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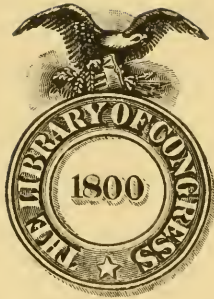
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ANGEL MARINER

COLLEGE



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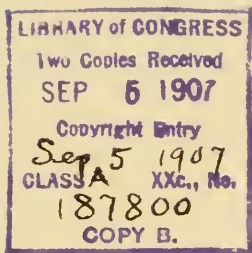
THE RIME OF
THE ANCIENT MARINER
CHRISTABEL
AND OTHER POEMS

BY
SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY
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PREFACE

THIS volume of selections from the poems of Coleridge has been prepared with the purpose of giving to students a full and profitable acquaintance with the poet's work and place in literature. As a "college entrance requirement," the colleges ask only for one poem, the *Ancient Mariner*, a selection that is unfair to the student as well as to the poet, since the probability is strong that he will never reach Coleridge again in his student days, and the poet will remain to him for years, perhaps for life, a poet of one poem. This misrepresentative method of studying literature in isolated fragments is much to be deprecated.

In the introduction and notes, material is furnished for a complete working equipment for student and teacher, so that within the limits of this volume a satisfactory treatment of the poet may be accomplished; but as time permits, additional material should be obtained from outside sources, a guide to which will be found in the bibliographical list.

The text of the poems is that of the standard edition edited by J. Dykes Campbell, which conforms essentially to that of the edition of 1829, the last to receive the personal correction of the poet. For any thorough study of Coleridge's life and works Campbell's biography and textual annotations are now indispensable, and every editor must give to him the most cordial acknowledgment of large obligations.

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

Merrill's English Texts

THIS series of books will include in complete editions those masterpieces of English Literature that are best adapted for the use of schools and colleges. The editors of the several volumes will be chosen for their special qualifications in connection with the texts to be issued under their individual supervision, but familiarity with the practical needs of the classroom, no less than sound scholarship, will characterize the editing of every book in the series.

In connection with each text, a critical and historical introduction, including a sketch of the life of the author and his relation to the thought of his time, critical opinions of the work in question chosen from the great body of English criticism, and, where possible, a portrait of the author, will be given. Ample explanatory notes of such passages in the text as call for special attention will be supplied, but irrelevant annotation and explanations of the obvious will be rigidly excluded.

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	3
INTRODUCTION:	
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH	7
COLERIDGE AS A TALKER	20
COLERIDGE AS A POET	22
THE ANCIENT MARINER	24
CRITICISM OF THE ANCIENT MARINER	30
CHRISTABEL	32
CRITICISM OF CHRISTABEL	35
KUBLA KHAN	37
DEJECTION: AN ODE	39
FRANCE: AN ODE	40
TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH	42
BIBLIOGRAPHY	43
COLERIDGE'S POEMS:	
THE ANCIENT MARINER	47
CHRISTABEL	74
KUBLA KHAN	99
THE PAINS OF SLEEP	101
DEJECTION: AN ODE	103

COLERIDGE'S POEMS — <i>Continued</i> :	PAGE
YOUTH AND AGE	108
ANSWER TO A CHILD'S QUESTION	110
SONNET: TO THE RIVER OTTER	111
FRANCE: AN ODE	111
NOTES:	
THE ANCIENT MARINER	117
CHRISTABEL	138
KUBLA KHAN	143
THE PAINS OF SLEEP	144
DEJECTION: AN ODE	145
YOUTH AND AGE	148
ANSWER TO A CHILD'S QUESTION	149
SONNET: TO THE RIVER OTTER	149
FRANCE: AN ODE	150

INTRODUCTION

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

AT Ottery St. Mary, in beautiful Devonshire, Samuel Taylor Coleridge was born, October 21, 1772. The father, vicar of the parish and head master of the Free Grammar School, was an amiable eccentric, with some scholarly knowledge and much innocent pedantry; "a perfect Parson Adams," the poet says, "in learning, good-heartedness, absentness of mind, and excessive ignorance of the world." The mother was a good practical housewife, with a fine scorn for "your harpsichord ladies," and a strong ambition to have her sons become gentlemen. All told, there were thirteen children in the family, of whom the poet was the youngest. At three years of age he attended a dame's school and at six he entered his father's school, where he "soon outstripped" all of his age.

As a lad, Coleridge was precocious and strange, showing early symptoms of the illustrious infirmities of later years. He cared little for the ordinary sports of boys, and naturally was tormented by them into isolation. Reading and dreaming were his chief occupations and joys. "At six years of age," he says, "I remember to have read *Belisarius*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and *Philip Quarll*; and then I found the *Arabian Nights' Entertainments*, one tale of which made so deep an impression on me . . . that I was haunted by specters whenever I was in the dark. . . . My father found out the effect which these books had produced, and burned them. So I became a dreamer, and acquired an indisposition to all bodily activity . . . and before I was eight years old I was *a character*."

In the boy's ninth year, the father died, and the next year the

little dreamer was sent to the famous charity school, Christ's Hospital, in London, which became his home for nine years. In *Frost at Midnight*, he says:

"I was reared
In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,
And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars."

Among the seven hundred "blue-coat" boys the youthful exile found a sympathetic companion in Charles Lamb, who became his life-long friend. The imagination loves to picture these two frail boys, marked for immortal fame, wandering about the streets of London, as we to-day see the boys of Christ's, in that antique garb — a long, blue coat, reaching nearly to the heels and buttoned straight to the neck in front, with yellow stockings, low shoes, a white stock, and bare head. Christ's was a school of stern experiences in those days, hard fare, hard lessons, and hard floggings being the law of the boys' daily life. But the headmaster, the Rev. James Boyer, in spite of his Rhadamanthine methods, instructed the boys thoroughly well in Latin and Greek, and in the elements of manliness. "Thank Heaven," says Coleridge, "I was flogged instead of being flattered."

No severity of discipline could keep the visionary boy out of that world of romance and ideality which he had early created for himself. Once he was rushing along the street swinging his arms as if swimming, and, happening to hit a stranger's pocket with his hand, he was seized as a thief. Upon explaining that he thought himself Leander swimming the Hellespont, the man gave him a subscription to a circulating library. This providential supply of reading he rapidly devoured, "running all risks in skulking out to get the two volumes which I was entitled to have daily." His vagaries were not always so happy in their final issue. At one time, thinking himself an infidel, to escape being a minister he planned to run away and become apprenticed to a shoemaker; but master Boyer intervened with his characteristic application of common sense. "So, sirrah, you

are an infidel, are you? Then I'll flog your infidelity out of you," and a summary conversion was effected.

Coleridge's reading during these school years was prodigious not only in its quantity and variety, but also in its profundity. A brother came to London to study in the hospitals, and so he "became wild to be apprenticed to a surgeon," he says; "English, Latin, yea, Greek books of medicine read I incessantly." A Latin medical dictionary he learned "nearly by heart." But this interest soon gave way to "a rage for metaphysics," and he read deeply in the Neo-Platonists and Church Fathers. "At a very premature age, even before my fifteenth year, I had bewildered myself in metaphysics, and in theological controversy." For a time history, even poetry, had no interest for him. His greatest delight was to meet "any passenger, especially if he were dressed in black," with whom he could bring about a discussion of his favorite theme, "providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate." It was of Coleridge at about this time that Lamb's famous sketch portrait was drawn. "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!*"

From "this preposterous pursuit" of metaphysics, as he afterwards called it, Coleridge was reconverted to the pursuit of beauty and things of the imagination through a rather surprising agency. He read the *Sonnets* of William Lisle Bowles and discovered a new heaven and a new earth in poetry. With "impetuous zeal," he labored to win other appreciative readers, and with his own pen made forty copies of the sonnets as presents

for his friends. Four years later, Wordsworth made the same discovery, and kept his brother waiting on Westminster Bridge while he read the volume through. This modest little collection of twenty-one sonnets seems to-day innocent enough of any such moving power, and one wonders what would have been the effect if Coleridge had first come upon Cowper and Burns. What surprised and transported him in these sonnets was the revelation of poetic simplicity and sincerity, and love of natural beauty, qualities strangely different from the placid conventionalisms of eighteenth-century poetry; and so for the time being the pensive Bowles became to Coleridge "the god of my idolatry."

In 1791 Coleridge entered Jesus College, Cambridge. Of his university life few details have survived. He won a gold medal for a Sapphic Ode, and just missed success in a close contest for a prize scholarship. A fellow student described his reading as "desultory and capricious." His scholarship apparently made no real impression except through the remarkable conversational powers for which he was distinguished throughout his life. Students flocked to his rooms to hear him discourse upon the exciting political issues of the time, when he would recite "whole passages verbatim" from the latest political pamphlets. Near the end of his second year occurred the most conspicuous episode of which we have any knowledge. Suddenly he went up to London and enlisted in the King's Light Dragoons, under the name of Silas Tomkyn Comberbach (S.T.C.) — an appropriate name, he afterwards suggested, as he presented but a sorry appearance upon a horse's back. Four months of soldiering was quite enough, and he managed to reveal his situation to friends, who procured his release and return to the university. This singular freak he attributed to debts and disappointment in love, but the real explanation is found in a constitutional instability of purpose, a tendency to pursue the fresh suggestions of impulse, new schemes of alluring colors, *ignes fatui*, that led him a deplorable race with the stern realities of life. It is not surprising, therefore, that a few months after the military ad-

venture he left the university altogether, decoyed by a new appeal to his restless and romantic temperament.

While visiting a friend in Oxford, he met Robert Southey, a young enthusiast like himself, filled with the radicalism and democracy of the French Revolution. A friendship was at once established, a partnership tragedy was written, *The Fall of Robespierre*, which Coleridge published at Cambridge; and out of a kinship of ideals was swiftly evolved the utopian scheme of Pantisocracy, a state of individual and social perfection which was to be realized in a sort of communal paradise, established on the banks of the Susquehanna. For a time Pantisocracy was made famous in university circles, especially through the eloquence of Coleridge, and other idealists were enlisted in the project; but the very material consideration of the money required to emigrate to America was finally reached, and upon this rock the beautiful scheme went to pieces; not, however, until Coleridge's university career had been wrecked.

Coleridge now entered upon practical life, with a most unpractical grasp upon its responsibilities. Pantisocracy with its rose-colored idealism and inherent elements of disaster, was symbolical of his management of all of life's material problems. He began with a course of lectures, in Bristol, upon the burning question of liberty, which he called *Consciones ad Populum*. In October, 1795, in Chatterton's church of St. Mary Redcliffe, he was married to Miss Sara Fricker, whose sister Edith, a month later, became the wife of his friend Southey. The young couple settled at Clevedon, in a "pretty cot," over which "thick jasmines twined," where they could hear —

"At silent noon, and eve, and early morn,
The sea's faint murmur."

The happiness of this first home is recorded in *The Eolian Harp* and *Reflections on having left a Place of Retirement*.

A generous publisher of Bristol, Joseph Cottle, offered Coleridge a guinea and a half for every hundred lines of poetry he would write. Upon this insubstantial vision of golden harvests

as a basis, he set up his domestic establishment. In 1797 he published his first volume of poetry, entitled *Poems on Various Subjects*, including in the volume three sonnets by his friend Lamb. He started a weekly magazine, called *The Watchman*, which came to an impecunious end with the tenth number. Very soon he proved — to his friends, if not to himself — how precarious is literature as a trade to live by, especially when carried on by a genius. He wrote poems and book-reviews for the magazines, planned great works which came to nothing, preached in Unitarian chapels, but without pay; he received gifts and loans from friends; he took into his family as a boarder and pupil, Charles Lloyd, a wealthy young man of literary ambition, who became one of the “Lakers.” But his finances became increasingly chaotic, and in deep distress he writes, “my anxieties eat me up.”

A small cottage at Nether Stowey, provided by his friend, Thomas Poole, into which he moved in 1797, seemed to promise a happy remedy for all his ills. Here he will become a farmer, “and there can be no shadow of a doubt that an acre and a half of land, divided properly, and managed properly, will maintain a small family in everything but clothes and rent.” He will give up meat and strong liquors, both of which are “perceptibly” injurious. “Sixteen shillings,” he estimates, will “cover all the weekly expenses.” To a friend who suggested the loneliness of so remote a place he replied: “I shall have six companions: my Sara, my babe, my own shaping and disquisitive mind, my books, my beloved friend, Thomas Poole, and lastly, Nature looking at me with a thousand looks of beauty, and speaking to me in a thousand melodies of love.” And literature, “though I shall never abandon it, will always be a secondary object with me. My poetic vanity and my political *furor* have been exhaled; and I would rather be an expert, self-maintaining gardener than a Milton, if I could not unite both.”

It is worth while to dwell at some length upon this bucolic dream, for in its fragmentary realization Coleridge came nearer to peace and happiness than was ever his fortune again. Soon

after he was settled at Stowey, the most important event of his life occurred; at Racedown he met Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy, and mutual admiration ripened quickly into a friendship that linked together forever the names of these two poets. In a few weeks Wordsworth and his sister removed to Alfoxden, a pleasant country house near the sea, three miles from Stowey, their "principal inducement being," as Dorothy wrote, "Coleridge's society." For about a year the two poets were together almost daily; both were great walkers, and the Quantock hills echoed in all directions their high talk of poetry and the poetic art; and in those delightful rambles a new age of English poetry began. A literary partnership was formed and the epoch-making volume of *Lyrical Ballads* was published in September, 1798.

That Coleridge received more from this friendship than Wordsworth, there can be no doubt. From Wordsworth's lofty and steadfast purposes his emotional and receptive nature absorbed quickly the influence needed to stimulate and concentrate his best creative energies. Indeed, it is safe to say that without this influence Coleridge would have remained the second-rate poet of vagrant thought and voluminous expression found in his early writing. The year 1797-8, the period of this association, is called Coleridge's *annus mirabilis*, the wonderful year; for in this brief period he wrote essentially all the poetry upon which his fame as a poet rests, the *Ancient Mariner*, the first part of *Christabel*, the *Ode to France*, *Kubla Khan*, *Frost at Midnight*, *Fears in Solitude*, and *The Nightingale*.

About this time Coleridge received an annuity of £150 from the Wedgwood brothers, sons of the famous potter; the only condition of the gift was that he should devote himself entirely to the highest intellectual pursuits. With this bountiful providence to attend him, he set out for Germany, accompanied by Wordsworth and his sister. Nine months were devoted to the mastering of the German language, literature, and philosophy, a feat which, through his omnivorous powers of acquisition, he approximately accomplished. The most immediate result of

this German excursion was a translation of Schiller's *Wallenstein*, of which Scott remarked: "Coleridge has made Schiller's *Wallenstein* far finer than he found it." Other results of these studies appeared later in the field of his philosophical speculations.

In the autumn of 1799, Coleridge and Wordsworth made a tour through the Lake Country, and in this visit the poetic fame of this region had its birth. They were especially charmed by the beauties of Grasmere, and here Wordsworth and his sister at once settled, in Dove Cottage, which to-day is a shrine of devoted pilgrimage. Six months later Coleridge found a home at Greta Hall, Keswick, twelve miles from Dove Cottage. The distance did not keep the friends apart long at a time, for to these peripatetic poets a brisk walk of twelve miles was only a stimulating exercise, when there was a reading and discussion of each other's poems in anticipation at the end. Interesting glimpses of these visits back and forth between Dove Cottage and Greta Hall, as between Stowey and Alfoxden, are given in Dorothy Wordsworth's faithful journals. In 1803 Southey with his family visited the Coleridges, and the visit was extended into a life-long residence. For ten years Greta Hall was nominally the home of Coleridge, and became permanently the home of his wife and children, who were finally left to the brotherly care of Southey.

The culmination of Coleridge's work as a poet was reached in 1802, when he published *Dejection: an Ode*, a pathetic confession of powers shattered and hopes unrealized. After this he wrote no more poetry of high merit. Henceforth, his life was a tragic decline, a losing fight against himself. The tragedies of life are the products of ignorance and weakness, but Nemesis accepts no excuses. Coleridge was not ignorant, and the knowledge of his weakness increased his suffering, while he paid the penalty of accumulated errors. He complains of the "God Pecunia," who compels him to write political articles for the *Morning Post* — Pegasus in the harness of a newspaper hack. But other and greater powers of evil than poverty were devastating

his life. The demon of ill health was his familiar companion, in league always with the demon of procrastination, furnishing plausible excuses for wasted time and evaded obligations. The unsympathetic Hazlitt said that "Coleridge was capable of doing anything which did not present itself as a duty." There was also the demon of domestic infelicity. His marriage was hasty and proved to be "most ill-starred." But possibly there could be only incompatibility between a practical-minded wife, devoted to her children, and a husband disposed to substitute philosophical speculations for the substantial necessities of the household. He complained that she did not understand his philosophy, and she complained that he did not understand his duty to his children, and both were right. The solution was characteristic of his calamitous weakness; in 1810 he abandoned his home altogether.

There was another demon greater than all that presided over the majestic ruin of Coleridge's life, the demon of opium. From an early period he was a frequent sufferer from rheumatism, neuralgia, gout, and other ailments, partly inherited from the recklessness of youth. In 1797 he speaks of taking an opiate to alleviate pain, and by the year 1803 the opium habit had become established as a dissipation. In 1826, when he had measurably subdued the fiend, he wrote: "Alas! it is with a bitter smile, a laugh of gall and bitterness, that I recall this period of unsuspecting delusion, and how I first became aware of the maelstrom, the fatal whirlpool to which I was drawing, just when the current was beyond my strength to stem." De Quincey asserts, rather too positively, that opium "killed Coleridge as a poet." Certain it is that under its influence his poetic imagination seemed to be paralyzed, and an interest in metaphysical studies almost entirely supplanted the old poetic enthusiasm.

In 1804 Coleridge went to Malta for his health, and in about two years returned, "ill, penniless, and worse than homeless," he wrote to Wedgewood. He contributed to the London papers; started another magazine called *The Friend*, which failed like

The Watchman; gave lectures upon Shakspeare, the fragmentary notes and reports of which have made him famous as a critic; completed a tragedy, *Remorse*, which through the aid of Byron was accepted and successfully acted at Drury Lane Theater. In 1816 he published *Christabel*, which had long been lying in manuscript, and the next year he published the chief collection of his poems under the title *Sibylline Leaves*, "in allusion," he says, "to the fragmentary and wildly scattered state in which they had been long suffered to remain." During these years, 1804-1816, he was never long in one place, dodging in and out of London, appearing suddenly at one friend's house and then at another's, where a flying visit would often be prolonged into a residence of weeks or months. Naturally, he was always in financial distress, and his strenuous borrowing from friends in any but a poet and philosopher would be regarded as little better than begging. Old friends gradually fell away, through exhausted forbearance, but there were always new ones to pull him out of trouble. New acquaintances he impressed as the ideal genius, sadly unfortunate, frail of will and irresponsible, it might be, but brilliant and fascinating; so homes and hearts were readily opened to him. His active mind was constantly evolving great literary and philosophical projects that were never carried beyond the title page, such as this: "Logosophia, or On the Logos, Human and Divine, in Six Treatises." Publishers even sometimes advanced money on these mythical works. As early as his trip to Germany, he said accurately of his "waverings" of mind: "This is the disease of my mind — it is comprehensive in its conceptions and wastes itself in the contemplation of the many things which it might do." This "disease" had now been so increased by opium that his mind was capable of little else than metaphysical meanderings.

In 1816 Coleridge took heroic measures to overcome the opium habit, under which both health and mind were giving way. He put himself in the hands of a physician, and arranged for systematic treatment in the home of Mr. Gillman, at Highgate, just outside of London. Here he spent the remaining

years of his life, in comparative peace and happiness. Under the patient and loving care of Mr. and Mrs. Gillman, whom he described in his will as "his more than friends, the guardians of his health, happiness, and interests," he recovered in large measure from the effects of the "detested poison," and renewed with more system and efficiency his literary activity. He now published his most important prose works, the *Aids to Reflection*, a book of religious meditations that was once widely popular, and the *Biographia Literaria*, a work containing little biography, but much and important literary criticism, profound in the analysis and exposition of poetic principles. This book and the *Table Talk*, notes of conversations written down by his nephew and son-in-law, Henry Nelson Coleridge, are the only prose works of Coleridge that attract readers to-day.

During these last years, Coleridge wrote little poetry, but one fragment, composed in 1827 and entitled, *Work without Hope*, is of peculiar interest, being perhaps the saddest lines a poet ever wrote of himself. He contrasts the spring, awakening to new life and productive energy, with his own dead and decaying powers:

ALL Nature seems at work. Slugs leave their lair —
 The bees are stirring — birds are on the wing —
 And WINTER, slumbering in the open air,
 Wears on his smiling face a dream of Spring!
 And I, the while, the sole unbusy thing,
 Nor honey make, nor pair, nor build, nor sing.

Yet well I ken the banks where Amaranths blow,
 Have traced the fount whence streams of nectar flow.
 Bloom, O ye Amaranths! bloom for whom ye may,
 For me ye bloom not! Glide, rich streams away!
 With lips unbrightened, wreathless brow, I stroll:
 And would you learn the spells that drowse my soul?
 WORK WITHOUT HOPE draws nectar in a sieve,
 And HOPE without an object cannot live.

Coleridge died in 1834, and the body that had done him such "grievous wrong" was laid in Highgate Churchyard. Few even of his admiring friends understood how great a light had gone

out. When the news reached Wordsworth, he was deeply moved and spoke of Coleridge as "the most *wonderful* man that he had ever known." "His great and dear spirit haunts me," wrote Charles Lamb; "never saw I his likeness, nor probably the world can see again." There were three surviving children. Hartley, the oldest son, was a poet and essayist, gentle, lovable, and talented, but deprived of high achievement by intemperance. He spent his life in the Lake Country, near to Wordsworth, where his father had predicted he would "wander like a breeze." Derwent was a teacher, rector, and linguist, possessing something of his father's brilliant conversational gift. His daughter, Sarah, was distinguished for her intellectual acquirements, as well as for beauty and grace of personality. Her fine qualities are affectionately celebrated by Wordsworth in *The Triad*.

Coleridge's personal appearance has been described by many of his friends and contemporaries. The description of him by Dorothy Wordsworth as he was in the Stowey days is among the most celebrated of the word portraits. "He is a wonderful man," she writes in her journal. "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 little trifle. At first I thought him very plain, that is for about three minutes; he is pale, thin, has a wide mouth, thick lip, 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."

His appearance in the last days at Highgate is given in Carlyle's powerfully drawn sketch: "The good man, he was now getting old, towards sixty perhaps; and gave you the idea of a life that had been full of sufferings; a life heavy-laden, half-

vanquished, still swimming painfully in seas of manifold physical and other bewilderment. Brow and head were round, and of massive weight, but the face was flabby and irresolute. The deep eyes, of a light hazel, were as full of sorrow as of inspiration; confused pain looked wildly from them, as in a kind of mild astonishment. The whole figure and air, good and amiable otherwise, might be called flabby and irresolute; expressive of weakness under possibility of strength. He hung loosely on his limbs, with knees bent, and stooping attitude; in walking he rather shuffled than decisively stepped; and a lady once remarked, he never could fix which side of the garden-walk would suit him best, but continually shifted in cork-screw fashion, and kept trying both. A heavy-laden, high-aspiring and surely much-suffering man."

The character of Coleridge is easily misinterpreted, if the external facts of his personal history alone are considered. His great spirit, in spite of its incumbrances, was one of the strongest purifying and elevating influences of the nineteenth century. The clear stream of his poetry testifies to the crystal purity of the fountain head. Through noble sentiments, rational criticism, and the lofty reach of his philosophical thought he influenced and guided the finest minds of the century. He was the father of modern Shaksperian study, and laid the broad basis of modern criticism through sympathetic interpretation. He introduced German literature and philosophy into England, and sowed the seeds of transcendentalism, gathered from Kant and Schelling, which came to blossom and fruitage in the writings of Emerson. His *Aids to Reflection* and other religious and theological writings led to the Broad Church movement with which Frederick Maurice and Dean Stanley were identified. His poetry was a direct creative force; of the Romantic School he may justly be regarded as the founder; the fragmentary *Christabel*, which was read, recited, and admired some years before publication, was the model followed by Scott and Byron in their famous metrical romances and tales. The Preraphael movement of Rossetti and his friends of the "Brotherhood," which Theodore

Watts-Dunton has defined as "the renaissance of the spirit of wonder in poetry and art," was indebted directly to Coleridge for much of its initial impulse. Such briefly is the summary of the achievements of Coleridge as poet, critic, and "subtle-souled psychologist."

COLERIDGE AS A TALKER

AMONG his contemporaries, Coleridge's chief influence was exerted through his marvelous conversational power. "He distinguished himself," says Carlyle, "to all that ever heard him as the most surprising talker extant in this world." Through this perishable form of expression he loved best, and was best able fully, to translate himself. "I think, Charles, you never heard me preach," he once remarked to Lamb, who replied, "I never heard you do anything else." His lectures, according to all accounts, differed little from his ordinary talks, except in the number of the audiences. Highgate became famous as a resort for the eager-minded young men of the period, who listened reverently to the great sage's discourse, like disciples at the feet of a prophet. Among the more casual visitors was Emerson, who found the visit to be "rather a spectacle than a conversation." Upon the mention of Dr. Channing's name, "he burst into a declamation upon the folly and ignorance of Unitarianism." When, during a pause for breath, Emerson interposed that he himself had been born and bred a Unitarian, Coleridge replied, "'Yes, I supposed so,' and continued as before."

Of those who visited Highgate, Carlyle has left the most celebrated account of what was experienced there. "Coleridge sat on the brow of Highgate Hill, in those years, looking down on London and its smoke-tumult, like a sage escaped from the inanity of life's battle; attracting towards him the thoughts of innumerable brave souls still engaged there. His express contributions to poetry, philosophy, or any specific province of human literature or enlightenment, had been small and sadly intermittent; but he had, especially among young inquiring men, a higher than literary, a kind of prophetic or magician

character. He was thought to hold, he alone in England, the key of German and other Transcendentalisms; knew the sublime secret of believing by 'the reason' what 'the understanding' had been obliged to fling out as incredible. . . . A sublime man; who, alone in those dark days, had saved his crown of spiritual manhood; escaping from the black materialisms, and revolutionary deluges, with 'God, Freedom, Immortality' still his: a king of men. The practical intellects of the world did not much heed him, or carelessly reckoned him a metaphysical dreamer; but to the rising spirits of the young generation he had this dusky sublime character; and sat there as a kind of *Magus*, girt in mystery and enigma. . . . Nothing could be more copious than his talk; and furthermore it was always, virtually or literally, of the nature of a monologue; suffering no interruption, however reverent; hastily putting aside all foreign additions, annotations, or most ingenuous desires for elucidation, as well-meant superfluities which would never do. Besides, it was talk not flowing any whither like a river, but spreading every whither in inextricable currents and regurgitations like a lake or sea; terribly deficient in definite goal or aim, nay often in logical intelligibility; *what* you were to believe or do, on any earthly or heavenly thing, obstinately refusing to appear from it. So that, most times, you felt logically lost; swamped near to drowning in this tide of ingenious vocables, spreading out boundless as if to submerge the world."

John Sterling thus describes his first interview with Coleridge: "I was in his company about three hours; and of that time he spoke during two and three quarters. It would have been delightful to listen as attentively, and certainly easy for him to speak just as well, for the next forty-eight hours. On the whole, his conversation, or rather monologue, is by far the most interesting I ever heard or heard of. Dr. Johnson's talk, with which it is obvious to compare it, seems to me immeasurably inferior."

Charles Lamb gives a striking instance of Coleridge's power: "I dined yesterday in Parnassus, with Wordsworth, Coleridge,

Rogers, and Tom Moore — half the poetry of England constellated and clustered in Gloucester Place! It was a delightful evening! Coleridge was in his finest vein of talk — had all the talk; and let 'em talk as they will of the envy of poets, I am sure not one there but was content to be nothing but a listener. The Muses were dumb while Apollo lectured."

COLERIDGE AS A POET

"His best work is but little, but of its kind it is perfect and unique. For exquisite metrical movement and for imaginative fantasy, there is nothing in our language to be compared with *Christabel*, and *Kubla Khan*, and the *Ancient Mariner*. The little poem called *Love* is not so good, but it touches with great grace that with which all sympathize. All that he did excellently might be bound up in twenty pages, but it should be bound in pure gold." — *Stopford Brooke's Primer of English Literature*.

"Coleridge is the great Musician of the romantic school of English poetry. His practice is the exact antithesis of Wordsworth's theory that there is no essential difference between the language of poetry and the language of prose. In him metrical movement is all in all. He was the first to depart from the lofty severe iambic movement which had satisfied the feeling of the eighteenth century, and, by associating picturesque images and antique phrases in melodious and flowing meters, to set the imagination free in a world quite removed from actual experience. His invention exercised a profound influence upon the course of English verse-composition." — *Courthope's Liberal Movement in English Literature*.

"Even in the dilapidation of his powers, due chiefly, if you will, to his own unthrifty management of them, we might, making proper deductions, apply to him what Mark Antony says of the dead Cæsar:

‘He was the ruins of the noblest man
That ever lived in the tide of time.’

Whatever may have been his faults and weaknesses, he was the man of all his generation to whom we should most unhesitatingly allow the distinction of genius, that is, of one authentically possessed from time to time by some influence that made him better and greater than himself. If he lost himself too much in what Mr. Pater has admirably called ‘impassioned contemplation,’ he has at least left us such a legacy as only genius, and genius not always, can leave.” — *James Russell Lowell’s Literary and Political Addresses.*

“Coleridge is conspicuous, to a degree beyond any other writer between Spenser and Rossetti, for a delicate, voluptuous languor, a rich melancholy, and a pitying absorption without vanity in his own conditions and frailties, carried so far that the natural objects of his verse take the qualities of the human Coleridge upon themselves. In Wordsworth we find a purer, loftier note, a species of philosophical severity which is almost stoic, a freshness of atmosphere which contrasts with Coleridge’s opaline dream-haze, magnifying and distorting common things. Truth, sometimes pursued to the confines or past the confines of triviality, is Wordsworth’s first object, and he never stoops to self-pity, rarely to self-study. Each of these marvelous poets is pre-eminently master of the phrase that charms and intoxicates, the sequence of simple words so perfect that it seems at once inevitable and miraculous. Yet here also a very distinct difference may be defined between the charm of Wordsworth and the magic of Coleridge. The former is held more under the author’s control than the latter, and is less impulsive. It owes its impressiveness to a species of lofty candor which kindles at the discovery of some beautiful truth not seen before, and gives the full intensity of passion to its expression. The latter is a sort of Eolian harp (such as that with which he enlivened the street of Nether Stowey) over which the winds of emotion play, leaving the instrument often without a sound, or with none but

broken murmurs, yet sometimes dashing from its chords a melody, vague and transitory indeed, but of a most unearthly sweetness. Wordsworth was not a great metrist; he essayed comparatively few and easy forms, and succeeded best when he was at his simplest. Coleridge, on the other hand, was an innovator; his *Christabel* revolutionized English prosody and opened the door to a thousand experiments; in *Kubla Khan* and in some of the lyrics, Coleridge attained a splendor of verbal melody which places him near the summit of the English Parnassus." — *Edmund Gosse's Modern English Literature.*

THE ANCIENT MARINER

MODERN English poetry dates from the *Lyrical Ballads*, written in partnership by Wordsworth and Coleridge and published by Joseph Cottle, at Bristol, 1798. The young poets had been caught in the first whirlwind of the French Revolution, but had regained their footing, and now inaugurated a revolution in poetry. The little volume was as strange and radical a document as the new constitution of France. It was intended to be a protest against the mechanical and lifeless forms and stilted sentiments of eighteenth-century poetry, and an exposition of new sources of poetic truth and of more natural forms of expression. These purposes were explained in a brief preface, contributed by Wordsworth, which in an expanded form in subsequent editions became the basis of modern poetic criticism.

Two literary tendencies were prominent in the latter part of the eighteenth century, the return to nature for the inspiration and material of poetry, as in Cowper and Burns, and the revival of romanticism. Naturalism was already showing signs of weakness in becoming too natural, as in the dull matter-of-factness of Crabbe's poems; and romanticism was running into the wildest extravagance and absurdity in such tales as Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*, Mrs. Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho*, and "Monk" Lewis's *Tales of Terror and Wonder*. Naturalism was in need of more imagination, and romanticism was in need of more truth. In prose Scott rescued the romance from ruin, and

in poetry it was the work of Wordsworth and Coleridge, begun in the *Lyrical Ballads*, to give sanity and permanent power to both tendencies.

Fortunately we have an account of the origin of this adventurous little volume from each of the poets. Wordsworth tells the story as follows:

“In the autumn of 1797, Mr. 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 endeavored 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. . . . The 'Ancient Mariner' grew and grew till it became too important for our first object, 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."

Coleridge's account is given in Chapter XIV of the *Biographia Literaria* as follows:

"During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbors, 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 colors 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 naturally 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 endeavors 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 analo-

gous 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 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 volume contained twenty-three poems, nineteen of them written by Wordsworth. The four contributed by Coleridge were the *Ancient Mariner*, *The Foster-Mother's Tale*, *The Nightingale: a Conversational Poem*, and *The Dungeon*. Among Wordsworth's poems were illustrations of his best and his worst work. There were the *Lines Written Above Tintern Abbey*, *We are Seven*, *Expostulation and Reply*, and *The Tables Turned*; but there were also *Goody Blake* and *The Idiot Boy*, which furnished a deal of merriment for the critics. The volume opened with the *Ancient Mariner* and closed with *Tintern Abbey*. The publication was anonymous, with nothing to indicate that there were two authors. Before the book issued from the press the poets had set out for Germany, and they heard nothing of its fortune with the public for several months, except the cheering news from Mrs. Coleridge that “the *Lyrical Ballads* are not liked at all by any.”

The text of the *Ancient Mariner* was much changed by Coleridge in successive editions, portions being omitted and many passages being rewritten. The original title of the poem was *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere, in Seven Parts*. The feature of extreme archaism in words and phrases was over-done at first, and was modified throughout the poem, in the second

edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, 1800. The title was changed to *The Ancient Mariner, A Poet's Reverie*. The "Argument" was rewritten as follows:

"How a Ship having first sailed to the Equator, was driven by Storms to the cold Country towards the South Pole; how the Ancient Mariner, cruelly, and in contempt of the laws of hospitality, killed a Sea-bird; and how he was followed by many strange Judgments; and in what manner he came back to his own Country."

In the next two editions of the *Lyrical Ballads*, 1802 and 1805, the Argument was omitted. It appeared again in *Sibylline Leaves*, the edition of 1817, together with more changes in the text, the addition of the marginal gloss, and the motto from Burnet. These repeated alterations may suggest the poet's unstable mind, but in general they show a refinement and ripening of critical judgment. Many changes of the text are given in the notes of this edition as illustrations of improvements.

In response to the demand for "sources" of the poet's material, minute research has discovered a few hints, in addition to those mentioned by Wordsworth, which he may possibly have utilized. A quaint narrative published in 1633, Captain Thomas James's *Strange and Dangerous Voyage . . . in his intended Discovery of the Northwest Passage into the South Sea*, has some claim to honors of this kind. The extent of Coleridge's possible indebtedness to this book is shown in the notes. The idea of the angelic navigation of the ship is thought to have been suggested by a story of a shipwreck in the "Letter of Saint Paulinus to Macarius," found in La Bigne's *Magna Bibliotheca Veterum Patrum*, 1618, in which an old man is the sole survivor of the ship's crew, and the ship is navigated by "a crew of angels," and steered by the "Pilot of the World." It is quite possible that Coleridge had seen these strange narratives, for about that time he was "a literary cormorant," he says, "deep in all out of the way books, whether of the monkish times, or of the puritanical era." But all such remote hints do not affect the originality of the poem — of the poetry of the poem; they merely show how genius always

assimilates crude material and reproduces it in forms of beautiful art.

Ingenious and somewhat perverse efforts have been made to find in the *Ancient Mariner* some deep moral or subtle symbolical meaning. Some think they see in it an allegory, shadowing forth "the terrible discipline of culture, through which man must pass in order to reach self-consciousness and self-determination." An illustration of this method of interpretation may be found in the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, Vol. 14. But the matter is made clear enough by the statement of the simple moral at the end, and if this will not satisfy the searcher after profundity, we have Coleridge's own words for it that no deeper moral was intended. In *Table Talk* he says:

"Mrs. Barbauld once told me that she admired the *Ancient Mariner* very much, but that there were two faults in it, — it was improbable, and had no moral. As for the probability, I owned that that might admit some question; but as to the want of a moral, I told her that in my own judgment the poem had too much; and that the only, or chief, fault, if I might say so, was the obtrusion of the moral sentiment so openly on the reader as a principle or cause of action in a work of such pure imagination. It ought to have had no more moral than the *Arabian Nights* tale of the merchant's sitting down to eat dates by the side of a well, and throwing the shells aside, and lo! a genie starts up, and says he *must* kill the aforesaid merchant *because* one of the date-shells had, it seems, put out the eye of the genie's son."

The form of the *Ancient Mariner* is that of the ballad. Wordsworth says in his first preface that it "was professedly written in imitation of the *style*, as well as of the spirit of the elder poets." Coleridge did much more than imitate the old ballads. He made use of the typical and most effective features of balladry, such as the rapid movement, free interchange of metrical feet, repetition, alliteration, end rhyme and interlinear rhyme; but with the supreme artist's creative skill he worked these hackneyed elements into a new metrical structure that was quite his own and unique in poetry. He not only gave life to the old ballad, but gave to it a new life different from any that it had known

before, a life endowed with music, magic expression and spiritual power. The typical ballad stanza consists of four lines, the first and third having four feet in each and no rhyme, the second and fourth having three feet with rhyme. The measure is iambic, varied with anapestic substitutions. Such is the first stanza of the *Ancient Mariner*, which will scan thus:

∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ /
 It is an ancient mariner,
 ∪ ∪ / ∪ / ∪ /
 And he stoppeth one of three.
 ∪ ∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ ∪ /
 By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
 ∪ / ∪ / ∪ /
 Now wherefore stoppst thou me?

Coleridge used this stanza as a basis, modifying it in a variety of ways. He not only interchanged iambic and anapestic feet, but often substituted a trochee, as in ll. 29, 84, 119, 174. His use of interlinear rhyme is seen in such lines as 27, 31, 49, 53. This freedom was allowed in the older poetry, but in the eighteenth century it was an offense against the laws of poetry as understood in the school of Pope. Coleridge rebelled against the starched precision of the rhymed couplet and the tame uniformity of even the best verse of the century, like that of Gray's *Elegy*. This use of irregular meter he regarded as a "new principle," which is illustrated more fully in *Christabel*; and what he says in the preface to that poem (p. 33) in explanation of his departure applies equally to the *Ancient Mariner*.

CRITICISM OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

THERE can be no doubt that the *Ancient Mariner* at first shocked the general public, and pleased not even the poet's best friends. Its strangeness was utterly incomprehensible. Southey called it "a Dutch attempt at German sublimity," adding, "many of the stanzas are laboriously beautiful; but in connection they are absurd or unintelligible." A writer in the *Monthly Review* for June, 1799, reviewed the volume and said

of the *Ancient Mariner*: "Though it seems a rhapsody of unintelligible wildness and incoherence (of which we do not perceive the drift, unless the joke lies in depriving the wedding-guest of his share of the feast), there are in it poetical touches of an exquisite kind." Even Wordsworth believed the failure of the volume to be due to the unpopularity of this initial ballad, and in the second edition added a curiously apologetic and patronizing note, giving his reasons for republishing it. "The poem of my friend," he says, "has indeed 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 continually 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 number of the stanzas present beautiful images, and are expressed with unusual felicity of language; and the versification, though the meter is itself unfit for long poems, is harmonious and artfully varied." Therefore, it appeared to him that these several merits "gave to the poem a value which is not often possessed by better poems."

A century has passed and other Daniels have come to judgment. Says Campbell, "The *Ancient Mariner* is the one perfect, complete, and rounded poem of any length which Coleridge achieved." "As to its poetry," says Stopford Brooke, "it is like that of *Christabel*, not to be analyzed or explained. The spirit herself of Poetry is everywhere, in these two poems, felt, but never obtruding, touching spiritual life and earthly loveliness each with equal light, and so charming sense and soul with music that what is spiritual seems sensible, and what is of the senses seems spiritual."

The poet Swinburne regards this poem as "beyond question one of the supreme triumphs of poetry. . . . For the execution,

I presume no human eye is too dull to see how perfect it is, and how high in kind of perfection. Here is not the speckless and elaborate finish which shows everywhere the fresh rasp of file or chisel on its smooth and spruce excellence; this is faultless after the fashion of a flower or a tree. Thus it has grown; not thus has it been carved."

And finally, we must listen to the high judgment of Lowell: "He has written some of the most poetical poetry in the language, and one poem, the *Ancient Mariner*, not only unparalleled, but unapproachable in its kind, and that kind of the rarest. It is marvelous in its mastery over that delightfully fortuitous inconsequence that is the adamantine logic of dream-land. Coleridge has taken the old ballad measure and given to it by an indefinable charm wholly his own all the sweetness, all the melody and compass of a symphony. And how picturesque it is in the proper sense of the word. I know nothing like it. There is not a description in it. It is all picture. Descriptive poets generally confuse us with multiplicity of detail; we cannot see their forest for the trees; but Coleridge never errs in this way. With instinctive tact he touches the right chord of association, and is satisfied, as we also are. I should find it hard to explain the singular charm of his diction, there is so much nicety of art and purpose in it, whether for music or meaning. Nor does it need any explanation, for we all feel it. The words seem common words enough, but in the order of them, in the choice, variety, and position of the vowel-sounds, they become magical. The most decrepit vocable in the language throws away its crutches to dance and sing at his piping."

CHRISTABEL

IN 1816 a small pamphlet was published by John Murray, containing *Christabel*, *Kubla Khan*, and *The Pains of Sleep*. Byron, who already knew the poem in manuscript, advised the great publisher to print *Christabel*, saying, "I won't have any one sneer at *Christabel*; it is a fine wild poem." The pamphlet contained the following "Preface":

“The first part of the following poem was written in the year one thousand seven hundred and ninety-seven, at Stowey, in the county of Somerset. The second part, after my return from Germany, in the year one thousand eight hundred, at Keswick, Cumberland. Since the latter date, my poetic powers have been, till very lately, in a state of suspended animation. But, as in my very first conception of the tale, I had the whole present to my mind, with the wholeness, no less than with the liveliness, of a vision, I trust that I shall be able to embody in verse the three parts yet to come, in the course of the present year.

“It is probable that if the poem had been finished at either of the former periods, or if even the first and second part had been published in the year 1800, the impression of its originality would have been much greater than I dare at present expect. But for this, I have only my own indolence to blame. The dates are mentioned for the exclusive purpose of precluding charges of plagiarism or servile imitation from myself. For there is amongst us a set of critics who seem to hold that every possible thought and image is traditional; who have no notion that there are such things as fountains in the world, small as well as great; and who would therefore charitably derive every rill they behold flowing, from a perforation made in some other man’s tank. I am confident, however, that as far as the present poem is concerned, the celebrated poets whose writings I might be suspected of having imitated, either in particular passages, or in the tone and the spirit of the whole, would be among the first to vindicate me from the charge, and who, on any striking coincidence, would permit me to address them in this doggerel version of two monkish Latin hexameters:

’Tis mine, and it is likewise yours;
 But an if this will not do,
 Let it be mine, good friend, for I
 Am the poorer of the two.

“I have only to add that the meter of the *Christabel* is not, properly speaking, irregular, though it may seem so from its being founded on a new principle, — namely, that of counting in each line the accents, not the syllables. Though the latter may vary from seven to twelve, yet in each line the accents will be found to be only four. Nevertheless, this occasional variation in number of syllables is not introduced wantonly, or for the mere ends of convenience, but in correspondence with some transition, in the nature of the imagery or passion.”

The hope expressed at the end of the first paragraph was never

fulfilled. These words were modified in subsequent editions, and finally in the edition of 1834 were omitted altogether. For many years he was constantly promising his friends and himself that he would complete the poem, yet it is doubtful whether at any time he could have done so successfully. The magic wand was broken. The clear and alluring light of romantic vision with which his creative soul was illuminated in that wonderful year at Stowey was never so pure and clear again. Even as soon as 1799 he began to be tormented with doubts. "I am afraid," he writes, "that I have scarce poetic enthusiasm enough to finish *Christabel*." Yet the idea of finishing it haunted him all his life. In 1833 he said (*Table Talk*, July 6): "The reason of my not finishing *Christabel* is not that I don't know how to do it — for I have, as I always had, the whole plan entire from beginning to end in my mind; but I fear I could not carry on with equal success the execution of the idea, an extremely subtle and difficult one." And so the poem was left forever, as Scott called it, "a beautiful and tantalizing fragment."

Gillman, in his *Life of Coleridge*, gives the plan of a conclusion, as Coleridge "explained the story to his friends."

"The following relation was to have occupied a third and fourth canto, and to have closed the tale. Over the mountains the Bard, as directed by Sir Leoline, hastes with his disciple; but in consequence of one of those inundations, supposed to be common to this country, the spot only where the castle once stood is discovered, the edifice itself being washed away. He determines to return. Geraldine, being acquainted with all that is passing, like the weird sisters in *Macbeth*, vanishes. Reappearing, however, she awaits the return of the bard, exciting in the meantime, by her wily arts, all the anger she could rouse in the baron's breast, as well as that jealousy of which he is described to have been susceptible. The old Bard and the youth at length arrive, and therefore she can no longer personate the character of Geraldine, the daughter of Lord Roland de Vaux, but changes her appearance to that of the accepted though absent lover of Christabel. Next ensues a courtship most distressing to Christabel, who feels, she knows not why, great disgust for her once favored knight. This coldness is very painful to the Baron, who has no more conception than herself of the supernatural trans-

formation. She at last yields to her father's entreaties, and consents to approach the altar with this hated suitor. The real lover, returning, enters at this moment, and produces the ring which she had once given him in sign of her betrothment. Thus defeated, the supernatural being, Geraldine, disappears. As predicted, the castle bell tolls, the mother's voice is heard, and to the exceeding great joy of the parties, the rightful marriage takes place, after which follows a reconciliation and explanation between the father and daughter."

This conclusion, says Rossetti, "I believe is correct enough, only not picturesquely worded. It does not seem a bad conclusion by any means, though it would require fine treatment to make it seem a really good one."

As to the meaning of the poem, it is very unlikely that Coleridge intended to embody in it any specific moral or psychological idea. Indeed, he himself called it just "a common Fairy tale." Nevertheless, it has a moral significance, as has all fine imaginative art, which is revealed variously through a refined symbolism to the inquiring spirits that are brought to its contemplation; but it would be as unsafe to insist upon any particular "interpretation" as to pronounce dogmatically upon the moral purpose of the *Laocoon* or the *Dying Gladiator*. Gillman inferred from Coleridge's conversation that the story is "partly founded on the notion that the virtuous of this world save the wicked." Campbell suggests that this explanation must have been "mere quizzing on the part of Coleridge, indulged in to relieve the pressure of prosaic curiosity." Each intelligent reader will extract from the poem a moral according to his own moral aptitude.

CRITICISM OF CHRISTABEL

THE appeal of *Christabel* to the critics, in 1816, was not any more favorable than that of the *Ancient Mariner* in 1798. The *Edinburgh Review* said that it exhibited "from beginning to end not a ray of genius," and declared it to be "one of the most notable pieces of impertinence of which the press has lately been guilty; and one of the boldest experiments that has yet

been made upon the patience and understanding of the public." Although the reception of the poem was disappointing, the pamphlet sold rapidly, and soon went into a second edition.

It is generally agreed that the second part of *Christabel* is inferior to the first. Coleridge himself seemed to feel this. "Certainly," he says, "the first canto is more perfect, has more of the true wild, weird spirit than the last." As we pass from the first to the second part, says Prof. Beers, "the magic glamour has faded into the light of common day. . . . The fact that *Christabel* was left unfinished is not needed, as evidence, to prove that Coleridge could never have finished it in the spirit in which it was begun."

"The first part," says Prof. Herford, "is a masterpiece in the art of suggesting enchantment by purely natural means. The castle, the wood, the mastiff, the tree with its jagged shadows, are drawn with a quivering intensity of touch which conveys the very atmosphere of foreboding and suspense. The real marvel, too, when we come to it — the serpent-nature of Geraldine — is of a more searching and subtle weirdness than that of *The Mariner*; for no prodigies of the external world touch the imagination so nearly as distortions of human personality."

"The magical beauty of *Christabel*," says J. C. Shairp, "has been so long canonized in the world's estimate that to praise it now would be unseemly. It brought into English poetry an atmosphere of wonder and mystery, of weird beauty and pity combined, which was quite new at the time it appeared, and has never since been approached. The movement of its subtle cadences has a union of grace with power which only the finest lines of Shakspeare can parallel. As we read *Christabel* and a few other of Coleridge's pieces we recall his own words:

'In a half sleep we dream,
And dreaming hear thee still, O singing lark!
That singest like an angel in the clouds.'

Lowell suggests a discriminating comparison, which is worth careful consideration. "I confess," he says, "that I prefer the

Ancient Mariner to *Christabel*, fine as that poem is in parts and tantalizing as it is in the suggestion of deeper meanings than were ever there. The *Ancient Mariner* seems to have come of itself. In *Christabel* I fancy him saying, 'Go to, let us write an imaginative poem.' It could never be finished on those terms."

KUBLA KHAN

THIS poem was first printed in 1816, in the pamphlet with *Christabel*, with the title *Kubla Khan; or, A Vision in a Dream*, and with the following prefatory explanation by Coleridge:

"The following fragment is here published at the request of a poet of great and deserved celebrity, and as far as the author's own opinions are concerned, rather as a psychological curiosity than on the ground of any supposed *poetic* merits.

"In the summer of the year 1797, the author, then in ill health, had retired to a lonely farm-house between Porlock and Linton, on the Exmoor confines of Somerset and Devonshire. In consequence of a slight indisposition, an anodyne had been prescribed, from the effects of which he fell asleep in his chair at the moment that he was reading the following sentence, or words of the same substance, in *Purchas's Pilgrimage*: 'Here the Khan Kubla commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto. And thus ten miles of fertile ground was inclosed with a wall.' The author continued for about three hours in a profound sleep, at least of the external senses, during which time he has the most vivid confidence that he could not have composed less than from two to three hundred lines; if that indeed can be called composition in which all the images rose up before him as *things*, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation or consciousness of effort. On awaking he appeared to himself to have a distinct recollection of the whole, and taking his pen, ink, and paper, instantly and eagerly wrote down the lines that are here preserved. At this moment he was unfortunately called out by a person on business from Porlock, and detained by him above an hour, and on his return to his room, found, to his no small surprise and mortification, that though he still retained some vague and dim recollection of the general purport of the vision, yet, with the exception of some eight or ten scattered lines and images, all the rest had passed away like the images on the surface of a stream

into which a stone has been cast, but, alas! without the after restoration of the latter!

Then all the charm
Is broken — all that phantom-world so fair
Vanishes, and a thousand circlets spread,
And each mis-shape the other. Stay awhile,
Poor youth! who scarcely dar'st lift up thine eyes —
The stream will soon renew its smoothness, soon
The visions will return! And lo! he stays,
And soon the fragments dim of lovely forms
Come trembling back, unite, and now once more
The pool becomes a mirror.

“Yet from the still surviving recollections in his mind, the author has frequently purposed to finish for himself what had been originally, as it were, given to him. *Αὐριον ἄδιον ἄσω*; but the to-morrow is yet to come.”

The celebrated poet referred to in the first paragraph was Byron. The experience with the anodyne was probably one of the first, if not the first, of Coleridge's experiences with the strange effects of opium. All of his great poems are, in a sense, miraculous productions. The dream element is in them all; but how much the marvelous drug may have had to do with the dreams we shall never know. In April, 1816, Lamb wrote to Wordsworth:

“Coleridge is printing *Christabel* by Lord Byron's recommendation to Murray, with what he calls a vision, *Kubla Khan*, which said vision he repeats so enchantingly that it irradiates and brings heaven and elysian bowers into my parlor when he sings or says it; but there is an observation, ‘Never tell thy dreams,’ and I am almost afraid that *Kubla Khan* is an owl that will not bear daylight. I fear lest it should be discovered by the lantern of typography and clear reducing to letters no better than non-sense or no sense.”

The *Edinburgh Review* thought *Kubla Khan* not quite so bad as *Christabel*, and not “mere raving” like *The Pains of Sleep*, but bad enough to be condemned. Compare this judgment with that of Swinburne, who pronounces *Kubla Khan* to be “for absolute melody and splendor, the first poem in the lan-

guage." Here we have the beginning and the end of criticism upon this marvelous fragment of poetic melody. Let the imagination yield freely to the fascination of the dream pictures, with no attempt to compel the lines to give forth a coherent meaning, and the judgment of Swinburne, within the limitations he names, will not seem extravagant.

DEJECTION: AN ODE

FEW personal poems possess the profound interest of this ode, which is not an ode *to* dejection, contemplated poetically, but an expression of dejection as actually experienced. It is a confession from out of the depths of a heavily burdened soul, and the pain and pathos of its yearning and despairing lines are increased by the consciousness that the burden was largely of that soul's own creating. Ill health, domestic tribulation, and the opium indulgence combined to produce the mood in which the poem was written. Nor was it the expression of a passing mood, as Traill suggests, like that of Shelley's poem of the same title, but rather "the record of a life change, a veritable threnody over a spiritual death. For there can be no doubt — his whole subsequent history goes to show it — that Coleridge's 'shaping spirit of Imagination' was in fact dead when these lines were written. To a man of stronger moral fiber a renascence of the poetical instinct in other forms might have been possible; but the poet of *Christabel* and the *Ancient Mariner* was dead. The metaphysician had taken his place, and was striving, in abstruse research, to live in forgetfulness of the loss."

The poem was first printed in the *Morning Post*, Oct. 4, 1802, which was Wordsworth's wedding-day. As originally written, it was addressed to Wordsworth, the name "William" appearing throughout the poem in the lines of personal address. But in the first printed form this name was changed to "Edmund," and this again was changed in the edition of 1817 to the present "Lady," referring presumably (if any personal reference is intended) to Mrs. Wordsworth, or Dorothy Wordsworth. Many

other changes were made in the poem in 1817, some of which are described in the notes. The complete poem in its first printed form is given in the Appendix to Campbell's edition; as first written, it is given by Coleridge in a letter to W. Sotheby, July 19, 1802 (See *Letters*, Vol. I, pp. 378-384). Coleridge's reason for blotting out all direct allusions to Wordsworth is an unsolved problem. In 1802 Wordsworth was his most intimate friend, — "friend of my devoutest choice" — and the personal passages in the poem are a noble tribute of admiration to this friend. Campbell thinks that the explanation is found in a temporary estrangement between the two friends that occurred between 1802 and 1817, the reconciliation not having cleared away entirely "the marks of that which once had been." In the same manner he removed the personal color from his poem, *To William Wordsworth*, composed on hearing Wordsworth recite the *Prelude*, the title becoming *To a Gentleman*.

It is quite possible, however, that for the artistic and permanent purposes of poetry Coleridge concluded that the personal coloring should be more obscure; upon this basis the "Lady" of the ode would be merely an impersonal idealization of lofty character. The matter is discussed briefly in the notes, and an interesting discussion of the whole question by Canon Ainger may be found in *Macmillan's Magazine*, June, 1887. The other poems recording the friendship of these two great poets should be read in connection with this ode, Coleridge's *To a Gentleman*, just mentioned, and Wordsworth's *Stanzas Written in my Pocket-copy of Thomson's "Castle of Indolence,"* and the last book of the *Prelude*, especially the concluding passage beginning:

"Whether to me shall be allotted life," etc.

FRANCE: AN ODE

DURING the first years of the French Revolution, Coleridge, like Wordsworth and Southey, was filled with passionate zeal for the cause of popular liberty as represented by the people of France, who had overthrown the despotic government of the

monarchy and established a republic. He harangued his college friends upon the theme with tumultuous eloquence, wrote poems, delivered lectures, and started the *Watchman* with the avowed purpose of disseminating the new doctrines. But as the excesses of the Revolution increased and the despotism of the guillotine was established in bloody horrors, he modified his views of liberty and popular sovereignty. Indeed, "before 1793," he declares, "I clearly saw, and often enough stated in public, the horrid delusion, the vile mockery of the whole affair." Instead of being a Jacobin, he was, he says, at "the extreme opposite pole." In 1798 the French republic wantonly invaded Switzerland, and this despicable act brought forth from Coleridge a poetic expression of his blighted faith in French liberty.

This magnificent ode, which Shelley called the finest ode in the language, was first printed in the *Morning Post* April 16, 1798, with the title *The Recantation: An Ode*, so named because the poet now recanted his widely published belief in the French Revolution. It was accompanied by an editorial introduction beginning thus: "The following excellent ode will be in unison with the feelings of every friend to liberty, and foe to oppression; of all who, admiring the French Revolution, detest and deplore the conduct of France towards Switzerland." It was printed again in the *Morning Post* in 1802, with the present title, and preceded by the following "Argument," which will be of assistance in interpreting the text:

First Stanza. An invocation to those objects in Nature the contemplation of which had inspired the Poet with a devotional love of Liberty. *Second Stanza.* The exultation of the Poet at the commencement of the French Revolution, and his unqualified abhorrence of the Alliance against the Republic. *Third Stanza.* The blasphemies and horrors during the domination of the Terrorists regarded by the Poet as a transient storm, and as the natural consequence of the former despotism and of the foul superstition of Popery. Reason, indeed, began to suggest many apprehensions; yet still the Poet struggled to retain the hope that France would make conquests by no other means than by presenting to the observation of Europe a people

more happy and better instructed than under other forms of Government. *Fourth Stanza.* Switzerland and the Poet's recantation. *Fifth Stanza.* An address to Liberty, in which the Poet expresses his conviction that those feelings and that great *ideal* of Freedom which the mind attains by its contemplation of its individual nature, and of the sublime surrounding objects (see stanza the first), do not belong to men as a society, nor can possibly be either gratified or realized under any form of human government; but belong to the individual man, so far as he is pure, and inflamed with the love and adoration of God in Nature."

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

STUDY the musical quality of the poems and explain its special beauty and variety. For this purpose the poems must be read aloud until the varying rhythm is completely mastered.

The structure of the *Ancient Mariner*, its unity, and the appropriateness of its seven divisions.

The supernatural element compared with that of *Christabel*.

A comparison of the final text with that of 1798. (See Campbell's edition for a complete reprint of the original text.) Show the improvements by omissions and by additions.

The value of the "Gloss." Was Wordsworth correct in calling it "a gratuitous afterthought"?

Coleridge's purpose in adding the Motto from Burnet?

Comparison of the recurrence of the wedding-guest and the albatross throughout the poem with the use of the *motif* or *theme* in musical compositions.

The religion of the *Ancient Mariner*.

The moral of the poem: was it the underlying purpose of the poem, or an incidental feature, or an afterthought?

Make out the geography of the poem and chart the course of the ship.

Explain the incident of the Pilot's boy.

Analyze the picture of the calm, showing the poet's use of details in producing the effect.

Consider Swinburne's suggestion that "this great sea-piece might have had more in it of the air and savor of the sea."

Nearly every English poet has written finely of the sea; make some comparisons.

Study the forceful imagery of the poem, especially in such passages as ll. 41-66; 199-219.

Compare the *Ancient Mariner* with some of the old ballads, as *Sir Patrick Spence*, *Chevy Chase*, *The Nut-brown Maid* (Percy's *Reliques*); explain points of likeness and of difference.

In Part I of *Christabel*, the details that produce the atmosphere of mystery and superstition.

Point out the pictures in *Christabel*.

Respects in which Part II is inferior to Part I.

A comparison of *Christabel* with Keats's *Lamia*.

An account of Charles Lamb's relations to Coleridge. Of Wordsworth's association with Coleridge.

Coleridge's vocabulary, its composition and power.

The specific features of reform in poetry aimed at by Wordsworth and Coleridge. (See Wordsworth's *Prefaces* and Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*.)

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THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

IN SEVEN PARTS

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.

ARGUMENT

How a Ship having passed the Line was driven by storms to the cold Country towards the South Pole; 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. (1798.)

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?

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

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;
 Nodding their heads before her goes 35
 The merry minstrelsy.

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

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
 Yet he cannot choose but hear;
 And thus spake on that ancient man,
 The bright-eyed Mariner. 40

“ And now the Storm-blast came, and he
 Was tyrannous and strong:
 He struck with his o’ertaking wings,
 And chased us south along.

The ship drawn by a storm toward the south pole.

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.

“God save thee, ancient Mariner, 79 The ancient
 From the fiends, that plague thee thus!— pitably killeth
 Why look’st thou so?” — “With my the pious bird of
 cross-bow good omen.
 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 85
 Went down into the sea.

And the good south wind still blew behind,
 But no sweet bird did follow,
 Nor any day for food or play
 Came to the mariners’ hollo! 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, 95
 That made the breeze to blow!

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

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

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

The fair breeze
continues; the
ship enters the
Pacific Ocean,
and sails north-
ward, even till it
reaches the Line.

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

✓ The ship hath
been suddenly
becalmed.

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

And the Albatross
begins to
be avenged.

Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink; 120
Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink.

The very deep did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs 125
Upon the slimy sea.

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.

And every tongue, through utter drought,
 Was withered at the root; 136
 We could not speak, no more than if
 We had been choked with soot.

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

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

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

PART III

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 beholdeth 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.

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
approach, it
seemeth 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!

A flash of joy;

With throats unslaked, with black lips
baked,
Agape they heard me call:
Gramercy! they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in, 165
As they were drinking all.

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

See! see! (I cried) she tacks no more!
Hither to work us weal;
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel! 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 suddenly
Betwixt us and the Sun. 176

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

Are those her ribs through which the Sun
Did peer, as through a grate? 186
And is that Woman all her crew?
Is that a Death? and are there two?
Is Death that Woman's mate?

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

Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold: 191
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Night-mare Life-in-Death was she,
Who thicks man's blood with cold.

Like vessel, like
crew!

The naked hulk alongside came, 195
And the twain were casting dice;
'The game is done! I've won! I've won!'
Quoth she, and whistles thrice,

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

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 specter-bark.

At the rising of
the Moon,

We listened and looked sideways up!
Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
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 clomb above the eastern bar
The horned Moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip. 211

One after an-
other,

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

His shipmates
drop down dead.

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

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

The souls did from their bodies fly, — 220
They fled to bliss or woe!
And every soul, it passed me by,
Like the whizz of my cross-bow!

PART IV

“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.

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

I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
 And thy skinny hand, so brown.” —
 Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!
 This body dropt not down. 231

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

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
 Alone on a wide wide sea!
 And never a saint took pity on
 My soul in agony. 235

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

He despiseth the creatures of the calm.

I looked upon the rotting sea, 240
 And drew my eyes away;
 I looked upon the rotting deck,
 And there the dead men lay.

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

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

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

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
 Nor rot nor reek did they:
 The look with which they looked on me
 Had never passed away. 256

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.

In his loneliness
 and fixedness he
 yearneth
 towards the
 journeying
 Moon, and the
 stars that still
 sojourn, yet
 still move on-
 ward; and every-
 where the blue
 sky belongs to
 them, and is
 their appointed
 rest, and their
 native country
 and their own
 natural homes,
 which they enter
 unannounced, as

The moving Moon went up the sky,
 And no where did abide:
 Softly she was going up, 265
 And a star or two beside —

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

lords that are
 certainly ex-
 pected and yet
 there is a silent
 joy at their
 arrival.
 By the light of
 the Moon he be-
 holdeth God's
 creatures of the
 great calm.

Within the shadow of the ship
 I watched their rich attire:
 Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
 They coiled and swam; and every track
 Was a flash of golden fire. 281

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.

Their beauty and
 their happiness.
 He blesseth
 them in his
 heart.

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

The spell begins
 to break.

PART V

Oh sleep! it is a gentle thing,
 Beloved from pole to pole!
 To Mary Queen the praise be given!
 She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,
 That slid into my soul. 296

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

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

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

I moved, and could not feel my limbs: 305
I was so light — almost
I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a blessed ghost.

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

And soon I heard a roaring wind:
It did not come anear; 310
But with its sound it shook the sails,
That were so thin and sere.

The upper air burst into life!
And a hundred fire-flags 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 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

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

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

The helmsman steered, the ship moved
 on; 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.

But not by the
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.

“I fear thee, ancient Mariner!” 345

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:

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.

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

And now 'twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute;

And now it is an angel's song, 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.

^X Till noon we quietly sailed on,
 Yet never a breeze did breathe:
 Slowly and smoothly went the ship, 375
 Moved onward from beneath.

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
 The sails at noon left off their tune,
 And the ship stood still also.

The lonesome
 Spirit from the
 south-pole car-
 ries on the ship
 as far as the
 Line, in obedi-
 ence to the an-
 gelic troop, but
 still requireth
 vengeance.

The Sun, right up above the mast,
 Had fixed her to the ocean:
 But in a minute she 'gan stir, 385
 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: 390
 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;

The Polar
 Spirit's fellow-
 dæmons, the in-
 visible 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.

But ere my living life returned, 395
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 400
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.’ 405

The other was a softer voice,
As soft as honey-dew:
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

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

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

SECOND VOICE

'The air is cut away before,
And closes from behind. 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 430
As in a gentle weather:

'Twas night, calm night, the Moon was
high,
The dead men stood together.

The supernatural
motion is re-
tarded; the Mar-
iner awakes, and
his penance be-
gins anew.

All stood together on the deck,
For a charnel-dungeon fitter: 435

All fixed on me their stony eyes,
That in the Moon did glitter.

The pang, the curse, with which they died,
Had never passed away:
I could not draw my eyes from theirs, 440
Nor turn them up to pray.

The curse is
finally expiated.

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

Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed
 The lighthouse top I see? 465
 Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
 Is this mine own countree?
 And the ancient
 Mariner behold-
 eth his native
 country.

We drifted o'er the harbor-bar,
 And I with sobs did pray —
 O let me be awake, my God! 470
 Or let me sleep alway.

The harbor-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,
 Till rising from the same, 481
 Full many shapes, that shadows were,
 In crimson colors came.
 The angelic
 spirits leave the
 dead bodies,

And appear in
their own forms
of light.

A little distance from the prow
Those crimson shadows were: 485
I turned my eyes upon the deck —
Oh, Christ! what saw I there!

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

This seraph-band, each waved his hand:
It was a heavenly sight!
They stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light; 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 shrieve my soul, he'll wash away
 The Albatross's blood.

PART VII

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

The Hermit of
the Wood

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,
 That signal made but now?' 526

'Strange, by my faith!' the Hermit said —
 'And they answered not our cheer!
 The planks looked warped! and see those
 sails,
 How thin they are and sere! 530

Approacheth the
ship with won-
der.

I never saw aught like to them,
Unless perchance it were

Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
My forest-brook along;
When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow, 535
And the owl whoops to the wolf below,
That eats the she-wolf's young.'

'Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look —
(The Pilot made reply)
I am a-feared' — 'Push on, push on!' 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,
Which sky and ocean smote, 551
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

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.

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 rever-
ence to all things
that God made
and loveth.

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small; 615
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 bridegroom's door.

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

CHRISTABEL

PART THE FIRST

'Tis the middle of night by the castle clock,
 And the owls have awakened the crowing cock,
 Tu — whit! —— Tu — whoo!
 And hark, again! the crowing cock,
 How drowsily it crew. 5

Sir Leoline, the Baron rich,
 Hath a toothless mastiff, which
 From her kennel beneath the rock
 Maketh answer to the clock,
 Four for the quarters, and twelve for the hour; 10
 Ever and aye, by shine and shower,
 Sixteen short howls, not over loud;
 Some say, she sees my lady's shroud.

Is the night chilly and dark?
 The night is chilly, but not dark. 15
 The thin grey cloud is spread on high,
 It covers but not hides the sky.
 The moon is behind, and at the full;
 And yet she looks both small and dull.
 The night is chill, the cloud is grey: 20
 'Tis a month before the month of May,
 And the Spring comes slowly up this way.

The lovely lady, Christabel,
 Whom her father loves so well,

What makes her in the wood so late, 25
A furlong from the castle gate?
She had dreams all yesternight
Of her own betrothed knight;
And she in the midnight wood will pray
For the weal of her lover that's far away. 30

She stole along, she nothing spoke,
The sighs she heaved were soft and low,
And naught was green upon the oak
But moss and rarest mistletoe:
She kneels beneath the huge oak tree, 35
And in silence prayeth she.

The lady sprang up suddenly,
The lovely lady, Christabel!
It moaned as near as near can be,
But what it is she cannot tell. 40
On the other side it seems to be,
Of the huge, broad-breasted, old oak tree.

The night is chill; the forest bare;
Is it the wind that moaneth bleak?
There is not wind enough in the air 45
To move away the ringlet curl
From the lovely lady's cheek —
There is not wind enough to twirl
The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
That dances as often as dance it can, 50
Hanging so light, and hanging so high,
On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.

Hush, beating heart of Christabel!
 Jesu Maria, shield her well!
 She folded her arms beneath her cloak, 55
 And stole to the other side of the oak.
 What sees she there?

There she sees a damsel bright,
 Drest in a silken robe of white,
 That shadowy in the moonlight shone: 60
 The neck that made that white robe wan,
 Her stately neck, and arms were bare;
 Her blue-veined feet unsandal'd were,
 And wildly glittered here and there
 The gems entangled in her hair. 65
 I guess, 'twas frightful there to see
 A lady so richly clad as she —
 Beautiful exceedingly!

'Mary mother, save me now!'
 Said Christabel, 'And who art thou?' 70

The lady strange made answer meet,
 And her voice was faint and sweet: —
 'Have pity on my sore distress,
 I scarce can speak for weariness:'
 'Stretch forth thy hand, and have no fear!' 75
 Said Christabel, 'How camest thou here?'
 And the lady, whose voice was faint and sweet,
 Did thus pursue her answer meet: —

‘ My sire is of a noble line,
 And my name is Geraldine: 80
 Five warriors seized me yestermorn,
 Me, even me, a maid forlorn:
 They choked my cries with force and fright,
 And tied me on a palfrey white.
 The palfrey was as fleet as wind, 85
 And they rode furiously behind.
 They spurred amain, their steeds were white:
 And once we crossed the shade of night.
 As sure as Heaven shall rescue me,
 I have no thought what men they be; 90
 Nor do I know how long it is
 (For I have lain entranced I wis)
 Since one, the tallest of the five,
 Took me from the palfrey’s back,
 A weary woman, scarce alive. 95
 Some muttered words his comrades spoke:
 He placed me underneath this oak;
 He swore they would return with haste;
 Whither they went I cannot tell —
 I thought I heard, some minutes past, 100
 Sounds as of a castle bell.
 Stretch forth thy hand ’ (thus ended she),
 ‘ And help a wretched maid to flee.’

Then Christabel stretched forth her hand,
 And comforted fair Geraldine: 105
 ‘ O well, bright dame! may you command
 The service of Sir Leoline;

And gladly our stout chivalry
Will he send forth and friends withal
To guide and guard you safe and free 110
Home to your noble father's hall.'

She rose: and forth with steps they passed
That strove to be, and were not, fast.
Her gracious stars the lady blest,
And thus spake on sweet Christabel: 115
' All our household are at rest,
The hall as silent as the cell;
Sir Leoline is weak in health,
And may not well awakened be,
But we will move as if in stealth, 120
And I beseech your courtesy,
This night, to share your couch with me.'

They crossed the moat, and Christabel
Took the key that fitted well;
A little door she opened straight, 125
All in the middle of the gate;
The gate that was ironed within and without,
Where an army in battle array had marched out.
The lady sank, belike through pain,
And Christabel with might and main 130
Lifted her up, a weary weight,
Over the threshold of the gate:
Then the lady rose again,
And moved, as she were not in pain.

So free from danger, free from fear, 135
They crossed the court: right glad they were.
And Christabel devoutly cried
To the lady by her side,
' Praise we the Virgin all divine
Who hath rescued thee from thy distress!' 140
' Alas, alas!' said Geraldine,
' I cannot speak for weariness.'
So free from danger, free from fear,
They crossed the court: right glad they were.

Outside her kennel, the mastiff old 145
Lay fast asleep, in moonshine cold.
The mastiff old did not awake,
Yet she an angry moan did make!
And what can ail the mastiff bitch?
Never till now she uttered yell 150
Beneath the eye of Christabel.
Perhaps it is the owlet's scritch:
For what can ail the mastiff bitch?

They passed the hall, that echoes still,
Pass as lightly as you will! 155
The brands were flat, the brands were dying,
Amid their own white ashes lying;
But when the lady passed, there came
A tongue of light, a fit of flame;
And Christabel saw the lady's eye, 160
And nothing else saw she thereby,
Save the boss of the shield of Sir Leoline tall,

Which hung in a murky old niche in the wall,
'O softly tread,' said Christabel,
'My father seldom sleepeth well.' 165

Sweet Christabel her feet doth bare,
And jealous of the listening air
They steal their way from stair to stair,
Now in glimmer, and now in gloom,
And now they pass the Baron's room, 170
As still as death, with stifled breath!
And now have reached her chamber door;
And now doth Geraldine press down
The rushes of the chamber floor.

The moon shines dim in the open air, 175
And not a moonbeam enters here.
But they without its light can see
The chamber carved so curiously,
Carved with figures strange and sweet,
All made out of the carver's brain, 180
For a lady's chamber meet:
The lamp with twofold silver chain
Is fastened to an angel's feet.

The silver lamp burns dead and dim;
But Christabel the lamp will trim. 185
She trimmed the lamp, and made it bright,
And left it swinging to and fro,
While Geraldine, in wretched plight,
Sank down upon the floor below.

‘ O weary lady, Geraldine,
I pray you, drink this cordial wine!
It is a wine of virtuous powers;
My mother made it of wild flowers.’ 190

‘ And will your mother pity me,
Who am a maiden most forlorn?’ 195
Christabel answered — ‘ Wo is me!
She died the hour that I was born.
I have heard the grey-haired friar tell
How on her death-bed she did say,
That she should hear the castle-bell
Strike twelve upon my wedding-day. 200
O mother dear! that thou wert here!’
‘ I would,’ said Geraldine, ‘ she were!’

But soon with altered voice, said she —
‘ Off, wandering mother! Peak and pine! 205
I have power to bid thee flee.’
Alas! what ails poor Geraldine?
Why stares she with unsettled eye?
Can she the bodiless dead espy?
And why with hollow voice cries she, 210
‘ Off, woman, off! this hour is mine —
Though thou her guardian spirit be,
Off, woman, off! ’tis given to me.’

Then Christabel knelt by the lady’s side,
And raised to heaven her eyes so blue — 215
‘ Alas!’ said she, ‘ this ghastly ride —

Dear lady! it hath wildered you!
The lady wiped her moist cold brow,
And faintly said, ' 'tis over now!'

Again the wild-flower wine she drank: 220
Her fair large eyes 'gan glitter bright,
And from the floor whereon she sank,
The lofty lady stood upright:
She was most beautiful to see,
Like a lady of a far countree. 225

And thus the lofty lady spake —
' All they who live in the upper sky,
Do love you, holy Christabel!
And you love them, and for their sake
And for the good which me befel, 230
Even I in my degree will try,
Fair maiden, to requite you well.
But now unrobe yourself; for I
Must pray, ere yet in bed I lie.'

Quoth Christabel, ' So let it be! ' 235
And as the lady bade, did she.
Her gentle limbs did she undress,
And lay down in her loveliness.

But through her brain of weal and woe
So many thoughts moved to and fro, 240
That vain it were her lids to close;
So half-way from the bed she rose,

And on her elbow did recline
To look at the lady Geraldine.
Beneath the lamp the lady bowed, 245
And slowly rolled her eyes around;
Then drawing in her breath aloud,
Like one that shuddered, she unbound
The cincture from beneath her breast:
Her silken robe, and inner vest, 250
Dropt to her feet, and full in view,
Behold! her bosom and half her side —
A sight to dream of, not to tell!
O shield her! shield sweet Christabel!

Yet Geraldine nor speaks nor stirs; 255
Ah! what a stricken look was hers!
Deep from within she seems half-way
To lift some weight with sick assay,
And eyes the maid and seeks delay;
Then suddenly, as one defied, 260
Collects herself in scorn and pride,
And lay down by the Maiden's side! —
And in her arms the maid she took,
 Ah wel-a-day!

And with low voice and doleful look 265
These words did say:
'In the touch of this bosom there worketh a spell,
Which is lord of thy utterance, Christabel!
Thou knowest to-night, and wilt know to-morrow,
This mark of my shame, this seal of my sorrow; 270
 But vainly thou warrest,

For this is alone in
 Thy power to declare,
 That in the dim forest
 Thou heard'st a low moaning, 275
 And found'st a bright lady, surpassingly fair;
 And didst bring her home with thee in love and in
 charity,
 To shield her and shelter her from the damp air.'

THE CONCLUSION TO PART THE FIRST

It was a lovely sight to see
 The lady Christabel, when she 280
 Was praying at the old oak tree.
 Amid the jagged shadows,
 Of mossy leafless boughs,
 Kneeling in the moonlight,
 To make her gentle vows; 285
 Her slender palms together prest,
 Heaving sometimes on her breast;
 Her face resigned to bliss or bale —
 Her face, oh call it fair not pale,
 And both blue eyes more bright than clear, 290
 Each about to have a tear.

With open eyes (ah woe is me!)
 Asleep, and dreaming fearfully,
 Fearfully dreaming, yet, I wis,
 Dreaming that alone, which is — 295
 O sorrow and shame! Can this be she,
 The lady, who knelt at the old oak tree?

And lo! the worker of these harms,
That holds the maiden in her arms,
Seems to slumber still and mild, 300
As a mother with her child.

A star hath set, a star hath risen,
O Geraldine! since arms of thine
Have been the lovely lady's prison.
O Geraldine! one hour was thine — 305
Thou'st had thy will! By tairn and rill,
The night birds all that hour were still.

But now they are jubilant anew,
From cliff and tower, tu — whoo! tu — whoo!
Tu — whoo! tu — whoo! from wood and fell! 310

And see! the lady Christabel
Gathers herself from out her trance;
Her limbs relax, her countenance
Grows sad and soft; the smooth thin lids,
Close o'er her eyes; and tears she sheds — 315
Large tears that leave the lashes bright!
And oft the while she seems to smile
As infants at a sudden light!

Yea, she doth smile, and she doth weep,
Like a youthful hermitess, 320
Beauteous in the wilderness,
Who, praying always, prays in sleep.

And, if she move unquietly,
Perchance, 'tis but the blood so free
Comes back and tingles in her feet. 325

No doubt, she hath a vision sweet.
 What if her guardian spirit 'twere,
 What if she knew her mother near?
 But this she knows, in joys and woes,
 That saints will aid if men will call: 330
 For the blue sky bends over all!

PART THE SECOND

Each matin bell, the Baron saith,
 Knells us back to a world of death.
 These words Sir Leoline first said,
 When he rose and found his lady dead: 335
 These words Sir Leoline will say
 Many a morn to his dying day!

And hence the custom and law began
 That still at dawn the sacristan,
 Who duly pulls the heavy bell, 340
 Five and forty beads must tell
 Between each stroke — a warning knell,
 Which not a soul can choose but hear
 From Bratha Head to Wyndermere.

Saith Bracy the bard, So let it knell! 345
 And let the drowsy sacristan
 Still count as slowly as he can!
 There is no lack of such, I ween,
 As well fill up the space between.
 In Langdale Pike and Witch's Lair, 350
 And Dungeon-ghyll so foully rent,

With ropes of rock and bells of air
Three sinful sextons' ghosts are pent,
Who all give back, one after t'other,
The death-note to their living brother; 355
And oft too, by the knell offended,
Just as their one! two! three! is ended,
The devil mocks the doleful tale
With a merry peal from Borrowdale.

The air is still! through mist and cloud 360
That merry peal comes ringing loud;
And Geraldine shakes off her dread,
And rises lightly from her bed;
Puts on her silken vestments white,
And tricks her hair in lovely plight, 365
And nothing doubting of her spell
Awakens the lady Christabel.
'Sleep you, sweet lady Christabel?
I trust that you have rested well.'

And Christabel awoke and spied 370
The same who lay down by her side —
O rather say, the same whom she
Raised up beneath the old oak tree!
Nay, fairer yet! and yet more fair!
For she belike hath drunken deep 375
Of all the blessedness of sleep!
And while she spake, her looks, her air,
Such gentle thankfulness declare,
That (so it seemed) her girded vests

Grew tight beneath her heaving breasts. 380
'Sure I have sinn'd!' said Christabel,
'Now heaven be praised if all be well!'
And in low faltering tones, yet sweet,
Did she the lofty lady greet
With such perplexity of mind 385
As dreams too lively leave behind.

So quickly she rose, and quickly arrayed
Her maiden limbs, and having prayed
That He, who on the cross did groan,
Might wash away her sins unknown, 390
She forthwith led fair Geraldine
To meet her sire, Sir Leoline.

The lovely maid and lady tall
Are pacing both into the hall,
And pacing on through page and groom, 395
Enter the Baron's presence-room.

The Baron rose, and while he prest
His gentle daughter to his breast,
With cheerful wonder in his eyes
The lady Geraldine espies, 400
And gave such welcome to the same
As might beseem so bright a dame!

But when he heard the lady's tale,
And when she told her father's name,
Why waxed Sir Leoline so pale, 405

Murmuring o'er the name again,
 Lord Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine?

Alas! they had been friends in youth;
 But whispering tongues can poison truth;
 And constancy lives in realms above; 410

And life is thorny; and youth is vain;
 And to be wroth with one we love
 Doth work like madness in the brain.
 And thus it chanced, as I divine,
 With Roland and Sir Leoline. 415

Each spake words of high disdain
 And insult to his heart's best brother:
 They parted — ne'er to meet again!
 But never either found another
 To free the hollow heart from paining — 420

They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
 Like cliffs which had been rent asunder;
 A dreary sea now flows between.
 But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder,
 Shall wholly do away, I ween, 425
 The marks of that which once hath been.

Sir Leoline, a moment's space,
 Stood gazing on the damsel's face:
 And the youthful Lord of Tryermaine
 Came back upon his heart again. 430

O then the Baron forgot his age,
 His noble heart swelled high with rage;

He swore by the wounds in Jesu's side
 He would proclaim it far and wide,
 With trump and solemn heraldry, 435
 That they, who thus had wronged the dame
 Were base as spotted infamy!
 'And if they dare deny the same,
 My herald shall appoint a week,
 And let the recreant traitors seek 440
 My tourney court — that there and then
 I may dislodge their reptile souls
 From the bodies and forms of men!'

He spake: his eye in lightning rolls!
 For the lady was ruthlessly seized; and he kenned 445
 In the beautiful lady the child of his friend!

And now the tears were on his face,
 And fondly in his arms he took
 Fair Geraldine, who met the embrace,
 Prolonging it with joyous look. 450
 Which when she viewed, a vision fell
 Upon the soul of Christabel,
 The vision of fear, the touch and pain!
 She shrunk and shuddered, and saw again —
 (Ah, woe is me! Was it for thee, 455
 Thou gentle maid! such sights to see?)

Again she saw that bosom old,
 Again she felt that bosom cold,
 And drew in her breath with a hissing sound:
 Whereat the Knight turned wildly round, 460

And nothing saw, but his own sweet maid
With eyes upraised, as one that prayed.

The touch, the sight, had passed away,
And in its stead that vision blest,
Which comforted her after-rest, 465
While in the lady's arms she lay,
Had put a rapture in her breast,
And on her lips and o'er her eyes
Spread smiles like light!

With new surprise,

'What ails then my beloved child?' 470
The Baron said. — His daughter mild
Made answer, 'All will yet be well!'
I ween, she had no power to tell
Aught else: so mighty was the spell.

Yet he, who saw this Geraldine, 475
Had deemed her sure a thing divine.
Such sorrow with such grace she blended,
As if she feared she had offended
Sweet Christabel, that gentle maid!
And with such lowly tones she prayed 480
She might be sent without delay
Home to her father's mansion.

'Nay!

Nay, by my soul!' said Leoline.
'Ho! Bracy the bard, the charge be thine!
Go thou, with music sweet and loud, 485

And take two steeds with trappings proud,
 And take the youth whom thou lov'st best
 To bear thy harp, and learn thy song,
 And clothe you both in solemn vest,
 And over the mountains haste along, 490
 Lest wandering folk, that are abroad,
 Detain you on the valley road.

'And when he has crossed the Irthing flood,
 My merry bard! he hastes, he hastes
 Up Knorren Moor, through Halegarth Wood, 495
 And reaches soon that castle good
 Which stands and threatens Scotland's wastes.

'Bard Bracy! Bard Bracy! your horses are fleet,
 Ye must ride up the hall, your music so sweet,
 More loud than your horses' echoing feet! 500
 And loud and loud to Lord Roland call,
 Thy daughter is safe in Langdale hall!
 Thy beautiful daughter is safe and free —
 Sir Leoline greets thee thus through me.
 He bids thee come without delay 505
 With all thy numerous array;
 And take thy lovely daughter home:
 And he will meet thee on the way
 With all his numerous array
 White with their panting palfreys' foam: 510
 And, by mine honor! I will say,
 That I repent me of the day
 When I spake words of fierce disdain

To Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine! —
For since that evil hour hath flown, 515
Many a summer's sun hath shone;
Yet ne'er found I a friend again
Like Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine.'

The lady fell, and clasped his knees,
Her face upraised, her eyes o'erflowing; 520
And Bracy replied, with faltering voice,
His gracious hail on all bestowing;
'Thy words, thou sire of Christabel,
Are sweeter than my harp can tell;
Yet might I gain a boon of thee, 525
This day my journey should not be,
So strange a dream hath come to me;
That I had vowed with music loud
To clear yon wood from thing unblest,
Warn'd by a vision in my rest! 530
For in my sleep I saw that dove,
That gentle bird, whom thou dost love,
And call'st by thy own daughter's name —
Sir Leoline! I saw the same,
Fluttering, and uttering fearful moan, 535
Among the green herbs in the forest alone.
Which when I saw and when I heard,
I wonder'd what might ail the bird;
For nothing near it could I see,
Save the grass and green herbs underneath the old
tree. 540

'And in my dream, methought, I went
 To search out what might there be found;
 And what the sweet bird's trouble meant,
 That thus lay fluttering on the ground.
 I went and peered, and could descry 545
 No cause for her distressful cry;
 But yet for her dear lady's sake
 I stooped, methought, the dove to take,
 When lo! I saw a bright green snake
 Coiled around its wings and neck. 550
 Green as the herbs on which it couched,
 Close by the dove's its head it crouched;
 And with the dove it heaves and stirs,
 Swelling its neck as she swelled hers!
 I woke; it was the midnight hour, 555
 The clock was echoing in the tower;
 But though my slumber was gone by,
 This dream it would not pass away —
 It seems to live upon my eye!
 And thence I vowed this self-same day 560
 With music strong and saintly song
 To wander through the forest bare,
 Lest aught unholy loiter there.'

Thus Bracy said: the Baron, the while,
 Half-listening heard him with a smile; 565
 Then turned to Lady Geraldine,
 His eyes made up of wonder and love,
 And said in courtly accents fine,
 'Sweet maid, Lord Roland's beauteous dove,

With arms more strong than harp or song, 570
 Thy sire and I will crush the snake!
 He kissed her forehead as he spake,
 And Geraldine in maiden wise
 Casting down her large bright eyes,
 With blushing cheek and courtesy fine 575
 She turned her from Sir Leoline;
 Softly gathering up her train,
 That o'er her right arm fell again;
 And folded her arms across her chest,
 And couched her head upon her breast, 580
 And looked askance at Christabel —
 Jesu Maria, shield her well!

A snake's small eye blinks dull and shy,
 And the lady's eyes they shrunk in her head,
 Each shrunk up to a serpent's eye, 585
 And with somewhat of malice, and more of dread,
 At Christabel she look'd askance! —
 One moment — and the sight was fled!
 But Christabel in dizzy trance
 Stumbling on the unsteady ground 590
 Shuddered aloud, with a hissing sound;
 And Geraldine again turned round,
 And like a thing, that sought relief,
 Full of wonder and full of grief,
 She rolled her large bright eyes divine 595
 Wildly on Sir Leoline.

The maid, alas! her thoughts are gone,

She nothing sees — no sight but one!
 The maid, devoid of guile and sin,
 I know not how, in fearful wise, 600
 So deeply had she drunken in
 That look, those shrunken serpent eyes,
 That all her features were resigned
 To this sole image in her mind:
 And passively did imitate 605
 That look of dull and treacherous hate!
 And thus she stood, in dizzy trance,
 Still picturing that look askance
 With forced unconscious sympathy
 Full before her father's view —— 610
 As far as such a look could be
 In eyes so innocent and blue!

And when the trance was o'er, the maid
 Paused awhile, and inly prayed:
 Then falling at the Baron's feet, 615
 'By my mother's soul do I entreat
 That thou this woman send away!'

She said: and more she could not say:
 For what she knew she could not tell,
 O'er-mastered by the mighty spell. 620

Why is thy cheek so wan and wild,
 Sir Leoline? Thy only child
 Lies at thy feet, thy joy, thy pride,
 So fair, so innocent, so mild;
 The same, for whom thy lady died! 625

O, by the pangs of her dear mother
 Think thou no evil of thy child!
 For her, and thee, and for no other,
 She prayed the moment ere she died,
 Prayed that the babe for whom she died, 630
 Might prove her dear lord's joy and pride!
 That prayer her deadly pangs beguiled,
 Sir Leoline!
 And wouldst thou wrong thy only child,
 Her child and thine? 635

Within the Baron's heart and brain
 If thoughts, like these, had any share,
 They only swelled his rage and pain,
 And did but work confusion there.
 His heart was cleft with pain and rage, 640
 His cheeks they quivered, his eyes were wild,
 Dishonor'd thus in his old age;
 Dishonor'd by his only child,
 And all his hospitality
 To the insulted daughter of his friend 645
 By more than woman's jealousy
 Brought thus to a disgraceful end —
 He rolled his eye with stern regard
 Upon the gentle minstrel bard,
 And said in tones abrupt, austere — 650
 'Why, Bracy! dost thou loiter here?
 I bade thee hence!' The bard obeyed;
 And turning from his own sweet maid,
 The aged knight, Sir Leoline,

Led forth the lady Geraldine!

655

THE CONCLUSION TO PART THE SECOND

A little child, a limber elf,
 Singing, dancing to itself,
 A fairy thing with red round cheeks,
 That always finds, and never seeks,
 Makes such a vision to the sight 660
 As fills a father's eyes with light;
 And pleasures flow in so thick and fast
 Upon his heart, that he at last
 Must needs express his love's excess
 With words of unmeant bitterness. 665
 Perhaps 'tis pretty to force together
 Thoughts so all unlike each other;
 To mutter and mock a broken charm,
 To dally with wrong that does no harm.
 Perhaps 'tis tender, too, and pretty 670
 At each wild word to feel within
 A sweet recoil of love and pity.
 And what, if in a world of sin
 (O sorrow and shame should this be true!)
 Such giddiness of heart and brain 675
 Comes seldom save from rage and pain,
 So talks as it's most used to do.

KUBLA KHAN

IN Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea. 5

So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
And here were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills, 10
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted 15
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momentarily was forced:
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst 20
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momentarily the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion 25
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,

And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war! 30

The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.

It was a miracle of rare device, 35
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played, 40
Singing of Mount Abora.

Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,

That with music loud and long, 45

I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!

His flashing eyes, his floating hair! 50

Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

THE PAINS OF SLEEP

ERE on my bed my limbs I lay,
 It hath not been my use to pray
 With moving lips or bended knees;
 But silently, by slow degrees,
 My spirit I to Love compose, 5
 In humble trust mine eyelids close,
 With reverential resignation,
 No wish conceived, no thought exprest,
 Only a sense of supplication;
 A sense o'er all my soul imprest 10
 That I am weak, yet not unblest,
 Since in me, round me, everywhere
 Eternal strength and wisdom are.

But yester-night I prayed aloud
 In anguish and in agony, 15
 Up-starting from the fiendish crowd
 Of shapes and thoughts that tortured me:
 A lurid light, a trampling throng,
 Sense of intolerable wrong,
 And whom I scorned, those only strong! 20
 Thirst of revenge, the powerless will
 Still baffled, and yet burning still!
 Desire with loathing strangely mixed
 On wild or hateful objects fixed.
 Fantastic passions! maddening brawl! 25
 And shame and terror over all!
 Deeds to be hid which were not hid,

Which all confused I could not know,
Whether I suffered, or I did:
For all seemed guilt, remorse, or woe, 30
My own or others', still the same
Life-stifling fear, soul-stifling shame.

So two nights passed; the night's dismay
Saddened and stunned the coming day.
Sleep, the wide blessing, seemed to me 35
Distemper's worst calamity.

The third night, when my own loud scream
Had waked me from the fiendish dream,
O'ercome with sufferings strange and wild,
I wept, as I had been a child; 40

And having thus by tears subdued
My anguish to a milder mood,
Such punishments, I said, were due
To natures deepliest stained with sin, —
For aye entempesting anew 45

The unfathomable hell within
The horror of their deeds to view,
To know and loathe, yet wish and do!
Such griefs with such men well agree,
But wherefore, wherefore fall on me? 50
To be beloved is all I need,
And whom I love, I love indeed.

DEJECTION: AN ODE

Written April 4, 1802

Late, late yestreen I saw the new Moon,
 With the old Moon in her arms;
 And I fear, I fear, my Master dear!
 We shall have a deadly storm.

BALLAD OF SIR PATRICK SPENCE.

I

WELL! If the Bard was weather-wise who made
 The grand old ballad of Sir Patrick Spence,
 This night, so tranquil now, will not go hence
 Unroused by winds, that ply a busier trade
 Than those which mould yon cloud in lazy flakes, 5
 Or the dull sobbing draft, that moans and rakes
 Upon the strings of this Eolian lute,
 Which better far were mute.

For lo! the New-moon winter-bright!
 And overspread with phantom light, 10
 (With swimming phantom light o'erspread
 But rimmed and circled by a silver thread)
 I see the old Moon in her lap, foretelling
 The coming on of rain and squally blast.
 And oh! that even now the gust were swelling,
 And the slant night-shower driving loud and fast! 15
 Thosesounds which oft have raised me, whilst they awed,
 And sent my soul abroad,
 Might now perhaps their wonted impulse give,
 Might startle this dull pain, and make it move and
 live! 20

II

A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,
 A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,
 Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,
 In word, or sigh, or tear —
 O Lady! in this wan and heartless mood, 25
 To other thoughts by yonder throstle wooed,
 All this long eve, so balmy and serene,
 Have I been gazing on the western sky,
 And its peculiar tint of yellow green:
 And still I gaze — and with how blank an eye! 30
 And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,
 That give away their motion to the stars;
 Those stars, that glide behind them or between,
 Now sparkling, now bedimmed, but always seen:
 You crescent Moon, as fixed as if it grew 35
 In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue;
 I see them all so excellently fair,
 I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!

III

My genial spirits fail;
 And what can these avail 40
 To lift the smothering weight from off my breast?
 It were a vain endeavor,
 Though I should gaze forever
 On that green light that lingers in the west:
 I may not hope from outward forms to win 45
 The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

IV

O Lady! we receive but what we give,
 And in our life alone does Nature live:
 Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud!
 And would we aught behold, of higher worth, 50
 Than that inanimate cold world allowed
 To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,
 Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth,
 A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
 Enveloping the Earth — 55
 And from the soul itself must there be sent
 A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
 Of all sweet sounds the life and element!

V

O pure of heart! thou need'st not ask of me
 What this strong music in the soul may be! 60
 What, and wherein it doth exist,
 This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,
 This beautiful and beauty-making power.
 Joy, virtuous Lady! Joy that ne'er was given,
 Save to the pure, and in their purest hour, 65
 Life, and Life's effluence, cloud at once and shower,
 Joy, Lady! is the spirit and the power,
 Which wedding Nature to us gives in dower,
 A new Earth and new Heaven,
 Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud — 70
 Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud —
 We in ourselves rejoice!

And thence flows all that charms or ear or sight,
 All melodies the echoes of that voice,
 All colors a suffusion from that light. 75

VI

There was a time when, though my path was rough,
 This joy within me dallied with distress,
 And all misfortunes were but as the stuff
 Whence Fancy made me dreams of happiness:
 For hope grew round me, like the twining vine, 80
 And fruits, and foliage, not my own, seemed mine.
 But now afflictions bow me down to earth:
 Nor care I that they rob me of my mirth,
 But oh! each visitation
 Suspends what nature gave me at my birth, 85
 My shaping spirit of Imagination.
 For not to think of what I needs must feel,
 But to be still and patient, all I can;
 And haply by abstruse research to steal
 From my own nature all the natural man — 90
 This was my sole resource, my only plan:
 Till that which suits a part infects the whole,
 And now is almost grown the habit of my soul.

VII

Hence, viper thoughts, that coil around my mind,
 Reality's dark dream! 95
 I turn from you, and listen to the wind,
 Which long has raved unnoticed. What a scream

Of agony by torture lengthened out
 That lute sent forth! Thou Wind, that rav'st without,
 Bare crag, or mountain-tairn, or blasted tree, 100
 Or pine-grove whither woodman never clomb,
 Or lonely house, long held the witches' home,
 Methinks were fitter instruments for thee,
 Mad Lutanist! who in this month of showers,
 Of dark brown gardens, and of peeping flowers, 105
 Mak'st Devils' yule, with worse than wintry song,
 The blossoms, buds, and timorous leaves among.

Thou Actor, perfect in all tragic sounds!

Thou mighty Poet, e'en to frenzy bold!

What tell'st thou now about? 110

'Tis of the rushing of an host in rout,

With groans of trampled men, with smarting
 wounds —

At once they groan with pain, and shudder with the
 cold!

But hush! there is a pause of deepest silence!

And all that noise, as of a rushing crowd,

With groans, and tremulous shudderings — all is
 over — 115

It tells another tale, with sounds less deep and loud!

A tale of less affright,

And tempered with delight,

As Otway's self had framed the tender lay — 120

'Tis of a little child

Upon a lonesome wild,

Not far from home, but she hath lost her way:

And now moans low in bitter grief and fear,

And now screams loud, and hopes to make her mother
hear. 125

VIII

'Tis midnight, but small thoughts have I of sleep:
Full seldom may my friend such vigils keep!
Visit her, gentle Sleep! with wings of healing,
And may this storm be but a mountain birth,
May all the stars hang bright above her dwelling, 130
Silent as though they watched the sleeping Earth!

With light heart may she rise,
Gay fancy, cheerful eyes,
Joy lift her spirit, joy attune her voice;
To her may all things live, from pole to pole, 135
Their life the eddy of her living soul!

O simple spirit, guided from above,
Dear Lady! friend devoutest of my choice,
Thus mayest thou ever, evermore rejoice.

YOUTH AND AGE

VERSE, a Breeze 'mid blossoms straying,
Where Hope clung feeding, like a bee —
Both were mine! Life went a-maying
With Nature, Hope, and Poesy,
When I was young! 5

When I was young? — Ah, woeful When!
Ah, for the Change 'twixt Now and Then!
This breathing house not built with hands,
This body that does me grievous wrong,
O'er aery cliffs and glittering sands, 10

How lightly *then* it flashed along: —
 Like those trim skiffs, unknown of yore,
 On winding lakes and rivers wide,
 That ask no aid of sail or oar,
 That fear no spite of wind or tide! 15
 Nought cared this body for wind or weather
 When Youth and I lived in't together.

Flowers are lovely; Love is flower-like;
 Friendship is a sheltering tree;
 O! the joys, that came down shower-like, 20
 Of Friendship, Love, and Liberty,
 Ere I was old!

Ere I was old? — Ah, woeful *Ere*,
 Which tells me, Youth's no longer here!
 O Youth! for years so many and sweet, 25
 'Tis known, that Thou and I were one,
 I'll think it but a fond conceit —
 It cannot be that thou art gone!
 Thy Vesper-bell hath not yet tolled: —
 And thou wert aye a masker bold! 30
 What strange disguise hast now put on,
 To *make believe*, that thou art gone?
 I see these locks in silvery slips,
 This drooping gait, this altered size:
 But Springtide blossoms on thy lips, 35
 And tears take sunshine from thine eyes!
 Life is but thought: so think I will
 That Youth and I are housemates still.

Dewdrops are the gems of morning,
 But the tears of mournful eve! 40
 Where no hope is, life's a warning
 That only serves to make us grieve,
 When we are old:

That only serves to make us grieve
 With oft and tedious taking-leave, 45
 Like some poor nigh-related guest,
 That may not rudely be dismiss;
 Yet hath outstay'd his welcome while,
 And tells the jest without the smile.

ANSWER TO A CHILD'S QUESTION

Do you ask what the birds say? The sparrow, the
 dove,
 The linnet, and thrush, say, "I love and I love!"
 In the winter they're silent — the wind is so strong.
 What it says I don't know, but it sings a loud song.
 But green leaves, and blossoms, and sunny warm
 weather, 5
 And singing, and loving — all come back together.
 But the lark is so brimful of gladness and love,
 The green fields below him, the blue sky above,
 That he sings, and he sings; and forever sings he —
 "I love my Love, and my Love loves me!" 10

SONNET

TO THE RIVER OTTER

DEAR native Brook! wild Streamlet of the West!
 How many various-fated years have passed,
 What happy and what mournful hours, since last
 I skimmed the smooth thin stone along thy breast,
 Numbering its light leaps! Yet so deep imprest 5
 Sink the sweet scenes of childhood, that mine eyes
 I never shut amid the sunny ray, —
 But straight with all their tints thy waters rise,
 Thy crossing plank, thy marge with willows grey, —
 And bedded sand that, veined with various dyes, 10
 Gleamed through thy bright transparence! On my
 way,
 Visions of Childhood! oft have ye beguiled
 Lone manhood's cares, yet waking fondest sighs:
 Ah! that once more I were a careless child.

FRANCE: AN ODE

I

YE Clouds! that far above me float and pause,
 Whose pathless march no mortal may control!
 Ye Ocean-Waves! that, wheresoe'er ye roll,
 Yield homage only to eternal laws!
 Ye Woods! that listen to the night-birds singing, 5
 Midway the smooth and perilous slope reclined,
 Save when your own imperious branches swinging,

Have made a solemn music of the wind!
 Where, like a man beloved of God,
 Through glooms which never woodman trod, 10
 How oft, pursuing fancies holy,
 My moonlight way o'er flowering weeds I wound,
 Inspired, beyond the guess of folly,
 By each rude shape and wild unconquerable sound!
 O ye loud Waves! and O ye Forests high! 15
 And O ye Clouds that far above me soared!
 Thou rising Sun! thou blue rejoicing Sky!
 Yea, everything that is and will be free!
 Bear witness for me, wheresoe'er ye be,
 With what deep worship I have still adored 20
 The spirit of divinest Liberty.

II

When France in wrath her giant-limbs upreared,
 And with that oath, which smote air, earth, and sea,
 Stamped with her strong foot and said she would
 be free,
 Bear witness for me, how I hoped and feared! 25
 With what a joy my lofty gratulation
 Unawed I sang, amid a slavish band:
 And when to whelm the disenchanting nation,
 Like fiends embattled by a wizard's wand,
 The Monarchs marched in evil day, 30
 And Britains joined the dire array;
 Though dear her shores and circling ocean,
 Though many friendships, many youthful loves,
 Had swol'n the patriot emotion,

And flung a magic light o'er all her hills and groves; 35
 Yet still my voice, unaltered, sang defeat,
 To all that braved the tyrant-quelling lance,
 And shame too long delayed and vain retreat!
 For ne'er, O Liberty! with partial aim
 I dimmed thy light or damped thy holy flame; 40
 But blessed the pæans of delivered France,
 And hung my head and wept at Britain's name.

III

'And what,' I said, 'though Blasphemy's loud scream
 With that sweet music of deliverance strove!
 Though all the fierce and drunken passions wove 45
 A dance more wild than e'er was maniac's dream!
 Ye storms, that round the dawning east assembled,
 The Sun was rising, though ye hid his light!'
 And when, to soothe my soul, that hoped and
 trembled,
 The dissonance ceased, and all seemed calm and
 bright; 50
 When France her front deep-scarr'd and gory
 Concealed with clustering wreaths of glory;
 When, insupportably advancing,
 Her arm made mockery of the warrior's ramp;
 While timid looks of fury glancing, 55
 Domestic treason, crushed beneath her fatal stamp,
 Writhed like a wounded dragon in his gore;
 Then I reproached my fears that would not flee;
 'And soon,' I said, 'shall Wisdom teach her lore
 In the low huts of them that toil and groan! 60

And, conquering by her happiness alone,
 Shall France compel the nations to be free,
 Till Love and Joy look round, and call the Earth
 their own.'

IV

Forgive me, Freedom! O forgive those dreams!
 I hear thy voice, I hear thy loud lament, 65
 From bleak Helvetia's icy cavern sent —
 I hear thy groans upon her blood-stained streams!
 Heroes, that for your peaceful country perished,
 And ye, that fleeing, spot your mountain-snows
 With bleeding wounds; forgive me, that I cherished
 One thought that ever blessed your cruel foes! 71
 To scatter rage, and traitorous guilt,
 Where Peace her jealous home had built;
 A patriot-race to disinherit
 Of all that made their stormy wilds so dear; 75
 And with inexpiable spirit
 To taint the bloodless freedom of the mountaineer —
 O France, that mockest Heaven, adulterous, blind,
 And patriot only in pernicious toils,
 Are these thy boasts, Champion of humankind? 80
 To mix with Kings in the low lust of sway,
 Yell in the hunt, and share the murderous prey;
 To insult the shrine of Liberty with spoils
 From freemen torn; to tempt and to betray?

V

The Sensual and the Dark rebel in vain, 85
 Slaves by their own compulsion! In mad game

They burst their manacles and wear the name
Of Freedom, graven on a heavier chain!
O Liberty! with profitless endeavor
Have I pursued thee, many a weary hour; 90
But thou nor swell'st the victor's strain, nor ever
Didst breathe thy soul in forms of human power.
Alike from all, howe'er they praise thee
(Nor prayer, nor boastful name delays thee),
Alike from Priestcraft's harpy minions, 95
And factious Blasphemy's obscener slaves,
Thou speedest on thy subtle pinions,
The guide of homeless winds, and playmate of the
waves:
And there I felt thee! — on that sea-cliff's verge,
Whose pines, scarce traveled by the breeze above,
Had made one murmur with the distant surge! 101
Yes, while I stood and gazed, my temples bare,
And shot my being through earth, sea, and air,
Possessing all things with intensest love,
O, Liberty! my spirit felt thee there. 105

NOTES

THE ANCIENT MARINER

Motto: "I can easily believe that there are more invisible than visible beings in the universe. But who will explain to us the nature of all these, the rank, the relationships, the characteristics and functions of each. What are their occupations? What regions do they inhabit? Ever about the complete understanding of these things the human mind has circled, yet never has reached it. Meanwhile, it is profitable, I admit, sometimes to contemplate in the mind, as in a picture, the image of this greater and better world; lest the mind, accustomed to the petty details of daily life, be too much narrowed, or sink wholly into trivial thoughts. But we must, meanwhile, watch diligently for the truth, and maintain moderation of judgment, in order that we may distinguish the certain from the uncertain, day from night."

The motto is from Thomas Burnet, an English writer who died in 1715. He was the author of a remarkable treatise explaining the origin of the world, entitled *Teluris Theoria Sacra*, which was once regarded as scientific. Another work, from which the motto is quoted, bears the title, *Archæologiæ Philosophicæ: sive Doctrina Antiqua de Rerum Originibus*.

Rime: This word generally signifies the likeness of terminal sounds in verse, but here it is the whole composition, a tale in verse, like Chaucer's "rym" of Sir Thopas. This is the proper spelling of the word, from the Anglo-Saxon *rim*, the form *rhyme* being a confusion with the classic *rhythm* that began about 1550. Coleridge, of course, adopted this form for its antique flavor.

The gloss: The quaint prose commentary or gloss was an

afterthought, added in the edition of 1817. Its artistic value should be tested. Read it through once continuously, as a prose version of the story. Walter Pater suggests that this commentary indicates the origin of the poem as "a flower of mediæval or later German romance, growing up in the peculiarly compounded atmosphere of modern psychological speculation," and that it connects the poem with Coleridge's philosophy, emphasizing his psychological interest, which is "its curious soul-lore." W. P. Ker, in Craik's *English Prose*, Vol. V, estimates this marginal gloss to be "one of his finest compositions, in an unfamiliar mood; a translation or transposition of his poem, for a purely artistic end."

1. **It is, etc.:** The abrupt beginning is thoroughly in the manner of the old ballads, as in *Edom o' Gordon*, "It fell about the Martinmas," and in *The Fair Flower of Northumberland*, "It was a knight in Scotland born." So Longfellow begins the *Wreck of the Hesperus*, "It was the schooner Hesperus."

The keynote of the whole poem is sounded in the words *Ancient Mariner*, suggesting the remote, strange, weird, and uncanny. The effect of the phrase throughout the poem is worth special study. Change the words anywhere to their verbal equivalent, *Old Sailor*, and note (and explain) the difference of meaning and effect.

2. **One of three:** The number three, with its multiple nine, was associated with mysterious powers. The witches in *Macbeth* are three and they dance three times around the caldron. In classic lore there are three Fates, three Furies, three Graces, and three times three Muses. Compare De Quincey's use of the number in *Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow*. Note the simple definiteness of the phrase. In ballad composition many details are omitted, but such as are given are presented with the emphasis of direct and precise expression.

3. **By thy long grey beard, etc.:** Notice the indirect method of description, and the abruptness and rush of the whole stanza. The Mariner seems to fascinate the wedding-guest with his *glittering eye*, as with an "evil eye." The snake has a *glittering*

eye when it is supposed to charm its prey. The snake eye of the witch in *Christabel*, through which her malign influence is exerted, is the chief motive of the poem, like a prevailing motive in a musical composition.

8. **Mayst hear:** The omission of the subject gives the effect of haste and impatience.

9-12. In the original edition of 1798 two stanzas stood in place of this stanza. Explain the improvement in this condensation:

“ But still he holds the wedding-guest —
 There was a Ship, quoth he —
 ‘Nay, if thou’st got a laughsome tale,
 Marinere! come with me.’ ”

He holds him with his skinny hand,
 Quoth he, there was a Ship —
 ‘Now get thee hence, thou grey-beard Loon!
 Or my Staff shall make thee skip.’ ”

11. **Loon:** A stupid fellow, clown; then opprobriously a fool, dolt. Compare Macbeth’s “cream-faced loon” (*Macbeth*, V, 3, 11).

12. **Eftsoons:** At once, forthwith.

15-16. These two lines were contributed by Wordsworth, and also ll. 226, 227. Note the sudden changes of tense in this and the preceding stanza, and throughout the poem. What special effects are obtained by this device?

18. **He cannot choose, etc.:** Coleridge’s power over his hearers has often been compared to that of his Mariner. John Sterling says: “With all the kindness and glorious far-seeing intelligence of his eye, there is a glare in it, a light half unearthly, half morbid. It is the glittering eye of the Ancient Mariner.” Similarly Mary Cowden Clarke says: “Like his own Ancient Mariner, when he had once fixed your eye he held you spell-bound, and you were constrained to listen to his tale.”

23. **Below the kirk, etc.:** One by one the objects on shore disappear. *Kirk* is the northern form of *church*, still used in Scotland. The swiftness of the narrative here, as in so many stanzas, should be noticed.

25-28. Where is the ship represented to be in these lines? This stanza, says Mrs. Oliphant (*Literary History of England*) is a "grand image of the loneliness, the isolation from all other created things, of that speck upon the boundless, noiseless waters. Throughout the whole poem this sentiment of isolation is preserved with a magical and most impressive reality." Compare Lowell's impression in *Leaves from My Journal — At Sea*: "A cloudless sunrise in mid-ocean is beyond comparison for simple grandeur. It is like Dante's style, bare and perfect. Naked sun meets naked sea, the true classic of nature."

30. **Over the mast at noon:** The ship has now reached the Line, or equator.

32. **Bassoon:** Mrs. Sanford in *Thomas Poole and his Friends*, suggests that the hint for this line came from the fact that "during Coleridge's residence in Stowey his friend Poole reformed the church choir, and added a bassoon to its resources."

34. **Red as a rose:** A common simile in the old ballads, borrowed by Coleridge to give the true ballad flavor.

36. **Minstrelsy:** The minstrels, musicians; abstract for the concrete.

37-38. Repetition was common in the old ballads, often signifying little or nothing. Here it has a special force. The wedding-guest makes another attempt to get away, but is forced to stay by the spell that is upon him.

41-44. **Drawn** (gloss); Campbell changes this word to *driven*, believing this to be the word that Coleridge wrote. In the *Argument* we find "was driven by Storms."

This stanza and the next are in place of the following stanza in the original edition:

"Listen, Stranger! Storm and Wind,
A Wind and Tempest strong!
For days and weeks it play'd us freaks —
Like Chaff we drove along."

41. "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." — *Woodberry*.

46. **As who:** As one who.

47. **Still treads the shadow:** The monstrous pursuer follows the pursued so closely that he cannot even get out of the shadow of the foe, cast over him when the sun is behind. *Still* is in the sense of ever, continually. The imagery is suggestive of swift and violent movement.

51-70. This description is thought to have been suggested by passages in Captain James's *Strange and Dangerous Voyage* in search of the North West Passage, published in 1633. Campbell selects the following entries from Captain James's log as the material from which Coleridge probably extracted his poetry: "All day and all night, it snow'd hard"; "The nights are very cold; so that our rigging freezes"; "It proved very thicke 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, like an over-fall of water, which made us to reason amongst our selves concerning it, for we were not able to see about us, it being darke night and foggie"; "The Ice . . . crackt all over the Bay, with a fearful noyse"; "These great pieces that came agrounde began to breake with a most terrible thundering noyse"; "This morning . . . we unfastened our Ship, and came to Saile, steering betwixt great pieces of Ice that were agrounde in 40 fad., and twice as high as our Top-mast-head."

55. **Drifts:** Driving clouds of snow and mist, "snow-fog" it is in the gloss. **Clifts** is an archaic form for *cliffs*.

56. **Dismal sheen:** The cold luster of snow surfaces.

57. **Ken:** Descry. "After many dayes sayling, they *kenned* land afarre off." — *Hakluyt's Voyages*.

62. **Like noises in a swound:** "What more weirdly imagined of the 'cracks and growls' of the rending iceberg than that they sounded 'like noises in a swound.'" — *Traill*. *Swound* is the obsolete form of *swoon*.

63. **Albatross:** A sea-bird of the petrel family, inhabiting the southern seas and the Pacific ocean. They are "the largest known sea-birds and are noted for their powers of flight, sailing for hours, and in any direction with reference to the wind, without visible movement of the wings. . . . From their habit of following ships for days together without resting, albatrosses are regarded with feelings of attachment and superstitious awe by sailors, it being considered unlucky to kill one." — *Century Dictionary*.

The albatross theme was supplied by Wordsworth, suggested by passages in Shelvocke's *Voyage Round the World*, published in 1726, which he had just been reading. The passages in Wordsworth's mind are the following: "These were accompanied by Albitrosses, the largest sort of sea-fowls, some of them extending their wings 12 or 13 foot. . . . We all observed that we had not the sight of one fish of any kind, since we were come to the Southward of the streights of *le Mair*, nor one sea-bird, except a disconsolate black *Albitross*, who accompanied us for several days, hovering about us as if he had lost himself, till Hatley (my second Captain) observing, in one of his melancholy fits, that this bird was always hovering near us, imagin'd, from his colour, that it might be some ill omen. That which, I suppose, induced him the more to encourage his superstition, was the continued series of contrary tempestuous winds, which had oppress'd us ever since we had got into this sea. But be that as it would, he, after some fruitless attempts, at length, shot the *Albitross*, not doubting (perhaps) that we should have a fair wind after it."

64. **Thorough:** The old form of *through*, used for the sake of the meter, as well as for antique flavor.

67. For this line Coleridge originally wrote:

"The Mariners gave it biscuit-worms."

69. **Thunder-fit:** Noise like a thunder-clap. *Fit* is a sudden and violent movement or spasm. Spenser has *bitter fitt* in the sense of fatal stroke, or, possibly, death spasm (*Fairy Queen*, I, 2, 18).

76. **Vespers nine:** Nine evenings. The evening religious service in the Roman and English churches is called *vespers*. Notice that the Albatross is called, in the gloss, "the pious bird."

79-81. The Mariner's struggle with his emotions, as depicted in his face, is most forcibly described indirectly by giving the effect upon the listeners. This, too, is the method of the swift moving ballad, to give effects, without explanations.

81. **Cross-bow:** Does the *cross-bow* indicate the period of the poem? Are there other indications of a particular period? What is the period of the English ballads?

82. **I shot the Albatross:** Consider the forceful abruptness of this climax. Dwelling upon the story of the bird, the Mariner has approached slowly and with dread the confession of his crime. When it comes, it is expressed in a few, but deeply significant words. Because the killing of the Albatross is the chief motive of the poem, an allusion to it recurs at the end of each "Part."

83-86. In what direction is the ship now sailing? When was the course changed? See ll. 25-28.

92. **Work 'em:** Is Coleridge justified in using this colloquialism?

97. **Like God's own head:** This phrase must be read with *Sun uprist*. Upon these lines Dowden remarks: "How majestically the sunrise at sea is expressed. . . . It is like the solemn apparition of one of the chief actors in this strange drama of crime, and agony, and expiation, and in the new sense of wonder with which we witness that oldest spectacle of the heavens we can well believe in other miracles."

98. **Uprist:** An early English contracted form of the third person singular of the present tense. Chaucer has *the Sonne uprist*, the sun rises; but Coleridge apparently uses the word as a preterite, uprose. Cf. the provincial form *ris*.

104. **Followed free:** In the edition of 1817 Coleridge changed these words to *stream'd off free*, explaining in a footnote his reason; "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 broad flowing off from the stern." But the more musical form prevailed with his judgment finally, in spite of the literal fact, for in the edition of 1828 he restored it.

107. Notice the peculiar appropriateness of the words selected to indicate the sudden change in the ship's movement. Compare the swiftly-gliding lines 105-106.

109. Hales notes here that "a common provincial pronunciation of *break* is *breek*. This would set right the internal rhyme of the line.

113. **Right up above the mast:** The ship has again reached the Line.

114. **No bigger than the Moon:** The simile is somewhat surprising, as the apparent diameter of the moon is greater than that of the sun. But we know that the moon is smaller, and in the light of that knowledge it becomes smaller to the eye.

117. **A painted ship:** Hales recalls *Hamlet*, II, 2, 503: "So as a painted tyrant, Pyrrhus stood."

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

127. **About, about:** Compare the witches' dance in *Macbeth*, I, 3, 33. *Rout* is a disorderly or confused crowd of people.

128. **Death-fires:** St. Elmo's fires or corposants, lights supposed to be of an electrical origin that play about the rigging of ships, which to the superstitious sailor portend death. See *Tempest*, I, 2, 196. Compare also *corpse-light*, and *fetch-candle*. Coleridge has in the *Ode to the Departing Year*:

"Mighty armies of the dead
Dance like death-fires round her tomb."

129-130. **The water, etc.:** The phosphorescence on the water's surface is here described, the beautiful and mysterious light believed to be "emitted from the bodies of certain marine animals." *Witch's oils* suggests the practices of the old necromancers.

132. **Spirit:** The avenging spirit of animate nature, called later the Polar Spirit. See ll. 402–405 and gloss. Coleridge's suggestion that we consult the ancient authorities for these earth spirits or demons need not be taken seriously. Out of the "vasty deep" of his book-knowledge he could easily draw the material for a scheme of supernaturalism suited to the moral and artistic purposes of his poem. Professor Noyes suggests an interesting comparison with Cardinal Newman's belief about angels, explained in the first chapter of his *Apologia pro Vita Sua*. Those who are curious and not too busy will find much quaint learning upon the subject in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, more accessible than Michael Psellus, in which (Part I, sec. 2, "A Digression of the Nature of Spirits") there are frequent quotations from Psellus, who is called "a great observer of the nature of devils."

133. **Nine fathom deep:** *Nine* merely because that is a mystical number. The spirit is merely invisible. Of Coleridge's treatment of the supernatural element Pater says: "It is the delicacy, the dreamy grace in his presentation of the marvelous, which makes Coleridge's work so remarkable. The too palpable intruders from a spiritual world, in almost all ghost literature, in Scott and Shakspeare even, have a kind of coarseness or crudeness. Coleridge's power is in the very fineness with which, as with some really ghostly finger, he brings home to our inmost sense his inventions, daring as they are — the skeleton ship, the polar spirit, the inspiring of the dead bodies of the ship's crew" (Ward's *English Poets*, IV).

139. **Well-a-day:** A variant of *well-a-way*, an exclamation of grief or distress, equivalent to *alas*, from Anglo-Saxon *wā lā wā*, woe lo woe; common in the old literature, especially in the ballads. When Tybalt is slain by Romeo, the nurse cries out to Juliet: "Ah, well-a-day! he's dead . . . we are undone . . . alack the day!"

141. **Instead of the cross, etc.:** The meaning seems to be, instead of the symbol of purity and redemption, the symbol of his guilt and condemnation is hung about his neck. Possibly

the sailor, as a good Catholic, was wearing a cross, which he was no longer worthy to wear. There are frequent allusions in the poem to the beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church.

In his *English Note Books* Hawthorne speaks of an albatross in the Warwick Museum which was "huge beyond imagination," and remarks: "I do not think that Coleridge could have known the size of the fowl when he caused it to be hung round the neck of his *Ancient Mariner*" (Noyes). Is the poet's conception anywhere affected by the *size* of the bird?

143. Originally the third part began thus:

"I saw a something in the Sky
No bigger than my fist,
At first it seem'd a little speck," etc.

In the next edition this was changed to the following:

"So past a weary time; each throat
Was parch'd and glaz'd each eye,
When, looking westward, I beheld
A something in the sky."

148. **Something:** Notice the several stages of the growth of this *something* into a *sail* in l. 161.

152. **I wist:** *Wist* is the preterite of *wite*, know. It is confused with the adverb *iwis* (A.-S. *gewis*), certainly, which was often written *i wis* in the old ballads; hence it came to be regarded as a pronoun and verb with the meaning *I think*, the meaning that Coleridge seems to intend in the preterite.

157. **Black lips baked:** Cf. *Lamentations*, V. 10: "Our skin was black like an oven because of the terrible famine."

164. **Gramercy:** An interjection of mingled thankfulness and surprise; *grand merci*, great thanks.

164. **They for joy did grin:** "I took the thought of 'grinning for joy' from poor Burnet's remark to me, when we had climbed to the top of Plinlimmon, and were nearly dead with thirst. We could not speak from 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." — *Table Talk*, May 31, 1830.

166. **As they were drinking:** As *if* they were drinking. An effective touch of realism.

169–170. Compare the skipper's description of the specter ship in Longfellow's *Ballad of Carmilhan*:

“‘There is a Specter Ship,’ quoth he,
A ship of the Dead that sails the sea,
And is called the Carmilhan.

“‘A ghostly ship, with a ghostly crew,
In tempest she appears;
And before the gale, or against the gale,
She sails without a rag of sail,
Without a helmsman steers.’”

Compare also the legend of *The Flying Dutchman*, and Captain Marryat's tale, *The Phantom Ship*.

174. **Broad:** Why *broad* bright Sun?

178. **Heaven's Mother:** The sailor prays to the Madonna. Find other illustrations of his religion.

184. **Gossameres:** Cobwebs that float in the air; literally, *goose-summer*, in allusion to the downy character of the film, and to the time of its appearance (see *Cen. Dic.*). According to legend, these fine floating threads are the ravelings of the Virgin's winding-sheet, which fell away on her ascension into heaven. An old spelling, *gossamere*, gave Coleridge his rhyme.

185–189. In place of this stanza the two following were in the original:

“Are those *her* naked ribs, which fleck'd
The sun that did behind them peer?
And are those two all, all the crew,
That woman and her fleshless Pheere?

“*His* bones were black with many a crack,
All black and bare, I ween;
Jet black and bare, save where with rust
Of mouldy damp and charnel crust
They're patched with purple and green.”

The first stanza was corrected as follows in 1800:

“Are those *her* Ribs, thro’ which the Sun
 Did peer, as thro’ a grate?
 And are those two all, all her crew,
 That Woman, and her Mate?”

Another correction has been found in manuscript:

“Are those *her* ribs which fleck’d the Sun
 Like bars of a dungeon grate?
 Are those two all, all of the crew,
 That woman and her mate?”

193–194. These two lines in 1798 were:

“And she is far liker Death than he;
 Her flesh makes the still air cold.”

Many find an allusion to these lines in the *Epitaph* on himself, composed in 1833:

“O, lift one thought in prayer for S. T. C.;
 That he who many a year with toil of breath
 Found death in life, may here find life in death.”

193. **Night-mare:** An incubus, or evil spirit, according to popular belief, that oppresses one in sleep; A.-S. *mara*, dream, vision, or incubus. Coleridge creates a new type of this spirit. Cf. *King Lear*, III, 4, 126.

197. **I’ve won, I’ve won:** The editions of 1817 and 1829 read, *I’ve, I’ve won*, manifestly a typographical error, and so regarded by Dykes Campbell.

198. **Whistles thrice:** The mystical number again. In *Macbeth*, I, 3, 33, the witches’ charm is “wound up” by threes; similarly Sabrina in Milton’s *Comus* works her charm upon the Lady, “Thrice upon thy finger’s tip,” etc. Cf. *Kubla Khan*, l. 51.

195–198. After this stanza there came in the original another stanza of gruesome details which Coleridge’s maturing judgment of artistic propriety led him to excise:

“A gust of wind sterte up behind
 And whistled thro’ his bones;
 Thro’ the holes of his eyes and the hole of his mouth
 Half-whistles and half-groans.”

Of this and similar excisions Swinburne says: “Coleridge

“And we look’d round, and we look’d up,
 And fear at our hearts, as at a cup,
 The Life-blood seem’d to sip —
 The sky was dull, and dark the night,
 The helmsman’s face by his lamp gleam’d bright,
 From the sails the dews did drip —
 Till clomb above the Eastern Bar,
 The horned moon, with one bright star
 Within its nether tip.”

A study of the changes made in the description of the specter ship will show Coleridge’s good sense in cutting out details of mere horror that repel, rather than stimulate, the artistic imagination.

203. **Looked sideways up:** Explain the touch of nature in these words.

207. **By his lamp:** The lamp over the compass that keeps the needle and card illuminated.

209. **Clomb:** The old strong pretirite of *climb*, still used in poetry. *Bar* is the line of the horizon.

211. **Within the nether tip:** Why is it impossible to see a star within the tip of the moon?

212. **The star-dogged Moon:** “It is a common superstition among sailors that something evil is about to happen whenever a star dogs the moon.” — *Coleridge’s MS. note.*

218. **Thump — lump:** Explain the peculiar appropriateness of this rather homely rhyme.

222. **And every soul, etc.:** This quasi corporeal conception of the departing soul is thoroughly medieval. Compare Rossetti’s use of it in *The Blessed Damozel* and *Sister Helen*.

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

226–227. “For the two last lines of this stanza I am indebted to Mr. Wordsworth.” — *Coleridge’s note.*

232–235. The expression of the utter desolation of loneliness in these wonderfully simple lines is probably unequaled in English poetry. How is the effect produced? Compare Byron’s

description of Bonnivard in *The Prisoner of Chillon*. The third line was originally:

“And Christ would take no pity on ”

236. **So beautiful:** Charles Lamb objected to this word, remarking that they were merely “Vagabonds, all covered with pitch.” But this is to miss the meaning entirely. To the mariner anything human, with all its possibilities, is beautiful in contrast with the “slimy things” around him. Note the effect of the punctuation in the last line. He drops in the remark, “and so did I,” as an afterthought, including his own miserable self, as it were, among the “slimy things” that “live on.”

242. **Rotting deck** was at first *eldritch deck*.

245. **Or ever:** Before ever. Notice the bad rhyme, *gusht — dust*.

250. What is the effect of this long anapestic line, with its repetitions?

264–271. Notice the poetic beauty of the gloss here. “It is characteristic,” says Stopford Brooke, “of the quaint fantasy which belonged to his nature that he puts the thoughts which lift the whole scene into the realm of the imagination into the prose gloss at the side — and it is perhaps the loveliest little thought in all his writings.”

273. **Water-snakes:** Professor Dowden remarks that Coleridge’s “strange creatures of the sea” are not “those hideous worms which a vulgar dealer in the supernatural might have invented. Seen in a great calm by the light of the moon these creatures of God are beautiful in the joy of their life.”

275–281. Compare Coleridge’s description of a real night scene at sea, in his *Letters* (Vol. I, p. 260): “The ocean is a noble thing by night; a beautiful white cloud of foam at momentary intervals roars and rushes by the side of the vessel, and stars of flame dance and sparkle and go out in it, and every now and then light detachments of foam dart away from the vessel’s side with their galaxies of stars and scour out of sight like a

Tartar troop over a wilderness. What these stars are I cannot say; the sailors say they are fish spawn, which is phosphorescent."

279. **Rich attire:** Richer because in the shadow.

284-285. "That one self-centered in crude egoism should be purified and converted through a new sympathy with suffering and sorrow is a common piece of morality; this purification through sympathy with joy is a piece of finer and higher doctrine." — *Dowden*.

289. **So free:** Thus made free.

288-291. Here is the climax of the story. The terrible penance of the mariner in its worst features has been accomplished. His hard heart that knew not love for bird, or beast, or other living thing outside himself has been transformed. Through a new love, revealed to him through suffering, he is saved. The moral contained in the albatross motive, and stated at the end of the poem, begins here to be unfolded.

290. **The albatross fell off:** The similar incident in *Pilgrim's Progress* will be recalled.

292-296. **Oh sleep, etc.:** Five years later he wrote in *The Pains of Sleep*:

"Sleep, the wide blessing, seemed to me
Distemper's worst calamity."

In a letter to Southey in the same year he writes: "I truly dread to sleep. It is no shadow with me, but substantial misery foot-thick, that makes me sit by my bedside of a morning and cry." Very soon after the writing of the *Ancient Mariner* Coleridge's health and habits went to rack and ruin under the influence of opium. (See Notes, p. 144.)

Look up some of the fine passages about sleep in other poets, especially in *Macbeth*, II, 2, 37, and 2 *Henry IV*, III, 1, 5, and Tennyson's *Lotos-Eaters*.

297. **Silly:** Empty, useless. A.-S. *sælig*, blessed, happy; later, simple, innocent; then foolish, weak, etc.

308. **Blessed:** Happy in the release from the horrors of his living condition; or possibly a *redeemed spirit* in heaven, since the mariner's redemption had now begun.

314. **Sheen:** Bright; here used as an adjective; see l. 56. What are the *fire-flags*? Notice the pleonasm.

325. **With never a jag:** In a violent storm the usual jagged or forked lightning may change to sheet lightning, as it is called, which seems to be what Coleridge has in mind.

335. Wordsworth says that he suggested the navigating of the ship by the reanimated bodies.

352. **Sweet sounds:** The spirits alone are alive, and they make music as they pass from the bodies which they have just entered.

369-372. Study this beautiful passage carefully and account for the selection of each particular detail.

372. Here these four stanzas followed in the version of 1798:

“Listen, O listen, thou Wedding-guest!
 ‘Marinere! thou hast thy will:
 For that, which comes out of thine eye, doth make
 My body and soul to be still.’

“Never sadder tale was told
 To a man of woman born:
 Sadder and wiser thou Wedding-guest!
 Thou’lt rise to-morrow morn.

“Never sadder tale was heard
 By a man of woman born:
 The Mariners all return’d to work
 As silent as beforene.

“The Mariners all ’gan pull the ropes,
 But look at me they n’old:
 Thought I, I am as thin as air —
 They cannot me behold.”

377-382. The gloss here appears to be inconsistent with the gloss at ll. 103-106, according to which the ship had already reached the Line.

394. **Have not to:** Am not able to.

395. **Living life:** Natural life, complete consciousness, in contrast with life during the swoon, which was a kind of dead life.

407. **Honey-dew:** A sweet substance found in minute drops like dew on the leaves of trees and plants. When so abundant as to drip from the leaves it is called *manna*. Compare *Kubla Khan*:

“For he on honey-dew hath fed
And drunk the milk of Paradise.”

409. **Will do:** “Observe that it is not *shall do*. The speaker merely knows of the punishment. A higher power inflicts it.” — *Bates*.

414. **Still as a slave, etc.:** Dykes Campbell thinks that this line is borrowed from Coleridge’s own *Osorio*

“O woman!
I have stood silent like a slave before thee.”

And the rest of the stanza from a passage in Sir John Davies’s *Orchestra, a Poeme on Dauncing*.

“For lo the *sea* that fleets about the land,
And like a girdle clips her solid waist,
Music and measure both doth understand:
For his great crystal eye is always cast
Up to the Moon, and on her fixed fast.”

422–429. The possible suggestion for this home-coming of the mariner in a trance has been found in Captain James’s *Voyage* (see note, ll. 51–70) where the narrator expresses his lack of faith in the wild stories of “Portingals and Spaniards” who have come out of the South Sea, “who never speak of any difficulties: as shoalde water, Ice, nor sight of land; but as if they had been brought home in a dreame or engine.

446–451. Superstitious fear and dread of this kind would seem to be a fundamental quality of human nature, so universal is it. Charles Lamb quotes this stanza in his essay, *Witches, and Other Night Fears*, and thus comments: “That the kind of fear here treated of is purely spiritual, that it is strong in proportion as it is objectless upon earth, that it predominates in the period of sinless infancy, are difficulties, the solution of which might afford some probable insight into our antemun-

dane condition, and a peep at least into the shadow land of pre-existence."

455. A light breeze reveals its presence on the surface of water by ripples and by dark streaks.

465. Note the order of the details in this stanza, and compare with ll. 21-24.

467. **Countree:** This use of the word with accent on the final syllable is an imitation of the common usage in the old ballads, as in *Chevy-Chase*:

"For a better man of heart, nare of hande
Was not in all the north countrè."

470-471. Make this vision a reality, or if it is only a dream, let me sleep on forever.

475. **Shadow of the Moon:** The moon's reflection. After this stanza came in the version of 1798 the five following stanzas:

"The moonlight bay was white all o'er,
Till rising from the same,
Full many shapes, that shadows were,
Like as of torches came.

"A little distance from the prow
Those dark-red shadows were;
But soon I saw that my own flesh
Was red as in a glare.

"I turn'd my head in fear and dread,
And by the holy rood,
The bodies had advanc'd, and now
Before the mast they stood.

"They lifted up their stiff right-arms,
They held them strait and tight;
And each right-arm burnt like a torch,
A torch that's borne upright.
Their stony eye-balls glitter'd on
In the red and smoky light.

"I pray'd and turn'd my head away
Forth looking as before.
There was no breeze upon the bay,
No wave against the shore.

478. Pater, while speaking of the unity of the poem, remarks: "How pleasantly, how reassuringly, the whole night-mare story itself is made to end, among the clear fresh sounds and lights of the bay, where it began."

479. Why *steady* weathercock?

482. The mariner is looking away from the ship, and so sees the reflection of the *seraph-band* on the water.

490. **Seraph-man:** The seraphs are the "burning or flaming" angels, who surround the throne of Jehovah.

494. **As signals:** A ship coming to harbor at night signals for a pilot.

503. Here followed originally this stanza:

"Then vanish'd all the lovely lights:
The bodies rose anew:
With silent pace, each to his place,
Came back the ghastly crew.
The wind, that shade nor motion made,
On me alone it blew.

Another form of this stanza was found written upon the margin of a copy of the first edition:

"Then vanish'd all the lovely lights,
The spirits of the air,
No souls of mortal men were they,
But spirits bright and fair."

512. **Shrieve:** Obsolete form of *shrive*. A priest *shrives* a penitent when he hears confession and grants absolution.

524. **Trow:** Believe, think. The phrase, *I trow*, in expressions of surprise, is nearly equivalent to *I wonder*.

535. **Ivy-tod:** Ivy-bush.

560-565. The terrifying appearance of the mariner is described indirectly by the effects it produces.

586. **I pass, etc.:** Look up and compare the legend of *The Wandering Jew*.

592. By the appearance of the wedding-guest several times throughout the poem, and this return at the end to the marriage-feast, the artistic unity of the poem is secured.

612. **He prayeth well, etc:** Notice the effect of the repetition of *loveth* in emphasizing the concluding idea of the poem.

617. "And then comes the ineffable, half-childish, half-divine simplicity of those soft moralizings at the end, so strangely different from the tenor of the tale, so wonderfully perfecting its visionary strain. After all, the poet seems to say, after this weird excursion into the very deepest, awful heart of the seas and mysteries, here is your child's moral, a tender little half trivial sentiment, yet profound as the blue depths of heaven. This unexpected gentle conclusion brings our feet back to the common soil with a bewildered sweetness of relief and soft quiet after the prodigious strain of mental excitement which is like nothing else we can remember in poetry. The effect is one rarely produced, and which few poets have the strength and daring to accomplish, sinking from the highest notes of spiritual music to the absolute simplicity of exhausted nature. Thus we are set down on the soft grass, in a tender bewilderment, out of the clouds." — *Mrs. Oliphant's Literary History of England*. "He combined one of the highest lessons of advanced civilization, one of the last results of spiritual perception — the idea of love toward life in any form — with the animistic beliefs and supernatural fancies of the crude ages of the senses." — *Woodberry's Makers of Literature*.

This moral was repeated by Coleridge in a couplet appended, in 1817, to *The Raven*, a poem written about the same time, and with the same theme as that of the *Ancient Mariner*. The raven's family is destroyed by unfeeling men, and when they in turn are shipwrecked the raven rejoices. To the closing words, "revenge was sweet," Coleridge added in parenthesis:

"We must not think so, but forget and forgive,
And what Heaven gives life to, we'll still let it live!"

The same lesson of love and sympathy for lower creatures is expressed in the early poem *To a Young Ass*. This sympathetic interest in the creatures of nature was common to Wordsworth and the other poets of the new era, and was entering as a permanent element into literature.

“I conceive,” says Rossetti, “the leading point about his work is its human love, and the leading point about his career the sad fact of how little of it was devoted to that work.” So Wordsworth in his tribute to Coleridge at the close of *The Prelude* says:

“O capacious soul!
Placed on this earth to love and understand,
And from thy presence shed the light of love.”

CHRISTABEL

3. **Tu-whit:** Compare the *Song* in *Love's Labor's Lost*, V. 2, 927; also Tennyson's second song to *The Owl*.

12-13. The keynote of mystery and superstition is sounded here at the very beginning of the poem. The still night air is filled with evil omen, and strange things are surely coming to pass.

23. **Christabel:** “With the most exquisite feeling for womanhood in its general features, he seems to have been incapable of drawing strongly the features of any individual woman. . . . Even Christabel is a figure somewhat too faintly drawn, a figure expressing indeed the beauty, innocence, and gentleness of maidenhood, but without any of the traits of a distinctive personality. All his other imaginings of women are exquisite abstractions, framed by purely feminine elements, but representing Woman rather than being themselves veritable women.” — *Dowden's New Studies in Literature*.

49-52. In Dorothy Wordsworth's *Journal*, March 7, 1798, we find the prose of this passage: “William and I drank tea at Coleridge's. A cloudy sky. Observed nothing particularly interesting — the distant prospect obscured. One only leaf upon the top of a tree — the sole remaining leaf — danced round and round like a rag blown by the wind.”

50-52. Notice the change in the movement of the verse.

54. **Jesu Maria:** Mary [mother] of Jesus.

58-65. This passage as first published read thus:

“There she sees a damsel bright
 Drest in a silken robe of white;
 Her neck, her feet, her arms were bare,
 And the jewels disordered in her hair.”

66. **I guess:** Is this the so-called Yankee *guess*?

88. In a MS. copy of the poem this line reads:

“And twice we cross’d the shade of night.”

Coleridge evidently concluded that a ride of two days and *one* night was quite enough for the credulity of Christabel.

104-122. This passage in 1816 was as follows:

“Then Christabel stretch’d forth her hand
 And comforted fair Geraldine,
 Saying, that she should command
 The service of Sir Leoline;
 And straight be convey’d, free from thrall,
 Back to her noble father’s hall.

“So up she rose, and forth they pass’d,
 With hurrying steps, yet nothing fast;
 Her lucky stars the lady blest,
 And Christabel she sweetly said —
 All our household are at rest,
 Each one sleeping in his bed;
 Sir Leoline is weak in health,
 And may not well awaken’d be;
 So to my room we’ll creep in stealth,
 And you to-night must sleep with me.”

In one MS. copy is found *smiling* stars instead of *lucky* and *gracious* stars. Also in l. 116 *is at rest*, and in the next line *a cell for the cell*.

125. **A little door:** The wicket, a small door for every-day use within the large door or gate of a cathedral or castle.

132. **Over the threshold:** In chapter 15 of *The Abbot* one of the characters is made to say: “Reverend father, hast thou never heard that there are spirits powerful to rend the walls of a castle asunder when once admitted, which yet cannot enter the house unless they are invited, nay, dragged over the threshold.” To this passage Scott appends a note in which he says:

"There is a popular belief respecting evil spirits, that they cannot enter an inhabited house unless invited, nay, dragged over the threshold. There is an interesting instance of the same superstition in the *Tales of the Genii*." He then suggests an oriental origin of the superstition.

152. **Scratch:** Screech; so *scratch-owl*, for *screech-owl*. Ben Jonson has "the scritch owl."

158. **But when the lady passed, etc.:** "With what exquisite delicacy are all these hints of the true character of this stranger imagined — the difficulty of passing the threshold, the dread and incapacity of prayer, the moaning of the old mastiff in his sleep, the rekindling of the dying embers as she passes, the influence of the lamp 'fastened to the angel's feet.' . . . After the notion of evil has once been suggested to the reader, the external beauty and great mildness of demeanor ascribed to the stranger produce only the deeper feeling of terror, and they contrast, in a manner singularly impressive, with the small revelations which every now and then take place of what is concealed beneath them." — *Blackwood's Magazine*, Vol. 6 (cited by Huntington).

167. "This beautiful line was added in 1828." — *Campbell*.

175–183. Traill thinks that "nowhere out of Keats's *Eve of St. Agnes* is there any 'interior' to match that of Christabel's chamber, done as it is in little more than half a dozen lines."

191. **Cordial wine:** This was at first *spicy wine*; an "unfortunate change," says Campbell.

205. Compare the incantations of the witches in *Macbeth*, I, 3:

"Weary se'n nights nine times nine
Shall he dwindle, peak and pine."

219. **'Tis over now:** Instead of these strong words, in two of the extant MSS. are the prosy words *I'm better now*.

252. **Behold:** There has been much curious speculation here as to what "sight" the poet intended the reader to imagine. But it is the refinement of romance to leave a mystery unexplained. To probe the text for the exact facts — "'twere to

consider too curiously, to consider so." Some such feeling apparently prompted the poet to omit a line which in one of his MSS. follows l. 252: -

"Hideous, deformed, and pale of hue."

Says Dowden: "Coleridge preferred to leave a line without a rhyme rather than retain words which define a horror better shadowed in mystery." A writer in *Notes and Queries* (Vol. I, 324) says; "What Christabel saw is plain enough. The lady was a being like Duessa in Spenser; a horrible looking witch who could, to a certain degree, put on an appearance of beauty. The difference is that this lady had both forms at once, the one in her face, the other concealed."

254-262. For these nine lines there were only three in 1816:

"And she is to sleep by Christabel.

She took two paces, and a stride,
And lay down by the maiden's side."

306. **Tairn:** A Scotch form of *tarn*, a small mountain lake.

341. **Beads:** To *tell* one's beads is to say one's prayers, counting them off by the beads of the rosary. *Tell* is *count*, as in Milton's *L'Allegro*, the shepherd "tells his tale [of sheep] under the hawthorne in the dale."

344. **From Bratha Head, etc.:** The allusions here and in the following lines to localities in the Lake District indicate Coleridge's change of residence. He was living at Nether Stowey when the First Part was written.

348-359. A play of the poet's fancy with the echo of the matin bell.

351. **Ghyll:** More properly *gill*; a narrow ravine, especially with rapid stream running through it.

408-426. In a letter to Thomas Poole, Coleridge called these lines "the best and sweetest lines I ever wrote." There is a strong suspicion that the passage commemorates some one of Coleridge's broken friendships, most probably that of Southey, from whom he became alienated soon after the collapse of

pantisocracy. A temporary alienation of his life-long friend Charles Lamb would also account for the passage. See footnote in Vol. II, of the *Letters*, p. 609.

Walter Pater says: "I suppose these lines leave almost every reader with a quickened sense of the beauty and compass of human feeling; and it is the sense of such richness and beauty, which, in spite of his 'dejection,' in spite of that burden of his morbid lassitude, accompanies Coleridge himself through life." Campbell speaks of these lines as being the most famous in *Christabel*, "perhaps because they bring us out of the surrounding fairyland." Says the poet Rossetti: "The passage on sundered friendship is one of the masterpieces of the language, but no doubt was written quite separately and then fitted into *Christabel*."

426. *Been*. The common English pronunciation must be used here for the rhyme.

459. Note the different expressions of the snake motive introduced into this part of the poem.

489. **Solemn vest:** Rich, impressive clothes. *Vest* is vestment, garment. Wordsworth has the "radiant vest" of the morn.

493. Sir Leoline addresses his harper sometimes in the second person, and sometimes in the third. In his excitement he anticipates the ride in imagination.

583. "It is that description of the serpent-look of the witch's eyes which, on being read in a company at Lord Byron's, is said to have caused Shelley to faint" (quoted by Huntington from Reed's *Lectures on the British Poets*).

656-677. This "Conclusion" apparently has no relation to the poem whatever. The lines were sent to Southey in a letter of May 6, 1801, and unquestionably refer to the poet's little Hartley, of whom he writes in the letter. Immediately following the verses is this explanatory comment: "A very metaphysical account of fathers calling their children rogues, rascals, and little varlets, etc." Ernest Hartley Coleridge says: "It is possible that they were intended to form part of a distinct poem in the meter of *Christabel*, or, it may be, they are the

sole survival of an attempted third part of the ballad itself. It is plain, however, that the picture is from the life, that the little child, the limber elf, is the four-year-old Hartley."

KUBLA KHAN

The passage which Coleridge says he had just read in *Purchas, his Pilgrimage* (1626), when he dreamed this musical dream, reads thus: "In Zamdu did Cublai Can build a stately Palace, encompassing sixteene miles of plaine ground with a wall, wherein are fertile Meddowes, pleasant Springs, delightfull Streames, and all sorts of beasts of chase and game, and in the middest thereof a sumptuous house of pleasure."

1. **Khan:** The title of a sovereign or chief in Tartar countries. The "Great Khan" is the Emperor of China, or Cathay. Kublai Khan was emperor of China in the last part of the thirteenth century; the celebrated traveler, Marco Polo, spent some years at his court. Notice the euphonious word made out of *Zamdu*.

3. **Alph:** A river existing only in the poet's dream.

10. Cf. Bryant's *Thanatopsis*: "The hills Rock-ribbed and ancient as the sun."

13. **Cedarn:** Poetic form. Tennyson has, in *Arabian Nights*, "The carven *cedarn* doors," and Milton has, in *Comus*:

"And west winds with musky wing
About the *cedarn* alleys fling
Nard and cassia's balmy smells."

15. **Waning moon:** In popular superstition the waning moon is considered to have an evil influence, and the full or new moon to be the most auspicious period for beginning any enterprise; thus the proper time for killing animals, gathering herbs, sowing seed, etc., is determined.

25. Note the effect of alliteration in picturing the slow movement of the stream.

51. **Round him thrice:** Witches and magicians always perform their enchantments with the magic number three, or combinations of three, as in *Macbeth*, I, 3, the "weird sisters" wind up their charm:

“Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine,
And thrice again to make up nine.”

53. **Honey-dew:** In plain prose, honey-dew is “the sugary secretion from the leaves of plants, occurring most frequently in hot weather. It usually appears as small glistening drops, but if particularly abundant may drip from the leaves in considerable quantities, when it has been called *manna*” (*Cen. Dic.*).

THE PAINS OF SLEEP

This poem was first published in the pamphlet with *Christabel* and *Kubla Khan*. At the end of the prefatory explanation of *Kubla Khan* Coleridge added this remark: “As a contrast to this vision I have annexed a fragment of a very different character, describing with equal fidelity the dream of pain and disease.” Thus we have, probably, the contrasted pictures of the pleasures and the pains of opium. The poem was written in 1803. Passages in the *Letters* contain the substance of the poem. To one friend he writes: “I had walked 263 miles in eight days, in the hope of forcing the disease [gout] into the extremities. . . . During the whole journey three nights out of four I have fallen asleep struggling and resolving to lie awake, and, awaking, have blest the scream which delivered me from the reluctant sleep.” To Southey he writes: “My spirits are dreadful, owing entirely to the horrors of every night — I truly dread to sleep. It is no shadow with me, but substantial misery foot-thick, that makes me sit by my bedside of a morning and cry.” He then quotes the verses and adds: “They are, doggerel as they may be, a true portrait of my nights.”

35. **Sleep, the wide blessing:** Cf. *Ancient Mariner*, ll. 292–295.

51–52. In a letter Coleridge speaks of himself as one “who from my childhood have had no avarice, no ambition, whose very vanity in my vainest moments was, nine-tenths of it, the desire and delight, and necessity of loving and of being beloved.” Love is a constantly recurring theme in his poetry, the underlying moral substance of much of it, as in the *Ancient Mariner* (see

note on ll. 614–617); the word is contained in the titles of eleven of his poems. In *Religious Musings*, with transcendental fervor he says:

“There is one Mind, one omnipresent Mind,
Omnific. His most holy name is Love.”

DEJECTION: AN ODE

The grand old ballad may be found in Percy's *Reliques*. Coleridge seems to have quoted carelessly, or from some modernized version. The stanza is given by Percy as follows:

“Late, late yestreen I saw the new moone
Wi' the auld moone in her arme;
And I feir, I feir, my deir mastèr,
That we will come to harme.”

The preceding stanza ends with the line:

“For I feir a deadlie storme.”

6. **Moans:** In place of this word the original had *drones*.

13. **Foretelling, etc.:** When the obscured part of the moon is faintly outlined within the horns of the new moon, it is supposed to indicate coming storms.

25. Here the original has *O, Edmund!* instead of *O Lady!* and so throughout the poem. (See Introduction, p. 39).

36–37. Between these lines was originally this line:

“A boat becalm'd! a lovely sky-canoe!”

In the first draft of the ode it read “Thy own sweet sky-canoe,” in allusion to the Prologue to Wordsworth's *Peter Bell*.

72. Originally “We, we ourselves rejoice.”

47–48. “There are few lines in the loftier walks of English poetry better known than these.” — *Alfred Ainger*. Compare Wordsworth's line:

“By our own spirits we are deified,”

in *Resolution and Independence* (The Leech-Gatherer), a poem written in the same year as Coleridge's ode.

76-93. These lines picture with pathetic accuracy the condition of Coleridge during the period of splendid creative impulse and glorious promise at Stowey, in contrast with his condition after he settled at Keswick. The sudden change was a mystery to his friends at the time, as it is in large measure still to all who probe the matter. The only explanation is the opium-eating, in which he indulged for several years before his friends discovered the truth; and this explanation is by no means satisfactory. The problem is perhaps more psychological than pathological.

89. **Haply by abstruse research, etc:** In a letter written in July, 1802, Coleridge says: "Sickness and some other and worse afflictions first forced me into downright metaphysics. For I believe that by nature I have more of the poet in me. In a poem written during that dejection, to Wordsworth, and the greater part of a private nature, I thus expressed the thought in language more forcible than harmonious." Then ll. 76-93 are quoted. In a letter to Southey written in the same month he says: "As to myself, all my poetic genius (if ever I really possessed any *genius*, and it was not rather a mere general *aptitude* of talent, and quickness in imitation) is gone, and I have been fool enough to suffer deeply in my mind, regretting the loss, which I attribute to my long and exceedingly severe metaphysical investigations, and these partly to ill-health, and partly to private affliction which rendered any subjects, immediately connected with feeling, a source of pain and disquiet to me."

It is significant that ll. 87-93, though written in 1802, were not printed until the second appearance of the poem in *Sibylline Leaves*, 1817.

93. **Habit of my soul:** Originally "Temper of my soul."

94-95. The *Morning Post* version has for these lines:

"O wherefore did I let it haunt my mind, .
This dark distressful dream?"

100. **Mountain-tairn:** "Tairn, a small lake, generally, if not always, applied to the lakes up in the mountains, and which

are the feeders of those in the valleys. This address to the storm-wind will not appear extravagant to those who have heard it at night, and in a mountainous country." — *Coleridge's note.*

104. **Month of showers:** As the sub-title shows, the poem was written in April, when the storms among the mountains about Keswick, as he says, keep Devil's Christmas.

120. **As Otway's self:** This was at first "As thou thyself had'st framed, etc.," a compliment to his friend Wordsworth, introducing the allusion in the next line to Wordsworth's *Lucy Gray*. Thomas Otway (1651–1685), the dramatist, was famous for his pathos and tenderness, especially in the popular play *The Orphan*.

121–122. To make the allusion here to Wordsworth's poem perfectly clear he copies one line, "Upon the lonesome wild."

126–139. This last stanza, or strophe, was very much changed in the second printing. The pronoun becomes feminine throughout, to adapt the address to the "Lady," and one line had to be omitted for the same reason, "O lofty Poet, full of life and love." But the most important change was the omission of five lines after l. 133:

"And sing his lofty song, and teach me to rejoice!
O Edmund, friend of my devoutest choice,
O raised from anxious dread and busy care,
By the immenseness of the good and fair
Which thou see'st everywhere."

These lines describe with peculiar accuracy and condensation the tranquil and clear-visioned soul of Wordsworth; and there is implied the painful contrast of his optimism and freedom from "anxious dread" with Coleridge's troubled and dejected spirit. Why these lines and the other allusions to Wordsworth were omitted can only be surmised. Canon Ainger thinks that Coleridge "desired to conceal from the general reader some of the more painful personal allusions and contrasts discoverable in the original version."

YOUTH AND AGE

This poem was written in 1823 and first published in 1828. As first printed, the poem ended with line 38. The concluding lines were added in 1834, though probably composed in 1832, in which year they appeared separately in *Blackwood's Magazine*, entitled *The Old Man's Sigh*. The first four lines, however, had an earlier existence, for in 1828 Coleridge wrote in an album thus:

“Dew-drops are the gems of morning,
 But the tears of mournful eve;
 Where no hope is, life's a warning
 That only serves to make us grieve,
 As we creep feebly down life's slope.
 Yet courteous dame, accept this truth —
 Hope leaves not us, but we leave hope,
 And quench the inward light of youth.”

8. Cf. *II Corinthians*, V, 1; “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

9. **This body, etc.:** From an early point in life Coleridge had suffered at frequent intervals intense pain from rheumatism, gout, and other ailments, which was at first the cause, and later perhaps in part the consequence, of the opium habit.

12. **Skiffs:** Is this word appropriately applied to the water-craft described in these lines?

29. **Vesper-bell:** The bell that calls to evening service or *vespers*, with which good church people end the day. *Vesper* is the evening star, Latin *Hesperus*.

30. **Masker:** Literally one who takes part in an entertainment in which each person is disguised by wearing a mask.

41. **Where no hope is:** Compare the little poem *Work without Hope*, quoted in the Introduction, and the longer poem, *The Visionary Hope*. Also note the modification of the thought in the album verses given above.

45-49. In his old age, Benjamin Franklin once said: “By living twelve years beyond David's period I seem to have in-

truded myself into the company of posterity, when I ought to have been abed and asleep."

ANSWER TO A CHILD'S QUESTION

This dainty little song was first published in 1802 with the title: *The Language of Birds: Lines spoken extempore to a little child in early spring*. It has been set to music by J. M. Capes as *The Song of the Birds*, and by S. Marshall as *I love and I love*. It illustrates Coleridge's skillful and melodious use of the pure anapestic movement.

7. **But the lark, etc:** This is a wonderfully epitomized description of the lark's song. It should be compared with the elaborate descriptions in Shelley's *To a Skylark*, and Wordsworth's two poems *To a Skylark*.

TO THE RIVER OTTER

This little poem was at first embodied in a longer poem entitled *Recollection*, which was printed in the ill-fated *Watchman*, April 2, 1796. It next appeared as a separate poem in the first collected edition of Coleridge's poems, 1797. Although written in sonnet form, it is a poor form of sonnet; it is neither Italian nor English, neither Miltonic nor Shaksperian. Coleridge never mastered the difficulties of the sonnet as did Wordsworth, and he may have had a glimmering of his inability when he remarked in a letter, "I love sonnets; but *upon my honor* I do not love *my* sonnets." Indeed, in one of his prefaces he said: "The sonnet has been ever a favorite species of composition with me; but I am conscious that I have not succeeded in it." His natural expression was too diffuse and wayward to be bound down to the preciseness of form required by the perfect sonnet. This particular sonnet is in reality an imitation of Bowles's sonnet *To the River Itchin*, and is thus a testimonial to Coleridge's early admiration for this gentle sonneteer. (See Introduction.) A sonnet addressed *To the Rev. W. L. Bowles* begins with these lines of affluent praise:

“My heart has thanked thee, Bowles, for those soft strains,
That on the still air floating, tremblingly
Waked in me Fancy, Love, and Sympathy.”

1. **Native brook:** Coleridge's birthplace was Ottery St. Mary, named evidently from the river flowing near by. It was never in reality a home to him after his ninth year, when he entered Christ's Hospital.

3. For *happy* and *mournful* the original version had *blissful* and *anguished*.

7-11. Several changes were made in these lines. In l. 7 *ray* was *blaze*; line 9 read, *thy margin's willowy maze*; and l. 11 ended with *to the gaze*, in place of *On my way*.

FRANCE: AN ODE

1. **Ye clouds, etc:** In this splendid opening stanza we find the influences of natural scenery upon Coleridge as he was affected by them in his endless rambles among the Quantock Hills, within sight and hearing of the sounding sea.

20. **Still adored:** Ever adored.

26. **Gratulation:** Gratification, thankfulness.

27. **Unawed I sang, etc.:** In both verse and prose Coleridge said many harsh things about his conservative countrymen, whom he regarded as little better than a “slavish band.” For the first burst of his enthusiasm, see *Destruction of the Bastille*. See also *Fears in Solitude*, *Ode to the Departing Year*, and parts of *Religious Musings*. It will be remembered that in his last year at the university Coleridge engaged with Southey in the joint composition of a drama upon *The Fall of Robespierre*.

28. **Disenchanted nation:** For centuries France had been in a kind of painful sleep of enchantment under the despotism of the Louis.

30. **The Monarchs marched, etc.:** An Alliance of nearly all the great powers of Europe, including England, was formed against France, and was many times defeated by the triumphant forces of the new republic.

43-46. **Blasphemy's loud scream:** Atheism was proclaimed truth by the Commune of Paris, the churches were closed or used for municipal purposes, and an infamous woman was installed in Nôtre Dame as the "Goddess of Reason." During the Reign of Terror the bloodiest and vilest human passions were dominant, producing a horrible reversal of civilized habits and principles. "It was the frightfullest thing ever born of Time," says Carlyle.

53. **Insupportably:** Irresistibly; an unusual sense of the word, borrowed by Coleridge from Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, 136, as also the word *ramp* in the next line in the sense of leap or bound, which in many editions is incorrectly printed *tramp*.

56. **Domestic treason:** While France was fighting the allied Powers there were reactionary disturbances in the government and rebellious risings among the peasants.

66. **Helvetia:** The original Roman name for Switzerland.

80. **Champion of humankind:** It was the avowed purpose of France, in her European wars, to carry freedom to other peoples living under despotic governments, a profession, however, that generally served merely to cloak the greed of conquest.

86-88. Campbell says that in Coleridge's *Commonplace Book* is this entry: "At Genoa the word 'Liberty' is engraved on the chains of the galley-slaves and the doors of prisons."

EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

ON

THE ANCIENT MARINER

BY

*Cornelia Beare, Instructor in English, High School,
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PRELIMINARY.

Account of Coleridge and Southey as given in "Little Journeys to Homes of English Authors."

Life of Coleridge, touching especially on friendships with Wordsworth and Southey.

Reading of "Christ's Hospital" from "Essays of Elia."

Study of ballad verse. Reading of one or two old ballads, as "Sir Patrick Spens," "Chevy Chase." Study of figures of speech.

STUDY OF POEM.

Read entire poem aloud to the class. Follow with these or similar questions:—

1. What is the purpose of the poem?
2. Of what time does it tell?
3. How is the supernatural used?
4. Specify and describe briefly vivid pictures from it.
5. What instances did you notice of peculiar or old-fashioned words or constructions?

DETAILED WORK FOR HOME STUDY.

1. How is the setting given?
2. What direction does the ship take? How is this shown?
3. Write a dynamic description of the scene in the polar waters.

4. What makes the sight of the albatross so welcome to the crew?
5. What is the purpose of the lines

“God save thee, Ancient Mariner,
From the fiends that plague thee thus.
Why lookst thou so?”
6. Explain what the real sin of the Mariner was.
7. Tell the action of the crew with regard to his deed and explain the significance of each step in it.
8. Explain why they hung the albatross about his neck.
9. Write a dynamic description of the scene in the equatorial waters.
10. From this part of the poem select examples of (a) metaphor, (b) synecdoche, (c) exclamation, (d) antithesis, (e) hyperbole, and show the value of each as it is used.
11. Why do the crew suffer with the Ancient Mariner?
12. What is there in his punishment which theirs lacks?
13. Why is interrogation used in the description of the phantom ship?
14. Why is the Ancient Mariner deprived of the power to pray? What do you consider the worst feature of this part of his punishment?
15. What is signified by his blessing the water snakes? Why is it that, at this moment, the albatross falls from his neck?
16. Describe the scene on his awakening.
17. What value has the introduction of the supernatural here? What similes are used to describe the “sweet sounds” and the noise of the sails? Show the significance of each.
18. How does the Mariner learn of the real nature of his sin; of his penance?
19. Explain the simile in the stanza beginning “Like one that on a lonesome road.”

Compare it with the simile in the earlier stanza,
“As who pursued with yell and blow.”
20. Explain why interrogation is used in the stanza

“Oh dream of . . . is this indeed”

21. Describe the scene as the ship entered the bay, bringing in what you consider the strongest impression given by it.

22. How is the supernatural element used in part 7?

23. What is the effect on the three of the Mariner's appearance? What do you consider the most effective detail in telling of this effect?

24. How does the Ancient Mariner learn the full nature of his punishment? What is it?

25. What is the message the Mariner gives to the wedding guest?

VERSE STRUCTURE.

1. Select examples of feminine or double endings, and tell the value.

2. Pick out all stanzas that vary from the ordinary ballad stanza, and explain what you believe to be the reason for this variation.

3. Select examples of run-on lines; is the proportion greater of end-stop or run-on lines?

4. Select examples of onomatopœia; of use of meter to further the thought of the line.

5. Select examples of the use of obsolete words or constructions which help to produce the effect that this is an old ballad.

6. Select three stanzas which you consider especially poetical; specify what in them has led you to choose them.

GENERAL VARIED QUESTIONS.

1. Explain what you consider to be the lesson of the poem.

2. Explain in detail the nature of the Mariner's punishment and show how it fitted his sin.

3. Give reasons for or against the statement that the Mariner deserved all his punishment.

4. Explain the punishment of the crew; give reasons for or against the statement that they were really as guilty as the Mariner, and should have been punished accordingly.

5. Narrate the circumstances under which the Mariner first told his story.
6. Discuss Coleridge's use of the Supernatural in this poem.
7. Discuss Coleridge's ability to describe vividly; to tell of an incident graphically.

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