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COLERIDGE'S

THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

IN SEVEN PARTS.

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The Ancient Mariner.

INTRODUCTION.

THE PLANNING AND COMPOSITION OF THE POEM.

COLERIDGE was born in 1772 in Devonshire. He was educated at Christ's Hospital, London, and for a short time at Jesus College, Cambridge. At the end of 1796 he went to live at Nether Stowey, a Somersetshire village, and there met with Wordsworth. This was the commencement of the richest period of Coleridge's poetical activity, the period containing *The Ancient Mariner*, *Christabel*, *Kubla Khan*, *Love*, *The Dark Ladie*, *This Lime-Tree Bower*, *France*, *Frost at Midnight*, *The Nightingale*. Wordsworth and Coleridge planned together a volume of *Lyrical Ballads*. The origin of this volume is explained by Coleridge in his *Biographia Literaria* (ch. XIV.).

'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 continuing 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.

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. With this view I wrote *The Ancient Mariner.*'

'There is,' said Coleridge, 'a class of poetry built on the foundation of dreams' (*Plain Speaker*). His own *Kubla Khan* was a transcription of an actual dream; and 'all his best poems were really dreams or spontaneous reveries, showing a nature of marvellous richness and susceptibility' (L. Stephen). According to Wordsworth's account *The Ancient Mariner*, too, was 'founded on a dream, as Mr. Coleridge said, of his friend Mr. Cruikshank. Much the greatest part of the story was Mr. Coleridge's invention, but certain parts I suggested: for example, some crime was to be committed which should bring upon the Old Navigator, as Coleridge afterwards delighted to call him, the spectral persecution, as a consequence of that crime and his own wanderings. I had been reading in Shelvocke's *Voyages*, a day or two before, that, while doubling Cape Horn, they frequently saw albatrosses in that latitude, the largest sort of sea fowl, some extending their wings twelve

or thirteen feet. "Suppose," said I, "you represent him as having killed one of these birds on entering the South Sea, and that the tutelary spirits of these regions take upon them to avenge the crime." The incident was thought fit for the purpose and adopted accordingly. I also suggested the navigation of the ship by the dead men, but do not recollect that I had anything more to do with the scheme of the poem. The gloss with which it was subsequently accompanied was not thought of by either of us at the time, at least not a hint of it was given to me, and I have no doubt it was a gratuitous afterthought. We began the composition together on that, to me, memorable evening. I furnished two or three lines at the beginning of the poem, in particular:—

> And listen'd like a three years' child;
> The Mariner had his will.

These trifling contributions, all but one, which Mr. Coleridge has with unnecessary scrupulosity recorded, slipped out of his mind, as they well might. As we endeavoured to proceed conjointly (I speak of the same evening), our respective manners proved so widely different that it would have been quite presumptuous in me to do anything but separate from an undertaking upon which I could only have been a clog.'

De Quincey also tells us that, 'before meeting with a fable in which to embody his ideas, Coleridge had meditated a poem on delirium, confounding its own dream scenery with external things, and connected with the imagery of high latitudes'.

THE PLACE OF THE ANCIENT MARINER IN LITERATURE.

The typical poetry of the eighteenth century, viz. that which was approved by those critics who were considered to be

authorities in matters of taste, had certain definite characteristics.

For *material* they seldom went outside the life and manners of the society of their own times; anything less polished than their own conventional and artificial civilization would have been considered beneath the dignity of poetry. There was a strong tendency to consider society as in need of no improvement, and perhaps as incapable of it. They were guided by cold common sense and the dry light of reason; natural emotions and a soaring imagination were looked upon with disfavour. Any enthusiasm for the wild things of nature, for the wild life of past ages, or of distant and little known lands—in fact anything uncultivated—was repressed. Nature had to be 'methodized' or 'to advantage dressed', passion had to be restrained by the customs and rules of cultured society, life had to learn the insipid elegance of eighteenth century manners. Instead of probing into the depths of the elemental in human nature they were content to reflect, accurately and artistically, it is true, the superficial aspects of its acquired customs and ways of thinking, rather than the real feeling that lay beneath and formed the essential man. Similarly they were distrustful of visionary ideals of the future, and of whatever could not be verified by experience.

There were appearing, however, men who could not be satisfied with this narrow range of feeling and imagination, and who wished to penetrate more deeply into the realities of things. The spontaneous views of the individual were no longer to be subjected to the conventions of society, and poets could not accept Jeffrey's later dictum that the standards of poetry 'were fixed long ago by certain inspired writers, whose authority it is no longer lawful to call in question'.

The new movement had several aspects:—

(1) The Return to Nature, both in the narrower and the wider sense, external nature and human nature. Instead of fine stereotyped and conventional phrases about nature, we have direct, first-hand observation, even so early as Thomson; and it was no longer necessary that it should be nature 'methodized' or 'to advantage dressed'. In Burns and the Ballad revival we can see a fuller, deeper, and richer interest in human nature instead of a reproduction of its mere externals. Even in such an imaginative poem as *The Ancient Mariner* we see evidence of the loving and accurate observation of nature, e.g. ll. 184, 369, 521, 533.

(2) Closely connected with this is the humanitarianism which included a new sympathy with animal life. This tendency, well marked in Cowper, Burns, and Blake, was felt also by Coleridge, and forms an important element in *The Ancient Mariner*; as in connexion with the curse following the killing of the albatross, and its removal after the blessing of the water-snakes; and finally and most obtrusively in the lines :—

> 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 that loveth us,
> He made and loveth all.

(3) But for *The Ancient Mariner* the most important aspect of the new movement of expansion was the Romantic Revival proper, the Renaissance of wonder and mystery. This manifested itself in three ways: (*a*) the going back for poetic material to mediaeval times or other past ages; (*b*) the recourse to strange and distant countries for their richly coloured life; and (*c*) the use of the marvellous and supernatural. All these gave freer scope and wider range to the imagination, as

well as richer colouring and more exciting events. All three of these aspects of the movement were present in *The Ancient Mariner* and in the old ballads that were revived by Percy and other later enthusiasts.

A ballad is a short narrative in simple verse. The subject was taken from traditional history, often semi-mythical, from popular tales introducing old superstitions, from pathetic and tragic tales of love. Deeds of valour often formed the staple, but supernatural elements were freely introduced. The simpler emotions and passions, as love, hatred, jealousy, pity, pride, were given full play; but were treated straightforwardly and without the subtlety of a psychological or analytical observer. This new popularity of ballads clearly connects itself with the return to nature in the widest sense because we are brought into the presence of the elements of human life, not of its merely superficial aspects.

The critic Hurd in his *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*, 1762, suggested that there was 'something in the Gothic romance particulary suitable' for the subject matter of poetry, and that the moderns had gone too far in their perpetual ridicule and contempt of it. This kind of material was however being utilized not merely by Percy, the collector of ballads, but also by Chatterton and Macpherson, with their pretended revivals of old Celtic poetry, and even by Gray; and in prose by Horace Walpole (*The Castle of Otranto*), Mrs. Radcliffe (*The Mysteries of Udolpho* and other novels), M. G. Lewis (*The Monk*, etc.); finally both in verse and prose by Scott. The finest flower, however, of the Romantic Revival in the strict sense, was *The Ancient Mariner*. With this we are placed, once and for all, far beyond the external machinery of romance and the crude devices of the *Romance of Terror*.

But the public taste was still under the influence of

eighteenth century ideas. This new poem disturbed them. It took them back into a past age of which they knew nothing, it took them into regions that no man had known, it brought them into the presence of the supernatural and of marvels; and common sense could not accept it. It had not the external symmetry and orderliness dear to the worshippers of Pope, and art could not accept it. They admitted that there were 'poetical touches of an exquisite kind'; but it was 'improbable' said Mrs. Barbauld; even Lamb disliked 'the miraculous part of it'; Southey called it 'a Dutch attempt at German sublimity'; to a review it seemed 'a rhapsody of unintelligible wildness and incoherence'.

Hazlitt, however, could be enthusiastic in its praise. Although he admitted that Coleridge seemed to 'conceive of poetry but as a drunken dream, reckless, careless, and heedless of past, present, and to come', he thinks *The Ancient Mariner* 'is unquestionably a work of genius—of wild, irregular, overwhelming imagination', and praises 'that rich, varied movement in the verse'.

And modern critics have discerned the harmony and unity of it all. 'The marvels are not mere anomalies protruded into the normal world, but elements in a magical world of their own, fantastic as a dream, and yet consistent as reality. Scenery, atmosphere, even the colouring of phrase and rhythm, concur in giving to this magical world the harmonious unity of a possible experience' (Herford, *Age of Wordsworth*, p. 175).

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

really finished thing in a life of many beginnings. *Christabel* remained a fragment. In *The Ancient Mariner* this unity is secured in part by the skill with which the incidents of the marriage-feast are made to break in dreamily from time to time upon the main story. And then, how pleasantly, how re-assuringly, the whole nightmare story itself is made to end among the clear fresh sounds and lights of the bay where it began, with

> The moon-light steeped in silentness,
> The steady weather-cock.'
>
> (Pater, *Appreciations*, p. 99).

Pater thought that the essence of romance lay in 'the addition of strangeness to beauty'; and nothing could be more illuminating than his own description of the romanticism of *The Ancient Mariner*.

'*The Ancient Mariner* is a "romantic" poem, impressing us by bold invention, and appealing to that taste for the super-natural to which the "romantic" school directly ministered. In Coleridge, personally, this taste had been encouraged by his odd and out-of-the-way reading in the old-fashioned literature of the marvellous—books like Pu.chas's *Pilgrims*, early voyages like Hakluyt's, old naturalists and visionary moralists, like Thomas Burnet, from whom he quotes the motto of *The Ancient Mariner*.

'Fancies of the strange things which may very well happen, even in broad daylight, to men shut up alone in ships far off on the sea, seem to have occurred to the human mind in all ages with a peculiar readiness, and often have about them the fascina-tion of a certain dreamy grace, which distinguishes them from other kinds of marvellous inventions. This sort of fascination *The Ancient Mariner* brings to its highest degree: it is the

delicacy, the dreamy grace, in his presentation of the marvellous, which makes Coleridge's work so remarkable. The too palpable intruders from a spiritual world in almost all ghost literature, in Scott and Shakespeare even, have a kind of crudity or coarseness. Coleridge's power is in the very fineness with which, as by some really ghostly finger, he brings home to our inmost sense his inventions, daring as they are—the skeleton ship, the polar spirit, the inspiriting of the dead corpses of the ship's crew. *The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner* has the plausibility, the perfect adaptation to reason and the general aspect of life which belongs to the marvellous, when actually presented as a part of a credible experience in our dreams. The modern mind, so minutely self-scrutinizing, if it is to be affected at all by a sense of the supernatural, needs to be more finely touched than was possible in the older, romantic presentment of it. The spectral object, so crude, so impossible has become plausible, as

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

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

'It is this finer, more delicately marvellous supernaturalism, fruit of his more delicate psychology, that Coleridge infuses into romantic adventure, itself also then a new or revived thing in English literature; and with a fineness of weird effect in *The Ancient Mariner*, unknown in those older, more simple, romantic legends and ballads. It is a flower of mediaeval or later German romance, growing up in the peculiarly compounded atmosphere of modern psychological speculation, and putting forth in it wholly new qualities. The quaint prose commentary,

which runs side by side with the verse of *The Ancient Mariner*, illustrates this—a composition of quite a different shade of beauty and merit from that of the verse which it accompanies, connecting thus the chief poem of Coleridge with his philosophy, and emphasizing therein that psychological interest of which I have spoken, in curious soul-lore.'

In style and execution, as well as in choice of matter and in the spirit of treatment, the new poets were more adventurous. Hitherto in the correct poetic diction only words that were of good repute were to be used, and phrases that had been used by classic authors. The eighteenth century poets were under the mistaken impression that they must avoid the phraseology of ordinary daily life as being too mean for poetry. Addison declared that 'since it often happens that the most obvious phrases and those which are used in ordinary conversation become too familiar to the ear and contract a kind of meanness by passing through the mouths of the vulgar, a poet should take particular care to guard himself against idiomatic ways of speaking'. So instead of birds and the moon, we have such grandiloquent phrases as 'the feathered quire [choir]' and 'refulgent lamp of light'. Wordsworth, on the other hand, protested against this strained and artificial diction and in place of the 'gaudiness and inane phraseology' of his predecessors proposed to employ 'a selection of the language really spoken by men', believing that 'this selection, wherever it is made with true taste and feeling, will of itself form a distinction far greater than would at first be imagined, and will entirely separate the composition from the vulgarity and meanness of ordinary life'.

Coleridge, too, saw that the familiar word is often more forcible than the far-fetched, and in his best poetry avoided the fatal habit of padding out his sentences with useless epithets,

He seems to have told Hazlitt that

'The *Lyrical Ballads* were an experiment about to be tried by himself and Wordsworth, to see how far the public taste would endure poetry written in a more natural and simple style than had hitherto been attempted; totally discarding the artifices of poetic diction, and making use only of such words as had probably been common in the most ordinary language since the days of Henry II.'

In verse, while orderliness and regularity were the watch-words of the eighteenth century, freedom and individuality, variety and elasticity, were those of the innovators.

Pope and his school had practically confined themselves to the heroic couplet for long poems; but now blank verse, the Spenserian stanza, the tetrameter couplet, and the ballad metre were reintroduced, and even within these different forms the strict rule was not at all rigidly observed; whereas with the school of Pope, 'correctness' was their care.

The legitimate modifications of the normal heroic line had been severely limited, and now variety for its own sake would have been welcome, but with the best poets, as with Coleridge, these variations are 'not introduced wantonly or for the mere ends of convenience, but in correspondence with some transition in the nature of the imagery or passion' (Pref. to *Christabel*). The very qualities of *The Ancient Mariner* that an eighteenth century critic would have singled out for condemnation are exactly those which Wordsworth praises.

'The versification is harmonious and artfully varied, exhibiting the utmost powers of that metre, and every variety of which it is capable.'

THE STYLE OF THE POEM.

'This poem is beyond question one of the supreme triumphs of poetry. . . . For the execution I presume no human eye is

too dull to see how perfect it is, and how high in kind of perfection.' (Swinburne).

'My eyes make pictures when they are closed,' says Coleridge in one of his poems; and it has been said of *The Ancient Mariner* that it is 'a story told by pictures'. It is as Lowell pointed out, 'picturesque in the proper sense of the word'. The so-called descriptive poets generally confuse their pictures by multiplicity of detail which cannot be unified and combined into one organic whole. 'Our flying minds cannot contain a protracted description,' said Meredith, and therefore 'the art of the pen is to arouse the inward vision.' The best descriptions are done by those who enter into the spirit of a scene and select just those details that will serve that spirit. Coleridge had this power, and with unerring instinct he 'touches the right chord of association,' and with a few bold strokes completes a picture that is startling in its vividness.

'Coleridge triumphs over his difficulties by sheer vividness of imagery and terse vigour of descriptive phrase. . . . In *The Ancient Mariner* his eye seems never to wander from his object, and again and again the scene starts out upon the canvas in two or three strokes of the brush. 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 moonbeam, with the "elfish light" falling off them in "hoary flakes" when they reared; the dead crew, who work the ship and "raise their limbs like lifeless tools"—everything seems to have been actually *seen*, and we believe it all as the story of a truthful eye-witness' (Trail, *Coleridge*, p. 54).

Perhaps more remarkable than all is his bold description of the almost instantaneous fall of night 'within the courts of the sun':—

The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out:
At one stride comes the dark.

The realistic force of the narrative is due partly to this intensity of pictorial vision, and partly to the circumstantial way in which all the happenings are related, whether natural or supernatural; the action never halts, the poet never falters; and as a result the poet does 'procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith'. Coleridge has what Matthew Arnold noticed in Shakespeare, 'the power of intensely feeling a situation, of intimately associating himself with a character'.

The 'beautiful images' and 'unusual felicity of language' that Wordsworth notes, will be obvious to all readers; see ll. 263-81, 292-6, 354-72, 478. It is of more importance to note that perhaps the most powerful effects of the poem are due to that directness and simplicity which Coleridge undoubtedly learnt from the old ballads. In method and style their characteristic qualities are rapidity in movement, straightforwardness and directness in thought and language—'plainness' Matthew Arnold called it. There is no otiose ornamentation to interfere with the simple directness of the narrative. Similes are brief and to the point:—

And ice, mast high, went floating by
As green as emerald. (ll. 53-4.)
As if it had been a Christian soul
We hailed it in God's name. (ll. 65-6.)
As if through a dungeon-grate he peered
With broad and burning face. (ll. 179-80.)
It cracked, and growled, and roared, and howled,
Like noises in a swound! (ll. 61-2.)

Coleridge knew the virtue of brevity; that the short word is more forcible than the long, the familiar more forcible than

the far-fetched. And in accordance with this he seems always to have preferred an old English word to one derived from Latin. In ll. 25-8 we have a whole stanza in which every word is a monosyllable, none being longer than six letters; and the picture is as simple as its words.

He realized, too, that concrete terms are more vivid and effective than abstract. He took care to use everything that would strike vividly on the senses; and so leaves a clear and definite impression on the mind. He wastes no words in circumlocutions or wordy explanations; but he also takes from the ballad writers their fondness for repetition of words and phrases. See l. 13 and note, 37-40, 83-6, 87-90, 99-102, 121, 143-6 (see note), 162.

The influence of the ballads, as well as of Chaucer (and Spenser), is seen in the archaisms which Coleridge introduced apparently to spread over his poem the atmosphere of a far-away time. A glance at the deleted readings of the 1798 text will show that there were some three dozen of these words and expressions that had become antiquated long before Coleridge's time. Wordsworth disapproved of the 'old words and the strangeness of it'; and 'by 1800 Coleridge had seen that this purely mechanical device, applied so lavishly, defeated its own object—the suggestion of an indefinitely remote age. The obsolete forms stand out from the context, detaining the eye, distracting attention (and thus arresting the flow of passion), while importing a certain element of the grotesque. Coleridge therefore removed about ten of the more importunate archaisms, e.g. the Chaucerian *y-spread*, *yeven*, *n'old*; and another ten from the 1817 edition. Finally, therefore, all but six or seven were discarded; for Coleridge found that a thin strewing of words and forms no longer in common use, but not yet grown strange or unmeaning to the general eye, suffices to create a

willing illusion as of a bygone style throughout, yet leaving the poet free to employ modern usage' (*Athenæum*, No. 4321).

The following are some of the archaisms, words, or spellings remaining in the final text of 1829: *quoth* (10), *untand* (11), *eftsoons* (12), *chuse* (18), *spake* (19), *clifts* (55), *ken* (57), *swound* (62), *thorough* (64), *vespers* (76), *uprist* (98), *I wist* (152), *gramercy* (164), *betwixt* (176), *clomb* (209), *alway* (270), *silly* (297), *sere* (312), *sheen* (314), *countree* (467). [Some of these, e.g. *uprist*, *I wist* are false forms; see notes.]

The chief of the deleted archaisms are: *laughsome* (11), *ne . . . ne . . .* [*neither . . . nor . . .*] (57, etc.), *an* [*if*] (65), *withouten* (169), *Pheere* (188, see note), *sterte* [started] (199), *atween* (211), *eldritch* (242), *yspread* (268), *Lavrock* (359).

Several of the original readings were remarkable examples of intense realism, e.g. the description of the mate of the spectre woman, Life-in-Death.

> *His* bones were black with many a crack,
> All black and bare, I ween;
> Jet-black and bare, save where with rust
> Of mouldy damps and charnel crust
> They're patch'd with purple and green.
>
> . . . .
>
> A gust of wind sterte up behind
> And whistled thro' his bones;
> Thro' the holes of his eyes and the hole of his mouth
> Half whistles and half groans.

But Coleridge recognized that these gruesome details of this powerful picture were hardly consistent with the kind of weird glamour which he was endeavouring to throw over the poem, and wisely 'rejected the horrors while retaining the terrors of death'; he therefore excised 'the stanza which described the Death-Mate of the Spectre-Woman, his bones foul with leprous

scurf and green corruption of the grave, in contrast to the red lips and yellow locks of the fearfuller Nightmare Life-in-Death' (Swinburne). It interfered with the general impression, and disturbed the unity of effect which should be the object of art.

'Relying largely, as he did in his poems dealing with the supernatural, on the effect produced by their psychological truth, Coleridge could afford to subdue the supernatural and refine it to the uttermost. . . . He did not need, as Monk Lewis did, to drag into his verse all the horrors of the churchyard . . .' (Dowden, *New Studies*).

For a similar reason the 'biscuit-worms' of l. 67 became 'the food it ne'er had eat', which was much more consonant with the world of mystery and imagination.

For l. 104 see note.

In 1798 after l. 344 stood two other lines

> I quaked to think of my own voice
> How frightful it would be.

which 'were omitted from the revised version of the poem—perhaps because, where they stood, they were in the nature of an anti-climax; one who is helping a corpse to hoist a sail may well be beyond the reach of these more delicate terrors' (Raleigh).

THE DEFECTS OF THE POEM—ALLEGED AND REAL.

Wordsworth pointed out four 'great defects':—

(1) That the principal person has no distinct character either in his profession of Mariner, or as a human being who having been long under the control of supernatural impressions might be supposed himself to partake of something supernatural;

(2) that he does not act, but is continually acted upon;

(3) that the events having no necessary connexion do not produce each other;

(4) that the imagery is somewhat too laboriously accumulated.

The last two allegations are false. The fourth has already been answered by implication in the exposition of Coleridge's style. The third will disappear after a careful reading of the *Argument* of 1800, and the marginal summary; and a consideration of the incidents that lead to the killing of the albatross, from that to the blessing of the water-snakes, and from that point to the mariner's return—they are all connected by a rigorous inner law of cause and effect.

The first has been answered by Lamb: 'I totally differ from your idea that the *Marinere* should have had a character and profession. . . . The Ancient Marinere undergoes such trials as overwhelm and bury all individuality or memory of what he was—like the state of a man in a bad dream, one terrible peculiarity of which is, that all consciousness of personality is gone. Your other observation is, I think as well, a little unfounded: the *Marinere*, from being conversant in supernatural events, *has* acquired a supernatural and strange cast of phrase, eye, appearance, etc., which frighten the "wedding guest"'. . . (Letter to Wordsworth, January, 1801); and in fact at 'sight of him the Pilot shrieked and fell down in a fit' (ll. 560-1).

A modern critic, remarking on Wordsworth's objection that the mariner had no character, says 'Nor has he; he is only a soul that has been alone on a wide, wide sea,' and remains but an embodied memory of what he has undergone. The pilot's boy goes crazy at the sight of him, he 'passes like night from land to land', compelled by an inward agony to tell his tale. He has, as Lamb said, 'a supernatural cast', that ghostly air which comes to men transported beyond the normal

bounds of human faculty by an overwhelming experience. And all this weird and penetrating supernaturalism is thrown into relief with exquisite instinct by scenes full of the babbling innocence of nature, e.g. ll. 354, 533 (Herford, *Age of Wordsworth*, p. 175).

The poem was also accused, by Mrs. Barbauld, of improbability and of the absence of a moral. Improbable, of course, in one sense it is; but this did not trouble Coleridge, the great Romanticist. He was aiming at 'adherence to the truth of nature,' i.e. the 'dramatic truth' of the emotions that would be naturally aroused by such situations if they were real.

Given a certain situation, then everything is worked out with an inner consistency perfect in its logic. Poetry, as Coleridge learnt very early, 'had a logic of its own, as severe as that of science; and more difficult because more subtle, more complex, and dependent on more, and more, and more fugitive causes' (*Biog. Lit.*, ch. 1).

'As to want of a moral,' said Coleridge, 'I told her that in my judgement the poem had too much; and that the chief fault . . . was the obtrusion of the moral sentiment so openly on the reader as a principle or cause of action in a work of such pure imagination.'

The nature of the moral will be evident from the *Argument* (1800) and the marginal gloss. Stopford Brooke sums up the teaching of the poem by saying that men who violate the laws of pity and love 'are punished by hardness of heart. They cannot pray, they cannot be wise, they cannot bless the living creatures of the land and sea and sky. Nature to them is dead; and if these be powers bound up with Nature, these are their enemies till they change their hearts. And Coleridge imagined the lonesome Spirit of the South Pole who loved the Albatross, and his fellow-demons, the invisible inhabitants of

the element, and the great ocean that always looks at the moon, and the Sun and Moon, who act with the Polar Spirit, and Death, and Life in Death,—the spiritual powers which execute the sanctions of the Law of Pity.'

Of the stanza (ll. 614-7) in which the moral is explicitly stated Prof. Herford says: 'At only one point does Coleridge's tender delight in the natural world seem to have introduced an incongruous element into his presentment of marvel. The shooting of the albatross was in admirable keeping so long as the persecution it provoked was conceived as vengeance for the violation of the bird's legendary sanctity. But in an unfortunate (though beautiful) stanza at the close it was suggested that the ruthless supernatural destroyers of men had really been avenging a breach of the law of kindness to all living things, a suggestion which lets in the light of common day upon the spectral scenery of the poem.'

With regard to the supernaturalism in the poem Mr. William Watson has written a very subtle criticism which is here freely abridged. He points out that 'Coleridge is careful not to introduce any element of the marvellous or supernatural until he has transported the reader beyond the pale of definite geographical knowledge, and thus left behind him all those conditions of the known and the familiar, all those associations with recorded fact and experience, which would have created a hostile atmosphere. . . . Beyond a few broad indications Coleridge very astutely avoids anything like geography. We reach that silent sea into which we are the first that ever burst, and that is sufficient for imaginative ends. It is enough that the world, as known to actual navigators, is left behind, and a world which the poet is free to colonize with the wildest children of his dreaming brain, has been entered. Henceforth we cease to have any direct relations with the verifiable.

Natural law is suspended; marvel after marvel is accepted by us, as by the wedding-guest, with the unquestioning faith of 'a three years' child'. We become insensibly acclimatized to this dreamland where the jurisdiction of imagination is supreme and where reason cannot intrude. But at last we leave this consistently impossible world; we are restored to the world of reason and common experience; and when so restoring us the poet makes his first and only mistake. For the concluding pair of miracles—the apparition of the angelic forms standing over the corpses of the crew, and the sudden preternatural sinking of the ship—take place just when we have returned to the province of the natural and regular, to the sphere of the actual and the known; just when we have re-entered the harbour, and seen the well-known church with its weathercock. A discordant note is struck at once. We have left a world where prodigies were normal, and have returned to one where they are monstrous; but prodigies still pursue us, and in this case cause bewilderment.

THE VERSE OF THE ANCIENT MARINER.

The verse-form of *The Ancient Mariner* is based on what is known as *ballad metre*. This can best be explained under two headings (A) the metre of individual verses, and (B) the rime and stanza.

A. The Metre of Individual Verses.

In English speech some sounds are made more prominent than others; i.e. they are accented or stressed. It is upon stress or accent that the rhythm of English verse mainly depends; the words are so arranged that the accented syllables occur at equal intervals of time. In other words, verse may be divided into measures or feet, each of which occupies, ap-

proximately at least, the same period of time; and the beginning or end of each foot is marked by a syllable more strongly stressed than others in that foot.

Are thóse | her ríbs | through whích | the Sún | did péer—as thróugh | a gráte? | and ís | that Wóm | an áll | her crew? | Is thát | a Déath | and áre | there twó? | Is Déath | that wóm | an's máte?

Here it is the last syllable of each foot that receives the stress.

(In some other kinds of verse the first syllable in each foot is stressed,

> Háppy | field or | móssy | cávern
> Chòicer | thàn the | Mérmaid | távern. *Keats.*)

Furthermore this rhythmical series is divided into larger metrical units—verses or lines—which occupy regular lengths of time; each contains a fixed number of the smaller rhythmical units or feet. In many poems all the lines are of equal length, each containing the same number of feet.

> The wáy | was lóng | the wínd | was cóld
> The mín | strel wás | infírm | and óld.

or

> Avénge | O Lórd | thy sláught | ered sáints | whose bónes
> Lie scát | tered òn | the Alp | ine móunt | ains cóld;
> Even thém | who képt | thy fáith | so púre | of óld. . . .

In some the length of the lines is regularly varied; in *The Ancient Mariner* and the ballads the lines are as a general rule alternately of four feet (tetrameter) and three feet (trimeter).

> At first | it seemed | a lit | tle speck,
> And then | it seemed | a mist;
> It moved | and moved, | and took | at last
> A cer | tain shape, | I wist.

The feet are alike in two respects :—

(1) they are equal in duration ;

(2) the heaviest accent falls on the last syllable of the foot, or in other words the rhythm is rising rhythm.

They may, however, differ in other respects :—

(i) So long as the time-length remains practically constant there may be one, two, or three syllables in the foot. Usually there are two, and the two-syllabled foot may be regarded as the normal. When there are three syllables they are pronounced more rapidly so that they occupy the same time as a two-syllabled foot. When there is only one syllable it is pronounced slowly.

Examples of trisyllabic feet are :—

The ice | did split | with a thund | er fit. (69.)
And a good | south wind sprung up behind. (71.)
From the fiends | that plague thee thus. (80.)
When the i | vy-tod | is heav | y with snow
And the ow | let whoops | to the wolf | below. (535-6.)
(two instances in the same line)
For the sky | and the sea | and the sea | and the sky. (250.)
(four instances in the same line).

Examples of monosyllabic feet are :—

Fóur | times fíf | ty lív | ing mén. (216.)
Soft | ly she | was go | ing up. (265.)
Swift | ly swift | ly flew | the ship. (460.)

N.B.—This truncation of the foot occurs always after a pause, i.e. usually at the beginning of a line, although occasionally as in l. 488 in the middle of a line.

It will be noted that in most of the above cases it is impossible to explain away the trisyllabic feet on the principle of

slurring or elision, since this can only be applied, as in the poetry of Milton, where two vowel sounds come together or are separated only by liquid consonants. Moreover Coleridge, whatever may have been the theory and practice of other poets, made it clear that he did not regard equality in the number of syllables to be necessary. Of the metre of *Christabel* he says that it is not irregular, 'though it may seem so from its being founded on a new principle, namely, that of counting in each line the accents, not the syllables. Though the latter may vary from seven to twelve, yet in each line the accents will be found to be only four. Nevertheless this occasional variation in number of syllables is not introduced wantonly, or for the mere ends of convenience, but in correspondence with some transition in the nature of the imagery or passion.'

Trisyllabic and monosyllabic feet are often found next to each other :—

> Réd | as a róse | is shé
> Each córse | lay flát |^ lífe | less and flát

See also ll. 26, 111, 212, 414.

Some prosodists would scan these lines :—

> Réd as | a róse | is shé
> Each córse | lay flát | lífeless | and flát

saying that the stress of the first foot was unveiled and that a trochee was substituted for an iamb. But the frequency of monosyllabic feet has not received sufficient recognition by orthodox metrists. The time of the normal two syllables is in a monosyllabic foot filled up partly by the voice lingering on the stressed syllable, and partly by the fact that there is a pause preceding. This pause may be due to a division in the sense or metre, or merely to the fact that when two stressed syllables come together there is a tendency to make a pause

between them. In other words the interval between the metrical stresses may be filled either by unstressed syllables or by silences.

A two syllabled foot in rising rhythm, i.e. one composed of an unstressed followed by a stressed syllable, is called an *iamb*. When this is the dominant foot the verse is called iambic verse. A three syllabled foot in rising rhythm, i.e. one composed of two unstressed syllables followed by a stressed syllable, is called an *anapaest*.

(ii) The metrical stress is not always of equal weight, e.g. in the words *ágonỳ*, *béautifùl*, *márinèr*. Here the stress on *-y*, *-ful*, *-er* is obviously not so heavy as that on *ag-*, *beau-*, *mar-*. All that is necessary is that the stress should be heavier than that on the preceding syllable. It frequently happens that a light metrical stress in one foot is compensated by a heavier one in the adjoining foot:—

Like the whízz of mỳ cross-bów

Such a line as

And néver a saínt took píty oǹ
My sóul in ágonỳ.

affords an example of what is known to Shakespearian metrists as a *light ending*. Ordinarily the last foot in an iambic verse should receive a full stress, but occasionally a line is found ending with a monosyllable which cannot receive a heavy accent. The voice cannot dwell on such a word, so that the line is made rhythmically continuous with the next. (See on *overflow* in the next paragraph.)

(iii) Besides the pause which, occurring between two stressed syllables, helps to fill up the time of a foot there are two other kinds of which the prosodist must take account (*a*) the metrical pause, marking the end of each metrical unit

or line; (*b*) the sense pause, marking the end of a phrase or clause. The sense pause, of course, is present also in prose, and in verse may occur at any part of the line. Its position is frequently, but not necessarily, marked by punctuation. When a clause or sentence comes to an end at the end of a line, then there is a heavy pause; when, however, the line comes to an end in the middle of a phrase the pause is so light that it may almost be neglected. In the latter case the sense and rhythm seem to *overflow* or *run on* into the next line—

> We could not speak, no more than if
> We had been choked with soot. (ll. 137-8.)
> The Albatross fell off, and sank
> Like lead into the sea. (ll. 290-1.)

Also 275-6, 306-7, 332-3.

See also l. 533 for an example of enjambement between one stanza and another.

(iv) In a few cases an additional syllable is found after the last stress of the line, e.g.

> The Alb | atróss | did fól | low
> Cáme | to the már | iner's hól | lo.

See also ll. 116-8, 384-6-8, 411-3, 427-9, 431-3, 435-7. These are called feminine endings or double endings, and the lines are called hypermetrical.

By these means variety of movement is attainable without disregard of the law of the verse. The beat or metrical stress always recurs at the same interval, thus preserving uniformity of time amid the variety of pause, speed, number of syllables, and weight of accent.

There are several instances of wrenched accent, i.e. accents which for the sake of the metre are removed from the syllables to which they properly belong in modern English and placed

on syllables that are ordinarily unaccented—e.g. countree, l. 467; alway, l. 270. But this pronunciation often represents the accentuation in Middle English as in the case of 'countree'. In the old ballads, therefore, these apparently wrenched accents were not really wrenched.

B. Rime and Stanza.

The verses throughout are arranged in groups, which are called stanzas. The grouping principle is rime. When words at the end of verses or metrical sections have a certain similarity of sound without complete identity then they are said to rime together. The conditions are: (1) the last stressed vowel sounds must be identical; (2) all sounds, consonant or vowel following the stressed vowel must also be identical; (3) the preceding consonant must be different. *Bear* and *bare* would not fulfil these conditions because the preceding consonants are identical, nor would *máking* and *the Kíng* because the similar sounds are not both stressed. Coleridge sometimes has rimes that are not perfect:—

(*a*) because the sounds are not exactly of the same quality but are only approximately similar, e.g. *thus* and *Albatross* (ll. 80, 82), *cold* and *emerald* (ll. 52, 54), *groan* and *one* (ll. 217, 219), *given* and *heaven* (ll. 294, 295), also ll. 328 and 330, 368 and 372, 374 and 376, 407 and 409, 489 and 491, 528 and 532, 534 and 537.

(*b*) because the words are altogether identical in sound, e.g. *he* and *he* (ll. 10, 12). *Cf.* also ll. 94 and 96, 100 and 102, 144 and 146, 174 and 176, where, however, another riming sound is provided as these occur in six-line stanzas.

(*c*) because the words have an entirely different sound although similar in spelling, e.g. *blow* and *prow* (ll. 45, 46), *root* and *soot* (ll. 136, 138), *flute* and *mute* (ll. 364, 366).

Notice also such cases as *dew* and *do* (ll. 407 and 439) where even if the vowel sounds were identical the rime would be bad because the consonants are also identical; and *hear* and *mariner* where both the quality and the stress of one sound have to be changed for the sake of the rime.

A large number of the four-foot lines have *internal rime* or *leonine rime*, i.e. the line is divided into two equal sections, the last syllables of which rime together.

> The guests are met, the feast is set. (l. 7.)
> The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared. (l. 21.)
> The wedding-guest here beat his breast. (l. 31.)

In some stanzas there are two lines with internal rime (ll. 55 and 57, 71 and 73, 75 and 77, 93 and 95), and in one stanza there are three such lines (ll. 97, 99, 101).

Alliteration is used with great effect in a few places. It occurs when two or more words close together commence with the same consonant sound, e.g.

> The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew
> The furrow followed free;
> We were the first that ever burst
> Into that silent sea. (ll. 103-106.)

See also lines 127-30.

The stanza form is based on the older ballad verse. The lines are ordinarily grouped in fours, of which the second and fourth lines, of equal length, viz. trimeters, rime together. The first and third lines, tetrameters, ordinarily do not rime together, although they frequently have internal rime; but in some instances, e.g. ll. 220, 317, 452, 476, 492, so that the formula is *abab*, instead of *xaya*.

The normal form of ballad verse is therefore a stanza of four

verses, the first and third being in iambic tetrameter, the second and fourth in iambic trimeter riming together.

There are, however, stanzas of five, six, and even nine lines (see lines 203, 248, 282). The five-verse stanzas have an extra line after the third, of the same length and riming with it (*abccb*). The six-verse stanza has two more lines after the fourth, three-foot and four-foot respectively; the sixth line riming with the fourth, often identically (*abcbdb*). The single nine-line stanza is composed of three triplets, in each of which the first two lines form a couplet, and all the third lines rime together (*aabccbddb*).

The twelfth stanza (ll. 45-50), is of a different mould. The first three lines are four-foot lines riming together, the fifth is a four-foot line with internal rime, the fourth and sixth are three-foot lines riming together.

A reviewer in the *Athenæum* (No. 4321) says of this stanza: 'Desiring to produce the impression of a flight at once headlong and protracted, he extends the first line to three times its ordinary length—i.e. a line of twelve accents—resolved into three equal parts, punctuated with a rime, and so secures the combined effect of continuous yet precipitous movement'.

And of the nine-line stanza (ll. 203-11): 'Again when he would invoke a vision of the long hours of the mariner's terror-stricken watch between sunset and moonrise on the night after their encounter with the spectre bark and its intolerable crew,' he employs a six-line stanza; duplicating the first, third, and fifth lines, so that a line of eight accents, divided by rime into hemistichs of four, alternates with a normal line of three accents.

THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER.

ARGUMENT.

How a Ship having first sailed to the Equator, was driven by Storms to the cold Country towards the South Pole, how the Ancient Mariner cruelly, and in contempt of the laws of hospitality, killeth a sea-bird, and how he was followed by many strange judgments, and in what manner he came back to his own country (1800).

PART I

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

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

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

Title] The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere. 1798. The Ancient Mariner, A Poet's Reverie. 1800

NOTE.—How a Ship having passed the Line was driven by Storms to the cold Country towards the South Pole; and how from thence she made her course to the tropical Latitude of the Great Pacific Ocean, and of the strange things that befell; and in what manner the Ancyent Marinere came back to his own Country. [1798.]

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

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

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

'The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.

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

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

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

9-16. But still he holds the wedding-guest—
There was a Ship, quoth he—
'Nay, if thou'st got a laughsome tale,
Marinere! come with me'.
He holds him with his skinny hand,
Quoth he, there was a Ship—
'Now get thee hence, thou grey-beard Loon!
Or my Staff shall make thee skip'.
1798, 1800.

" The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared."

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;
Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry minstrelsy.

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

The ship driven by a storm toward the south pole.

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

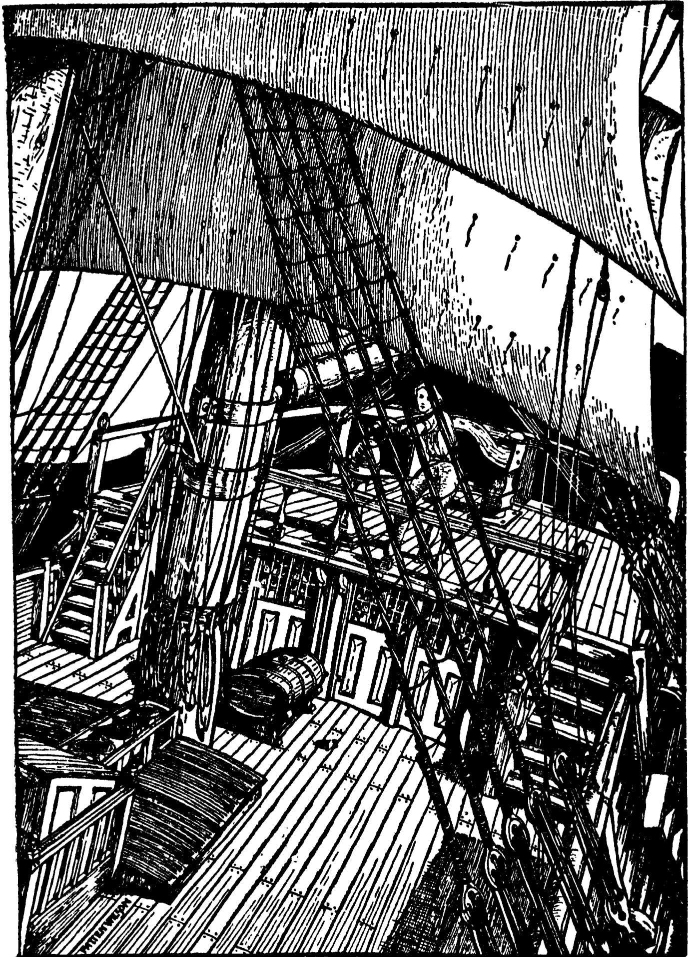
With sloping masts and dipping prow,
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe,
And forward bends his head,
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
50 And southward aye we fled.

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

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

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

57. 'Ne . . . ne.' 1798.



"The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast."

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

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,
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,
And round and round it flew.
The ice did split with a thunder-fit,
70 The helmsman steered us through!

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

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

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

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

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

62. Like noises of a swound. 1798.
A wild and ceaseless sound. 1800.
65. And an it were a Christian Soul. 1798.
67. The Marineres gave it biscuit-worms. 1798, 1800.

Part II.

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.

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

And I had done an 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!

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

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

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

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

The fair breeze continues; the ship enters the Pacific Ocean, and

85. And broad as a weft upon the left. 1798.
104. The furrow stream'd off free, 1817.
'In the former edition the line was "The furrow follow'd free"; but I had not been long on board a ship, before I perceived that this was the image as seen by a spectator from the shore, or from another vessel. From the ship itself the *Wake* appears like a brook flowing off from the stern.'

sails northward, even till it reaches the Line.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
'Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea! 110

The ship hath been suddenly becalmed.

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

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

And the Albatross begins to be avenged.

Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink; 120
Water, water, every where,
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.

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

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.

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

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.

140

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.

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

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.

150

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.

143-8. I saw a something in the Sky,
No bigger than my fist; 1798.
So past a weary time; each throat
(Was) parch'd and glaz'd each eye,
When, looking westward, I beheld
A something in the sky. 1800.

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!
160 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! they for joy did grin,

A flash of joy.

And all at once their breath drew in,
As they were drinking all.

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

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

It seemeth him but the skeleton of a ship.

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

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

159. Then while thro' drouth all dumb they stood. 1798, 1800.
169. Withouten wind, withouten tide, 1798, 1800.

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 Night-mare LIFE-IN-DEATH was she,
Who thicks man's blood with cold.

The naked hulk alongside came,
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:
At one stride comes the dark;
With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,
Off shot the spectre-bark.

And its ribs are seen as bars on the face of the setting Sun. The Spectre-Woman and her Death-mate, and 190 no other on board the skeleton-ship. Like vessel, like crew! Death and Life-in-Death have diced for the ship's crew and she (the latter) winneth the ancient Mariner. 200 No twilight within the courts of the Sun. At the rising of the Moon,

185-9. Are those *her* naked ribs, which fleck'd
The sun that did behind them peer?
And are those two all, all the crew,
That woman and her fleshless Pheere? * (mate)

His bones were black with many a crack,
All black and bare, I ween;
Jet-black and bare, save where with rust
Of mouldy damps and charnel crust
They're patch'd with purple and green. 1798.

193-4. And she is far liker Death than he;
Her flesh makes the still air cold. 1798, 1800.

199-211. A gust of wind sterte * up behind (started)
And whistled thro' his bones;
Thro' the holes of his eyes and the hole of his mouth
Half-whistles and half-groans. 1798, 1800, 1817.
With never a whisper in the Sea
Off darts the Spectre-ship,
While clombe * above the Eastern bar (climbed)
The horned Moon, with one bright Star
Almost atween the tips 1798, 1800, 1817.

We listened and looked sideways up!
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
210 The horned Moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip.

One after another,

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

His ship-mates drop down dead,

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

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

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

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.*

* For the two last lines of this stanza, I am indebted to Mr. Wordsworth. It was on a delightful walk from Nether Stowey to Dulverton, with him and his sister, in the autumn of 1797, that this Poem was planned, and in part composed. [Coleridge's note.]

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

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

230

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.

He despiseth the creatures of the calm.

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

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

240

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.

250

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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.

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

Their beauty and their happiness.

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

268. Like morning frosts yspread. 1798.

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

He blesseth them in his heart.

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

The spell begins to break.

290

Part V.

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

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.

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

300

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

I moved, and could not feel my limbs:
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.

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

310

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;
320 And the rain poured down from one black cloud;
The Moon was at its edge.

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

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

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

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 up blew;
The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
Where they were wont to do;
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—
340 We were a ghastly crew.

The body of my brother's son
Stood by me, knee to knee:

The body and I pulled at one rope,
But he said nought 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:

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

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

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

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

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

It ceased: yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June, 370
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

344. In 1798 two other lines followed this:—
And I quak'd to think of my own voice
How frightful it would be.

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

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,
From the land of mist and snow,
The spirit slid: and it was he
380 That made the ship to go.
The sails at noon left off their tune,
And the ship stood still also.

The Sun, right up above the mast,
Had fixed her to the ocean:
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,
390 She made a sudden bound:
It flung the blood into my head,
And I fell down in a swound.

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

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,
400 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.'

long and heavy for the ancient Mariner hath been accorded to the Polar Spirit, who returneth southward.

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

Part VI.

FIRST VOICE.

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

SECOND VOICE.

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

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

FIRST VOICE.

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

The Mariner hath been

SECOND VOICE.

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

'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.'

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

430 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,
440 Nor turn them up to pray.

The curse is finally expiated.

And now the 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;
450 Because he knows, a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

But soon there breathed a wind on me,
Nor sound nor motion made :
Its path was not upon the sea,
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, 460
Yet she sailed softly too :
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—
On me alone it blew.

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

And the ancient Mariner beholdeth his native country.

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

The harbour-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.

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

The Angelic spirits leave the dead bodies,

And appear in their own forms of light.

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

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
And, by the holy rood!
490 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.

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

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

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

PART VII.

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

The Hermit of the Wood,

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

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

'Strange, by my faith!' the Hermit said—
'And they answered not our cheer!
The planks look warped! and see those sails,

Approacheth the ship with wonder.

503-4. *Between these lines occur six lines in* 1798 *only*
Then vanish'd all the lovely lights;
The bodies rose anew:
With silent pace, each to his place,
Came back the ghastly crew.
The wind, that shade nor motion made,
On me alone it blew.

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

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

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

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

The ship suddenly sinketh.

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

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

550 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 560
And fell down in a fit;
The holy Hermit raised his eyes,
And prayed where he did sit.

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

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

'O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man!'
The Hermit crossed his brow.
'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; 580
And then it left me free.

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

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. 590

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

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

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

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

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

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

610 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,
620 Is gone: and now the Wedding-Guest
Turned from the bridegroom's door.

"To walk together to the kirk."

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

NOTES.

Rime. the etymologically correct form, from O.E. rim. Of the title as printed in 1800, *The Ancient Mariner · A Poet's Reverie*, Lamb said, 'it is as bad as Bottom the Weaver's declaration that he is not a lion, but only the scenical representation of a lion'.

Coleridge printed after the title a Latin quotation, which is here translated.

'I can easily believe that there are in the universe more invisible than visible beings. But who shall tell us the kinds of them all? and their ranks, their points of likeness and of difference, and the functions of each? What do they do? where do they dwell? The mind of man has always sought after this knowledge, but has never yet attained it. Meanwhile, I do not deny, it is pleasant sometimes to contemplate in the mind, as if it were in a picture, the image of a greater and better world (than our own). lest the soul becoming accustomed to the petty details of daily life, contract too much and fall altogether into trivial thoughts. Yet in the meantime we must keep a watch for the truth, and observe moderation (in our imaginings), so that we may distinguish what is known from what is uncertain, day from night.' From the *Archæologicae Philosophicæ* of Thomas Burnet (1635-1715).

Notice how Coleridge plunges straight into his tale without unnecessary preface, just as in the old ballads. Deeds, not words, were what they were interested in. The poet himself begins the narrative, telling how 'the old sea-faring man' stops the hurrying wedding-guest, and, despite the latter's impatience to get away to the feast, at once exercises a fascination over him which compels him to hear the tale out—'He cannot chuse but hear'. Henceforward the mariner tells his own tale, the only interruptions being designed to show the effect of the marvellous story upon the listener, or the effect of the terrible recollection upon the mariner himself.

The narrative of Coleridge in which he speaks of the mariner and the wedding-guest is conducted mostly in the historic present for the sake of vividness, as often in the ballads; but it frequently breaks into the past tense, e.g. ll. 10, 12, 14, 17, 19 (and 39), 31-2, 37. The narrative of the mariner is in the past throughout, although on special occasions the historic present is used, as in the vivid lines describing almost with one stroke the rapid fall of night (ll. 199-200). The historic present is used in the marginal summary.

1. **ancient**: meaning primarily 'old' in age, but also suggesting that the mariner had the look of one from a past age.

2. **one of three**. he met three men, but he stopped only one; the significance of these words will be evident from the mariner's explanation in ll. 582-90. He wants no large audience, but feels a fierce necessity to tell his tale; one man is sufficient, and he can pick out that man as soon as he meets him.

3-8. The wedding-guest expostulates. Notice how, as in the ballads, the various speakers in the dialogue are not indicated directly.

3. At the very outset the gallant is struck by the peculiar appearance of the mariner. 'I charge you by your strange appearance to tell me why. . . .'

'The "Mariner," from being conversant in supernatural events, has acquired a supernatural and strange cast of phase, eye, appearance, etc. which frighten the wedding-guest.'

5. **Bridegroom's**. strictly there should be no *r* in the second part of the word; it was originally *bryd gome* from O.E. *bryd*+*guma* 'a man'. In M.E. *gome* became obsolete, and in the sixteenth century was replaced by *grome*, 'a groom or lad'.

6. 'I am his nearest relative, everyone and everything is ready; you can hear the noise already.' It was most important that he should go, yet despite this he is spellbound by the mariner.

8. **may'st**: the wedding guest in his haste and annoyance omits the pronoun *thou*.

9. **He**: the mariner.

his skinny hand. the mariner was old, and in addition ghostly in appearance.

10. Holding the gallant with his hand, he abruptly starts his tale.

quoth: an archaic word for 'said'.

11-20. The gallant sharply and roughly commands the mariner to let him go: the mariner does not attempt to use physical force, but he still exercises a peculiar fascination which holds the wedding-guest spellbound, and makes him listen with wonder to the story like a child.

11. 'Keep away! let me go. You grey bearded clown.'

unhand. take your hands off. The prefix *un*- reverses the meaning of a verb.

loon: an ill-bred or stupid person.

eftsoons. at once O.E. *eft*, afterwards + *sone*, soon; the *s* being added upon the analogy of adverbs formed from the genitive case of a noun, as in *whiles* (l. 77).

13. **glittering eye**: he fixes his strangely bright eyes on the wedding-guest, and fascinates or almost hypnotises him. The glittering eye has already been mentioned (l. 3), and is so again (e.g. ll. 20, 228, 618). Save in l. 40 this is not due to mere idle repetition, but marks the preternatural appearance of the sailor after his strange and terrible experience.

15-16. Wordsworth says that he furnished a few of the lines at the beginning of the poem, and quotes these in particular.

15. 'as a young child listens spell-bound to a thrilling story.'

16. hath his will: either (*a*) has taken possession of his (i.e. the wedding-guest's) will power, or (*b*) has his own way, that which he desires. The general meaning is the same in either case.

18. 'He cannot choose to do anything except listen.'

Chuse: an earlier form of *choose*, which was used very extensively in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

21. The mariner after the interruption continues the story commenced in l. 10.

cheered: as the ship weighed anchor cheers would be raised by the crew or by those watching from the quay, or by both.

cleared: the ship 'got clear of,' or away from, the harbour.

22-4. The world being spherical in shape, the farther a ship goes away from land the less it sees of the land, first, the low-lying objects near the sea-level vanish from sight, and lastly the highest points. Here the church first disappears, then the top of the hill, lastly the lighthouse on the hill. Cf. ll. 465-6, where these objects reappear in the reverse order.

23. kirk: a northern form of the word *Church*.

25. upon the left: since the sun rises in the East, if it was rising on the left hand, and setting on the right, they must have been sailing southward.

26-8. out of the sea . . . into the sea: the horizon on either side was formed by sea and sky, and not by land and sky. As far as eye could see there was nothing but water all around them.

29. higher and higher: as they sailed southward nearer to the equator, the sun would be almost vertically above their heads at noon, until finally it was quite so, and the mast would cast no shadows.

30. The ship had now reached the equator ('the line').

31-40. The sounds of the wedding-feast break in and the gallant strikes his breast in vexation and remorse at his enforced absence; but, although hitherto the tale has not been remarkable in any way, save for its directness, he remains spellbound by the mariner's personality.

31. here: at this point.

32. bassoon: a wooden double-reed instrument; its notes were bass (or low in the scale), hence the name.

34. red as a rose: blushing.

35. nodding their heads: i.e. keeping time with the beat of the music.

minstrelsy: i.e. minstrels, musicians, abstract for concrete by the figure of synecdoche. Minstrelsy is a collective noun and grammatically singular in number; hence *goes*. But it is plural in meaning and *heads* remains in the plural.

37-40. All the lines in this stanza are repetitions of previous lines, l. 31, 18-20.

41 *et seq.* When they have passed the equator, a storm drives them southward into the Antarctic regions.

41. **he**: the storm-blast is personified, i.e. spoken of as if it were a person.

42. **tyrannous**: cruel, severe, remorseless, like a tyrant. A tyrant originally meant a monarch who had gained his absolute power unconstitutionally or by disregard of law. Since such a one was often oppressive and severe, the word has now come to mean one who rules unjustly and oppressively.

45. **sloping**: bent forwards with the force of the wind on the sails.

dipping: for the same reason; the wind was from behind.

prow: the bows, or forward part of the ship.

46. **as who . . .**: just as one who is pursued. . . .

47. **still treads . . .**: the foe is so near that the fugitive is actually treading on the shadow of the pursuer.

48. **forward bends his head**: as if cowering from the expected blow of the pursuer. The point of similarity between the two pictures is the bending forward before a pursuer.

49. **drove**: the verb *drive* is used intransitively of a vessel being driven rapidly by a strong wind; it is used in the same way as *drift* but with an intensified meaning.

50. **aye**: ever.

On the versification of this stanza see Introduction. *The Verse*, B *ad fin.*

53. **ice mast high**: icebergs, as high as the ship's masts.

54. **emerald**: a precious stone of bright green colour.

55. **drifts**: i.e. the snow and mist that was driven through the air by the wind. (*Drift*, that which has been driven.)

clifts: cliffs; a form due to confusion with *clift*, an earlier form of *cleft*, 'a crack'. It was used by Chaucer, Spenser, and other old poets, and was still found in the eighteenth century. The cliffs are those of the icebergs, which were like small mountains of ice.

56. **dismal**: gloomy, cheerless (E.).

sheen: brightness (E.). The brightness of the cliffs was veiled by the mist, yet it could be seen that they were bright.

57. **ken**: see. Often, as in Scotland at the present day, meaning 'to know'; from O.E. *cunnan*, cf. mod. *cunning*.

Nor . . . nor: neither . . . nor.

58. **all**: everywhere.

61. The noises made by the icebergs crashing together. This line is an example of onomatopœia; the sounds of the words themselves imitate those they represent.

62. 'like noises heard by one who is falling into, or awakening from a fit.'

63. did cross their course. The part played by the albatross apparently was suggested by Wordsworth, after reading Shelvocke's *Voyages*. 'I had been reading in Shelvocke's *Voyages*, a day or two before, that while doubling Cape Horn they frequently saw albatrosses in that latitude. . . "Suppose," said I, "you represent him as having killed one of these birds on entering the South Sea, and that the tutelary spirits of these regions take upon them to avenge the crime." The incident was thought fit for the purpose and adopted accordingly.' The **Albatross** is the largest sort of sea-fowl, some of them extending their wings '12 or 13 feet'.

64. swound : swoon ; the *-d* has no etymological reason for its presence. Coleridge in 1800 removed the archaism to please critics, but afterwards restored it.

thorough: a later form of the preposition 'thorough'. It was used sometimes by Shakespeare (e.g. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, II. i. 3, 'thorough bush, thorough fire').

67. eat: as a past participle this is now obsolete and superseded by *eaten*. This line was originally rather gruesome in its realism: 'The Mariners gave it biscuit-worms'. But this, with other realistic lines, was removed perhaps because he considered that 'poetry gives most pleasure when it is only generally and not perfectly understood,' more probably because such a reference to common things was out of place in the imaginary 'spirit-world'. The food it had never eaten before was that which the sailors gave it; hitherto it had probably been not seen, or not been fed by, any human beings.

69. Notice the abruptness with which this result of the friendly reception of the albatross is related.

a thunder fit. with a (noise like that of a) sudden and violent burst of thunder.

71. No longer ice-bound they return with a favourable wind northwards to warmer climes ; the albatross accompanied them and became very friendly.

72-4. follow . . . hollo: feminine endings ; see introd., *The Verse*, A. IV.

74. hollo : a shout to attract attention.

75. 'Even in misty or cloudy weather.'

shroud : the shrouds of a ship were ropes securing the mast-head to the sides of the deck. Its general meaning is a winding-sheet for the dead.

76. vespers: evenings.

77. whiles: see G.

78. glimmered gleamed with a feeble or wavering light.

79. At the recollection of what at this point he was about to relate, the mariner's agony makes itself seen in his face. The wedding-guest breaks in and, thinking that he is plagued by some evil spirits, asks the reason of the horror in his expression The mariner confesses his crime.

God save thee: may God save thee.

80. fiend: lit. enemy, hence devil or evil spirit.

plague: annoy, oppress, persecute.

81. cross-bow: a bow fixed across a wooden stock, like that of a gun, having a groove or tube for the missile (arrow or bolt) and an arrangement such as a trigger, to hold and release the string. 'The Ancient Mariner cruelly, and in contempt of the laws of hospitality, killed a Sea-bird'; and in consequence 'he was followed by many and strange judgments' (Argument, 1800).

II.

83. The east was on their right, therefore they were travelling northwards still.

85. This line in its original form 'And broad as a weft upon the left' was one which attracted the censure of critics. Coleridge therefore removed the archaism. [*Weft* means something that is woven.]

87-90. This stanza is modelled on ll. 71-4.

89. da y: on any day.

91. The mariner gives the opinion of his shipmates. At first believing that the albatross was a bird which brought good luck to any vessel that it followed, they upbraid the mariner; then when good results seemed to follow they approve his action, and thus, by admitting that it could have been right to kill the bird, 'make themselves accomplices in his crime'.

92. **'em**: from M.E. *hem*, the dat. pl. of the third personal pronoun.

93. **averred**: asserted.

97-8. 'The sun rose: neither dim nor red, but bright like the glory of God's head.'

97. **nor . . . nor . . .**: neither . . . nor, cf. l. 57. When seen through the mist the sun would appear dim and red.

like God's own head: the head of God was usually imagined as surrounded by a blaze of glory.

98. **uprist**: in Chaucer this form is only used as present tense or as a noun; here it is evidently intended to be the past tense.

99-102. Cf. 93-6 for the repetition.

103-6. Notice the alliteration in this stanza.

103. **the white foam**: formed by the prow cutting through the water.

104. Later this line became 'stream'd off free'. Coleridge explained that 'In the former edition the line was "The furrow followed free"; but I had not been long on board a ship, before I perceived that this was the image as seen by a spectator from the shore, or from another vessel. From the ship itself, the *Wake* appears like a brook flowing off from the stern.' Afterwards, however, the original reading was restored, apparently for the sake of the alliteration, for Coleridge was a great artist in sound effects.

furrow. literally, the trench cut by a plough; here used metaphorically for the track made by a ship in passing through the water.

107. They are becalmed in the Pacific Ocean near the equator.

the sails dropt down: they hung loosely instead of being filled out by the wind.

109. **to break**: the only reason for speaking was that they might break the terrible silence.

111. **copper sky**: it had apparently a dull, red colour caused by the great heat.

113. If the **sun at noon** was vertically above the mast they must have been exactly on the equator.

115. The repetition, as in the next stanza, adds to the effect of monotony.

116. **nor breath** . . . without either breath of wind or current.

117-8. **painted**: as motionless as a ship painted in a picture.

120. **and**: adversative = *yet;* despite there being sea-water all around, the woodwork of the ship shrunk with the heat; all their drinking-water had gone.

123. **The very deep did rot**. even the sea became foul. Possibly Coleridge was thinking of the stagnation of such a sea as the Sargasso in the Atlantic Ocean where there are large quantities of sea-weed and other floating plants, and enormous numbers of marine creatures. But lines 125-6 perhaps indicated that the mariner's mind is beginning to be unhinged by delirium; for, as the marginal commentary points out, vengeance is now beginning for the death of the albatross.

126. The sea was slimy probably with sea-weed.

127. **about**: to be taken with *danced* in l. 128.

reel: a vigorous dance, particularly one of a type common in the Scottish highlands.

rout: a confused company. Probably the phrase means something like 'in a confused whirl'.

128. **death-fires**: luminous appearances, also called 'corpse-candles,' imagined to be seen over dead bodies or graves, and often considered to be omens of death to come.

[Not the same as 'corposant' (*corpus sancti*, 'body of a saint'), the ball of fire supposed to be seen in a storm about the mast of a ship.]

129. **witch's oils**: the materials used by witches to produce different coloured flames. The reference to witch-craft was possibly intended to enhance the weirdness of the scene.

burnt green . . . burnt with flames coloured green. . . .

Possibly the sights described in this stanza are hallucinations produced in the mariner's disordered brain by exaggeration of the natural phosphorescence of the ocean. Phosphorescence is a luminous appearance like the glow of phosphorus in process of slow oxidation, but not due to that substance; the light is emitted by certain luminous organisms, such as

small zoophytes and deep-sea fish, and by the bacteria of marine putrefaction.

131. **assured were** . . . were made sure or certain of its existence.

132. **the Spirit**: see the marginal summary. The Polar Spirit, who was avenging the mariner's violation of the laws of love and friendliness between man and nature.

> 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. (ll. 802-8).

133. **fathom**: fathoms. A measure of six feet, used in sounding depths of water. It is roughly the distance between the finger tips when the arms are stretched out horizontally.

135. **utter drought**. complete absence of moisture.

drought. lit dryness, is now used chiefly to mean 'want of rain'.

137. **no more than if** . . .: no more than we could have done if. . . !

138. **soot** is not an exact rime to **root**.

139 **well-a-day!** strictly *wellaway*, from O.E. *wā lā wā*, lit. 'woe lo! woe!' or 'alas'.

141. **Instead of the cross**, a symbol that men had been redeemed from sin, the albatross, the sign of his guilt, was hung about his neck.

III.

143-6. Notice how the repetition enhances the effect of the wearisome monotony. The later reading is therefore a great improvement.

144. supply *was* with **glazed**. They had a glassy appearance, as in death.

148. **a something**. it was some object but not clearly seen. As it approaches it is seen more clearly.

152. **a certain shape**: a definite form.

I wist: in origin a corruption of the M.E. adverb *y-wis* or *i-wis* 'certainly'. With the prefix *i-* being written separately it was mistaken for the personal pronoun, and the phrase regarded as a past tense of *witen*, to know.

155. Sailors, being a superstitious people, were always ready to explain things by the invention of some supernatural agency.

sprite = spirit; the two words are doublets.

dodged: moved about from one side to another as if to elude a pursuer.

156. **tacked**: kept making at intervals changes of direction so as to go into the wind (a method of sailing utilized when the wind is blowing across a ship's course).

veered: changed direction, turned. The ship was sailing in a zig-zag course.

157. unslaked: unmoistened. The word is ordinarily used in connexion with *thirst*, meaning 'relieve or satisfy'.

baked: dried up by the heat, and so **blackened.**

159-60. Owing to the dryness of their throats none could speak, until the mariner sucked blood from his arm, thus paying a heavy price—'a dear ransom' as the marginal summary says—for his power of speech.

162. Repetition.

163. agape: with mouths wide open with astonishment.

164. gramercy: an exclamation of wonder or some sudden emotion; probably equivalent to 'mercy on us' or as we say 'great heavens'.

for joy did grin: Coleridge (*Table Talk*, 31 May, 1830) says he took this thought from a remark by a companion when they had climbed together to the top of a mountain (Plinlimmon), 'and were nearly dead from thirst. We could not speak from the constriction, till we found a little puddle under a stone. He said to me, "You grinned like an idiot!" He had done the same.'

166. as they . . .: as if they were all drinking.

167. Hither. i.e. she comes hither, she is heading towards us.

weal. to do good for us, for our welfare.

170. steadies with upright keel. keeps on her course steadily without tacking; in tacking the wind blows across a ship so that it does not sail in an upright position. The **keel** is the long beam at the centre and bottom of the hull of a vessel.

171. aflame: with the reflection of the setting sun's rays (E.).

173-4. The sun was setting and, being low in the horizon, seemed almost to be resting on the sea in the wave.

175. drove. moved, drifted. Cf. l. 49, note.

176. betwixt. archaic for *between*.

177. straight: straightway, immediately.

flecked: striped or streaked with the masts and spars of the ship; or perhaps as the word 'skeleton' in the marginal gloss suggests, most of the planks of that part of the hull which is above water were missing.

178. Heaven's mother: the mother of Christ, the Virgin Mary.

send us: (may) Heaven's Mother send us.

179. a dungeon grate: the small grating in the door of a prison cell.

peer: (i) originally, to look narrowly somewhere as if to find something or make out something that is difficult to be seen; (ii) 'said of inanimate things figured as looking out: To "peep out" so as just to be seen; to appear slightly. . . .' Shak. *Romeo and Juliet*, I. i. 126, 'An hour before the sun Peer'd forth the golden window of the east'; 1 *Henry IV*, V. i. 1 (N.E.D.).

181. The unearthly appearance of the skeleton ship has changed their joy to fear.

184. gossameres: i.e. gossamers; webs of a fine, filmy substance like cobwebs, which floats in the air when there is little wind, or is spread over bushes or tall grass. It is made by small spiders.

186. Repetition, **as through**: as if through.

[**Pheere** (l. 188 in the text of 1798): a companion or mate; here = husband.]

188. a Death, i.e. a figure of Death, a skeleton.

190-2. Alliteration.

192. as leprosy: as that of one suffering from leprosy; a disease in which the skin assumes an unnatural white colour.

193. Nightmare: a female monster or fiend sitting upon the chest of a sleeper and seeming to paralyse and suffocate him; also used more generally of a dreadful and fantastic dream.

Life-in-Death: a combination of life and death. Her lips, and looks, and hair were as those of one living; but her skin was as that of a leper.

thicks: thickens.

195. hulk: the body of a ship, especially when it has fallen into disuse, and its equipment has been removed. This hulk was **naked** because its ribs had been apparently stripped of their planks.

196. twain: archaic for *two*. The gloss makes it clear that they had been playing at dice to decide which of them should have possession of the ship's crew; Death had won, and now they were throwing to decide the fate of the mariner. Life-in-Death won, and the mariner was condemned to live on in the midst of all his dead comrades, all of whom as they died seemed to curse him.

197. The woman-spectre wins the mariner's soul.

198. whistles thrice: she is apparently whistling to summon the wind mentioned in the cancelled stanza. With regard to these cancelled stanzas 'His bones . . .' and 'A guste of wind . . .' see Introd.. *Style*.

199-200. Night falls with great rapidity in the tropics. One of the most vivid of Coleridge's word-pictures.

199. dips: below the horizon. Then immediately the stars may be seen, and the darkness of night comes not gradually but 'at one stride'.

201. whisper: onomatopœia.

203. sideways: they did not dare to look straight up boldly, being still terrified by their strange experience.

204. Fear: personified. 'Fear seemed to drain the life-blood slowly from my heart, as if sipping at a cup.'

205. sip: to drink slowly by small mouthfuls.

209. clomb: archaic for *climbed*. The O.E. verb was strong and had as its perfect *clamb*, in M.E. *clomb*. It is now weak.

the eastern bar: the eastern horizon where the moon rises.

210. horned: crescent-shaped moon, when in the first quarter.

211. within the nether tip: within the lower 'tip' or horn. This position is impossible because the moon is a solid sphere although only that part of it shines which receives the sun's rays; and a star could not be seen through the dark portion.

212. one after one: one after another.

by: i.e. by the light of.

the star-dogged moon: followed closely by a star as by a dog tracking his prey.

214. each: each of the crew. Death had won their lives with the dice, and was now taking their souls.

222-3. like the whizz: the noise of the souls passing from the bodies reminds him in his agony of the shooting of the albatross.

whizz. onomatopœic.

Notice how every part save VII is brought to an end by a mention of the albatross and the mariner's crime.

IV.

224. The wedding guest breaks in. On hearing how all the crew had dropped down dead he begins to fear that the mariner with his strange looks is one who has risen from death, until he is reassured, 'This body dropped not down'.

225. skinny hand: repetition, cf. l. 9, and 209.

226-7. 'For the last two lines of the stanza I am indebted to Mr. Wordsworth.' (Note by Coleridge, 1817.)

lank. lean.

227. the ribbed sea sand: the waves of the ebbing tide leave on a sandy shore numerous ripple-shaped ridges.

232-5. Lines like these, and like,

> I pass like night from land to land
> I have strange power of speech,

strike deeper into the true romance than anything that had yet been known. This was something quite beyond the reach of the novelists of the school of Terror.

232-3. Notice how the repetition intensifies the sense of loneliness and of the vastness of the great watery expanse.

232. all: altogether, entirely; adverb.

234. never a: not even one. It was a Roman Catholic belief that dead saints could intervene in earthly affairs.

236. so beautiful: man being a creature wonderfully and beautifully made. Cf. Shak. *Hamlet*, 'What a piece of work is man! . . . how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! . . . the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!' (II. ii. 324).

'What a pity,' he says in effect, 'that these, God's beautiful creatures, should lie dead, while all those revolting creatures of the deep still live! I, too, am living, but it is amongst the dead, as the prey of Life-in-Death.' In the light of the gloss, this seems to be the drift of the stanza. Perhaps there is also the idea that it would be better to be dead, for these men are even in death beautiful, and above the revolting beasts of the ocean.

245. **or ever** : 'before ever'. *Or* means the same as *ere*, i.e. 'before', and *ever* has an intensifying force. [The *ever* is sometimes rightly contracted to *e'er*, sometimes wrongly to *ere*.]

gushed : i.e. issued forth.

The mariner was still unrepentant inasmuch as he still hated the living creatures about him; and he was therefore unable to pray. Cf. the moral in 614-7.

249. **balls** : the eye-balls throbbed like a man's heart.

250. Notice the repetition expressing the eternal weariness of the mariner.

253. **melted** : i.e. evaporated.

254. **reek** : to give off (1) vapour or steam; (2) an unpleasant smell.

255. **the look . . .** : cf. l. 215. The eyes of the corpses were still open, and seemed always to be fixed upon him and cursing him.

258. **from on high** . from heaven.

262. **I could not die** : because he had been condemned to Life-in-Death.

267. **be mocked** : a rare form meaning 'made mock of'; *be* has an intensive force.

main . sea.

268. **hoar frost** . a thin layer of white frost caused by the freezing of dew.

spread : being spread out like a layer of hoar frost on the surface of the water. *Spread* qualifies *beams*.

charmed · under a charm.

alway : in modern English *always*. For the accent on the last syllable cf. *countree* (l. 467).

275. **reared** : a serpent progresses with an undulating motion.

elfish : weird, yet fascinating. An *elf* was a kind of fairy, small and mischievous, but not always or necessarily malicious. The elfish light is the reflexion of the moon's rays on the water-drops falling from the parts of the serpents that were raised out of the water.

hoary . white.

This is the culminating point of the poem. Gradually the mariner has been led to take an interest in the things of nature, and the joy they show, simply for their own sakes. He is no longer absorbed in his own position. He is fascinated by their beauty; a natural love springs up instinctively. He blesses the water-snakes; the power to pray is restored, and the curse begins to break.

283. might: could.

285. unaware: unconsciously, i.e. instinctively, without deliberate thought and determination.

286. sure: surely.

287. Repetition.

288. self-same: the very same moment, at once.

290. the albatross fell off: symbolizing the pardoning of his crime. Thus his neck was left *free*, this adjective is therefore in l. 289 applied proleptically, i.e. before it was really true.

V.

293. from pole to pole: from one end of the world to the other.

294. Mary Queen: the Virgin Mary.

be given: let praise be given.

296. slid: entered smoothly and imperceptibly.

297. silly: empty.

301. His throat and lips were cold and wet instead of parched and baked.

302. dank: moist, wet.

303. 'Surely it seemed as if I had drunk. . . .

drunken: this is now used as an adjective only, and *drunk* as a participle.

304. still my body drank: i.e. by the pores of his skin absorbing moisture.

305. His lightness of heart seems to have transferred itself to his limbs.

306-7. almost I thought: I almost thought.

312. sere: withered, rotten; lit. dried up.

fire-flag: or *fire-flaughts*: tongues of flame, i.e. flashes of lightning.

sheen: bright. Originally an adjective as here, but later used as a noun as in l. 56.

317. wan: pale.

319. sedge: a kind of reed growing on the banks of rivers.

321. its edge: i.e. the edge of the cloud.

325. jag: a break, indentation, or projection. The lightning flashes fell straight to earth without zig-zagging.

a river . . . wide: 'sheet lightning'.

332. spake: archaism for 'spoke'.

333. it had been: it would have been.

336. upblew: blew up, rose.

337. Wordsworth said, 'I also suggested the navigation of the ship by the dead men'.

'gan: began, but not necessarily a contracted form of that word, as there was an O.E. verb *ginnan* as well as *beginnan*.

338. **wont** = accustomed.

344. **naught**: nothing, now archaic or dialectic.

On the two lines that stood after this in the 1st ed. see Introd., *Style*.

345. Again the wedding-guest breaks in, fearing a man who had been amidst doings so uncanny. But the mariner reassures him, saying that they were not the souls of his dead comrades that returned to the bodies but a company of angelic spirits.

348. **corses**: bodies. *Corpse* is the correct spelling; the word is ultimately from Lat. *corpus;* but in the French word *corps*, the *p* is not pronounced.

354. A passage of wonderful melody.

359. **sky-lark**: *lavrock* in the 1st ed. was the old form of the word used in M.E. The sky-lark is a small bird that loves to soar in the air, and sings a joyful song (cf. Shelley's *To a Skylark:* 'Like an unbodied joy. . . ').

360. **that are**: that live or exist.

362. **jargoning**: Old Fr. *jargon*, 'the warbling or twittering of birds'. Jargon now means speech composed of unintelligible words.

363. **all** kinds of **instruments**.

369. **like of** = like that of.

370 **leafy**: in June all the leaves are out in full.

376. Explained in the next stanza.

377-8. Repetition; cf. ll. 133-4.

382. The ship has reached the equator where the Polar Spirit's jurisdiction ends. The gloss at this point explains what is not made quite clear in the text. The 'short uneasy motion' is apparently due to the Polar Spirit 'still requiring vengeance'.

389. like a horse pawing the ground, i.e. striking the ground with a hoof, in impatience to go.

394. **I have not** the power, cannot.

395. **living life**: not a redundancy, but a term used to distinguish the life of ordinary consciousness from the abnormal life in the swoon or trance into which he had been plunged.

396. in my mind could distinguish.

399. **by him who died on** (the) **cross**: i.e. Christ.

402. **bideth**: dwelleth. A contraction of *abide*. The Polar Spirit who lives in the Antarctic Circle.

404-5. The mariner instead of extending his love to all the things of nature, had violated the law of universal love by basely killing the bird that had trusted him and proved so friendly.

407. honey-dew. a sweet substance found in small drops like dew on the leaves and stems of various plants, whether produced by the plants themselves or by insects.

414. This is the reply to the second question.

415. blast: wind; 'for the angelic power causeth the vessel to drive northward faster than human life can endure'.

416. his: the ocean's.

418. to find out **if he may know.**

419. she guides him smooth or grim: the moon rules him whether calm or rough. The moon of course influences the tides of the sea.

423. or . . . or: either . . . or.

435. charnel-dungon: a cell for dead bodies.

fitter: they were more fit for a charnel than for the deck.

436. stony: expressionless and remorseless.

438. cf. ll. 255-6.

442-5. But now the spell was broken and he looked away from the ship with all its horrors; he saw little of what would otherwise have been seen, i.e. if he had still been under the sway of Life-in-Death, and if he had not been in such dread that he dared not look round upon the ship.

453. 'and it made neither . . .'

454. Its path. . . . 'The effect of the wind on the sea was not seen either by the rippling of the water, or by the dark shadow which the surface takes when disturbed by the breeze' (Stevens and Morris).

457. a meadow-gale.

464. He has now returned to the familiar scenes of his native land.

465. Cf. ll. 23-4. These objects are now seen in the reverse order.

467. Countree: The final syllable is stressed, as it was in M.E.

468. harbour-bar: a sand-bank or other shoal at the mouth of a harbour.

470. 'Let me wake and find out that my return is no dream; or else if it is a dream let me sleep always and continue in it.'

472-9. Everything is familiar and reassuring.

473. strewn. spread out.

475. shadow: this word is often used loosely for 'reflection'.

476. kirk: cf. 23 note. **no less**, i.e. no less bright.

478. The moonlight steeped in silentness: it seemed to be saturated with silence.

479. steady. there were now no more of the furious winds that had driven the mariner to and fro.

489. by the holy rood: the cross on which Christ was crucified.

490. seraph: a bright celestial being or angel.

492. 'each man of the band of seraphs.'

494. **stood as signals to the land**: a ship entering a harbour requires a pilot to steer it in, and to signal its arrival and its need of a pilot, the ship would have to use lights. These seraphs then were acting as signals to attract attention.

498. **sunk**: the correct modern form of the perfect tense is *sank*.

502. was of necessity turned away from the seraph-band on hearing the sound.

507. **blast**: destroy.

509. **Hermit**: a religious man who lives in solitude.

512. **shrieve**, or shrive: hear my confession and free me from my sins. He will wash away the stain on my soul caused by the blood of the albatross.

VII.

515. **rears**: raises.

520. . . . The hermit lived in close communion with nature. He was therefore just the man to shrive the mariner who had sinned against the universal law of love which should bind all nature together.

523. **skiff-boat**: a skiff is a small, light boat. The addition of *boat* causes a redundancy, i e. it is unnecessary because its meaning is contained in the first word.

524. **trow**: think, believe; almost = indeed.

526. **that signal made**: which made signals.

529. **warped**: shrunk and twisted by heat etc.

530. **sere**: see note on l. 312.

533. **lag**: remain behind at the end of autumn. The leaves are partly decayed, and seem like brown skeletons.

534. Order inverted.

535. **ivy-tod**: ivy-bush; or a bush about which ivy entwines itself (G.).

536. **owlet**: little owl.

537. **that eats**: 'The male wolf has a propensity to eat its young, to prevent which the female hides them until they are able to see' (Stevens and Morris).

540. **afeared**: afraid. From an O.E. verb *afaeran*, to frighten, now obsolete except in dialects.

549. **The ship went down like lead**: Thus the poet suddenly transports us " from the land of mystery to that of human reality," from the supernatural to the natural world. The mariner has been undergoing punishment for guilt; has been passing through a fearful experience for his spiritual salvation. The ship has been the stage on which these scenes have been enacted, and when it has served its purpose it disappears from human sight. The disappearance not only hides the mystery of the dead; but breaks the only material link that binds the mariner to his dreadful past' (Gayley and Young).

551. sky and ocean: object of *smote*, the order of words being inverted.

552-3. 'A dead body after having been in the water some days swells, owing to the generation of gases within it, and thus becoming more buoyant than before, rises to the surface' (Stevens and Morris).

556. the whirl: when a ship sinks the surrounding water rushes in to fill the space it had occupied, and so forms a whirlpool for a short time.

559. telling of the sound: echoing it.

560. the pilot shrieked: i.e. with terror at the ghastly appearance of the mariner. 'With what consummate art are we left to imagine the physical traces which the mariner's long agony had left behind it by a method far more terrible than any direct description—the effect, namely, which the sight of him produces upon others' (Traill, *Coleridge*, p. 55). See also l. 3, note, and Introd. IV.

564. The pilot's boy sees what he thinks must be a ghost or a devil taking the oars to row instead of the pilot who had fallen into a fit; and he too becomes insane; he breaks into hysterical laughter, and his eyes roll like those of a madman.

568. plain: plainly; as in 576, **quick** = quickly.

575. crossed his brow: made the sign of the cross over his forehead to avert evil.

577. what manner—what kind.

578. 'Immediately my body was tortured.'

580-90. This is the mariner's penance; he travels from land to land teaching by his own experience 'love and reverence to all things that God made and loveth'. He never knows the hour when the fierce necessity will fall upon him; but when it does come he cannot rest till his tale is told.

587. strange power of speech: this probably means not only that he could speak several different tongues, but that he could always hold the attention of his hearers.

588. He can single out at once the man who has to listen to his tale. See l. 2, telling how he chose the wedding-guest out from his two companions—'he chooseth one of three'.

591. . . . The sounds of the wedding-feast are heard again, but now the wedding-guest has no anxiety to depart.

593. bower: a place overarched with foliage.

bridemaids: see G.

595. vesper-bell: the bell calling to vespers, the evening service at the church.

biddeth me to: bids me go to prayer.

603-5. To walk, etc.: the noun-clauses thus introduced are the subjects of *'tis sweeter*.

604. . . . Not merely to go, but to see others there; all humanity being joined together in worship.

607. **bends**: kneels, in the attitude of prayer.

613. **Birds and beasts** are to be included in the love and fellowship of men.

On this obtrusion of the moral see Introd., *Defects*.

620. Even when the mariner has gone, the wedding-guest is so impressed that he does not care to join in the feast.

623. **of sense forlorn**: bereft of consciousness. Archaic.

624. Hitherto the 'gallant' had been a frivolous, pleasure-loving man —perhaps it was for this reason that he was singled out by the mariner. Now this terrible story has made him *sadder;* i.e. more serious.

NOTES ON THE MARGINAL COMMENTARY.

PART I.

Gallant: 'a man of fashion.'

bidden, i.e. invited.

proveth a bird of good omen: was found to be a sign of good for them.

PART II.

accomplices: partners.

Josephus: a historian of the Jews.

Michael Psellus, the younger, lived in the eleventh century. As Professor of Philosophy in the Academy at Constantinople he revived the study of Plato, and was a great admirer of the old pagan glories of Hellas. He wrote also on astronomy, theology, and physics.

PART III.

at a dear ransom. he paid a heavy price.
A ransom is the sum paid to gain the freedom of a prisoner of war

like vessel, like crew: the ship looked unearthly, so did its crew.

the courts of the sun: the tropics.

envieth: is envious because.

PART IV.

their appointed rest: the place appointed for their rest.

PART V.

inspired, i.e. with life; life was breathed into them.

penance . . . for the mariner hath been accorded . . . . i.e. the Polar Spirit had been promised that the mariner should have penance laid upon him.

GLOSSARY.

aflame (l. 171), ‘flaming’. The particle *a* is used to mean *in* before words denoting some state, such as *a live*, *a sleep*. ‘In these the word governed by *a* was originally a noun, e.g. *life*, *sleep*, but being often the verbal substantive of state or act, it has been in modern times erroneously taken as a verb and used as a model for forming such adverbial phrases from any verb, as *a-blaze*, *a-tremble*’ (N.E.D.).

agape (163), ‘on the gape’, i.e. open-mouthed. Lit. ‘in the state of gaping’; *a-* being the prepositional particle denoting a state, as in *afloat*, *alife*, *asleep* and *aflame* (see above).

alway (270), ‘always’; this form is from the accusative case in O.E.; adverbs formed from masc. nouns in O.E. usually retain the gen. sing. ending *-s* as in the modern form *always*.

anear (310), ‘near’, as *afar* = ‘far’.

bower (593), (1) a dwelling, (2) a rustic dwelling, (3) an arbour, or shady place covered in with branches of trees. O.E. *bur*, a dwelling.

bridegroom (5), see note.

bride-maids (594), maidens who have certain ceremonial duties at a wedding. Now called *bridesmaids* as if *bride* were genitive (‘maids of the bride’), but O.E. *bryd* being fem. had not its gen. in *-s* like masculines; bride- in combination with other words had the force of an adj. ‘bridal maids’.

clomb (209), see note.

dismal (56), ‘cheerless’; from Lat. *dies mali*, day of evil, referring to anything that had to do with such a day, which would naturally be gloomy.

eftsoons (12), *eft*, adv., ‘afterwards’ + *soon*, i.e. ‘soon afterwards, immediately’. The *-s* was added after the analogy of adverbs formed from the gen. cases of masc. or neuter nouns in *-s*.

forlorn (623), ‘deprived of’; from the past participle of O.E. *forleosan*, to destroy or lose altogether, in which the prefix *for-* is an intensive particle, giving the sense of ‘entirely’.

glimmer (78), a frequentative of *gleam*.

gramercy (164), Fr. *grant merci*, ‘great thanks’, ‘may God reward you greatly’. Originally an expression of thankfulness it became one of surprise.

plague (80), fr. Lat. *plaga*, a blow or injury; the *u* is merely kept in to preserve the hard sound of *g*.

quoth (9), past tense of O.E. *cwēthan* ‘said’; but it is also used as a present.

sheen (56, 314), originally an adj. ‘bright or fair’ as in 314; but later used as a noun as in l. 56; cf. Byron’s ‘The sheen of their spears’.

tod (535), ‘a bush, a bale of wool, or a fox’; the same meaning of *bushiness* being common to all, e.g. the fox’s tale.

whiles (77), 'while'; O.E. ***hwīle*** was a noun meaning a space of time, and as many adverbs are formed in *-es* from the gen. sing. of masc. nouns the analogous form ***whiles*** grew up; but ***hwīle*** being feminine ought ***not*** to have had an *-s*. In the mod. ***whilst*** there is an excrescent ***t*** as well.

TEST QUESTIONS ON *THE ANCIENT MARINER*.

1. Write a note on the title of *The Ancient Mariner.*

2. Explain the importance of the wedding feast for the artistic effect of the poem.

3. Illustrate the simplicity and directness of the poem.

4. What is the attitude towards external nature taken by the mariner in the poem ?

5. Describe the figure of Life-in-Death, and the ship that carried her.

6. What do you consider the turning-point or points in this story ? Show how previous and later events lead up to, or flow from, the central incidents.

7. In what respects is *The Ancient Mariner* a romantic poem ?

8. What are the romantic elements in the style ?

9. Illustrate and comment on Coleridge's use of archaisms.

10. In what ways does *The Ancient Mariner* recall the form and style of the old ballads ?

11. What does Coleridge say elsewhere of his artistic aims in the *Lyrical Ballads* ?

12. How does Coleridge succeed in making improbable events seem probable ?

13. 'Mrs. Barbauld once told me that there were two faults in it—it was improbable, and had no moral.' Discuss this criticism.

14. Wordsworth said: 'The principal has no distinct character, either in his profession of Mariner, or as a human being who having been long under the control of supernatural impressions might be supposed himself to partake of something supernatural'. Discuss this criticism.

15. Is it true that 'the events having no necessary connexion do not produce each other'?

16. State carefully the moral of *The Ancient Mariner*, and show how the idea is embodied in the story.

17. Quote what seem to you the most beautiful verses of *The Ancient Mariner.* Are there any particular lines that are peculiarly romantic in quality ?

18. Quote the verses describing: (*a*) the entrance of the bridal party, (*b*) the ship driven by the north wind, (*c*) the entrance into the Pacific Ocean, (*d*) the fall of night, (*e*) the rising of the moon, (*f*) the water-snakes and their blessing, (*g*) sleep.

19. Describe the verse of *The Ancient Mariner* and its variations.

20. Scan:—

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

(*b*) Like the whizz of my cross-bow.

(*c*) And a good south wind sprung up behind;
The albatross did follow.

(*d*) With a short, uneasy motion.

21. What are the requisite conditions of a good rime? Are there any imperfect rimes in *The Ancient Mariner?*

22. Explain the following: eftsoons, gray beard loon, a dismal sheen, death-fires, gossameres, cross-bow, hoar-frost, Mary Queen, the silly buckets, a hundred fire-flags sheen, honey-dew, he'll shrieve my soul, the little vesper-bell.

23. Comment on:—

(i) he holds him with his glittering eye.

(ii) Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill.

(iii) The bloody sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand.

(iv) Instead of the cross the albatross
About my neck was hung.

(v) Gramercy! they for joy did grin.

(vi) The horned moon with one bright star
Within the nether tip.

(vii) And thou art long, and lank, and brown
As in the ribbed sea-sand!

(viii) And when they reared the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

(ix) O! let me be awake, my God,
Or let me sleep alway!

(x) And now the wedding-guest
Turns from the bridegroom's door.
A sadder and a wiser man
He rose the morrow morn.

(xi) Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry minstrelsy.

24. Quote examples of alliteration, onomatopœia, simile. metaphor. synecdoche, personification, leonine rime.

25. What other readings are found for the following lines, and why were the changes made?

> It ate the food it ne'er had eat.
> The furrow followed free.
> Like God's own head.

Why was the description of Death omitted?

26. Explain, with quotations, how Coleridge indicates by natural means the time of day, the position of the ship, or the direction of its course.

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