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SELECTIONS FROM
COLERIDGE
Selections from the Poets

Coleridge

By
Andrew Lang

Illustrated by Patten Wilson

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INTRODUCTION

The critical habit of "placing" poets, like undergraduates in an examination, has many defects. For example, it is impossible to "place" Coleridge, and the impossibility illustrates a general difficulty of criticism. Probably it is agreed that Coleridge is a great English poet, but why is he great? What is the test of greatness? If it be excellence of quality exhibited in considerable quantity, then Coleridge offers no considerable bulk of verse excellent in the first degree. We never think of going to him for dramatic creation of character; his best lyrical expressions of personal emotion are few though beautiful, as in his lines on vanished Youth. He does not "moralise his song," like Wordsworth, or, at least, not with Wordsworth's frequent depth and persuasiveness. Indeed, he moralises quite sufficiently in prose. His narrative verse in its finest
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phase consists of one finished piece, and a mere fragment. He has no "message," which he must deliver in verse, and not otherwise. Prose serves for his metaphysics and theology, or rather does not serve, for the mass of mankind know not what he would be at in these fields, and possibly dismiss his musings as, in Lamb's phrase, "Only Coleridge's fun."

Yet Coleridge is, or may be reckoned, a great poet, because every now and again he captures in verse that indefinable emotion which is less articulately expressed in music, and in some unutterable way he transports us into the world of dream and desire. This is a very vague fashion of saying what hardly permits itself to be said. We might put it that Coleridge has, on occasion, the power to move us, as we are moved by the most rarely beautiful cosmic effects of magic lights and shadows; by the silver on lakes for a chosen moment in the dawn or twilight; by the fragrant deeps of dewy forests; by sudden infrequent passions of heart and memory; and by unexpected potencies of imagination. What those things, and such things as these, can do in life, Coleridge can do in verse. His world becomes "an unsubstantial fairy place," and yet more real than the world of experience: it is a place which we may have remembered out of a previous life, or may have
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foreseen, in a glance of the not-ourselves in which we mysteriously move and have our being. Coleridge has, in brief, "the key of the happy golden land," but he seldom opens the portals that unfold themselves at the sound of his music.

"He on honey-dew hath fed
And drunk the milk of Paradise,"

and therefore "with music" he "builds that dome in air," of his pleasure-house.

It is his possession of this gift, the rarest gift, that makes Coleridge great: his own consciousness could not tell whence the gift came, nor why it came so seldom.

A brief sketch of the life of Coleridge, as far as his poetry is involved, must be given; it rests mainly on the patient researches of Mr. James Dykes Campbell.* Born at the vicarage of Ottery St. Mary, in Devonshire, on October 21, 1772, Coleridge is the chief poetical worthy of a county which Keats found enervating, and which was detested by Herrick. He was the youngest of a vast clerical family of thirteen; his father was learned, simple, and so absent-minded that he is said to have tucked into his waistband the white dress of a lady placed next him at dinner, under the impression that it was

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his shirt. Yet some of his offspring had a marked talent for getting on in the world. Samuel had not, but was as visionary as his sire. Mrs. Coleridge was a practical Hausfrau, and particularly detested "your harpsichord ladies." Thus it is impossible to show that Coleridge's Muse came to him by inheritance. Petted by his parents, Samuel, like Joseph, was not adored by his brethren. Nobody wanted to play with him (he must have been a most inefficient field), and he "read incessantly." He was "haunted by spectres in the dark," and hallucinations did not cease with his nonage. He "had seen too many ghosts to believe in them," his unconscious stratum of thought manifesting itself in this visual way. His father, detecting his waking nightmares, burned his books. At school, when only six, he "outstripped all his age." In short, he was a sample of a not very unusual kind of clever little boy. Mr. Traill contrasts with Coleridge's early youth the "commonplace boyhood of Scott." The boyhood of Scott was, I think, as far as possible from commonplace. "Why don't you play with those boys, Walter?" "Oh, you cannot think how ignorant they are," replied the all-devouring little student, who, perhaps, never afterwards said a priggish thing.

In 1782, having lost his father, Coleridge was
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taken to an admiring but injudicious uncle, a shop-
keeper in London. He was led about to coffee-
houses, "and talked and disputed as if I had been
a man." The habit of talking never deserted him.
In September he entered the thronged and squalid
world of Christ's Hospital, where Lamb met him,
miserable, lonely, dreaming of home; finding plea-
sure in watching the sky, and making mental pic-
tures of trees, meadows, and "his native stream."
He probably cast off his home-sickness; he made
friends, became a Grecian, read Voltaire, and, like
other ardent lads, pried into that promising but
tangled garden of the Neo-Platonists. If he read
them in Thomas Taylor's cribs, as Mr. Campbell
thinks, he must have found confusion thrice con-
founded, Mr. Taylor being the most incompetent of
known translators. At sixteen he met, and then,
or later, fell in love with, a Miss Mary Evans, who
was, it seems, the inevitable unattainable ideal of
his heart.

In 1789, the chord of poetry in Coleridge was
stricken by the clerical hand of Mr. Bowles. This
appears curious. If the classic poets did not touch
the chord, the Elizabethans or Burns, Thomson or
Cowper, might have awakened a musical reply in
Coleridge. Poets (and poetasters) are like the un-
touched lute in Walton's illustration of Telepathy,
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which vibrates when the other lute is played upon. Reading poetry, they find, or think they find, that they are poets themselves and warble a response.

Others around Coleridge were versifying: the chord was touched, and he versified too. In Coleridge's case, as is not unusual, his dormant propensity to rhyme was awakened by a contemporary example. He was, as it were, possessed by Bowles, and made forty manuscript copies of the minstrel's sonnets, that his friends might rejoice with him. Bowles, it appears, breathed the first "unsophisticated breath of Nature" which fanned Coleridge's early brow; for this we are infinitely obliged to him. Yet Keats's revel in Spenser seems more intelligible, and Coleridge is undeniably the masterpiece of Bowles. Nothing else of Bowles's has worn so well; and we must remember that the infant genius of Robert Louis Stevenson was vivified by a Free Kirk hymn which goes naturally, and, one would think, irresistibly, to the tune of "Bonnie Dundee." Are we all odiously ungrateful to Bowles? Mr. Campbell says that Wordsworth read right through his quarto in a recess of Westminster Bridge. Now, it must be remembered, the contents of Bowles's quarto were exclusively Sonnets. \textit{La jeunesse n'a qu'un temps}. Coleridge was young; he swallowed xvi
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Bowles entire, and consequently he wrote the juvenile poems of 1790 and the following years. Brother John, in Rabelais, discerned that his life had passed its meridian by his increased and awful terror of meeting bad wine. From the juvenile poems of 1790 and the following years an elderly critic shrinks with similar cowardice. Coleridge went up to Jesus, Cambridge, in 1791, and the poems of this period are not, on the whole, better than what most of us have written. The poet was not precocious, did not early enter into his kingdom.

"Thy corpse, of many a livid hue,
On the bare ground I view,
Whilst various passions all my mind engage;
Now is my breast distended with a sigh,
And now a flash of rage
Darts through the tear that glistens in the eye."

Thus did Coleridge address Chatterton, and, in fact, little that is not worthy to be let die occurs in his poems before Lewisi, in 1794. As a poet, Coleridge was not, like Keats and Tennyson, precocious. He had not from the first his own definite peculiar note, unless we hear it in the more melodious stanzas of the Songs of the Pixies (1793).

Coleridge seems to have displayed industry at the beginning of his residence in Cambridge. He gained the Browne gold medal for a Greek ode on the Slave
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Trade, and came near winning the Craven. But amusement and talk soon claimed him: he cared for no active sport, but would discuss and dispute eloquently and endlessly. In December 1793, this friend of the French Revolution left Cambridge "to be a dragoon." His equestrian incompetence was flagrant, his quality was recognised, and he was re-admitted by his College. In June 1794, during a visit to Oxford, he made the acquaintance of Southey, of Balliol, who mentions that Coleridge already contemplated the publication of poems. "Pantisocracy," a form of Socialism, involving an elegant agriculture on the unsophisticated banks of some American river, was conceived during three summer weeks beside the Isis, and matured during the vacation at Bristol. Ladies were to accompany the Pantisocratists, and Coleridge, really deep in love with Miss Evans, became betrothed to a sister of Southey's fiancée, a Miss Sarah (Sara) Fricker. He altered "Mary" (in Lewti) to Sara, transferring his heart and copyright. Mary Evans he could not marry, and, like other poetic rovers, he sought consolation in Sarah Fricker.

But the broken heart was not so readily to be pieced. Coleridge left Bristol and Miss Fricker for town, to arrange about publishing his and Southey's piece, The Fall of Robespierre. Thence he went
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to Cambridge, and wrote the poem *On a Discovery Made too Late*. The discovery, of course, was that Mary, not Sarah, was the true love. In December he wrote to Mary: Miss Fricker would not have approved of the epistle. Hopeless of winning Mary, Coleridge left Cambridge for town without a degree, where he talked and drank with Lamb, and wrote sonnets on eminent characters in the *Morning Chronicle*. Pantisocracy and Miss Fricker were now shadows: Coleridge cherished an idea of cultivating law at the Temple. But the stern Southey dragged Coleridge back to Love and Duty. Coleridge made the best of it, was a wooer as ardent as might be, and was reconverted to Pantisocracy. "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel," was the motto for Coleridge. He made a little money by political lecturing, and, as Southey's faith in Pantisocracy waxed cold, it was his turn to upbraid and quarrel with Southey. Cottle gave Coleridge thirty pounds for his poems, and offered to take any amount at about fourpence a line. On these prospects Coleridge wedded Miss Fricker (October 4, 1795), and they resided in a rose-hung cottage at Clevedon. *The Aeolian Harp* commemorates the honeymoon, and proves that, in the matter of love, Coleridge could "make believe" admirably. A cot with jasmine and myrtle, a pretty affectionate lass,
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were agreeable circumstances, and Coleridge could, no doubt, address his wife as "beloved woman" with almost perfect sincerity. The cot was abandoned, and Coleridge went forth

"To fight the bloodless fight
Of science, freedom, and the truth in Christ;"

that is, to be nearer Bristol Library and the literary ammunition for the war.*

In December he made a scheme for a paper, *The Watchman*; and, preaching his Unitarian way through the Midlands, canvassed for subscribers. His adventures were humorous, but *The Watchman*, after ingeniously offending every subscriber, died in May 1796. His friend Poole collected money for the editor; henceforth Coleridge was always living on borrowed gear or presents. He had none of Burns's independence about money: indeed, men of letters in those days had a way of thinking that somebody ought to maintain them. Somebody was often found to do so, a condition of affairs not easily conceived in our age.

Meanwhile, in March 1796, Cottle had published "Poems on various subjects, by S. T. Coleridge, late of Jesus College, Cambridge," an octavo of xvi, 188 pages. In his preface Coleridge says that he desires

* Reflections on having left a Place of Retirement.

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"to raise esteem upon the base of woe" (Shaw). Who is Shaw?

Lamb contributed a few "Effusions," and Southey lent half an effusion. Most of the effusions were sonnets, but Coleridge "was fearful that the title 'Sonnet' might have reminded readers of the poems of the Rev. W. L. Bowles."

The sonnet, the form of Shakspeare and Milton, long neglected, was now, it seems, Mr. Bowles's private parterre or demesne. How Coleridge explained the "Discovery Made too Late" to Mrs. Coleridge is not known, but probably she never read the effusions of her lord, or she accepted the theory (as regards effusions always probable) that it was "only his fun."

Coleridge was now older than Keats ever lived to be. It cannot be said that this first fruit of his Muse bore any shadow of title to be compared even with Keats's earliest and least mature volume. The long poem "Religious Musings" is Jacobin, more or less, in tone, and is inspired by a perfectly untenable theory that human life began in the pastoral stage, which preceded the evolution of property. A whole continent, in that case, would have been peopled by shepherds whose office, as in Otaheite, was a sinecure. "There are no sheep in Otaheite," nor were there any sheep in America. However,
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this is no place for arguments on Primitive Culture. There is vigour in the denunciations of modern society—

"O aged women! ye who weekly catch
The morsel tossed by law-forced charity,
And die so slowly that none call it murder!"

Is it not true? In this Shelleyan vein Coleridge as a young poet shone; but while we sympathise with the indignation, we reflect that "indignation makes verses," yet seldom makes poetry.

For social wrongs the poet sees no cure but "Creation's eyeless drudge, black Ruin," which really will not make the world much better or happier. "Pure Faith" and "meek Piety" are therefore implored to "return," but they do not usually follow Revolution.

Hartley is saluted as "of mortal kind wisest," and the piece is almost as much a revolutionary manifesto as a poem. Very little in the book gives promise of the Coleridge that was to be, the Poet and the Tory. Poor Hartley, "wisest of mortal kind," was to be very unhandsomely treated in the final version of lines on Jeanne d'Arc, which Coleridge first wrote for Southey's poem on the Maid, and then altered as his opinions changed. He knew nothing of Jeanne, in fact, and seems to have thought her a kind of emancipated barmaid. The Anglo-Burgundian myth of
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Jeanne as a maid of the inn was still accepted. Failing in a number of projects, Coleridge took a boarder, a young sentimentalist named Lloyd. By the end of 1796 the unemployed poet had begun to take laudanum, for neuralgia, it seems. Of the laudanum, as Mr. Campbell observes, he was never cured. Mr. Traill seems to think that opium only became a habitual enjoyment in 1803, and that it killed his poetry. But he was taking as much as seventy drops in November 1796.*

Thus it seems more probable that opium stimulated the poetry of Coleridge's marvellous years (1797–1798) than that it destroyed his poetic faculty. The poetry of these years is like that of no other man, and we know of no change in Coleridge except what opium might produce. The society of the Wordsworths, though stimulating, would not alter a man's genius, as that of Coleridge was altered.

The year 1797 found the poet in a cottage at Stowey, where he was to live like Virgil's old gardener, and where he did prepare a new edition of his verses, including pieces by Charles Lloyd. He wrote for Sheridan a play, Osorio, and met with the usual chagrin of people who write for the stage. Sixteen years later Osorio was acted at Drury Lane. The

* Coleridge to Poole, Nov. 5, 1796. T. Poole and his Friends, l. 117.
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poet had made the acquaintance and won the friendship of Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy, who visited him at Stowey, and, in affection for his society, settled at Alfoxden. The three were constantly together, and, on November 13, 1797, took the long walk during which *The Ancient Mariner* was proposed as a joint work. Except for a few suggestions and a very few lines, the poem is entirely by Coleridge, and is his one complete and perfect narrative. A dream of a Mr. Cruikshank supplied the germ; it was a vision of "a skeleton ship with figures in it." Wordsworth suggested the mariner's crime, the shooting of the albatross. This is Wordsworth's account. Coleridge speaks of a conversation between them 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 two friends were to illustrate these points; Coleridge by verses of a "supernatural" cast; Wordsworth by verses on subjects "chosen from ordinary life." . . . "With this view I wrote *The Ancient Mariner*:" he also began *Christabel*.

*The Ancient Mariner*, as Mr. Traill justly observes, "not only defeats classification but defies it." Modern romantic poetry was born on the Mariner's
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birthday, and the poem at once did, and outdid, all that romance has aimed at and achieved. She is naturally *impossibilium cupitor*, "eager for things impossible," beyond experience; eager to describe these in a fashion at once novel and beautiful; eager to sing them to some new undreamed-of air. There is in romance no desire to moralise or to interpret life; rather a desire to make imagination wider, richer, more mysterious. Romance is the Columbus of the imagination; Coleridge leaves the familiar fields to be cultivated by Wordsworth or another; he sets forth in quest of the unknown land, because it is unknown; for the unsailed seas and the undreamed-of peoples. This is a temper alien to the eighteenth century; alien to Candide with his *cultivons notre jardin*; alien to Wordsworth, and, above all, alien (as far as his verse proves) to Coleridge, before Mr. Cruikshank dreamed that most fortunate of dreams.

That Coleridge was to be the Cortes of the spiritual Anahuac, the *conquistador* in whose track Scott and Hugo and Poe were to sail, nothing had previously indicated. Wordsworth assuredly never led Coleridge into these seas: Wordsworth, in a homely phrase, was as much perplexed as a hen that has hatched a wild swan.

A new Coleridge was born or had awakened; not xxv
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a social philosopher; not a pious Unitarian; not a Pantisocratist, but a fairy poet.

The form of the Mariner was as novel as the matter. Nominally it is a ballad. The ancient popular ballads of the country had been rediscovered by Percy and others, even in Johnson's day. They had been imitated, more or less well, by Lady Wardlaw and others. Sir Walter had already, in translating Bürger's Lenore, shown that in the ballad he had a tool made to his hand, and it is possible that he wrote The Eve of St. John (1799) without inspiration from Coleridge. He was later, in the ballad of the Red Harlaw, to outdo the old minstrels in their own form, without widening the limits or breaking the conventions of the ballad style. But Coleridge widened these limits and varied these conventions, with a freedom and originality which contained the germ of the verse in Christabel and The Lay of the Last Minstrel. Coleridge, at a stroke, had created and closed the career of a new genre: for no such "Rime" had been written before, or will be written again by man.

The absolute novelty of the creation is proved by the inept contemporary criticism on the Ancient Mariner. Southey called it a "Dutch attempt at German sublimity." Lamb himself was puzzled. "I dislike all the miraculous part of it," he writes. Cole-
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ridge was discouraged by the "knowledge that many persons had been much displeased with it." Wordsworth admitted that "the poem of my friend has indeed great defects; first, 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."

It is, indeed, worth while to be an original poet when another original poet and a friend welcomes you in this wise. However, Wordsworth recognised that "the passion is of the highest kind," and the verse "harmonious and artfully varied." Mrs. Barbauld, however, urged that the piece "was improbable" (of course it is not improbable; it is a better thing, impossible)* and "had no moral," which, to the amazement of mankind, it has. Being a thing of pure fantasy, the piece has also the merit of being a thing of perfect sanity, as sane as Robinson Crusoe, granting the subject. In this respect the fantasy of Coleridge resembles that of Edgar Poe in his prose tales. To quote Mr. Traill's words: "Perfect consistency of plan and complete equality of execution, brevity, self-restraint, and an unerring sense of artistic

* Coleridge, in Aristotle's phrase, "prefers the probable impossible to the improbable possible."
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propriety—these are the chief notes of the *Ancient Mariner*, as they are *not*, in my humble judgment, the chief note of any poem of Coleridge's before or since." And these merits are in complete contrast with the impossibilities of the matter of the poem, those desired impossibilities after which romance hungers, while the poet's art blends them with the familiar hill and kirk of "mine ain countrie," and with human love and tenderness.

It is highly probable that Coleridge acquiesced in Wordsworth's judgment, for his loyalty to his friend, his generous appreciation and unfeigned submission to one whom he deemed his master, are among the noblest traits of his character. Coleridge had not yet created the taste which could enjoy him, and "miraculous" matters were still tabooed by Common Sense. This poem, begun in November 1797, was finished in March 1798. At the latter date *Christabel* was at least begun, for the "one red leaf" and "the thin grey cloud" are noted in Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal of January–March 1798. Coleridge, however, in his preface to *Christabel* (1816), says that the first part was written in 1797: conceivably the leaf and cloud were introduced later. The history of the poem must be deferred for a moment.

In December 1797, Coleridge was about to accept the cure of the Unitarian chapel at Shrewsbury.
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Here he preached, and made, not in a lucky hour, the acquaintance of young Hazlitt, who heard him “launch into his subject like an eagle dallying with the wind.” Coleridge visited Hazlitt’s father at Wem, and accepted an offer of £150 a year, a pension or endowment, from the Wedgwoods, “for life.” Half of this endowment was later withdrawn. He was also introduced to the Morning Post. To this journal he contributed The Ode to France, or Recantation of his old love for the Revolution (written in February 1798).

He had “hung his head and wept at Britain’s name,” in young enthusiasm for “immortal and indomitable France.”* But now France has pitched into “bleak Helvetia” and things are no longer the same. In April, Coleridge wrote “Fears in Solitude,” during an alarm of invasion. He had been the rebuke of his country, which is far from perfect, but we must cling to the flag, to England, which is not only the England of Pitt, but also “of Sara Coleridge, and of little Hartley, and of Mr. Thomas Poole of Nether Stowey.” Here the important political poems end. When fiery Gaul invasion threatens, the poet must stand up for his own like a Briton, in the newspaper. He “snapped his squeaking baby-trumpet of sedition,” he tells his brother.

* The phrase is Mr. Watson’s.
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In April 1798, after a quarrel with Lloyd, Coleridge retired to a farmhouse near Porlock, and took opium and composed *Kubla Khan* in a dream. "An anodyne had been prescribed," by S. T. C. no doubt. After three hours of sleep "of the external senses," Coleridge woke, and partly set down in words that which was "given to him" in images and during sleep. Then came "a person on business from Porlock," and the rest was lost.

I see no reason to doubt that Coleridge's story is true, and that *Kubla Khan* was created in what the Eskimo call the "Sleep of the Shadow," in an opiated dream. Ordinary mortals versify in sleep: generally the remembered results are pure nonsense. The opposite was the experience of Coleridge, as long before of Cædmon, who had been no singer till he sang in a dream.

I am acquainted with a popular novelist (in rude health), who once found a tale under his name in a serial to which he contributed, who was paid for the tale, and who has no memory of writing a word of it or of posting his manuscript. Mr. Traill writes as if he were not unlearned in experiences analogous to that of Coleridge, in which, however, the memory did not retain the matter created in a momentary "abnormal exaltation of the creative and apprehensive power." He, however, does not take xxx
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a high sense of the poetic value of Kubla Khan, whereas, to myself, the piece seems to be what romantic poetry would be, if it could. Think of a volume of the same merit as Kubla Khan! Reading it, we would dwell in the land of the Lotus-Eaters.

The quarrel with Lloyd unluckily involved Lamb, but the estrangement was brief, and had a fortunate result in The Old Familiar Faces. In September 1798, the Lyrical Ballads of Wordsworth, with The Ancient Mariner and a few other pieces by Coleridge, were published by Cottle, and the poets went to Germany with Dorothy Wordsworth. Mrs. Coleridge sent a cheerful report "that the Lyrical Ballads are not liked at all by any." We hear remarkably little of Mrs. Coleridge at this time.

The subject of this sketch being Coleridge's life as a poet, we need not dally over his residence in Germany, where he worked with unusual concentration, and acquired a literary knowledge of the language. But after his return to England he seemed unable to settle anywhere. He did some article-writing for the Morning Post. He translated Wallenstein for Messrs. Longman; the work irked him terribly, and was financially a failure. In the middle of 1800 he went to Greta Hall, to be near the Wordsworths, and by October he had finished the second part of Christabel. It was intended to appear xxxi
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in the new edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, and Coleridge kept asserting that he had done some 1400 lines. But only the first half of 1400 has ever been seen by mortal eye. Coleridge never finished the poem, though he always vowed that he knew his aim and purpose. If he did, the knowledge expired with him. The poem was not published till it appeared, a fragment, with *Kubla Khan* and *The Pains of Sleep*, in 1816. Coleridge then, in his preface, observed that *Christabel* had outstayed the period in which it was likely to seem original. Metre of the same fashion had been employed by Scott in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, and Scott had been inspired by Stoddart's reading of a manuscript copy of *Christabel*. Avowedly, the music of *Christabel*, in part, at least, suggested that of the *Lay*, and Scott unwittingly transferred "Jesu Maria, shield us well," from Coleridge.

Thus Sir Walter anticipated, more or less, the dreamy S. T. C., and this was undeniably hard on Coleridge. He thought differently about the affair in different moods, occasionally expressing huge contempt of Scott's poetry. However, there Scott's poems were, readable and read by all men, while *Christabel* reposed like a pearl in the oyster, and never could get itself completed. In 1824, Scott read *Christabel* to Basil Hall, who says, "in his hands, at all events, *Christabel* justified Lord Byron's often-
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quizzed character of it, as a wild and singularly original and beautiful poem.” Why should Byron’s remark have been “often-queried”? What else can any one say about Christabel, except (in more words or fewer) that it is wild and singularly original and beautiful? But the critics did not see this. The author of an infamous critique in the Edinburgh declared that Byron praised Christabel in hopes of being repaid by the praise of Coleridge. The poem “has not one couplet which could be reckoned poetry were it found in the corner of a newspaper.” While Hazlitt, as Coleridge believed, thus assailed him in the Edinburgh, Wilson was libelling him in Blackwood. The Quarterly was discreetly dumb. Thus the masterpieces of Coleridge fell almost as flat as the everyday superfluous octavo of the everyday poetaster.

Christabel is probably fortunate in that it is a fragment. A coherent story, with a happy ending and vice punished in the person of Geraldine, could not move us like this broken chant out of the airy dome of Kubla Khan’s pleasure-house. We hear the fairy song, but we hear it only in part,—the rest the Muses leave untold, and so produce an air of charmed mystery. “The half is better than the whole:” it is better only guessing who or what Geraldine was, and why power was given to her.
INTRODUCTION

As Geraldine, when the piece breaks off, is on the very point of being unmasked like an impostor who has given a false reference, it is plain that the effect of mystery could not well be continued, and that Coleridge ceased because he was unable to go on. A touch of ridicule, of the familiar even, would have dissolved the spell which the fancy of Coleridge binds upon every listener. The airy characters do not suffer themselves to be fixed to local habitations, and every touch in the second part, which connects them with Cumberland, is a touch too heavy. Scott's people are at home in Branxholme, Thirlestane, and Harden, but Christabel and Geraldine have no dwelling-place beyond the δήμος ὄνειρον,—the region of dreams.

Residence near the Wordsworths no doubt enabled Coleridge to resume Christabel, but the very fact that their countryside suggested local details which could not have been in his mind when he wrote the first part of Christabel, proves that other confusing later thoughts must have appeared, had he tried to finish the poem and unfold the riddle.

As if he had no more energy left, he dawdled now from vast project to vast project, making notes and marginalia, a dreamy and contented hypochondriac. Recovering from an illness, real, imaginary, or the result of opium, he left poetry for metaphysics.
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By 1801 it is thought that opium had mastered him; the anodyne, the imaginative stimulus, had become the tyrant. After vague wanderings he came back, well-nigh a broken man, to Wordsworth, and, on April 4, 1802, wrote that forlorn swan-song, The Ode to Dejection. Nature can no longer

"Startle this dull pain, and make it move and live."

Moon and sky he watches:—

"I see them all so excellently fair,
I see, not feel, how beautiful they are."

Besides the pangs of "that body of his which did him grievous wrong," Coleridge was unhappy in alienation from his wife. Even a woman nearer his level of mind might well have been alienated by the shiftless, irresolute genius. It is not necessary to follow Coleridge to Malta, and then up and down England, where he lectured, dreamed, made notes, and finally, in 1816, handed himself over to Mr. Gillman, and, under his care, recovered a measure of health, industry, and self-respect. The Pains of Sleep (1803) contain the sombre poetry of his disease.

The sad lines on

"Sense of past youth, and manhood come in vain,
And genius given, and knowledge won in vain."

are of 1807, and were suggested by Wordsworth's reading of his own intellectual history in The Prelude.
INTRODUCTION

There were brief inspired hours, such as that in which *Youth and Age* was written (1822–1832),—hours, or perhaps we would say minutes. Coleridge died on July 25, 1834, having been long a voluble oracle to which many pilgrims came, but, as a poet, he was his real self for but six years at most, practically for but two.

Of Coleridge’s other activities it is not possible to speak here at length. Some of his essays in political journalism have been highly applauded by Mr. Traill. His literary criticism and literary opinions, the fruit of immense knowledge and of deep thought, are to be found in their least unpopular form in his *Table-Talk, Biographia Literaria*, and Lectures on Shakspeare. To criticising and expounding Wordsworth’s work in theory and practice, much of the *Biographia Literaria* is devoted. Unfortunately, Wordsworth was not pleased by what every other reader must think the noblest of tributes to his genius. It did not consist merely and wholly of applause, and Wordsworth was not the only poet who cannot forgive a hint of censure in a volume of praise.

The Metaphysics of Coleridge it would be vain to pretend to estimate. They were, in his opinion, the scientific basis of his religious orthodoxy. This orthodoxy (whether it would have satisfied theologians or not) was what distinguished Coleridge
INTRODUCTION

in a period of doubt. Inquiring young spirits believed him to possess the secret, and flocked around him in the hopes of acquiring that key of fairy gold to the mysteries of the universe. Even Mr. Carlyle admits that there were sunlit isles of sense and eloquence in the hazy seas of Coleridge's talk, his "endless loquacity," as Southey calls it. Many other listeners were more favourably impressed than Mr. Carlyle, who himself greatly preferred talking to listening. Coleridge at no time lacked friends, who thought it the greatest of pleasures and privileges to hear him philosophise aloud. Though these friends soon ceased to be the dupes of his golden projects of things to be done in verse and prose, though they thoroughly appreciated the shiftlessness of Coleridge, they were uncommonly staunch and loyal.

If any fell off, if the faith of Wedgwood and Poole on occasion waxed cold, other friends were raised up for Coleridge, "in relays," as De Quincey said: he was never deserted, never left without backers and comforters. Lamb and (with a difference) Wordsworth were true to the last, though Southey was wearied and worn out. This capacity for making and keeping friends, for loving and being loved, still pleads with us in favour of a very trying private character, rich in miraculous promise, prompt in squalid disappointments, all but devoid of will,
INTRODUCTION

yet capable of energy by fits and starts, and of repentance not wholly sentimental. The charm of Coleridge, though its secret may be lost, was undeniable and invincible. Wordsworth called him "the only wonderful man he had ever known," and it is impossible to calculate the amount of his inspiring influence on Wordsworth in the vernal flush of the genius of the friends.

Lockhart, in his youth, was not effusively addicted to praise, but, after meeting the wits in town, "Coleridge is worth all the rest," he says, "and five hundred more into the bargain."

After all was over, Lockhart wrote, "The equanimity with which Mr. Coleridge looked back upon a life which any worldly person would have, called eminently unfortunate, will not surprise any one who had the honour and privilege of his personal acquaintance. He was, in the first place, well aware that the main source of all his external mishaps was in himself." Indeed Coleridge did not, like many others who have failed, blame the world for the failure. "This great light of his time and country," Lockhart calls him, "this beautiful poet, this exquisite metaphysician, this universal scholar and profound theologian"—it is a noble and heartfelt panegyric by a very keen and reserved spectator of mankind.

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INTRODUCTION

Coleridge's repentances, in his most hapless days, do undeniably seem maudlin, but they were never embittering. As he writes:—

"Remorse is as the heart on which it grows;
If that be gentle, it drops balmy dews
Of true repentance; but if proud and gloomy,
It is a poison-tree, that, pierced to the inmost,
Weeps only tears of poison."

"A kind, good soul, full of religion and affection, and poetry and animal magnetism. . . . A man of great and useless genius; a strange, not at all a great man," Carlyle called Coleridge.

Can "great genius" be "useless?" can a man "of great genius" fail to be "a great man"? Let us ask what Coleridge did—whether more than a track of momentary splendour was left by this meteoric soul on the vault that overhangs our little life? We may answer that, more than any one man, Coleridge awakened Poetry. He strung her lyre anew; he purged her eyes with euphrasy; he taught her once more to see the unseen beauty, and to hear the harmonies as of "all the angels singing out of heaven." He put a new song in her mouth, a new ideal before her eyes. Wordsworth alone could never have done this. We may say that, apart from Coleridge's own creations in verse, Scott would not have been what he was, nor Hugo, Tennyson, xxxix
or Musset. The Lyric Muse would not have unshackled her limbs and unfolded her wings without the example of Coleridge. To set that example was not to be "useless."

We have abstained from comment on Coleridge's metaphysics. One may venture to suggest that what converted Coleridge to a kind of orthodoxy was not his philosophy, but his incommunicable experience of prayer and rapture. He "had felt." What he had felt he could no more put into clear coherent terms of philosophic diction than St. Paul could describe his vision of things unspeakable. But Coleridge was convinced, though he never could clearly reveal the secret which young men sought, as young men will, from the lips of the Master. He had passed through the night and the fire, and had withdrawn his feet from the Slough of Despond. At Highgate he dwelt in Beulah. He carried the standard of spiritual faith through an age of materialism: men gathered round it; if they did not understand, they did not despair. His existence was not "useless."

In criticism, again, as in the Lectures on Shakespeare and the Biographia, Coleridge showed many an oasis of clear and sound judgment, despite his too frequent wanderings in a wilderness of words. He always gave more promises than he could fulfil; but who could have fulfilled the promise of Coleridge?
INTRODUCTION

ridge? Morally weak beyond most men, he yet redeemed himself, as it were, beyond hope. No suffering could embitter, no remorse could permanently degrade this affectionate heart, this “great light of his time and country.” “Great” in the sense of Cromwell or Frederick, Coleridge was not, but he was great in genius and in suffering.

Of the poems selected, several, especially the earlier, are chosen rather for their biographical interest, and as illustrative of Coleridge’s development, than as entirely worthy of the author of Christabel.

My friend Mr.-Ernest Hartley Coleridge has kindly read and commented on the foregoing remarks. He doubts the old story of his great-grandfather’s absence of mind (p. xiii.), and defends the sonnets of Mr. Bowles as well-selected models. Among the early poems, he justly chooses Genevieve, the Sonnets to Autumn, and The Evening Star as worthy of the author. He does not consider that Coleridge absolutely abandoned the use of opium when with Mr. Gillman, but that he was cured to an astonishing degree, and, as I understand, took no more than he might blamelessly consume, in the interests of a constitution long accustomed to the drug. The point is only of interest as an illustration of Coleridge’s
INTRODUCTION

ultimate power of self-recovery, which attests more resolution than he was wont to claim.

Mr. Coleridge regards 1800–1801 as the probable date of the poet's regular consumption of opium. I have thought it probable that opium accounted for the fairy quality of *The Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel*, as it certainly accounts for *Kubla Khan*. In my humble opinion, an occasional experiment in opium would be more likely to exalt and change the imaginative faculty than constant and regular use of the anodyne. But the case of Cædmon proves that a dormant or inert faculty may be awakened, we know not how, and much must be allowed for the spiritual excitement of the society of the Wordsworths. We cannot dogmatise on these psychical questions. The dream-life of Coleridge is worth comparing with that of Dickens. Genius will always evade our analysis, but an historical and comparative study of the less normal experiences of genius has still to be made. Mr. Frederick Myers's essays on "The Mechanism of Genius." when collected, will mark a forward step in this field of research. At present we have only the absurdly crude generalisations of Lombroso.

As to dates, Mr. Coleridge gives *Kubla Khan* "to the late spring or early summer of 1798," while, as a whole, *Christabel* is of the same year.

Mr. Coleridge dislikes the phrase "pension or
INTRODUCTION

endowment" as applied to the gift of the Wedgwoods. Let us call it a "gift"; the word is of no great moment. The pact was honourable to the givers, and, at that time, anything but dishonourable to the recipient. Why Josiah Wedgwood broke his promise and withdrew his moiety, in 1814, is unknown.

It is pointed out that Mrs. Coleridge was a perfectly well-educated woman, who brought her children up in a filial regard for their father, but she was neither imaginative enough, nor enough in love, to be able to "suffer and be strong."

As to the fourteen hundred lines of Christabel, Mr. Coleridge says that the poet did not assert that he had composed so much, but he did say that "it had swelled into" so much. The distinction may seem shadowy, but the poet may have meant that this was his idea of the final quantity, the scale, of Christabel, which would unfit it for a place in Lyrical Ballads. In this sense the Wordsworths appear to have understood the author.

As to the question of "weakness of will," I agree with Mr. Coleridge that the will was there, and, finally and courageously, after defeat which would have disheartened most men, asserted itself victoriously. Morally a victor, the triumph of Coleridge came too late for his genius.
SELECTIONS FROM COLERIDGE

SONGS OF THE PIXIES

The Pixies, in the superstition of Devonshire, are a race of beings invisibly small, and harmless or friendly to man. At a small distance from a village in that county, half-way up a wood-covered hill, is an excavation called the Pixies' Parlour. The roots of old trees form its ceiling; and on its sides are innumerable cyphers, among which the author discovered his own cypher and those of his brothers, cut by the hand of their childhood. At the foot of the hill flows the river Otter.

To this place the Author, during the summer months of the year 1793, conducted a party of young ladies; one of whom, of stature elegantly small, and of complexion colourless yet clear, was proclaimed the Faery Queen. On which occasion the following Irregular Ode was written.

I

WHOM the untaught Shepherds call
Pixies in their madrigal,
Fancy's children, here we dwell:
Welcome, Ladies! to our cell.

Here the wren of softest note
Builds its nest and warbles well;
Here the blackbird strains his throat;
Welcome, Ladies! to our cell.

A
COLERIDGE

II

When fades the moon all shadowy-pale,
And scuds the cloud before the gale,
Ere Morn with living gems bedight
Purples the East with streaky light,
We sip the furze-flower's fragrant dews
Clad in robes of rainbow hues;
Or sport amid the rosy gleam
Soothed by the distant-tinkling team,
While lusty Labour scouting sorrow,
Bids the Dame a glad good-morrow,
Who jogs the accustomed road along,
And paces cheery to her cheering song.

III

But not our filmy pinion
We scorch amid the blaze of day,
When Noontide's fiery-tressed minion.
    Flashes the servid ray.

2
SONGS OF THE PIXIES

Aye from the sultry heat
We to the cave retreat
O'er canopied by huge roots intertwined
With wildest texture, blackened o'er with age:
Round them their mantle green the ivies bind.

Beneath whose foliage pale,
Fanned by the unfrequent gale,
We shield us from the Tyrant's mid-day rage.

iv

Thither, while the murmuring throng
Of wild-bees hum their drowsy song,
By Indolence and Fancy brought,
A youthful Bard, "unknown to Fame,"
Wooes the Queen of Solemn Thought,
And heaves the gentle misery of a sigh

Gazing with tearful eye,
As round our sandy grot appear
Many a rudely-sculptured name
To pensive Memory dear!

3
COLERIDGE

Weaving gay dreams of sunny-tinctured hue,
    We glance before his view:
O'er his hush'd soul our soothing witcheries shed
And twine our faery garlands round his head.

When Evening's dusky car
Crowned with her dewy star
Steals o'er the fading sky in shadowy flight;
On leaves of aspen trees
We tremble to the breeze
Veiled from the grosser ken of mortal sight.
    Or, haply, at the visionary hour,
Along our wildly-bowered sequestered walk,
We listen to the enamoured rustic's talk;
Heave with the heavings of the maiden's breast,
Where young-eyed Loves have built their turtle nest;
    Or guide of soul-subduing power
The electric flash, that from the melting eye
Darts the fond question and the soft reply.
SONGS OF THE PIXIES

VI

Or through the mystic ringlets of the vale
We flash our faery feet in gamesome prank;
Or, silent-sandal'd, pay our defter court,
Circling the Spirit of the Western Gale,
Where wearied with his flower-caressing sport,
Supine he slumbers on a violet bank;
Then with quaint music hymn the parting gleam
By lonely Otter's sleep-persuading stream;
Or where his wave with loud unquiet song
Dash'd o'er the rocky channel froths along;
Or where, his silver waters smoothed to rest,
The tall tree's shadow sleeps upon his breast.

VII

Hence thou lingerer, Light!
Eve saddens into Night.
Mother of wildly-working dreams! we view
COLERIDGE

The sombre hours, that round thee stand
With down-cast eyes (a duteous band!)
Their dark robes dripping with the heavy dew.
    Sorceress of the ebon throne!
Thy power the Pixies own,
When round thy raven brow
Heaven's lucent roses glow,
And clouds in watery colours drest
Float in light drapery o'er thy sable vest:
What time the pale moon sheds a softer day
Mellowing the woods beneath its pensive beam;
For mid the quivering light 'tis ours to play,
Aye dancing to the cadence of the stream.

VIII

Welcome, Ladies! to the cell
Where the blameless Pixies dwell:
But thou, Sweet Nymph! proclaimed our Faery Queen,
    With what obeisance meet
Thy presence shall we greet?

6
SONGS OF THE PIXIES

For lo! attendant on thy steps are seen
Graceful Ease in artless stole,
And white-robed Purity of soul,
With Honour's softer mien;
Mirth of the loosely-flowing hair,
And meek-eyed Pity eloquently fair,
Whose tearful cheeks are lovely to the view,
As snowdrop wet with dew.

IX

Unboastful Maid! though now the Lily pale
Transparent grace thy beauties meek,
Yet, ere again along the impurpling vale,
The purpling vale and elfin-haunted grove,
Young Zephyr his fresh flowers profusely throws,
We'll tinge with livelier hues thy cheek;
And, haply, from the nectar-breathing Rose
Extract a Blush for Love!

1793.

7
LECERIDGE

LEWITI

OR THE CIRCASSIAN LOVE-CHAUNT

At midnight by the stream I roved,
To forget the form I loved.
Image of Lewti! from my mind
Depart; for Lewti is not kind.

The Moon was high, the moonlight gleam
And the shadow of a star
Heaved upon Tamaha's stream;
But the rock shone brighter far,
The rock half sheltered from my view
By pendent boughs of tressy yew.—
So shines my Lewti's forehead fair,
Gleaming through her sable hair,
Image of Lewti! from my mind
Depart; for Lewti is not kind.

I saw a cloud of palest hue,
Onward to the moon it passed;
LEWTI

Still brighter and more bright it grew,
With floating colours not a few,
Till it reach'd the moon at last:
Then the cloud was wholly bright,
With a rich and amber light!
And so with many a hope I seek
And with such joy I find my Lewti;
And even so my pale wan cheek
Drinks in as deep a flush of beauty!
Nay, treacherous image! leave my mind,
If Lewti never will be kind.

The little cloud—it floats away,
Away it goes; away so soon?
Alas! it has no power to stay:
Its hues are dim, its hues are grey,
Away it passes from the moon!
How mournfully it seems to fly,
Ever fading more and more,
COLE RIDGE

To joyless regions of the sky—
    And now 'tis whiter than before!
As white as my poor cheek will be,
    When, Lewti! on my couch I lie,
A dying man for love of thee.
Nay, treacherous image! leave my mind—
And yet, thou didst not look unkind.

I saw a vapour in the sky,
    Thin, and white, and very high;
I ne'er beheld so thin a cloud:
    Perhaps the breezes that can fly
Now below and now above,
Have snatched aloft the lawny shroud
    Of Lady fair—that died for love.
For maids, as well as youths, have perished
From fruitless love too fondly cherished.
Nay, treacherous image! leave my mind—
For Lewti never will be kind.
Lewti

Hush! my heedless feet from under
   Slip the crumbling banks for ever:
Like echoes to a distant thunder,
   They plunge into the gentle river.
The river-swans have heard my tread,
And startle from their reedy bed.
O beauteous birds! methinks ye measure
   Your movements to some heavenly tune!
O beauteous birds! 'tis such a pleasure
   To see you move beneath the moon,
I would it were your true delight
To sleep by day and wake all night.

I know the place where Lewti lies
When silent night has closed her eyes:
   It is a breezy jasmine-bower,
The nightingale sings o'er her head:
   Voice of the Night! had I the power
COLE RIDGE

That leafy labyrinth to thread,
And creep, like thee, with soundless tread,
I then might view her bosom white
Heaving lovely to my sight,
As these two swans together heave
On the gently-swelling wave.

Oh! that she saw me in a dream,
    And dreamt that I had died for care;
All pale and wasted I would seem
    Yet fair withal, as spirits are!
I'd die indeed, if I might see
Her bosom heave, and heave for me!
Soothe, gentle image! soothe my mind!
To-morrow Lewti may be kind.

1794.
AN UNFORTUNATE

ALE Roamer, through the night!
    thou poor Forlorn!
Remorse that man on his death-bed possess,
Who in the credulous hour of tenderness
Betrayed, then cast thee forth to want and scorn!
The world is pitiless: the chaste one’s pride,
Mimic of Virtue scowls on thy distress:
Thy Loves and they that envied thee deride:
And Vice alone will shelter wretchedness!
O! I am sad to think that there should be
Cold-bosom’d lewd ones, who endure to place
Foul offerings on the shrine of misery,
And force from Famine the caress of Love;
May He shed healing on the sore disgrace,
He, the great Comforter that rules above!

? 1794.
E U bleedest, my poor Heart! and
thy distress
Reasoning I ponder with a scornful
smile
And probe thy sore wound sternly, though the while
Swoln be mine eye and dim with heaviness.
Why didst thou listen to Hope’s whisper bland?
Or, listening, why forget the healing tale,
When Jealousy with feverish fancies pale
Jarred thy fine fibres with a maniac’s hand?
Faint was that Hope, and rayless!—Yet ’twas fair
And soothed with many a dream the hour of rest:
Thou should’st have loved it most, when most opprest,
And nursed it with an agony of care,
Even as a mother her sweet infant heir
That wan and sickly droops upon her breast!

1794.
TO A YOUNG ASS

TO A YOUNG ASS

ITS MOTHER BEING TETHERED NEAR IT

OOR little foal of an oppressed race!

I love the languid patience of thy face:

And oft with gentle hand I give thee bread,

And clap thy ragged coat, and pat thy head.

But what thy dulled spirits hath dismay'd,

That never thou dost sport along the glade?

And (most unlike the nature of things young)

That earthward still thy moveless head is hung?

Do thy prophetic fears anticipate,

Meek Child of Misery! thy future fate?

The starving meal, and all the thousand aches

"Which patient Merit of the Unworthy takes"?

Or is thy sad heart thrill'd with filial pain

To see thy wretched mother's shortened chain?

15
COLERIDGE

And truly, very piteous is her lot—
Chained to a log within a narrow spot
Where the close-eaten grass is scarcely seen,
While sweet around her waves the tempting green!

Poor Ass! thy master should have learnt to show
Pity—best taught by fellowship of Woe!
For much I fear me that He lives like thee,
Half famished in a land of Luxury!
How askingly its footsteps hither bend?
It seems to say, "And have I then one friend?"
Innocent foal! thou poor despised forlorn!
I hail thee Brother—spite of the fool's scorn!
And fain would take thee with me, in the Dell
Of Peace and mild Equality to dwell,
Where Toil shall call the charmer Health his bride,
And Laughter tickle Plenty's ribless side!
How thou wouldst toss thy heels in gamesome play,
And frisk about, as lamb or kitten gay!
TO THE NIGHTINGALE

Yea! and more musically sweet to me
Thy dissonant harsh bray of joy would be,
Than warbled melodies that soothe to rest
The aching of pale Fashion's vacant breast!

1794

TO THE NIGHTINGALE

SISTER of love-lorn Poets, Philomel!
How many Bards in city garret pent,
While at their window they with downward eye
Mark the faint lamp-beam on the kennell'd mud,
And listen to the drowsy cry of Watchmen
(Those hoarse unfeather'd Nightingales of Time!),
How many wretched Bards address thy name,
And hers, the full-orb'd Queen that shines above.
But I do hear thee, and the high bough mark,
Within whose mild moon-mellow'd foliage hid
Thou warblest sad thy pity-pleading strains.

17
COлерidge

O! I have listen'd, till my working soul,
Waked by those strains to thousand phantasies,
Absorb'd hath ceased to listen! Therefore oft,
I hymn thy name: and with a proud delight
Oft will I tell thee, Minstrel of the Moon!
"Most musical, most melancholy" Bird!
That all thy soft diversities of tone,
Tho' sweeter far than the delicious airs
That vibrate from a white-arm'd Lady's harp,
What time the languishment of lonely love
Melts in her eye, and heaves her breast of snow,
Are not so sweet as is the voice of her,
My Sara—best beloved of human kind
When breathing the pure soul of tenderness
She thrills me with the Husband's promised name!

? 1795.
THE EOLIAN HARP

THE EOLIAN HARP

COMPOSED AT CLEVEDON, SOMERSETSHIRE

My pensive Sara! thy soft cheek reclined
Thus on mine arm, most soothing sweet it is
To sit beside our cot, our cot o'ergrown
With white-flowered Jasmin, and the broad-leaved Myrtle,
(Meet emblems they of Innocence and Love!),
And watch the clouds, that late were rich with light,
Slow saddening round, and mark the star of eve.
Serenely brilliant (such should wisdom be),
Shine opposite! How exquisite the scents
Snatched from yon bean-field! and the world so hushed!
The stilly murmur of the distant sea
 Tells us of silence.

And that simplest lute,

19
C O L E R I D G E

Placed length-ways in the clasping casement,
hark!
How by the desultory breeze caressed,
Like some coy maid half yielding to her lover,
It pours such sweet upbraiding, as must needs
Tempt to repeat the wrong! And now, its strings
Boldlier swept, the long sequacious notes
Over delicious surges sink and rise,
Such a soft floating witchery of sound
As twilight Elfin's make, when they at eve
Voyage on gentle gales from Fairy-Land,
Where Melodies round honey-dropping flowers,
Footless and wild, like birds of Paradise,
Nor pause, nor perch, hovering on untamed
wing!
O! the one life within us and abroad,
Which meets all motion and becomes its soul,
A light in sound, a sound-like power in light
Rhythm in all thought, and joyance everywhere—
Methinks, it should have been impossible

20
THE EOLIAN HARP

Not to love all things in a world so filled;
Where the breeze warbles, and the mute still air
Is Music slumbering on her instrument.

And thus, my love! as on the midway slope
Of yonder hill I stretch my limbs at noon,
Whilst through my half-closed eyelids I behold
The sunbeams dance, like diamonds, on the main,
And tranquil muse upon tranquillity;
Full many a thought uncalled and undetained,
And many idle flitting phantasies,
Traverse my indolent and passive brain,
As wild and various as the random gales
That swell and flutter on this subject lute!

And what if all of animated nature
Be but organic harps diversely framed,
That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
At once the Soul of each and God of all?
COLERIDGE

But thy more serious eye a mild reproof
Darts, O beloved woman! nor such thoughts
Dim and unhallowed dost thou not reject,
And biddest me walk humbly with my God.
Meek daughter in the family of Christ!
Well hast thou said and holily dispraised
These shapings of the unregenerate mind;
Bubbles that glitter as they rise and break
On vain Philosophy's aye-babbling spring.
For never guiltless may I speak of Him,
The Incomprehensible! save when with awe
I praise Him, and with Faith that inly feels;
Who with His saving mercies healed me,
A sinful and most miserable man,
Wilder'd and dark, and gave me to possess
Peace and this cot, and thee, dear honoured Maid!

1795.
REFLECTIONS

REFLECTIONS ON HAVING LEFT
A PLACE OF RETIREMENT

"Sermoni propriora."—Hor.

OW was our pretty Cot: our tallest rose
Peeped at the chamber-window.
We could hear
At silent noon, and eve, and early morn,
The sea's faint murmur. In the open air
Our myrtles blossom'd; and across the porch
Thick jasmins twined: the little landscape round
Was green and woody, and refreshed the eye.
It was a spot which you might aptly call
The Valley of Seclusion! Once I saw
(Hallowing his Sabbath-day by quietness)
A wealthy son of commerce saunter by,
Bristowa's citizen: methought, it calmed
His thirst of idle gold, and made him muse

23
COLERIDGE

With wiser feelings: for he paused, and looked
With a pleased sadness, and gazed all around,
Then eyed our Cottage, and gazed round again.
And sighed, and said, it was a Blessed Place.
And we were blessed. Oft with patient ear
Long-listening to the viewless skylark’s note
(Viewless, or haply for a moment seen
Gleaming on sunny wings) in whispered tones
I’ve said to my beloved, “Such, sweet girl!
The unobtrusive song of Happiness,
Unearthly minstrelsy! then only heard
When the soul seeks to hear; when all is hushed,
And the heart listens!”

But the time, when first
From that low dell, steep up the stony mount
I climbed with perilous toil and reached the top,
Oh! what a goodly scene! Here the bleak mount,
The bare bleak mountain speckled thin with sheep;

24
REFLECTIONS

Grey clouds, that shadowing spot the sunny fields;
And river, now with bushy rocks o'erbrowed,
Now winding bright and full, with naked banks;
And seats, and lawns, the abbey and the wood,
And cots, and hamlets, and faint city-spire;
The Channel there, the Islands and white sails,
Dim coasts, and cloud-like hills, and shoreless
Ocean—
It seem'd like Omnipresence! God, methought,
Had built Him there a Temple: the whole World
Seemed imaged in its vast circumference:
No wish profaned my overwhelmed heart.
Blest hour! It was a luxury,—to be!

Ah! quiet dell! dear cot, and mount sublime!
I was constrained to quit you. Was it right,
While my unnumbered brethren toiled and bled,
That I should dream away the intrusted hours
On rose-leaf beds, pampering the coward heart
With feelings all too delicate for use?
COLERIDGE

Sweet is the tear that from some Howard’s eye
Drops on the cheek of one he lifts from earth:
And he that works me good with unmoved face,
Does it but half: he chills me while he aids,
My benefactor, not my brother man!
Yet even this, this cold beneficence
Praise, praise it, O my Soul! oft as thou scann’st
The sluggard Pity’s vision-weaving tribe!
Who sigh for wretchedness, yet shun the wretched,
Nursing in some delicious solitude
Their slothful loves and dainty sympathies!
I therefore go, and join head, heart, and hand,
Active and firm, to fight the bloodless fight
Of science, freedom, and the truth in Christ.

Yet oft when after honourable toil
Rests the tired mind, and waking loves to dream,
My spirit shall revisit thee, dear Cot!
Thy jasmin and thy window-peeping rose,
And myrtles fearless of the mild sea-air.

26
RELIGIOUS MUSINGS

And I shall sigh fond wishes—sweet abode!
Ah!—had none greater! And that all had such!
It might be so—but the time is not yet.
Speed it, O Father! Let thy Kingdom come!
1795.

RELIGIOUS MUSINGS

A DESULTORY POEM WRITTEN ON THE CHRISTMAS EVE OF 1794

His is the time when, most divine to hear,
The voice of Adoration rouses me
As with a Cherub's trump: and high upborne,
Yea, mingling with the Choir, I seem to view
The vision of the heavenly multitude,
Who hymned the song of Peace o'er Bethlehem's fields!
Yet thou more bright than all the Angel-blaze,
That harbingered thy birth, Thou Man of Woes!

27
COLERIDGE

Despised Galilæan! For the Great

Invisible (by symbols only seen)

With a peculiar and surpassing light

Shines from the visage of the oppressed good man,

When heedless of himself the scourged saint

Mourns for the oppressor. Fair the vernal mead,

Fair the high grove, the sea, the sun, the stars;

True impress each of their creating Sire!

Yet nor high grove, nor many-colour’d mead,

Nor the green ocean with his thousand isles,

Nor the starred azure, nor the sovran sun,

E’er with such majesty of portraiture

Imaged the supreme beauty uncreate,

As thou, meek Saviour! at the fearful hour

When thy insulted anguish winged the prayer

Harped by Archangels, when they sing of mercy!

Which when the Almighty heard from forth His throne

Diviner light filled Heaven with ecstasy!

28
RELIGIOUS MUSINGS

Heaven's hymnings paused: and Hell her yawning mouth
Closed a brief moment.

Lovely was the death
Of Him whose life was Love! Holy with power,
He on the thought-benighted Sceptic beamed
Manifest Godhead, melting into day
What floating mists of dark idolatry
Broke and misshaped the omnipresent Sire:
And first by Fear uncharmed the drowsed Soul,
Till of its nobler nature it 'gan feel
Dim recollections; and thence soared to Hope,
Strong to believe whate'er of mystic good
The Eternal dooms for His immortal sons.
From Hope and firmer Faith to perfect Love
Attracted and absorbed: and centered there
God only to behold, and know, and feel,
Till by exclusive consciousness of God
C O L E R I D G E

All self-annihilated it shall make
God its Identity: God all in all!
We and our Father one!

And blest are they
Who in this fleshly World, the elect of Heaven,
Their strong eye darting through the deeds of men,
Adore with steadfast unpresuming gaze
Him, Nature’s essence, mind, and energy!
And gazing, trembling, patiently ascend
Treading beneath their feet all visible things
As steps that upward to their Father’s throne
Lead gradual—else nor glorified nor loved.
They nor contempt embosom nor revenge:
For they dare know of what may seem deform
The Supreme Fair sole operant: in whose sight
All things are pure, his strong controlling love
Alike from all educating perfect good.
Their’s too celestial courage, inly armed—
Dwarving Earth’s giant brood, what time they muse

30
RELIGIOUS MUSINGS

On their great Father, great beyond compare!
And marching onwards view high o'er their heads
His waving banners of Omnipotence.

Who the Creator love, created Might
Dread not: within their tents no terrors walk.
For they are holy things before the Lord
Aye unprofaned, though Earth should league with
    Hell;
God's altar grasping with an eager hand
Fear, the wild-visaged, pale, eye-starting wretch,
Sure-refuged hears his hot pursuing fiends
Yell at vain distance. Soon refreshed from Heaven
He calms the throb and tempest of his heart.
His countenance settles; a soft solemn bliss
Swims in his eye—his swimming eye upraised:
And Faith's whole armour glitters on his limbs!
And thus transfigured with a dreadless awe,
A solemn hush of soul, meek he beholds
All things of terrible seeming: yea, unmoved

31
COLERIDGE

Views e'en the immitigable ministers
That shower down vengeance on these latter days.
For kindling with intenser Deity
From the celestial Mercy-seat they come,
And at the renovating wells of Love
Have filled their vials with salutary wrath,
To sickly Nature more medicinal
Than what soft balm the weeping good man pours
Into the lone despoiled traveller's wounds!

Thus from the Elect, regenerate through faith,
Pass the dark passions and what thirsty cares
Drink up the spirit, and the dim regards
Self-centre. Lo they vanish! or acquire
New names, new features—by supernal grace
Enrobed with Light, and naturalised in Heaven.
As when a shepherd on a vernal morn
Through some thick fog creeps timorous with slow foot,
Darkling he fixes on the immediate road
His downward eye: all else of fairest kind
**RELIGIOUS MUSINGS**

Hid or deformed. But lo! the bursting Sun!  
Touched by the enchantment of that sudden beam  
Straight the black vapour melteth, and in globes  
Of dewy glitter gems each plant and tree;  
On every leaf, on every blade it hangs!  
Dance glad the new-born intermingling rays,  
And wide around the landscape streams with glory!

There is one Mind, one omnipresent Mind,  
Omnific. His most holy name is Love.  
Truth of subliming import! with the which  
Who feeds and saturates his constant soul,  
He from his small particular orbit flies  
With blest outstarting! From himself he flies,  
Stands in the sun, and with no partial gaze  
Views all creation; and he loves it all,  
And blesses it, and calls it very good!  
This is indeed to dwell with the Most High!  
Cherubs and rapture-trembling Seraphim  
Can press no nearer to the Almighty's throne.
COLERIDGE

But that we roam unconscious, or with hearts
Unfeeling of our universal Sire,
And that in His vast family no Cain
Injures uninjured (in her best-aimed blow
Victorious Murder a blind Suicide)
Haply for this some younger Angel now
Looks down on Human Nature: and, behold!
A sea of blood bestrewed with wrecks, where mad
Embattling Interests on each other rush
With unhelmed rage!

'Tis the sublime of man,
Our noontide Majesty, to know ourselves
Parts and proportions of one wondrous whole!
This fraternises man, this constitutes
Our charities and bearings. But 'tis God
Diffused through all, that doth make all one whole;
This the worst superstition, him except
Aught to desire, Supreme Reality!
The plenitude and permanence of bliss!
RELIGIOUS MUSINGS

O Fiends of Superstition! not that oft
The erring priest hath stained with brother's blood
Your grisly idols, not for this may wrath
Thunder against you from the Holy One!
But o'er some plain that steameth to the sun,
Peopled with Death; or where more hideous Trade
Loud-laughing packs his bales of human anguish;
I will raise up a mourning, O ye Fiends!
And curse your spells, that film the eye of Faith,
Hiding the present God; whose presence lost,
The moral world's cohesion, we become
An Anarchy of Spirits! Toy-bewitched,
Made blind by lusts, disherited of soul,
No common centre Man, no common sire
Knoweth! A sordid solitary thing,
Mid countless brethren with a lonely heart
Through courts and cities the smooth savage roams
Feeling himself, his own low self, the whole;
When he by sacred sympathy might make
The whole one Self! Self, that no alien knows!
COLERIDGE

Self, far diffused as Fancy’s wing can travel!
Self, spreading still! Oblivious of its own,
Yet all of all possessing! This is Faith!
This the Messiah’s destined victory!

But first offences needs must come! Even now*
(Black Hell laughs horrible—to hear the scoff!)
Thee to defend, meek Galilæan! Thee
And thy mild laws of Love unutterable,
Mistrust and enmity have burst the bands
Of social peace: and listening Treachery lurks
With pious fraud to snare a brother’s life;

* January 21, 1794, in the debate on the Address to his Majesty on the speech from the Throne, the Earl of Guildford moved an amendment to the following effect:—“That the House hoped his Majesty would seize the earliest opportunity to conclude a peace with France,” &c. This motion was opposed by the Duke of Portland, who “considered the war to be merely grounded on one principle—the preservation of the Christian religion.” May 30, 1794, the Duke of Bedford moved a number of resolutions, with a view to the establishment of a peace with France. He was opposed (among others) by Lord Abingdon in these remarkable words: “The best road to Peace, my Lords, is War! and War carried on in the same manner in which we are taught to worship our Creator, namely, with all our souls, and with all our minds, and with all our hearts, and with all our strength.”
RELIGIOUS MUSINGS

And childless widows o' er the groaning land
Wail numberless; and orphans weep for bread!
Thee to defend, dear Saviour of Mankind!
Thee, Lamb of God! Thee, blameless Prince of Peace!
From all sides rush the thirsty brood of War!—
Austria, and that foul Woman of the North,
The lustful murderess of her wedded lord!
And he, connatural Mind! whom (in their songs
So bards of elder time had haply feigned)
Some Fury fondled in her hate to man,
Bidding her serpent hair in mazy surge
Lick his young face, and at his mouth inbreathe
Horrible sympathy! And leagued with these
Each petty German princeling, nursed in gore!
Soul-hardened batterers of human blood!
Death's prime slave-merchants! Scorpion-whips of
Fate!
Nor least in savagery of holy zeal,
Apt for the yoke, the race degenerate,
Whom Britain erst had blushed to call her sons!
COLERIDGE

Thee to defend the Moloch Priest prefers
The prayer of hate and bellows to the herd,
That Deity, Accomplice Deity
In the fierce jealousy of wakened wrath
Will go forth with our armies and our fleets
To scatter the red ruin on their foes!
O blasphemy! to mingle fiendish deeds
With blessedness!

Lord of unsleeping Love,*
From everlasting Thou! We shall not die.
These, even these, in mercy didst thou form,
Teachers of Good through Evil, by brief wrong
Making Truth lovely, and her future might
Magnetic o'er the fixed untrembling heart.

In the primeval age a dateless while
The vacant Shepherd wander'd with his flock,

* "Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord, my God, mine Holy
One? We shall not die. O Lord, Thou hast ordained them for
judgment," &c.—Habakkuk i. 12.
RELIGIOUS MUSINGS

Pitching his tent where'er the green grass waved.
But soon Imagination conjured up
A host of new desires: with busy aim,
Each for himself, Earth's eager children toiled.
So Property began, twy-streaming fount,
Whence Vice and Virtue flow, honey and gall.
Hence the soft couch, and many-coloured robe,
The timbrel, and arched dome and costly feast,
With all the inventive arts, that nursed the soul
To forms of beauty, and by sensual wants
Unsensualised the mind, which in the means
Learnt to forget the grossness of the end,
Best pleased with its own activity.
And hence Disease that withers manhood's arm,
The daggered Envy, spirit-quenching Want,
Warriors, and Lords, and Priests—all the sore ills
That vex and desolate our mortal life.
Wide-wasting ills! yet each the immediate source
Of mightier good. Their keen necessities
To ceaseless action goading human thought
COLERIDGE

Have made Earth's reasoning animal her Lord;
And the pale-featured Sage's trembling hand
Strong as a host of armed Deities,
Such as the blind Ionian fabled erst.

From Avarice thus, from Luxury and War
Sprang heavenly Science; and from Science Freedom.
O'er waken'd realms Philosophers and Bards
Spread in concentric circles: they whose souls,
Conscious of their high dignities from God,
Brook not wealth's rivalry! and they, who long
Enamoured with the charms of order, hate
The unseemly disproportion: and whoe'er
Turn with mild sorrow from the victor's car
And the low puppetry of thrones, to muse
On that blest triumph, when the Patriot Sage
Called the red lightnings from the o'er-rushing cloud
And dashed the beauteous terrors on the earth
Smiling majestic. Such a phalanx ne'er
RELIGIOUS MUSINGS

Measured firm paces to the calming sound
Of Spartan flute! These on the fated day,
When, stung to rage by pity, eloquent men
Have roused with pealing voice the unnumbered tribes
That toil and groan and bleed, hungry and blind—
These, hush'd awhile with patient eye serene,
Shall watch the mad careering of the storm;
Then o'er the wild and wavy chaos rush
And tame the outrageous mass, with plastic might
Moulding Confusion to such perfect forms
As erst were wont,—bright visions of the day!—
To float before them, when the summer noon,
Beneath some arched romantic rock reclined,
They felt the sea-breeze lift their youthful locks;
Or in the month of blossoms, at mild eve,
Wandering with desultory feet inhaled
The wafted perfumes, and the flocks and woods
And many-tinted streams and setting sun
With all his gorgeous company of clouds
Ecstatic gazed! then homeward as they strayed
Cast the sad eye to earth, and inly mused
Why there was misery in a world so fair.

Ah! far removed from all that glads the sense,
From all that softens or ennobles Man,
The wretched Many! Bent beneath their loads
They gape at pageant Power, nor recognise
Their cots' transmuted plunder! From the tree
Of Knowledge, ere the vernal sap had risen
Rudely disbranched! *Blessed* Society!
Fitliest depicted by some sun-scorched waste,
Where oft majestic through the tainted noon
The Simoom sails, before whose purple pomp
Who falls not prostrate dies! And where by night,
Fast by each precious fountain on green herbs
The lion couches, or hyæna dips
Deep in the lucid stream his bloody jaws;
Or serpent plants his vast moon-glittering bulk,
RELIGIOUS MUSINGS

Caught in whose monstrous twine Behemoth * yells,
His bones loud-crashing!

O ye numberless,
Whom foul Oppression's ruffian gluttony
Drives from life's plenteous feast! O thou poor wretch,
Who nursed in darkness and made wild by want,
Roamest for prey, yea thy unnatural hand
Dost lift to deeds of blood! O pale-eyed form,
The victim of seduction, doomed to know
Polluted nights and days of blasphemy;
Who in loathed orgies with lewd wassailers
Must gaily laugh, while thy remembered home
Gnaws like a viper at thy secret heart!

O aged women! ye who weekly catch
The morsel tossed by law-forced charity,
And die so slowly that none call it murder!
O loathly suppliants! ye, that unreceived

* Behemoth, in Hebrew, signifies wild beasts in general. Some believe it is the elephant, some the hippopotamus; some affirm it is the wild bull. Poetically, it designates any large quadruped.
C O L E R I D G E

Totter heart-broken from the closing gates
Of the full Lazar-house; or, gazing, stand
Sick with despair! O ye to Glory's field
Forced or ensnared, who, as ye gasp in death,
Bleed with new wounds beneath the vulture's beak!
O thou poor widow, who in dreams dost view
Thy husband's mangled corse, and from short doze
Start'st with a shriek; or in thy half-thatched cot
Waked by the wintry night-storm, wet and cold,
Cow'rst o'er thy screaming baby! Rest awhile,
Children of wretchedness! More groans must rise,
More blood must stream, or ere your wrongs be full.
Yet is the day of retribution nigh:
The Lamb of God hath opened the fifth seal:
And upward rush on swiftest wing of fire
The innumerable multitude of wrongs
By man on man inflicted! Rest awhile,
Children of wretchedness! The hour is nigh
And lo! the Great, the Rich, the Mighty Men,
The Kings and the Chief Captains of the World,
RELIGIOUS MUSINGS

With all that fixed on high like stars of Heaven
Shot baleful influence, shall be cast to earth,
Vile and down-trodden, as the untimely fruit
Shook from the fig-tree by a sudden storm.
Even now the storm begins: * each gentle name,
Faith and meek Piety, with fearful joy
Tremble far-off—for lo! the Giant Frenzy
Uprooting empires with his whirlwind arm
Mocketh high Heaven; burst hideous from the cell
Where the old hag, unconquerable, huge,
Creation’s eyeless drudge, black Ruin, sits
Nursing the impatient earthquake.

O return!

Pure Faith! meek Piety! The abhorred Form
Whose scarlet robe was stiff with earthly pomp,
Who drank iniquity in cups of gold,
Whose names were many and all blasphemous,
Hath met the horrible judgment! Whence that cry?

* Alluding to the French Revolution.
COLERIDGE

The mighty army of foul Spirits shrieked
Disherited of earth! For she hath fallen
On whose black front was written Mystery;
She that reeled heavily, whose wine was blood;
She that worked whoredom with the Dæmon Power,
And from the dark embrace all evil things
Brought forth and nurtured: mitred Atheism!
And patient Folly who on bended knee
Gives back the steel that stabbed him; and pale Fear
Hunted by ghastlier shapings than surround
Moon-blasted Madness when he yells at midnight!
Return pure Faith! return meek Piety!
The kingdoms of the world are your's: each heart
Self-governed, the vast family of Love
Raised from the common earth by common toil
Enjoy the equal produce. Such delights
As float to earth, permitted visitants!
When in some hour of solemn jubilee
The massy gates of Paradise are thrown
Wide open, and forth come in fragments wild

46
RELIGIOUS MUSINGS

Sweet echoes of unearthly melodies,
And odours snatched from beds of amaranth,
And they that from the crystal river of life
Spring up on freshened wing, ambrosial gales!
The favoured good man in his lonely walk
Perceives them, and his silent spirit drinks
Strange bliss which he shall recognise in heaven.
And such delights, such strange beatitude
Seize on my young anticipating heart
When that blest future rushes on my view!
For in his own and in His Father's might
The Saviour comes! While as the Thousand Years
Lead up their mystic dance, the Desert shouts!
Old Ocean claps his hands! The mighty Dead
Rise to new life, whoe'er from earliest time
With conscious zeal had urged Love's wondrous plan,
Coadjutors of God. To Milton's trump
The high groves of the renovated Earth
Unbosom their glad echoes: inly hushed,
Adoring Newton his serener eye
COLERIDGE

Raises to heaven: and he of mortal kind
Wisest, he* first who marked the ideal tribes
Up the fine fibres through the sentient brain.
Lo! Priestley there, patriot, and saint, and sage,
Him, full of years, from his loved native land
Statesmen blood-stained and priests idolatrous
By dark lies maddening the blind multitude
Drove with vain hate. Calm, pitying he retired,
And mused expectant on these promised years.

O Years! the blest pre-eminence of Saints!
Ye sweep athwart my gaze, so heavenly bright,
The wings that veil the adoring Seraphs’ eyes,
What time they bend before the Jasper Throne†
Reflect no lovelier hues! Yet ye depart,
And all beyond is darkness! Heights most strange,
Whence Fancy falls, fluttering her idle wing.

* David Hartley.
† Rev. chap. iv. v. 2 and 3.—"And immediately I was in the Spirit: and behold, a Throne was set in Heaven, and one sat on the Throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone," &c.

48
RELIGIOUS MUSINGS

For who of woman born may paint the hour,
When, seized in his mid-course, the Sun shall wane
Making noon ghastly! Who of woman born
May image in the workings of his thought,
How the black-visaged, red-eyed Fiend outstretched *
Beneath the unsteady feet of Nature groans,
In feverish slumbers—destined then to wake,
When fiery whirlwinds thunder his dread name
And Angels shout, Destruction! How his arm
The last great Spirit lifting high in air
Shall swear by Him, the ever-living One,
Time is no more!

Believe thou, O my soul,
Life is a vision shadowy of Truth;
And vice, and anguish, and the wormy grave,
Shapes of a dream! The veiling clouds retire,
And lo! the Throne of the redeeming God
Forth flashing unimaginable day
Wraps in one blaze earth, heaven, and deepest hell.

* The final Destruction impersonated.
COLERIDGE

Contemplant Spirits! ye that hover o'er
With untired gaze the immeasurable fount
Ebullient with creative Deity!
And ye of plastic power, that interfused
Roll through the grosser and material mass
In organising surge! Holies of God!
(And what if Monads of the infinite mind?)
I haply journeying my immortal course
Shall sometime join your mystic choir! Till then
I discipline my young noviciate thought
In ministeries of heart-stirring song,
And aye on Meditation's heaven-ward wing
Soaring aloft I breathe the empyreal air
Of Love, omnific, omnipresent Love,
Whose day-spring rises glorious in my soul
As the great Sun, when he his influence
Sheds on the frost-bound waters—The glad stream
Flows to the ray and warbles as it flows.

1796.
SONNET

TO A FRIEND WHO ASKED HOW I FELT WHEN THE
NURSE FIRST PRESENTED MY INFANT TO ME

HARLES! my slow heart was only
sad, when first
I scanned that face of feeble
infancy:
For dimly on my thoughtful spirit burst
All I had been, and all my child might be!
But when I saw it on its mother's arm,
And hanging at her bosom (she the while
Bent o'er its features with a tearful smile)
Then I was thrilled and melted, and most warm
Impressed a father's kiss: and all beguiled
Of dark remembrance and presageful fear,
I seemed to see an angel-form appear—
'Twas even thine, beloved woman mild!
So for the mother's sake the child was dear,
And dearer was the mother for the child.

1796.
COLERIDGE

THIS LIME-TREE BOWER MY PRISON

ADDRESS TO CHARLES LAMBI, OF THE INDIA HOUSE, LONDON

In the June of 1797 some long-expected friends paid a visit to the author's cottage; and on the morning of their arrival, he met with an accident, which disabled him from walking during the whole time of their stay. One evening, when they had left him for a few hours, he composed the following lines in the garden-bower.

Well, they are gone, and here must I remain,
This lime-tree bower my prison!
I have lost
Beauties and feelings, such as would have been
Most sweet to my remembrance even when age
Had dimmed mine eyes to blindness! They, meanwhile,
Friends, whom I never more may meet again,
On springy heath, along the hill-top edge,
Wander in gladness, and wind down, perchance,
To that still roaring dell, of which I told;

52
LIME-TREE BOWER MY PRISON

The roaring dell, o'erwooded, narrow, deep,
And only speckled by the mid-day sun;
Where its slim trunk the ash from rock to rock
Flings arching like a bridge;—that branchless ash,
Unsunned and damp, whose few poor yellow leaves
Ne'er tremble in the gale, yet tremble still,
Fanned by the waterfall! and there my friends
Behold the dark green file of long lank weeds,
That all at once (a most fantastic sight!)
Still nod and drip beneath the dripping edge
Of the blue clay-stone.

Now, my friends emerge
Beneath the wide wide Heaven and view again
The many-steepled tract magnificent
Of hilly fields and meadows, and the sea,
With some fair bark, perhaps, whose sails light up
The slip of smooth clear blue betwixt two Isles
Of purple shadow! Yes! they wander on
In gladness all; but thou, methinks, most glad,
53
COLE RIDGE

My gentle-hearted Charles! for thou hast pined
And hungered after Nature, many a year,
In the great City pent, winning thy way
With sad yet patient soul, through evil and pain
And strange calamity! Ah, slowly sink
Behind the western ridge, thou glorious Sun!
Shine in the slant beams of the sinking orb,
Ye purple heath-flowers! richlier burn, ye clouds!
Live in the yellow light, ye distant groves!
And kindle, thou blue Ocean! So my friend
Struck with deep joy may stand, as I have stood,
Silent with swimming sense; yea, gazing round
On the wide landscape, gaze till all doth seem
Less gross than bodily; and of such hues
As veil the Almighty Spirit, when yet He makes
Spirits perceive His presence.

A delight

Comes sudden on my heart, and I am glad
As I myself were there! Nor in this bower,
LIME-TREE BOWER MY PRISON

This little lime-tree bower, have I not marked
Much that has soothed me. Pale beneath the blaze
Hung the transparent foliage; and I watched
Some broad and sunny leaf, and loved to see
The shadow of the leaf and stem above,
Dappling its sunshine! And that walnut-tree
Was richly tinged, and a deep radiance lay
Full on the ancient ivy, which usurps
Those fronting elms, and now, with blackest mass
Makes their dark branches gleam a lighter hue
Through the late twilight: and though now the bat
Wheels silent by, and not a swallow twitters,
Yet still the solitary humble-bee
Sings in the bean-flower! Henceforth I shall know
That Nature ne'er deserts the wise and pure;
No plot so narrow, be but Nature there,
No waste so vacant, but may well employ
Each faculty of sense, and keep the heart
Awake to Love and Beauty! and sometimes
'Tis well to be bereft of promised good,
COLERIDGE

That we may lift the soul, and contemplate
With lively joy the joys we cannot share.
My gentle-hearted Charles! when the last rook
Beat its straight path along the dusky air
Homewards, I blest it! deeming, its black wing
(Now a dim speck, now vanishing in light)
Had cross'd the mighty orb's dilated glory,
While thou stood'st gazing; or when all was still,
Flew creeking o'er thy head, and had a charm
For thee, my gentle-hearted Charles, to whom
No sound is dissonant which tells of Life.

1797.

KUBLA KHAN

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man

Down to a sunless sea.

56
"In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree."
KUBLA KHAN

So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
And here were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e’er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher’s flail:
And ’mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momentarily the sacred river.
C O L E R I D G E

Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!

The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.
KUBLA KHAN

Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,

That with music loud and long
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!

Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

1798.
COLERIDGE

THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

IN SEVEN PARTS


ARGUMENT

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

PART I

T 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 ancient Mariner meeteth three Gallants bidden to a wedding feast.
RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

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,
"There was a ship," quoth he.
"Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!"
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

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.
COLERIDGE

"The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, 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 ship was cheered, the harbour cleared."
RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

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.

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

And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold:
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.
And through the drifts the snowy cliffs
Did send a dismal sheen:
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
The ice was all between.

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

At length did cross an Albatross,
Thorough the fog it came;
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;
The helmsman steered us through!
"The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast, for he heard the loud bassoon."
RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

And lo! the Albatross proved a bird of good omen, and followed 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;
While 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 crossbow I shot the Albatross.

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.

73
COLERIDGE

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

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

Nor dim nor red, like God’s own head,
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.

74
RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

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

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

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

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.

A Spirit had followed them; one of the invisible inhabitants of this planet, neither departed souls nor angels;

COLERIDGE

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

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

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.

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.

78
RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

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.

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.
COLERIDGE

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

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

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

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

So
RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

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

Hither to work us weal;
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel!

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

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

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

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.

82
RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

At the rising of the Moon,
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
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 shipmates 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.

83
COLO RIDGE

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

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

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

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

* "For the last two 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."—[Note of S. T. C., first printed in Sibylline Leaves.]
RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

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

He despiseth the creatures of the calm.

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

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

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

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

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

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

In his loneliness and fixedness he yearneth towards the journeying Moon, and the stars that still sojourn, yet still move onward; and everywhere the blue sky 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 nowhere 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,
The charmed water burnt alway
A still and awful red.

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

Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire:

89
COLERIDGE

Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

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

The selfsame moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.
"Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watched the water-snakes."
RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

PART V

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

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

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

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

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

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

And the coming wind did roar more loud,
And the sails did sigh like sedge;
And the rain poured down from one black cloud;
The Moon was at its edge.
"The helmsman steered, the ship moved on."
RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

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

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

The helmsman steered, the ship moved on;
Yet never a breeze up blew;
The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
COLERIDGE

Where they were wont to do;
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—
We were a ghastly crew.

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

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.

98
"And now it is an angel's song,
That makes the heavens be mute."
RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

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 skylark sing;
Sometimes all little birds that are,
How they seemed to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning!

And now 'twas like all instruments,
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
COLERIDGE

In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

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

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

The Sun, right up above the mast,
Had fixed her to the ocean:
But in a minute she 'gan stir,

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.
"I heard and in my soul discerned
Two voices in the air."
RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

With a short uneasy motion—
Backwards and forwards half her length
With a short uneasy motion.

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

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.

105
COLERIDGE

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

The other was a softer voice,
As soft as 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,
Thy soft response renewing—
What makes that ship drive on so fast?
What is the ocean doing?”

106
RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

SECOND VOICE

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

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

FIRST VOICE

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

SECOND VOICE

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

107
COLERIDGE

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

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

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

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

108
RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

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

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

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

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

109
COLERIDGE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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!
A man all light, a seraph-man,
On every corse there stood.
This seraph-band, each waved his hand:
It was a heavenly sight!
They stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light;

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

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

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

I saw a third—I heard his voice:
It is the Hermit good!
He singeth loud his godly hymns
That he makes in the wood.
He'll 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.

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.
COLERIDGE

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 looked warped! and see those sails,
How thin they are and sere!
I never saw aught like to them,
Unless perchance it were

Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
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.”

114
RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

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

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

Stunned by that loud and dreadful sound,
Which sky and ocean smote,
COLERIDGE

Like one that hath been seven days drowned
My body lay afloat;
But swift as dreams, myself I found
Within the Pilot's boat.

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

I moved my lips—the Pilot shrieked
And fell down in a fit;
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
RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

His eyes went to and fro.

"Ha! ha!" quoth he, "full plain I see,
The Devil knows how to row."

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

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

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

117
And ever and anon throughout life an agony constraineth him to travel from land to land,

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

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

What loud uproar bursts from that door!
The wedding-guests are there:
But in the garden-bower the bride
And bride-maids singing are:
And hark the little vesper bell,
Which biddeth me to prayer!
"To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company!"
RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

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

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

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

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

121
COLE RIDGE

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

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

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

1797–1798.
CHRI\'STABEL

CHRI\'STABEL

PART THE FIRST

IS the middle of night by the castle clock,

And the owls have awakened the crowing cock,

Tu—whit!—Tu—whoo!

And hark, again! the crowing cock,

How drowsily it crew.

Sir Leoline, the Baron rich,

Hath a toothless mastiff, which

From her kennel beneath the rock

Maketh answer to the clock,

Four for the quarters, and twelve for the hour;

Ever and aye, by shine and shower,

Sixteen short howls, not over-loud;

Some say, she sees my lady's shroud.
COLE R IDGE

Is the night chilly and dark?
The night is chilly, but not dark.
The thin gray cloud is spread on high,
It covers but not hides the sky.
The moon is behind, and at the full;
And yet she looks both small and dull.
The night is chill, the cloud is gray:
'Tis a month before the month of May,
And the Spring comes slowly up this way.

The lovely lady, Christabel,
Whom her father loves so well,
What makes her in the wood so late,
A furlong from the castle gate?
She had dreams all yesternight
Of her own betrothed knight;
And she in the midnight wood will pray
For the weal of her lover that’s far away.

124
"In silence prayeth she."
CHRISTABEL

She stole along, she nothing spoke,
The sighs she heaved were soft and low,
And naught was green upon the oak
But moss and rarest mistletoe:
She kneels beneath the huge oak tree,
And in silence prayeth she.

The lady sprang up suddenly,
The lovely lady, Christabel!
It moaned as near, as near can be,
But what it is she cannot tell.—
On the other side it seems to be,
Of the huge, broad-breasted, old oak tree.

The night is chill; the forest bare;
Is it the wind that moaneth bleak?
There is not wind enough in the air
To move away the ringlet curl
127
COLERIDGE

From the lovely lady's cheek—
There is not wind enough to twirl
The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
That dances as often as dance it can,
Hanging so light, and hanging so high,
On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.

Hush, beating heart of Christabel!
Jesu, Maria, shield her well!
She folded her arms beneath her cloak,
And stole to the other side of the oak.
What sees she there?
There she sees a damsels bright,
Drest in a silken robe of white,
That shadowy in the moonlight shone:
The neck that made that white robe wan,
Her stately neck, and arms were bare;
Her blue-veined feet unsandal'd were,
And wildly glittered here and there
The gems entangled in her hair.

128
CHRISTABEL

I guess 'twas frightful there to see
A lady so richly clad as she—
Beautiful exceedingly!

Mary Mother, save me now!
(Said Christabel,) And who art thou?

The lady strange made answer meet,
And her voice was faint and sweet:—
Have pity on my sore distress,
I scarce can speak for weariness:
Stretch forth thy hand, and have no fear!
Said Christabel, How camest thou here?
And the lady, whose voice was faint and sweet,
Did thus pursue her answer meet:—

My sire is of a noble line,
And my name is Geraldine:
COLERIDGE

Five warriors seized me yestermorn,
Me, even me, a maid forlorn:
They choked my cries with force and fright,
And tied me on a palfrey white.
The palfrey was as fleet as wind,
And they rode furiously behind.
They spurred amain, their steeds were white:
And once we crossed the shade of night.
As sure as Heaven shall rescue me,
I have no thought what men they be;
Nor do I know how long it is
(For I have lain entranced I wis)
Since one, the tallest of the five,
Took me from the palfrey's back,
A weary woman, scarce alive.
Some muttered words his comrades spoke:
He placed me underneath this oak;
He swore they would return with haste;
Whither they went I cannot tell—

130
CHRISTABEL

I thought I heard, some minutes past,
Sounds as of a castle bell.
Stretch forth thy hand (thus ended she),
And help a wretched maid to flee.

Then Christabel stretched forth her hand,
And comforted fair Geraldine:
O well, bright dame! may you command
The service of Sir Leoline;
And gladly our stout chivalry
Will he send forth and friends withal
To guide and guard you safe and free
Home to your noble father's hall.

She rose: and forth with steps they passed
That strove to be, and were not, fast.
Her gracious stars the lady blest,
And thus spake on sweet Christabel:
COLERIDGE

All our household are at rest.
The hall as silent as the cell;
Sir Leoline is weak in health,
And may not well awakened be,
But we will move as if in stealth,
And I beseech your courtesy,
This night to share your couch with me.

They crossed the moat, and Christabel
Took the key that fitted well;
A little door she opened straight,
All in the middle of the gate;
The gate that was ironed within and without,
Where an army in battle array had marched out.
The lady sank, belike through pain,
And Christabel, with might and main
Lifted her up, a weary weight,
Over the threshold of the gate:
Then the lady rose again,
And moved, as she were not in pain.
CHRISTABEL

So free from danger, free from fear,
They crossed the court: right glad they were.
And Christabel devoutly cried
To the lady by her side,
Praise we the Virgin all divine
Who hath rescued thee from thy distress!
Alas, alas! said Geraldine,
I cannot speak for weariness.
So free from danger, free from fear,
They crossed the court: right glad they were.

Outside her kennel, the mastiff old
Lay fast asleep, in moonshine cold.
The mastiff old did not awake,
Yet she an angry moan did make!
And what can ail the mastiff bitch?
Never till now she uttered yell
Beneath the eye of Christabel.
Perhaps it is the owlet's scritch:
For what can ail the mastiff bitch?

133
COLERIDGE

They passed the hall, that echoes still,
Pass as lightly as you will!
The brands were flat, the brands were dying,
Amid their own white ashes lying;
But when the lady passed, there came
A tongue of light, a fit of flame;
And Christabel saw the lady's eye,
And nothing else saw she thereby,
Save the boss of the shield of Sir Leoline
tall,
Which hung in a murky old niche in the wall.
O softly tread, said Christabel,
My father seldom sleepeth well.

Sweet Christabel her feet doth bare,
And, jealous, of the listening air
They steal their way from stair to stair,
Now in glimmer, and now in gloom,
And now they pass the Baron's room,
As still as death, with stifled breath!

134
CHRISTABEL

And now have reached her chamber door;
And now doth Geraldine press down
The rushes of the chamber floor.

The moon shines dim in the open air,
And not a moonbeam enters here.
But they without its light can see
The chamber carved so curiously,
Carved with figures strange and sweet,
All made out of the carver's brain,
For a lady's chamber meet:
The lamp with twofold silver chain
Is fastened to an angel's feet.

The silver lamp burns dead and dim;
But Christabel the lamp will trim.
She trimmed the lamp, and made it bright,
And left it swinging to and fro,
While Geraldine, in wretched plight,
Sank down upon the floor below.

135
COLERIDGE

O weary lady, Geraldine,
I pray you, drink this cordial wine!
It is a wine of virtuous powers;
My mother made it of wild flowers.

And will your mother pity me,
Who am a maiden most forlorn?
Christabel answered—Woe is me!
She died the hour that I was born.
I have heard the grey-haired friar tell
How on her death-bed she did say,
That she should hear the castle bell
Strike twelve upon my wedding-day.
O mother dear! that thou wert here!
I would, said Geraldine, she were!

But soon with altered voice, said she—
Off, wandering mother! Peak and pine!
I have power to bid thee flee.
Alas! what ails poor Geraldine?
CHRISTABEL

Why stares she with unsettled eye?
Can she the bodiless dead espy?
And why with hollow voice cries she,
"Off, woman, off! this hour is mine—
Though thou her guardian spirit be,
Off, woman, off! 'tis given to me."

Then Christabel knelt by the lady's side,
And raised to heaven her eyes so blue—
Alas! said she, this ghastly ride—
Dear lady! it hath wildered you!
The lady wiped her moist cold brow,
And faintly said, 'Tis over now!

Again the wild-flower wine she drank:
Her fair large eyes 'gan glitter bright,
And from the floor whereon she sank,
The lofty lady stood upright:
She was most beautiful to see,
Like a lady of a far countree.
And thus the lofty lady spake:
"All they who live in the upper sky,
Do love you, holy Christabel!
And you love them, and for their sake
And for the good which me befel,
Even I in my degree will try,
Fair maiden, to requite you well.
But now unrobe yourself; for I
Must pray, ere yet in bed I lie."

Quoth Christabel, So let it be!
And as the lady bade, did she.
Her gentle limbs did she undress,
And lay down in her loveliness.

But through her brain of weal and woe
So many thoughts moved to and fro,
138
CHRISTABEL

That vain it were her lids to close;
So half-way from the bed she rose,
And on her elbow did recline
To look at the lady Geraldine.

Beneath the lamp the lady bowed,
And slowly rolled her eyes around,
Then drawing in her breath aloud,
Like one that shuddered, she unbound
The cincture from beneath her breast:
Her silken robe, and inner vest,
Dropt to her feet, and full in view,
Behold! her bosom and half her side—
A sight to dream of, not to tell!
O shield her! shield sweet Christabel!

Yet Geraldine nor speaks nor stirs;
Ah! what a stricken look was hers!
COLO RIDGE

Deep from within she seems half-way
To lift some weight with sick assay,
And eyes the maid and seeks delay;
Then suddenly, as one defied,
Collects herself in scorn and pride,
And lay down by the Maiden’s side!—
And in her arms the maid she took,
    Ah wel-a-day!
And with low voice and doleful look
These words did say:
In the touch of this bosom there worketh a spell,
Which is lord of thy utterance, Christabel!
Thou knowest to-night, and wilt know to-morrow,
This mark of my shame, this seal of my sorrow;
    But vainly thou warrest,
    For this is alone in
Thy power to declare,
    That in the dim forest
Thou heard’st a low moaning,
CHRISTABEL

And found'st a bright lady, surpassingly fair;
And didst bring her home with thee in love and in charity,
To shield her and shelter her from the damp air.

THE CONCLUSION TO PART THE FIRST

It was a lovely sight to see
The lady Christabel, when she
Was praying at the old oak tree.
   Amid the jagged shadows
   Of mossy leafless boughs,
   Kneeling in the moonlight,
   To make her gentle vows;
Her slender palms together prest,
Heaving sometimes on her breast;
Her face resigned to bliss or bale—
Her face, O call it fair not pale,
And both blue eyes more bright than clear,
Each about to have a tear.
With open eyes (ah woe is me!)
Asleep, and dreaming fearfully,
Fearfully dreaming, yet I wis,
Dreaming that alone which is—
O sorrow and shame! Can this be she,
The lady who knelt at the old oak tree?
And lo! the worker of these harms,
That holds the maiden in her arms,
Seems to slumber still and mild,
As a mother with her child.

A star hath set, a star hath risen,
O Geraldine! since arms of thine
Have been the lovely lady's prison.
O Geraldine! one hour was thine—
Thou'st had thy will! By tain and rill,
The night-birds all that hour were still.
But now they are jubilant anew,
From cliff and tower,—tu—whoo! tu—whoo!—
Tu—whoo!— tu—whoo! from wood and fell!
CHRISTABEL

And see! the lady Christabel
Gathers herself from out her trance;
Her limbs relax, her countenance
Grows sad and soft; the smooth thin lids
Close o'er her eyes; and tears she sheds—
Large tears that leave the lashes bright!
And oft the while she seems to smile
As infants at a sudden light!

Yea, she doth smile, and she doth weep,
Like a youthful hermitess,
Beauteous in a wilderness,
Who, praying always, prays in sleep.
And, if she move unquietly,
Perchance, 'tis but the blood so free
Comes back and tingles in her feet.
No doubt, she hath a vision sweet.
What if her guardian spirit 'twere?
What if she knew her mother near?

143
COLERIDGE

But this she knows, in joys and woes,
That saints will aid if men will call:
For the blue sky bends over all!

1797.

PART THE SECOND

Each matin bell, the Baron saith,
Knells us back to a world of death.
These words Sir Leoline first said,
When he rose and found his lady dead:
These words Sir Leoline will say
Many a morn to his dying day!

And hence the custom and law began
That still at dawn the sacristan,
Who duly pulls the heavy bell,
Five and forty beads must tell
Between each stroke—a warning knell,
Which not a soul can choose but hear
From Bratha Head to Wyndermere.

144
The Sacristan at dawn.
CHRISTABEL

Saith Bracy the bard, So let it knell!
And let the drowsy sacristan
Still count as slowly as he can!
There is no lack of such, I ween,
As well fill up the space between.
In Langdale Pike and Witch's Lair,
And Dungeon-ghyll so fouly rent,
With ropes of rock and bells of air
Three sinful sextons' ghosts are pent,
Who all give back, one after t'other,
The death-note to their living brother;
And oft too, by the knell offended,
Just as their one! two! three! is ended,
The devil mocks the doleful tale
With a merry peal from Borrowdale.

The air is still! through mist and cloud
That merry peal comes ringing loud;
And Geraldine shakes off her dread,
And rises lightly from the bed;
COLERIDGE

Puts on her silken vestments white,
And tricks her hair in lovely plight,
And, nothing doubting of her spell,
Awakens the lady Christabel.

"Sleep you, sweet lady Christabel?
I trust that you have rested well."

And Christabel awoke and spied
The same who lay down by her side—
Or rather say, the same whom she
Raised up beneath the old oak tree!
Nay, fairer yet! and yet more fair!
For she belike hath drunken deep
Of all the blessedness of sleep!
And while she spake, her looks, her air,
Such gentle thankfulness declare,
That (so it seemed) her girded vests
Grew tight beneath her heaving breasts.

"Sure I have sinn’d!" said Christabel,

"Now heaven be praised if all be well!"

148
CHRISTABEL

And in low faltering tones, yet sweet,
Did she the lofty lady greet
With such perplexity of mind
As dreams too lively leave behind.

So quickly she rose, and quickly arrayed
Her maiden limbs, and having prayed
That He, who on the cross did groan,
Might wash away her sins unknown,
She forthwith led fair Geraldine
To meet her sire, Sir Leoline.
The lovely maid and the lady tall
Are pacing both into the hall,
And pacing on through page and groom,
Enter the Baron's presence-room.

The Baron rose, and while he prest
His gentle daughter to his breast,
COLERIDGE

With cheerful wonder in his eyes
The lady Geraldine espies,
And gave such welcome to the same
As might beseem so bright a dame!

But when he heard the lady's tale,
And when she told her father's name,
Why waxed Sir Leoline so pale,
Murmuring o'er the name again,
Lord Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine?

Alas! they had been friends in youth;
But whispering tongues can poison truth;
And constancy lives in realms above;
And life is thorny; and youth is vain;
And to be wroth with one we love
Doth work like madness in the brain.
And thus it chanced, as I divine,
With Roland and Sir Leoline.

150
CHRISTABEL

Each spake words of high disdain
And insult to his heart's best brother:
They parted—ne'er to meet again!
But never either found another
To free the hollow heart from paining—
They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
Like cliffs which had been rent asunder;
A dreary sea now flows between.
But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder,
Shall wholly do away, I ween,
The marks of that which once hath been.

Sir Leoline, a moment's space,
Stood gazing on the damsel's face;
And the youthful Lord of Tryermaine
Came back upon his heart again.
O then the Baron forgot his age,
His noble heart swelled high with rage;
He swore by the wounds in Jesu's side
He would proclaim it far and wide,
COLERIDGE

With trump and solemn heraldry,
That they who thus had wronged the dame
Were base as spotted infamy!
"And if they dare deny the same,
My herald shall appoint a week,
And let the recreant traitors seek
My tourney court—that there and then
I may dislodge their reptile souls
From the bodies and forms of men!"
He spake: his eye in lightning rolls!
For the lady was ruthlessly seized; and he kenned
In the beautiful lady the child of his friend!

And now the tears were on his face,
And fondly in his arms he took
Fair Geraldine, who met the embrace,
Prolonging it with joyous look.

152
CHRISTABEL

Which when she viewed, a vision fell
Upon the soul of Christabel,
The vision of fear, the touch and pain!
She shrunk and shuddered, and saw again—
(Ah, woe is me! Was it for thee,
Thou gentle maid! such sights to see?)

Again she saw that bosom old,
Again she felt that bosom cold,
And drew in her breath with a hissing sound:
Whereat the Knight turned wildly round,
And nothing saw, but his own sweet maid
With eyes upraised, as one that prayed.

The touch, the sight, had passed away,
And in its stead that vision blest,
Which comforted her after-rest,
While in the lady's arms she lay,
Had put a rapture in her breast,
And on her lips and o'er her eyes
Spread smiles like light!

With new surprise,

"What ails, then, my beloved child?"
The Baron said—his daughter mild
Made answer, "All will yet be well!"
I ween, she had no power to tell
Aught else: so mighty was the spell.
Yet he who saw this Geraldine
Had deemed her sure a thing divine.
Such sorrow with such grace she blended,
As if she feared she had offended
Sweet Christabel, that gentle maid!
And with such lowly tones she prayed
She might be sent without delay
Home to her father's mansion.

"Nay, nay! by my soul!" said Leoline.

"Ho! Bracy the bard, the charge be thine!
Go thou, with music sweet and loud,
And take two steeds with trappings proud,
CHRISTABEL

And take the youth whom thou lov'st best
To bear thy harp and learn thy song,
And clothe you both in solemn vest,
And over the mountains haste along,
Lest wandering folk, that are abroad,
Detain you on the valley road.

"And when he has crossed the Irthing flood,
My merry bard! he hastes, he hastes
Up Knorren Moor, through Halegarth Wood,
And reaches soon that castle good
Which stands and threatens Scotland's wastes.

"Bard Bracy! bard Bracy! your horses are fleet,
Ye must ride up the hall, your music so sweet,
More loud than your horses' echoing feet!
And loud and loud to Lord Roland call,
Thy daughter is safe in Langdale Hall!
Thy beautiful daughter is safe and free—
Sir Leoline greets thee thus through me.
COLERIDGE

He bids thee come without delay,
With all thy numerous array;
And take thy lovely daughter home:
And he will meet thee on the way
With all his numerous array
White with their panting palfreys' foam.
And, by mine honour! I will say,
That I repent me of the day
When I spake words of fierce disdain
To Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine!—
—For since that evil hour hath flown,
Many a summer's sun hath shone;
Yet ne'er found I a friend again
Like Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine."

The lady fell, and clasped his knees,
Her face upraised, her eyes o'erflowing;
And Bracy replied, with faltering voice,
His gracious hail on all bestowing:

156
CHRISTABEL

"Thy words, thou sire of Christabel,
Are sweeter than my harp can tell;
Yet, might I gain a boon of thee,
This day my journey should not be,
So strange a dream hath come to me,
That I had vowed with music loud
To clear yon wood from thing unblest,
Warn'd by a vision in my rest!
For in my sleep I saw that dove,
That gentle bird, whom thou dost love,
And call'st by thy own daughter's name—
Sir Leoline! I saw the same,
Fluttering, and uttering fearful moan,
Among the green herbs in the forest alone.
Which when I saw and when I heard,
I wondered what might ail the bird;
For nothing near it could I see,
Save the grass and green herbs underneath
the old tree.

157
COLERIDGE

And in my dream, methought, I went
To search out what might there be found;
And what the sweet bird's trouble meant,
That thus lay fluttering on the ground.
I went and peered, and could descry
No cause for her distressful cry;
But yet for her dear lady's sake
I stooped, methought, the dove to take,
When lo! I saw a bright green snake
Coiled around its wings and neck.
Green as the herbs on which it couched,
Close by the dove's its head it crouched;
And with the dove it heaves and stirs,
Swelling its neck as she swelled hers!
I woke; it was the midnight hour,
The clock was echoing in the tower;
But though my slumber was gone by,
This dream it would not pass away—
It seems to live upon my eye!
And thence I vowed this self-same day

158
CHRISTABEL

With music strong and saintly song
To wander through the forest bare,
Lest aught unholy loiter there."

Thus Bracy said: the Baron, the while,
Half-listening heard him with a smile;
Then turned to Lady Geraldine,
His eyes made up of wonder and love;
And said in courtly accents fine,
"Sweet maid, Lord Roland's beauteous dove.
With arms more strong than harp or song,
Thy sire and I will crush the snake!"
He kissed her forehead as he spake,
And Geraldine in maiden-wise
Casting down her large bright eyes,
With blushing cheek and courtesy fine
She turned her from Sir Leoline;
Softly gathering up her train,
That o'er her right arm fell again;

159
COLERIDGE

And folded her arms across her chest,
And couched her head upon her breast,
And looked askance at Christabel——
Jesu, Maria, shield her well!

A snake’s small eye blinks dull and shy,
And the lady’s eyes they shrunk in her head,
Each shrunk up to a serpent’s eye,
And with somewhat of malice, and more of dread,
At Christabel she look’d askance!—
One moment—and the sight was fled!
But Christabel in dizzy trance
Stumbling on the unsteady ground
Shuddered aloud, with a hissing sound;
And Geraldine again turned round,
And like a thing, that sought relief,
Full of wonder and full of grief,
She rolled her large bright eyes divine
Wildly on Sir Leoline.

160
CHRISTABEL

The maid, alas! her thoughts are gone,
She nothing sees—no sight but one!
The maid, devoid of guile and sin,
I know not how, in fearful wise,
So deeply had she drunken in
That look, those shrunken serpent eyes,
That all her features were resigned
To this sole image in her mind:
And passively did imitate
That look of dull and treacherous hate!
And thus she stood, in dizzy trance,
Still picturing that look askance
With forced unconscious sympathy
Full before her father's view——
As far as such a look could be
In eyes so innocent and blue!

And when the trance was o'er, the maid
Paused awhile, and inly prayed:

161
Then falling at the Baron's feet,
"By my mother's soul do I entreat
That thou this woman send away!"
She said: and more she could not say:
For what she knew she could not tell,
O'er-mastered by the mighty spell.

Why is thy cheek so wan and wild,
Sir Leoline? Thy only child
Lies at thy feet, thy joy, thy pride,
So fair, so innocent, so mild;
The same for whom thy lady died!
O by the pangs of her dear mother
Think thou no evil of thy child!
For her, and thee, and for no other,
She prayed the moment ere she died:
Prayed that the babe for whom she died,
Might prove her dear lord's joy and pride!

162
CHRISTABEL

That prayer her deadly pangs beguiled,
             Sir Leoline!
And wouldst thou wrong thy only child,
            Her child and thine?

Within the Baron's heart and brain
If thoughts, like these, had any share,
They only swelled his rage and pain,
And did but work confusion there.
His heart was cleft with pain and rage,
His cheeks they quivered, his eyes were wild,
Dishonour'd thus in his old age;
Dishonour'd by his only child,
And all his hospitality
To the insulted daughter of his friend
By more than woman's jealousy
Brought thus to a disgraceful end—
He rolled his eye with stern regard
Upon the gentle minstrel bard,

163
COLERIDGE

And said in tones abrupt, austere—
"Why, Bracy! dost thou loiter here?
I bade thee hence!" The bard obeyed;
And turning from his own sweet maid,
The aged knight, Sir Leoline,
Led forth the lady Geraldine!

1801.

THE CONCLUSION TO PART THE SECOND

A little child, a limber elf,
Singing, dancing to itself,
A fairy thing with red round cheeks,
That always finds, and never seeks,
Makes such a vision to the sight
As fills a father's eyes with light;
And pleasures flow in so thick and fast
Upon his heart, that he at last
Must needs express his love's excess
With words of unmeant bitterness.

164
CHRISTABEL

Perhaps 'tis pretty to force together
Thoughts so all unlike each other;
'To mutter and mock a broken charm,
To dally with wrong that does no harm.
Perhaps 'tis tender too and pretty
At each wild word to feel within
A sweet recoil of love and pity.
And what if, in a world of sin
(O sorrow and shame should this be true!)
Such giddiness of heart and brain
Comes seldom save from rage and pain,
So talks as it's most used to do.

1801.
E Clouds! that far above me float
and pause,
Whose pathless march no mortal
may controul!

Ye Ocean-Waves! that, wheresoe'er ye roll,
Yield homage only to eternal laws!
Ye Woods! that listen to the night-birds' singing,
Midway the smooth and perilous slope reclined,
Save when your own imperious branches swinging,
Have made a solemn music of the wind!
Where, like a man beloved of God,
Through glooms which never woodman trod,

How oft, pursuing fancies holy,
My moonlight way o'er flowering weeds I wound,
Inspired, beyond the guess of folly,

By each rude shape and wild unconquerable sound!
FRANCE: AN ODE

O ye loud Waves! and O ye Forests high!
And O ye Clouds that far above me soared!
Thou rising Sun! thou blue rejoicing Sky!
Yea, everything that is and will be free!
Bear witness for me, wheresoe'er ye be,
With what deep worship I have still adored
The spirit of divinest Liberty.

II

When France in wrath her giant-limbs upreared,
And with that oath, which smote air, earth, and sea,
Stamped her strong foot and said she would be free,
Bear witness for me, how I hoped and feared!
With what a joy my lofty gratulation
Unawed I sang, amid a slavish band:
And when to whelm the disenchanted nation,
Like fiends embattled by a wizard's wand,
The Monarchs marched in evil day,
And Britain join'd the dire array;

167
COLERIDGE

Though dear her shores and circling ocean,
Though many friendships, many youthful loves
Had swoln the patriot emotion
And flung a magic light o'er all her hills and groves;
Yet still my voice, unaltered, sang defeat
To all that braved the tyrant-quelling lance,
And shame too long delay'd and vain retreat!
For ne'er, O Liberty! with partial aim
I dimmed thy light or damped thy holy flame;
But blessed the psalms of delivered France,
And hung my head and wept at Britain's name.

III

"And what," I said, "though Blasphemy's loud scream
With that sweet music of deliverance strove!
Though all the fierce and drunken passions wove
A dance more wild than e'er was maniac's dream!
Ye storms, that round the dawning east assembled,
The Sun was rising, though ye hid his light!"
FRANCE: AN ODE

And when, to soothe my soul, that hoped and trembled,
The dissonance ceased, and all seemed calm and bright;
When France her front deep-scarr'd and gory
Concealed with clustering wreaths of glory;
When, insupportably advancing,
Her arm made mockery of the warrior's ramp;
While timid looks of fury glancing,
Domestic treason, crushed beneath her fatal stamp,
Writhed like a wounded dragon in his gore;
Then I reproached my fears that would not flee;
"And soon," I said, "shall Wisdom teach her lore
In the low huts of them that toil and groan!
And, conquering by her happiness alone,
Shall France compel the nations to be free,
Till Love and Joy look round, and call the Earth their own."

169
COLERIDGE

IV

Forgive me, Freedom! O forgive those dreams!
I hear thy voice, I hear thy loud lament,
From bleak Helvetia's icy caverns sent—
I hear thy groans upon her blood-stained streams!
Heroes, that for your peaceful country perished,
And ye that, fleeing, spot your mountain-snows
With bleeding wounds; forgive me, that I cherished
One thought that ever blessed your cruel foes!
To scatter rage and traitorous guilt
Where Peace her jealous home had built;
A patriot-race to disinherit
Of all that made their stormy wilds so dear;
And with inexpiable spirit
To taint the bloodless freedom of the moun-
taineer—
O France, that mockest Heaven, adulterous, blind,
And patriot only in pernicious toils!

170
FRANCE: AN ODE

Are these thy boasts, Champion of human kind?
   To mix with Kings in the low lust of sway,
Yell in the hunt, and share the murderous prey;
To insult the shrine of Liberty with spoils
   From freemen torn; to tempt and to betray?

v

The Sensual and the Dark rebel in vain,
Slaves by their own compulsion! In mad
   game
They burst their manacles and wear the name
   Of Freedom, graven on a heavier chain!
O Liberty! with profitless endeavour
Have I pursued thee, many a weary hour;
   But thou nor swell'st the victor's strain, nor
ever
Didst breathe thy soul in forms of human power.
   Alike from all, howe'er they praise thee,
   (Nor prayer, nor boastful name delays thee)
COLE RIDGE

Alike from Priestcraft's harpy minions,
And factious Blasphemy's obscener slaves,
Thou speedest on thy subtle pinions,
The guide of homeless winds, and playmate of the
waves!
And there I felt thee!—on that sea-cliff's verge,
Whose pines, scarce travelled by the breeze
above,
Had made one murmur with the distant surge!
Yes, while I stood and gazed, my temples bare,
And shot my being through earth, sea, and air,
Possessing all things with intensest love,
O Liberty! my spirit felt thee there.

_February 1798._
FROST AT MIDNIGHT

FROST AT MIDNIGHT

The Frost performs its secret ministry,
Unhelped by any wind. The owlet's cry
Came loud—and hark, again! loud as before.
The inmates of my cottage, all at rest,
Have left me to that solitude, which suits
Abstruser musings: save that at my side
My cradled infant slumbers peacefully.
'Tis calm indeed! so calm, that it disturbs
And vexes meditation with its strange
And extreme silentness. Sea, hill, and wood,
This populous village! Sea, and hill, and wood,
With all the numberless goings-on of life,
Inaudible as dreams! the thin blue flame
Lies on my low-burnt fire, and quivers not;
Only that film, which fluttered on the grate,
Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing.
Methinks its motion in this hush of Nature
Gives it dim sympathies with me who live,
Making it a companionable form,
Whose puny flaps and freaks the idling Spirit
By its own moods interprets, everywhere
Echo or mirror seeking of itself,
And makes a toy of Thought.

But O! how oft,
How oft at school, with most believing mind,
Presageful, have I gazed upon the bars,
To watch that fluttering stranger! and as oft
With unclosed lids, already had I dreamt
Of my sweet birthplace, and the old church-tower,
Whose bells, the poor man's only music, rang
From morn to evening, all the hot Fair-day,
So sweetly, that they stirred and haunted me
With a wild pleasure, falling on mine ear
Most like articulate sounds of things to come!

174
The Old Church-Tower.
FROST AT MIDNIGHT

So gazed I, till the soothing things, I dreamt
Lulled me to sleep, and sleep prolonged my dreams!
And so I brooded all the following morn,
Awed by the stern preceptor's face, mine eye
Fixed with mocked study on my swimming book:
Save if the door half opened, and I snatched
A hasty glance, and still my heart leaped up,
For still I hoped to see the stranger's face,
Townsman, or aunt, or sister more beloved,
My playmate when we both were clothed alike!

Dear Babe, that sleepest cradled by my side,
Whose gentle breathings, heard in this deep calm,
Fill up the interspersed vacancies
And momentary pauses of the thought!
My babe so beautiful! it thrills my heart
With tender gladness thus to look at thee,
And think that thou shalt learn far other lore,
And in far other scenes! For I was reared
In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,

177

M
COLERIDGE

And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars.
But thou, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze
By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags
Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds,
Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores
And mountain crags: so shalt thou see and hear
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
Of that eternal language, which thy God
Utters, who from eternity doth teach
Himself in all, and all things in Himself.
Great Universal Teacher! He shall mould
Thy spirit, and by giving make it ask.

Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee,
Whether the summer clothe the general earth
With greenness, or the redbreast sit and sing
Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch
Of mossy apple-tree, while the nigh thatch
Smokes in the sun-thaw; whether the eave-drops
fall

178
FEARS IN SOLITUDE

Heard only in the trances of the blast,
Or if the secret ministry of frost
Shall hang them up in silent icicles,
Quietly shining to the quiet Moon.

February 1798.

FEARS IN SOLITUDE

WRITTEN IN APRIL 1798, DURING THE ALARM
OF AN INVASION

GREEN and silent spot, amid the
hills,
A small and silent dell! O'er stiller
place

No singing skylark ever poised himself.
The hills are heathy, save that swelling slope,
Which hath a gay and gorgeous covering on,
All golden with the never-bloomless furze,
Which now blooms most profusely: but the dell,

179
Bathed by the mist, is fresh and delicate
As vernal corn-field, or the unripe flax,
When, through its half-transparent stalks,
at eve,
The level sunshine glimmers with green light.
Oh! 'tis a quiet spirit-healing nook!
Which all, methinks, would love; but chiefly he,
The humble man, who, in his youthful years,
Knew just so much of folly, as had made
His early manhood more securely wise!
Here he might lie on fern or withered heath,
While from the singing lark (that sings unseen
The minstrelsy that solitude loves best),
And from the sun, and from the breezy
air,
Sweet influences trembled o'er his frame;
And he, with many feelings, many thoughts,
Made up a meditative joy, and found
Religious meanings in the forms of Nature!
And so, his senses gradually wrapt
180
FEARS IN SOLITUDE

In a half-sleep, he dreams of better worlds,
And dreaming hears thee still, O singing lark,
That singest like an angel in the clouds!

My God! it is a melancholy thing
For such a man, who would full fain preserve
His soul in calmness, yet perforce must feel
For all his human brethren—O my God!
It weighs upon the heart, that he must think
What uproar and what strife may now be stirring
This way or that way o’er these silent hills—
Invasion, and the thunder and the shout,
And all the crash of onset, fear and rage,
And undetermined conflict—even now,
Even now, perchance, and in his native isle:
Carnage and groans beneath this blessed sun!
We have offended, Oh! my countrymen!
We have offended very grievously,
And been most tyrannous. From east to west

181
A groan of accusation pierces Heaven!
The wretched plead against us; multitudes
Countless and vehement, the sons of God,
Our brethren! Like a cloud that travels on,
Steam'd up from Cairo's swamps of pestilence,
Even so, my countrymen! have we gone forth
And borne to distant tribes slavery and pangs,
And, deadlier far, our vices, whose deep taint
With slow perdition murders the whole man,
His body and his soul! Meanwhile, at home,
All individual dignity and power
Engulf'd in Courts, Committees, Institutions,
Associations and Societies,
A vain, speech-mouthing, speech-reporting Guild,
One Benefit-Club for mutual flattery,
We have drunk up, demure as at a grace,
Pollutions from the brimming cup of wealth;
Contemptuous of all honourable rule,
Yet bartering freedom and the poor man's life
For gold, as at a market! The sweet words
FEARS IN SOLITUDE

Of Christian promise, words that even yet
Might stem destruction, were they wisely preached,
Are muttered o'er by men, whose tones proclaim
How flat and wearisome they feel their trade:
Rank scoffers some, but most too indolent
To deem them falsehoods or to know their truth.
O blasphemous! the book of life is made
A superstitious instrument, on which
We gabble o'er the oaths we mean to break;
For all must swear—all and in every place,
College and wharf, council and justice-court;
All, all must swear, the briber and the bribed,
Merchant and lawyer, senator and priest,
The rich, the poor, the old man and the young;
All, all make up one scheme of perjury,
That faith doth reel; the very name of God
Sounds like a juggler's charm; and, bold with joy,
Forth from his dark and lonely hiding-place,
(Portentous sight!) the owlet Atheism,
Sailing on obscene wings athwart the noon,
COLERIDGE

Drops his blue-fringed lids, and holds them close,
And hooting at the glorious sun in Heaven,
Cries out, "Where is it?"

Thankless too for peace,
(Peace long preserved by fleets and perilous seas)
Secure from actual warfare, we have loved
To swell the war-whoop, passionate for war!
Alas! for ages ignorant of all
Its ghastlier workings, (famine or blue plague,
Battle, or siege, or flight through wintry snows,)
We, this whole people, have been clamorous
For war and bloodshed; animating sports,
The which we pay for as a thing to talk of,
Spectators and not combatants! No guess
Anticipative of a wrong unfelt,
No speculation on contingency,
However dim and vague, too vague and dim
To yield a justifying cause; and forth,
(Stuffed out with big preamble, holy names,
FEARS IN SOLITUDE

And adjurations of the God in Heaven,)
We send our mandates for the certain death
Of thousands and ten thousands! Boys and girls,
And women, that would groan to see a child
Pull off an insect’s leg, all read of war,
The best amusement for our morning meal!
The poor wretch, who has learnt his only prayers
From curses, who knows scarcely words enough
To ask a blessing from his Heavenly Father,
Becomes a fluent phraseman, absolute
And technical in victories and defeats,
And all our dainty terms for fratricide;
Terms which we trundle smoothly o’er our tongues
Like mere abstractions, empty sounds to which
We join no feeling and attach no form!
As if the soldier died without a wound;
As if the fibres of this godlike frame
Were gored without a pang; as if the wretch
Who fell in battle, doing bloody deeds,
COLERIDGE

Passed off to Heaven, translated and not killed;
As though he had no wife to pine for him,
No God to judge him! Therefore, evil days
Are coming on us, O my countrymen!
And what if all-avenging Providence,
Strong and retributive, should make us know
The meaning of our words, force us to feel
The desolation and the agony
Of our fierce doings?

Spare us yet awhile,
Father and God! O spare us yet awhile!
O let not English women drag their flight
Fainting beneath the burthen of their babes,
Of the sweet infants, that but yesterday
Laughed at the breast! Sons, brothers, hus-
bands, all
Who ever gazed with fondness on the forms
Which grew up with you round the same fireside,
And all who ever heard the sabbath-bells

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FEARS IN SOLITUDE

Without the infidel's scorn, make yourselves pure!
Stand forth! be men! repel an impious foe,
Impious and false, a light yet cruel race,
Who laugh away all virtue, mingling mirth
With deeds of murder; and still promising
Freedom, themselves too sensual to be free,
Poison life's amities, and cheat the heart
Of faith and quiet hope, and all that soothes
And all that lifts the spirit! Stand we forth;
Render them back upon the insulted ocean,
And let them toss as idly on its waves
As the vile seaweed, which some mountain-blast
Swept from our shores! And oh! may we return,
Not with a drunken triumph, but with fear,
Repenting of the wrongs with which we stung
So fierce a foe to frenzy!

I have told,
O Britons! O my brethren! I have told
Most bitter truth, but without bitterness.

187
Nor deem my zeal or factious or mistimed;
For never can true courage dwell with them,
Who, playing tricks with conscience, dare not look
At their own vices. We have been too long
Dupes of a deep delusion! Some, belike,
Groaning with restless enmity, expect
All change from change of constituted power;
As if a Government had been a robe,
On which our vice and wretchedness were tagged
Like fancy-points and fringes, with the robe
Pulled off at pleasure. Fondly these attach
A radical causation to a few
Poor drudges of chastising Providence,
Who borrow all their hues and qualities
From our own folly and rank wickedness,
Which gave them birth and nursed them. Others,
meanwhile,
Dote with a mad idolatry; and all
Who will not fall before their images.

188
FEARS IN SOLITUDE

And yield them worship, they are enemies
Even of their country!

Such have I been deemed.—

But, O dear Britain! O my Mother Isle!
Needs must thou prove a name most dear and holy
To me, a son, a brother, and a friend,
A husband, and a father! who revere
All bonds of natural love, and find them all
Within the limits of thy rocky shores.
O native Britain! O my Mother Isle!
How shouldst thou prove aught else but dear and holy
To me, who from thy lakes and mountain-hills,
Thy clouds, thy quiet dales, thy rocks and seas,
Have drunk in all my intellectual life,
All sweet sensations, all ennobling thoughts,
All adoration of the God in nature,
All lovely and all honourable things,
Whatever makes this mortal spirit feel
The joy and greatness of its future being?

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COLO RIDGE

Their lives nor form nor feeling in my soul
Unborrowed from my country! O divine
And beautcous island! thou hast been my sole
And most magnificent temple, in the which
I walk with awe, and sing my stately songs,
Loving the God that made me!—

May my fears,
My filial fears, be vain! and may the vaunts
And menace of the vengeful enemy
Pass like the gust, that roared and died away
In the distant tree: which heard, and only heard
In this low dell, bow'd not the delicate grass.

But now the gentle dew-fall sends abroad
The fruit-like perfume of the golden furze:
The light has left the summit of the hill,
Though still a sunny gleam lies beautiful,
Aslant the ivied beacon. Now farewell,
Farewell awhile, O soft and silent spot!
FEARS IN SOLITUDE

On the green sheep-track, up the heathy hill,
Homeward I wind my way; and lo! recalled
From bodings that have well-nigh wearied me,
I find myself upon the brow, and pause
Startled! And after lonely sojournng
In such a quiet and surrounded nook,
This burst of prospect, here the shadowy main,
Dim-tinted, there the mighty majesty
Of that huge amphitheatre of rich
And elmy fields, seems like society—
Conversing with the mind, and giving it
A livelier impulse and a dance of thought!
And now, beloved Stowey! I behold
Thy church-tower, and, methinks, the four huge elms
Clustering, which mark the mansion of my friend;
And close behind them, hidden from my view,
Is my own lowly cottage, where my babe
And my babe's mother dwell in peace! With light
And quickened footsteps thitherward I tend,
Remembering thee, O green and silent dell!

191
And grateful that by nature's quietness
And solitary musings, all my heart
Is soften'd, and made worthy to indulge
Love, and the thoughts that yearn for human kind.

**Nether Stowey, April 20th, 1798.**

**THE NIGHTINGALE**

*A Conversation Poem, Written in April 1798*

O cloud, no relique of the sunken
  day
Distinguishes the West, no long thin slip
Of sullen light, no obscure trembling hues.

Come, we will rest on this old mossy bridge!
You see the glimmer of the stream beneath,
But hear no murmuring: it flows silently,
O'er its soft bed of verdure. All is still,
A balmy night! and though the stars be dim,
THE NIGHTINGALE

Yet let us think upon the vernal showers
That gladden the green earth, and we shall find
A pleasure in the dimness of the stars.
And hark! the Nightingale begins its song,
"Most musical, most melancholy" bird!
A melancholy bird? Oh! idle thought!
In Nature there is nothing melancholy.
But some night-wandering man whose heart was pierced
With the remembrance of a grievous wrong,
Or slow distemper, or neglected love,
(And so, poor wretch! fill'd all things with himself,
And made all gentle sounds tell back the tale
Of his own sorrow), he, and such as he,
First named these notes a melancholy strain.
And many a poet echoes the conceit;
Poet who hath been building up the rhyme
When he had better far have stretched his limbs
Beside a brook in mossy forest-dell,
COLERIDGE

By sun or moon-light, to the influxes
Of shapes and sounds and shifting elements
Surrendering his whole spirit, of his song
And of his fame forgetful! so his fame
Should share in Nature's immortality,
A venerable thing! and so his song
Should make all Nature lovelier, and itself
Be loved like Nature! But 'twill not be so;
And youths and maidens most poetical,
Who lose the deepening twilights of the spring
In ball-rooms and hot theatres, they still,
Full of meek sympathy must heave their sighs
O'er Philomela's pity-pleading strains.

My Friend, and thou, our Sister! we have learnt
A different lore: we may not thus profane
Nature's sweet voices, always full of love
And joyance! 'Tis the merry Nightingale
That crowds, and hurries, and precipitates
With fast thick warble his delicious notes,
THE NIGHTINGALE

As he were fearful that an April night
Would be too short for him to utter forth
His love-chant, and disburthen his full soul
Of all its music!

And I know a grove
Of large extent, hard by a castle huge,
Which the great lord inhabits not; and so
This grove is wild with tangling underwood,
And the trim walks are broken up, and grass,
Thin grass and kingcups grow within the paths.
But never elsewhere in one place I knew
So many nightingales; and far and near,
In wood and thicket, over the wide grove,
They answer and provoke each other's songs,
With skirmish and capricious passagings,
And murmurs musical and swift jug-jug,
And one low piping sound more sweet than all—
Stirring the air with such an harmony,
That should you close your eyes, you might
almost

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COLO RIDGE

Forget it was not day! On moonlight bushes,
Whose dewy leaflets are but half-disclosed,
You may perchance behold them on the twigs,
Their bright, bright eyes, their eyes both bright and full,
Glistening, while many a glow-worm in the shade
Lights up her love-torch.

A most gentle Maid,
Who dwelleth in her hospitable home
Hard by the castle, and at latest eve
(Even like a Lady vowed and dedicate
To something more than Nature in the grove)
Glides through the pathways; she knows all their notes,
That gentle Maid! and oft, a moment’s space,
What time the moon was lost behind a cloud,
Hath heard a pause of silence; till the moon
Emerging, hath awakened earth and sky
With one sensation. and those wakeful birds
196
THE NIGHTINGALE

Have all burst forth in choral minstrelsy,
As if some sudden gale had swept at once
A hundred airy harps! And she hath watched
Many a nightingale perch giddily
On blossomy twig still swinging from the breeze,
And to that motion tune his wanton song,
Like tipsy joy that reels with tossing head.

Farewell, O Warbler! till to-morrow eve,
And you, my friends! farewell, a short farewell!
We have been loitering long and pleasantly,
And now for our dear homes.—That strain again!
Full fain it would delay me! My dear babe,
Who, capable of no articulate sound,
Mars all things with his imitative lisp,
How he would place his hand beside his ear,
His little hand, the small forefinger up,
And bid us listen! And I deem it wise
To make him Nature's playmate. He knows well
COLERIDGE

The evening star; and once, when he awoke
In most distressful mood (some inward pain
Had made up that strange thing, an infant's
dream),
I hurried with him to our orchard-plot,
And he beheld the moon, and, hushed at once,
Suspends his sobs, and laughs most silently,
While his fair eyes, that swam with undropped
   tears,
Did glitter in the yellow moonbeam! Well!—
It is a father's tale: But if that Heaven
Should give me life, his childhood shall grow up
Familiar with these songs, that with the night
He may associate joy.—Once more, farewell,
Sweet Nightingale! once more, my friends!
   farewell!
LOVE

LOVE

All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
All are but ministers of Love,
And feed his sacred flame.

Oft in my waking dreams do I
Live o'er again that happy hour,
When midway on the mount I lay
Beside the ruined tower.

The moonshine, stealing o'er the scene,
Had blended with the lights of eve;
And she was there, my hope, my joy,
My own dear Genevieve!

199
COLERIDGE

She leant against the armed man,
The statue of the armed knight;
She stood and listened to my lay
   Amid the lingering light.

   Few sorrows hath she of her own,
   My hope! my joy! my Genevieve!
She loves me best, whene'er I sing
   The songs that make her grieve.

I played a soft and doleful air,
I sang an old and moving story—
An old rude song, that suited well
   That ruin wild and hoary.

She listened with a flitting blush,
With downcast eyes and modest grace;
For well she knew, I could not choose
   But gaze upon her face.
LOVE

I told her of the Knight that wore
Upon his shield a burning brand;
And that for ten long years he wooed
   The Lady of the Land.

I told her how he pined: and ah!
The deep, the low, the pleading tone
With which I sang another's love,
   Interpreted my own.

She listened with a flitting blush,
With downcast eyes and modest grace,
And she forgave me, that I gazed
   Too fondly on her face!

But when I told the cruel scorn
That crazed that bold and lovely Knight,
And that he crossed the mountain-woods,
   Nor rested day nor night;

201
COLERIDGE

That sometimes from the savage den,
And sometimes from the darksome shade
And sometimes starting up at once
In green and sunny glade,—

There came and looked him in the face
An angel beautiful and bright;
And that he knew it was a Fiend,
This miserable Knight!

And that unknowing what he did,
He leaped amid a murderous band,
And saved from outrage worse than death
The Lady of the Land!

And how she wept and clasped his knees,
And how she tended him in vain
And ever strove to expiate
The scorn that crazed his brain;—
"There came and looked him in the face
An angel beautiful and bright."
LOVE

And that she nursed him in a cave;
And how his madness went away,
When on the yellow forest-leaves
   A dying man he lay;—

His dying words—but when I reached
That tenderest strain of all the ditty,
My falttering voice and pausing harp
   Disturbed her soul with pity!

All impulses of soul and sense
Had thrilled my guileless Genevieve;
The music and the doleful tale,
   The rich and balmy eve;

And hopes, and fears that kindle hope,
An undistinguishable throng,
And gentle wishes long subdued,
   Subdued and cherished long!

205
COLERIDGE

She wept with pity and delight,
She blushed with love, and virgin-shame;
And like the murmur of a dream,
    I heard her breathe my name.

Her bosom heaved—she stepped aside,
As conscious of my look she stepped—
Then suddenly, with timorous eye
    She fled to me and wept.

She half enclosed me with her arms,
She pressed me with a meek embrace;
And bending back her head, looked up,
    And gazed upon my face.

'Twas partly love, and partly fear,
And partly 'twas a bashful art,
That I might rather feel, than see
    The swelling of her heart.

206
BALLAD OF THE DARK LADIE

I calmed her fears, and she was calm,
And told her love with virgin pride;
And so I won my Genevieve,
    My bright and beauteous bride.
1798-1799.

THE BALLAD OF THE DARK LADIE

A FRAGMENT

BENEATH yon birch with silver bark,
And boughs so pendulous and fair,
The brook falls scatter'd down the rock:
    And all is mossy there!

And there upon the moss she sits,
The Dark Ladié in silent pain;
The heavy tear is in her eye,
    And drops and swells again.
COLERIDGE

Three times she sends her little page
Up the castled mountain's breast,
If he might find the Knight that wears
The Griffin for his crest.

The sun was sloping down the sky,
And she had linger'd there all day,
Counting moments, dreaming fears—
O wherfore can he stay?

She hears a rustling o'er the brook,
She sees far off a swinging bough!
"'Tis He! 'Tis my betrothed Knight!
Lord Falkland, it is Thou!"

She springs, she clasps him round the neck,
She sobs a thousand hopes and fears,
Her kisses glowing on his cheeks
She quenches with her tears.
BALLAD OF THE DARK LADIE

"My friends with rude ungentle words
They scoff and bid me fly to thee!
O give me shelter in thy breast!
        O shield and shelter me!

"My Henry, I have given thee much,
I gave what I can ne'er recall,
I gave my heart, I gave my peace,
        O Heaven! I gave thee all."

The Knight made answer to the Maid,
While to his heart he held her hand,
"Nine castles hath my noble sire,
        None statelier in the land.

"The fairest one shall be my love's,
The fairest castle of the nine!
Wait only till the stars peep out,
        The fairest shall be thine:

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       0
“Wait only till the hand of eve
Hath wholly closed yon western bars,
And through the dark we two will steal
Beneath the twinkling stars!”—

“The dark? the dark? No! not the dark?
The twinkling stars? How, Henry? How?
O God! ’twas in the eye of noon
He pledged his sacred vow!

“And in the eye of noon my love
Shall lead me from my mother’s door,
Sweet boys and girls all clothed in white
Strewing flowers before:

“But first the nodding minstrels go
With music meet for lordly bowers,
The children next in snow-white vests,
Strewing buds and flowers!

210
CATULLIAN HENDECASYLLABLES

"And then my love and I shall pace,
My jet black hair in pearly braids,
Between our comely bachelors
And blushing bridal maids."

1798.

CATULLIAN HENDECASYLLABLES

Hear, my beloved, an old Milesian story!—
High, and embosom'd in congregated laurels,
Glimmer'd a temple upon a breezy headland;
In the dim distance amid the skiey billows
Rose a fair island; the god of flocks had blest it.
From the far shores of the bleat-resounding island
Oft by the moonlight a little boat came floating,
Came to the sea-cave beneath the breezy headland,
COLERIDGE

Where amid myrtles a pathway stole in mazes
Up to the groves of the high embosom'd temple.
There in a thicket of dedicated roses,
Oft did a priestess, as lovely as a vision,
Pouring her soul to the son of Cytherea,
Pray him to hover around the slight canoe-boat,
And with invisible pilotage to guide it
Over the dusk wave, until the nightly sailor
Shivering with ecstasy, sank upon her bosom.

1799
DEJECTION: AN ODE

DEJECTION: AN ODE

WRITTEN APRIL 4, 1802

Late, late yestreen I saw the new Moon,
With the old Moon in her arms;
And I fear, I fear, my Master dear!
We shall have a deadly storm.

_Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence._

W

ELL! if the Bard was weather-wise, who made
The grand old ballad of Sir Patrick Spence,

This night, so tranquil now, will not go hence
Unroused by winds that ply a busier trade
Than those which mould yon cloud in lazy flakes,

Or the dull sobbing draft, that moans and rakes

Upon the strings of this _Æolian_ lute,

Which better far were mute.
COLE RIDGE

For lo! the New-moon winter-bright!
And overspread with phantom light,
(With swimming phantom light o’erspread
But rimmed and circled by a silver thread)
I see the old Moon in her lap, foretelling
The coming-on of rain and squally blast.
And oh! that even now the gust were swelling,
And the slant night-shower driving loud and fast!
Those sounds which oft have raised me, whilst they awed,
And sent my soul abroad,
Might now perhaps their wonted impulse give,
Might startle this dull pain, and make it move and live!

II

A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,
A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,
Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,
In word, or sigh, or tear—
DEJECTION: AN ODE

O Lady! in this wan and heartless mood,
To other thoughts by yonder throstle woo'd,
All this long eve, so balmy and serene,
Have I been gazing on the western sky,
And its peculiar tint of yellow-green:
And still I gaze—and with how blank an eye!
And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,
That give away their motion to the stars;
Those stars, that glide behind them or between,
Now sparkling, now bedimmed, but always seen:
Yon crescent Moon, as fixed as if it grew
In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue;
I see them all so excellently fair,
I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!

III

My genial spirits fail;
And what can these avail

215
COLERIDGE

To lift the smothering weight from off my breast?
   It were a vain endeavour,
Though I should gaze for ever
On that green light that lingers in the west:
I may not hope from outward forms to win
The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

IV

O Lady! we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live:
Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud!
   And would we aught behold, of higher worth,
Than that inanimate cold world allowed
To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,
   Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
   Enveloping the Earth—
And from the soul itself must there be sent
   A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
Of all sweet sounds the life and element!
DEJECTION: AN ODE

v

O pure of heart! thou need'st not ask of me
What this strong music in the soul may be!
What, and wherein it doth exist,
This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,
This beautiful and beauty-making power.
Joy, virtuous Lady! Joy that ne'er was given,
Save to the pure and in their purest hour,
Life, and Life's effluence, cloud at once and
shower!
Joy, Lady! is the spirit and the power
Which wedding Nature to us gives in dower,

A new Earth and new Heaven,
Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud—
Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud—

We in ourselves rejoice!

And thence flows all that charms or ear or sight,

All melodies the echoes of that voice,
All colours a suffusion from that light.
There was a time when, though my path was rough,
This joy within me dallied with distress,
And all misfortunes were but as the stuff
Whence Fancy made me dreams of happiness:
For hope grew round me, like the twining vine,
And fruits and foliage, not my own, seemed mine.
But now afflictions bow me down to earth:
Nor care I that they rob me of my mirth;
But oh! each visitation
Suspends what nature gave me at my birth,
My shaping spirit of Imagination.
For not to think of what I needs must feel,
But to be still and patient, all I can;
And haply by abstruse research to steal
From my own nature all the natural man—
This was my sole resource, my only plan:
Till that which suits a part infects the whole,
And now is almost grown the habit of my soul.
DEJECTION: AN ODE

VII

Hence, viper thoughts, that coil around my mind,
   Reality's dark dream!
I turn from you, and listen to the wind,
   Which long has raved unnoticed.
   What a scream
Of agony by torture lengthened out
That lute sent forth!  Thou Wind, that rav'st without,

   Bare crag, or mountain-tarn, or blasted tree,
Or pine-grove whither woodman never clomb,
Or lonely house, long held the witches' home,
   Methinks were fitter instruments for thee,
Mad Lutanist! who in this month of showers,
Of dark-brown gardens, and of peeping flowers,
Mak'st Devils' Yule, with worse than wintry song,
The blossoms, buds, and timorous leaves among.
   Thou Actor, perfect in all tragic sounds!
Thou mighty Poet, even to frenzy bold!

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COLERIDGE

What tell'st thou now about?
'Tis of the rushing of a host in rout,
With groans of trampled men, with smarting wounds—
At once they groan with pain and shudder with the cold!
But hush! there is a pause of deepest silence!
And all that noise, as of a rushing crowd,
With groans, and tremulous shudderings—all is over—
It tells another tale, with sounds less deep and loud!
A tale of less affright,
And tempered with delight,
As Otway's self had framed the tender lay.
'Tis of a little child
Upon a lonesome wild,
Not far from home, but she hath lost her way:
And now moans low in bitter grief and fear,
And now screams loud, and hopes to make her mother hear.
DEJECTION: AN ODE

VIII

'Tis midnight, but small thoughts have I of sleep:
Full seldom may my friend such vigils keep!
Visit her, gentle Sleep! with wings of healing,
And may this storm be but a mountain-birth.
May all the stars hang bright above her dwelling,
Silent as though they watched the sleeping Earth!
With light heart may she rise,
Gay fancy, cheerful eyes,
Joy lift her spirit, joy attune her voice;
To her may all things live, from pole to pole,
Their life the eddying of her living soul!
O simple spirit, guided from above,
Dear Lady! friend devoutest of my choice,
Thus mayest thou ever, evermore rejoice.
RE on my bed my limbs I lay,
It hath not been my use to pray
With moving lips or bended knees;

But silently, by slow degrees,
My spirit I to Love compose,
In humble trust mine eyelids close,
With reverential resignation,
No wish conceived, no thought exprest,
Only a sense of supplication;
A sense o'er all my soul imprest
That I am weak, yet not unblest,
Since in me, round me, everywhere
Eternal Strength and Wisdom are.

But yesternight I pray'd aloud
In anguish and in agony,
THE PAINS OF SLEEP

Up-starting from the fiendish crowd
Of shapes and thoughts that tortured me:
A lurid light, a trampling throng,
Sense of intolerable wrong,
And whom I scorned, those only strong!
Thirst of revenge, the powerless will
Still baffled, and yet burning still!
Desire with loathing strangely mixed
On wild or hateful objects fixed.
Fantastic passions! maddening brawl!
And shame and terror over all!
Deeds to be hid which were not hid,
Which all confused I could not know
Whether I suffered or I did:
For all seem’d guilt, remorse or woe,
My own or others, still the same
Life-stifling fear, soul-stifling shame!

So two nights passed: the night’s dismay
Saddened and stunned the coming day.

223
COLERIDGE

Sleep, the wide blessing, seemed to me
Distemper's worst calamity.
The third night, when my own loud scream
Had waked me from the fiendish dream,
O'ercome with sufferings strange and wild,
I wept as I had been a child;
And having thus by tears subdued
My anguish to a milder mood,
Such punishments, I said, were due
To natures deepliest stained with sin:
For aye entempesting anew
The unfathomable hell within
The horror of their deeds to view,
To know and loathe, yet wish and do!
Such griefs with such men well agree,
But wherefore, wherefore fall on me?
To be beloved is all I need,
And whom I love, I love indeed.

1803.
TO A GENTLEMAN

TO A GENTLEMAN

[William Wordsworth]

COMPOSED ON THE NIGHT AFTER HIS RECITATION OF A
POEM ON THE GROWTH OF AN INDIVIDUAL MIND

FRIEND of the wise! and Teacher
of the Good!
Into my heart have I received that
Lay
More than historic, that prophetic Lay
Wherein (high theme by thee first sung aright)
Of the foundations and the building up
Of a Human Spirit thou hast dared to tell
What may be told, to the understanding mind
Revealable; and what within the mind
By vital breathings secret as the soul
Of vernal growth, oft quickens in the heart
Thoughts all too deep for words!—

Theme hard as high!

Of smiles spontaneous, and mysterious fears,
COLERIDGE

(The first-born they of Reason and twin-birth,)
Of tides obedient to external force,
And currents self-determined, as might seem,
Or by some inner Power; of moments awful,
Now in thy inner life, and now abroad,
When power streamed from thee, and thy soul received
The light reflected, as a light bestowed—
Of fancies fair, and milder hours of youth,
Hyblean murmurs of poetic thought
Industrious in its joy, in vales and glens
Native or outland, lakes and famous hills!
Or on the lonely highroad when the stars
Were rising; or by secret mountain-streams,
The guides and the companions of thy way!

Of more than Fancy, of the Social Sense
Distending wide, and man beloved as man,
Where France in all her towns lay vibrating
Like some becalmed bark beneath the burst

226
TO A GENTLEMAN

Of Heaven's immediate thunder, when no cloud
Is visible, or shadow on the main.
For thou wert there, thine own brows garlanded,
Amid the tremor of a realm aglow,
Amid a mighty nation jubilant,
When from the general heart of human kind
Hope sprang forth like a full-born Deity!
—Of that dear Hope afflicted and struck down,
So summoned homeward, thenceforth calm and sure
From the dread watch-tower of man's absolute self,
With light unwaning on her eyes, to look
Far on—herself a glory to behold,
The Angel of the vision! Then (last strain)
Of Duty, chosen Laws controlling choice,
Action and joy!—An orphic song indeed,
A song divine of high and passionate thoughts
To their own music chaunted!

O great Bard!

Ere yet that last strain dying awed the air,
COLERIDGE

With steadfast eye I viewed thee in the choir
Of ever-enduring men. The truly great
Have all one age, and from one visible space
Shed influence! They, both in power and act,
Are permanent, and Time is not with them,
Save as it worketh for them, they in it.
Nor less a sacred Roll than those of old,
And to be placed, as they, with gradual fame
Among the archives of mankind, thy work
Makes audible a linked lay of Truth,
Of Truth profound a sweet continuous lay,
Nor learnt, but native, her own natural notes!
Ah! as I listen'd with a heart forlorn,
The pulses of my being beat anew:
And even as life returns upon the drowned,
Life's joy rekindling roused a throng of pains—
Keen pangs of Love, awakening as a babe
Turbulent, with an outcry in the heart;
And fears self-willed, that shunned the eye of
hope;
TO A GENTLEMAN

And hope that scarce would know itself from fear;
Sense of past youth, and manhood come in vain,
And genius given, and knowledge won in vain;
And all which I had culled in wood-walks wild,
And all which patient toil had reared, and all
Commune with thee had opened out—but flowers
Strewed on my corse, and borne upon my bier,
In the same coffin, for the self-same grave!

That way no more! and ill beseems it me,
Who came a welcomer in herald’s guise,
Singing of glory and futurity,
To wander back on such unhealthful road,
Plucking the poisons of self-harm! And ill
Such intertwine beseems triumphal wreaths
Strew’d before thy advancing!

Nor do thou,

Sage Bard! impair the memory of that hour
COLERIDGE

Of thy communion with my nobler mind
By pity or grief, already felt too long!
Nor let my words import more blame than needs.
The tumult rose and ceased: for Peace is nigh
Where Wisdom's voice has found a listening heart.
Amid the howl of more than wintry storms,
The halcyon hears the voice of vernal hours
Already on the wing.

Eve following eve,
Dear tranquil time, when the sweet sense of Home
Is sweetest! moments for their own sake hailed
And more desired, more precious, for thy song.
In silence listening, like a devout child,
My soul lay passive, by thy various strain
Driven as in surges now beneath the stars,
With momentary stars of my own birth,
TO A GENTLEMAN

Fair constellated foam, still darting off
Into the darkness; now a tranquil sea,
Outspread and bright, yet swelling to the moon.

And when—O Friend! my comforter and guide!
Strong in thyself, and powerful to give strength!—
Thy long-sustained Song finally closed,
And thy deep voice had ceased—yet thou thyself
Wert still before my eyes, and round us both
That happy vision of beloved faces—
Scarce conscious, and yet conscious of its close
I sate, my being blended in one thought
(Thought was it? or aspiration? or resolve?)
Absorbed, yet hanging still upon the sound—
And when I rose, I found myself in prayer.

January 1807
COLERIDGE

SONG

SUNG BY GLYCINE IN ZAPOLYA, ACT II. SCENE 2

SUNNY shaft did I behold,
From sky to earth it slanted:
And poised therein a bird so bold—
Sweet bird, thou wert enchanted!

He sunk, he rose, he twinkled, he trolled
Within that shaft of sunny mist;
His eyes of fire, his beak of gold,
All else of amethyst!

And thus he sang: "Adieu! adieu!
Love's dreams prove seldom true.
The blossoms they make no delay:
The sparkling dewdrops will not stay.
Sweet month of May,
We must away;
Far, far away!
To-day! to-day!

1815.

232
HUNTING SONG

P, up! ye dames, and lasses gay!
To the meadows trip away.
'Tis you must tend the flocks
this morn,
And scare the small birds from the corn.

Not a soul at home may stay:
For the shepherds must go
With lance and bow
To hunt the wolf in the woods to-day.

Leave the hearth and leave the house
To the cricket and the mouse:
Find grannam out a sunny seat,
With babe and lambkin at her feet.

Not a soul at home may stay:
For the shepherds must go
With lance and bow
To hunt the wolf in the woods to-day.
TIME, REAL AND IMAGINARY

AN ALLEGORY

In the wide level of a mountain's head,
(I knew not where, but 'twas some faery place)
Their pinions, ostrich-like, for sails outspread,
Two lovely children run an endless race,
A sister and a brother!
This far outstript the other;
Yet ever runs she with reverted face,
And looks and listens for the boy behind:
For he, alas! is blind!
O'er rough and smooth with even step he passed,
And knows not whether he be first or last.
1815.


THE KNIGHT'S TOMB

THE KNIGHT'S TOMB

WHERE is the grave of Sir Arthur O'Kellyn?

Where may the grave of that good man be?—

By the side of a spring, on the breast of Helvellyn,

Under the twigs of a young birch-tree!

The oak that in summer was sweet to hear,

And rustled its leaves in the fall of the year,

And whistled and roar'd in the winter alone,

Is gone,—and the birch in its stead is grown.—

The Knight's bones are dust,

And his good sword rust;—

His soul is with the saints, I trust.

?1817.

235
COLERIDGE

FANCY IN NUBIBUS
OR THE POET IN THE CLOUDS

IT is pleasant, with a heart at ease,
    Just after sunset, or by moonlight skies,
To make the shifting clouds be what you please,

Or let the easily persuaded eyes
Own each quaint likeness issuing from the mould
    Of a friend's fancy; or with head bent low
And cheek aslant see rivers flow of gold
    'Twixt crimson banks; and then, a traveller go,
From mount to mount through Cloudland, gorgeous land!

Or list'ning to the tide, with closed sight,
Be that blind bard, who on the Chian strand,
    By those deep sounds possessed with inward light,
Beheld the Iliad and the Odyssee
Rise to the swelling of the voiceful sea.

1819.

236
YOUTH AND AGE

YOUTH AND AGE

VERSE, a breeze 'mid blossoms stray-
ing,
Where Hope clung feeding, like a bee—
Both were mine! Life went a-maying
With Nature, Hope, and Poesy,
When I was young!

When I was young?—Ah, woful When!
Ah! for the change 'twixt Now and Then!
This breathing house not built with hands,
This body that does me grievous wrong,
O'er aery cliffs and glittering sands,
How lightly then it flashed along:—
Like those trim skiffs, unknown of yore,
On winding lakes and rivers wide,
That ask no aid of sail or oar,
That fear no spite of wind or tide!

237
COLERIDGE

Nought cared this body for wind or weather
When Youth and I lived in't together.
Flowers are lovely; Love is flower-like;
Friendship is a sheltering tree;
O! the joys, that came down shower-like,
Of Friendship, Love, and Liberty.

Ere I was old!

Ere I was old? Ah, woful Ere!
Which tells me Youth's no longer here!
O Youth! for years so many and sweet,
'Tis known that Thou and I were one,
I'll think it but a fond conceit—
It cannot be that Thou art gone!
Thy vesper-bell hath not yet toll'd:—
And thou wert aye a masker bold!
What strange disguise hast now put on,
To make believe, that thou art gone?
I see these locks in silvery slips,
This drooping gait, this altered size:

238
"Friendship is a sheltering tree."
YOUTH AND AGE

But Spring-tide blossoms on thy lips,
And tears take sunshine from thine eyes!
Life is but thought: so think I will
That Youth and I are house-mates still.

Dewdrops are the gems of morning,
But the tears of mournful eve!
Where no hope is, life's a warning
That only serves to make us grieve,
When we are old:
That only serves to make us grieve
With oft and tedious taking-leave,
Like some poor nigh-related guest,
That may not rudely be dismiss'd;
Yet hath outstay'd his welcome while,
And tells the jest without the smile.

1822–1832.
WORK WITHOUT HOPE

LINES COMPOSED 21ST FEBRUARY 1827

LL Nature seems at work. Slugs leave their lair—
The bees are stirring—birds are on the wing—
And Winter slumbering in the open air,
Wears on his smiling face a dream of Spring!
And I the while, the sole unbusy thing,
Nor honey make, nor pair, nor build, nor sing.

Yet well I ken the banks where amaranths blow,
Have traced the fount whence streams of nectar flow.
WORK WITHOUT HOPE

Bloom, O ye amaranths! bloom for whom ye may,
For me ye bloom not! Glide, rich streams, away!
With lips unbrightened, wreathless brow, I stroll:
And would you learn the spells that drowse my soul?
Work without Hope draws nectar in a sieve,
And Hope without an object cannot live.

1827.
COLERIDGE

MY BAPTISMAL BIRTHDAY

OD'S child in Christ adopted,—Christ
my all,—
What that earth boasts were not
lost cheaply, rather
Than forfeit that blest name, by which I call
The Holy One, the Almighty God, my Father?—
Father! in Christ we live, and Christ in Thee—
Eternal Thou, and everlasting we.
The heir of heaven, henceforth I fear not death:
In Christ I live! in Christ I draw the breath
Of the true life!—Let then earth, sea, and sky
Make war against me! On my front I show
Their mighty master's seal. In vain they try
To end my life, that can but end its woe.—
Is that a death-bed where a Christian lies?—
Yes! but not his—'tis Death itself there dies.

1833.

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EPITAPH

TOP, Christian passer-by!—Stop, child of God, And read with gentle breast. Beneath this sod

A poet lies, or that which once seem'd he.—O, lift one thought in prayer for S. T. C.; That he who many a year with toil of breath Found death in life, may here find life in death! Mercy for praise—to be forgiven for fame He ask'd, and hoped, through Christ.

Do thou the same!

9th November 1833.

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