THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

BY

S. T. COLERIDGE
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ANCIENT MARINER.

M. I
INTRODUCTION.

“As to my life,” said Coleridge, “what I am depends on what I have been. . . . It will perhaps make you behold with no unforgiving or impatient eye those weaknesses and defects in my character which so many untoward circumstances have concurred in planting there.”

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the youngest of a family of ten children, was born on the 21st of October, 1772. His father was vicar, and master of the school, of the parish of Ottery St. Mary, in the county of Devon, England. The vicar “made the world his confidant with respect to his learning and ingenuity,” wrote Coleridge, “and the world seems to have kept the secret very faithfully. His various works, uncut, unthumbed, were preserved free from all pollution in the family archives, where they may still be, for anything that I know. This piece of good luck promises to be hereditary; for all my compositions have the same amiable home-staying propensity. The truth is, my father was not a first-rate genius; he was, however, a first-rate Christian, which is much better.” Coleridge’s mother was Ann Bowdon, whose family “inherited a good farm, and house thereon, in the Exmoor country, in the reign of Elizabeth,” said her son; “and to my knowledge they have inherited nothing better since that time. . . . My mother was an admirable economist, and managed exclusively.

“From October, 1775, to October, 1778, . . . I continued at
the reading school, because I was too little to be trusted among my father's schoolboys. After breakfast, I had a halfpenny given me, with which I bought three cakes at the baker's shop close by the school of my old mistress; and these were my dinners every day except Saturday and Sunday, when I used to dine at home, and wallowed in a beef-and-pudding dinner. . . . My father was very fond of me, and I was my mother's darling: in consequence whereof I was very miserable. For Molly, who had nursed my brother Francis, and was immoderately fond of him, hated me because my mother took more notice of me than of Frank; and Frank hated me, because my mother gave me now and then a bit of cake when he had none, quite forgetting, that for one bit of cake which I had and he had not, he had twenty sops in the pan, and pieces of bread and butter with sugar on them from Molly, from whom I received only thumps and ill names.

"So I became fretful and timorous and a telltale; and the schoolboys drove me from play, and were always tormenting me. And hence I took no pleasure in boyish sports, but read incessantly. I read through all gilt-cover little books that could be had at that time, and likewise all the uncovered tales of 'Tom Hickathrift,' 'Jack the Giant-Killer,' and the like. And I used to lie by the wall, and mope. . . . At six years of age I remember to have read 'Belisarius,' 'Robinson Crusoe,' and 'Philip Quarles;' and then I found the 'Arabian Nights Entertainments.' . . .

"So I became a dreamer, and acquired an indisposition to all bodily activity; and I was fretful and inordinately passionate. And as I could not play at anything, and was slothful, I was despised and hated by the boys; and because I could read and spell, and had, I may truly say, a memory and understanding
forced into almost unnatural ripeness, I was flattered and wondered at by all the old women. And so I became very vain, and despised most of the boys that were at all near my own age; and before I was eight years old I was a character. Sensibility, imagination, vanity, sloth, and feelings of deep and bitter contempt for almost all who traversed the orbit of my understanding, were even then prominent and manifest.

"After the death of my father [in October, 1781], we of course changed houses, and I remained with my mother till the spring of 1782, and was a day scholar to Parson Warren, my father's successor. Somewhere, I think, about April, 1782, Judge Buller, who had been educated by my father, sent for me, having procured a Christ's Hospital presentation. I accordingly went to London, and was received and entertained by my mother's brother, Mr. Bowdon. My uncle was very proud of me, and used to carry me from coffeehouse to coffeehouse, and tavern to tavern, where I drank and talked and disputed, as if I had been a man. Nothing was more common than for a large party to exclaim in my hearing that I was a prodigy, and so forth; so that while I remained at my uncle's I was most completely spoiled and pampered, both mind and body."

At length the time came, and Coleridge donned the blue coat and yellow stockings of Christ's Hospital. This is a famous school in London, founded three centuries and a half ago as a hospital for orphans. It is sometimes called the "Blue-Coat School," from the dress worn by the boys. Long ago it ceased to be a strictly charitable institution, and took on the character which Charles Lamb describes in his "Recollections" of his early years within its walls.

"I was placed," says Coleridge, "in the second ward in the
under grammar school. There were twelve wards, or dormitories, of unequal sizes, besides the sick ward, in the great school; and they contained altogether seven hundred boys, of whom I think nearly one third were the sons of clergymen. . . .

"Oh, what a change!—depressed, moping, friendless poor orphan, half starved. At that time the portion of food to the Blue-Coats was cruelly insufficient for those who had no friends to supply them."

For eight years Coleridge continued at Christ's Hospital. In this time he prepared for Cambridge, and read omnivorously through the catalogue of a circulating library, "folios and all, whether I understood them or did not understand them, running all risks in skulking out to get the two volumes which I was entitled to have daily."

At this great school he found as fellow-pupil Charles Lamb,—him of the "Recollections" just mentioned,—to whom he became the confidant, and to whom "his great and dear spirit" gave his confidence. "He was my fifty-year-old friend without a dis-sension," wrote Lamb a half century later. "Never saw I his likeness, nor probably the world can see it again."

Coleridge entered Jesus College, Cambridge, in 1791. He "was very studious," said one of his fellows; "but his reading was desultory and capricious. He took little exercise merely for the sake of exercise; but he was ready at any time to unbend his mind in conversation; and for the sake of this his room . . . was a constant rendezvous of conversation-loving friends. I will not call them loungers; for they did not call to kill time, but to enjoy it. What evenings have I spent in those rooms! What little suppers, or sizings, as they were called, have I enjoyed, when Æschylus and Plato and Thucydides were pushed aside, with a
INTRODUCTION.

pile of lexicons and the like, to discuss the pamphlets of the day! Ever and anon a pamphlet issued from the pen of Burke. There was no need of having the book before us: Coleridge had read it in the morning, and in the evening he would repeat whole pages verbatim."

He had already begun earnest composition, and in 1793 he produced the "Songs of the Pixies," and other pieces. It was in this year that, harassed by debt and in despondency, he one day quitted Cambridge, and, going to London, enlisted as a private. When suddenly asked his name, he answered, "Cumberback;" "and verily," said Coleridge, in telling of the incident, "my habits were so little equestrian, that my horse, I doubt not, was of that opinion." He served only a few months; for his utter unfitness for a military life was recognized by all who knew him, and through the interposition of friends he obtained a discharge, and returned to Cambridge.

During his Cambridge course, he met Robert Southey, who was at that time a student at Oxford. "Coleridge," wrote Southey, "is of the strongest genius, the clearest judgment, the best heart." —"Verily, Southey," said Coleridge, in a letter from Wales, "thou art [at Oxford] a nightingale among owls."

Coleridge returned from Wales, and went to Southey's home at Bristol, and there, with an associate few, all seized with the democratic spirit which was just then moving Southey, developed pantisocracy. This was to be a condition of affairs by which all should govern. With it was aspheritism, which meant "the holding of all things in common." Coleridge bears evidence to his earnest adoption of the plan in his letters: "Twelve men with their families emigrate. . . . Two thousand pounds should be the aggregate of their contributions. . . . On the banks of the
Susquehanna. . . . Literary characters may make money there. . . . The mosquitoes there are not so bad as our gnats. . . . Those of us whose bodies, from habits of sedentary study or academic indolence, have not acquired their full tone and strength, intend to learn the theory and practice of agriculture and carpentry.” In accord with such enthusiasms, fate kindly led Coleridge to an acquaintance with and engagement to Sarah Fricker, “an honest, simple, lively-minded, affectionate woman.” Southey was about to marry her sister.

Coleridge left Cambridge. Pantisocracy ended in smoke; and to-day the most substantial record of that time is the poets’ joint drama of “The Fall of Robespierre,” of which Southey wrote the second and third acts. But Coleridge gained enough money and fame in delivering public addresses, and in addresses in behalf of the Unitarian faith, to enable him to marry.

The problem of bread and cheese could, he thought, be solved by his establishing a weekly paper, “The Watchman,” which should “cry the state of the political atmosphere.” To insure subscribers he ventured on an extended canvassing tour, in which his moral earnestness and extraordinary eloquence won him instant recognition, and applause which endured long afterwards. But the journal did not pay expenses. It was while engaged in such work that he published his first poems. In the following year (1797) he met William Wordsworth. “The giant Wordsworth,” he wrote, “God love him! When I speak in the terms of admiration due to his intellect, I fear lest these terms should keep out of sight the amiableness of his manners.”—“Coleridge is a wonderful man,” wrote Wordsworth’s sister Dorothy: “his face teems with mind, soul, and spirit. Then he is so benevolent, so good-tempered and cheerful. . . . At first I thought him plain;
INTRODUCTION.

that is, for about three minutes. He is pale, thin, has a wide mouth, thick lips and not very good teeth, longish, loose-growing, half-curling, rough black hair. . . . His eye is large and full, and not very dark, but gray,—such an eye as would receive from a heavy soul the dullest expression; but it speaks every emotion of his animated mind; it has more of 'the poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling' than I have ever witnessed. He has fine dark eyebrows and overhanging forehead."

It was now that Coleridge and Wordsworth, meeting as friends and neighbors, talked together "on the two cardinal points of poetry," says Coleridge, in "Biographia Literaria," "and 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." In his endeavor to approach the ideal, Coleridge wrote "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," "The Dark Ladie," and the first part of "Christabel." At this time, also, he produced "Kubla Khan," "The Three Graces," "France, an Ode," and other poems. Of the several periods of his changing life, this at Stowey, with his young wife and his baby son (who was later the poet Hartley Coleridge), and Wordsworth and Thomas Poole for friends, was the most productive and happy.

Later on, when difficulties arose and he was relieved from embarrassment by the generous pension of the Wedgewood brothers, sons of Josiah Wedgewood, who founded the art of pottery in England, he went to Germany. Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy were his traveling comrades. Upon his return the next year, he translated Schiller's "Wallenstein," his "happiest attempt," he said, before he had been "buffeted by adversity, or cursed by fatality." He now wrote for the "Morning Post" at a guinea a week.
At the end of two years he quitted London, and went to the Lake Country, still continuing on the "Post," however, and also giving some time to poetry. Wordsworth had already settled at Grasmere.

After a trip to Scotland, which he made in company with the Wordsworths, he began the use of a medicine for the relief of rheumatism. The basis of the drug was opium. From this time, his life was changed. His buoyancy and sweetness of character were gone. The splendor and clearness of his genius were clouded. The love and peace of his home also, upon which he had dwelt in other days, were broken. From a strong, active, forceful man courageously fighting the battle of life, and winning fame for his wife and children, he became an hypochondriac invalid. The change was wrought by the "black drops."

In 1804 he left his family at Greta Hall, living on the kindly dispensation of the Cheeryble Wedgewoods, with his brother-in-law, Southey. He went to Malta and to Rome. He returned to England "worse than homeless," he said. Lines which Wordsworth wrote are thought to describe him at this time:—

"Ah! piteous sight it was to see this man
When he came back to us a withered flower,
Or, like a sinful creature, pale and wan.
Down he would sit, and, without strength or power,
Look at the common grass from hour to hour."

Coleridge returned to London. He took up journalism, and lived miserably in an attic. He regained himself enough to lecture with applause upon the English poets. But notice the last clause in De Quincey's description: "On many of his lecture days I have seen all Albemarle Street closed by a 'lock' of carriages filled with women of distinction, until the servants of the
institution, or their own footmen, advanced to the carriage door with the intelligence that Mr. Coleridge had been taken suddenly ill. . . . The plea, which at first had been received with expressions of concern, repeated too often, began to cause disgust."

At last Coleridge was reduced to the pass of asking to be allowed to condense police and parliamentary reports for newspapers. To cheat and overreach his recurring appetite, he engaged men to follow, and prevent him from buying opium. "Before God," he cried, "I have but one voice,—mercy, mercy! woe is me. Pray for me that I may not pass such another night as the last. While I am awake, and retain my reasoning powers, the pang is gnawing; but I am, except for a fitful moment or two, tranquil: it is the howling wilderness of sleep that I dread."

In 1811-12 he lectured again, these times upon Shakespeare and Milton, when he had among his auditors Byron and Lamb and Rogers. In 1813 his play of "Osorio, or Remorse," was presented, with a fair yield to the author. In 1814 he began "Biographia Literaria."

In 1816 he took lodgings with Dr. Gillman, a physician who was living at Highgate, near London. In this retreat, where the kindest and most judicious treatment was shown him, Coleridge passed the rest of his life, rarely venturing into the world for any length of time. Though his emancipation from the slavery of his old habit was never complete, it was in a large measure accomplished, and he partially recovered his intellectual powers and his natural dignity and self-respect. In his writings of this period there are indications that he was occasionally troubled by fits of remorse; but in the main his last years seem to have been happily spent in study and literary production and in conversation with admiring friends.
The year before his death, Coleridge wrote his own epitaph:

"Stop, Christian passer-by; stop, child of God,
And read, with gentle breast. Beneath this sod
A poet lies, or that which once seemed he—
Oh, lift one thought in prayer for S. T. C.—
That he who many a year with toil of breath
Found death in life, may here find life in death;
Mercy for praise — to be forgiven for fame —
He asked, and hoped, through Christ. Do thou the same."

After his death were published some of his specimens of the "Table Talk" of the last few years, his "Literary Remains," and other works.

Coleridge did not live to see the popularity, or even the appreciation, of any of his works. In the opinions of reviewers of that day, the "Biographia Literaria" was "wild ravings." "Christabel" was discredited in like manner, and also "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." The latter poem had a prosaic origin. Coleridge and Wordsworth, with Dorothy Wordsworth, endeavored to defray the expenses of a short trip together by sending a poem to the "New Monthly Magazine," hoping to receive as much as five pounds in pay. The poem was planned as they tramped off over the hills, Coleridge taking the theme from a dream which he had heard related by a friend, and Wordsworth suggesting the killing of the albatross as the crime which should be the cause of the Mariner's sufferings and the manning of the ship by dead men. Wordsworth tells us, that though the poem was intended to be a joint production, and was planned by the two poets together, he soon found that his friend's manner of composition was so different from his own, that it would be impossible to give him any aid, and so left Coleridge to write it alone.
In commenting upon the poem, one of his biographers says that Coleridge "triumphs over his difficulties by sheer vividness of imagery and terse vigor of descriptive phrase. . . . His eye never seems to wander from his object. . . . The skeleton ship with the dicing demons on its deck; the setting sun peering through its ribs, 'as if through a dungeon grate;' the water snakes under the moonbeams, with 'the elfish light' falling off them; . . . the dead crew, who work the ship,—everything seems to have been actually seen; and we believe it all as the story of a truthful eyewitness."

"Coleridge," says Lowell, "has written some of the most poetical poetry in the language, and one poem, the 'Ancient Mariner,' not only un paralleled, but unapproached in its kind, and that kind of the rarest. It is marvelous in its mastery. . . . Coleridge has taken the old ballad measure, and given to it, by an indefinable charm wholly his own, all the sweetness, all the melody and compass, of a symphony. And how picturesque it is in the proper sense of the word! I know nothing like it. There is not a description in it. It is all picture. Descriptive poets generally confuse us with multiplicity of detail; we cannot see their forests for the trees. But Coleridge never errs in this way. With instinctive tact he touches the right chord of association, and is satisfied, as we also are. I should find it hard to explain the singular charm of his diction, there is so much nicety of art and purpose in it, whether for music or meaning. Nor does it need any explanation, for we all feel it. The words seem common words enough; but in the order of them, in the choice, variety, and position of the vowel sounds, they become magical."
THE RIME\(^1\) OF THE ANCIENT MARINER.

IN SEVEN PARTS.

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PART I.

It is an ancient Mariner,\(^2\)
And he stoppeth one of three.
"By thy long gray beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?"

"The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,
And I am next of kin;
The guests are met, the feast is set:
Mayst\(^3\) hear the merry din."

He holds him with his skinny hand,
"There was a ship," quoth he.
"Hold off! unhand me, graybeard loon!"
Eftsoons\(^4\) his hand dropt he.

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\(^1\) The old and correct spelling of "rhyme." The latter form crept into use through the identification of the word with "rhythm."

\(^2\) "This word was uniformly printed 'marinere' in 1798; and the rhyme in many places requires it to be pronounced so. In the first verse of Part VII. the old spelling is retained."

\(^3\) The subject of "mayst" is "thou," understood.

\(^4\) From "eft," or "aft" ("again"), and "soon."
The Wedding Guest is spellbound by the eye of the old seafaring man, and constrained to hear his tale.

The wedding guest is spellbound by the eye of the old seafaring man, and constrained to hear his tale.

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The Wedding Guest stood still,
And listens 1 like a three-years' child:
The Mariner hath his will.

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

"The ship was cheered, the harbor cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, 2 below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.

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

"Higher and higher every day,
Till over the mast at noon" 3 —
The Wedding Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon. 4

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

The Wedding Guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear;

1 "And listens," etc. Wordsworth suggested these two lines.
2 The Scotch and north of England form of the word "church."
3 At the equator, the sun would be directly overhead at noon.
4 A musical wind instrument.
And thus spake on that ancient man,  
The bright-eyed Mariner:—

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

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

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

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

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

"At length did cross an Albatross:  
Thorough the fog it came;  

1 Cliffs.  
2 Descry. This word is allied to, and often means, "know."  
3 Swoon.  
4 Old form of "through."
As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God's name.

"It ate the food it ne'er had eat,\(^1\)
And round and round it flew.
The ice did split with a thunder fit;\(^2\)
The helmsman steered us through!

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

"In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
It perched for vespers\(^3\) nine;
Whiles all the night, through fog smoke white,
Glimmered the white moonshine."

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

PART II.

"The Sun now rose upon the right,\(^4\)
Out of the sea came he,
Still hid in mist, and on the left
Went down into the sea.

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1 Another form of "eaten."
2 A noise resembling thunder.
3 Evenings. The word comes to us from the Greek, in which it had the form "hesperos," and is commonly used to describe the evening star.
4 They have doubled Cape Horn, and are sailing northward.
"And the good south wind still blew behind;
But no sweet bird did follow,
Nor any day, for food or play,
Came to the mariners' hollo!

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

"Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,¹
The glorious Sun uprist:²
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist.
'Twas right,' said they, 'such birds to slay,
That bring the fog and mist.'

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

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

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

¹ "Like God's," etc., a forcible simile of the grandeur of the rising sun.
² An old form of "uprose."
“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,  
And all the boards did shrink;  
Water, water, everywhere,  
Nor any drop to drink.

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

“And 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

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

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

Ah, welladay!3 what evil looks  
Had I from old and young!

1 “St. Elmo’s lights;” a luminous discharge of atmospheric electricity about the rigging of ships, supposed by superstitious sailors to presage death and disaster.  
2 The phosphorescent lights of the breaking water.  
3 Corrupted from “welaway” (“alas”).
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.
A weary time! a weary time!
How glazed each weary eye!
When looking westward I beheld
A something in the sky.

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

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

"With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
We could 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!'

"With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call.
Gramercy!² they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in,
As they were drinking all.

¹ Past tense of an old verb, "wit" ("to know").
² Many thanks, from the French grand merci.
"'See! see!' I cried, 'she tacks no more
Hither, to work us weal—
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel!'

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

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

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

"'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?'

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

1 Well-being; happiness; allied to "well," "wealth."
2 Comes steadily on.
3 Straightway; immediately.
4 Gossamers; threads of cobweb floating in the air.
"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.

"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 specter bark.

"We listened, and looked sideways up!
Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
My lifeblood seemed to sip! ¹
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 ² above the eastern bar
The hornèd Moon, with one bright star
Within the nether ³ tip.

"One after one, by the star-dogged ⁴ Moon,
Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,
And cursed me with his eye.

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

¹ "Fear at my heart," etc., i.e., fear seemed to draw my lifeblood, as though by a cupping glass (a glass formerly used to draw blood from a patient, by creating a partial vacuum over the spot).
² An old past tense of "climb." ³ Lower.
⁴ The star following the crescent moon, as a dog follows the heels of his master.
"The souls did from their bodies fly,—
They fled to bliss or woe!
And every soul, it passed me by,
Like the whiz of my crossbow!"

**PART IV.**

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."

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

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

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

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

1 "And thou art long," etc. For these two lines, Coleridge was indebted to Wordsworth.
"I looked to heaven, and tried to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.

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

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

"An orphan's curse would drag to hell
A spirit from on high;
But oh! 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.

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

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 cer-
tainly expected, and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival.

"Her beams bemocked the sultry main,
Like April hoarfrost spread;

1 "To this exquisite gloss there is nothing to correspond in the text. Some such thoughts, which he but vaguely grasps and does not attempt to express, must be supposed to pass through the brain of the Mariner."
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,  
The charmèd water burnt alway  
A still and awful red.

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

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

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

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

PART V.

"O sleep! it is a gentle thing,  
Beloved from pole to pole!  
To Mary Queen the praise be given!  
She sent the gentle sleep from heaven,  
That slid into my soul.
"The silly buckets on the deck,  
That had so long remained,  
I dreamt that they were filled with dew;  
And when I awoke, it rained.

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

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

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

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

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

"The thick black cloud was cleft, and still  
The Moon was at its side:  

1 Empty; useless.  
2 The shining, or splendor, of a hundred flashes, or gleams of lightning.
Like waters shot from some high crag,
The lightning fell with never a jag,¹
A river steep and wide.

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

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

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

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

"I fear thee, ancient Mariner!"—
"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.

"For when it dawned, they dropped their arms,
And clustered round the mast;

¹ With never a break or zigzag, but straight down.
Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths,
And from their bodies passed.

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

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

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

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

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

"Under the keel nine fathom deep,
From the land of mist and snow,

1 In using the word in this way, Coleridge takes it back to the old French jargonner ("to chirp and chatter as birds").
The spirit slid; and it was he
That made the ship to go.
The sails at noon left off their tune,
And the ship stood still also.

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

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

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

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

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

"The other was a softer voice,
As soft as honeydew."
Quoth he, 'The man hath penance done,  
And penance more will do.'

PART VI.

First Voice.

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

Second Voice.

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

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

First Voice.

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

Second Voice.

"'The air is cut away before,  
And closes from behind.
Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high!
Or we shall be belated;
For slow and slow that ship will go,
When the Mariner's trance is abated.'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Oh, dream of joy! is this indeed
The lighthouse top I see?
Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree? ¹

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

¹ An old form, sometimes used in poetry, preserving the termination of the old French word for "country."
And the bay was white with silent light,
Till, rising from the same,
Full many shapes, that shadows were,
In crimson colors came.

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

"Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
And, by the holy rood!\(^1\)
A man all light, a seraph man,
On every corse there stood.

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

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

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

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

\(^1\) "The holy rod" or "rood," i.e., the cross or crucifix.
"I saw a third—I heard his voice:
It is the Hermit good!
He singeth loud his godly hymns
That he makes in the wood.
He'll shrieve¹ my soul, he'll wash away
The Albatross's blood.

PART VII.

"This Hermit good lives in that wood
Which slopes down to the sea.
How loudly his sweet voice he rears!
He loves to talk with marineres²
That come from a far countree.

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

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

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

¹ An old form of "'shrive;' to receive confession, and grant absolution.
² See Note 2, p. 17.
“Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
My forest brook along,
When the ivy tod \(^1\) is heavy with snow,
And the owlet whoops to the wolf below,
That eats the she-wolf’s young.’

‘‘Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look,’
The Pilot made reply:
‘I am afeared.’—‘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,
And straight \(^2\) a sound was heard.

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

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

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

“I moved my lips—the Pilot shrieked,
And fell down in a fit;

\(^1\) A bush or thick mass of ivy. \(^2\) See Note 3, p. 24.
The holy Hermit raised his eyes,
And prayed where he did sit.

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

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

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

"Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
With a woeful agony,
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,
This heart within me burns.

"I pass, like night, from land to land;
I have strange power of speech;
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me:
To him my tale I teach.
"What loud uproar bursts from that door!  
The wedding guests are there;  
But in the garden bower the bride  
And bridemaids singing are;  
And hark the little vesper bell,  
Which biddeth me to prayer!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹ Deprived; bereft.
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