

# Samuel Taylor Coleridge

1772–1834

Coleridge wrote in a 1796 letter, “I am, and ever have been, a great reader, and have read almost everything—a library-cormorant.” His own work was similarly wide-ranging and prolific; Coleridge’s collected writings comprise 50 volumes and reveal his interest in a myriad of subjects from history and politics to science and literary criticism. He is chiefly remembered, however, for his significant contribution to English Romantic poetry: poems such as “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” and “Kubla Khan” have remained fresh and affecting for generations of readers.

The son of a school headmaster, Coleridge received a robust classical education and later briefly attended Cambridge, although he left without taking a degree. After several false starts—he joined the army, and upon his release concocted an ill-fated plan to move to America to found a communal society—he began to publish his writing. His second book of poetry was *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), a collaboration with his friend William Wordsworth; it opened with “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” which remains Coleridge’s most critically lauded single poem.

Coleridge composed little poetry during the last 35 years of his life. His most important writing from this period is the two-volume *Biographia Literaria* (1817), a work of autobiography and literary criticism in which he anatomizes both poetry and poetic production, considering not only formal elements but also the psychology of the creative process.

# The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

## In Seven Parts

*Facile credo, plures esse Naturas invisibiles quam visibiles in rerum universitate. Sed horum omnium familiam quis nobis enarrabit? et gradus et cognationes et discrimina et singulorum munera? Quid agunt? quæ loca habitant? Harum rerum notitiam semper ambivit ingenium humanum, nunquam attigit. Juvat, interea, non diffiteor, quandoque in animo, tanquam in Tabulâ, majoris et melioris mundi imaginem contemplari: ne mens assuefacta hodiernæ vitæ minutiis se contrahat nimis, & tota subsidat in pusillas cogitationes. Sed veritati interea invigilandum est, modusque servandus, ut certa ab incertis, diem a nocte, distinguamus.—*  
T. Burnet. *Archaeol. Phil.* p. 68.<sup>1</sup>

### Part 1

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?

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

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

He holds him with his skinny hand,  
10 “There was a ship,” quoth he.  
“Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!”  
Eftsoons<sup>2</sup> his hand dropt he.

1 From Thomas Burnet’s *Archaeologiae Philosophicae* (1692), translated by Mead and Foxton (1736): “I can easily believe, that there are more invisible than visible beings in the universe. But who will declare to us the family of all these, and acquaint us with the agreements, differences, and peculiar talents which are to be found among them? It is true, human wit has always desired a knowledge of these things, though it has never yet attained it. I will own that it is very profitable, sometimes to contemplate in the mind, as in a draught, the image of the greater and better world, lest the soul being accustomed to the trifles of this present life, should contract itself too much, and altogether rest in mean cogitations, but, in the meantime, we must take care to keep to the truth, and observe moderation, that we may distinguish certain from uncertain things, and day from night.”

2 *Eftsoons* At once.

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 choose but hear;  
 And thus spake on that ancient man,  
 The bright-eyed Mariner.

“The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,  
 Merrily did we drop  
 Below the kirk,<sup>1</sup> below the hill,  
 Below the lighthouse top.

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

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

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

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

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

The wedding-guest is spellbound  
 by the eye of the old sea-faring  
 man, and constrained to hear  
 his tale. 15

The Mariner tells how the ship  
 sailed southward with a good  
 wind and fair weather, till it  
 reached the line. 25

The wedding-guest heareth the  
 bridal music; but the mariner  
 continueth his tale. 30

35

The ship drawn by a storm  
 toward the south pole.

40

1 *kirk* Church.

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

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

- 55 And through the drifts the snowy clifts  
 Did send a dismal sheen:  
 Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken<sup>1</sup>—  
 The ice was all between.

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

- The ice was here, the ice was there,  
 60 The ice was all around:  
 It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,  
 Like noises in a swound!<sup>2</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

1 *ken* Recognize.

2 *swound* Swoon.

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud, 75  
 It perched for vespers nine;<sup>1</sup>  
 Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,  
 Glimmered the white Moon-shine.”

“God save thee, ancient Mariner!  
 From the fiends, that plague thee thus!—  
 Why look’st thou so?”—With my cross-bow 80  
 I shot the ALBATROSS.  
 The ancient Mariner  
 inhospitably killed the pious  
 bird of good omen.

## Part 2

The Sun now rose upon the right:  
 Out of the sea came he,  
 Still hid in mist, and on the left 85  
 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 a hellish thing,  
 And it would work ’em woe:  
 For all averred, I had killed the bird  
 That made the breeze to blow.  
 Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,  
 That made the breeze to blow! 95

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,  
 That bring the fog and mist.  
 But when the fog cleared off,  
 they justify the same—and thus  
 make themselves accomplices in  
 the crime. 100

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,  
 The furrow followed free;  
 The fair breeze continues;

1 *vespers nine* I.e., nine evenings. Vespers is an evening prayer service.

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

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

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

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

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

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

About, about, in reel and rout  
 The death-fires<sup>1</sup> danced at night;  
 The water, like a witch's oils,  
 130 Burnt green, and blue and white.

And some in dreams assurèd were  
 Of the Spirit that plagued us so;  
 Nine fathom deep he had followed us  
 From the land of mist and snow.

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

The ship hath been suddenly  
 becalmed.

And the Albatross begins to be  
 avenged.

A spirit has 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, and there is no  
 climate or element without one  
 or more.

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1 *death-fires* Possibly luminescent plankton.

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.

135

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 seabird round  
 his neck.

140

### *Part 3*

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.

145

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.<sup>1</sup>

150

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

155

With throat unslacked, with black lips baked,  
 We could nor laugh nor wail;  
 Through utter drought all dumb we stood!  
 I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,  
 And cried, A sail! a sail!

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.

160

With throat unslacked, with black lips baked,  
 Agape they heard me call:

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1 *wist* Knew.

Gramercy!<sup>1</sup> they for joy did grin,  
 165 And all at once their breath drew in,  
 As they were drinking all.

See! see! (I cried) she tacks no more!  
 Hither to work us weal;<sup>2</sup>  
 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;  
 175 When that strange shape drove suddenly  
 Betwixt us and the Sun.

And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,  
 (Heaven's Mother send us grace!)  
 As if through a dungeon-grate he peered  
 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?

185 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?

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

A flash of joy.

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

It seemeth him but the skeleton  
 of a ship.

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

1 *Gramercy* Grant mercy, i.e., may God reward you in His mercy.

2 *us weal* Will benefit us.



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.

195

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.<sup>1</sup>

Like vessel, like crew! Death and  
 Life-in-Death have dived for the 200  
 ship's crew, and she (the latter)  
 winneth the ancient Mariner.

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 dews did drip—  
 Till clomb<sup>2</sup> above the eastern bar  
 The hornèd Moon, with one bright star  
 Within the nether tip.

No twilight within the courts of  
 the sun. 205

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.

At the rising of the Moon,  
 215

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

One after another,

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

But Life-in-Death begins her 220  
 work on the ancient Mariner.

1 *bark* Boat.

2 *clomb* Climbed.

*Part 4*

"I fear thee, ancient Mariner!

225 I fear thy skinny hand!

And thou art long, and lank, and brown,  
As is the ribbed sea-sand.<sup>1</sup>

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

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

Alone, alone, all, all alone,  
Alone on a wide wide sea!  
And never a saint took pity on

235 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.

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

I looked to heaven, and tried to pray;  
245 But or ever a prayer had gusht,  
A wicked whisper came, and made  
My heart as dry as dust.

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

The wedding-guest feareth that a  
spirit is talking to him;

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

He despiseth the creatures of  
the calm,

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

1 [Coleridge's note] 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

255

260

In his loneliness and fixedness, he  
 yearneth towards the journeying  
 Moon, and the stars that still  
 sojourn, yet still move onwards; 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 certain expected, and yet there  
 is a silent joy at their arrival.

270

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

275

Their beauty and their happiness.

He blesseth them in his heart.

285

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

The spell begins to break.

### Part 5

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

The silly<sup>1</sup> buckets on the deck,  
 That had so long remained,  
 I dreamt that they were filled with dew;  
 300 And when I awoke, it rained.

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

My lips were wet, my throat was cold,  
 My garments all were dank;  
 Sure I had drunken in my dreams,  
 And still my body drank.  
 305 I moved, and could not feel my limbs:  
 I was so light—almost  
 I thought that I had died in sleep,  
 And was a blessèd ghost.

And soon I heard a roaring wind:  
 310 It did not come anear;  
 But with its sound it shook the sails,  
 That were so thin and sere.<sup>2</sup>

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

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

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1 *silly* Simple.

2 *sere* Withered.

And the coming wind did roar more loud,  
 And the sails did sigh like sedge;  
 And the rain poured down from one black cloud;  
 The Moon was at its edge. 320

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. 325

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

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

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—  
 We were a ghastly crew. 335 340

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<sup>1</sup> came again,  
 But a troop of spirits blest:

But not by the souls of the 345  
 men, nor by dæmons of earth  
 or middle air, but by a blessed  
 troop of angelic spirits, sent  
 down by the invocation of the  
 guardian saint.

---

1 *corses* Corpses.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The 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.

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.

385

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

390

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

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

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

395

400

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.”

405

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

## *Part 6*

### FIRST VOICE

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

410

## SECOND VOICE

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

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

## FIRST VOICE

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

## SECOND VOICE

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

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

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

All stood together on the deck,  
 435 For a charnel-dungeon<sup>1</sup> 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:  
 440 I could not draw my eyes from theirs,  
 Nor turn them up to pray.

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

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

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1 *charnel-dungeon* Mortuary; house of death.



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

The curse is finally expiated.

445

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

450

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.

455

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

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

460

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.

465

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

470

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

475

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,

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

And appear in their own forms  
 of light.

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,  
 And, by the holy rood!<sup>1</sup>  
 490 A man all light, a seraph-man,<sup>2</sup>  
 On every corse there stood.

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

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

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

The Pilot and the Pilot's boy,  
 505 I heard them coming fast:

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1 *rood* Cross.

2 *seraph-man* Angel.

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  
That he makes in the wood. 510  
He'll shrieve<sup>1</sup> my soul, he'll wash away  
The Albatross's blood.

### *Part 7*

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.

515

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

The skiff-boat neared: I heard them talk,  
“Why, this is strange, I trow!<sup>2</sup>  
Where are those light so many and fair,  
That signal made but now?” 525

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

Approacheth the ship with  
wonder.

530

Brown skeletons of leaves that lag  
My forest-brook along;

1 *shrieve* Give absolution to.

2 *trow* Believe.

535 When the ivy-tod<sup>1</sup> is heavy with snow,  
 And the owlet whoops to the wolf below,  
 That eats the she-wolf's young."

"Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look—"  
 (The Pilot made reply)

540 "I am a-feared"—"Push on, push on!"  
 Said the Hermit cheerily.

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

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 ship suddenly sinketh.

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  
 555 Within the Pilot's boat.

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

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

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

I took the oars: the Pilot's boy,  
 565 Who now doth crazy go,  
 Laughed loud and long, and all the while

---

1 *ivy-tod* Bush.

His eyes went to and fro.  
 "Ha! ha!" quoth he, "full plain I see,  
 The Devil knows how to row."

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

570

"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?"

The ancient Mariner earnestly  
 entreateth the Hermit to shrieve 575  
 him; and the penance of life falls  
 on him.

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

580

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

And ever and anon throughout  
 his future life an agony  
 constraineth him to travel from  
 land to land. 585

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

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!

595

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

600

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

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

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

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

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

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,  
 Whose beard with age is hoar,<sup>1</sup>  
 620 Is gone: and now the Wedding-Guest  
 Turned from the bridegroom's door.

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

—1817 (earlier version published 1798)

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1 *hoar* White, as with frost (hoarfrost).