

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834)
The Rime of the Ancient Mariner (text of 1834)

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.

PART I

M

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

It is an ancient Mariner, 01
And he stoppeth one of three.
'By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?

The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide, 05
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, 09
'There was a ship,' quoth he.
'Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!'
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

M

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-- 13
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child:
The Mariner hath his will.

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone: 17
He cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

'The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared, 21
Merrily did we drop

M

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

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

The Sun came up upon the left, 25
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.

Higher and higher every day, 29
Till over the mast at noon--'
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.

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

The bride hath paced into the hall, 33
Red as a rose is she;
Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry minstrelsy.

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

M
The ship driven
by a storm toward
the south pole.

And now the STORM-BLAST came, and he 41
Was tyrannous and strong:
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.

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

And now there came both mist and snow, 51
And it grew wondrous cold:
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.

M

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

And through the drifts the snowy clifts 55
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, 59
The ice was all around:
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound!

M

Till a great sea-bird,
called the Albatross,
came through the
snow-fog, and was
received with great
joy and hospitality.

At length did cross an Albatross, 63
Thorough the fog it came;
As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God's name.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat, 67
And round and round it flew.
The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
The helmsman steered us through!

M

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; 71
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, 75
It perched for vespers nine;
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmered the white Moon-shine.'

M

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

'God save thee, ancient Mariner! 79
From the fiends, that plague thee thus!--

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

PART II

The Sun now rose upon the right: 83
Out of the sea came he,
Still hid in mist, and on the left
Went down into the sea.

And the good south wind still blew behind, 87
But no sweet bird did follow,
Nor any day for food or play
Came to the mariner's hollo!

M

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

And I had done a hellish thing, 91
And it would work 'em woe:
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay, 95
That made the breeze to blow!

M

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

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head, 97
The glorious Sun uprist:
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist. 100
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,
That bring the fog and mist.

M

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

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew, 103
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

M

The ship hath been
suddenly becalmed.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down, 107
'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, 111
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.

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

M

And the Albatross
begins to be avenged.

Water, water, every where, 119
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, every where,
Nor any drop to drink.

The very deep did rot: O Christ! 123
That ever this should be!
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.

About, about, in reel and rout 127
The death-fires danced at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue and white.

M

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 131
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, 135
Was withered at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.

M

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

Ah! well a-day! what evil looks 139
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 143
Was parched, and glazed each eye.
A weary time! a weary time!
How glazed each weary eye,

M

The ancient Mariner
beholdeth a sign in
the element afar off.

When looking westward, I beheld 147
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.

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist! 153
And still it neared and neared:
As if it dodged a water-sprite,
It plunged and tacked and veered.

M

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, 157
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!

M

A flash of joy;

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked, 162
Agape they heard me call:
Gramercy! they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in.
As they were drinking all.

M

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

See! see! (I cried) she tacks no more! 167
Hither to work us weal;
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel!

The western wave was all a-flame. 171
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.

M

It seemeth him
but the skeleton
of a ship.

And straight the Sun was flecked with bars, 177
(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) 181
How fast she nears and nears!

M

And its ribs are seen
as bars on the face
of the setting Sun.

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

M
The Spectre-Woman
and Death-mate,
and no other on
board the skeleton
ship.

Are those her ribs through which the Sun 185
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?

M
Like vessel, like crew!

Her lips were red, her looks were free, 190
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.

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

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

The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out; 199
At one stride comes the dark;
With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,
Off shot the spectre-bark.

M
At the rising of
the Moon,

We listened and looked sideways up! 203
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--
Till clomb above the eastern bar
The hornèd Moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip.

M

One after another,

One after one, by the star-dogged Moon, 212
Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,
And cursed me with his eye.

M

His shipmates drop
down dead.

Four times fifty living men, 216
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropped down one by one.

M

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

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

PART IV

M

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

'I fear thee, ancient Mariner! 224
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, 228
And thy skinny hand, so brown.'--

M

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.

Alone, alone, all, all alone, 232
Alone on a wide wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.

M

He despiseth the

creatures of the calm,

The many men, so beautiful! 236
And they all dead did lie:
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on; and so did I.

M

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

I looked upon the rotting sea, 240
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; 244
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, 248
And the balls like pulses beat;
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky
Lay dead like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.

M

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

The cold sweat melted from their limbs, 253
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 257
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, 263

M

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

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

And no where did abide:
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside--

Her beams bemocked the sultry main, 267
Like April hoar-frost spread;
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
The charmèd water burnt away
A still and awful red.

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

Beyond the shadow of the ship, 272
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 277
I watched their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

M
Their beauty and
their happiness.

O happy living things! no tongue 282
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,

M
He blesseth them
in his heart.

And I blessed them unaware:
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

M

The spell begins
to break.

The self-same moment I could pray; 288
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.

PART V

Oh sleep! it is a gentle thing, 292
Beloved from pole to pole!
To Mary Queen the praise be given!
She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,
That slid into my soul.

M

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

The silly buckets on the deck, 297
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, 301
My garments all were dank;
Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
And still my body drank.

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

M

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

And soon I heard a roaring wind: 309
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! 313

M

fire-flags: presumably
a reference to the
aurora australis.

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, 318
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 322
The Moon was at its side:
Like waters shot from some high crag,
The lightning fell with never a jag,
A river steep and wide.

M

The bodies of the
ship's crew are
[inspired, S.L.] and
the ship moves on;

The loud wind never reached the ship, 327
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, 331
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;
It had been strange, even in a dream,
To have seen those dead men rise.

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

The body of my brother's son 341
Stood by me, knee to knee:
The body and I pulled at one rope,
But he said nought to me.

M

But not by the souls of the
men, nor by dæmons 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 Mariner!' 345
Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest!
'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
Which to their corpses came again,
But a troop of spirits blest:

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

Around, around, flew each sweet sound, 354
Then darted to the Sun;
Slowly the sounds came back again,
Now mixed, now one by one.

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky 358
I heard the sky-lark sing;
Sometimes all little birds that are,
How they seemed to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning!

And now 'twas like all instruments, 363
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 367
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, 373
Yet never a breeze did breathe:
Slowly and smoothly went the ship,
Moved onward from beneath.

M

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.

Under the keel nine fathom deep, 377
From the land of mist and snow,
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, 383
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, 389
She made a sudden bound:
It flung the blood into my head,
And I fell down in a swoond.

M

The Polar Spirit's
fellow-daemons, 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, 393
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?' 398
By him who died on cross,
With his cruel bow he laid full low
The harmless Albatross.

The spirit who bideth by himself 402
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, 406
As soft as honey-dew:
Quoth he, 'The man hath penance done,
And penance more will do.'

PART VI

FIRST VOICE

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

SECOND VOICE

'Still as a slave before his lord, 414
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; 418
For she guides him smooth or grim.
See, brother, see! how graciously
She looketh down on him.'

FIRST VOICE

M

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

'But why drives on that ship so fast, 422
Without or wave or wind?'

SECOND VOICE

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

Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high! 426
Or we shall be belated:
For slow and slow that ship will go,
When the Mariner's trance is abated.'

M

The supernatural
motion is retarded;
the Mariner awakes,
and his penance
begins anew.

I woke, and we were sailing on 430
As in a gentle weather:
'Twas night, calm night, the moon was high;
The dead men stood together.

All stood together on the deck, 434
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, 438
Had never passed away:
I could not draw my eyes from theirs,
Nor turn them up to pray.

M

The curse is finally
expiated.

And now this spell was snapt: once more 442
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 446
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, 452
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 456
Like a meadow-gale of spring--
It mingled strangely with my fears,
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

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

M

And the ancient
Mariner beholdeth
his native country.

Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed 464
The light-house top I see?
Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree?

We drifted o'er the harbour-bar, 468
And I with sobs did pray--
O let me be awake, my God!
Or let me sleep alway.

The harbour-bay was clear as glass, 472
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, 476
That stands above the rock:
The moonlight steeped in silentness
The steady weathercock.

And the bay was white with silent light, 480
Till rising from the same,

M

The angelic spirits
leave the dead bodies,

Full many shapes, that shadows were,
In crimson colours came.

M

And appear in their
own forms of light.

A little distance from the prow 484
Those crimson shadows were:
I turned my eyes upon the deck--
Oh, Christ! what saw I there!

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat, 488
And, by the holy rood!
A man all light, a seraph-man,
On every corse there stood.

This seraph-band, each waved his hand: 492
It was a heavenly sight!
They stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light;

This seraph-band, each waved his hand, 496
No voice did they impart--

No voice; but oh! the silence sank
Like music on my heart.

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

The Pilot and the Pilot's boy, 504
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: 508
It is the Hermit good!
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

M
The Hermit of
the wood,

This Hermit good lives in that wood 514
Which slopes down to the sea.
How loudly his sweet voice he rears!
He loves to talk with marineres
That come from a far countree.

He kneels at morn, and noon, and eve-- 519
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, 523
'Why, this is strange, I trow!
Where are those lights so many and fair,
That signal made but now?'

M
Approacheth the
ship with wonder.

'Strange, by my faith!' the Hermit said-- 527
'And they answered not our cheer!
The planks looked warped! and see those sails,
How thin they are and sere!
I never saw aught like to them,
Unless perchance it were

Brown skeletons of leaves that lag 533

My forest-brook along;

M

ivy-tod. "Tod" is an archaic word meaning "bush" or "mass of foliage."

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-- 538
(The Pilot made reply)
I am a-feared'--'Push on, push on!'
Said the Hermit cheerily.

The boat came closer to the ship, 542
But I nor spake nor stirred;
The boat came close beneath the ship,
And straight a sound was heard.

M

The ship suddenly sinketh.

Under the water it rumbled on, 546
Still louder and more dread:
It reached the ship, it split the bay;
The ship went down like lead.

M

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

Stunned by that loud and dreadful sound, 550
Which sky and ocean smote,
Like one that hath been seven days drowned
My body lay afloat;
But swift as dreams, myself I found
Within the Pilot's boat.

Upon the whirl, where sank the ship, 556
The boat spun round and round;
And all was still, save that the hill
Was telling of the sound.

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

I took the oars: the Pilot's boy, 564
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, 570
I stood on the firm land!
The Hermit stepped forth from the boat,
And scarcely he could stand.

M

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!' 574
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 578
With a woful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale;
And then it left me free.

M

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, 582
That agony returns:
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.

I pass, like night, from land to land; 586
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! 591
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! 596

O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide wide sea:
So lonely 'twas, that God himself

Scarce seemed there to be.

O sweeter than the marriage-feast, 601
'Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company!--

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

M

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

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell 610
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best 614
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.

The Mariner, whose eye is bright, 618
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, 622
And is of sense forlorn:
A sadder and a wiser man,
He rose the morrow morn.

Notes

1] First published in *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798. Almost twenty years later Coleridge, in his *Biographia Literaria* (chap. XIV), gave an account of the occasion of the poem: "During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbours, our conversations turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination. The sudden charm, which accidents of light and shade, which moonlight or sunset diffused over a known and familiar landscape, appeared to represent the practicability of combining both. These are the poetry of nature. The thought suggested itself (to which of us I do not recollect) that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the one, the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least supernatural; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting

of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions, as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. And real in this sense they have been to every human being who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency. For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be such, as will be found in every village and its vicinity where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them, when they present themselves. In this idea originated the plan of the Lyrical Ballads; in which it was agreed, that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith. Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which, in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude we have eyes, yet see not, and hearts that neither feel or understand. With this view I wrote *The Ancient Mariner*, and was preparing among other poems, *The Dark Ladie*, and *the Christabel* in which I should have more nearly realized my ideal, than I had done in my first attempt." Wordsworth also has recorded an account of the inception of the poem: "The *Ancient Mariner* was founded on a strange dream, which a friend of Coleridge had, who fancied he saw a skeleton ship, with figures in it. We had both determined to write some poetry for a monthly magazine, the profits of which were to defer the expenses of a little excursion we were to make together. The *Ancient Mariner* was intended for this periodical, but was too long. I had very little share in the composition of it, for I soon found the style of Coleridge and myself would not assimilate. Beside the lines (in the fourth part)--"And thou art long, and lank, and brown,/As in the ribbed sea-sand--" I wrote the stanza (in the first part) "He holds him with his glittering eye--/ The Wedding-Guest stood still,/ And listens like a three-years child:/ The Mariner hath his will.--" and four or five lines more in different parts of the poem, which I could not now point out. The idea of shooting an albatross was mine; for I had been reading Shelvock's *Voyages*, which probably Coleridge never saw. I also suggested the reanimation of the dead bodies, to work the ship." It should be noted that Coleridge revised most of his poems after their first publication; the poems printed here are taken from the 1834 text, which is the final outcome, in many cases, of a sustained creative process. The 1798 text of *The Ancient Mariner* was deliberately archaic in diction, and spelling; most of the archaisms were removed for the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*; the *Malta voyage*, 1804-6, produced some additional lines and increased precision of phrase; marginal glosses were added in *Sibylline Leaves*, 1817. The argument belongs to the 1798 text only. In 1817 Coleridge replaced the Argument by an epigraph taken from Thomas Burnet's *Archaeologiae Philosophicae*. Translated it reads: "I can easily believe, that there are more Invisible than Visible Beings in the Universe; but who will declare to us the Family of all these, and acquaint us with the Agreements, Differences, and peculiar Talents which are to be found among them? What do they do and where do they live? It is true, human Wit has always desired a Knowledge of these Things, though it has never yet attained it. I will own that it is very profitable, sometimes to contemplate in the Mind, as in a Draught, the Image of the greater and better World; lest the Soul being accustomed to the Trifles of this present Life, should contract itself too much, and altogether rest in mean Cogitations; but, in the mean Time, we must take Care to keep to the Truth, and observe Moderation, that we may distinguish certain Things, and Day from Night."

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