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THE ANCIENT MARINER



S. T. Coleridge

(After a painting by PHILLIPS)

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COLERIDGE'S

THE RIME OF
THE ANCIENT MARINER

EDITED, WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

LINCOLN R. GIBBS, M.A.

BOSTON, U.S.A.

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PREFACE.



THIS edition of *The Ancient Mariner* aims to include the information and critical comment necessary to an intelligent appreciation of the poem. As a help to that end, it has been thought desirable to print the original version (1798), since the differences between that and the final version afford an especially valuable opportunity for training in discrimination and taste.

The interest which attaches to the personal history of Coleridge has, unfortunately, little in common with the interest which attaches to *The Ancient Mariner*. It has, therefore, seemed proper to include in this volume only a short biographical sketch. Students who may be impelled by a laudable curiosity to seek a more detailed knowledge of the poet's life are referred to the biographies by Hall Caine, Dr. Alois Brandl (translated into English by Lady Eastlake), and J. Dykes Campbell. Coleridge's own *Biographia Literaria*, in spite of its fragmentary character, is essential to a knowledge of his intellectual and moral development.

Methods of teaching *The Ancient Mariner* must differ widely with different teachers and pupils. All efforts, however, should be subordinated to the aim of helping students to read with their imaginations — to see what Coleridge describes. In order to arouse the attention and

interest necessary to attain this end, students should be required to do something for themselves. The editor has found very useful the plan of assigning to different pupils the task of writing short papers, the best of which may be read to the class, on topics drawn from the poem, such as the diction and imagery of *The Ancient Mariner*, *The Ancient Mariner* as a ballad, the changes made in the poem since the version of 1798, the moral teaching of the poem.

The text of the first version in this volume I believe to be faithfully copied, with a few unimportant changes in punctuation and typography, from the edition of 1829; that of the version of 1798 is reprinted from the appendix of J. Dykes Campbell's edition of the poetical works of Coleridge (London and New York, 1893).

L. R. G.

BOSTON, MASS.,
Jan. 5, 1898.

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INTRODUCTION.



I. SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF COLERIDGE.

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE was born at Ottery St. Mary's, Devonshire, on the 21st of October, 1772. His father, John Coleridge, who combined the offices of parish clergyman and schoolmaster, was a man of great learning, amazing eccentricity, and childlike simplicity in the ways of the world — traits which his son Samuel Taylor inherited in full measure. It is related of John Coleridge that he sometimes quoted the Old Testament to his country congregations in the original Hebrew, in order that they might hear "the authentic language of the Holy Spirit." The boy Coleridge was unnaturally precocious, being able to read a chapter of the Bible at three years, entering the grammar school at the same age, and beginning the study of Latin at six. His tastes, moreover, were not those of a healthy boy: he played little with his brothers and loved to be much alone, dreaming and reading fairy stories.

In 1781 his father died, leaving a large family in narrow circumstances. Thereupon Coleridge became a pupil of Christ's Hospital, London, a charitable institution for the education of orphan boys. The early years of his school life were unhappy. The discipline was barbarous, the slightest offenses being punished by a flogging; the food

was ill prepared and insufficient; little attention was paid to the health of the boys.¹ Coleridge, a warm-hearted and poetic lad, longed for his country home in Devonshire. In *Frost at Midnight*, he says of his schooling:

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

But Coleridge's school days, though sometimes wretched and lonely, were by no means idle. Indeed, his mental growth was too rapid to be quite healthy, and even as a schoolboy he developed the widely diversified tastes which in later life made it impossible for him to fix upon a calling or even to carry a literary project to completion. A visit to the hospitals with his brother Luke aroused his interest in medicine, and for a time he read voraciously whatever he could find on that subject, in Greek, Latin, and English. Before his fifteenth year he was deep in metaphysics, the taste which he then acquired for Neoplatonic mysticism persisting throughout his life and strongly influencing both his philosophy and his poetry. After reading Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary*, he professed himself an infidel, whereupon the head-master, the Rev. James Boyer, promptly resorted to the cane and gave the boy a flogging, the only one, says Coleridge, that he ever deserved.

During the last two years of his stay at Christ's Hospital, Coleridge's principal taste in reading was for poetry. The influence of Milton's descriptive poems and of Gray may be traced in his early work. He also read with eagerness the sonnets of Bowles (published 1789), which would

¹ See Charles Lamb's "Christ's Hospital Five-and-thirty Years After" (in the *Essays of Elia*).

now be utterly neglected were it not for the part they played in forming the tastes of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Whatever their intrinsic worth may be, they are at least of the Romantic school, which was about to declare its principles and gain its victories in the work of Coleridge and Wordsworth. The former professed an extravagant admiration for them, and on leaving school made forty copies of them with his own hand, which he presented to his schoolmates as parting gifts. To the present generation Bowles represents the weakness rather than the strength of the Romantic tendency, — its undisciplined emotion, degenerating into sentimentality; but to Coleridge his work was a welcome contrast to the frigid artificiality of the imitators of Pope and Johnson; it had the saving qualities of sincerity and spontaneity.

After remaining in Christ's Hospital nine years, Coleridge became a student of Jesus College, Cambridge, entering the university in 1791, just as Wordsworth was leaving it. His career there, though auspiciously begun, was a disappointment to his friends and ended disastrously. For the first year he studied diligently, obtaining in 1792 the Brown medal for a Greek Sapphic ode. Later he became a desultory student, though not an indolent one. His rooms were a gathering place for the most radical spirits in the university, who met there to discuss the stirring events of the French Revolution. Before leaving Christ's Hospital, he had celebrated in verse the destruction of the Bastille; and perhaps the most important fact in his mental history from 1791 to 1794 is the quickening of his democratic sympathies by his reading and associations at the university. Godwin's *Political Justice* came

to his hands, and he became a convert to its communistic creed. He soon gave evidence of his democratic convictions in a ridiculous manner.

In December, 1793, in a fit of despondency, caused by debt and perhaps by a disappointment in love, Coleridge left Cambridge and went to London to seek his fortune. Finding himself in the city with scarcely a penny in his pocket, he obeyed a sudden impulse to enlist as a dragoon. This he did under an assumed name—Silas Tomkyn Comberbach; but after a few months of service, some Latin verses which he scribbled on his stall led to an investigation, his friends procured his discharge, and he was restored to the university.

In June, 1794, Coleridge visited Oxford and made the acquaintance of Southey, then a student at the university. A few weeks after, they met again at Bristol. Southey was full of democratic ideas, which he dreamed of putting into practice by establishing a communistic settlement on the banks of the Susquehanna. He had no difficulty in arousing the ardent interest of Coleridge in this visionary scheme. They named the enterprise Pantisocracy. Its fundamental principles were the abolition of exclusive privileges and private property, and the universal reign of brotherly love. The Pantisocritans hoped that a few hours of daily labor would provide for their needs; the rest of the time they purposed to devote to conversation and literature. They needed money to charter a ship and purchase supplies; but they were penniless themselves and could enlist in the enterprise only those whose fortunes were as desperate as their own. All attempts to raise money failing, Southey, to Coleridge's great

disgust, abandoned the project and accepted an advantageous offer to go to Lisbon with an uncle.

Meanwhile, Coleridge had left the university without a degree, and had complied with one of the important regulations of the Pantisocratic community by taking a wife. On the 4th of October, 1795, he was married to Miss Sara Fricker, of Bristol.

His opinions in politics and religion, which in youth and early manhood were heretical, had prevented his taking a degree at Cambridge and barred him from a career in the university or the church. For more than a year he had formed no other plan for the future than the impracticable Pantisocracy project. This failing him, he found himself, in the winter of 1796, with no certain means of support for himself and his wife. He settled at Clevedon, near Bristol, and tried to gain a livelihood by publishing a volume of his collected poems, lecturing, and writing for the press. In the spring of 1796 he edited a political and literary journal of his own, *The Watchman*, which failed after ten numbers, for lack of subscribers. Hoping to get a Unitarian pulpit, he preached a few times in Bath, but his eccentricity in dress and in the choice of subjects—he appeared in the pulpit in a blue coat and white waistcoat, and on one occasion preached on the Hair-Powder Tax—prevented him from getting the desired appointment. These struggles, eccentricities, and failures are typical of his entire life.

After nearly a year's residence at Clevedon, Coleridge removed to Nether Stowey, in Somersetshire. In June, 1797, Wordsworth, with his sister Dorothy, took up his residence in the neighboring village of Alfoxden, princi-

pally for the sake of Coleridge's society. Wordsworth's *Descriptive Sketches* (1793) had come into the hands of Coleridge, who saw in them the certain announcement of a great poetic genius. Wordsworth, on his part, had been attracted by Coleridge's lectures in Bristol. Only the opportunity for personal intercourse was needed to create a life-long friendship. Wordsworth shared Coleridge's disgust with artificiality and his desire for plain living and high thinking, without sharing his vague dreams of immediately founding an ideal community. The best of his influence on Coleridge was moral rather than literary. From the stronger character of Wordsworth, Coleridge gained confidence in his own powers, purpose, and energy. During the months when the two poets were neighbors—from June, 1797, to September, 1798—he wrote much of his best poetry,—*The Ancient Mariner*, the first part of *Christabel*, *The Dark Ladie*, *Fears in Solitude*, *France*, and *Kubla Khan*. The years 1797 and 1798 are the culmination of his career as a poet.

In September, 1798, Coleridge again found himself in financial difficulties. A pension from the Wedgwood brothers, makers of the famous pottery, enabled him to spend a year of study in Germany. Henceforth he was no longer primarily a poet, but a critic, theologian and philosopher. From this time forward, therefore, the events of his personal history and even the growth of his mind and character are comparatively uninteresting to students of his poetry, and we may pass rapidly over them.

In 1799, upon his return to England, he began his work as a pioneer in introducing German thought into England, by translating Schiller's *Wallenstein*. After a period of

successful service on a London newspaper, he was offered a lucrative position as editor, which he declined, fearing that the routine duties would interfere with "the lazy reading of old folios." In 1803 the consequences of inherited weakness and of indiscreet exposure during his school days appeared in the form of a painful rheumatic affection. For relief he had recourse to a nostrum which contained laudanum, and in this way began a slavery to the opium habit, which lasted till 1816. In 1804 he went to Malta in search of health, acting as secretary to the governor, but returned to England in 1806. This period of his life (1803-1816) is the melancholy record of bondage to the opium habit, separation from his family, and genius wasted and misapplied. He supported himself by hack work for the newspapers, by lecturing on Shakespeare, Milton and the fine arts, by compiling text-books, and by writing sermons for indolent clergymen. In 1809 he made a second unsuccessful venture in journalism, *The Friend*.

In 1816 Coleridge became an inmate of the house of Dr. Gillman, of Highgate, London, under whose care he gained the mastery over the opium habit. Here he continued to reside till his death in 1834. During this period he wielded an influence which had previously been denied him. He was visited by many of the noblest and most promising young men in England—Edward Irving, Julius Hare, A. H. Hallam, John Sterling, J. H. Green, and Frederic Denison Maurice, who listened to him as to a spiritual father. Both by his conversation with this group and by his *Aids to Reflection* (1825) he profoundly influenced the religious thought of England in the direction of a liberal, practical, and spiritual Christianity.

About 1830 his health began to fail, and on the 25th of July, 1834, he died.

Coleridge's contributions to English literature, in spite of their miscellaneous character, are not without a certain unity of aim. His work in criticism, almost as important as his work in creative writing, is an exposition of the principles underlying the Romantic movement, of which he was the great critical mind. His lectures on Shakespeare — though often more enthusiastic than discriminating — had their share in promoting the revival of interest in Shakespeare which marked the early years of the century. His criticism of Wordsworth was influential in breaking down the prejudice against which Wordsworth was compelled to struggle and in hastening his tardy recognition. As a critic, as well as a poet, theologian, and philosopher, Coleridge's position in the history of English literature is that of protest against the barren formalism of the 18th century. If it were necessary to characterize him in a single phrase, he should be called the supreme asserter of the rights of the imagination.

The following are the dates of publication of Coleridge's more important works:

The Watchman,	1796.
Ode to the Departing Year,	1796.
The Ancient Mariner,	1798.
Wallenstein (translation),	1800.
Remorse,	1813.
Christabel,	1816.
Biographia Literaria,	1817.
Sibylline Leaves,	1817.
Zapolya,	1817.

Aids to Reflection,	1825.
Table-Talk,	1835.
Confessions of an Enquiring Spirit,	1840.
Notes upon Shakespeare,	1849.

II. ORIGIN OF THE LYRICAL BALLADS.

The Ancient Mariner was first published in the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), the origin of which Wordsworth has described in the Fenwick note to *We Are Seven*:

In the autumn of the year 1798, he [Coleridge], my sister, and myself, started from Alfoxden pretty late in the afternoon, with a view to visit Lenton and the Valley of Stones near 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, set up by Phillips, the bookseller, and edited by Dr. Aiken. 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 myself 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 Shelvock's *Voyages* a day or two before, that while doubling Cape Horn they frequently saw albatrosses in that latitude, the largest of sea fowl, some extending their wings twelve or fifteen 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 those 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 talk 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.

Of the objects of this volume, Coleridge has given a full account in *Biographia Literaria* :

During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbors our conversation 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 the 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 prac-

ticability 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 interest 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. . . . 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 analogous to the supernatural by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom and directing it to the loveliness and 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 which see not, ears that hear not, and hearts which neither feel nor understand.

III. CRITICAL COMMENTS.

Whether or not a born "maker," he [Coleridge] was certainly a born theorist; and we believe not only that under all his most important achievements there was a basis of intellectual theory, but that the theory, so far

from being an alien and disturbing presence, did duty as the unifying principle which coördinated the whole. We think we can see such a theory underlying *The Ancient Mariner*, and securing the almost unqualified success of that poem; and we further think we can see it departed from in one isolated instance, with temporary artistic disaster as the result.

Any one examining the poem with a critical eye for its machinery and groundwork will have noticed that Coleridge is careful not to introduce any element of the marvellous or supernatural until he has transported the reader beyond the pale of definite geographical knowledge, and thus left behind him all those conditions of the known and the familiar, all those associations with recorded fact and experience, which would have created an inimical atmosphere. Indeed, there is perhaps something rather inartistic in his undignified haste to convey us to the æsthetically necessary region. In some half-dozen stanzas, beginning with "The ship was cleared," we find ourselves crossing the line and driven far towards the Southern Pole. Beyond a few broad indications thus vouchsafed, Coleridge very astutely takes pains to avoid anything like geography. We reach that silent sea into which we are the first that ever burst, and that is sufficient for imaginative ends. It is enough that the world, as known to actual navigators, is left behind, and a world which the poet is free to colonize with the wildest children of his dreaming brain, has been entered. Forthwith, to all intents and purposes, we may say, in the words of Goethe as rendered by Shelley:

"The bounds of true and false are passed; —
Lead on, thou wandering gleam."

Thenceforth we cease to have any direct relations with the verifiable. Natural law is suspended; standards of probability have ceased to exist. Marvel after marvel is accepted by us, as by the Wedding-Guest, with the unquestioning faith of "a three years' child." We become insensibly acclimatized to this dreamland. Nor is it the chaotic, anarchic, incoherent world of arabesque romance, where the real and unreal by turns arbitrarily interrupt and supplant each other, and are never reconciled at heart. On the contrary, here is no inconsistency, for with the constitution of *this* dream-realm nothing except the natural and the probable would be inconsistent. Here is no danger of the intellect or the reason pronouncing an adverse judgment, for the venue has been changed to a court where the jurisdiction of fancy is supreme. Thus far then, the Logic of the Incredible is perfect, and the result, from the view point of art, magnificent. But at last we quit this consistently, unimpeachably, most satisfactorily impossible world; we are restored to the world of common experience; and when so restoring us, the poet makes his first and only mistake. For the concluding miracle, or rather brace of miracles — the apparition of the angelic forms standing over the corpses of the crew, and the sudden preternatural sinking of the ship — take place just when we have returned to the province of the natural and regular, to the sphere of the actual and the known; just when, floating into harbor, we sight the well-remembered kirk on the rock, and the steady weathercock which the moonlight steeps in silentness. A dissonant note is struck at once. We have left a world where prodigies were normal, and have returned to one where they are monstrous. But

prodigies still pursue us with unseasonable pertinacity, and our feeling is somewhat akin to that of the Ancient Mariner himself, whose prayer is that he may either "be awake" or may "sleep alway." We would fain either surrender unconditionally to reality, or remain free, as naturalized citizens of a self-governing dreamland.

WILLIAM WATSON, *Excursions in Criticism*, pp. 98-101.

And this poem is beyond question one of the supreme triumphs of poetry. Witness the men who brought batteries to bear on it right and left. Literally: for one critic said that the "moral sentiment" had impaired the imaginative excellence; another, that it failed and fell through for want of a moral foothold upon facts. Remembering these things, I am reluctant to proceed; but desirous to praise, as I best may. Though I doubt if it be worth while, seeing how *The Ancient Mariner*, praised or dispraised, lives and is like to live for the delight equally of young boys and old men; and seeing also that the last critic cited was no less a man than Hazlitt. It is fortunate, among many misfortunes, that for Coleridge no warning word was needed against the shriek of the press gang from this side or that. He stooped once or twice to spurn them; but he knew that he stooped. His intense and overwrought abstraction from things of the day or hour did him no ill service here.

The Ancient Mariner has doubtless more of breadth and space, more of material force and motion, than anything else of the poet's. And the tenderness of sentiment which touches with significant color the pure white imagination is here no longer morbid or languid, as in the earlier

poems of feeling and emotion. It is soft and piteous enough, but womanly rather than effeminate; and thus serves indeed to set off the strange splendors and boundless beauties of the story. 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.

SWINBURNE, *Essays and Studies* pp. 263, 264.

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It is enough for us here that he [Coleridge] has written some of the most poetical poetry in the language, and one poem, *The Ancient Mariner*, not only unparalleled, but unapproached in its kind, and that kind of the rarest. It is marvellous in the 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 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 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 for mean-

ing. 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. I cannot think it a personal peculiarity, but a matter of universal experience, that more bits of Coleridge have embedded themselves in my memory than of any other poet who delighted my youth—unless I should except the sonnets of Shakespeare. This argues perfectness of expression.

LOWELL, *Democracy and Other Addresses*, pp. 98, 99.

Christabel, though not printed till 1816, was written mainly in the year 1797: *The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner* was printed as a contribution to the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798; and these two poems belong to the great year of Coleridge's poetic production, his twenty-fifth year. In poetic quality, above all in that most poetic of all qualities, a keen sense of, and delight in beauty, the infection of which lays hold upon the reader, they are quite out of proportion to all his other compositions. The form in both is that of the ballad, with some of its terminology, and some also of its quaint conceits. They connect themselves with that revival of ballad literature, of which Percy's *Relics*, and, in another way, Macpherson's *Ossian* are monuments, and which afterwards so powerfully affected Scott —

“Young-eyed poesy
All deftly masked as hoar antiquity.”

The Ancient Mariner . . . is a "romantic" poem, impressing us by bold invention, and appealing to that taste for the supernatural, that longing for *le frisson*, a shudder, to which the "romantic" school in Germany, and its derivations in England and France directly ministered. In Coleridge, personally, this taste had been encouraged by his odd and out-of-the-way reading in the old-fashioned literature of the marvellous—books like Purchas's *Pilgrims*, early voyages like Hakluyt's, old naturalists and visionary moralists, like Thomas Burnet, from whom he quotes the motto of *The Ancient Mariner*, "*Facile credo, plures esse naturas invisibiles quam visibiles in rerum universitate,*" etc. Fancies of the strange things which may very well happen, even in broad daylight, to men shut up alone in ships far off on the sea, seem to have occurred to the human mind in all ages with a peculiar readiness, and often have about them, from the story of the stealing of Dionysus downwards, the fascination of a certain dreamy grace, which distinguishes them from other kinds of marvellous inventions. This sort of fascination *The Ancient Mariner* brings to its highest degree: it is the delicacy, the dreamy grace, in his presentation of the marvellous, which makes Coleridge's work so remarkable. The too palpable intruders from a spiritual world in almost all ghost literature, in Scott and Shakespeare even, have a kind of crudity or coarseness. Coleridge's power is in the very fineness with which, as by some really ghostly finger, he brings home to our inmost sense his inventions, daring as they are—the skeleton ship, the polar spirit, the inspiriting of the dead corpses of the ship's crew. *The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner* has

the plausibility, the perfect adaptation to reason and the general aspect of life, which belongs to the marvellous, when actually presented as part of a credible experience in our dreams. | Doubtless, the mere experience of the opium-eater, the habit he must almost necessarily fall into of noting the more elusive phenomena of dreams, had something to do with that | in its essence, however, it is connected with a more purely intellectual circumstance in the development of Coleridge's poetic gift. Some one once asked William Blake, to whom Coleridge has many resemblances, when either is at his best (that whole episode of the re-inspiring of the ship's crew in *The Ancient Mariner* being comparable to Blake's well-known design of the "Morning Stars singing together"), whether he had ever seen a ghost, and was surprised when the famous seer, who ought, one might think, to have seen so many, answered frankly, "Only once!" His "spirits," at once more delicate, and so much more real than any ghost — the burden, as they were the privilege, of his *temperament* — like it, were an integral element in his everyday life. And the difference of mood expressed in that question and its answer, is indicative of a change of temper in regard to the supernatural which has passed over the whole modern mind, and of which the true measure is the influence of the writings of Swedenborg. What that change is we may see if we compare the vision by which Swedenborg was "called," as he thought, to his work, with the ghost which called Hamlet, or the spells of Marlowe's *Faust* with those of Goethe's. The modern mind, so minutely self-scrutinizing, if it is to be affected at all by a sense of the supernatural, needs to be more

finely touched than was possible in the older, romantic presentment of it. The spectral object, so crude, so impossible, has become plausible, as

"The blot upon the brain
That *will* show itself without ;"

and is understood to be but a condition of one's own mind, for which, according to the skepticism, latent at least, in so much of our modern philosophy, the so-called real things themselves are but *spectra* after all.

It is this finer, more delicately marvellous supernaturalism, fruit of his more delicate psychology, that Coleridge infuses into romantic adventure, itself also then a new or revived thing in English literature; and with a fineness of weird effect in *The Ancient Mariner*, unknown in those older, more simple, romantic legends and ballads. It is a flower of mediæval or later German romance, growing up in the peculiarly compounded atmosphere of modern psychological speculation, and putting forth in it wholly new qualities. The quaint prose commentary, which runs side by side with the verse of *The Ancient Mariner*, illustrates this — a composition of quite a different shade of beauty and merit from that of the verse which it accompanies, connecting this, the chief poem of Coleridge, with his philosophy, and emphasizing therein that psychological interest of which I have spoken, its curious soul-lore.

Completeness, the perfectly rounded wholeness and unity of the impression it leaves on the mind of a reader who fairly gives himself to it — that, too, is one of the characteristics of a really excellent work, in the poetic as in every other kind of art; and by this completeness, *The Ancient Mariner* certainly gains upon *Christabel* — a com-

pleteness, entire as that of Wordsworth's *Leech-gatherer*, or Keats's *Saint Agnes' Eve*, each typical in its way of such wholeness or entirety of effect on a careful reader. It is Coleridge's one great complete work, the one really finished thing, in a life of many beginnings. *Christabel* remained a fragment. In *The Ancient Mariner* this unity is secured in part by the skill with which the incidents of the marriage-feast are made to break in dreamily from time to time upon the main story. And then, how pleasantly, how reassuringly, the whole nightmare story itself is made to end, among the clear fresh sounds and lights of the bay, where it began, with

“The moonlight steeped in silentness,
The steady weathercock.”

WALTER PATER, *Appreciations*, pp. 96-101.

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, numquam attigit. Juvat, interea, non diffiteor, quandoque in animo, tamquam in tabula, 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.

THE RIME OF
THE ANCIENT MARINER.

IN SEVEN PARTS.



PART I.

It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
"By thy long gray beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?"

An ancient
Mariner meet-
eth three gal-
lants bidden
to a wedding
feast, and
detaineth one.

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

He holds him with his skinny hand,
10 "There was a ship," quoth he.
"Hold off ! unhand me, graybeard loon !"
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

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

The wedding-
guest is spell-
bound by the
eye of the old
seafaring man,
and constrain-
ed to hear his
tale.

The wedding-guest sat on a stone :
 He can not choose but hear ;
 And thus spake on that ancient man,
 20 The bright-eyed Mariner.

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

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

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

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

The wedding-
 guest heareth
 the bridal
 music ; but the
 Mariner con-
 tinueth his
 tale.

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

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

The ship
 drawn by a
 storm toward
 the south
 pole.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Till a great
 seabird called
 the Albatross
 came through
 the snow-fog,
 and was re-
 ceived with
 great joy and
 hospitality.

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

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

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

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

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

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

PART II.

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

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

His ship-
mates cry out
against the
ancient Mari-
ner, for killing
the bird of
good luck.

And I had done an hellish thing,
And it would work 'em woe :
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
95 Ah wretch ! said they, the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow !

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious Sun uprist :

Then all averred, I had killed the bird

100 That brought the fog and mist.

'T was 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 blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free ;

105 We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

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

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
'T was sad as sad could be ;

And we did speak only to break

110 The silence of the sea !

The ship hath been suddenly becalmed.

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

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

Water, water, everywhere,

120 And all the boards did shrink ;

Water, water, everywhere,

Nor any drop to drink.

And the Albatross begins to be avenged.

The very deep did rot : O Christ !

That ever this should be !

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

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

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.

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.

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

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

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

PART III.

There passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parched, and glazed each eye.
145 A weary time ! a weary time !
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,
 150 And then it seemed a mist ;
 It moved and moved, and took at last
 A certain shape, I wist.

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

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
 We could not laugh nor wail ;
 Through utter drought all dumb we stood !
 160 I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
 And cried, A sail ! a sail !

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,
 Agape they heard me call :
 Gramercy ! they for joy did grin,
 165 And all at once their breath drew in,
 As they were drinking all.

A flash of joy ;

See ! see ! (I cried) she tacks no more !
 Hither to work us weal ;
 Without a breeze, without a tide,
 170 She steadies with upright keel !

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

The western wave was all a-flame.
 The day was well nigh done !
 Almost upon the western wave
 Rested the broad bright Sun ;
 175 When that strange shape drove suddenly
 Betwixt us and the Sun.

It seemeth
him but the
skeleton of a
ship.

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

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

And its ribs
are seen as
bars on the
face of the set-
ting Sun.
The spectre-
woman and
her death-
mate, and no
other on board
the skeleton-
ship.

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

Like vessel,
like crew!

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

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

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

No twilight
within the
courts of the
Sun.

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

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

At the rising
 of the Moon,

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

One after
 another,

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

His shipmates
 drop down
 dead ;

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

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

PART IV.

" I fear thee, ancient Mariner !
 225 I fear thy skinny hand !
 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,
 229 And thy skinny hand, so brown.” —
 Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!
 This body dropt not down.

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

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

He despiseth
 the creatures
 of the calm.

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

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

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

I looked to Heaven, and tried to pray;
 245 But or ever a prayer had gusht,
 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; [the sky
 250 For the sky and the sea, and the sea and
 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:

255 The look with which they looked on me
Had never passed away.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Their beauty
and their hap-
piness.

O happy living things ! no tongue
Their beauty might declare :

284 A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware :
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

He blesseth
them in his
heart.

The spell be-
gins to break.

The selfsame moment I could pray ;
And from my neck so free

290 The Albatross fell off and sank
Like lead into the sea.

PART V.

Oh sleep ! it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole !
To Mary Queen the praise be given !

295 She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,
That slid into my soul.

By grace of the
holy Mother,
the ancient
Mariner is re-
freshed with
rain.

The silly buckets on the deck,
That had so long remained,
I dreamt that they were filled with dew ;

300 And when I awoke, it rained.

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

305 I moved, and could not feel my limbs :
I was so light — almost

I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a blessed ghost.

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

He heareth
strange sounds
and seeth
strange sights
and commo-
tions in the sky
and the ele-
ment.

The upper air burst into life!
And a hundred fire-flags sheen,
315 To and fro they were hurried about!
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;
320 And the rain poured down from one black
cloud;
The Moon was at its edge.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
 I heard the sky-lark sing;

360 Sometimes all little birds that are,
 How they seemed to fill the sea and air
 With their sweet jargoning !

And now 't was like all instruments,
 Now like a lonely flute ;

365 And now it is an angel's song,
 That makes the Heavens be mute.

It ceased ; yet still the sails made on
 A pleasant noise till noon,
 A noise like of a hidden brook

370 In the leafy month of June,
 That to the sleeping woods all night
 Singeth a quiet tune.

Till noon we quietly sailed on,
 Yet never a breeze did breathe :

375 Slowly and smoothly went the ship,
 Moved onward from beneath.

Under the keel nine fathom deep,
 From the land of mist and snow,
 The spirit slid : and it was he

380 That made the ship to go.
 The sails at noon left off their tune,
 And the ship stood still also.

The Sun, right up above the mast,
 Had fixed her to the ocean :

385 But in a minute she 'gan stir,
 With a short uneasy motion —
 Backwards and forwards half her length
 With a short uneasy motion.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

410 " But tell me, tell me ! speak again,
 Thy soft response renewing —
 What makes that ship drive on so fast ?
 What is the Ocean doing ?"

SECOND VOICE.

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

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

FIRST VOICE.

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

SECOND VOICE.

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

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

430 I woke, and we were sailing on
 As in a gentle weather :
 ’T was night, calm night, the Moon was high ;
 The dead men stood together.

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

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

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

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

The curse is
 finally expi-
 ated.

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

Like one, that on a lonesome road
 Doth walk in fear and dread,
 And having once turned round walks on,
 And turns no more his head ;
 450 Because he knows, a frightful fiend
 Doth close behind him tread.

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

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

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

And the an-
 cient Mariner
 beholdeth his
 native country.

Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed
 The light-house top I see ?

Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree?

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

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

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

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

The angelic
spirits leave
the dead
bodies,

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

And appear
in their own
forms of light.

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

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

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

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

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

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

PART VII.

The Hermit of
 the Wood,

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

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

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

" Strange, by my faith ! " the Hermit said — Approacheth
the ship with
wonder.
 " And they answered not our cheer !
 The planks looked warped ! and see those sails,
 530 How thin they are and sere !
 I never saw aught like to them,
 Unless perchance it were

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The ancient
 Mariner
 earnestly en-
 treateth the
 Hermit to
 shrieve him;
 and the pen-
 ance of life
 falls on him.

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

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

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

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:
 590 To him my tale I teach.

What loud uproar bursts from that door!
 The wedding-guests are there:
 But in the garden-bower the bride
 And bride-maids singing are:
 595 And hark the little vesper-bell,
 Which biddeth me to prayer!

O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been
 Alone on a wide wide sea:
 So lonely 't was, that God himself
 600 Scarce seemed there to be.

O sweeter than the marriage-feast,
 'T is sweeter far to me,
 To walk together to the kirk
 With a goodly company! —

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE RIME OF
THE ANCYENT MARINERE.

IN SEVEN PARTS.

(*Version of 1798.*)



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.

I

It is an ancyent Marinere,
And he stoppeth one of three :
'By thy long grey beard and thy glittering eye
'Now wherefore stoppest me?

5 'The Bridegroom's doors are open'd wide,
'And I am next of kin ;
'The Guests are met, the Feast is set, —
'May'st hear the merry din.

10 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 —

15 ' Now get thee hence, thou grey-beard Loon!
' Or my Staff shall make thee skip.'

He holds him with his glittering eye —
The wedding guest stood still
And listens like a three year's child ;
20 The Marinere hath his will.

The wedding-guest sate on a stone,
He cannot chuse but hear ;
And thus spake on that ancyent man,
The bright-eyed Marinere.

25 The Ship was cheer'd, the Harbour clear'd —
Merrily did we drop
Below the Kirk, below the Hill,
Below the Light-house top.

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

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

The Bride hath pac'd into the Hall,
Red as a rose is she ;
Nodding their heads before her goes
40 The merry Minstralsy.

The wedding-guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot chuse but hear:
And thus spake on that ancyent Man,
The bright-eyed Marinere.

45 Listen, Stranger ! Storm and Wind,¹
 A Wind and Tempest strong !
 For days and weeks it play'd us freaks —
 Like Chaff we drove along.

50 Listen, Stranger ! Mist and Snow,
 And it grew wond'rous cauld :
 And Ice mast-high came floating by
 As green as Emerald.

And through the drifts the snowy clifts
 Did send a dismal sheen ;
 55 Ne shapes of men ne beasts we ken —
 The Ice was all between.

The Ice was here, the Ice was there,
 The Ice was all around :
 It crack'd and growl'd, and roar'd and howl'd —
 60 Like noises of a swound.²

At length did cross an Albatross,
 Thorough the Fog it came ;
 And an it were a Christian soul,
 We hail'd it in God's name.

65 The Mariners gave it biscuit-worms,
 And round and round it flew :

¹ The foot-notes show the changes made in the edition of 1800.

ll. 45-50. But now the Northwind came more fierce,
 There came a Tempest strong !
 And Southward still for days and weeks
 Like chaff we drove along.

And now there came both Mist and Snow
 And it grew wondrous cold ;

² l. 60. A wild and ceaseless sound.
 (The text of 1798 was afterwards restored.)

The Ice did split with a Thunder-fit,
The Helmsman steer'd us thro'.

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

In mist or cloud on mast or shroud,
It perch'd for vespers nine,
75 Whiles all the night thro' fog-smoke white,
Glimmer'd the white moon-shine.

' God save thee, ancyent Marinere !
' From the fiends that plague thee thus—
' Why look'st thou so ?' — with my cross bow
80 I shot the Albatross.

II

The Sun came up upon the right,
Out of the Sea came he ;
And broad as a weft upon the left
Went down into the Sea.

85 And the good south wind still blew behind,
But no sweet Bird did follow
Ne any day for food or play
Came to the Marinere's hollo !

And I had done an hellish thing
90 And it would work 'em woe :
For all averr'd I had kill'd the Bird
That made the Breeze to blow.

Ne dim ne red, like God's own head,
The glorious Sun uprist ;
95 Then all averr'd I had kill'd the Bird
That brought the fog and mist.
'T was right, said they, such birds to slay
That bring the fog and mist.

The breezes blew, the white foam flew,
100 The furrow follow'd free :
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent Sea.

Down dropt the breeze, the Sails dropt down,
'T was sad as sad could be
105 And we did speak only to break
The silence of the Sea.

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

Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, ne breath ne motion,
As idle as a painted Ship
Upon a painted Ocean.

115 Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink ;
Water, water, everywhere,
Ne any drop to drink.

The very deeps did rot : O Christ !
120 That ever this should be !
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy Sea.

About, about, in reel and rout,
 The Death-fires danc'd at night ;
 125 The water, like a witch's oils,
 Burnt green and blue and white.

And some in dreams assured were
 Of the Spirit that plagued us so ;
 Nine fathom deep he had follow'd us
 130 From the Land of Mist and Snow.

And every tongue thro' utter drouth
 Was wither'd at the root ;
 We could not speak no more than if
 We had been choked with soot.

135 Ah ! wel-a-day ! what evil looks
 Had I from old and young ;
 Instead of the Cross the Albatross
 About my neck was hung.

III

I saw a something in the Sky,¹
 140 No bigger than my fist ;
 At first it seem'd a little speck
 And then it seem'd a mist :
 It mov'd and mov'd, and took at last
 A certain shape, I wist.

145 A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist !
 And still it ner'd and ner'd ;

¹ ll. 139, 140. 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.

And, an it dodg'd a water-sprite,
It plung'd, and tack'd, and veer'd.

150 With throat unslack'd, with black lips bak'd
Ne could we laugh, ne wail :
Then while thro' drouth, all dumb they stood
I bit my arm and suck'd the blood
And cry'd, A sail ! a sail !

155 With throat unslack'd, with black lips bak'd,
Agape they hear'd me call ;
Gramercy ! they for joy did grin
And all at once their breath drew in
As they were drinking all.

160 She doth not tack from side to side —
Hither to work us weal
Withouten wind, withouten tide,
She steddies with upright keel.

The western wave was all a flame,
The day was well nigh done !
165 Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad bright Sun ;
When that strange shape drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the Sun.

170 And strait the Sun was fleck'd with bars
(Heaven's mother send us grace)
As if thro' a dungeon grate he peer'd
With broad and burning face.

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

Are those *her* naked ribs, which fleck'd
 The sun that did behind them peer?
 And are those two all, all the crew,
 180 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
 185 They 're patch'd with purple and green.

Her lips are red, *her* looks are free,
Her locks are yellow as gold:
 Her skin is as white as leprosy,
 And she is far liker Death than he;
 190 Her flesh makes the still air cold.

The naked Hulk alongside came
 And the Twain were playing dice;
 'The Game is done! I've won, I've won!'
 Quoth she, and whistled thrice.

195 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.

With never a whisper in the Sea
 200 Off darts the Spectre-ship;
 While clombe above the Eastern bar
 The horned Moon, with one bright Star
 Almost atween the tips.

¹ ll. 177-180. 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?

One after one by the horned Moon
 205 (Listen, O Stranger ! to me)
 Each turn'd his face with a ghastly pang
 And curs'd me with his ee.

Four times fifty living men,
 With never a sigh or groan,
 210 With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
 They dropp'd down one by one.

Their souls did from their bodies fly, —
 They fled to bliss or woe ;
 And every soul it pass'd me by,
 215 Like the whiz of my Cross-bow.

IV

' I fear thee, ancyent Marinere !
 ' I fear thy skinny hand ;
 ' And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
 ' As is the ribb'd Sea-sand.

220 ' I fear thee and thy glittering eye
 ' And thy skinny hand so brown —
 Fear not, fear not, thou wedding guest !
 This body dropt not down.

Alone, alone, all all alone,
 225 Alone on the wide wide Sea ;
 And Christ would take no pity on
 My soul in agony.

The many men so beautiful,
 And they all dead did lie !
 230 And a million million slimy things
 Liv'd on — and so did I.

- I look'd upon the rotting Sea,
And drew my eyes away ;
I look'd upon the eldritch deck,
235 And there the dead men lay.
- I look'd to Heav'n, and try'd to pray ;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came and made
My heart as dry as dust.
- 240 I clos'd my lids and kept them close,
Till the balls like pulses beat ;
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky,
Lay like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.
- 245 The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Ne rot, ne reek did they ;
The look with which they look'd on me,
Had never pass'd away.
- An orphan's curse would drag to Hell
250 A spirit from on high :
But O! more horrible than that
Is the curse in a dead man's eye !
Seven days, seven nights I saw that curse,
And yet I could not die.
- 255 The moving Moon went up the sky,
And no where did abide :
Softly she was going up
And a star or two beside —
- Her beams bemock'd the sultry main
260 Like morning frosts yspread ;

But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
The charmed water burnt alway
A still and awful red.

Beyond the shadow of the ship
265 I watch'd the water-snakes :
They mov'd in tracks of shining white ;
And when they rear'd, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

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

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

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

v

O sleep, it is a gentle thing,
285 Belov'd from pole to pole !
To Mary-queen the praise be even
She sent the gentle sleep from heaven
That slid into my soul.

The silly buckets on the deck
290 That had so long remain'd ;
I dreamt that they were fill'd with dew
And when I awoke it rain'd.

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

I mov'd, and could not feel my limbs,
I was so light, almost
I thought that I had died in sleep,
300 And was a blessed Ghost.

The roaring wind ! it roar'd far off,
It did not come anear ;
But with its sound it shook the sails
That were so thin and sere.

305 The upper air bursts into life,
And a hundred fire-flags sheen,
To and fro they are hurried about ;
And to and fro, and in and out
The stars dance on between.

310 The coming wind doth roar more loud ;
The sails do sigh, like sedge :
The rain pours down from one black cloud
And the Moon is at its edge.

Hark ! hark ! the thick black cloud is cleft,
315 And the Moon is at its side ;
Like waters shot from some high crag,
The lightning falls with never a jag
A river steep and wide.

320 The strong wind reach'd the ship : it roar'd
 And dropp'd down, like a stone !
 Beneath the lightning and the moon
 The dead men gave a groan.

They groan'd, they stirr'd, they all uprose,
 Ne spake, ne mov'd their eyes :
 325 It had been strange, even in a dream
 To have seen those dead men rise.

The helmsman steer'd, the ship mov'd on ;
 Yet never a breeze up-blew ;
 The Mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
 330 Where they were wont to do :
 They rais'd their limbs like lifeless tools —
 We were a ghastly crew.

The body of my brother's son
 Stood by me knee to knee :
 335 The body and I pull'd at one rope,
 But he said nought to me —
 And I quak'd to think of my own voice¹
 How frightful it would be !

340 The day-light dawn'd — they dropp'd their arms,
 And cluster'd round the mast :
 Sweet sounds rose slowly thro' their mouths
 And from their bodies pass'd.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,
 Then darted to the sun :
 345 Slowly the sounds came back again
 Now mix'd, now one by one.

¹ ll. 337, 338 omitted.

Sometimes a dropping from the sky,
 I heard the Lavrock sing ;
 Sometimes all little birds that are
 350 How they seem'd to fill the sea and air
 With their sweet jargoning.

And now 't was like all instruments,
 Now like a lonely flute ;
 And now it is an angel's song
 355 That makes the heavens be mute.

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

Listen, O listen, thou Wedding-guest !¹
 ' Marinere ! thou hast thy will :
 ' For that, which comes out of thine eye, doth make
 365 ' 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.

370 Never sadder tale was heard
 By a man of woman born :
 The Mariners all return'd to work
 As silent as before.

The Mariners all 'gan pull the ropes,
 375 But look at me they n'old :

¹ ll. 362-377. These four stanzas omitted.

Thought I, I am as thin as air —
 They cannot me behold.

Till noon we silently sail'd on
 Yet never a breeze did breathe :
 380 Slowly and smoothly went the ship
 Mov'd onward from beneath.

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

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

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

How long in that same fit I lay,
 I have not to declare ;
 400 But ere my living life return'd,
 I heard and in my soul discern'd
 Two voices in the air.

' Is it he ? ' quoth one, ' Is this the man ?
 ' By him who died on cross,

- 405 ' With his cruel bow he lay'd full low
 ' The harmless Albatross.
- ' The spirit who 'bideth by himself
 ' In the land of mist and snow,
 ' He lov'd the bird that lov'd the man
 410 ' Who shot him with his bow.'

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

VI

FIRST VOICE.

- 415 ' But tell me, tell me ! speak again,
 ' Thy soft response renewing —
 ' What makes that ship drive on so fast ?
 ' What is the Ocean doing ?'

SECOND VOICE.

- 420 ' Still as a Slave before his Lord,
 ' The Ocean hath no blast :
 ' His great bright eye most silently
 ' Up to the moon is cast —
- ' If he may know which way to go,
 ' For she guides him smooth or grim.
 425 ' See, brother, see ! how graciously
 ' She looketh down on him.'

FIRST VOICE.

- ' But why drives on that ship so fast
 ' Withouten wave or wind ?'

SECOND VOICE.

- 430 'The air is cut away before,
' And closes from behind.
- 'Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high,
' Or we shall be belated;
For slow and slow that ship will go,
' When the Marinere's trance is abated.'
- 435 I woke, and we were sailing on
As in a gentle weather:
'T was night, calm night, the moon was high;
The dead men stood together.
- 440 All stood together on the deck,
For a charnel-dungeon fitter:
All fix'd on me their stony eyes
That in the moon did glitter.
- The pang, the curse, with which they died,
Had never pass'd away:
445 I could not draw my een from theirs
Ne turn them up to pray.
- And in its time the spell was snapt,
And I could move my een:
I look'd far-forth, but little saw
450 Of what might else be seen.
- Like one, that on a lonely road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turn'd round, walks on
And turns no more his head:
455 Because he knows, a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

But soon there breath'd a wind on me,
 Ne sound ne motion made :
 Its path was not upon the sea,
 460 In ripple or in shade.

It rais'd my hair, it fann'd my cheek,
 Like a meadow-gale of spring —
 It mingled strangely with my fears,
 Yet it felt like a welcoming.

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

O dream of joy ! is this indeed
 470 The light-house top I see ?
 Is this the Hill ? Is this the Kirk ?
 Is this mine own countrée ?

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

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

The moonlight bay was white all o'er,¹
 Till rising from the same,
 Full many shapes, that shadows were,
 Like as of torches came.

¹ ll. 481-502. These five stanzas omitted.

485 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,
490 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 ;
495 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
500 Forth looking as before.
There was no breeze upon the bay,
No wave against the shore.

The rock shone bright, the kirk no less
That stands above the rock :
505 The moonlight steep'd in silentness
The steady weathercock.

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

A little distance from the prow
Those crimson shadows were :
I turn'd my eyes upon the deck —
O Christ ! what saw I there ?

515 Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat ;
 And by the Holy rood,
 A man all light, a seraph-man,
 On every corse there stood.
 This seraph-band, each wav'd his hand :
 520 It was a heavenly sight :
 They stood as signals to the land,
 Each one a lovely light :
 This seraph-band, each wav'd his hand,
 No voice did they impart —
 525 No voice ; but O ! the silence sank,
 Like music on my heart.
 Eftsones I heard the dash of oars,
 I heard the pilot's cheer :
 My head was turn'd perforce away,
 530 And I saw a boat appear.
 Then vanish'd all the lovely lights ;¹
 The bodies rose anew :
 With silent pace, each to his place,
 Came back the ghastly crew.
 535 The wind, that shade nor motion made,
 On me alone it blew.
 The pilot, and the pilot's boy
 I heard them coming fast :
 Dear Lord in Heaven ! it was a joy,
 540 The dead men could not blast.
 I saw a third — I heard his voice :
 It is the Hermit good !
 He singeth loud his godly hymns
 That he makes in the wood.
 545 He 'll shrieve my soul, he 'll wash away
 The Albatross's blood.

¹ ll. 531-536. This stanza omitted.

VII

- This Hermit good lives in that wood
 Which slopes down to the Sea.
 How loudly his sweet voice he rears !
 550 He loves to talk with Marineres
 That come from a far Countrée.
- He kneels at morn and noon and eve —
 He hath a cushion plump :
 It is the moss, that wholly hides
 555 The rotted old Oak-stump.
- The skiff-boat ne'rd : I heard them talk,
 ' Why, this is strange, I trow !
 ' Where are those lights so many and fair
 ' That signal made but now ?'
- 560 ' Strange, by my faith !' the Hermit said —
 ' And they answer'd not our cheer.
 ' The planks look warp'd, and see those sails
 ' How thin they are and sere !
 ' I never saw aught like to them
 565 ' Unless perchance it were
- ' The skeletons of leaves that lag
 ' My forest-brook along :
 ' When the Ivy-tod is heavy with snow,
 ' And the Owlet whoops to the wolf below
 570 ' That eats the she-wolf's young.'
- ' Dear Lord ! it has a fiendish look —
 (The Pilot made reply)
 ' I am afear'd' — ' Push on, push on !'
 Said the Hermit cheerily.

575 The Boat came closer to the Ship,
 But I ne spake ne stirr'd !
 The Boat came close beneath the Ship,
 And strait a sound was heard !

Under the water it rumbled on,
 580 Still louder and more dread :
 It reach'd the Ship, it split the bay ;
 The Ship went down like lead.

Stunn'd by that loud and dreadful sound,
 Which sky and ocean smote :
 585 Like one that had been seven days drown'd
 My body lay afloat :
 But, swift as dreams, myself I found
 Within the Pilot's boat.

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

I mov'd my lips : the Pilot shriek'd
 And fell down in a fit,
 595 The Holy Hermit rais'd his eyes
 And pray'd where he did sit.

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

And now all in mine own Countrée
 I stood on the firm land !

605 The Hermit stepp'd forth from the boat,
And scarcely he could stand.

'O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy Man !'

The Hermit cross'd his brow —

610 'Say quick,' quoth he, 'I bid thee say
'What manner man art thou?'

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrench'd

With a woeful agony,

Which forc'd me to begin my tale

And then it left me free.

615 Since then at an uncertain hour,¹
Now oftimes and now fewer,
That anguish comes and makes me tell
My ghastly aventure.

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

625 What loud uproar bursts from that door !
The Wedding-guests are there ;
But in the Garden-bower the Bride
And Bride-maids singing are :
And hark the little Vesper bell
Which biddeth me to prayer.

¹ ll. 615-618. Since then at an uncertain hour
That agony returns ;
And till my ghastly tale is told
This heart within me burns.

630 O Wedding-guest ! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide wide sea :
So lonely 't was, that God himself
Scarce seemed there to be.

O sweeter than the Marriage-feast,
635 'T is sweeter far to me
To walk together to the Kirk
With a goodly company.

To walk together to the Kirk
And all together pray,
640 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
To thee, thou wedding-guest !
645 He prayeth well who loveth well,
Both man and bird and beast.

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

The Marinere, whose eye is bright,
Whose beard with age is hoar,
Is gone ; and now the wedding-guest
Turn'd from the bridegroom's door.

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

NOTES.



Rime. The derivation (Anglo-Saxon, *rīm*; Middle English, *rime*) shows this spelling to be correct rather than the ordinary form, *rhyme*, which is the result of a confusion beginning about 1550 between *rime* and *rhythm*.

The gloss did not appear in the earliest editions; it was added in *Sibylline Leaves* (1817).

1 1. **It is an ancient Mariner.** A common form of introduction in the ballads.

1 3. **"By thy long gray beard."** Brandl regards this Turkish oath as an indication of the "eclectic tendency" of the Romantic school!

1 8. What is the subject of *mayst hear*?

1 12. **Eftsoons**, at once. (Anglo-Saxon, *aeft* and *sōna*.)

1-2 13-19. Notice the mixed tenses. Cf. ll. 57-58, 363-65. Is this the result of carelessness?

1 15-16. These lines are Wordsworth's.

2 18. **He can not choose but hear.** "Doubtless this is a feature taken from life, for such a fascination did Coleridge himself exercise over his hearers." (Brandl.)

2 20. What is gained by putting the story into the mouth of the Ancient Mariner himself? Is there any advantage in his having the impatient wedding-guest as a listener? See *Introduction*, p. xxvi.

2 23. **kirk**, a Northern form of *church*. Explain the presence of dialect words and archaisms in the poem.

2 21-24. What is the point of view — that of the Ancient Mariner on board the ship or that of an observer on shore?

2 34. **Red as a rose.** A very common comparison in the ballads.

2 36. **minstrelsy**, musicians.

3 47. **still**, constantly.

2-3 21-50. Do you agree with William Watson (see *Introduction*, p. xviii) that Coleridge shows "undignified haste to convey us to the aesthetically necessary region?"

3 55. **clifts**, cliffs.

3 56. **sheen**, brightness. In l. 314 the word is used as an adjective.

3 57. **ken**, describ.

3 61. Notice the harmony between sound and sense.

3 62. **swound**, swoon.

3 64. **Thorough**, through. An archaism.

4 76. **vespers**, evenings.

4 82. "The details were gathered from Shelvocke's *Voyage round the World*. He [Wordsworth] there read of a captain, by name Simon Hatley, a discontented, cruel, splenetic man. . . . The same, on a fearfully cold and stormy passage, far south of the Terra del Fuego, saw a black albatross, the only living thing in the wide waste of waters, who soared round and round the vessel for many days. The captain accordingly imagined in his superstitious way that the dark, disconsolate-looking bird had something to do with the bad weather, and in one of his gloomy fits shot the albatross, 'not doubting' (perhaps) 'that we should have a fair wind after it.' The guardian spirits of Nature, of whom Coleridge often sang in Stowey, revenged the murder; and the ship's company agreed to put the mark of Cain on the criminal, by hanging the body of the albatross about his neck." (Brandl.)

4 92. 'em. Not colloquial, but archaic. (A.-S., *him*, dat. pl. of *hē*, *hēo*, *hit*; M. E., *hem*.)

5 97. **like God's own head**. Care should be taken in reading to connect this phrase with the latter part of the sentence.

5 98. **uprist**, arose. In Chaucer this word is usually either a substantive or a contracted form of the third sing. pres. ind. (*upriseth*); but in a few cases it is used, as Coleridge uses it here, as a third sing. pret. ind.

5 103-104. Alliteration.

5 104. **The furrow followed free**. In the edition of 1817 Coleridge changed this line to

The furrow streamed off free.

His reason for doing so was that actual observation on board ship had taught him that the image described in the text is the one seen by a spectator from the shore or from another vessel, and that from the ship itself the wake appears like a brook flowing off from the stern. But in the later editions he restored the present reading. Which of the readings is preferable?

5 117-118. Cf. *Hamlet*, II. ii. 502, when Pyrrhus' sword

seemed i' the air to stick:

So as a painted tyrant, Pyrrhus stood,
And like a neutral to his will and matter
Did nothing. (Hales.)

6 128. **death-fires**, luminous appearances supposed to be seen over dead bodies. Cf. Coleridge's *Ode to the Departing Year*,

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

6 138. Notice the force of this homely comparison.

6 141. Five of the seven parts of the poem end with a reference to the Mariner's crime. Is this by accident or design? See 82, note.

7 152. **I wist.** This expression was probably conceived by Coleridge, and the ballad writers whom he imitated, to mean "I think" or "I guess." It is properly an adverb meaning "certainly." (A.-S., *gewis*; M. E., *y-wis*, *i-wis*.) The two syllables being printed separately, the word was mistaken for a verb with subject pronoun.

7 149-161. "He [Coleridge] was accustomed to wander of evenings on the shore to the north of Stowey, and watch a vessel emerging to sight on the open sea — first a little spot between himself and the setting sun; then a dark little cloud; then a shadowy form, mast and yards, black as iron cross-bars; while the solitary character of the coast helped to heighten the ghostly impression." (Brandl.)

7 164. **Gramercy!** An exclamation of gratitude or surprise (Fr., *grand merci*).

'**grin.** "I took the thought of 'grinning for joy' . . . from poor Burnett's remark to me, when we had climbed to the top of Plinlimmon, and were nearly dead with thirst. We could not speak 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." (Coleridge's *Table-Talk*, May 31, 1830.)

8 177-187. The skeleton ship was suggested to Coleridge by the dream of his friend Cruikshank.

8 184. **gossameres**, filmy cobwebs woven by small spiders.

8 197. "**I've, I've won!**" Many editions, including Mr. Campbell's, read *I've won, I've won*; but the reading in the text is that of the edition of 1829, the latest that was printed under Coleridge's personal supervision.

8 198. **thrice**, a mystical number, much used in charms. Cf. Milton's *Comus*, ll. 914-15,

Thrice upon thy finger's tip,
Thrice upon thy rubied lip.

9 209. **clomb**, climbed. An archaism.

9 210-11. Is this imagination or observation? Are stars ever visible so near the moon?

9 226-27. "For the last two lines of this stanza I am indebted to Mr. Wordsworth. It was on a delightful walk from Nether Stowey to Dulverton, with him and his sister, in the autumn of 1797, that this poem was planned and in part composed." (Coleridge's note.)

11 263-66. Notice the contrast between the beauty of this stanza and the horrors of the narrative.

11 270. **charmed**, under a spell. (Lat. *carmen*, a song, an incantation.)

11 273. **water-snakes**. "In these monsters he [Coleridge] seems to have taken particular interest, and to have consulted various zoölogical works; for the note-book of this date contains long paragraphs upon the alligators, boas, and crocodiles of antediluvian times." (Brandl.)

12 282-91. Dowden comments: "That one self-centred 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." (*New Studies in Literature*, p. 341.)

12 292-93. Cf. *The Pains of Sleep*,

Sleep, the wide blessing.

12 295-96. Cf. Browning, *Christmas Eve*,

Have I been sure, this Christmas Eve,
God's own hand did the rainbow weave,
Whereby the truth *from heaven slid*
Into my soul?

12 297. **silly**, useless.

13 314. **sheen**, bright. The use of this word as an adjective is archaic.

15 362. **jargonning**. *Jargonner* is the usual word in Old French for the singing of birds.

14-15 354-72. Memorize.

15 385-88. Notice the skilful adaptation of the metre to the motion described.

16 404-5. "The consciousness of a central spirit of love and redemption is the religion of Coleridge's most vital poem, the 'Ancient Mariner.'" (Vida D. Scudder, *The Life of the Spirit in the Modern English Poets*, p. 312.)

16 407. **honey-dew**, a sweet substance found in minute drops on the leaves of plants and trees. Cf. *Kubla Khan*,

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.

17 435. **charnel-dungeon**, a vault for the deposit of dead bodies.

18 452 ff. "As the voyage approaches its conclusion, ordinary instrumentalities appear once more. There is first the rising of the soft familiar

wind, 'like a meadow gale in spring,' then the blessed vision of the lighthouse top, the hill, the kirk, all those well-known realities which gradually relieve the absorbed excitement of the listener, and favour his slow return to ordinary daylight." (Mrs. Oliphant.)

18 460-63. Alliteration.

19 467. **countree**, an archaic form of *country*, very common in the ballads.

19 489. **rood**, cross.

20 492-95. Alliteration.

20 512. **shrieve**, hear confession and pronounce absolution.

21 521-22. Cf. *Christabel*,

And naught was green upon the oak,
But moss and rarest mistletoe.

21 524. **trou**, think, believe.

21 535. **ivy-tod**, ivy-bush, a dialect word.

22 549. See *Introduction*, p. xix.

— 22 560-69. Traill comments: "With what consummate art are we left to imagine the physical traces which the Mariner's long agony had left behind it, by a method far more terrible than any direct description — the effect, namely, which the sight of him produces upon others." (*Coleridge*, p. 52.)

24 610-17. "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 obtusion of the moral sentiment so openly on the reader as a principle or cause of action in a work of such pure imagination." (*Coleridge's Table-Talk*, May 31, 1830.)

Mrs. Oliphant does not agree with Coleridge: "And then comes the ineffable half-childish, half-divine simplicity of those soft moralisings 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 depth 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." (*Literary History of England, XVIIIth and XIXth Centuries*, vol. I, p. 249.)

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