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Ab! well a-day! wbat
evil looks

Had I from old and young!
Instead of the cross the
Albatross

About my neck was bung.

COLERIDGE'S

THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT
MARINER

EDITED

WITH NOTES AND AN INTRODUCTION

BY

M. A. EATON, A. B.



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INTRODUCTION.

THE AUTHOR.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was born in the village of Ottery St. Mary in Devonshire, in the year 1772. His father was rector of the little parish and had a large family, of whom Samuel was the youngest. He lived here until he was nine years old when, unfortunately for him, his father died.

As he was without money or friends, he was sent to the great London Charity School, Christ's Hospital, which Lamb has described so vividly in "Elia."

Here his life was by no means an easy one. Once, indeed, he tried to escape, and became the apprentice of a shoe-maker, but he was forced to go back to school again. Coleridge, however, had an unfailing refuge from all the ills that afflicted him. This was the dream world in which from his earliest years he lived much of the time. This "shaping spirit of imagination," he says, "Nature gave

me at my birth." In school at London he would lie for hours on the roof gazing after the drifting clouds and trying to fathom the blue of the sky.

Once this too vivid imagination very nearly involved him in grave difficulties. He was walking along the Strand on a busy day, swinging his arms and fancying himself swimming in an imaginary sea. Suddenly his hand came in contact with the pocket of one of the passers-by. It was promptly grasped by the outraged stranger, who exclaimed, "What, so young and so wicked!" "But I'm not wicked nor a pickpocket, sir," remonstrated Coleridge; "I thought I was Leander swimming the Hellespont." The gentleman was so impressed with the incident that it is said he obtained membership for the youth in a circulating library.

Coleridge was not a mere dreamer, however. He became the first student in the school and, as a result, was transferred at nineteen to Cambridge University. Here he might have distinguished himself had it not been for his erratic temperament. Debts drove him to London, where he enlisted in the Dragoons, and, although he subsequently re-

turned to college, he soon left again without taking a degree.

He made one friend at this time, who had a good deal of influence upon his life. This was the poet, Robert Southey, who was just then under the influence of the socialistic ideas of the French Revolution. The two young men decided to establish an ideal community in the wilds of America, in which the citizens were to work at farming two hours of the day and develop their souls the rest of the time.

Unfortunately, however, their ideas outstripped their pocketbooks, and while they were still dreaming at Southey's home in Bristol, their plans were forever checked. The two poets fell in love with two sisters and were soon after married.

Coleridge lived at Clevedon, near Bristol, with his wife, Sara Fricker, for two years.

His life here was a struggle. He had married, with his usual carelessness in such matters, on practically no income at all. His health was poor, he was quite unable to do any good work except when the spirit moved him, and his wife did not prove to be of a sympathetic temperament. His work at this

period, therefore, is of little moment, and it was not until he met the poet Wordsworth in 1797 that his real power began to awaken.

In this year Coleridge moved to Nether Stowey, in the English lake region, Wordsworth's home, and their famous intimacy began. Wordsworth was then full of the idea that poetry should deal with the simple emotions and events of daily life and express them in simple language, not in the artificial diction of the eighteenth century poets.

These theories, which were destined to have a profound influence upon English poetry, bore immediate fruit in a joint volume called "Lyrical Ballads," to which Coleridge contributed "The Ancient Mariner" and a few other poems.

The book did not make a great impression at the time and Coleridge left Nether Stowey soon after. For two years he travelled in Germany with the Wordsworths, where he translated Schiller's drama, "Wallenstein," and became profoundly interested in German philosophy.

In 1800 he returned to England and settled in Keswick with Wordsworth. The poetic muse, however, seemed to have abandoned

him. He was ill, too. He had always been a sufferer from neuralgia, and the habit of taking opium to alleviate the pain was beginning to cloud his intellect and his will. He became restless, and for the next fifteen years he led the life of a wanderer, estranged from his family and powerless to do anything worth while.

At last he placed himself under the care of a surgeon in London, and here, though his health was shattered, he gradually regained the power to work. The work, however, was now chiefly that of a literary critic and philosopher, though he wrote a few brilliant fragments of verse at this time. Young poets and critics flocked to see him and the fame of his conversation and lectures spread far and wide.

But he never fulfilled the brilliant promise of his youth. He "gave you the idea," says Carlyle, "of a life that had been full of sufferings; a life heavy laden, half vanquished, still swimming painfully in seas of manifold physical and other bewilderment." Much even of his best work is fragmentary and incomplete. His flashes of genius often left him before a poem was finished, and the

mood would never again return. He tells us that while writing "Kubla Khan," which came to him in his sleep as a kind of vision, he was interrupted by a person who called on business. When the interruption was over the vision had fled and the poem still remains a fragment.

Coleridge died at Highgate after a lingering illness, July 25, 1834. In spite of his weakness and failures and of the incomplete character of his work, those fragments stamp him as one of the very greatest of lyric poets. He can invest the simplest words with a music and charm rare in any language, he can paint pictures in three words that have an almost uncanny vividness, he can make the marvellous startlingly real, and the weird fascinating without being horrible. How much greater he might have been we cannot tell. As Hazlitt said, "To the man had been given in high measure the seeds of noble endowment, but to unfold them had been forbidden him."

THE POEM.

Had Coleridge written nothing else, the "Ancient Mariner" would have made for him an immortal name. Yet neither the author nor his friends, Southey and Wordsworth, thought it a poem of much consequence.

It came to be written in this way. In the autumn of 1797, Wordsworth and his sister, with Coleridge, started one afternoon to visit Linton and the Valley of Stones. As none of the three had much money they decided to pay the expenses of their little journey by writing a poem for the *New Monthly Magazine*. In the course of their walk they planned a poem founded on a dream of Coleridge's friend, Mr. Cruikshank. Wordsworth had been reading, a day or two before, in "Shelvocke's Voyages," when he came across the following passage: "We saw no fish nor one sea bird, except a disconsolate black albatross, who accompanied us for several days, hovering about us as if he had lost himself, till Hartley (my second captain) observing in one of his melancholy fits that this bird

was always hovering near us, imagined from his color that it might be some ill omen. That which, I suppose, induced him the more to encourage his superstition, was the continued series of contrary tempestuous winds, which had oppressed us ever since we got into this sea. But be that as it would, he, after some fruitless attempts, at length shot the albatross, not doubting (perhaps) that we should have a fair wind after it."

This passage led Wordsworth to propose that the mariner kill one of those birds on entering the South Sea, and that the guardian spirits of the region take upon themselves to avenge the crime.

That same evening the poem was begun, but Wordsworth soon found that they could not collaborate successfully and he retired and left the field to Coleridge.

The poem is in the style of the early ballads, though Coleridge varies the stanza by the introduction of additional lines. This stanza is especially adapted to the mysterious twilight region full of nameless terms and strange shapes into which the story takes us.

The "Ancient Mariner" is not merely a

supernatural tale, however. It has a fine spiritual significance, very simply and tenderly expressed. It is simply that love is the power which makes all created things kin. The soul that hates any living thing, that harbors any thought of malignance or cruelty toward an innocent creature, even if that creature be only a bird or a water snake, dwells apart, shunned by the living and shut out even from God. It is when he learns how to love even the humblest of God's creatures, that he begins to be conscious of the bond which binds him to others. Only then does he feel the beauty of the sea and sky, the meadows and the forest streams. Then for the first time he learns the songs of the birds and sees the divine in every man. Then at last he can approach God, for his very act of loving, his joy in living things, is itself a prayer.

OTHER POEMS TO READ

"Christabel" — First Part.

"Kubla Khan."

"Ode to Dejection."

"Ode to France."

"The Dark Ladie."

"Frost at Midnight."

"Love."

"Lines to Wordsworth."

"Youth and Age."

"Complaint and Reply."

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PART THE FIRST.

I.

An ancient
Mariner meet-
eth three Gal-
lants bidden to
a wedding-
feast, and de-
taineth one.

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

“By thy long gray beard and
glittering eye,
Now wherefor stoppst
thou me?”

1. *It is.* That is, the man is. This is a form of beginning common in old tales and ballads, and has the merit of vividness.

1. *Mariner.* Mariner, Bridegroom, etc., are capitalized because they are used throughout the poem as titles.

2. *One of three.* The odd numbers, three, five, seven, and nine, have always been associated with the symbolic and supernatural. Thus there are three Fates, nine Muses, three Graces, etc. The world was made in seven days, the Resurrection took place on the third day, etc. See also the *Blessed Damosel*.

“She had three lilies in her hand,
And the stars in her hair were seven.”

II.

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

III.

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

2. *Kin*. That is, the nearest relative.

4. *Mayst*. Thou mayst. An effect of impatience is produced by the omission of the pronoun.

6. *There was*, etc. Note the abruptness with which incidents and objects are introduced. This produces an incongruous, uncanny effect, like objects in a dream.

6. *Quoth*. Said.

7. *Loon*. A stupid, foolish fellow.

8. *Eftsoons*. Straightway.

8. *Dropt*. Coleridge is fond of this form of the past tense.

IV.

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

He holds him with a
 tering eye —
The Wedding-Guest
 still,
And listens like a
 child:
The Mariner

The Wedding-Guest
 a ;
He cannot
And then

The

“The

Me

9. *Cleared.* Passes
10. *Drop.* Sail down

Below the kirk, below the
hill,
Below the lighthouse top.

VII.

The sun came up upon the
left,
Out of the sea came he!
He shone bright, and on
the right
t down into the sea.

VIII.

d higher every day,
l for *church*.

house, being the highest
of sight.

t is, they were sailing
se :

retire,
! of the night,
of fire,
pillar'd light!
ed robe
vnward drawn,
he globe
he dawn.

—*The Voyage.*



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Till over the mast at
noon —”
The Wedding-Guest here
beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bas-
soon.

IX.

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

The bride hath paced into
the hall,
Red as a rose is she; ⁵
Nodding their heads before
her goes
The merry minstrelsy.

X.

The Wedding-Guest he beat
his breast,

3. *Bassoon*. A musical instrument. It serves as a bass among the wind instruments of an orchestra.

5. *Red as a rose*. Compare Burns’
“O, my love’s like a red, red rose.”

6. *Nodding*. Instinctively keeping time to the music with their bodies, as a musician is apt to do.

7. *Minstrelsy*. Literally the music of the minstrels. The word is here used to mean the minstrels themselves, and accounts for the singular form of the verb *goes*.

Yet he cannot choose but
 hear;
 And thus spake on that an-
 cient man,
 The bright-eyed Mariner.

XI.

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’ertak-
 ing wings,
 And chased us southalong.

XII.

With sloping masts and dip-
 ping prow,
 As who pursued with yell
 and blow

7. *South along.* A rather archaic use of the adverb.
8. *Sloping.* Because the ship was pitched over by the gale.
8. *Prow.* The forward end of a ship.

Still treads the shadow of his
 foe,
 And forward bends his
 head,
 The ship drove fast, loud
 roared the blast,
 And southward aye we
 fled.

XIII.

And now there came both
 mist and snow, 5
 And it grew wondrous
 cold:
 And ice, mast-high, came
 floating by,
 As green as emerald.

XIV.

The land of ice,
 and of fearful
 sounds, where

And through the drifts the
 snowy clifts

1. *Treads the shadow.* That is, keeps just his shadow's length ahead of him.

4. *Aye.* Continually, always.

7. *Mast-high.* An old book of voyages published in 1633 describes "Ice as high as our Top-Mast-Head."

no living thing
was to be seen.

Did send a dismal sheen;
Nor shapes of men nor beasts
we ken —
The ice was all between.

XV.

The ice was here, the ice was
there,
The ice was all around: ⁵
It cracked and growled, and
roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound!

XVI.

Till a great sea-
bird, called the
Albatross, came
through the

At length did cross an
Albatross:

1. *Sheen*. Cold light.
2. *Ken*. Discerned.
3. *Between*. That is, everywhere the ice shut us in and obscured our view.
7. *Swound*. Swoon, faint. The same old book says that the ice "made a hollow and hideous noise."
8. *Cross*. That is, did cross our course.
8. *Albatross*. A sea bird which has a habit of following a ship for days together. Sailors regard it as an unlucky omen to kill one of them.

snow-fog, and
was received
with great joy
and hospitality.

Thorough the fog it came;
As if it had been a Christian
soul,
We hailed it in God's
name.

XVII.

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

XVIII.

And lo! the
Albatross prov-
eth a bird of
good omen, and
followeth the
ship as it re-
turned north-

And a good south wind
sprung up behind;
The Albatross did follow,

1. *Thorough*. An old form of *through*.
4. *Had eat*. An archaic form of *eaten*.
6. *Thunder-fit*. A sound like thunder.
8. *South wind*. The course changes to north.

ward, through
fog and floating
ice.

And every day, for food or
play,
Came to the mariners'
hollo!

XIX.

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

XX.

The Ancient
Mariner
inhospitably
killeth the pious

"God save thee, ancient Mari-
ner!

2. *Hollo.* Call.
3. *Shroud.* One of the ropes that attach the mast-head to the side of the ship.
4. *Vespers.* The evening prayers of the Church.
4. *Nine.* That is, for nine vespers or nine days.
5. *Whiles.* While.

bird of good
omen.

From the fiends, that
plague thee thus!—
Why lookst thou so?”—
“With my cross-bow
I shot the Albatross.”

1. *Fiends*. The Greeks personified the pangs of conscience as three Furies, or hideous women armed with claws, who pursued their victims through the world.

2. *Cross-bow*. A massive bow for shooting missiles, used by the English in the middle ages.

PART THE SECOND.

XXI.

“The Sun now rose upon the
right:

Out of the sea came he,
Still hid in mist and on the
left

Went down into the sea.

XXII.

And the good south wind
still blew behind, 5

But no sweet bird did
follow,

Nor any day, for food or play,
Came to the mariner's
hollo!

1. *Right.* They were now sailing north. The change of course is mentioned in Part One, Verse XVIII.

XXIII.

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

And I had done a hellish
thing,
And it would work 'em
woe:
For all averred, I had killed
the bird
That made the breeze to
blow,
'Ah, wretch!' said they, 'the
bird to slay, 5
That made the breeze to
blow!'

XXIV.

But when the
fog cleared off,
they justify the
same, and thus
make them-
selves accom-
pllices in the
crime.

Nor dim nor red, like God's
own head,
The glorious Sun uprist:
Then all averred, I had killed
the bird

2. *'Em.* Them. This contraction was better usage
in the early days of the language than it is now.

3. *Averred.* Declared.

8. *Uprist.* An old form for *uprose*.

That brought the fog and
 mist.
 'Twas right,' said they, 'such
 birds to slay,
 That bring the fog and
 mist.'

XXV.

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

The fair breeze blew, the
 white foam flew,
 The furrow followed free: ⁵
 We were the first that ever
 burst
 Into that silent sea.

XXVI.

The ship hath
 been suddenly
 becalmed.

Down dropt the breeze, the
 sails dropt down,
 'Twas sad as sad could
 be;

5. *Furrow.* That is, the wake or track made by the vessel.

8. *Down dropt, etc.* Notice how slow is the rhythm of this line compared with line 6.

And we did speak only to
break
The silence of the sea!

XXVII.

All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right above the mast did
stand, 5
No bigger than the Moon.

XXVIII.

Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor
motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean. 10

XXIX.

And the Albatross begins to be avenged.

Water, water, everywhere,
And all the boards did
shrink;

3. *All.* That is, in the midst of a sky all hot and copper-hued.

9. "*As idle,*" etc. Two very often quoted lines.

Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink.

XXX.

The very deep did rot: O
Christ!

That ever this should be!
Yea, slimy things did crawl
with legs
Upon the slimy sea.

XXXI.

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

2. *Drink.* The brackish sea-water increases thirst.
7. *Rout.* Wild merry-making.
8. *Death-fires.* Balls of light, of an electrical origin, are sometimes seen about the rigging and prow of a ship. Sailors call them St. Elmo's fire or corposants.
9. *Witch's oils.* Necromancers were fond of using strange fires in their practices.

XXXII.

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.

XXXIII.

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.

1. *Assured.* Learned for certain.
3. *Fathom.* A fathom is six feet. *Nine* is chosen arbitrarily as a mystical number.
5. *Utter.* Absolute, unalleviated drought.

XXXIV.

The shipmates
in their sore
distress would
vain 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.

1. *Well-a-day*. An exclamation once common, meaning, *woes the day*. It is a mixture of the latter words and *walaway*, an old expression of distress.

PART THE THIRD.

XXXV.

There passed a weary time.

Each throat

Was parched, and glazed
each eye.

A weary time! a weary time!

How glazed each weary
eye!

When looking westward, I
beheld

A something in the sky.

5

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

XXXVI.

At first it seemed a little
speck,

And then it seemed a mist;

It moved and moved, and
took at last

A certain shape, I wist.

10

10. *Wist.* Became aware.

XXXVII.

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

And still it neared and
neared:

As if it dodged a water-
sprite,

It plunged and tacked and
veered.

XXXVIII.

At its nearer
approach, it
seemeth him to
be a ship; and
at a dear ransom
he freeth his
speech from the
bonds of thirst.

With throats unslaked, with
black lips baked,

We could nor laugh nor
wail;

Through utter drought all
dumb we stood!

I bit my arm, I sucked the
blood,

And cried, A sail! a sail!

3. *Sprite.* Spirit.

4. *Tacked.* Kept changing its course.

5. *Unslaked.* That is, their thirst unslaked.

XXXIX.

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

A flash of joy.

Gramercy! they for joy did
 grin,

And all at once their breath
 drew in,

As they were drinking all. ⁵

XL.

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

See! see! (I cried) she tacks
 no more!

Hither to work us weal—

3. *Gramercy*. A corruption of the French words, *grand merci*, great thanks.

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

7. *Weal*. Good. To save us.

Without a breeze, without a
 tide,
 She steadies with upright
 keel!

XLI.

The western wave was all
 a-flame,
 The day was well-nigh
 done!
 Almost upon the western
 wave 5
 Rested the broad bright
 Sun;

2. *Keel.* The sloping bottom of a ship. Compare Longfellow's *Ballad of Carmilhan* :

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

3. *Wave.* Sea.

6. *Broad.* The sun appears larger and brighter when it is about to set.

When that strange shape
drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the Sun.

XLII.

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,⁵
With broad and burning
face.

XLIII.

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

1. *Strange shape.* Coleridge's power is in the very fineness with which, as with some ghostly finger, he brings home to our inmost sense his inventions, daring as they are—the skeleton ship, the polar spirit, the inspiring of the dead bodies of the ship's crew; the *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* has the plausibility, the perfect adaptation to reason, and the general aspect of life which belongs to the marvelous when actually presented as a part of a credible experience in our dreams.

—Walter Pater.

4. *Heaven's Mother.* The Virgin Mary.

How fast she nears and
 nears!
 Are those *her* sails that
 glance in the Sun,
 Like restless gossameres?

XLIV.

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

Are those *her* ribs through
 which the Sun
 Did peer as through a
 grate? 5
 And is that Woman all her
 crew?
 Is that a Death? and are
 there two?
 Is Death that Woman's
 mate?

XLV.

Like vessel,
 like crew!

Her lips were red, her looks
 were free,

3. *Gossameres*. Floating cobwebs.

7. *A Death*. He says *a Death* rather than *Death* because he asks himself, "Are there two Deaths, and is the Woman Death's mate?"

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

XLVI.

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

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

5

2. *Leprosy*. An Eastern disease which eats away the flesh.

5. *Naked hulk*. Without even planking.

6. *Casting dice*. Throwing dice to see who should win the mariner, Death or Life-in-Death.

XLVII.

The Sun's rim dips; the stars
rush out:

No twilight
within the
courts of the
Sun.

At one stride comes the
dark;

With far-heard whisper, o'er
the sea,

Off shot the spectre-bark.

XLVIII.

At the rising of
the Moon,

We listened and looked side-
ways up! 5

Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
My life-blood seemed to
sip!

The stars were dim, and thick
the night,

The steersman's face by his
lamp gleamed white;
From the sails the dew did
drip— 10

3. *Whisper.* The sound of the wind whistling through the naked hulk.

9. *Lamp.* A small lamp always illuminates the compass in front of the steersman.

Till clomb above the eastern
 bar
 The hornèd Moon, with one
 bright star
 Within the nether tip.

XLIX.

One after
 another,

One after one, by the star-
 dogged Moon,
 Too quick for groan or
 sigh, 5
 Each turned his face with a
 ghastly pang,
 And cursed me with his
 eye.

L.

His shipmates
 drop down dead.

Four times fifty living men,

1. *Clomb*. Climbed.
1. *Bar*. Horizon.
2. *Horned*. That is, the moon was in the form of a crescent with two horns.
3. *Nether*. Lower.
4. *Star-dogged*. Followed. "It is a common superstition among sailors that something is going to happen when stars dog the moon."—*Coleridge*.

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

LI.

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

The souls did from their
bodies fly —
They fled to bliss or woe! ⁵
And every soul, it passed me
by,
Like the whizz of my
cross-bow!"

4. *Souls.* Compare Blake's picture of the soul parting from the body.

PART THE FOURTH.

LII.

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

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

LIII.

“I fear thee, and thy glittering
eye,
And thy skinny hand, so
brown.”—

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

“Fear not, fear not, thou
Wedding-Guest!
This body dropt not down.

LIV.

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide, wide sea,¹⁰

4. *Ribbed.* A low tide; the sand has a rippled appearance, left by the receding waves.

And never a saint took pity
 on
 My soul in agony.

LV.

He despiseth the
 creatures of the
 calm.

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

LVI.

And envleth
 that they should
 live, and so
 many lie dead.
 But the curse
 liveth for htm in
 the eye of the
 dead men.

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

10

LVII.

I looked to Heaven and tried
 to pray;

7. *Rotting.* A sea of stagnant water.

But or ever a prayer had
 gusht,
 A wicked whisper came, and
 made
 My heart as dry as dust.

LVIII.

I closed my lids, and kept
 them close,
 And the balls like pulses
 beat; 5
 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.

LIX.

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; ¹⁰

1. *Or ever.* Before.

10. *Nor, etc.* Remember that Life-in-Death had won the game.

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

LX.

An orphan's curse would
 drag to Hell
 A spirit from on high;
 But oh! more horrible than
 that 5
 Is a curse in a dead man's
 eye!
 Seven days, seven nights, I
 saw that curse,
 And yet I could not die.

LXI.

In his loneliness
 and fixedness
 he yearneth
 towards the
 journeying
 Moon, and the
 stars that still
 sojourn, yet still
 move onward;
 and everywhere
 the blue sky be-
 longs to them,
 and is their ap-
 pointed rest,
 and their native

The moving Moon went up
 the sky,
 And nowhere did abide: 10
 Softly she was going up,
 And a star or two be-
 side —

LXII.

country and
their own nat-
ural homes,
which they enter
unannounced,
as lords that are
certainly ex-
pected and yet
there is a silent
joy at their ar-
rival.

Her beams bemocked the
sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost
spread;
But where the ship's huge
shadow lay,
The charmèd water burnt
always
A still and awful red. 5

LXIII.

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

Beyond the shadow of the
ship,
I watched the water-
snakes:
They moved in tracks of
shining white,
And when they reared, the
elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes. 10

1. *Bemocked*. An old form of *mocked*.
2. *Hoar-frost*. White frost.
4. *Always*. Continually.
9. *Elfish*. Mysterious, supernatural. So Keats speaks of an *elfin* storm.

LXIV.

Within the shadow of the
 ship
 I watched their rich attire:
 Blue, glossy green, and vel-
 vet black,
 They coiled and swam; and
 every track
 Was a flash of golden fire. 5

LXV.

Their beauty
 and their
 happiness.

O happy living things! no
 tongue
 Their beauty might de-
 clare:
 A spring of love gushed from
 my heart,
 And I blessed them un-
 aware!
 Sure my kind saint took pity
 on me, 10
 And I blessed them un-
 ware!

He bleaseth
 them in his
 heart.

10. *Kind saint.* Every good Catholic had a patron saint.

LXVI.

The spell be-
gins to break.

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

1. *Pray.* The moral of the poem here appears. The moment the ancient mariner felt the impulse to bless instead of curse the happy, innocent creatures God has made, the curse began to depart from him.

PART THE FIFTH.

LXVII.

Oh sleep! it is a gentle
thing,

Beloved from pole to pole!
To Mary Queen the praise
be given!

She sent the gentle sleep
from Heaven,

That slid into my soul.

5

LXVIII.

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;
And when I awoke, it
rained.

1. *Sleep.* Read Shelley's beautiful *Ode to Sleep.*
3. *Mary Queen.* The Virgin Queen of Heaven.
6. *Silly.* Silly because useless, since they were empty of water.

LXIX.

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.

LXX.

I moved, and could not feel
 my limbs: 5
 I was so light — almost
 I thought that I had died in
 sleep,
 And was a blessèd ghost.

LXXI.

And soon I heard a roaring
 wind:

He heareth
 sounds, and
 seeth strange
 sights and com-

2. *Dank.* Heavy with moisture.
3. *Sure.* Surely.
6. *Light.* As one after a long illness.
8. *Ghost.* Spirit.

motions in the
sky and the
element.

It did not come anear;
But with its sound it shook
the sails,
That were so thin and sere.

LXXII.

The upper air burst into life!
And a hundred fire-flags
sheen, 5
To and fro they were hurried
about;
And to and fro, and in and
out,
The wan stars danced
between.

LXXIII.

And the coming wind did
roar more loud,

1. *Anear*. Near.
3. *Sere*. Dry and withered.
5. *Fire-flags*. Probably the Aurora or Northern Lights.
5. *Sheen*. An adjective modifying *flags*.
8. *Wan*. Pale. They were rendered so by the lights.

And the sails did sigh like
 sedge;
 And the rain poured down
 from one black cloud;
 The moon was at its edge.

LXXIV.

The thick black cloud was
 cleft, and still
 The Moon was at its side: ⁵
 Like waters shot from some
 high crag,
 The lightning fell with never
 a jag,
 A river steep and wide.

LXXV.

The loud wind never reached
 the ship,
 Yet now the ship moved ¹⁰
 on!
 Beneath the lightning and
 the Moon

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

1. *Sedge*. Tall rushes.

The dead men gave a
groan.

LXXVI.

They groaned, they stirred,
they all uprose,
Nor spake, nor moved
their eyes;
It had been strange, even in
a dream,
To have seen those dead ⁵
men rise.

LXXVII.

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:

4. *Had.* Subjunctive. It would have been strange.

8. *'Gan.* Began.

9. *Wont.* Accustomed.

They raised their limbs like
 lifeless tools —
 We were a ghastly crew.

LXXVIII.

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

LXXIX.

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

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

LXXX.

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.

LXXXI.

Around, around, flew each
sweet sound, 5
Then darted to the Sun;
Slowly the sounds came back
again,
Now mixed, now one by
one.

LXXXII.

Sometimes a-dropping from
the sky

5. *Around*, etc. Learn Stanzas LXXXI., LXXXII., LXXXIII., and LXXXIV.

I heard the sky-lark sing;
 Sometimes all little birds that
 are,
 How they seemed to fill the
 sea and air
 With their sweet jargon-
 ing!

LXXXIII.

And now 'twas like all in-
 struments, 5
 Now like a lonely flute;
 And now it is an angel's
 song,
 That makes the heavens
 be mute.

LXXXIV.

It ceased; yet still the sails
 made on
 A pleasant noise till noon,¹⁰

1. *Sky-lark*. An English bird that sings as it mounts upward, and whose song is wonderfully beautiful.

4. *Jargoning*. A confused murmur of sound.

A noise like of a hidden brook
 In the leafy month of
 June,
 That to the sleeping woods
 all night
 Singeth a quiet tune.

LXXXV.

Till noon we quietly sailed
 on, 5
 Yet never a breeze did
 breathe:
 Slowly and smoothly went
 the ship,
 Moved onward from beneath.

LXXXVI.

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

Under the keel nine fathom
 deep,
 From the land of mist and
 snow, 10
 The Spirit slid: and it was he

1. *Like of.* Like that of.
11. *Spirit slid.* See Stanza XXXII.

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

LXXXVII.

The Sun, right up above the
 mast,
 Had fixed her to the
 ocean: 5

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

LXXXVIII.

Then like a pawing horse
 let go, 10
 She made a sudden bound;

It flung the blood into my
 head,
 And I fell down in a
 swoond.

LXXXIX.

How long in that same fit I
 lay,
 I have not to declare;
 But ere my living life re-
 turned, 5
 I heard and in my soul dis-
 cerned
 Two voices in the air.

XC.

The Polar
 Spirit's fellow-
 demons, the
 invisible inhabi-
 tants of the
 element, take
 part in his

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

3. *Fit.* Trance.

4. *Have not.* Can not.

5. *Living.* That is, conscious life. He had been
 alive, but in a swoon.

9. *Him.* Our Lord.

wrong; and
two of them re-
late, one to the
other, that
penance long
and heavy for
the ancient
Mariner hath
been accorded
to the Polar
Spirit, who
returneth
southward.

With his cruel bow he laid
full low,
The harmless Aibatross.

XCI.

The spirit who bideth by him-
self
In the land of mist and
snow,
He loved the bird that loved
the man
Who shot him with his
bow.⁵

XCII.

The other was a softer voice,
As soft as honey-dew:
Quoth he, 'The man hath
penance done,
And penance more will do.'¹⁰

1. *Full*. An intensifying word.

3. *Bideth*. Abideth.

8. *Honey-dew*. A secretion found on the leaves of some plants in hot weather in small frothy drops.

PART THE SIXTH.

XCIII.

FIRST VOICE.

‘But tell me, tell me! speak
again,
Thy soft response renew-
ing —
What makes that ship drive
on so fast?
What is the Ocean doing?’

XCIV.

SECOND VOICE.

‘Still as a slave before his lord, ⁵
The Ocean hath no blast.
His great bright eye most
silently
Up to the Moon is cast—

6. *Blast.* Violence.

7. *Bright eye.* Compare the lines by Sir John Davies in speaking of the sea :

“For his great crystal eye is ever cast
Up to the moon and on her fixed fast.”

XCV.

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

XCVI.

FIRST VOICE.

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

'But why drives on that ship
so fast, 5
Without or wave or wind?'

SECOND VOICE.

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

XCVII.

Fly, brother, fly! more high,
more high!
Or we shall be belated: 10

For slow and slow that ship
 will go,
 When the Mariner's trance
 is abated.'

XCVIII.

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

I woke, and we were sailing on
 As in a gentle weather:
 'Twas night, calm night, the
 Moon was high; 5
 The dead men stood to-
 gether.

XCIV.

All stood together on the
 deck,
 For a charnel-dungeon
 fitter:
 All fixed on me their stony
 eyes
 That in the Moon did
 glitter. 10

2. *Abated.* That is, dispelled.

4. *As.* As if sailing in a gentle kind of weather.

8. *Charnel.* A dungeon of bones, a tomb.

C.

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

CI.

The curse is
 finally expiated.

And now this spell was
 snapt: once more 5
 I viewed the ocean green,
 And looked far forth, yet
 little saw
 Of what had else been
 seen —

CII.

Like one that on a lonesome
 road
 Doth walk in fear and
 dread, 10
 And having once turned
 round, walks on,

And turns no more his
 head;
 Because he knows a fright-
 ful fiend
 Doth close behind him
 tread.

CIII.

But soon there breathed a
 wind on me,
 Nor sound nor motion 5
 made:
 Its path was not upon the
 sea,
 In ripple or in shade.

CIV.

It raised my hair, it fanned
 my cheek
 Like a meadow-gale of
 spring —
 It mingled strangely with my ¹⁰
 fears,
 Yet it felt like a welcoming.

6. *Was not.* That is, was not made visible.

CV.

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

CVI.

And the an-
 cient Mariner
 beholdeth his
 native country.

Oh! dream of joy! is this
 indeed 5
 The light-house top I see?
 Is this the hill? is this the
 kirk?
 Is this mine own countree?

CVII.

We drifted o'er the harbor-
 bar,
 And I with sobs did pray— 10

5. *Oh*, etc. Compare Stanza VI.

8. *Countree*. A form of *country* common in old ballads.

9. *Harbor-bar*. A bank of sand or gravel forming an obstruction to the entrance of a harbor in low tide.

'O let me be awake, my God!
Or let me sleep alway.'

CVIII.

The harbor-bay was clear as
glass,
So smoothly it was strewn!
And on the bay the moon-
light lay, 5
And the shadow of the
Moon.

CIX.

The rock shone bright, the
kirk no less,
That stands above the
rock:
The moonlight steeped in
silentness
The steady weathercock. 10

1. *Awake.* Let this prove real or let me dream
always.

4. *Strewn.* That is, the light was so evenly dis-
tributed all over it.

10. *Steady.* The weather was so still that the vane
was steady.

CX.

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,

CXI.

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

5

CXII.

Each corse lay flat, lifeless
 and flat,
 And by the holy rood !

10

A man all light, a seraph-
man,
On every corse there stood.

CXIII.

This seraph-band, each
waved his hand:
It was a heavenly sight!
They stood as signals to the
land, 5
Each one a lovely light:

CXIV.

This seraph-band, each
waved his hand,
No voice did they impart—
No voice; but oh! the
silence sank
Like music on my heart. 10

CXV.

But soon I heard the dash
of oars,

6. *Signals.* At night vessels signal the pilot by placing lights on the deck.

I heard the Pilot's cheer;
 My head was turned perforce
 away
 And I saw a boat appear.

CXVI.

The Pilot, and the Pilot's
 boy,
 I heard them coming
 fast: 5
 Dear Lord in Heaven! it was
 a joy
 The dead men could not
 blast.

CXVII.

I saw a third—I heard his
 voice:
 It is the Hermit good!

1. *Cheer.* Call.

2. *Perforce.* Of necessity.

9. *Hermit.* In the Middle Ages men often withdrew from the world and lived quite alone in caves or deserts, that they might give their lives entirely to the service of God.

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.

3. *Shrieve.* Receive my confession, and pardon or
absolve me from my sin.

PART THE SEVENTH.

CXVIII.

The Hermit of
the wood.

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

5

CXIX.

He kneels at morn, and noon,
and eve—
He hath a cushion plump:

3. *Rears.* Raises.
4. *Marineres.* An archaic spelling.
7. *Cushion.* A cushion on which to pray, such as is found in churches or cathedrals.

It is the moss that wholly
 hides
 The rotted old oak-stump.

CXX.

The skiff-boat neared: I
 heard them talk;
 'Why this is strange, I
 trow!

Where are those lights so
 many and fair,
 That signal made but
 now?"

5

CXXI.

Approacheth
 the ship with
 wonder.

'Strange, by my faith!' the
 Hermit said —

'And they answered not
 our cheer!

The planks looked warped!
 and see those sails

3. *Skiff-boat.* Skiff, a small boat.

4. *Trow.* Think.

9. *Warped.* Shrunken and cracked.

How thin they are and sere!
 I never saw aught like to
 them,
 Unless perchance it were

CXXII.

Brown skeletons of leaves
 that lag
 My forest-brook along; 5
 When the ivy-tod is heavy
 with snow,
 And the owlet whoops to the
 wolf below
 That eats the she-wolf's
 young.'

CXXIII.

'Dear Lord! it hath a fiend-
 ish look' —

2. *Aught.* Anything.

3. *Perchance.* Perhaps.

6. *Ivy-tod.* Ivy-bush.

7. *Owlet.* Small owl.

9. *Fiendish.* An evil look as if it were the look of
 a fiend.

(The Pilot made reply)
 'I am a-feared' — 'Push on,
 push on!'
 Said the Hermit cheerily.

CXXIV.

The boat came closer to the
 ship,
 But I nor spake nor stirred; ⁵
 The boat came close beneath
 the ship,
 And straight a sound was
 heard.

CXXV.

The ship sud-
 denly sinketh.

Under the water it rumbled
 on,
 Still louder and more
 dread:
 It reached the ship, it split
 the bay; ¹⁰
 The ship went down like
 lead.

2. *A-feared.* Afraid.

7. *Straight.* Straightway, immediately.

CXXVI.

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

Stunned by that loud and
dreadful sound,
Which sky and ocean
smote,
Like one that hath been
seven days drowned
My body lay afloat;
But swift as dreams, myself
I found 5
Within the Pilot's boat.

CXXVII.

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. 10

7. *Whirl.* The sinking ship made a kind of whirl-pool.

10. *Was telling.* Echoed the sound.

CXXVIII.

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.

CXXIX.

I took the oars: the Pilot's
 boy, 5
 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.' 10

CXXX.

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.

CXXXI.

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

‘O shrieve me, shrieve me,
 holy man!’

The Hermit crossed his
 brow. 5

‘Say quick,’ quoth he, ‘I bid
 thee say —

What manner of man art
 thou?’

CXXXII.

Forthwith this frame of mine
 was wrenched

With a woful agony,
 Which forced me to begin
 my tale; 10

And then it left me free.

5. *Crossed.* Made the sign of the cross. It is supposed to ward off all evil influences.

CXXXIII.

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

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

CXXXIV.

I pass, like night, from land
to land; 5
I have strange power of
speech;
That moment that his face I
see,
I know the man that must
hear me:
To him my tale I teach.

5. *I pass, etc.* Compare the legend of the wandering Jew. He struck Christ on His way to Calvary and the Lord doomed him to wander on earth until the Day of Judgment. Until this day he goes from land to land unable to find a grave.

9. *Teach.* Tell.

CXXXV.

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, ⁵
Which biddeth me to
prayer!

CXXXVI.

O Wedding-Guest! this soul
hath been

Alone on a wide, wide sea:
So lonely 'twas, that God
himself

Scarce seemèd there to be. ¹⁰

CXXXVII.

O sweeter than the marriage-
feast,

'Tis sweeter far to me,
 To walk together to the
 kirk
 With a goodly com-
 pany!—

CXXXVIII.

To walk together to the
 kirk,
 And all together pray, 5
 While each to his great
 Father bends,
 Old men, and babes, and lov-
 ing friends,
 And youths and maidens
 gay!

CXXXIX.

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

Farewell, farewell! but this
 I tell
 To thee, thou Wedding-
 Guest! 10
 He prayeth well, who loveth
 well

Both man and bird and
beast.

CXL.

He prayeth best, who loveth
best
All things both great and
small;
For the dear God who loveth
us,
He made and loveth all.” 5

CXLI.

The Mariner, whose eye is
bright,
Whose beard with age is
hoar,
Is gone: and now the Wed-
ding-Guest
Turned from the bride-
groom’s door.

2. *He prayeth.* Learn this stanza. It is the moral of the poem.

CXLII.

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

2. *Forlorn.* Deprived of his sense of outward things.

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