking in those days, and Coleridge had his share. There was something rash in his behaviour, something unbalanced in his mind, — what is generally called lack of good sense, — and he was all at loose ends, with no money and no occupation ; in the midst of this state of affairs, when he was trying a little of everything, writing verses, lecturing, hoping for newspaper work, he found a country publisher at Bristol who engaged to buy verses of him at a guinea and a half for every hundred lines, and on the strength of this he married Sarah Fricker, October 4, 1795, and settled in a very humble cottage at Clevedon, near Bristol.

He was now twenty-three years old, and began that manhood life which is so remarkable for miscellaneous

and mixed activities. He remained in the rose-covered cottage only a short time, but life in it while the experiment lasted was like a camping-out. A sister-in-law and a male friend lived with the Coleridges. There was no servant; the men helped to do the work, and Coleridge continued to share the household labour more or less in his early married life; but soon this particular cottage was given up, and they moved into Bristol. Coleridge started a periodical, *The Watchman*, but it failed after ten numbers; he published his first book of poems, which made no great stir; and he tried several new schemes of getting employment, in all of which he was disappointed. Finally he took a young man, Lloyd, into his family, which was now increased by the birth of a son, and with the aid of this boarder and what he could earn by his pen he hoped to live. He had made, too, a valuable friend in Thomas Poole, who helped him with gifts, loans, and subscriptions from other friends; and, fulfilling a desire to live near Poole, he took another poor cottage, at Nether-Stowey, with a little garden of an acre and a half adjoining Poole's estate, — "a farm," he called it, — on which Lamb wrote, and asked him, "What does your worship know about farming?" A year and more of married life had gone by when he settled in this famous little nook, but he still had no permanent occupation. He used to travel about preaching in Unitarian chapels, for which he received no pay, as he did not believe in "preaching for hire"; and he wrote a play for the theatre (not acted till some years later); he is also said

18 Coleridge's Rime of the Ancient Mariner

to have learned "potato-culture and tanning" from Poole, but that only shows how he wasted his time. The great event of the summer, however, — and it was the great event of his life, really, — was his acquaintance with Wordsworth. The two young men took to each other at once and made a friendship that links their names forever. Coleridge went to meet Wordsworth at a place called Racedown. He was then in excellent health and strong; he was a good walker and vigorous in all his movements, but unquiet, physically excitable, and he would throw his arms about a good deal as he walked. Wordsworth's sister Dorothy, who was the best feminine friend Coleridge was ever to know, says of his arrival: "He did not keep to the high road, but leapt over a gate and bounded down the pathless field, by which he cut off an angle." Her description of his appearance is one of the most vivid that we have: —

"He is a wonderful man. His conversation teems with soul, mind, and spirit. Then he is so benevolent, so good-tempered and cheerful, and, like William, interests himself so much about every trifle. At first I thought him very plain, that is, for about three minutes: he is pale, thin, has a wide mouth, thick lips, and not very good teeth, longish, loose-growing, half-curling, rough black hair. But, if you hear him speak for five minutes, you think no more of them. His eye is large and full, and not very dark, but grey — such an eye as would receive from a heavy soul the dullest expression; but it speaks every emotion of his animated mind; it

has more of 'the poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling' than I ever witnessed. He has fine dark eyebrows, and an overhanging forehead."

This first visit was very successful, and a few weeks later Coleridge brought the Wordsworths, brother and sister, home with him for a fortnight, and they liked the country so much that they themselves took a cottage at Alfoxden, about three miles off; thus the two families became neighbours; they saw one another daily, and this intercourse continued for nearly a year. They read, walked, and talked together constantly, and each of the two poets greatly stimulated the other. They undertook a kind of literary partnership together, of which the fruit was the volume entitled *Lyrical Ballads*, in which *The Ancient Mariner* was first published, in 1798. The poem itself was begun, as a joint composition, on a walking tour, November 13, 1797, and was designed to pay the expenses of the tour in case it could be sold to a magazine; but it was not finished till four months later. It was not only this poem that made the year of this friendship so remarkable in Coleridge's life. He then began *Christabel*, and wrote the *Ode to France*, *Kubla Khan*, *Frost at Midnight*, *Fears in Solitude*, *The Nightingale*, and several other poems; taken all together these were the best and greatest work he was ever to do; for this reason this time is called Coleridge's *annus mirabilis*, or wonderful year,—1798.

It was two years earlier, March 12, 1796, that Coleridge first mentions in a letter his taking opium. He says he

was obliged to take laudanum almost every night. Six months later he again refers to it as a medicine. There can be little doubt that he grew fully aware of the stimulating power of the drug, and it is not unreasonable to associate the extraordinary power of his poetry in this period with the first effects of opium on his system. Under the pressure of mental and physical trouble, and especially in the efforts to obtain relief from rheumatic pains and to arouse his spirits in depression, he came to be a victim of the opium habit, though he concealed the fact from his friends for some time. It is not necessary to go into details here, but it will be enough to say plainly that the use of opium was one of the main causes, if not the chief one, of the failure of Coleridge as a man, and of the partial clouding of his genius. If it helped him at the beginning, it hurt him in the end, and almost destroyed his usefulness. After the great year, he produced little poetry of first-rate quality, and turned his mind to prose, as a critic and philosopher.

A brief view of Coleridge's life after the publication of *The Ancient Mariner* is all that is needed for the young student in order to complete a clear idea of the poet's character and career. A few facts stand out plain. In the first place, he was generally incapable of self-support, and was cared for by his friends. In 1797 he received an annuity of £150 from the Wedgwoods, who were famous manufacturers of pottery; and this was paid for many years either to himself or his family, until it was finally withdrawn, not without justice since its purpose, which

was to allow Coleridge freedom to devote himself to great works, was not fulfilled, owing to Coleridge's defects as a man. He also received gifts and loans from Poole, Wordsworth, and other friends. De Quincey at one time gave him £300, — a very generous gift. Such assistance, in one way and another, he had through life. Secondly, he led on the whole a wandering life. He went to Germany in 1798, where he learned German and formed his taste for German philosophy; and in 1804 he went to Malta and Italy, spending a year. He lived mainly between London and the Lakes, where he was a neighbour of Wordsworth and Southey, in his earlier years, and later with various friends, and especially Mr. Gilman, in whose house he was an inmate, and under his care, from 1814 to 1834. Up to that time he was always making little journeys and random visits. Thirdly, his home life was destroyed, partly by incompatibility between himself and his wife, who was a good woman, but unintellectual and much troubled by her husband's unpractical character. There were three children. He separated from his family in 1810, after much domestic difficulty, in which his opium habit had a great share; and the care of the family fell mainly on Southey, his brother-in-law.

As a public man he continued all the various activities that he had shown. He had already appeared as a poet, a dramatist, a lecturer, a preacher, an editor; and he was also a translator and a journalist. He published his principal volume of collected poems in 1817; his drama, *Remorse*, was successfully acted in 1813, and brought

22 Coleridge's Rime of the Ancient Mariner

him in considerable money; he edited *The Friend* in 1809, but practically it failed, like *The Watchman*; he gave several courses of lectures at Bristol and London, of much distinction, but of doubtful success; he contributed, especially, to the London *Morning Post*, and his journalistic work is well spoken of. He translated Schiller's *Wallenstein* in 1800. All these various writings have been collected, and now make his Works. Toward the latter part of his life, when he had partially freed himself from subjection to opium, he wrote mainly on philosophical and critical topics.

It is certain, nevertheless, that this short account of Coleridge's mature life, as seen from the outside and measured by what he accomplished, obscures his real power and is unjust to his personal attractiveness. His genius was most highly appreciated by the men, also of genius, who were his friends. Wordsworth thought him "the most wonderful man he ever knew," and believed that, except for his misfortune, he would have been the greatest of English poets. Lamb never lost his comrade-like affection and old-friend admiration for him. If Wordsworth shows more intellectual respect and real solicitude for him, Lamb shows a tenderer and closer love, that was indestructible. Coleridge had times of sorrowful coolness with both, and of much more than that with Southey; and he was at times a trial to all three. Poole was a faithful friend through all. Coleridge had personal charm, as it is called, and he fascinated those whom he attracted. You will hardly find a finer

story of a boy's admiration of genius than Hazlitt's account of Coleridge's stay at his father's house, and the walk they took together, in his essay *My First Acquaintance with Poets* (see Appendix). Lloyd, who has been mentioned as a boarder and charge of Coleridge above, was similarly captivated by him. The same experience was the lot of others, both old and young. He had the look, the face, and the ways of genius, and his voice itself had a wonderful quality to hold men. If he tired out one friend, he found another, and the first was soon ready to return to him. Such power as this shows a kind of strength in Coleridge's heart and brain, and in his ways of behaviour, that is altogether lost and concealed in the mere story of the outer events of his life. What his friends said of him is still the best wisdom about him, we may be sure.

You will remember him, then, as the homeless school-boy, growing up in the crowd at Christ's Hospital, and finding his talents there ; as the college boy who went foolish in his Sophomore year and altogether wild in his Junior year, with his scheme for a new society in America, his radical opinions, and his tavern habits ; as married early in life without prospects, or judgement, or resources ; as suddenly ripening, in Wordsworth's society, into a great poet of inspiration and musical words, with a touch, perhaps, of opium-dreaming in it all ; and then as a slowly breaking man, enslaved to the drug, losing power of self-control, of response to duty, of manhood force, and, though surrounded by kind and willing friends, unable to assert himself in life, gradually becoming a burden to

.

24 Coleridge's Rime of the Ancient Mariner

them all, till at last he saved himself sufficiently to live, under the care of a friend, a later life of a better sort. You will recall his many activities as a writer, editor, and speaker. You will think of him especially as the friend of Lamb, Wordsworth and his sister, Southey, Poole, and the Wedgwoods, and as one whom they loved and honoured ; and to them, you will think that he was most of all a poet. You may add to this that at the close of his life he was also the friend of the next generation, especially of the independent and liberal religious young leaders, and that in America he was the chief teacher of Poe in criticism and of great service to Lowell. So in the first part of his life he will be for you the poet ; in the second part, if not a great — that is, a deep and exact — thinker, yet a thinker on great subjects, in philosophy and criticism.

II. THE POEM

The poem is a story. It tells its meaning clearly and completely. In what I shall write, I have nothing to add to it ; I shall only try to bring out more distinctly what is already in your mind after you have read it carefully. When you think it over, you will recollect that, in the first place, it is a tale of a wedding feast. The wedding was going on, with guests and music, all the time the story was being told to the intercepted and delayed guest ; this is the setting of the poem, its framework, and serves by contrast to deepen the impression, and also to break up the monotony of a long narrative, and

to make the story more one of real life, because the incidents of the marriage celebration are plain matters of fact. Secondly,—and this is the important thing,—it is a tale of a voyage: of a ship that sailed south into the polar sea, and worked round into the tropic Pacific Ocean, and came home again in a miraculous swift way. You will not remember many events; it is not a tale of events. An albatross was shot; the crew died of thirst; there was a phantom ship that crossed the course; and the other incidents were concerned with the working of the ship and its arrival home. You remember the story, in fact, not by the things done, but by the things seen. Thus you recall the ice scenes, the fog scenes, the crew laying to the ropes, the seraph spirits standing on the dead bodies like lights, the coloured water-snakes, the two figures gaming on the phantom ship, and the like; in short, what is most vividly in your minds is a number of definite and unusual pictures. This is why the poem is called one of imagination. One image stays in your mind especially: it is the albatross. This is the key-image of the whole. Notice that the poet does not let you forget it, but at the end of every part he says something about it, comes back to it, uses it like a master-note in music. The poem is a story, then, told by pictures. Attend to these pictures carefully. They are all simple, with few details, and these are clear; they are presented in very few words; they are passed very swiftly before your eyes. Again, many of them are natural forms, things seen at sea, like the ice and fog and sun, but not

26 Coleridge's Rime of the Ancient Mariner

quite in an ordinary way; the objects seem ghostly, spectral, mysterious, and the colour is especially brought out, — pale moonlight and mist tones and brilliant hues at times. You remember the atmosphere and colour of it all plainer than the forms. Again, there are some things not of nature in the pictures; you don't see them. For example, you don't see the spirit that loved the albatross, but you imagine his presence under the water. You do see the two figures of the phantom ship, but not plainly; they are too ugly to be seen plainly. The minor characters of the tale — all the essential ones are supernatural, except the Mariner — make little impression on your mind; and they really are not important in the meaning of the story. On the whole, there is a series of wonderfully strange pictures in which ice and fog and sun and an albatross and a ship with tragedy on board are constant elements; and, besides, there is something that links these pictures together and makes them more than just a succession of marvellous incidents of the sea.

What is this something that links them together? It is the plot. There is a constant operation of the law of cause. The Mariner shot the albatross; for this act the ship is cursed by the spirit that loved the albatross, and the Mariner is made to suffer all the horrors described; he is so lonely and lost, and everything round him is so dead that when he sees the water-snakes he sees them as beautiful things just because they are alive, and suddenly he loves them. I will try to make the sense of this plain. Every story contains a chain of incidents, one causing

another, till the end is reached ; the chain of caused events is the plot ; in a story, things do not merely happen, but happen because they must, and a good storyteller arranges them in such a way as to bring this necessary connection and significance out, usually by means of what are called climaxes. The first climax here is the shooting of the albatross : it is the act from which all the rest results, and it marks the moment when the Mariner wantonly took life. He suffers the vengeance of the spirit who loved the albatross. The second climax is when he blesses the sea-snakes, and it marks the moment when he loves life, — that is, living creatures. You should notice that what has happened is a complete reversal of his nature, a change of heart. He began by being so heartless that he killed the good bird ; he ends by loving even the snakes. The story is told to show how this change of heart is brought about. As soon as his heart is changed, he is forgiven, and the ship is guided home by a miracle. The essential thing at the end is the idea of prayer. The poet means that for one who loves the beauty of life, prayer is a natural act. It is not, you observe, the prayer of a penitent for forgiveness nor of a sinner at all, that he speaks of, but a prayer of praise and thanksgiving for the gift and loveliness of life itself, not human life only, but all life.

These three things, then, you should find evident here : first, a series of pictures natural and supernatural ; second, a plot connecting these pictures into a story of which the essential thread is the conversion of the Mariner from a

heartless man, indifferent to the sacredness of life, into a man who so loves all life in all creatures that his heart is filled with a prayer of thanksgiving for life ; third, the moral lesson that prayer is the flower and consummation of love, and that love is the appreciation of the beauty of life. This is a great truth, which you may not fully understand, but the poem will introduce you to it and help you to understand it.

This is the whole meaning of the poem, and all that it is necessary for you to know to appreciate its imaginative beauty and moral teaching. I would like to add one further word, because it may be useful. The story is told as if it were matter of fact ; the rapidity of the narrative is remarkable — notice how quickly the poet gets the ship out to sea — and it is told with great dramatic effect. The suddenness of the statement that the Mariner shot the bird is an instance of this. Each Part stands by itself, like a chapter, and is ended, it should be specially noticed, by a statement about the albatross. These statements are like knots in a string, and divide up the tale into sections. The device by which the ship is brought home is also specially to be noticed, in the points of the swoon of the Mariner, the miraculous passage through the water, and the brevity of time consumed. The difficulty of getting that ship home was great, and the solution of the problem (including the sinking of the ship) is a triumph of inventive genius. These are all interesting matters ; but what I wished to add, especially, is this, — that the tale reads like matter of fact, because it is so swift,

vivid, and plain ; you do not have time to doubt and you see it so clearly that it seems real ; secondly, the tale affects you like the reality of a dream, even when you remember it could not have happened ; thirdly, the truth it contains is moral truth, and just as in a fable you know the animals do not talk, but you accept the make-believe for the sake of the truth, so here you accept all the marvels for the sake of the poetry,—that is, your delight in the strangeness, beauty, or adventure here given, and also your delight in the moral lesson. In other words, this poem should teach you that there is a higher truth than matter of fact,—the truth of what is beautiful to the imagination and the heart told in invented tales ; now this is the kind of truth that the greatest poetry always gives.

III. THE HISTORY OF THE POEM

This poem is unique ; it is the only one of its kind ; there is no other like it. The story of how it came to be written is interesting for many other reasons besides this. In the first place it is the chief monument of what is called the ballad revival in English literature. Ballads were written long ago and were popular, sung by wandering musicians who went from place to place, but they fell out of fashion, and were neglected and forgotten. In the middle of the eighteenth century, however, a cultivated and learned man interested in old and out-of-the-way things collected a number of these ballads and

30 Coleridge's Rime of the Ancient Mariner

published them. The book is Bishop Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* and was published in 1765. This volume created a new interest in the old ballads and a taste for them. It was read in Germany, and aided there in a ballad revival. Especially a German poet, Bürger, was affected by the book, and he wrote some very famous ballads and prefixed a preface to them. This book of Bürger's was read by Wordsworth and Coleridge, and they determined to do something of the same sort for English poetry. Wordsworth was to make domestic ballads of ordinary life, and Coleridge ballads of the supernatural. Here is Coleridge's account of the matter : —

“ During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbours, our conversations turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination. The sudden charm, which accidents of light and shade, which moonlight or sunset, diffused over a known and familiar landscape, appeared to represent the practicability of combining both. These are the poetry of nature. The thought suggested itself (to which of us I do not recollect) that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the one, the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions, as would natu-

rally accompany such situations, supposing them real. And real in this sense they have been to every human being who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency. For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life ; the characters and incidents were to be such as will be found in every village and its vicinity where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them when they present themselves.

“In this idea originated the plan of the *Lyrical Ballads*, in which it was agreed that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic ; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith. Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind’s attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us ; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which, in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude, we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand.

“With this view I wrote *The Ancient Mariner*, and was preparing, among other poems, the *Dark Ladie*, and the *Christabel*, in which I should have more nearly realized

32 Coleridge's Rime of the Ancient Mariner

my ideal than I had done in my first attempt. But Mr. Wordsworth's industry had proved so much more successful, and the number of his poems so much greater, that my compositions, instead of forming a balance, appeared rather an interpolation of heterogeneous matter. Mr. Wordsworth added two or three poems written in his own character, in the impassioned, lofty, and sustained diction which is characteristic of his genius. In this form the *Lyrical Ballads* were published."

The particular circumstances surrounding the composition of the poem were described by Wordsworth himself:

"In the autumn of 1797 he [Coleridge], my sister, and myself, started from Alfoxden pretty late in the afternoon, with a view to visit Linton and the Valley of Stones near to it; and as our united funds were very small, we agreed to defray the expense of the tour by writing a poem to be sent to the *New Monthly Magazine*. Accordingly we set off, and proceeded along the Quantock Hills towards Watchet, and in the course of this walk was planned the poem of *The Ancient Mariner*, founded on a dream, as Mr. Coleridge said, of his friend Mr. Cruikshank. Much the greatest part of the story was Mr. Coleridge's invention; but certain parts I suggested; for example, some crime was to be committed which should bring upon the Old Navigator, as Coleridge afterwards delighted to call him, the spectral persecution, as a consequence of that crime and his own wanderings. I had been reading in Shelvocke's *Voyages* a day or two before that, while doubling Cape Horn, they frequently saw albatrosses in

that latitude, the largest sort of sea-fowl, some extending their wings twelve or thirteen feet. 'Suppose,' said I, 'you represent him as having killed one of these birds on entering the South Sea, and that the tutelary spirits of these regions take upon them to avenge the crime.' The incident was thought fit for the purpose, and adopted accordingly. I also suggested the navigation of the ship by the dead men, but do not recollect that I had anything more to do with the scheme of the poem. The gloss with which it was subsequently accompanied was not thought of by either of us at the time, at least not a hint of it was given to me, and I have no doubt it was a gratuitous afterthought. We began the composition together on that, to me, memorable evening. I furnished two or three lines at the beginning of the poem, in particular, —

'And listened like a three years' child:
The Mariner had his will.'

These trifling contributions, all but one, which Mr. C. has with unnecessary scrupulosity recorded, slipped out of his mind, as they well might. As we endeavoured to proceed conjointly (I speak of the same evening) our respective manners proved so widely different that it would have been quite presumptuous in me to do anything but separate from an undertaking upon which I could only have been a clog. . . . We returned by Duburton to Alfoxden. *The Ancient Mariner* grew and grew till it became too important for our first object,

34 Coleridge's Rime of the Ancient Mariner

which was limited to our expectation of five pounds ; and we began to think of a volume, which was to consist, as Mr. Coleridge has told the world, of poems chiefly on supernatural subjects, taken from common life, but looked at, as much as might be, through an imaginative medium."

You will notice that what was furnished to Coleridge by others was the framework of the story, — that is, the scene, the action, the incidents ; what he brought to his task was the power to dream the scene, to see the pictures and colour them, to give the appropriate music of words, and especially to put the soul of the lesson of love into it all. It is said that Coleridge was also indebted to a book, Captain Thomas James's *Strange and Dangerous Voyage . . . in his Intended Discovery of the North-West Passage into the South Sea*, London, 1633 ; and also to another old narrative, *The Letter of Saint Paulinus to Macarius, in which he relates astounding wonders concerning the shipwreck of an old man*, published in a volume of 1618. Mr. J. Dykes Campbell, the editor of Coleridge, describes the passage as follows : "The old man of this story of the fourth century was the sole survivor of a ship's crew ; the ship was navigated by a 'crew of angels,' 'steered by the Pilot of the World' 'to the Lucanian shore' ; the fishermen then saw a crew which they took for soldiers, and fled, until recalled by the old man, who shewed them he was alone ; they then towed the ship into harbour." It is true that Coleridge read old books and may have seen these legends of voyages simi-

lar in some respects to that of his own imagining ; but it does not seem to me likely that he was indebted to either Wordsworth, James, or the old chronicle very much. I tell these facts because they are in the books, and also to show that even a poem of pure imagination like this usually has a human history back of it. It is not spun out of nothing, but out of dreams, fancies, suggestions, visions that have been in men's minds before.

The poem has also a literary or textual history. You will find that the greatest poets have often, if not usually, written very carefully, and then corrected their work over and over. The best writing has had the greatest pains taken with it. And, secondly, you will find that great poems are very often not known to be great for a long time after they are given to the world ; and that was the case with this poem. The *Lyrical Ballads*, in which it first appeared, was laughed at, and even Coleridge's own friends, like Wordsworth (the joint-author of the book) and Southey, did not realize that this was an immortal work of the imagination. Lamb came the nearest to appreciating it. The poem was much changed in successive issues. It was first published in the *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798, anonymously ; it was revised in the second edition, 1800, and in later issues the argument was omitted. It appeared in its present form in the *Sibylline Leaves*, with the marginal gloss and the motto from Burnet added for the first time. Wordsworth thought the poem was one reason of the failure of the *Lyrical Ballads*, and Coleridge wished to omit it from the second edition on

36 Coleridge's Rime of the Ancient Mariner

that account. Wordsworth, therefore, inserted this note:—

“The Author was himself very desirous that it should be suppressed. This has arisen from a consciousness of the defects of the Poem, and from a knowledge that many Persons had been much displeas'd with it. The Poem of my Friend has, indeed, many great defects; first, that the principal person has no distinct character, either in his profession of Mariner, or as a human being who having been long under the control of supernatural impressions, might be supposed himself to partake of something supernatural; secondly, that he does not act, but is constantly acted upon; thirdly, that the events having no necessary connection, do not produce each other; and lastly, that the imagery is somewhat too laboriously accumulated. Yet the Poem contains many delicate touches of passion, and indeed, the passion is everywhere true to Nature; a great many of the stanzas present beautiful images, and are expressed with unusual felicity of language; and the versification, tho' the metre is in itself, unfit for long poems, is harmonious and artfully varied, exhibiting the utmost power of that metre, and every variety of which it is capable. It therefore appeared to me that these several merits (the first of which, namely, that of the passion, is of the highest kind) gave to the Poem a value which is not often possessed by better Poems. On this account, I requested of my Friend to permit me to republish it.”

These are the main facts in regard to the origin, the

composition, the publication, and the reception of the poem, which constitute its literary history. They are interesting to know, but they neither help nor hinder your appreciation of the poem, which is an entirely different matter.

IV. CONCLUSION

The Ancient Mariner is a poem so simple that it requires little annotation and explanation, nor should it be used educationally except to give the artistic pleasure and moral instruction which are its end. It will do no harm to point out that in the poem the animal world is used in a wholly unnatural way, but one belonging to early modes of thought, symbolically and supernaturally, to enforce a high moral truth; but the young mind will be confused by the attempt to probe its meanings too subtly and variously. If you — my readers and students — see the beauty and wonder of the pictures here given to your visual imagination, if you feel the thrill and horror of the scenes of desolation and death and the peace and blessedness of those of regeneration and rescue, if you understand the facts of the construction of the tale as one with a beginning, a middle, and an end, and see also the moral reversal of the man's character in the middle, and how it was brought about, and if you appreciate even lightly the love of animals standing for the sacredness of all life, and that this love of life is one great spring of that emotion which impels men in many ways to the act of prayer, — then the poem has entered into your minds and hearts with its full power.

38 Coleridge's Rime of the Ancient Mariner

Facile credo, plures esse Naturas invisibiles quam visibiles in rerum universitate. Sed horum omnium familiam quis nobis enarrabit? et gradus et cognationes et discrimina et singulorum munera? Quid agunt? quæ loca habitant? Harum rerum notitiam semper ambivit ingenium humanum, nunquam attigit. Juvat, interea, non diffiteor, quandoque in animo, tanquam in tabulâ, majoris et melioris mundi imaginem contemplari: ne mens assuefacta hodiernæ vitæ minutiis se contrahat nimis, et tota subsidat in pusillas cogitationes. Sed veritati interea invigilandum est, modusque servandus, ut certa ab incertis, diem a nocte, distinguamus.—T. BURNET, *Archæol. Phil.* p. 68.

I readily believe that there are more invisible beings in the universe than visible. But who shall tell us their nature, the rank and kinship, the distinguishing marks and graces of each? what do they do? where do they inhabit? The human mind circles round this knowledge, but never touches it truly. Yet there is profit, I do not doubt, in sometimes contemplating in the spirit as in a picture the image of a greater and better world, that the mind wonted to daily details may not come into too narrow limits and settle down wholly on trifles. But truth must be guarded vigilantly, too, and proportion kept, that we may distinguish the sure from the uncertain, day from night.

THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

IN SEVEN PARTS¹

PART I

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 !'²

Eftsoons³ his hand dropt he.

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

5

10

¹ The following Argument was prefixed to the poem in the edition of 1798: How a Ship having passed the Line was driven by storms to the cold Country towards the South Polé; and how from thence she made her course to the Tropical Latitude of the Great Pacific Ocean; and of the strange things that befell; and in what manner the Ancyent Marinere came back to his own Country.

² Cf. *Macbeth*, v. 3. 11, "cream-faced loon."

³ Soon after, right away.

40 The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

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

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child : 15
The Mariner hath his will.

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:
He cannot choose but hear ;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner. 20

' The ship was cheered, the harbour
cleared,
Merrily did we drop¹
Below the kirk,² below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.

The Mariner tells how the ship sailed southward with a good wind and fair weather, till it reached the Line.³

The sun came up upon the left, 25
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 —' 30
The Wedding-Guest here beat his
breast,

For he heard the loud bassoon.

The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she ;

¹ A sailor term for the motion of a ship.

² Church.

³ Equator.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner 41

Nodding their heads before her goes The Wedding- 35
The merry minstrelsy. Guest heareth
the bridal music;

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear ; but the Mariner
continueth his
tale.

And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner. 40

‘ And now the Storm-blast came, and The ship driven ¹
he by a storm
toward the south
pole.

Was tyrannous and strong :
He struck with his o’ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.

With sloping masts and dipping prow, 45
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. 50

And now there came both mist and
snow,

And it grew wondrous cold :
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.

And through the drifts the snowy clifts ² 55
Did send a dismal sheen :

¹ Campbell’s conjecture for *drawn*, accepted by all editors.

² The clefts of the ice filled with snow.

42 The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

The land of ice, Nor shapes of men nor beasts we
 and of fearful ken¹—
 sounds where no The ice was all between.
 living thing was
 to be seen.

The ice was here, the ice was there,
 The ice was all around : 60
 It cracked and growled, and roared
 and howled,
 Like noises in a swound !²

Till a great sea- At length did cross an Albatross,
 bird, called the Thorough³ the fog it came ;
 Albatross, came As if it had been a Christian soul, 65
 through the We hailed it in God's name.
 snow-fog, and
 was received with
 great joy and
 hospitality.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,⁴
 And round and round it flew.
 The ice did split with a thunder-fit;⁵
 The helmsman steered us through ! 70

And lo! the And a good south wind sprung up
 Albatross prov- behind ;
 eth a bird of The Albatross did follow,
 good omen, and And every day, for food or play,
 followeth the ship Came to the mariners' hollo !
 as it returned
 northward
 through fog and
 floating ice.

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud, 75
 It perched for vespers⁶ nine ;

¹ See.

² Swoon.

³ Old form for *through*.

⁴ This form is now obsolete and vulgar.

⁵ Noise like thunder.

⁶ Evenings.

Whiles¹ all the night, through fog-
 smoke white,
 Glimmered the white moon-shine.'

'God save thee, ancient Mariner!
 From the fiends, that plague thee
 thus!—

The ancient
 Mariner inhospitably killeth
 the pious bird of good omen. 80

Why look'st thou so?' — 'With my
 cross-bow
 I shot the Albatross.

PART II

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.

85

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!

90

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!

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

95

¹ Old form for *while*.

44 The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

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

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious Sun uprist¹:
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist. 100
'Twas right, said they, such birds to
slay,
That bring the fog and mist.

The fair breeze continues; the ship enters the Pacific Ocean, and sails northward, even till it reaches the Line. The ship hath been suddenly becalmed.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam
flew,
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst 105
Into that silent sea.

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! 110

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, 115
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

¹ Old form for *uprose*.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner 45

Water, water, every where, And all the boards did shrink ; Water, water, every where Nor any drop to drink.	And the Albatross begins to be avenged.	120
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The very deep did rot : O Christ ! That ever this should be ! Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs Upon the slimy sea.	125
--	-----

About, about, in reel and rout The death-fires danced at night ; The water, like a witch's oils, Burnt green, and blue, and white.	130
---	-----

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.	A Spirit had followed them ; one of the invis- ible inhabitants of this planet, neither departed souls nor angels ; concerning whom the learned Jew, Josephus, and the platonick Constantinopoli- tan, Michael Psellus, may be consulted. They are very numer- ous, and there is no climate or element with- out one or more.	135
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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.	140
---	-----

Ah ! well-a-day ! what evil looks Had I from old and young ! Instead of the cross, the Albatross About my neck was hung.	140
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PART III

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.

There passed a weary time. Each
throat
Was parched, and glazed each eye.
A weary time! a weary time! 145
How glazed each weary eye,
When looking westward, I beheld
A something in the sky.

The ancient
Mariner be-
holdeth a sign
in the element
afar off.

At first it seemed a little speck,
And then it seemed a mist; 150
It moved and moved, and took at
last
A certain shape, I wist.¹

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!
And still it neared and neared:
As if it dodged a water-sprite, 155
It plunged and tacked and veered.

At its nearer ap-
proach, it seem-
eth him to be a
ship; and at a
dear ransom he
freeth his speech
from the bonds
of thirst.

With throats unslaked, with black lips
baked,
We could nor laugh nor wail;
Through utter drought all dumb we
stood!
I bit my arm, I sucked the blood, 160
And cried, A sail! a sail!

¹ Know.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner 47

With throats unslaked, with black lips
baked,

Agape they heard me call :

Gramercy !¹ they for joy did grin, A flash of joy ;
And all at once their breath drew in, 165
As they were drinking all.

See! see! (I cried) she tacks no more! And horror
Hither to work us weal ; follows.
Without a breeze, without a tide, For can it be a
She steadies with upright keel ! ship that comes
onward without
wind or tide ? 170

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 sud-
denly 175

Betwixt us and the Sun.

And straight the Sun was flecked with
bars, It seemeth him
but the skeleton
of a ship.

(Heaven's Mother send us grace !)

As if through a dungeon-grate he
peered

With broad and burning face. 180

Alas ! (thought I, and my heart beat
loud)

How fast she nears and nears !

¹ An English form of a French word for *thanks*.

48 The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

Are those her sails that glance in the
Sun,
Like restless gossameres? ¹

And its ribs are seen as bars on the face of the setting Sun. The Spectre-Woman and her Death-mate, and no other on board the skeleton-ship.

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?

Like vessel, like crew!

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

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, 195
And the twain were casting dice;
"The game is done! I've won! I've
won!"
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

No twilight within the courts of the Sun.

The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush
out:
At one stride comes the dark; 200
With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,
Off shot the spectre-bark.

¹ Fine cobwebs.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner 49

We listened and looked sideways up! At the rising of
Fear at my heart, as at a cup, the Moon,
My life-blood seemed to sip! 205
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 clomb¹ above the eastern bar
The horned Moon, with one bright star 210
Within the nether tip.

One after one, by the star-dogged Moon, One after
Moon, another,
Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turned his face with a ghastly
pang,
And cursed me with his eye. 215

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

The souls did from their bodies fly, — But Life-in- 220
They fled to bliss or woe ! Death begins her
And every soul, it passed me by, work on the
Like the whizz of my cross-bow !' ancient Mariner.

¹ Old form for *climbed*.

PART IV

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

' I fear thee, ancient Mariner !
I fear thy skinny hand !

225

And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

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 !

230

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.

235

He despiseth the creatures of the calm.

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

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

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

240

I looked to heaven, and tried to pray ;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,

245

A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.

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 250
Lay like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs, But the curse liv-
Nor rot nor reek¹ did they : eth for him in the
The look with which they looked on eye of the dead
me men. 255
Has never passed away.

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 ! 260
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that
curse,
And yet I could not die.

The moving Moon went up the sky,
And nowhere did abide :
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside — 265

In his loneliness
and fixedness he
yearneth toward
the journeying
Moon, and the
stars that still so-
journ, yet still
move onward ;

¹ Probably steam or smell.

52 The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

and every where
the blue sky be-
longs to them,
and is their ap-
pointed rest, and
their native
country and their
own natural
homes, which
they enter unan-
nounced, as lords
that are certainly
expected and
yet there is a si-
lent joy at their
arrival.

Her beams bemocked the sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost spread ;
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
The charmed water burnt alway 270
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 275
Fell off in hoary flakes.

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 280
Was a flash of golden fire.

Their beauty and
their happiness.

O happy living things ! no tongue
Their beauty might declare :
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware : 285
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

The spell begins
to break.

The selfsame moment I could pray ;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank 290
Like lead into the sea.

PART V

O 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, 295
That slid into my soul.

The silly¹ buckets on the deck,
That had so long remained,
I dreamt that they were filled with
dew ;
And when I awoke, it rained. 300

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

My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
My garments all were dank ;
Sure I had drunken² in my dreams,
And still my body drank.

I moved, and could not feel my limbs : 305
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.³ 310

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

¹ Blessed.

² Old form.

³ Thin and grey like autumn leaves.

54 The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

The upper air burst into life !
And a hundred fire-flags¹ sheen,
To and fro they were hurried about ! 315
And to and fro, and in and out,
The wan stars danced between.

And the coming wind did roar more
loud,
And the sails did sigh like sedge ;
And the rain poured down from one
black cloud ; 320
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, 325
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. 330

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.

¹ Lightning.

The helmsman steered, the ship moved
on ; 335

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. 340

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.'

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

But not by the 345
souls of the men,
nor by dæmons
of earth or mid-
dle air, but by a
blessed troop of
angelic spirits,
sent down by the
invocation of the
guardian saint.

For when it dawned — they dropped
their arms, 350

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 ; 355
Slowly the sounds came back again,
Now mixed, now one by one.

56 The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
I heard the skylark sing ;
Sometimes all little birds that are, 360
How they seemed to fill the sea and
air
With their sweet jargoning !¹

And now 'twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute ;
And now it is an angel's song, 365
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, 370
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, 375
Moved onward from beneath.

The lonesome
Spirit from the
south pole
carries on the
ship as far as

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. 380

¹ Old word for *birds' song*.



- 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 Line, in
obedience to
the angelic
troop, but still
requireth
vengeance.
- 385
- 390
- The Polar
Spirit's fellow-
dæmons, the
invisible inhabi-
tants 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.
- 395
- 400
- 405

The other was a softer voice,
 As soft as honey-dew :¹
 Quoth he, "The man hath penance
 done,
 And penance more will do."

PART VI

FIRST VOICE

"But tell me, tell me! speak again, 410
 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 ; 415
 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 420
 She looketh down on him."

FIRST VOICE

The Mariner
 hath been cast
 into a trance ;

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

¹ A sugar exuded from leaves.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner 59

SECOND VOICE

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

for the angelic
power causeth
the vessel to
drive northward
faster than hu-
man life could
endure. 425

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 super-
natural motion is 430
retarded; the
Mariner awakes,
and his penance
begins anew.

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

435

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.

440

And now this spell was snapt: once
more

The curse is
finally expiated.

I viewed the ocean green,

60 The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

And looked far forth, yet little saw
Of what had else been seen — 445

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 450
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. 455

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, 460
Yet she sailed softly too :
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze —
On me alone it blew.

And the ancient
Mariner behold-
eth his native
country.

Oh ! dream of joy ! is this indeed
The light-house top I see ? 465
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 —
Oh, let me be awake, my God!
Or let me sleep alway. 470

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. 475

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 480
Till rising from the same,
Full many shapes, that shadows were,
In crimson colours came.

The angelic
spirits leave the
dead bodies,

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

And appear in
their own forms
of light. 485

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
And, by the holy rood!
A man all light, a seraph-man,
On every corse there stood. 490

62 The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

This seraph-band, each waved his
hand :

It was a heavenly sight !
They stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light ; 495

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, 500
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 : 505
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 510
That he makes in the wood.
He'll shrieve¹ my soul, he'll wash
away
The Albatross's blood.

¹ Old form for *shrive*.

PART VII

This Hermit good lives in that wood The Hermit of
Which slopes down to the sea. the Wood . 515
How loudly his sweet voice he rears !
He loves to talk with mariners
That come from a far countree.

He kneels at morn, and noon, and
 eve —
He hath a cushion plump : 520
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, 525
That signal made but now ? ”

“ Strange, by my faith ! ” the Hermit Approacheth the
 said — ship with won-
 der.

“ And they answered not our cheer !
The planks looked warped ! and see
 those sails,
How thin they are and sere ! 530
I never saw aught like to them,
Unless perchance it were

64 The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
My forest-brook along ;
When the ivy-tod¹ is heavy with snow, 535
And the owlet whoops to the wolf be-
low,
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 !" 540
Said the Hermit cheerily.

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. 545

The ship sud-
denly sinketh.

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 ancient
Mariner is saved
in the Pilot's
boat.

Stunned by that loud and dreadful
sound, 550
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. 555

¹ A heavy growth of ivy.

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.

I moved my lips — the Pilot shrieked 560
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, 565
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, 570
I stood on the firm land !
The Hermit stepped forth from the
boat,
And scarcely he could stand.

“ O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy
man ! ”
The Hermit crossed his brow. 575
“ 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.

66 The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

Forthwith this frame of mine was
wrenched
With a woful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale; 580
And then it left me free.

And ever and
anon throughout
his future life an
agony constrain-
eth 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. 585

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. 590

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, 595
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. 600

O sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me,

To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company! —

To walk together to the kirk, 605
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends
And youths and maidens gay!

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell 610
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast. And to teach by his own example,
love and reverence to all
things that God
made and loveth.

He prayeth best, who loveth best 615
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 620
Turned from the bride-groom's door.

He went like one that hath been
stunned,
And is of sense forlorn:¹
A sadder and a wiser man,
He rose the morrow morn. 625

¹ Deprived



NOTES

1. Read the gloss as carefully as the text.
2. **One of three.** Notice the precise detail, since this is one method (as in Defoe) of giving plausibility to a strange story.
3. Similarly notice here the method of description by giving one or two clear details instead of an elaborate description. You see the long beard, bright eye, and nothing else; yet your imagination sees a whole man. Observe, too, the suddenness of everything,—of the opening, the question, the effect, which also characterizes the whole poem.
7. Notice the swiftness and brevity of the statements here, too; it is a trait of style to be fixed in your mind.
8. The subject is omitted for speed.
9. **Skinny**, another strong detail to build up the picture of the Mariner.
10. Notice how simple the speech is, nothing startling, yet it arrests attention completely.
13. The Guest is really hypnotized now,—that is, fascinated; he cannot go.
20. **Bright-eyed, blue.** Characteristic of sailors.
24. **Lighthouse top.** One looks most at the lighthouse top, because the light is there.
25. **Left.** The ship sails south.
30. They reach the equator.
32. **Bassoon.** J. Dykes Campbell notes that Mrs. Sandford suggests that Coleridge got the idea of the bassoon from the fact that his friend Tom Poole introduced one into the church choir during

his residence at Nether-Stowey. Such trivial details often account for a poet's images.

34. An old ballad line used to give ballad style and feeling.

39. The repetition is characteristic of ballad poetry and is for style.

41. **He.** The personification is to prepare the way for a world in which the weather and the birds and sea-monsters are almost as human as man.

45. Notice the picture by swift, brief detail as before, both for the ship and the *foe* just below.

59. The parallel passages from James's *Voyage* given by Dykes Campbell, are these:—

“‘All day and all night, it snowed hard;’ ‘The nights are very cold; so that our rigging freezes;’ ‘It proved very thick foule weather, and the next day, by two a Clocke in the morning, we found ourselves incompassed about with Ice;’ ‘We had Ice not farre off about us, and some pieces as high as our Top-mast-head;’ ‘The seventeenth . . . we heard . . . the rutt against a banke of Ice that lay on the Shoare. It made a hollow and hideous noyse;’ ‘The Ice . . . crackt all over the Bay with a fearfull noyse.’”

76. **Nine.** Notice the method of precision again.

83. The ship is sailing north.

104. **Followed.** Coleridge changed this to “stream'd off,” in 1817, saying: “In the former edition the line was ‘The furrow followed free,’ but I had not been long on board a ship before I perceived that this was the image as seen by a spectator from the shore or from another vessel. From the ship itself the *Wake* appears like a brook flowing off from the stern.” Later he restored the reading as it is.

105. Notice again the suddenness of the event.

125. This is as far as imagination can go in describing a sea so putrefying that it seems almost to support monsters like an ooze.

128. **Death-fires.** Phosphorescent fires of all kinds are here meant, such as the sailors call St. Elmo's lights, compositants, which

play about the masts and rigging of ships (as in Shakespeare's *Tempest*) as well as on the water surface.

132. It is needless to look up the authorities in the marginal gloss, as the information adds nothing to the poem.

164. **For joy did grin.** Coleridge notes: "I took the thought of '*grinning for joy*' from poor Burnett's remark to me, when we had climbed to the top of Plinlimmon, and were nearly dead with thirst. We could not speak for the constriction, till we found a little puddle under a stone. He said to me, 'You grinned like an idiot!' He had done the same."

200. This description of the sudden coming of the night is one of the most admired passages of the poem.

211. **Within the nether tip.** Of course no star would ever be in this position. Coleridge merely wished to use the sailor superstition that a star dogging the moon is ill-luck. The whole description of the spectre-ship gave him much trouble, and it is the least successful part of the poem, both pictorially and dramatically. Other readings are given by Dykes Campbell in his edition; and the most that can be said of them is that Coleridge showed good taste by modifying the details of horror and repulsiveness and reducing his narrative to its present form. The skeleton-ship against the sun is the one great image.

223. The return to the albatross idea here, which ends every part, is admirably managed and with a fine surprise.

226. Coleridge's note: "For the last two lines of this stanza I am indebted to Mr. Wordsworth." Notice the device of the Guest's fear to break and vary the narrative.

277. Notice the colour effects.

290. This is the climax, and signifies that the Mariner's heart is changed. The incident recalls the similar loosing of the burden from Pilgrim in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. The change may be compared, in a way, with that in Tennyson's *Day Dream*.

321. Notice the landscape picture, and from this point on observe the numerous precise, vivid scenes.

360. Notice how effectively, after the sea-scenery of sun, moon, and weather, the land scenes are brought in to vary the tale; it is as if one were coasting along the shore till the home harbour actually appears. The story is really over now, and all that remains is to bring the ship to port.

464. Here, again, the suddenness of the revelation is what gives tone and spring to the narrative.

490. This is one of the pictures that are most marvellous in effect.

498. Notice the many ways in which silence has been spoken of through the poem.

513. The last mention of the albatross.

565. These details, of course, are to show the terrifying look of the Mariner who had suffered all these horrors.

591. The poem ends with the close of the wedding feast in order to give greater appearance of unity to it, and the incident naturally leads to the suggestion of prayer, — the idea in which the poem culminates.

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APPENDIX

MY FIRST ACQUAINTANCE WITH POETS

MY father was a Dissenting Minister, at Wem, in Shropshire; and in the year 1798 (the figures that compose the date are to me like the "dreaded name of Demogorgon") Mr. Coleridge came to Shrewsbury, to succeed Mr. Rowe in the spirltual charge of a Unitarian congregation there. He did not come till late on the Saturday afternoon before he was to preach; and Mr. Rowe, who himself went down to the coach, in a state of anxiety and expectation, to look for the arrival of his successor, could find no one at all answering the description but a round-faced man, in a short black coat (like a shooting jacket) which hardly seemed to have been made for him, but who seemed to be talking at a great rate to his fellow-passengers. Mr. Rowe had scarce returned to give an account of his disappointment when the round-faced man in black entered, and dissipated all doubts on the subject by beginning to talk. He did not cease while he stayed; nor has he since, that I know of. He held the good town of Shrewsbury in delightful suspense for the three weeks that he remained there, "fluttering the *proud Salopians*, like an eagle in a dove-cote;" and the Welsh mountains that skirt the horizon with their tempestuous confusion, agree to have heard no such mystic sounds since the days of

"High-born Hoel's harp or soft Llewellyn's lay."

As we passed along between Wem and Shrewsbury, and I eyed their blue tops seen through the wintry branches, or the red rustling leaves of the sturdy oak-trees by the road side, a sound was in my ears as of a Syren's song; I was stunned, startled with it, as

from deep sleep ; but I had no notion then that I should ever be able to express my admiration to others in motley imagery or quaint allusion, till the light of his genius shone into my soul, like the sun's rays glittering in the puddles of the road. I was at that time dumb, inarticulate, helpless, like a worm by the wayside, crushed, bleeding, lifeless ; but now, bursting the deadly bands that "bound them,

" With Styx nine times round them,"

my ideas float on winged words, and as they expand their plumes, catch the golden light of other years. My soul has indeed remained in its original bondage, dark, obscure, with longings infinite and unsatisfied ; my heart, shut up in the prison-house of this rude clay, has never found, nor will it ever find, a heart to speak to ; but that my understanding also did not remain dumb and brutish, or at length found a language to express itself, I owe to Coleridge. But this is not to my purpose.

My father lived ten miles from Shrewsbury, and was in the habit of exchanging visits with Mr. Rowe, and with Mr. Jenkins of Whitchurch (nine miles farther on), according to the custom of Dissenting Ministers in each other's neighbourhood. A line of communication is thus established, by which the flame of civil and religious liberty is kept alive, and nourishes its smouldering fire unquenchable, like the fires in the *Agamemnon* of Æschylus, placed at different stations, that waited for ten long years to announce with their blazing pyramids the destruction of Troy. Coleridge had agreed to come over and see my father, according to the courtesy of the country, as Mr. Rowe's probable successor ; but in the meantime, I had gone to hear him preach the Sunday after his arrival. A poet and a philosopher getting up into a Unitarian pulpit to preach the gospel, was a romance in these degenerate days, a sort of revival of the primitive spirit of Christianity, which was not to be resisted.

It was in January of 1798, that I rose one morning before day-

light, to walk ten miles in the mud, to hear this celebrated person preach. Never, the longest day I have to live, shall I have such another walk as this cold, raw, comfortless one, in the winter of the year 1798. *Il y a des impressions que ni le tems ni les circonstances peuvent effacer. Dusse-je vivre des siècles entiers, le doux tems de ma jeunesse ne peut renaître pour moi, ni s'effacer jamais dans ma mémoire.* When I got there, the organ was playing the 100th Psalm, and when it was done, Mr. Coleridge rose and gave out his text, "And he went up into the mountain to pray, HIMSELF, ALONE." As he gave out this text, his voice "rose like a steam of rich distilled perfumes," and when he came to the two last words, which he pronounced loud, deep, and distinct, it seemed to me, who was then young, as if the sounds had echoed from the bottom of the human heart, and as if that prayer might have floated in solemn silence through the universe. The idea of St. John came into my mind, "of one crying in the wilderness, who had his loins girt about, and whose food was locusts and wild honey." The preacher then launched into his subject, like an eagle dallying with the wind. The sermon was upon peace and war; upon church and state—not their alliance but their separation—on the spirit of the world and the spirit of Christianity, not as the same, but as opposed to one another. He talked of those who had "inscribed the cross of Christ on banners dripping with human gore." He made a poetical and pastoral excursion—and to show the fatal effects of war, drew a striking contrast between the simple shepherd boy, driving his team afield, or sitting under the hawthorn, piping to his flock, "as though he should never be old," and the same poor country lad, crimped, kidnapped, brought into town, made drunk at an alehouse, turned into a wretched drummer boy, with his hair sticking on end with powder and pomatum, a long cue at his back, and tricked out in the loathsome finery of the profession of blood:

"Such were the notes our once-loved poet sung."

And for myself, I could not have been more delighted if I had

heard the music of the spheres. Poetry and Philosophy had met together. Truth and Genius had embraced, under the eye and with the sanction of Religion. This was even beyond my hopes. I returned home well satisfied. The sun that was still labouring pale and wan through the sky, obscured by thick mists, seemed an emblem of the *good cause*; and the cold dank drops of dew, that hung half melted on the beard of the thistle, had something genial and refreshing in them; for there was a spirit of hope and youth in all nature, that turned everything into good. The face of nature had not then the brand of *JUS DIVINUM* on it:

“Like to that sanguine flower inscrib'd with woe.”

On the Tuesday following, the half-inspired speaker came. I was called down into the room where he was, and went half-hoping, half-afraid. He received me very graciously, and I listened for a long time without uttering a word. I did not suffer in his opinion by my silence. “For those two hours,” he afterwards was pleased to say, “he was conversing with William Hazlitt’s forehead!” His appearance was different from what I had anticipated from seeing him before. At a distance, and in the dim light of the chapel, there was to me a strange wildness in his aspect, a dusky obscurity, and I thought him pitted with the small-pox. His complexion was at that time clear, and even bright —

“As are the children of yon azure sheen.”

His forehead was broad and high, light as if built of ivory, with large projecting eyebrows, and his eyes rolling beneath them, like a sea with darkened lustre. “A certain tender bloom his face o’erspread,” a purple tinge as we see it in the pale thoughtful complexions of the Spanish portrait painters, Murillo and Velasquez. His mouth was gross, voluptuous, open, eloquent; his chin good-humoured and round; but his nose, the rudder of the face, the index of the will, was small, feeble, nothing — like what he has done. It might seem that the genius of his face as from a height

surveyed and projected him (with sufficient capacity and huge aspiration) into the world unknown of thought and imagination, with nothing to support or guide his veering purpose, as if Columbus had launched his adventurous course for the New World in a scallop, without oars or compass. So, at least, I comment on it after the event. Coleridge, in his person, was rather above the common size, inclining to the corpulent, or like Lord Hamlet, "somewhat fat and pury." His hair (now, alas! grey) was then black and glossy as the raven's, and fell in smooth masses over his forehead. This long pendulous hair is peculiar to enthusiasts, to those whose minds tend heavenward; and is traditionally inseparable (though of a different colour) from the pictures of Christ. It ought to belong, as a character, to all who preach *Christ crucified*, and Coleridge was at that time one of those!

It was curious to observe the contrast between him and my father, who was a veteran in the cause, and then declining into the vale of years. He had been a poor Irish lad, carefully brought up by his parents, and sent to the University of Glasgow (where he studied under Adam Smith) to prepare him for his future destination. It was his mother's proudest wish to see her son a Dissenting Minister. So, if we look back to past generations (as far as eye can reach), we see the same hopes, fears, wishes, followed by the same disappointments, throbbing in the human heart; and so we may see them (if we look forward) rising up for ever, and disappearing, like vapourish bubbles, in the human breast! After being tossed about from congregation to congregation in the heats of the Unitarian controversy, and squabbles about the American war, he had been relegated to an obscure village, where he was to spend the last thirty years of his life, far from the only converse that he loved, the talk about disputed texts of Scripture, and the cause of civil and religious liberty. Here he passed his days, repining, but resigned, in the study of the Bible, and the perusal of the Commentators — huge folios, not easily got through, one of which would outlast a winter! Why did he pore on these from morn to

night (with the exception of a walk in the fields or a turn in the garden to gather broccoli-plants or kidney beans of his own rearing, with no small degree of pride and pleasure)? Here were "no figures nor no fantasies" — neither poetry nor philosophy — nothing to dazzle, nothing to excite modern curiosity; but to his lacklustre eyes there appeared within the pages of the ponderous, unwieldy, neglected tomes, the sacred name of JEHOVAH in Hebrew capitals: pressed down by the weight of the style, worn to the last fading thinness of the understanding, there were glimpses, glimmering notions of the patriarchal wanderings, with palm trees hovering in the horizon, and processions of camels at the distance of three thousand years; there was Moses with the Burning Bush, the number of the Twelve Tribes, types, shadows, glosses on the law and the prophets; there were discussions (dull enough) on the age of Methuselah, a mighty speculation! there were outlines, rude guesses at the shape of Noah's Ark and of the riches of Solomon's Temple; questions as to the date of the creation, predictions of the end of all things; the great lapses of time, the strange mutations of the globe were unfolded with the voluminous leaf, as it turned over; and though the soul might slumber with an hieroglyphic veil of inscrutable mysteries drawn over it, yet it was in a slumber ill-exchanged for all the sharpened realities of sense, wit, fancy, or reason. My father's life was comparatively a dream; but it was a dream of infinity and eternity, of death, the resurrection, and a judgement to come!

No two individuals were ever more unlike than were the host and his guest. A poet was to my father a sort of nondescript; yet whatever added grace to the Unitarian cause was to him welcome. He could hardly have been more surprised or pleased, if our visitor had worn wings. Indeed, his thoughts had wings: and as the silken sounds rustled round our little wainscoted parlour, my father threw back his spectacles over his forehead, his white hairs mixing with its sanguine hue; and a smile of delight beamed across his rugged, cordial face, to think that Truth had found a

new ally in Fancy!¹ Besides, Coleridge seemed to take considerable notice of me, and that of itself was enough. He talked very familiarly, but agreeably, and glanced over a variety of subjects. At dinner-time he grew more animated, and dilated in a very edifying manner on Mary Wollstonecraft and Mackintosh. The last, he said, he considered (on my father's speaking of his *Vindicia Gallica* as a capital performance) as a clever, scholastic man — a master of the topics — or, as the ready warehouseman of letters, who knew exactly where to lay his hand on what he wanted, though the goods were not his own. He thought him no match for Burke, either in style or matter. Burke was a metaphysician, Mackintosh a mere logician. Burke was an orator (almost a poet) who reasoned in figures, because he had an eye for nature: Mackintosh, on the other hand, was a rhetorician, who had only an eye to commonplaces. On this I ventured to say that I had always entertained a great opinion of Burke, and that (as far as I could find) the speaking of him with contempt might be made the test of a vulgar, democratical mind. This was the first observation I ever made to Coleridge, and he said it was a very just and striking one. I remember the leg of Welsh mutton and the turnips on the table that day had the finest flavour imaginable. Coleridge added that Mackintosh and Tom Wedgwood (of whom, however, he spoke highly) had expressed a very indifferent opinion of his friend Mr.

¹ My father was one of those who mistook his talent, after all. He used to be very much dissatisfied that I preferred his *Letters* to his *Sermons*. The last were forced and dry; the first came naturally from him. For ease, half-plays on words, and a supine, monkish, indolent pleasantry, I have never seen them equalled. [The *Sermons* of the Rev. William Hazlitt were printed by subscription in 1808, 2 vols. 8vo. He published other tracts and discourses. A letter of his, contributed to the *Monthly Repository* in July, 1808, will be found reprinted in the *Memoirs of William Hazlitt*, 1867, i, 267-9.]

Wordsworth, on which he remarked to them — “He strides on so far before you, that he dwindles in the distance!” Godwin had once boasted to him of having carried on an argument with Mackintosh for three hours with dubious success; Coleridge told him — “If there had been a man of genius in the room he would have settled the question in five minutes.” He asked me if I had ever seen Mary Wollstonecraft, and I said, I had once for a few moments, and that she seemed to me to turn off Godwin’s objections to something she advanced with quite a playful, easy air. He replied, that “this was only one instance of the ascendancy which people of imagination exercised over those of mere intellect.” He did not rate Godwin very high¹ (this was caprice or prejudice, real or affected), but he had a great idea of Mrs. Wollstonecraft’s powers of conversation; none at all of her talent for book-making. We talked a little about Holcroft. He had been asked if he was not much struck *with* him, and he said, he thought himself in more danger of being struck *by* him. I complained that he would not let me get on at all, for he required a definition of every the commonest word, exclaiming, “What do you mean by a *sensation*, Sir? What do you mean by an *idea*?” This, Coleridge said, was barricading the road to truth; it was setting up a turnpike gate at every step we took. I forget a great number of things, many more than I remember; but the day passed off pleasantly, and the next morning Mr. Coleridge was to return to Shrewsbury. When I came down to breakfast, I found that he had just received a letter from his friend, T. Wedgwood, making him an offer of 150*l.* a year if he chose to waive his present pursuit, and devote himself entirely to the study of poetry and philosophy. Coleridge seemed to

¹ He complained in particular of the presumption of his attempting to establish the future immortality of man, “without” (as he said) “knowing what Death was or what Life was” — and the tone in which he pronounced these two words seemed to convey a complete image of both.

make up his mind to close with this proposal in the act of tying on one of his shoes. It threw an additional damp on his departure. It took the wayward enthusiast quite from us to cast him into Deva's winding vales, or by the shores of old romance. Instead of living at ten miles' distance, of being the pastor of a Dissenting congregation at Shrewsbury, he was henceforth to inhabit the Hill of Parnassus, to be a Shepherd on the Delectable Mountains. Alas! I knew not the way thither, and felt very little gratitude for Mr. Wedgwood's bounty. I was presently relieved from this dilemma; for Mr. Coleridge, asking for a pen and ink, and going to a table to write something on a bit of card, advanced towards me with undulating step, and giving me the precious document, said that that was his address, *Mr. Coleridge, Nether-Stowey, Somersetshire*; and that he should be glad to see me there in a few weeks' time, and, if I chose, would come half-way to meet me. I was not less surprised than the shepherd boy (this simile is to be found in *Cassandra*), when he sees a thunderbolt fall close at his feet. I stammered out my acknowledgments and acceptance of this offer (I thought Mr. Wedgwood's annuity a trifle to it) as well as I could; and this mighty business being settled, the poet preacher took leave, and I accompanied him six miles on the road. It was a fine morning in the middle of winter, and he talked the whole way. The scholar in Chaucer is described as going

—“Sounding on his way.”

So Coleridge went on his. In digressing, in dilating, in passing from subject to subject, he appeared to me to float in air, to slide on ice. He told me in confidence (going along) that he should have preached two sermons before he accepted the situation at Shrewsbury, one on Infant Baptism, the other on the Lord's Supper, showing that he could not administer either, which would have effectually disqualified him for the object in view. I observed that he continually crossed me on the way by shifting from one side of the footpath to the other. This struck me as an odd move-

ment; but I did not at that time connect it with any instability of purpose or involuntary change of principle, as I have done since. He seemed unable to keep on in a straight line. He spoke slightly of Hume (whose *Essay on Miracles* he said was stolen from an objection started in one of South's sermons—*Credat Judæus Appella!*) I was not very much pleased at this account of Hume, for I had just been reading, with infinite relish, that completest of all metaphysical *chokepears*, his *Treatise on Human Nature*, to which the *Essays* in point of scholastic subtilty and close reasoning, are mere elegant trifling, light summer reading. Coleridge even denied the excellence of Hume's general style, which I think betrayed a want of taste or candour. He, however, made me amends by the manner in which he spoke of Berkeley. He dwelt particularly on his *Essay on Vision* as a masterpiece of analytical reasoning. So it undoubtedly is. He was exceedingly angry with Dr. Johnson for striking the stone with his foot, in allusion to this author's *Theory of Matter and Spirit*, and saying, "Thus I confute him, Sir." Coleridge drew a parallel (I don't know how he brought about the connection) between Bishop Berkeley and Tom Paine. He said the one was an instance of a subtle, the other of an acute mind, than which no two things could be more distinct. The one was a shop-boy's quality, the other the characteristic of a philosopher. He considered Bishop Butler as a true philosopher, a profound and conscientious thinker, a genuine reader of nature and his own mind. He did not speak of his *Analogy*, but of his *Sermons at the Rolls' Chapel*, of which I had never heard. Coleridge somehow always contrived to prefer the *unknown* to the *known*. In this instance he was right. The *Analogy* is a tissue of sophistry, of wire-drawn, theological special-pleading; the *Sermons* (with the preface to them) are in a fine vein of deep, matured reflection, a candid appeal to our observation of human nature, without pedantry and without bias. I told Coleridge I had written a few remarks, and was sometimes foolish enough to believe that I had made a discovery on the same subject

(the *Natural disinterestedness of the Human Mind*) — and I tried to explain my view of it to Coleridge, who listened with great willingness, but I did not succeed in making myself understood. I sat down to the task shortly afterwards for the twentieth time, got new pens and paper, determined to make clear work of it, wrote a few meagre sentences in the skeleton style of a mathematical demonstration, stopped half-way down the second page; and, after trying in vain to pump up any words, images, notions, apprehensions, facts, or observations, from that gulf of abstraction in which I had plunged myself for four or five years preceding, gave up the attempt as labour in vain, and shed tears of helpless despondency on the blank, unfinished paper. I can write fast enough now. Am I better than I was then? Oh no! One truth discovered, one pang of regret at not being able to express it, is better than all the fluency and flippancy in the world. Would that I could go back to what I then was! Why can we not revive past times as we can revisit old places? If I had the quaint Muse of Sir Philip Sidney to assist me, I would write a *Sonnet to the Road between Wem and Shrewsbury*, and immortalize every step of it by some fond enigmatical conceit. I would swear that the very milestones had ears, and that Harmer-hill stooped with all its pines, to listen to a poet, as he passed! I remember but one other topic of discourse in this walk. He mentioned Paley, praised the naturalness and clearness of his style, but condemned his sentiments, thought him a mere time-serving casuist, and said that “the fact of his work on Moral and Political Philosophy being made a text-book in our Universities was a disgrace to the national character.” We parted at the six-mile stone; and I returned homeward, pensive, but much pleased. I had met with unexpected notice from a person whom I believed to have been prejudiced against me. “Kind and affable to me had been his condescension, and should be honoured ever with suitable regard.” He was the first poet I had known, and he certainly answered to that inspired name. I had heard a great deal of his powers of conversation and was not disappointed. In fact,

I never met with anything at all like them, either before or since. I could easily credit the accounts which were circulated of his holding forth to a large party of ladies and gentlemen, an evening or two before, on the Berkeleian Theory, when he made the whole material universe look like a transparency of fine words; and another story (which I believe he has somewhere told himself) of his being asked to a party at Birmingham, of his smoking tobacco and going to sleep after dinner on a sofa, where the company found him, to their no small surprise, which was increased to wonder when he started up of a sudden, and rubbing his eyes, looked about him, and launched into a three-hours' description of the third heaven, of which he had had a dream, very different from Mr. Southey's *Vision of Judgement*, and also from that other *Vision of Judgement*, which Mr. Murray, the Secretary of the Bridge-street Junta, took into his especial keeping.

On my way back I had a sound in my ears — it was the voice of Fancy; I had a light before me — it was the face of Poetry. The one still lingers there, the other has not quitted my side! Coleridge, in truth, met me half-way on the ground of philosophy, or I should not have been won over to his imaginative creed. I had an uneasy, pleasurable sensation all the time, till I was to visit him. During those months the chill breath of winter gave me a welcoming; the vernal air was balm and inspiration to me. The golden sunsets, the silver star of evening, lighted me on my way to new hopes and prospects. *I was to visit Coleridge in the spring.* This circumstance was never absent from my thoughts, and mingled with all my feelings. I wrote to him at the time proposed, and received an answer postponing my intended visit for a week or two, but very cordially urging me to complete my promise then. This delay did not damp, but rather increased my ardour. In the meantime, I went to Llangollen Vale, by way of initiating myself in the mysteries of natural scenery; and I must say I was enchanted with it. I had been reading Coleridge's description of England in his fine *Ode on the Departing Year*, and I applied it, *con amore*, to the

My First Acquaintance with Poets 85

objects before me. That valley was to me (in a manner) the cradle of a new existence: in the river that winds through it, my spirit was baptized in the waters of Helicon!

I returned home, and soon after set out on my journey with unworn heart, and untired feet. My way lay through Worcester and Gloucester, and by Upton, where I thought of Tom Jones and the adventure of the muff. I remember getting completely wet through one day, and stopping at an inn (I think it was at Tewkesbury) where I sat up all night to read *Paul and Virginia*. Sweet were the showers in early youth that drenched my body, and sweet the drops of pity that fell upon the books I read! I recollect a remark of Coleridge's upon this very book that nothing could show the gross indelicacy of French manners and the entire corruption of their imagination more strongly than the behaviour of the heroine in the last fatal scene, who turns away from a person on board the sinking vessel, that offers to save her life, because he has thrown off his clothes to assist him in swimming. Was this a time to think of such a circumstance? I once hinted to Wordsworth, as we were sailing in his boat on Grasmere lake, that I thought he had borrowed the idea of his *Poems on the Naming of Places* from the local inscriptions of the same kind in *Paul and Virginia*. He did not own the obligation, and stated some distinction without a difference in defence of his claim to originality. Any, the slightest variation, would be sufficient for this purpose in his mind; for whatever he added or altered would inevitably be worth all that any one else had done, and contain the marrow of the sentiment. I was still two days before the time fixed for my arrival, for I had taken care to set out early enough. I stopped these two days at Bridgewater; and when I was tired of sauntering on the banks of its muddy river, returned to the inn and read *Camilla*. So have I loitered my life away, reading books, looking at pictures, going to plays, hearing, thinking, writing on what pleased me best. I have wanted only one thing to make me happy; but wanting that have wanted everything!

I arrived, and was well received. The country about Nether-Stowey is beautiful, green and hilly, and near the sea-shore. I saw it but the other day, after an interval of twenty years, from a hill near Taunton. How was the map of my life spread out before me, as the map of the country lay at my feet! In the afternoon, Coleridge took me over to All-Foxden, a romantic old family mansion of the St. Aubins, where Wordsworth lived. It was then in the possession of a friend of the poet's, who gave him the free use of it. Somehow, that period (the time just after the French Revolution) was not a time when *nothing was given for nothing*. The mind opened and a softness might be perceived coming over the heart of individuals, beneath "the scales that fence" our self-interest. Wordsworth himself was from home, but his sister kept house, and set before us a frugal repast; and we had free access to her brother's poems, the *Lyrical Ballads*, which were still in manuscript, or in the form of *Sibylline Leaves*. I dipped into a few of these with great satisfaction, and with the faith of a novice. I slept that night in an old room with blue hangings, and covered with the round-faced family portraits of the age of George I. and II., and from the wooded declivity of the adjoining park that overlooked my window, at the dawn of day, could

— "hear the loud stag speak."

In the outset of life (and particularly at this time I felt it so) our imagination has a body to it. We are in a state between sleeping and waking, and have indistinct but glorious glimpses of strange shapes, and there is always something to come better than what we see. As in our dreams the fullness of the blood gives warmth and reality to the coinage of the brain, so in youth our ideas are clothed, and fed, and pampered with our good spirits; we breathe thick with thoughtless happiness, the weight of future years presses on the strong pulses of the heart, and we repose with undisturbed faith in truth and good. As we advance, we exhaust our fund of enjoyment and of hope. We are no longer wrapped in

lamb's-wool, lulled in Elysium. As we taste the pleasures of life, their spirit evaporates, the sense palls ; and nothing is left but the phantoms, the lifeless shadows of what *has been* !

That morning, as soon as breakfast was over, we strolled out into the park, and seating ourselves on the trunk of an old ash-tree that stretched along the ground, Coleridge read aloud with a sonorous and musical voice, the ballad of *Betty Foy*. I was not critically or sceptically inclined. I saw touches of truth and nature, and took the rest for granted. But in the *Thorn*, the *Mad Mother*, and the *Complaint of a Poor Indian Woman*, I felt that deeper power and pathos which have been since acknowledged,

“ In spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,”

as the characteristics of this author ; and the sense of a new style and a new spirit in poetry came over me. It had to me something of the effect that arises from the turning up of the fresh soil, or of the first welcome breath of Spring :

“ While yet the trembling year is unconfirmed.”

Coleridge and myself walked back to Stowey that evening, and his voice sounded high

“ Of Providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,
Fix'd fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,”

as we passed through echoing grove, by fairy stream or waterfall, gleaming in the summer moonlight ! He lamented that Wordsworth was not prone enough to believe in the traditional superstitions of the place, and that there was a something corporeal, a *matter-of-fact-ness*, a clinging to the palpable, or often to the petty, in his poetry, in consequence. His genius was not a spirit that descended to him through the air ; it sprung out of the ground like a flower, or unfolded itself from a green spray, on which the goldfinch sang. He said, however (if I remember right), that this objection must be confined to his descriptive pieces, that his philosophic poetry had a grand and comprehensive spirit in it, so that his

soul seemed to inhabit the universe like a palace, and to discover truth by intuition, rather than by deduction. The next day Wordsworth arrived from Bristol at Coleridge's cottage. I think I see him now. He answered in some degree to his friend's description of him, but was more gaunt and Don Quixote-like. He was quaintly dressed (according to the *costume* of that unconstrained period) in a brown fustian jacket and striped pantaloons. There was something of a roll, a lounge in his gait, not unlike his own *Peter Bell*. There was a severe, worn pressure of thought about his temples, a fire in his eye (as if he saw something in objects more than the outward appearance), an intense, high, narrow forehead, a Roman nose, cheeks furrowed by strong purpose and feeling, and a convulsive inclination to laughter about the mouth, a good deal at variance with the solemn, stately expression of the rest of his face. Chantrey's bust wants the marking traits; but he was teased into making it regular and heavy: Haydon's head of him, introduced into the *Entrance of Christ into Jerusalem*, is the most like his drooping weight of thought and expression. He sat down and talked very naturally and freely, with a mixture of clear, gushing accents in his voice, a deep guttural intonation, and a strong tincture of the northern *burr*, like the crust on wine. He instantly began to make havoc of the half of a Cheshire cheese on the table, and said, triumphantly, that "his marriage with experience had not been so productive as Mr. Southey's in teaching him a knowledge of the good things of this life." He had been to see the *Castle Spectre* by Monk Lewis, while at Bristol, and described it very well. He said "it fitted the taste of the audience like a glove." This *ad captandum* merit was however by no means a recommendation of it, according to the severe principles of the new school, which reject rather than court popular effect. Wordsworth, looking out of the low, latticed window, said, "How beautifully the sun sets on that yellow bank!" I thought within myself, "With what eyes these poets see nature!" and ever after, when I saw the sunset stream upon the objects facing it, conceived I had made a dis-



covery, or thanked Mr. Wordsworth for having made one for me! We went over to All-Foxden again the day following, and Wordsworth read us the story of *Peter Bell* in the open air; and the comment upon it by his face and voice was very different from that of some later critics! Whatever might be thought of the poem, "his face was as a book where men might read strange matters," and he announced the fate of his hero in prophetic tones. There is a *chaunt* in the recitation both of Coleridge and Wordsworth, which acts as a spell upon the hearer, and disarms the judgment. Perhaps they have deceived themselves by making habitual use of this ambiguous accompaniment. Coleridge's manner is more full, animated, and varied; Wordsworth's more equable, sustained, and internal. The one might be termed more *dramatic*, the other more *lyrical*. Coleridge has told me that he himself liked to compose in walking over uneven ground, or breaking through the straggling branches of a copsewood; whereas Wordsworth always wrote (if he could) walking up and down a straight gravel walk, or in some spot where the continuity of his verse met with no collateral interruption. Returning that same evening, I got into a metaphysical argument with Wordsworth, while Coleridge was explaining the different notes of the nightingale to his sister, in which we neither of us succeeded in making ourselves perfectly clear and intelligible. Thus I passed three weeks at Nether-Stowey and in the neighbourhood, generally devoting the afternoons to a delightful chat in an arbour made of bark by the poet's friend Tom Poole, sitting under two fine elm-trees, and listening to the bees humming round us, while we quaffed our *flip*. It was agreed, among other things, that we should make a jaunt down the Bristol Channel, as far as Linton. We set off together on foot, Coleridge, John Chester, and I. This Chester was a native of Nether-Stowey, one of those who were attracted to Coleridge's discourse as flies are to honey, or bees in swarming-time to the sound of a brass pan. He "followed in the chase like a dog who hunts, not like one that made up the cry." He had on a brown cloth coat, boots, and corduroy breeches, was

low in stature, bow-legged, had a drag in his walk like a drover, which he assisted by a hazel switch, and kept on a sort of trot by the side of Coleridge, like a running footman by a state coach, that he might not lose a syllable or sound that fell from Coleridge's lips. He told me his private opinion, that Coleridge was a wonderful man. He scarcely opened his lips, much less offered an opinion the whole way: yet of the three, had I to choose during that journey, I would be John Chester. He afterwards followed Coleridge into Germany, where the Kantian philosophers were puzzled how to bring him under any of their categories. When he sat down at table with his idol, John's felicity was complete; Sir Walter Scott's, or Mr. Blackwood's, when they sat down at the same table with the King, was not more so. We passed Dunster on our right, a small town between the brow of a hill and the sea. I remember eyeing it wistfully as it lay below us: contrasted with the woody scene around, it looked as clear, as pure, as *embrowned* and ideal as any landscape I have seen since, of Gaspar Poussin's or Domenichino's. We had a long day's march (our feet kept time to the echoes of Coleridge's tongue) through Minehead and by the Blue Anchor, and on to Linton, which we did not reach till near midnight, and where we had some difficulty in making a lodgment. We, however, knocked the people of the house up at last, and we were repaid for our apprehensions and fatigue by some excellent rashers of fried bacon and eggs. The view in coming along had been splendid. We walked for miles and miles on dark brown heaths overlooking the Channel, with the Welsh hills beyond, and at times descended into little sheltered valleys close by the sea-side, with a smuggler's face scowling by us, and then had to ascend conical hills with a path winding up through a coppice to a barren top, like a monk's shaven crown, from one of which I pointed out to Coleridge's notice the bare masts of a vessel on the very edge of the horizon, and within the red-orbed disk of the setting sun, like his own spectre-ship in the *Ancient Mariner*. At Linton the character of the sea-coast becomes more marked and rugged.

There is a place called the *Valley of Rocks* (I suspect this was only the poetical name for it), bedded among precipices overhanging the sea, with rocky caverns beneath, into which the waves dash, and where the sea-gull for ever wheels its screaming flight. On the tops of these are huge stones thrown transverse, as if an earthquake had tossed them there, and behind these is a fretwork of perpendicular rocks, something like the *Giant's Causeway*. A thunderstorm came on while we were at the inn, and Coleridge was running out bareheaded to enjoy the commotion of the elements in the *Valley of Rocks*, but as if in spite, the clouds only muttered a few angry sounds, and let fall a few refreshing drops. Coleridge told me that he and Wordsworth were to have made this place the scene of a prose tale, which was to have been in the manner of, but far superior to, the *Death of Abel*, but they had relinquished the design. In the morning of the second day, we breakfasted luxuriously in an old-fashioned parlour on tea, toast, eggs, and honey, in the very sight of the beehives from which it had been taken, and a garden full of thyme and wild flowers that had produced it. On this occasion Coleridge spoke of Virgil's *Georgics*, but not well. I do not think he had much feeling for the classical or elegant.¹ It was in this room that we found a little worn-out copy of the *Seasons*, lying in a window-seat, on which Coleridge exclaimed, "That is true fame!" He said Thomson was a great poet, rather than a good one; his style was as meretricious as his thoughts were natural. He spoke of Cowper as the best modern poet. He said the

¹ He had no idea of pictures, of Claude or Raphael, and at this time I had as little as he. He sometimes gives a striking account at present of the Cartoons at Pisa by Buffamalco and others; of one in particular, where Death is seen in the air brandishing his scythe, and the great and mighty of the earth shudder at his approach, while the beggars and the wretched kneel to him as their deliverer. He would, of course, understand so broad and fine a moral as this at any time.

Lyrical Ballads were an experiment about to be tried by him and Wordsworth, to see how far the public taste would endure poetry written in a more natural and simple style than had hitherto been attempted; totally discarding the artifices of poetical diction, and making use only of such words as had probably been common in the most ordinary language since the days of Henry II. Some comparison was introduced between Shakespeare and Milton. He said "he hardly knew which to prefer. Shakespeare appeared to him a mere stripling in the art; he was as tall and as strong, with infinitely more activity than Milton, but he never appeared to have come to man's estate; or if he had, he would not have been a man but a monster." He spoke with contempt of Gray, and with intolerance of Pope. He did not like the versification of the latter. He observed that "the ears of these couplet writers might be charged with having short memories, that could not retain the harmony of whole passages." He thought little of Junius as a writer; he had a dislike of Dr. Johnson; and a much higher opinion of Burke as an orator and politician, than of Fox or Pitt. He, however, thought him very inferior in richness of style and imagery to some of our elder prose writers, particularly Jeremy Taylor. He liked Richardson, but not Fielding; nor could I get him to enter into the merits of *Caleb Williams*.¹ In short, he was profound and discriminating with respect to those authors whom he liked, and where he gave his judgement fair play; capricious, perverse, and prejudiced in his antipathies and distastes. We loitered on the "ribbed sea sands," in such talk as this a whole morning, and, I recollect, met with a curious seaweed, of which John Chester told us the country name! A fisherman gave Coleridge an account of a boy that had been drowned the day before, and that they had tried to save him at the risk of their own lives. He said "he did not know how it was that they ventured, but, Sir, we have a *nature*

¹ By William Godwin. *Things as they are, or the Adventures of Caleb Williams*. London, 1794, 12mo, 3 vols. — ED.

towards one another." This expression, Coleridge remarked to me, was a fine illustration of that theory of disinterestedness which I (in common with Butler) had adopted. I broached to him an argument of mine to prove that *likeness* was not mere association of ideas. I said that the mark in the sand put one in mind of a man's foot, not because it was part of a former impression of a man's foot (for it was quite new), but because it was like the shape of a man's foot. He assented to the justness of this distinction (which I have explained at length elsewhere, for the benefit of the curious) and John Chester listened; not from any interest in the subject, but because he was astonished that I should be able to suggest anything to Coleridge that he did not already know. We returned on the third morning, and Coleridge remarked the silent cottage-smoke curling up the valleys where, a few evenings before, we had seen the lights gleaming through the dark.

In a day or two after we arrived at Stowey, we set out, I on my return home, and he for Germany. It was a Sunday morning, and he was to preach that day for Dr. Toulmin of Taunton. I asked him if he had prepared anything for the occasion. He said he had not even thought of the text, but should as soon as we parted. I did not go to hear him — this was a fault — but we met in the evening at Bridgewater. The next day we had a long day's walk to Bristol, and sat down, I recollect, by a well-side on the road, to cool ourselves and satisfy our thirst, when Coleridge repeated to me some descriptive lines of his tragedy of *Remorse*; which I must say became his mouth and that occasion better than they, some years after, did Mr. Elliston's and the Drury-lane boards —

"Oh memory! shield me from the world's poor strife,
And give those scenes thine everlasting life."

I saw no more of him for a year or two, during which period he had been wandering in the Hartz Forest, in Germany; and his return was cometary, meteorous, unlike his setting out. It was not till some time after that I knew his friends Lamb and Southey.

The last always appears to me (as I first saw him) with a commonplace book under his arm, and the first with a *bon-mot* in his mouth. It was at Godwin's that I met him with Holcroft and Coleridge, where they were disputing fiercely which was the best — *Man as he was, or man as he is to be*. "Give me," says Lamb, "man as he is *not* to be." This saying was the beginning of a friendship between us, which I believe still continues. Enough of this for the present

"But there is matter for another rhyme,
And I to this may add a second tale."

WILLIAM HAZLITT.

CHRIST'S HOSPITAL FIVE-AND-THIRTY YEARS AGO

IN Mr. Lamb's "Works," published a year or two since, I find a magnificent eulogy on my old school, such as it was, or now appears to him to have been, between the years 1782 and 1789. It happens, very oddly, that my own standing at Christ's was nearly corresponding with his; and, with all gratitude to him for his enthusiasm for the cloisters, I think he has contrived to bring together whatever can be said in praise of them, dropping all the other side of the argument most ingeniously.

I remember L. at school; and can well recollect that he had some peculiar advantages, which I and others of his schoolfellows had not. His friends lived in town, and were near at hand; and he had the privilege of going to see them, almost as often as he wished, through some invidious distinction, which was denied to us. The present worthy sub-treasurer to the Inner Temple can explain how that happened. He had his tea and hot rolls in a morning, while we were battenning upon our quarter of a penny loaf — our *crug* — moistened with attenuated small beer, in wooden piggins, smacking of the pitched leathern jack it was poured from. Our Monday's milk porritch, blue and tasteless, and the pease soup

of Saturday, coarse and choking, were enriched for him with a slice of "extraordinary bread and butter," from the hot-loaf of the Temple. The Wednesday's mess of millet, somewhat less repugnant — (we had three banyan to four meat days in the week) — was endeared to his palate with a lump of double-refined, and a smack of ginger (to make it go down the more glibly) or the fragrant cinnamon. In lieu of our *half-pickled* Sundays, or *quite fresh* boiled beef on Thursdays (strong as *caro equina*), with detestable marigolds floating in the pail to poison the broth — our scanty mutton scrags on Fridays — and rather more savoury, but grudging, portions of the same flesh, rotten-roasted or rare, on the Tuesdays (the only dish which excited our appetites, and disappointed our stomachs, in almost equal proportion) — he had his hot plate of roast veal, or the more tempting griskin (exotics unknown to our palates), cooked in the paternal kitchen (a great thing), and brought him daily by his maid or aunt! I remember the good old relative (in whom love forbade pride) squatting down upon some odd stone in a by-nook of the cloisters, disclosing the viands (of higher regale than those cates which the ravens ministered to the Tishbite); and the contending passions of L. at the unfolding. There was love for the bringer; shame for the thing brought, and the manner of its bringing; sympathy for those who were too many to share in it; and, at top of all, hunger (eldest, strongest of the passions!) predominant, breaking down the stony fences of shame, and awkwardness, and a troubling over-consciousness.

I was a poor friendless boy. My parents, and those who should care for me were far away. Those few acquaintances of theirs, which they could reckon upon being kind to me in the great city, after a little forced notice, which they had the grace to take of me on my first arrival in town, soon grew tired of my holiday visits. They seemed to them to recur too often, though I thought them few enough; and, one after another, they all failed me, and I felt myself alone among six hundred playmates.

O the cruelty of separating a poor lad from his early homestead ! The yearnings which I used to have towards it in those unfledged years ! How, in my dreams, would my native town (far in the west) come back, with its church, and trees, and faces ! How I would wake weeping, and in the anguish of my heart exclaim upon sweet Calne in Wiltshire !

To this late hour of my life, I trace impressions left by the recollection of those friendless holidays. The long warm days of summer never return but they bring with them a gloom from the haunting memory of those *whole-day-leaves*, when, by some strange arrangement, we were turned out, for the livelong day, upon our own hands, whether we had friends to go to, or none. I remember those bathing excursions to the New-River, which L. recalls with such relish, better, I think, than he can — for he was a home-seeking lad, and did not much care for such water pastimes : — How merrily we would sally forth into the fields ; and strip under the first warmth of the sun ; and wanton like young dace in the streams ; getting us appetites for noon, which those of us that were penniless (our scanty morning crust long since exhausted) had not the means of allaying — while the cattle, and the birds, and the fishes, were at feed about us, and we had nothing to satisfy our cravings — the very beauty of the day, and the exercise of the pastime, and the sense of liberty, setting a keener edge upon them ! — How faint and languid finally, we would return, towards nightfall, to our desired morsel, half-rejoicing, half-reluctant, that the hours of our uneasy liberty had expired !

It was worse in the days of winter, to go prowling about the streets objectless — shivering at cold windows of print-shops, to extract a little amusement ; or haply, as a last resort, in the hope of a little novelty, to pay a fifty times repeated visit (where our individual faces should be as well known to the warden as those of his own charges) to the Lions in the Tower — to whose levee, by courtesy immemorial, we had a prescriptive title to admission.

L.'s governor (so we called the patron who presented us to the

foundation) lived in a manner under his paternal roof. Any complaint which he had to make was sure of being attended to. This was understood at Christ's, and was an effectual screen to him against the severity of masters, or worse tyranny of the monitors. The oppressions of these young brutes are heart-sickening to call to recollection. I have been called out of my bed, and *waked for the purpose*, in the coldest winter nights—and this not once, but night after night—in my shirt, to receive the discipline of a leathern thong, with eleven other sufferers, because it pleased my callow overseer, when there has been any talking heard after we were gone to bed, to make the six last beds in the dormitory, where the youngest children of us slept, answerable for an offence they neither dared to commit, nor had the power to hinder.—The same execrable tyranny drove the younger part of us from the fires, when our feet were perishing with snow; and under the cruelest penalties, forbade the indulgence of a drink of water, when we lay in sleepless summer nights, fevered with the season, and the day's sports.

There was one H——, who, I learned, in after days, was seen expiating some maturer offence in the hulks. (Do I flatter myself in fancying that this might be the planter of that name, who suffered—at Nevis, I think, or St. Kits—some few years since? My friend Tobin was the benevolent instrument of bringing him to the gallows.) This petty Nero actually branded a boy, who had offended him, with a red hot iron; and nearly starved forty of us, with exacting contributions, to the one half of our bread, to pamper a young ass, which, incredible as it may seem, with the connivance of the nurse's daughter (a young flame of his) he had contrived to smuggle in, and keep upon the leads of the *ward*, as they called our dormitories. This game went on for better than a week, till the foolish beast, not able to fare well but he must cry roast meat—happier than Caligula's minion, could he have kept his own counsel—but, foolisher, alas! than any of his species in the fables—waxing fat, and kicking, in the fullness of bread, one unlucky minute would needs proclaim his good fortune to the world below;

and, laying out his simple throat, blew such a ram's horn blast, as (toppling down the walls of his own Jericho) set concealment any longer at defiance. The client was dismissed, with certain attentions, to Smithfield; but I never understood that the patron underwent any censure on the occasion. This was in the stewardship of L.'s admired Perry.

Under the same *facile* administration, can L. have forgotten the cool impunity with which the nurses used to carry away openly, in open platters, for their own tables, one out of two of every hot joint, which the careful matron had been seeing scrupulously weighed out for our dinners? These things were daily practised in that magnificent apartment, which L. (grown connoisseur since, we presume) praises so highly for the grand paintings "by Verrio, and others," with which it is "hung round and adorned." But the sight of sleek well-fed blue-coat boys in pictures was, at that time, I believe, little consolatory to him, or us, the living ones, who saw the better part of our provisions carried away before our faces by harpies; and ourselves reduced (with the Trojan in the hall of Dido)

"To feed our mind with idle portraiture."

L. has recorded the repugnance of the school to *gags*, or the fat of fresh beef boiled; and sets it down to some superstition. But these unctuous morsels were never grateful to young palates (children are universally fat haters), and in strong, coarse, boiled meats, *unsalted*, are detestable. A *gag-eater* in our time was equivalent to a *ghoul*, and held in equal detestation. — suffered under the imputation.

" — 'Twas said,
He ate strange flesh."

He was observed, after dinner, carefully to gather up the remnants left at his table (not many, nor very choice fragments, you may credit me) — and, in an especial manner, these disreputable morsels, which he would convey away, and secretly stow in the settle that stood at his bedside. None saw when he ate them.

It was rumoured that he privately devoured them in the night. He was watched, but no traces of such midnight practices were discoverable. Some reported, that, on leave-days, he had been seen to carry out of the bounds a large blue check handkerchief, full of something. This then must be the accursed thing. Conjecture next was at work to imagine how he could dispose of it. Some said he sold it to the beggars. This belief generally prevailed. He went about moping. None spake to him. No one would play with him. He was excommunicated; put out of the pale of the school. He was too powerful a boy to be beaten, but he underwent every mode of that negative punishment, which is more grievous than many stripes. Still he persevered. At length he was observed by two of his schoolfellows, who were determined to get at the secret, and had traced him one leave-day for that purpose, to enter a large worn-out building, such as there exist specimens of in Chancery Lane, which are let out to various scales of pauperism with open door, and a common staircase. After him they silently slunk in, and followed by stealth up four flights, and saw him tap at a poor wicket, which was opened by an aged woman, meanly clad. Suspicion was now ripened into certainty. The informers had secured their victim. They had him in their toils. Accusation was formally preferred, and retribution most signal was looked for. Mr. Hathaway, the then steward (for this happened a little after my time), with that patient sagacity which tempered all his conduct, determined to investigate the matter, before he proceeded to sentence. The result was, that the supposed mendicants, the receivers or purchasers of the mysterious scraps, turned out to be the parents of —, an honest couple come to decay, — whom this seasonable supply had, in all probability, saved from mendicancy; and that this young stork, at the expense of his own good name, had all this while been only feeding the old birds! The governors on this occasion, much to their honour, voted a present relief to the family of —, and presented him with a silver medal. The lesson which the steward read upon RASH JUDGEMENT,

on the occasion of publicly delivering the medal to —, I believe, would not be lost upon his auditory. I had left school then, but I well remember —. He was a tall, shambling youth, with a cast in his eye, not at all calculated to conciliate hostile prejudices. I have since seen him carrying a baker's basket. I think I heard he did not do quite so well by himself as he had done by the old folks.

I was a hypochondriac lad; and the sight of a boy in fetters, upon the day of my first putting on the blue clothes, was not exactly fitted to assuage the natural terrors of initiation. I was of tender years, barely turned of seven; and had only read of such things in books, or seen them but in dreams. I was told he had *run away*. This was the punishment for the first offence. — As a novice I was soon after taken to see the dungeons. These were little, square, Bedlam cells, where a boy could just lie at his length upon straw and a blanket — a mattress, I think, was afterwards substituted — with a peep of light, let in askance, from a prison-orifice at top, barely enough to read by. Here the poor boy was locked in by himself all day, without sight of any but the porter who brought him his bread and water — who *might not speak to him*; — or of the beadle, who came twice a week to call him out to receive his periodical chastisement, which was almost welcome, because it separated him for a brief interval from solitude: and here he was shut up by himself *of nights*, out of the reach of any sound, to suffer whatever horrors the weak nerves, and superstition incident to his time of life, might subject him to. This was the penalty for the second offence. — Wouldst thou like, reader, to see what became of him in the next degree?

The culprit, who had been a third time an offender, and whose expulsion was at this time deemed irreversible, was brought forth, as at some solemn *auto da fẽ*, arrayed in uncouth and most appalling attire — all trace of his late "watchet weeds" carefully effaced, he was exposed in a jacket, resembling those which London lamplighters formerly delighted in, with a cap of the same.

The effect of this divestiture was such as the ingenious devisers of it could have anticipated. With his pale and frightened features, it was as if some of those disfigurements in Dante had seized upon him. In this disguise he was brought into the hall (*L.'s favourite state-room*), where awaited him the whole number of his schoolfellows, whose joint lessons and sports he was thenceforth to share no more; the awful presence of the steward, to be seen for the last time; of the executioner beadle, clad in his state robe for the occasion; and of two faces more, of direr import, because never but in these extremities visible. These were governors; two of whom, by choice, or charter, were always accustomed to officiate at these *Ultima Supplicia*; not to mitigate (so at least we understood it), but to enforce the uttermost stripe. Old Bamber Gascoigne, and Peter Aubert, I remember, were colleagues on one occasion, when the beadle turning rather pale, a glass of brandy was ordered to prepare him for the mysteries. The scourging was, after the old Roman fashion, long and stately. The lictor accompanied the criminal quite round the hall. We were generally too faint with attending to the previous disgusting circumstances, to make accurate report with our eyes of the degree of corporal suffering inflicted. Report, of course, gave out the back knotty and livid. After scourging, he was made over, in his *San Benito*, to his friends, if he had any (but commonly such poor runagates were friendless), or to his parish officer, who, to enhance the effect of the scene, had his station allotted to him on the outside of the hall gate.

These solemn pageantries were not played off so often as to spoil the general mirth of the community. We had plenty of exercise and recreation *after* school hours; and, for myself, I must confess, that I was never happier than *in* them. The Upper and Lower Grammar Schools were held in the same room; and an imaginary line only divided their bounds. Their character was as different as that of the inhabitants on the two sides of the Pyrenees. The Rev. James Boyer was the Upper Master: but the Rev. Matthew Field

presided over that portion of the apartment, of which I had the good fortune to be a member. We lived a life as careless as birds. We talked and did just what we pleased, and nobody molested us. We carried an accidence, or a grammar, for form ; but, for any trouble it gave us, we might take two years in getting through the verbs deponent, and another two in forgetting all that we had learned about them. There was now and then the formality of saying a lesson, but if you had not learned it, a brush across the shoulders (just enough to disturb a fly) was the sole remonstrance. Field never used the rod ; and in truth he wielded the cane with no great good will — holding it “like a dancer.” It looked in his hands rather like an emblem than an instrument of authority ; and an emblem, too, he was ashamed of. He was a good easy man, that did not care to ruffle his own peace, nor perhaps set any great consideration upon the value of juvenile time. He came among us, now and then, but often staid away whole days from us ; and when he came, it made no difference to us — he had his private room to retire to, the short time he staid, to be out of the sound of our noise. Our mirth and uproar went on. We had classics of our own, without being beholden to “insolent Greece or haughty Rome,” that passed current among us — Peter Wilkins — the Adventures of the Hon. Capt. Robert Boyle — the Fortunate Blue Coat Boy — and the like. Or we cultivated a turn for mechanic or scientific operations ; making little sun-dials of paper ; or weaving those ingenious parentheses, called *cat-cradles* ; or making dry peas to dance upon the end of a tin pipe ; or studying the art military over that laudable game “French and English,” and a hundred other such devices to pass away the time — mixing the useful with the agreeable — as would have made the souls of Rousseau and John Locke chuckle to have seen us.

Matthew Field belonged to that class of modest divines who affect to mix in equal proportion the *gentleman*, the *scholar*, and the *Christian* ; but, I know not how, the first ingredient is generally found to be the predominating dose in the composition. He was

engaged in gay parties, or with his courtly bow at some episcopal levée, when he should have been attending upon us. He had for many years the classical charge of a hundred children, during the four or five first years of their education ; and his very highest form seldom proceeded further than two or three of the introductory fables of Phædrus. How things were suffered to go on thus, I cannot guess. Boyer, who was the proper person to have remedied these abuses, always affected, perhaps felt, a delicacy in interfering in a province not strictly his own. I have not been without my suspicions, that he was not altogether displeased at the contrast we presented to his end of the school. We were a sort of Helots to his young Spartans. He would sometimes, with ironic deference, send to borrow a rod of the Under Master, and then, with Sardonic grin, observe to one of his upper boys, "how neat and fresh the twigs looked." While his pale students were battering their brains over Xenophon and Plato, with a silence as deep as that enjoined by the Samite, we were enjoying ourselves at our ease in our little Goshen. We saw a little into the secrets of his discipline, and the prospect did but the more reconcile us to our lot. His thunders rolled innocuous for us ; his storms came near, but never touched us ; contrary to Gideon's miracle, while all around were drenched, our fleece was dry. His boys turned out the better scholars ? we, I suspect, have the advantage in temper. His pupils cannot speak of him without something of terror allaying their gratitude ; the remembrance of Field comes back with all the soothing images of indolence, and summer slumbers, and work like play, and innocent idleness, and Elysian exemptions, and life itself a "playing holiday."

Though sufficiently removed from the jurisdiction of Boyer, we were near enough (as I have said) to understand a little of his system. We occasionally heard sounds of the *Ululantes*, and caught glances of Tartarus. B. was a rabid pedant. His English style was cramped to barbarism. His Easter anthems (for his duty obliged him to those periodical flights) were grating as scrannel pipes.—He would laugh, ay, and heartily, but then it must be at Flacous's

quibble about *Rex*— or at the *tristis severitas in vultu*, or *inspicere in patinas*, of Terence— thin jests, which at their first broaching could hardly have had *vis* enough to move a Roman muscle. — He had two wigs, both pedantic, but of different omen. The one serene, smiling, fresh powdered, betokening a mild day. The other, an old discoloured, unkempt, angry caxon, denoting frequent and bloody execution. Woe to the school, when he made his morning appearance in his *passy*, or *passionate wig*. No comet expounded surer.— J. B. had a heavy hand. I have known him double his knotty fist at a poor trembling child (the maternal milk hardly dry upon its lips) with a “Sirrah, do you presume to set your wits at me?”— Nothing was more common than to see him make a headlong entry into the schoolroom, from his inner recess, or library, and, with turbulent eye, singling out a lad, roar out, “Od’s my life, sirrah,” (his favourite adjuration) “I have a great mind to whip you,”— then, with as sudden a retracting impulse, fling back into his lair— and, after a cooling lapse of some minutes (during which all but the culprit had totally forgotten the context), drive headlong out again, piecing out his imperfect sense, as if it had been some Devil’s Litany, with the expletory yell— “*and I WILL too.*” — In his gentler moods, when the *ravidus furor* was assuaged, he had resort to an ingenious method, peculiar, for what I have heard, to himself, of whipping the boy, and reading the Debates, at the same time; a paragraph, and a lash between; which in those times, when parliamentary oratory was most at a height and flourishing in these realms, was not calculated to impress the patient with a veneration for the diffuser graces of rhetoric.

Once, and but once, the uplifted rod was known to fall ineffectual from his hand— when droll squinting W— having been caught putting the inside of the master’s desk to a use for which the architect had clearly not designed it, to justify himself, with great simplicity averred, that *he did not know that the thing had been forewarned*. This exquisite irrecognition of any law antecedent to the *oral* or *declaratory*, struck so irresistibly upon the fancy of

all who heard it (the pedagogue himself not excepted) that remission was unavoidable.

L. has given credit to B.'s great merits as an instructor. Coleridge, in his literary life, has pronounced a more intelligible and ample encomium on them. The author of the *Country Spectator* doubts not to compare him with the ablest teachers of antiquity. Perhaps we cannot dismiss him better than with the pious ejaculation of C.—when he heard that his old master was on his death-bed—“Poor J. B. !—may all his faults be forgiven ; and may he be wafted to bliss by little cherub-boys, all head and wings, with no *bottoms* to reproach his sublunary infirmities.”

Under him were many good and sound scholars bred.—First Grecian of my time was Lancelot Pepys Stevens, kindest of boys and men, since Co-grammar-master (and inseparable companion) with Dr. T——e. What an edifying spectacle did this brace of friends present to those who remembered the anti-socialities of their predecessors!—You never met the one by chance in the street without a wonder, which was quickly dissipated by the almost immediate subappearance of the other. Generally arm in arm, these kindly coadjutors lightened for each other the toilsome duties of their profession, and when, in advanced age, one found it convenient to retire, the other was not long in discovering that it suited him to lay down the fasces also. Oh, it is pleasant, as it is rare, to find the same arm linked in yours at forty, which at thirteen helped it to turn over the *Cicero De Amicitia*, or some tale of Antique Friendship, which the young heart even then was burning to anticipate!—Co-Grecian with S. was Th——, who has since executed with ability various diplomatic functions at the Northern courts. Th—— was a tall, dark, saturnine youth, sparing of speech, with raven locks.—Thomas Fanshaw Middleton followed him (now Bishop of Calcutta), a scholar and a gentleman in his teens. He has the reputation of an excellent critic ; and is author (besides the *Country Spectator*) of a Treatise on the Greek Article, against Sharpe.—M. is said to bear his mitre high in India,

where the *regni novitas* (I dare say) sufficiently justifies the bearing. A humility quite as primitive as that of Jewel or Hooker might not be exactly fitted to impress the minds of those Anglo-Asiatic diocesans with a reverence for home institutions, and the church which those fathers watered. The manners of M. at school, though firm, were mild, and unassuming. — Next to M. (if not senior to him) was Richards, author of the *Aboriginal Britons*, the most spirited of the Oxford Prize Poems; a pale, studious Grecian. — Then followed poor S——, ill-fated M——! of these the Muse is silent.

“ Finding some of Edward's race
Unhappy, pass their annals by.”

Come back into memory, like as thou wert in the day-spring of thy fancies, with hope like a fiery column before thee — the dark pillar not yet turned — Samuel Taylor Coleridge — Logician, Metaphysician, Bard! — How have I seen the casual passer through the Cloisters stand still, entranced with admiration (while he weighed the disproportion between the *speech* and the *garb* of the young *Mirandula*), to hear thee unfold, in thy deep and sweet intonations the mysteries of Jamblichus, or Plotinus (for even in those years thou waxedst not pale at such philosophic draughts), or reciting Homer in his Greek, or Pindar — while the walls of the old Grey Friars re-echoed to the accents of the *inspired charity-boy!* Many were the “wit-combats” (to dally awhile with the words of old Fuller), between him and C. V. Le G——, “which two I behold like a Spanish great galleon, and an English man-of-war; Master Coleridge, like the former, was built far higher in learning, solid, but slow in his performances. C. V. L., with the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about and take advantage of all winds, by the quickness of his wit and invention.”

Nor shalt thou, their compeer, be quickly forgotten, Allen, with the cordial smile, and still more cordial laugh, with which thou wert wont to make the old Cloisters shake, in thy cognition of

some poignant jest of theirs ; or the anticipation of some more material, and peradventure, practical, one of thine own. Extinct are those smiles, with that beautiful countenance, with which (for thou wert the *Nireus formosus* of the school), in the days of thy maturer waggery, thou didst disarm the wrath of infuriated town-damsel, who, incensed by provoking pinch, turning tigress-like round, suddenly converted by thy angel look, exchanged the half-formed terrible "*bl—*," for a gentler greeting — "*bless thy handsome face!*"

Next follow two, who ought to be now alive, and the friends of Elia — the junior Le G — and F — ; who impelled, the former by a roving temper, the latter by too quick a sense of neglect — ill capable of enduring the slights poor Sizars are sometimes subject to in our seats of learning — exchanged their Alma Mater for the camp ; perishing, one by climate, and one on the plains of Salamanca : — Le G —, sanguine, volatile, sweet-natured ; F —, dogged, faithful, anticipative of insult, warm-hearted, with something of the old Roman height about him.

Fine, frank-hearted Fr —, the present master of Hertford, with Marmaduke T —, mildest of Missionaries — and both my good friends still — close the catalogue of Grecians in my time.

CHARLES LAMB.

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