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POEMS OF COLERIDGE

SELECTED AND ARRANGED
WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY
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INTRODUCTION

In one of Rossetti's invaluable notes on poetry, he tells us that to him
"the leading point about Coleridge's work is its human love." We may
remember Coleridge's own words:

"To be beloved is all I need,
And whom I love, I love indeed."

Yet love, though it is the word which he uses of himself, is not really what he himself meant when using it, but rather an affectionate sympathy, in which there seems to have been little element of passion. Writing to his wife, during that first absence in Germany, whose solitude tried him so much, he laments that there is "no one to love." "Love is the vital air of my genius," he tells her, and adds: "I am deeply convinced that if I were to remain a few years among objects for whom I had no affection, I should wholly lose the powers of intellect."

With this incessant, passionless sensibility, it was not unnatural that his thirst for friendship was stronger than his need of love; that to him friendship was hardly distinguishable from love. Throughout all his letters there is a series of causeless explosions of emotion, which it is hardly possible to take seriously, but which, far from being insincere, is really, no doubt, the dribbling overflow of choked-up feelings, a sort of moral leakage. It might be said of Coleridge, in the phrase which he used of Nelson, that he was "heart-starved." Tied for life to a woman with whom he had not one essential sympathy, the whole of his nature was put out of focus; and perhaps nothing but "the joy of grief," and the terrible and fettering power of luxuriating over his own sorrows, and tracing them to first principles, outside himself or in the depths of his sub-consciousness, gave him the courage to support that long, everpresent divorce.

Both for his good and evil, he had never been able to endure emotion without either diluting or intensifying it with thought, and with always self-conscious thought. He uses identically the same words in writing his last, deeply moved letter to Mary Evans, and in relating the matter to

Southey. He cannot get away from words; coming as near to sincerity as he can, words are always between him and his emotion. Hence his over-emphasis, his rhetoric of humility. In 1794 he writes to his brother George: "Mine eyes gush out with tears, my heart is sick and languid with the weight of unmerited kindness." Nine days later he writes to his brother James: "My conduct towards you, and towards my other brothers, has displayed a strange combination of madness, ingratitude, and dishonesty. But you forgive me. May my Maker forgive me! May the time arrive when I shall have forgiven myself!" Here we see both what he calls his "gangrened sensibility" and a complete abandonment to the feelings of the moment. It is always a self-conscious abandonment, during which he watches himself with approval, and seems to be saying: "Now that is truly 'feeling'!" He can never concentrate himself on any emotion; he swims about in floods of his own tears. With so little sense of reality in anything, he has no sense of the reality of direct emotion, but is preoccupied, from the moment of the first shock, in exploring it for its universal principle, and then nourishes it almost in triumph at what he has discovered. This is not insincerity; it is the metaphysical, analytical, and parenthetic mind in action. "I have endeavoured to feel what I ought to feel," he once significantly writes.

Coleridge had many friends, to some of whom, as to Lamb, his friendship was the most priceless thing in life; but the friendship which meant most to him, not only as a man, but as a poet, was the friendship with Wordsworth and with Dorothy Wordsworth. "There is a sense of the word Love," he

wrote
to Wordsworth in 1812, "in which I never felt it but to you and one of
your
household." After his quarrel in that year he has "an agony of weeping."
"After fifteen years of such religious, almost superstitious idolatry and
self-sacrifice!" he laments. Now it was during his first, daily
companionship with the Wordsworths that he wrote almost all his
greatest
work. "The Ancient Mariner" and "Christabel" were both written in a
kind of
rivalry with Wordsworth; and the "Ode on Dejection" was written after
four
months' absence from him, in the first glow and encouragement of a
return
to that one inspiring comradeship. Wordsworth was the only poet among
his
friends whom he wholly admired, and Wordsworth was more
exclusively a poet,
more wholly absorbed in thinking poetry and thinking about poetry, and
in a
thoroughly practical way, than almost any poet who has ever lived. It
was
not only for his solace in life that Coleridge required sympathy; he
needed
the galvanizing of continual intercourse with a poet, and with one to
whom
poetry was the only thing of importance. Coleridge, when he was by
himself,
was never sure of this; there was his *_magnum opus_*, the revelation of
all philosophy; and he sometimes has doubts of the worth of his own
poetry.
Had Coleridge been able to live uninterruptedly in the company of the
Wordsworths, even with the unsympathetic wife at home, the opium in
the
cupboard, and the *_magnum opus_* on the desk, I am convinced that we
should have had for our reading to-day all those poems which went

down with
him into silence.

What Coleridge lacked was what theologians call a "saving belief" in Christianity, or else a strenuous intellectual immorality. He imagined himself to believe in Christianity, but his belief never realized itself in effective action, either in the mind or in conduct, while it frequently clogged his energies by weak scruples and restrictions which were but so many internal irritations. He calls upon the religion which he has never firmly apprehended to support him under some misfortune of his own making;

it does not support him, but he finds excuses for his weakness in what seem

to him its promises of help. Coleridge was not strong enough to be a Christian, and he was not strong enough to rely on the impulses of his own

nature, and to turn his failings into a very actual kind of success. When Blake said, "If the fool would persist in his folly he would become wise,"

he expressed a profound truth which Nietzsche and others have done little

more than amplify. There is nothing so hopeless as inert or inactive virtue: it is a form of life grown putrid, and it turns into poisonous, decaying matter in the soul. If Coleridge had been more callous towards what he felt to be his duties, if he had not merely neglected them, as he did, but justified himself for neglecting them, on any ground of intellectual or physical necessity, or if he had merely let them slide without thought or regret, he would have been more complete, more effectual, as a man, and he might have achieved more finished work as an artist.

To Coleridge there was as much difficulty in belief as in action, for belief is itself an action of the mind. He was always anxious to believe anything that would carry him beyond the limits of time and space, but it was not often that he could give more than a speculative assent to even

the

most improbable of creeds. Always seeking fixity, his mind was too fluid

for any anchor to hold in it. He drifted from speculation to speculation, often seeming to forget his aim by the way, in almost the collector's delight over the curiosities he had found in passing. On one page of his letters he writes earnestly to the atheist Thelwall in defence of Christianity; on another page we find him saying, "My Spinosism (if Spinosism it be, and i' faith 'tis very like it)"; and then comes the solemn assurance: "I am a Berkleyan." Southey, in his rough, uncomprehending way, writes: "Hartley was ousted by Berkeley, Berkeley by

Spinoza, and Spinoza by Plato; when last I saw him Jacob Behmen had some

chance of coming in. The truth is that he plays with systems"; so it seemed

to Southey, who could see no better. To Coleridge all systems were of importance, because in every system there was its own measure of truth. He

was always setting his mind to think about itself, and felt that he worked both hard and well if he had gained a clearer glimpse into that dark cavern. "Yet I have not been altogether idle," he writes in December, 1800,

"having in my own conceit gained great light into several parts of the human mind which have hitherto remained either wholly unexplained or most

falsely explained." In March, 1801, he declares that he has "completely extricated the notions of time and space." "This," he says, "I have done; but I trust that I am about to do more--namely, that I shall be able to evolve all the five senses, and to state their growth and the causes of their difference, and in this evolvment to solve the process of life and consciousness." He hopes that before his thirtieth year he will "thoroughly understand the whole of Nature's works." "My opinion is this,"

he says, defining one part at least of his way of approach to truth, "that deep thinking is attainable only by a man of deep feeling, and that all

truth is a species of revelation." On the other hand, he assures us, speaking of that _magnum opus_ which weighed upon him and supported him to the end of his life, "the very object throughout from the first page to the last [is] to reconcile the dictates of common sense with the conclusions of scientific reasoning."

This _magnum opus_, "a work which should contain all knowledge and proclaim all philosophy, had," says Mr. Ernest Coleridge, "been Coleridge's dream from the beginning." Only a few months before his death, we find him writing to John Sterling: "Many a fond dream have I amused myself with, of your residing near me, or in the same house, and of preparing, with your and Mr. Green's assistance, my whole system for the press, as far as it exists in any _systematic_ form; that is, beginning with the Propyleum, On the Power and Use of Words, comprising Logic, as the Canons of _Conclusion_, as the criterion of _Premises_, and lastly as the discipline and evolution of Ideas (and then the Methodus et Epochee, or the Disquisition on God, Nature, and Man), the two first grand divisions of which, from the Ens super Ens to the _Fall_, or from God to Hades, and then from Chaos to the commencement of living organization, containing the whole of the Dynamic Philosophy, and the deduction of the Powers and Forces, are complete." Twenty years earlier, he had written to Daniel Stuart that he was keeping his morning hours sacred to his "most important Work, which is printing at Bristol," as he imagined. It was then to be called "Christianity, the one true Philosophy, or Five Treatises on the Logos, or Communicative Intelligence, natural, human, and divine."

Of
this vast work only fragments remain, mostly unpublished: two large
quarto
volumes on logic, a volume intended as an introduction, a commentary
on the
Gospels and some of the Epistles, together with "innumerable fragments
of
metaphysical and theological speculation." But out of those fragments
no
system was ever to be constructed, though a fervent disciple, J. H.
Green,
devoted twenty-eight years to the attempt. "Christabel" unfinished, the
magnum opus unachieved: both were but parallel symptoms of a mind
"thought-bewildered" to the end, and bewildered by excess of light and
by
crowding energies always in conflict, always in escape.

Coleridge's search, throughout his life, was after the absolute, an
absolute not only in thought but in all human relations, in love,
friendship, faith in man, faith in God, faith in beauty; and while it was
this profound dissatisfaction with less than the perfect form of every art,
passion, thought, or circumstance, that set him adrift in life, making him
seem untrue to duty, conviction, and himself, it was this also that formed
in him the double existence of the poet and the philosopher, each
supplementing and interpenetrating the other. The poet and the
philosopher
are but two aspects of one reality; or rather, the poetic and the
philosophic attitudes are but two ways of seeing. The poet who is not
also
a philosopher is like a flower without a root. Both seek the same
infinitude; one apprehending the idea, the other the image. One seeks
truth
for its beauty; the other finds beauty, an abstract, intellectual beauty,
in the innermost home of truth. Poetry and metaphysics are alike a
disengaging, for different ends, of the absolute element in things.

In Coleridge, metaphysics joined with an unbounded imagination, in equal flight from reality, from the notions of time and space. Each was an equal denial of the reality of what we call real things; the one experimental, searching, reasoning; the other a "shaping spirit of imagination," an embodying force. His sight was always straining into the darkness; and he has himself noted that from earliest childhood his "mind was habituated to the Vast." "I never regarded my senses," he says, "as the criteria of my belief"; and "those who have been led to the same truths step by step, through the constant testimony of their senses, seem to want a sense which I possess." To Coleridge only mind existed, an eternal and an eternally active thought; and it was as a corollary to his philosophical conception of the universe that he set his mind to a conscious rebuilding of the world in space. His magic, that which makes his poetry, was but the final release in art of a winged thought fluttering helplessly among speculations and theories; it was the song of release.

De Quincey has said of Coleridge: "I believe it to be notorious that he first began the use of opium, not as a relief from any bodily pains or nervous irritations--for his constitution was strong and excellent--but as a source of luxurious sensations." Hartley Coleridge, in the biographical supplement to the "Biographia Literaria," replies with what we now know to be truth: "If my Father sought more from opium than the mere absence of pain, I feel assured that it was not luxurious sensations or the glowing phantasmagoria of passive dreams; but that the power of the medicine might keep down the agitations of his nervous system, like a strong hand grasping

the strings of some shattered lyre." In 1795. that is, at the age of twenty-three, we find him taking laudanum; in 1796, he is taking it in large doses; by the late spring of 1801 he is under the "fearful slavery," as he was to call it, of opium. "My sole sensuality," he says of this time, "was not to be in pain." In a terrible letter addressed to Joseph Cottle in 1814 he declares that he was "seduced to the _accursed_ habit ignorantly"; and he describes "the direful moment, when my pulse began to

fluctuate, my heart to palpitate, and such a dreadful falling abroad, as it were, of my whole frame, such intolerable restlessness, and incipient bewilderment ... for my case is a species of madness, only that it is a derangement, an utter impotence of the volition, and not of the intellectual faculties." And, throughout, it is always the pains, never the pleasures, of opium that he registers.

Opium took hold of him by what was inert in his animal nature, and not by any active sensuality. His imagination required no wings, but rather fetters; and it is evident that opium was more often a sedative than a spur to his senses.

The effect of opium on the normal man is to bring him into something like

the state in which Coleridge habitually lived. The world was always a sufficiently unreal thing to him, facts more than remote enough, consequences unrelated to their causes; he lived in a mist, and opium thickened the mist to a dense yellow fog. Opium might have helped to make

Southey a poet; it left Coleridge the prisoner of a cobweb-net of dreams. What he wanted was some astringent force in things, to tighten, not to loosen, the always expanding and uncontrollable limits of his mind.

Opium

did but confirm what the natural habits of his constitution had bred in him: an overwhelming indolence, out of which the energies that still arose

intermittently were no longer flames, but the escaping ghosts of flame,

mere black smoke.

At twenty-four, in a disinterested description of himself for the benefit of a friend whom he had not yet met, he declares, "the walk of the whole man indicates _indolence capable of energies_." It was that walk which Carlyle afterwards described, unable to keep to either side of the garden-path. "The moral obligation is to me so very strong a stimulant,"

Coleridge

writes to Crabb Robinson, "that in nine cases out of ten it acts as a narcotic. The blow that should rouse, _stuns_ me." He plays another variation on the ingenious theme in a letter to his brother: "Anxieties that stimulate others infuse an additional narcotic into my mind.... Like some poor labourer, whose night's sleep has but imperfectly refreshed his
overwearied frame, I have sate in drowsy uneasiness, and doing nothing
have

thought what a deal I have to do." His ideal, which he expressed in 1797
in

a letter to Thelwall, and, in 1813, almost word for word, in a poem
called"

The Night-Scene," was, "like the Indian Vishnu, to float about along an infinite ocean cradled in the flower of the Lotus, and wake once in a million years for a few minutes just to know that I was going to sleep a million years more." Observe the effect of the desire for the absolute, reinforced by constitutional indolence, and only waiting for the illuminating excuse of opium.

From these languors, and from their consequences, Coleridge found
relief in

conversation, for which he was always ready, while he was far from
always

ready for the more precise mental exertion of writing. "Oh, how I wish
to

be talking, not writing," he cries in a letter to Southey in 1803, "for my mind is so full, that my thoughts stifle and jam each other." And, in
1816,

in his first letter to Gillman, he writes, more significantly, "The stimulus of conversation suspends the terror that haunts my mind; but when

I am alone, the horrors that I have suffered from laudanum, the degradation, the blighted utility, almost overwhelm me." It was along one

avenue of this continual escape from himself that Coleridge found himself

driven (anywhere, away from action) towards what grew to be the main waste

of his life. Hartley Coleridge, in the preface to "Table-Talk," has told us eloquently how, "throughout a long-drawn summer's day, would this man talk

to you in low, equable, but clear and musical tones, concerning things human and divine"; we know that Carlyle found him "unprofitable, even tedious," and wished "to worship him, and toss him in a blanket"; and we

have the vivid reporting of Keats, who tells us that, on his one meeting with Coleridge, "I walked with him, at his alderman-after-dinner pace, for

near two miles, I suppose. In those two miles he broached a thousand things. Let me see if I can give you a list--nightingales--poetry--on poetical sensation--metaphysics--different genera and species of dreams--

nightmare--a dream accompanied with a sense of touch--single and double

touch--a dream related--first and second consciousness--the difference explained between will and volition--so say metaphysicians from a want of

smoking the second consciousness--monsters--the Kraken--mermaids--Southey

believes in them--Southey's belief too much diluted--a ghost story--Good-

morning--I heard his voice as he came towards me--I heard it as he moved

away--I had heard it all the interval--if it may be called so." It may be

that we have had no more wonderful talker, and, no doubt, the talk had its reverential listeners, its disciples; but to cultivate or permit disciples is itself a kind of waste, a kind of weakness; it requires a very fixed and energetic indolence to become, as Coleridge became, a vocal utterance, talking for talking's sake.

But beside talking, there was lecturing, with Coleridge a scarcely different form of talk; and it is to this consequence of a readiness to speak and a reluctance to write that we owe much of his finest criticism, in the imperfectly recorded "Lectures on Shakespeare." Coleridge as a critic is not easily to be summed up. What may first surprise us, when we begin to look into his critical opinions, is the uncertainty of his judgments in regard to his own work, and to the work of his friends; the curious bias which a feeling or an idea, affection or a philosophical theory, could give to his mind. His admiration for Southey, his consideration for Sotheby, perhaps in a less degree his unconquerable esteem for Bowles, together with something very like adulation of Wordsworth, are all instances of a certain loss of the sense of proportion. He has left us no penetrating criticisms of Byron, of Shelley, or of Keats; and in a very interesting letter about Blake, written in 1818, he is unable to take the poems merely as poems, and chooses among them with a scrupulous care "not for the want of innocence in the poem, but from the too probable want of it in many readers."

Lamb, concerned only with individual things, looks straight at them, not through them, seeing them implacably. His notes to the selections from the Elizabethan dramatists are the surest criticisms that we have in English; they go to the roots. Coleridge's critical power was wholly exercised upon elements and first principles; Lamb showed an infinitely keener sense of detail, of the parts of the whole. Lamb was unerring on definite points,

and could lay his finger on flaws in Coleridge's work that were invisible to Coleridge; who, however, was unerring in his broad distinctions, in the philosophy of his art.

"The ultimate end of criticism," said Coleridge, "is much more to establish the principles of writing than to furnish rules how to pass judgment on what has been written by others." And for this task he had an incomparable foundation: imagination, insight, logic, learning, almost every critical quality united in one; and he was a poet who allowed himself to be a critic. Those pages of the "Biographia Literaria," in which he defines and distinguishes between imagination and fancy, the researches into the abstract entities of poetry in the course of an examination of Wordsworth's theories and of the popular objections to them, all that we have of the lectures on Shakespeare, into which he put an illuminating idolatry, together with notes and jottings preserved in the "Table-Talk," "Anima Poetæ," the "Literary Remains," and on the margins of countless books, contain the most fundamental criticism of literature that has ever been attempted, fragmentary as the attempt remains. "There is not a man in England," said Coleridge, with truth, "whose thoughts, images, words, and erudition have been published in larger quantities than _mine_; though I must admit, not _by_, nor _for_, myself." He claimed, and rightly, as his invention, a "science of reasoning and judging concerning the productions of literature, the characters and measures of public men, and the events of nations, by a systematic subsumption of them, under principles deduced from the nature of man," which, as he says, was unknown before the year 1795. He is the one philosophical critic who is also a poet, and thus he is the one critic who instinctively knows his way through all the intricacies of the creative mind.

Most of his best criticism circles around Shakespeare; and he took Shakespeare almost frankly in the place of Nature, or of poetry. He affirms, "Shakespeare knew the human mind, and its most minute and intimate

workings, and he never introduces a word, or a thought, in vain or out of place." This granted (and to Coleridge it is essential that it should be granted, for in less than the infinite he cannot find space in which to use his wings freely) he has only to choose and define, to discover and to illuminate. In the "myriad-minded man," in his "oceanic mind," he finds all

the material that he needs for the making of a complete aesthetics.

Nothing

with Coleridge ever came to completion; but we have only to turn over the

pages about Shakespeare, to come upon fragments worth more than anyone

else's finished work. I find the whole secret of Shakespeare's way of writing in these sentences: "Shakespeare's intellectual action is wholly unlike that of Ben Jonson or Beaumont and Fletcher. The latter see the totality of a sentence or passage, and then project it entire. Shakespeare goes on creating, and evolving B out of A, and C out of B, and so on, just

as a serpent moves, which makes a fulcrum of its own body, and seems forever twisting and untwisting its own strength. "And here are a few axioms: "The grandest efforts of poetry are where the imagination is called

forth, not to produce a distinct form, but a strong working of the mind'; or, in other words, "The power of poetry is, by a single word perhaps, to instill that energy into the mind which compels the imagination to produce

the picture." "Poetry is the identity of all other knowledges," "the blossom and fragrance of all human knowledge, human thoughts, human passions, emotions, language." "Verse is in itself a music, and the natural symbol of that union of passion with thought and pleasure, which constitutes the essence of all poetry "; "a more than usual state of emotion, with more than usual order," as he has elsewhere defined it.

And,
in one of his spoken counsels, he says: "I wish our clever young poets would remember my homely definitions of prose and poetry; that is, prose-- words in their best order; poetry--the best words in the best order."

Unlike most creative critics, or most critics who were creative artists in another medium, Coleridge, when he was writing criticism, wrote it wholly

for its own sake, almost as if it were a science. His prose is rarely of the finest quality as prose writing. Here and there he can strike out a phrase at red-heat, as when he christens Shakespeare "the one Proteus of the fire and flood"; or he can elaborate subtly, as when he notes the judgment of Shakespeare, observable in every scene of the "Tempest," "still

preparing, still inviting, and still gratifying, like a finished piece of music"; or he can strike us with the wit of the pure intellect, as when he condemns certain work for being "as trivial in thought and yet enigmatic in

expression, as if Echo and the Sphinx had laid their heads together to construct it." But for the most part it is a kind of thinking aloud, and the form is wholly lost in the pursuit of ideas. With his love for the absolute, why is it that he does not seek after an absolute in words considered as style, as well as in words considered as the expression of thought? In his finest verse Coleridge has the finest style perhaps in English; but his prose is never quite reduced to order from its tumultuous amplitude or its snake-like involution. Is it that he values it only as a medium, not as an art? His art is verse, and this he dreads, because of its too mortal closeness to his heart; the prose is a means to an end, not an end in itself.

The poetry of Coleridge, though it is closely interwoven with the circumstances of his life, is rarely made directly out of those circumstances. To some extent this is no doubt explained by a fact to which

he often refers in his letters, and which, in his own opinion, hindered

him

not only from writing about himself in verse, but from writing verse at all. "As to myself," he writes in 1802, "all my poetic genius ... is gone," and he attributes it "to my long and exceedingly severe metaphysical investigations, and these partly to ill-health, and partly to private afflictions which rendered any subjects, immediately connected with feeling, a source of pain and disquiet to me." In 1818 he writes: "Poetry is out of the question. The attempt would only hurry me into that sphere of

acute feelings from which abstruse research, the mother of self-oblivion, presents an asylum." But theory worked with a natural tendency in keeping

him for the most part away from any attempt to put his personal emotions

into verse. "A sound promise of genius," he considered, "is the choice of subjects very remote from the private interests and circumstances of the writer himself." With only a few exceptions, the wholly personal poems, those actually written under a shock of emotion, are vague, generalized, turned into a kind of literature. The success of such a poem as the almost distressingly personal "Ode on Dejection" comes from the fact that Coleridge has been able to project his personal feeling into an outward image, which becomes to him the type of dejection; he can look at it as at

one of his dreams which become things; he can sympathize with it as he could never sympathize with his own undeserving self. And thus one stanza,

perhaps the finest as poetry, becomes the biography of his soul:

"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."

Elsewhere, in personal poems like "Frost at Midnight," and "Fears in Solitude," all the value of the poem comes from the delicate sensations of natural things which mean so much more to us, whether or not they did to him, than the strictly personal part of the matter. You feel that there he is only using the quite awake part of himself, which is not the essential one. He requires, first of all, to be disinterested, or at least not overcome by emotion; to be without passion but that of abstract beauty, in Nature, or in idea; and then to sink into a quiet lucid sleep, in which his genius came to him like some attendant spirit.

In the life and art of Coleridge, the hours of sleep seem to have been almost more important than the waking hours. "My dreams became the substance of my life," he writes, just after the composition of that terrible poem on "The Pains of Sleep," which is at once an outcry of agony, and a yet more disturbing vision of the sufferer with his fingers on his own pulse, his eyes fixed on his own hardly awakened eyes in the mirror. In an earlier letter, written at a time when he is trying to solve the problem of the five senses, he notes: "The sleep which I have is made up of ideas so connected, and so little different from the operations of reason, that it does not afford me the due refreshment." To Coleridge, with the help

of

opium, hardly required, indeed, there was no conscious division between day

and night, between not only dreams and intuitions, but dreams and pure reason. And we find him, in almost all his great poems, frankly taking not

only his substance but his manner from dreams, as he dramatizes them after

a logic and a passion of their own. His technique is the transposition into his waking hours of the unconscious technique of dreams. It is a kind of verified inspiration, something which came and went, and was as little to be relied upon as the inspiration itself. On one side it was an exact science, but on the other a heavenly visitation. Count and balance syllables, work out an addition of the feet in the verse by the foot-rule, and you will seem to have traced every miracle back to its root in a natural product. Only, something, that is, everything, will have escaped you. As well dissect a corpse to find out the principle of life. That elusive something, that spirit, will be what distinguishes Coleridge's finest verse from the verse of, well, perhaps of every conscious artist in our language. For it is not, as in Blake, literally unconscious, and wavering on every breath of that unseen wind on which it floats to us; it is faultless; it is itself the wind which directs it, it steers its way on the wind, like a seagull poised between sky and sea, and turning on its wings as upon shifted sails.

This inspiration comes upon Coleridge suddenly, without warning, in the first uncertain sketch of "Lewti," written at twenty-two; and then it leaves him, without warning, until the great year 1797, three years later, when "Christabel" and "The Ancient Mariner" are begun. Before and after,

Coleridge is seen trying to write like Bowles, like Wordsworth, like Southey, perhaps, to attain "that impetuosity of transition and that precipitancy of fancy and feeling, which are the _essential_ qualities of the sublimer Ode," and which he fondly fancies that he has attained in the "Ode on the Departing Year," with its one good line, taken out of his note-book. But here, in "Lewti," he has his style, his lucid and liquid

melody, his imagery of moving light and the faintly veiled transparency of
air, his vague, wildly romantic subject matter, coming from no one
knows

where, meaning one hardly knows what; but already a magic, an
incantation.

"Lewti" is a sort of preliminary study for "Kubla Khan"; it, too, has all
the imagery of a dream, with a breathlessness and awed hush, as of one
not

yet accustomed to be at home in dreams.

"Kubla Khan," which was literally composed in sleep, comes nearer than
any

other existing poem to that ideal of lyric poetry which has only lately
been systematized by theorists like Mallarmé. It has just enough
meaning to

give it bodily existence; otherwise it would be disembodied music. It
seems

to hover in the air, like one of the island enchantments of Prospero. It is
music not made with hands, and the words seem, as they literally were,
remembered. "All the images," said Coleridge, "rose up before me as
things, with a parallel production of the correspondent
expressions." Lamb, who tells us how Coleridge repeated it "so
enchantingly

that it irradiates and brings heaven and elysian bowers into my parlour
when he says or sings it to me," doubted whether it would "bear
daylight."

It seemed to him that such witchcraft could hardly outlast the night. It
has outlasted the century, and may still be used as a touchstone; it will
determine the poetic value of any lyric poem which you place beside it.
Take as many poems as you please, and let them have all the merits you
please, their ultimate merit as poetry will lie in the degree of their
approach to the exact, unconscious, inevitable balance of qualities in the
poetic art of "Kubla Khan."

In "The Ancient Mariner," which it seems probable was composed before, and not after "Kubla Khan," as Coleridge's date would have us suppose, a new supernaturalism comes into poetry, which, for the first time, accepted the whole responsibility of dreams. The impossible, frankly accepted, with its own strict, inverted logic; the creation of a new atmosphere, outside the known world, which becomes as real as the air about us, and yet never loses its strangeness; the shiver that comes to us, as it came to the wedding-guest, from the simple good faith of the teller; here is a whole new creation, in subject, mood, and technique. Here, as in "Kubla Khan," Coleridge saw the images "as _things_"; only a mind so overshadowed by dreams, and so easily able to carry on his sleep awake, could have done so; and, with such a mind, "that willing suspension of disbelief for a moment, which constitutes poetic faith," was literally forced upon him. "The excellence aimed at," says Coleridge, "was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions, as would naturally accompany such situations," those produced by supernatural agency, "supposing them real. And real in this sense they have been to every human being who, from whatever sense of delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency." To Coleridge, whatever appealed vitally to his imagination was real; and he defended his belief philosophically, disbelieving from conviction in that sharp marking off of real from imaginary which is part of the ordinary attitude of man in the presence of mystery.

It must not be forgotten that Coleridge is never fantastic. The fantastic is a playing with the imagination, and Coleridge respects it. His intellect

goes always easily as far as his imagination will carry it, and does not stop by the way to play tricks upon its bearer. Hence the conviction which

he brings with him when he tells us the impossible. And then his style, in its ardent and luminous simplicity, flexible to every bend of the spirit which it clothes with flesh, helps him in the idiomatic translation of dreams. The visions of Swedenborg are literal translations of the imagination, and need to be retranslated. Coleridge is equally faithful to the thing seen and to the laws of that new world into which he has transposed it.

"The Ancient Mariner" is the most sustained piece of imagination in the whole of English poetry; and it has almost every definable merit of imaginative narrative. It is the only poem I know which is all point and yet all poetry; because, I suppose, the point is really a point of mystery. It is full of simple, daily emotion, transported, by an awful power of sight, to which the limits of reality are no barrier, into an unknown sea and air; it is realized throughout the whole of its ghastly and marvellous happenings; and there is in the narrative an ease, a buoyancy almost, which

I can only compare with the music of Mozart, extracting its sweetness from

the stuff of tragedy; it presents to us the utmost physical and spiritual horror, not only without disgust, but with an alluring beauty. But in "Christabel," in the first part especially, we find a quality which goes almost beyond these definable merits. There is in it a literal spell, not acting along any logical lines, not attacking the nerves, not terrifying, not intoxicating, but like a slow, enveloping mist, which blots out the real world, and leaves us unchilled by any "airs from heaven or blasts from

hell," but in the native air of some middle region. In these two or three brief hours of his power out of a lifetime, Coleridge is literally a wizard. People have wanted to know what "Christabel" means, and how it was

to have ended, and whether Geraldine was a vampire (as I am inclined to think) or had eyes in her breasts (as Shelley thought). They have

wondered

that a poem so transparent in every line should be, as a whole, the most enigmatical in English. But does it matter very much whether "Christabel"

means this or that, and whether Coleridge himself knew, as he said, how it

was to end, or whether, as Wordsworth declared, he had never decided?

It

seems to me that Coleridge was fundamentally right when he said of the "Ancient Mariner," "It ought to have had no more moral than the Arabian

Nights' tale of the merchant's sitting down to eat dates by the side of a well, and throwing the shells aside, and lo! a genie starts up, and says he must kill the aforesaid merchant, because one of the date-shells had, it seems, put out the eye of the genie's son." The "Ancient Mariner," if we take its moral meaning too seriously, comes near to being an allegory. "Christabel," as it stands, is a piece of pure witchcraft, needing no further explanation than the fact of its existence.

Rossetti called Coleridge the Turner of poets, and indeed there is in Coleridge an ærial glitter which we find in no other poet, and in Turner only among painters. With him colour is always melted in atmosphere, which

it shines through like fire within a crystal. It is liquid colour, the dew on flowers, or a mist of rain in bright sunshine. His images are for the most part derived from water, sky, the changes of weather, shadows of things rather than things themselves, and usually mental reflections of them. "A poet ought not to pick Nature's pocket," he said, and it is for colour and sound, in their most delicate forms, that he goes to natural things. He hears

"the merry nightingale

That crowds and hurries and precipitates

With fast thick warble his delicious notes;"

and an ecstasy comes to him out of that natural music which is almost like
that of his own imagination. Only music or strange effects of light can
carry him swiftly enough out of himself, in the presence of visible or
audible things, for that really poetic ecstasy. Then all his languor drops
off from him, like a clogging garment.

The first personal merit which appears in his almost wholly valueless
early
work is a sense of colour. In a poem written at twenty-one he sees Fancy

"Bathed in rich amber-glowing floods of light,"

and next year the same colour reappears, more expressively, in a cloud,

"wholly bright,
With a rich and amber light."

The two women in "The Two Graves," during a momentous pause, are
found
discussing whether the rays of the sun are green or amber; a valley is

"Tinged yellow with the rich departing light;"

seen through corn at evening,

"The level sunshine glimmers with green light;"

and there is the carefully observed

"western sky
And its peculiar tint of yellow green."

"The Ancient Mariner" is full of images of light and luminous colour in
sky
and sea; Glycine's song in "Zapolya" is the most glittering poem in our
language, with a soft glitter like that of light seen through water. And he

is continually endeavouring, as later poets have done on a more deliberate theory, to suffuse sound with colour or make colours literally a form of music; as in an early poem

"Where melodies round honey-dropping flowers,
Footless and wild, like birds of Paradise,
Nor pause, nor perch, hovering on untamed wing."

With him, as with some of them, there is something pathological in this sensitiveness, and in a letter written in 1800 he says: "For the last month I have been trembling on through sands and swamps of evil and bodily grievance. My eyes have been inflamed to a degree that rendered reading scarcely possible; and, strange as it seems, the act of mere composition, as I lay in bed, perceptibly affected them, and my voluntary ideas were every minute passing, more or less transformed into vivid spectra."

Side by side with this sensitiveness to colour, or interfused with it, we find a similar, or perhaps a greater, sensitiveness to sound, Coleridge shows a greater sensitiveness to music than any English poet except Milton.

The sonnet to Linley records his ecstatic responsiveness to music; Purcell's music, too, which he names with Palestrina's ("some madrigals which he heard at Rome") in the "Table-Talk." "I have the intensest delight

in music," he says there, "and can detect good from bad"; a rare thing among poets. In one of his letters he notes: "I hear in my brain ... sensations ... of various degrees of pain, even to a strange sort of uneasy pleasure.... I hear in my brain, and still more in my stomach." There we get the morbid physical basis of a sensitiveness to music which came to mean much to him. In a note referring to "Christabel," and to the reasons why it had never been finished, he says: "I could write as good verse now

as ever I did, if I were perfectly free from vexations, and were in the ad libitum hearing of fine music, which has a sensible effect in harmonizing my thoughts, and in animating and, as it were, lubricating

my
inventive faculty." "Christabel," more than anything of Coleridge, is
composed like music; you might set at the side of each section,
especially
of the opening, *largo, vivacissimo*, and, as the general expression
signature, *tempo rubato*. I know no other verse in which the effects
of music are so precisely copied in metre. Shelley, you feel, sings like a
bird; Blake, like a child or an angel; but Coleridge certainly writes
music.

The metre of the "Ancient Mariner" is a re-reading of the familiar
ballad-
metre, in which nothing of the original force, swiftness or directness is
lost, while a new subtlety, a wholly new music, has come into it. The
metre
of "Christabel" is even more of an invention, and it had more immediate
consequences. The poem was begun in 1797, and not published till
1816; but
in 1801 Scott heard it recited, and in 1805 reproduced what he could of
it
in "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" and the other metrical romances
which, in
their turn, led the way to Byron, who himself heard "Christabel" recited
in
1811. But the secret of Coleridge's instinct of melody and science of
harmony was not discovered. Such ecstasy and such collectedness, a
way of
writing which seems to aim at nothing but the most precisely expressive
simplicity, and yet sets the whole brain dancing to its tune, can hardly be
indicated more exactly than in Coleridge's own words in reference to the
Italian lyrists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They, attained
their aim, he says, "by the avoidance of every word which a gentleman
would
not use in dignified conversation, and of every word and phrase which
none
but a learned man would use; by the studied position of words and

phrases,
so that not only each part should be melodious in itself, but contribute to the harmony of the whole, each note referring and conducing to the melody
of all the foregoing and following words of the same period or stanza;
and,
lastly, with equal labour, the greater because unbetrayed, by the variation
and various harmonies of their metrical movement." These qualities we may
indeed find in many of Coleridge's songs, part Elizabethan, part eighteenth
century, in some of his infantile jingles, his exuberant comic verse (in which, however, there are many words "which a gentleman would not use"),
and in a poem like "Love," which has suffered as much indiscriminate praise
as Raphael's Madonnas, which it resembles in technique and sentiment, and
in its exquisite perfection of commonplace, its _tour de force _of an almost flawless girlishness. But in "Christabel" the technique has an incomparable substance to work upon; substance at once simple and abnormal,
which Coleridge required, in order to be at his best.

It has been pointed out by the profoundest poetical critic of our time that the perfection of Coleridge's style in poetry comes from an equal balance of the clear, somewhat matter-of-fact qualities of the eighteenth century with the remote, imaginative qualities of the nineteenth century. "To please me," said Coleridge in "Table-Talk," "a poem must be either music or
sense." The eighteenth-century manner, with its sense only just coupled with a kind of tame and wingless music, may be seen quite by itself in the
early song from "Robespierre":

"Tell me, on what holy ground
May domestic peace be found?"

Here there is both matter and manner, of a kind; in "The Kiss" of the
same
year, with its one exquisite line,

"The gentle violence of joy,"

there is only the liquid glitter of manner. We get the ultimate union of
eighteenth and nineteenth century qualities in "Work without Hope," and
in

"Youth and Age," which took nine years to bring into its faultless
ultimate

form. There is always a tendency in Coleridge to fall back on the
eighteenth-century manner, with its scrupulous exterior neatness, and its
comfortable sense of something definite said definitely, whenever the
double inspiration flags, and matter and manner do not come together. "I
cannot write without a _body of thought_," he said at a time before he
had found himself or his style; and he added: "Hence my poetry is
crowded

and sweats beneath a heavy burden of ideas and imagery! It has seldom
ease." It was an unparalleled ease in the conveying of a "body of
thought"

that he was finally to attain. In "Youth and Age," think how much is
actually said, and with a brevity impossible in prose; things, too, far
from easy for poetry to say gracefully, such as the image of the steamer,
or the frank reference to "this altered size"; and then see with what an
art, as of the very breathing of syllables, it passes into the most flowing
of lyric forms. Besides these few miracles of his later years, there are
many poems, such as the Flaxman group of "Love, Hope, and Patience
supporting Education," in which we get all that can be poetic in the
epigram softened by imagination, all that can be given by an ecstatic
plain

thinking. The rarest magic has gone, and he knows it; philosophy
remains,

and out of that resisting material he is able, now and again, to weave, in his deftest manner, a few garlands.

ARTHUR SYMONS.

SELECTIONS FROM THE
POEMS OF COLERIDGE

THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

IN SEVEN PARTS

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

ARGUMENT

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

PART I

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

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

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.

"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 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 clifts
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!

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

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

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

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.

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.

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

The very deep did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!
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.

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.

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.

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 a-flame,
The day was well nigh done!
Almost upon the western wave

Rested the broad bright Sun;
When that strange shape drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the Sun.

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

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

Are those her ribs through which the Sun
Did peer, as through a grate?
And is that Woman all her crew?
Is that a Death? and are there two?
Is Death that Woman's mate?

Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The 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.

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 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.

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

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.[1]

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PART V

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It ceased; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
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,
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 swoond.

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

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

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

The other was a softer voice,
As soft as 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?"

SECOND VOICE

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

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

FIRST VOICE

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

SECOND VOICE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed
The 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 away.

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

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

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.

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 shrive 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.

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."

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

Stunned by that loud and dreadful sound,
Which sky and ocean smote,
Like one that hath been seven days drowned
My body lay afloat;

But swift as dreams, myself I found
Within the Pilot's boat.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns:

And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.

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

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

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

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.

[Footnote 1: 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*.]]

CHRISTABEL

PART THE FIRST

'Tis 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.

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.

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 misletoe:
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
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 damsel 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.
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:
Five warriors seized me yesternorn,
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
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:
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.

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?

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!
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.

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?
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 countrée.
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,
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!
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 his is alone in
Thy power to declare,
That in the dim forest
Thou heard'st a low moaning,
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, oh 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 tairn 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!

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?
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.
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 foully 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;
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--
O 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!"
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,
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.
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,
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.
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,

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.

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;
"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 wonder'd what might ail the bird;
For nothing near it could I see,
Save the grass and green herbs underneath the old tree.

"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
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;
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.

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:
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!
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,
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.
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.

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.
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,
A mighty fountain momently was forced:
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.
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.
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.

LEWTI
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;
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,
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.

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
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.

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.

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--
Oh wherefore 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.

* * * * *

"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:

"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!

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

* * * * *

1798.

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!

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.

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;

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;--

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 faltering 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!

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.

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 THREE GRAVES

A FRAGMENT OF A SEXTON'S TALE PART I

The grapes upon the Vicar's wall
Were ripe as ripe could be;

And yellow leaves in sun and wind
Were falling from the tree.

On the hedge-elms in the narrow lane
Still swung the spikes of corn:
Dear Lord! it seems but yesterday--
Young Edward's marriage-morn.

Up through that wood behind the church,
There leads from Edward's door
A mossy track, all over boughed,
For half a mile or more.

And from their house-door by that track
The bride and bridegroom went;
Sweet Mary, though she was not gay,
Seemed cheerful and content.

But when they to the church-yard came,
I've heard poor Mary say,
As soon as she stepped into the sun,
Her heart it died away.

And when the Vicar join'd their hands,
Her limbs did creep and freeze;
But when they prayed, she thought she saw
Her mother on her knees.

And o'er the church-path they returned--
I saw poor Mary's back,
Just as she stepped beneath the boughs
Into the mossy track.

Her feet upon the mossy track
The married maiden set:
That moment--I have heard her say--
She wished she could forget.

The shade o'er-flushed her limbs with heat--
Then came a chill like death:
And when the merry bells rang out,
They seemed to stop her breath.

Beneath the foulest mother's curse
No child could ever thrive:
A mother is a mother still,
The holiest thing alive.

So five months passed: the mother still
Would never heal the strife;
But Edward was a loving man,
And Mary a fond wife.

"My sister may not visit us,
My mother says her nay:
O Edward! you are all to me,
I wish for your sake I could be
More lifesome and more gay.

"I'm dull and sad! indeed, indeed
I know I have no reason!
Perhaps I am not well in health,
And 'tis a gloomy season."

'Twas a drizzly time--no ice, no snow!
And on the few fine days
She stirred not out, lest she might meet
Her mother in the ways.

But Ellen, spite of miry ways
And weather dark and dreary,
Trudged every day to Edward's house,
And made them all more cheery.

Oh! Ellen was a faithful friend,
More dear than any sister!
As cheerful too as singing lark;
And she ne'er left them till 'twas dark,
And then they always missed her.

And now Ash-Wednesday came-that day
But few to church repair:
For on that day you know we read
The Communion prayer.

Our late old Vicar, a kind man,
Once, Sir, he said to me,
He wished that service was clean out
Of our good Liturgy.

The mother walked into the church-
To Ellen's seat she went:
Though Ellen always kept her church
All church-days during Lent.

And gentle Ellen welcomed her
With courteous looks and mild:
Thought she, "What if her heart should melt,
And all be reconciled!"

The day was scarcely like a day--
The clouds were black outright:
And many a night, with half a moon,
I've seen the church more light.

The wind was wild; against the glass
The rain did beat and bicker;
The church-tower swinging over head,
You scarce could hear the Vicar!

And then and there the mother knelt,
And audibly she cried-
"Oh! may a clinging curse consume
This woman by my side!

"O hear me, hear me, Lord in Heaven,
Although you take my life--
O curse this woman, at whose house
Young Edward woo'd his wife.

"By night and day, in bed and bower,
O let her cursed be!!! "
So having prayed, steady and slow,
She rose up from her knee!
And left the church, nor e'er again
The church-door entered she.

I saw poor Ellen kneeling still,
So pale! I guessed not why:
When she stood up, there plainly was
A trouble in her eye.

And when the prayers were done, we all
Came round and asked her why:
Giddy she seemed, and sure, there was
A trouble in her eye.

But ere she from the church-door stepped
She smiled and told us why:
"It was a wicked woman's curse,"
Quoth she, "and what care I?"

She smiled, and smiled, and passed it off
Ere from the door she stept--
But all agree it would have been
Much better had she wept.

And if her heart was not at ease,
This was her constant cry--
"It was a wicked woman's curse--
God's good, and what care I?"

There was a hurry in her looks,
Her struggles she redoubled:
"It was a wicked woman's curse,
And why should I be troubled?"

These tears will come--I dandled her
When 'twas the merest fairy--
Good creature! and she hid it all:
She told it not to Mary.

But Mary heard the tale: her arms
Round Ellen's neck she threw;
"O Ellen, Ellen, she cursed me,
And now she hath cursed you!"

I saw young Edward by himself
Stalk fast adown the lee,
He snatched a stick from every fence,
A twig from every tree.

He snapped them still with hand or knee,
And then away they flew!
As if with his uneasy limbs
He knew not what to do!

You see, good Sir! that single hill?
His farm lies underneath:
He heard it there, he heard it all,
And only gnashed his teeth.

Now Ellen was a darling love
In all his joys and cares:

And Ellen's name and Mary's name
Fast-linked they both together came,
Whene'er he said his prayers.

And in the moment of his prayers
He loved them both alike:
Yea, both sweet names with one sweet joy
Upon his heart did strike!

He reach'd his home, and by his looks
They saw his inward strife:
And they clung round him with their arms,
Both Ellen and his wife.

And Mary could not check her tears,
So on his breast she bowed;
Then frenzy melted into grief,
And Edward wept aloud.

Dear Ellen did not weep at all,
But closelier did she cling,
And turned her face and looked as if
She saw some frightful thing.

PART II

To see a man tread over graves
I hold it no good mark;
'Tis wicked in the sun and moon,
And bad luck in the dark!

You see that grave? The Lord he gives,
The Lord, he takes away:
O Sir! the child of my old age
Lies there as cold as clay.

Except that grave, you scarce see one
That was not dug by me;
I'd rather dance upon 'em all
Than tread upon these three!

"Aye, Sexton!'tis a touching tale."
You, Sir! are but a lad;
This month I'm in my seventieth year,
And still it makes me sad.

And Mary's sister told it me,
For three good hours and more;
Though I had heard it, in the main,
From Edward's self, before.

Well! it passed off! the gentle Ellen
Did well nigh dote on Mary;
And she went oftener than before,
And Mary loved her more and more:
She managed all the dairy.

To market she on market-days,
To church on Sundays came;
All seemed the same: all seemed so, Sir!
But all was not the same!

Had Ellen lost her mirth? Oh! no!
But she was seldom cheerful;
And Edward look'd as if he thought
That Ellen's mirth was fearful.

When by herself, she to herself
Must sing some merry rhyme;
She could not now be glad for hours,
Yet silent all the time.

And when she soothed her friend, through all
Her soothing words 'twas plain
She had a sore grief of her own,
A haunting in her brain.

And oft she said, I'm not grown thin!
And then her wrist she spanned;
And once when Mary was down-cast,
She took her by the hand,
And gazed upon her, and at first
She gently pressed her hand;

Then harder, till her grasp at length
Did gripe like a convulsion!
"Alas!" said she, "we ne'er can be
Made happy by compulsion!"

And once her both arms suddenly
Round Mary's neck she flung,
And her heart panted, and she felt
The words upon her tongue.

She felt them coming, but no power
Had she the words to smother;
And with a kind of shriek she cried,
"Oh Christ! you're like your mother!"

So gentle Ellen now no more
Could make this sad house cheery;
And Mary's melancholy ways
Drove Edward wild and weary.

Lingering he raised his latch at eve,
Though tired in heart and limb:
He loved no other place, and yet
Home was no home to him.

One evening he took up a book,
And nothing in it read;
Then flung it down, and groaning cried,
"O! Heaven! that I were dead."

Mary looked up into his face,
And nothing to him said;
She tried to smile, and on his arm
Mournfully leaned her head.

And he burst into tears, and fell
Upon his knees in prayer:
"Her heart is broke! O God! my grief,
It is too great to bear!"

'Twas such a foggy time as makes
Old sextons, Sir! like me,
Rest on their spades to cough; the spring
Was late uncommonly.

And then the hot days, all at once,
They came, we knew not how:
You looked about for shade, when scarce
A leaf was on a bough.

It happened then ('twas in the bower,
A furlong up the wood:
Perhaps you know the place, and yet
I scarce know how you should,)

No path leads thither, 'tis not nigh
To any pasture-plot;
But clustered near the chattering brook,
Lone hollies marked the spot.

Those hollies of themselves a shape
As of an arbour took,

A close, round arbour; and it stands
Not three strides from a brook.

Within this arbour, which was still
With scarlet berries hung,
Were these three friends, one Sunday morn,
Just as the first bell rung.

'Tis sweet to hear a brook, 'tis sweet
To hear the Sabbath-bell,
'Tis sweet to hear them both at once,
Deep in a woody dell.

His limbs along the moss, his head
Upon a mossy heap,
With shut-up senses, Edward lay:
That brook e'en on a working day
Might chatter one to sleep.

And he had passed a restless night,
And was not well in health;
The women sat down by his side,
And talked as 'twere by stealth.

"The Sun peeps through the close thick leaves,
See, dearest Ellen! see!
'Tis in the leaves, a little sun,
No bigger than your ee;

"A tiny sun, and it has got
A perfect glory too;
Ten thousand threads and hairs of light,
Make up a glory gay and bright
Round that small orb, so blue."

And then they argued of those rays,
What colour they might be;

Says this, "They're mostly green"; says that,
"They're amber-like to me."

So they sat chatting, while bad thoughts
Were troubling Edward's rest;
But soon they heard his hard quick pants,
And the thumping in his breast.

"A mother too!" these self-same words
Did Edward mutter plain;
His face was drawn back on itself,
With horror and huge pain.

Both groan'd at once, for both knew well
What thoughts were in his mind;
When he waked up, and stared like one
That hath been just struck blind.

He sat upright; and ere the dream
Had had time to depart,
"O God, forgive me!" (he exclaimed)
"I have torn out her heart."

Then Ellen shrieked, and forthwith burst
Into ungentle laughter;
And Mary shivered, where she sat,
And never she smiled after.

1797-1809.

Carmen reliquum in futurum tempus relegatum. To-morrow!
and To-morrow! and To-morrow!----[Note of S.T.C.--1815.]

DEJECTION: AN ODE

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.

I

Well! 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 drafty that moans and rakes
Upon the strings of this Æolian lute,
Which better far were mute.
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--

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
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!

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 our ear or sight,
All melodies the echoes of that voice,
All colours a suffusion from that light.

VI

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.

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-tairn, 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!
What tell'st thou now about?
'Tis of the rushing of an 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.

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.

1802.

ODE TO TRANQUILLITY

Tranquility! thou better name
Than all the family of Fame!
Thou ne'er wilt leave my ripper age
To low intrigue, or factious rage;
For oh! dear child of thoughtful Truth,

To thee I gave my early youth,
And left the bark, and blest the steadfast shore,
Ere yet the tempest rose and scared me with its roar.

Who late and lingering seeks thy shrine,
On him but seldom, Power divine,
Thy spirit rests! Satiety
And Sloth, poor counterfeits of thee,
Mock the tired worldling. Idle Hope
And dire Remembrance interlope,
To vex the feverish slumbers of the mind:
The bubble floats before, the spectre stalks behind.

But me thy gentle hand will lead
At morning through the accustomed mead;
And in the sultry summer's heat
Will build me up a mossy seat;
And when the gust of Autumn crowds,
And breaks the busy moonlight clouds,
Thou best the thought canst raise, the heart attune,
Light as the busy clouds, calm as the gliding moon.

The feeling heart, the searching soul,
To thee I dedicate the whole!
And while within myself I trace
The greatness of some future race,
Aloof with hermit-eye I scan
The present works of present man--
A wild and dream-like trade of blood and guile,
Too foolish for a tear, too wicked for a smile!

1801.

FRANCE: AN ODE

I

Ye 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!
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, every thing 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 overwhelm the disenchanted nation,
Like fiends embattled by a wizard's wand,
The Monarchs marched in evil day,
And Britain join'd the dire array;
Though dear her shores and circling ocean,
Though many friendships, many youthful loves

Had sworn 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 paeans 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!"
And when, to soothe my soul, that hoped and trembled,
The dissonance ceased, and all seemed calm and bright;
When France her front deep-scar'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."

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 mountaineer--
O France, that mockest Heaven, adulterous, blind,
And patriot only in pernicious toils!
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)
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.

FEARS IN SOLITUDE

WRITTEN IN APRIL 1798, DURING THE
ALARM OF AN INVASION

A Green and silent spot, amid the hills,
A small and silent dell! O'er stiller place
No singing sky-lark 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,
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
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
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
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.
Oh! 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,
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,
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,
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!
Oh! 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, husbands, all
Who ever gazed with fondness on the forms
Which grew up with you round the same fire-side,
And all who ever heard the sabbath-bells
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 sea-weed, 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.

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.
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?
There lives nor form nor feeling in my soul
Unborrowed from my country! O divine
And beauteous 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!
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 sojourning
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!
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.

THIS LIME-TREE BOWER MY PRISON

ADDRESSED TO CHARLES LAMB, 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;
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 water-fall! 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, me thinks, most glad,
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,
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,
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 creaking o'er thy head, and had a charm
For thee, my gentle-hearted Charles, to whom
No sound is dissonant which tells of Life.

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
(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 high-road, 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
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,
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,
Not 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 retains 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;
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
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,
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.

HYMN BEFORE SUN-RISE, IN THE VALE OF CHAMOUNI

Besides the Rivers, Arve and Arveiron, which have their sources in the
foot
of Mont Blanc, five conspicuous torrents rush down its sides; and within
a
few paces of the Glaciers, the Gentiana Major grows in immense
numbers,
with its "flowers of loveliest blue."

Hast thou a charm to stay the morning-star
In his steep course? So long he seems to pause
On thy bald awful head, O sovran BLANC!
The Arve and Arveiron at thy base
Rave ceaselessly; but thou, most awful Form!
Risest from forth thy silent sea of pines,
How silently! Around thee and above
Deep is the air and dark, substantial, black,
An ebon mass: methinks thou piercest it,
As with a wedge! But when I look again,
It is thine own calm home, thy crystal shrine,
Thy habitation from eternity!
O dread and silent Mount! I gazed upon thee,
Till thou, still present to the bodily sense,
Didst vanish from my thought: entranced in prayer
I worshipped the Invisible alone.

Yet, like some sweet beguiling melody,
So sweet, we know not we are listening to it,
Thou, the meanwhile, wast blending with my Thought,
Yea, with my Life and Life's own secret joy:
Till the dilating Soul, enrapt, transfused,
Into the mighty vision passing--there
As in her natural form, swelled vast to Heaven!

Awake, my soul! not only passive praise
Thou owest! not alone these swelling tears,
Mute thanks and secret ecstasy! Awake,
Voice of sweet song! Awake, my heart, awake!
Green vales and icy cliffs, all join my Hymn.

Thou first and chief, sole sovereign of the Vale!
O struggling with the darkness all the night,
And visited all night by troops of stars,
Or when they climb the sky or when they sink:
Companion of the morning-star at dawn,

Thyself Earth's rosy star, and of the dawn
Co-herald: wake, O wake, and utter praise!
Who sank thy sunless pillars deep in Earth?
Who fill'd thy countenance with rosy light?
Who made thee parent of perpetual streams?

And you, ye five wild torrents fiercely glad!
Who called you forth from night and utter death,
From dark and icy caverns called you forth,
Down those precipitous, black, jagged rocks,
For ever shattered and the same for ever?
Who gave you your invulnerable life,
Your strength, your speed, your fury, and your joy.
Unceasing thunder and eternal foam?
And who commanded (and the silence came),
Here let the billows stiffen, and have rest?

Ye Ice-falls! ye that from the mountain's brow
Adown enormous ravines slope amain--
Torrents, methinks, that heard a mighty voice,
And stopped at once amid their maddest plunge!
Motionless torrents! silent cataracts!
Who made you glorious as the Gates of Heaven
Beneath the keen full moon? Who bade the sun
Clothe you with rainbows? Who, with living flowers
Of loveliest blue, spread garlands at your feet?--
GOD! let the torrents, like a shout of nations,
Answer! and let the ice-plains echo, GOD!
GOD! sing ye meadow-streams with gladsome voice!
Ye pine-groves, with your soft and soul-like sounds!
And they too have a voice, yon piles of snow,
And in their perilous fall shall thunder, GOD!

Ye living flowers that skirt the eternal frost!
Ye wild goats sporting round the eagle's nest!
Ye eagles, play-mates of the mountain-storm!

Ye lightnings, the dread arrows of the clouds!
Ye signs and wonders of the element!
Utter forth GOD, and fill the hills with praise!

Thou too; hoar Mount! with thy sky-pointing peaks,
Oft from whose feet the avalanche, unheard,
Shoots downward, glittering through the pure serene
Into the depth of clouds, that veil thy breast--
Thou too again, stupendous Mountain! thou
That as I raise my head, awhile bowed low
In adoration, upward from thy base
Slow travelling with dim eyes suffused with tears,
Solemnly seemest, like a vapoury cloud,
To rise before me--Rise, O ever rise,
Rise like a cloud of incense from the Earth!
Thou kingly Spirit throned among the hills,
Thou dread ambassador from Earth to Heaven,
Great Hierarch! tell thou the silent sky,
And tell the stars, and tell yon rising sun,
Earth, with her thousand voices, praises GOD.

1802

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, every where
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 birth-place, 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!
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 mock 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,
Townsmen, or aunt, or sister more beloved,
My play-mate 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,
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 night thatch
Smokes in the sun-thaw; whether the eave-drops fall
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.

THE NIGHTINGALE

A CONVERSATION POEM, WRITTEN IN APRIL 1798

No 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,
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,
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,
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 king-cups 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
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
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 play-mate. He knows well
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 moon-beam! 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.

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,
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 Elfins 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 every
where--

Methinks, it should have been impossible
Not to love all things in a world so filled;
Where the breeze warbles, and the mute still
air

In 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 eye-lids 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?

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,
Wildered and dark, and gave me to possess
Peace, and this cot, and thee, dear honoured
Maid!

1795.

THE PICTURE

OR THE LOVER'S RESOLUTION

Through weeds and thorns, and matted underwood
I force my way; now climb, and now descend
O'er rocks, or bare or mossy, with wild foot
Crushing the purple whorts;^[1] while oft unseen,
Hurrying along the drifted forest-leaves,
The scared snake rustles. Onward still I toil,

I know not, ask not whither! A new joy,
Lovely as light, sudden as summer gust,
And gladsome as the first-born of the spring,
Beckons me on, or follows from behind,
Playmate, or guide! The master-passion quelled,
I feel that I am free. With dun-red bark
The fir-trees, and the unfrequent slender oak,
Forth from this tangle wild of bush and brake
Soar up, and form a melancholy vault
High o'er me, murmuring like a distant sea.
Here Wisdom might resort, and here Remorse;
Here too the love-lorn man, who, sick in soul,
And of this busy human heart aweary,
Worships the spirit of unconscious life
In tree or wild-flower.--Gentle lunatic!
If so he might not wholly cease to be,
He would far rather not be that he is;
But would be something that he knows not of,
In winds or waters, or among the rocks!

But hence, fond wretch! breathe not contagion
here!

No myrtle-walks are these: these are no groves
Where Love dare loiter! If in sullen mood
He should stray hither, the low stumps shall
gore

His dainty feet, the briar and the thorn
Make his plumes haggard. Like a wounded
bird

Easily caught, ensnare him, O ye Nymphs,
Ye Oreads chaste, ye dusky Dryades!

And you, ye Earth-winds! you that make at
morn

The dew-drops quiver on the spiders' webs!
You, O ye wingless Airs! that creep between
The rigid stems of heath and bitten furze,

Within whose scanty shade, at summer-noon,
The mother-sheep hath worn a hollow bed--
Ye, that now cool her fleece with dropless damp,
Now pant and murmur with her feeding lamb.
Chase, chase him, all ye Fays, and elfin Gnomes!
With prickles sharper than his darts bemock
His little Godship, making him perforce
Creep through a thorn-bush on yon hedgehog's
back.

This is my hour of triumph! I can now
With my own fancies play the merry fool,
And laugh away worse folly, being free.
Here will I seat myself, beside this old,
Hollow, and weedy oak, which ivy-twine
Clothes as with net-work: here will couch my limbs,
Close by this river, in this silent shade,
As safe and sacred from the step of man
As an invisible world--unheard, unseen,
And listening only to the pebbly brook
That murmurs with a dead, yet tinkling sound;
Or to the bees, that in the neighbouring trunk
Make honey-hoards. The breeze, that visits me,
Was never Love's accomplice, never raised
The tendril ringlets from the maiden's brow,
And the blue, delicate veins above her cheek;
Ne'er played the wanton--never half disclosed
The maiden's snowy bosom, scattering thence
Eye-poisons for some love-distempered youth,
Who ne'er henceforth may see an aspen-grove
Shiver in sunshine, but his feeble heart
Shall flow away like a dissolving thing.

Sweet breeze! thou only, if I guess aright,
Liftest the feathers of the robin's breast,
That swells its little breast, so full of song,

Singing above me, on the mountain-ash.
And thou too, desert stream! no pool of thine,
Though clear as lake in latest summer-eve,
Did e'er reflect the stately virgin's robe,
The face, the form divine, the downcast look
Contemplative! Behold! her open palm
Presses her cheek and brow! her elbow rests
On the bare branch of half-uprooted tree,
That leans towards its mirror! Who erewhile
Had from her countenance turned, or looked by stealth
(For fear is true-love's cruel nurse), he now
With steadfast gaze and unoffending eye,
Worships the watery idol, dreaming hopes
Delicious to the soul, but fleeting, vain,
E'en as that phantom-world on which he gazed,
But not unheeded gazed: for see, ah! see,
The sportive tyrant with her left hand plucks
The heads of tall flowers that behind her grow,
Lychnis, and willow-herb, and fox-glove bells:
And suddenly, as one that toys with time,
Scatters them on the pool! Then all the charm
Is broken--all that phantom world so fair
Vanishes, and a thousand circlets spread,
And each mis-shapes the other. Stay awhile,
Poor youth, who scarcely dar'st lift up thine eyes!

The stream will soon renew its smoothness, soon
The visions will return! And lo! he stays:
And soon the fragments dim of lovely forms
Come trembling back, unite, and now once more
The pool becomes a mirror; and behold
Each wildflower on the marge inverted there,
And there the half-uprooted tree--but where,
O where the virgin's snowy arm, that leaned
On its bare branch? He turns, and she is gone!
Homeward she steals through many a woodland maze

Which he shall seek in vain. Ill-fated youth!
Go, day by day, and waste thy manly prime
In mad love-yearning by the vacant brook,
Till sickly thoughts bewitch thine eyes, and thou
Behold'st her shadow still abiding there,
The Naiad of the mirror!

Not to thee,
O wild and desert stream! belongs this tale:
Gloomy and dark art thou-the crowded firs
Spire from thy shores, and stretch across thy bed,
Making thee doleful as a cavern-well:
Save when the shy king-fishers build their nest
On thy steep banks, no loves hast thou, wild stream!

This be my chosen haunt--emancipate
From passion's dreams, a freeman, and alone,
I rise and trace its devious course. O lead,
Lead me to deeper shades and lonelier glooms.
Lo! stealing through the canopy of firs,
How fair the sunshine spots that mossy rock,
Isle of the river, whose disparted waves
Dart off asunder with an angry sound,
How soon to re-unite! And see! they meet,
Each in the other lost and found: and see
Placeless, as spirits, one soft water-sun
Throbbing within them, heart at once and eye!
With its soft neighbourhood of filmy clouds,
The stains and shadings of forgotten tears,
Dimness o'erswum with lustre! Such the hour
Of deep enjoyment, following love's brief feuds;
And hark, the noise of a near waterfall!
I pass forth into light--I find myself
Beneath a weeping birch (most beautiful
Of forest trees, the Lady of the Woods),
Hard by the brink of a tall weedy rock

That overbrows the cataract. How burst?
The landscape on my sight! Two crescent hills
Fold in behind each other, and so make
A circular vale, and land-locked, as might seem,
With brook and bridge, and grey stone cottages,
Half hid by rocks and fruit-trees. At my feet,
The whortle-berries are bedewed with spray,
Dashed upwards by the furious waterfall.
How solemnly the pendent ivy-mass
Swings in its winnow: All the air is calm.
The smoke from cottage-chimneys, tinged with light,
Rises in columns; from this house alone,
Close by the waterfall, the column slants,
And feels its ceaseless breeze. But what is this?
That cottage, with its slanting chimney-smoke,
And close beside its porch a sleeping child,
His dear head pillow'd on a sleeping dog--
One arm between its fore-legs, and the hand
Holds loosely its small handful of wildflowers,
Unfilleted, and of unequal lengths.
A curious picture, with a master's haste
Sketched on a strip of pinky-silver skin,
Peeled from the birchen bark! Divinest maid!
Yon bark her canvas, and those purple berries
Her pencil! See, the juice is scarcely dried
On the fine skin! She has been newly here;
And lo! yon patch of heath has been her couch--
The pressure still remains! O blessed couch!
For this may'st thou flower early, and the sun,
Slanting at eve, rest bright, and linger long
Upon thy purple bells! O Isabel!
Daughter of genius! stateliest of our maids!
More beautiful than whom Alcæus wooed,
The Lesbian woman of immortal song!
O child of genius! stately, beautiful,
And full of love to all, save only me,

And not ungentle e'en to me! My heart,
Why beats it thus? Through yonder coppicewood
Needs must the pathway turn, that leads straightway
On to her father's house. She is alone!
The night draws on--such ways are hard to hit--
And fit it is I should restore this sketch,
Dropt unawares no doubt. Why should I yearn
To keep the relique? 'twill but idly feed
The passion that consumes me. Let me haste!
The picture in my hand which she has left;
She cannot blame me that I follow'd her:
And I may be her guide the long wood through.

1802.

[Footnote 1: _Vaccinium Myrtillus_ known by the different names of
Whorts, Whortle-berries, Bilberries; and in the North of England,
Blea-berries and Bloom-berries. [Note by S. T. C. 1802.]]

THE GARDEN OF BOCCACCIO

Of late, in one of those most weary hours,
When life seems emptied of all genial powers,
A dreary mood, which he who ne'er has known
May bless his happy lot, I sate alone;
And, from the numbing spell to win relief,
Call'd on the Past for thought of glee or grief.
In vain! bereft alike of grief and glee,
I sate and cow'r'd o'er my own vacancy!
And as I watch'd the dull continuous ache,
Which, all else slum'bring, seem'd alone to wake;
O Friend! long wont to notice yet conceal,
And soothe by silence what words cannot heal,
I but half saw that quiet hand of thine
Place on my desk this exquisite design.
Boccaccio's Garden and its faery,

The love, the joyaunce, and the gallantry!
An Idyll, with Boccaccio's spirit warm,
Framed in the silent poesy of form.
Like flocks adown a newly-bathed steep
Emerging from a mist: or like a stream
Of music soft that not dispels the sleep,
But casts in happier moulds the slumberer's dream,
Gazed by an idle eye with silent might
The picture stole upon my inward sight.
A tremulous warmth crept gradual o'er my chest,
As though an infant's finger touch'd my breast.
And one by one (I know not whence) were brought
All spirits of power that most had stirr'd my thought
In selfless boyhood, on a new world tost
Of wonder, and in its own fancies lost;
Or charm'd my youth, that, kindled from above,
Loved ere it loved, and sought a form for love;
Or lent a lustre to the earnest scan
Of manhood, musing what and whence is man!
Wild strain of Scalds, that in the sea-worn caves
Rehearsed their war-spell to the winds and waves;
Or fateful hymn of those prophetic maids,
That call'd on Hertha in deep forest glades;
Or minstrel lay, that cheer'd the baron's feast;
Or rhyme of city pomp, of monk and priest,
Judge, mayor, and many a guild in long array,
To high-church pacing on the great saint's day.
And many a verse which to myself I sang,
That woke the tear yet stole away the pang,
Of hopes which in lamenting I renew'd.
And last, a matron now, of sober mien,
Yet radiant still and with no earthly sheen,
Whom as a faery child my childhood woo'd
Even in my dawn of thought--Philosophy;
Though then unconscious of herself, pardie,
She bore no other name than Poesy;

And, like a gift from heaven, in life's glee,
That had but newly left a mother's knee,
Prattled and play'd with bird and flower, and stone,
As if with elfin playfellows well known,
And life reveal'd to innocence alone.

Thanks, gentle artist! now I can descry
Thy fair creation with a mastering eye,
And _all_ awake! And now in fix'd gaze stand,
Now wander through the Eden of thy hand;
Praise the green arches, on the fountain clear
See fragment shadows of the crossing deer;
And with that serviceable nymph I stoop
The crystal from its restless pool to scoop.
I see no longer! I myself am there,
Sit on the ground-sward, and the banquet share.
'Tis I, that sweep that lute's love-echoing strings,
And gaze upon the maid who gazing sings;
Or pause and listen to the tinkling bells
From the high tower, and think that there she dwells.
With old Boccaccio's soul I stand possest,
And breathe an air like life, that swells my chest.
The brightness of the world, O thou once free,
And always fair, rare land of courtesy!
O Florence! with the Tuscan fields and hills
And famous Arno, fed with all their rills;
Thou brightest star of star-bright Italy!
Rich, ornate, populous, all treasures thine,
The golden corn, the olive, and the vine.
Fair cities, gallant mansions, castles old,
And forests, where beside his leafy hold
The sullen boar hath heard the distant horn,
And whets his tusks against the gnarled thorn;
Palladian palace with its storied halls;
Fountains, where Love lies listening to their falls;
Gardens, where flings the bridge its airy span,

And Nature makes her happy home with man;
Where many a gorgeous flower is duly fed
With its own rill, on its own spangled bed,
And wreathes the marble urn, or leans its head,
A mimic mourner, that with veil withdrawn
Weeps liquid gems, the presents of the dawn;--
Thine all delights, and every muse is thine;
And more than all, the embrace and intertwine
Of all with all in gay and twinkling dance!
Mid gods of Greece and warriors of romance,
See! Boccace sits, unfolding on his knees
The new-found roll of old Maeonides;
But from his mantle's fold, and near the heart,
Peers Ovid's Holy Book of Love's sweet smart!

O all-enjoying and all-blending sage,
Long be it mine to con thy mazy page,
Where, half conceal'd, the eye of fancy views
Fauns, nymphs, and winged saints, all gracious to thy muse!

Still in thy garden let me watch their pranks,
And see in Dian's vest between the ranks
Of the trim vines, some maid that half believes
The _vestal_ fires, of which her lover grieves,
With that sly satyr peeping through the leaves!

1828.

THE TWO FOUNTS

STANZAS ADDRESSED TO A LADY [MRS. ADERS] ON
HER RECOVERY WITH UNBLEMISHED LOOKS,
FROM A SEVERE ATTACK OF PAIN

'T was my last waking thought, how it could be
That thou, sweet friend, such anguish should'st endure;
When straight from Dreamland came a Dwarf, and he

Could tell the cause, forsooth, and knew the cure.
Methought he fronted me with peering look
Fix'd on my heart; and read aloud in game
The loves and griefs therein, as from a book:
And uttered praise like one who wished to blame.

In every heart (quoth he) since Adam's sin
Two Founts there are, of Suffering and of Cheer!
That to let forth, and _this_ to keep within!
But she, whose aspect I find imaged here,

Of Pleasure only will to all dispense,
That Fount alone unlock, by no distress
Choked or turned inward, but still issue thence
Unconquered cheer, persistent loveliness.

As on the driving cloud the shiny bow,
That gracious thing made up of tears and light,
Mid the wild rack and rain that slants below
Stands smiling forth, unmoved and freshly bright:

As though the spirits of all lovely flowers,
Inweaving each its wreath and dewy crown,
Or ere they sank to earth in vernal showers,
Had built a bridge to tempt the angels down.

Even so, Eliza! on that face of thine,
On that benignant face, whose look alone
(The soul's translucence thro' her crystal shrine!)
Has power to soothe all anguish but thine own,

A beauty hovers still, and ne'er takes wing,
But with a silent charm compels the stern
And tort'ring Genius of the bitter spring,
To shrink aback, and cower upon his urn.

Who then needs wonder, if (no outlet found
In passion, spleen, or strife) the Fount of Pain
O'erflowing beats against its lovely mound,
And in wild flashes shoots from heart to brain?

Sleep, and the Dwarf with that unsteady gleam
On his raised lip, that aped a critic smile,
Had passed: yet I, my sad thoughts to beguile,
Lay weaving on the tissue of my dream;

Till audibly at length I cried, as though
Thou hadst indeed been present to my eyes,
O sweet, sweet sufferer; if the case be so,
I pray thee, be _less_ good, _less_ sweet, _less_ wise!

In every look a barbed arrow send,
On those soft lips let scorn and anger live!
Do _any_ thing, rather than thus, sweet friend!
Hoard for thyself the pain, thou wilt not give!

1826.

A DAY-DREAM

My eyes make pictures, when they are shut:
I see a fountain, large and fair,
A willow and a ruined hut,
And thee, and me and Mary there.
O Mary! make thy gentle lap our pillow!
Bend o'er us, like a bower, my beautiful green willow!

A wild-rose roofs the ruined shed,
And that and summer well agree:
And lo! where Mary leans her head,
Two dear names carved upon the tree!
And Mary's tears, they are not tears of sorrow:
Our sister and our friend will both be here tomorrow.

'Twas day! but now few, large, and bright,
The stars are round the crescent moon!
And now it is a dark warm night,
The balmiest of the month of June!
A glow-worm fall'n, and on the marge remounting
Shines, and its shadow shines, fit stars for our sweet fountain.

O ever--ever be thou blest!
For dearly, Asra! love I thee!
This brooding warmth across my breast,
This depth of tranquil bliss--ah, me!
Fount, tree and shed are gone, I know not whither,
But in one quiet room we three are still together.

The shadows dance upon the wall,
By the still dancing fire-flames made;
And now they slumber moveless all!
And now they melt to one deep shade!
But not from me shall this mild darkness steal thee;
I dream thee with mine eyes, and at my heart I feel thee!

Thine eyelash on my cheek doth play--
'Tis Mary's hand upon my brow!
But let me check this tender lay
Which none may hear but she and thou!
Like the still hive at quiet midnight humming,
Murmur it to yourselves, ye two beloved women!

?1807.

SONNET

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

Charles! 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.

LINES TO W. LINLEY, ESQ.

WHILE HE SANG A SONG TO PURCELL'S MUSIC

While my young cheek retains its healthful hues,
And I have many friends who hold me dear,
Linley! methinks, I would not often hear
Such melodies as thine, lest I should lose
All memory of the wrongs and sore distress
For which my miserable brethren weep!
But should uncomforted misfortunes steep
My daily bread in tears and bitterness;
And if at death's dread moment I should lie
With no beloved face at my bed-side,
To fix the last glance of my closing eye,
Methinks such strains, breathed by my angel-guide,
Would make me pass the cup of anguish by,
Mix with the blest, nor know that I had died!

1797.

DOMESTIC PEACE

[FROM THE FALL OF ROBESPIERRE, ACT I.]

Tell me, on what holy ground
May Domestic Peace be found?
Halcyon daughter of the skies,
Far on fearful wings she flies,
From the pomp of Sceptered State,
From the Rebel's noisy hate.
In a cottaged vale She dwells,
Listening to the Sabbath bells!
Still around her steps are seen
Spotless Honour's meeker mien,
Love, the sire of pleasing fears,
Sorrow smiling through her tears,
And conscious of the past employ
Memory, bosom-spring of joy.

1794.

SONG

SUNG BY GLYCINE IN _ZAPOLYA_, ACT II. SCENE 2.

A 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 dew-drops will not stay.
Sweet month of May,
We must away;
Far, far away!
To-day! to-day!"

1815.

HUNTING SONG

[_ZAPOLYA_, ACT IV. SCENE 2]

Up, 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.

1815.

WESTPHALIAN SONG

[The following is an almost literal translation of a very old and very favourite song among the Westphalian Boors. The turn at the end is the same with one of Mr. Dibdin's excellent songs, and the air to which it is sung by the Boors is remarkably sweet and lively.]

When thou to my true-love com'st
Greet her from me kindly;
When she asks thee how I fare?
Say, folks in Heaven fare finely.

When she asks, "What! Is he sick?"
Say, dead!--and when for sorrow
She begins to sob and cry,
Say, I come to-morrow.

?1799.

YOUTH AND AGE

Verse, a breeze mid blossoms straying,
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, woeful 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!
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 woeful 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:
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.

Dew-drops 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;
Yet hath outstay'd his welcome while,

And tells the jest without the smile.

1823-1832.

WORK WITHOUT HOPE

LINES COMPOSED 21ST FEBRUARY 1827

All 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.
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.

TIME, REAL AND IMAGINARY

AN ALLEGORY

On 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.

LOVE'S APPARITION AND EVANISHMENT

AN ALLEGORIC ROMANCE

Like a lone Arab, old and blind,
Some caravan had left behind,
Who sits beside a ruin'd well,
Where the shy sand-asps bask and swell;
And now he hangs his aged head aslant,
And listens for a human sound--in vain!
And now the aid, which Heaven alone can grant,
Upturns his eyeless face from Heaven to gain;--
Even thus, in vacant mood, one sultry hour,
Resting my eye upon a drooping plant,
With brow low-bent, within my garden-bower,
I sate upon the couch of camomile;
And--whether 'twas a transient sleep, perchance,
Flitted across the idle brain, the while
I watch'd the sickly calm with aimless scope,
In my own heart; or that, indeed a trance,
Turn'd my eye inward--thee, O genial Hope,
Love's elder sister! thee did I behold,
Drest as a bridesmaid, but all pale and cold,
With roseless cheek, all pale and cold and dim,
Lie lifeless at my feet!
And then came Love, a sylph in bridal trim,
And stood beside my seat;
She bent, and kiss'd her sister's lips,
As she was wont to do;--
Alas! 'twas but a chilling breath

Woke just enough of life in death
To make Hope die anew.

L'ENVOY

In vain we supplicate the Powers above;
There is no resurrection for the Love
That, nursed in tenderest care, yet fades away
In the chill'd heart by gradual self-decay.

1833.

LOVE, HOPE, AND PATIENCE IN EDUCATION

O'er wayward childhood would'st thou hold firm rule,
And sun thee in the light of happy faces;
Love, Hope, and Patience, these must be thy graces,
And in thine own heart let them first keep school.
For as old Atlas on his broad neck places
Heaven's starry globe, and there sustains it;--so
Do these upbear the little world below
Of Education,--Patience, Love, and Hope.
Methinks, I see them group'd in seemly show,
The straiten'd arms upraised, the palms aslope,
And robes that touching as adown they flow,
Distinctly blend, like snow emboss'd in snow.
O part them never! If Hope prostrate lie,
Love too will sink and die.
But Love is subtle, and doth proof derive
From her own life that Hope is yet alive;
And bending o'er, with soul-transfusing eyes,
And the soft murmurs of the mother dove,
Wooes back the fleeting spirit, and half supplies;--
Thus Love repays to Hope what Hope first gave to Love.
Yet haply there will come a weary day,
When overtask'd at length

Both Love and Hope beneath the load give way.
Then with a statue's smile, a statue's strength,
Stands the mute sister, Patience, nothing loth,
And both supporting does the work of both.

1829.

DUTY SURVIVING SELF-LOVE

THE ONLY SURE FRIEND OF DECLINING LIFE A SOLILOQUY

Unchanged within, to see all changed without,
Is a blank lot and hard to bear, no doubt.
Yet why at others' wanings should'st thou fret?
Then only might'st thou feel a just regret,
Hadst thou withheld thy love or hid thy light
In selfish forethought of neglect and slight.
O wiselier then, from feeble yearnings freed,
While, and _on whom_, thou may'st--shine on! nor heed
Whether the object by reflected light
Return thy radiance or absorb it quite:
And though thou notest from thy safe recess
Old friends burn dim, like lamps in noisome air,
Love them for what they _are_; nor love them less,
Because to _thee_ they are not what they _were_.

1826.

LOVE'S FIRST HOPE

O Fair is Love's first hope to gentle mind!
As Eve's first star thro' fleecy cloudlet peeping;
And sweeter than the gentle south-west wind,
O'er willowy meads, and shadow'd waters creeping,
And Ceres' golden fields;--the sultry hind
Meets it with brow uplift, and stays his reaping.

?1824.

PHANTOM

All look and likeness caught from earth,
All accident of kin and birth,
Had pass'd away. There was no trace
Of aught on that illumined face,
Upraised beneath the rifted stone,
But of one spirit all her own;--
She, she herself, and only she,
Shone through her body visibly.

1804.

TO NATURE

It may indeed be phantasy: when I
Essay to draw from all created things
Deep, heartfelt, inward joy that closely clings;
And trace in leaves and flowers that round me lie
Lessons of love and earnest piety.
So let it be; and if the wide world rings
In mock of this belief, it brings
Nor fear, nor grief, nor vain, perplexity.
So will I build my altar in the fields,
And the blue sky my fretted dome shall be,
And the sweet fragrance that the wild flower yields
Shall be the incense I will yield to Thee,
Thee only God! and thou shalt not despise
Even me, the priest of this poor sacrifice.

?1820.

FANCY IN NUBIBUS

OR THE POET IN THE CLOUDS

O! 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.

CONSTANCY TO AN IDEAL OBJECT

Since all that beat about in Nature's range,
Or veer or vanish; why should'st thou remain
The only constant in a world of change,
O yearning Thought! that liv'st but in the brain?
Call to the Hours, that in the distance play,
The faery people of the future day--
Fond Thought! not one of all that shining swarm
Will breathe on _thee_ with life-enkindling breath,
Till when, like strangers shelt'ring from a storm,
Hope and Despair meet in the porch of Death!
Yet still thou haunt'st me; and though well I see,
She is not thou, and only thou art she,
Still, still as though some dear _embodied_ Good,
Some _living_ Love before my eyes there stood
With answering look a ready ear to lend,
I mourn to thee and say--"Ah! loveliest friend!
That this the meed of all my toils might be,

To have a home, an English home, and thee!"
Vain repetition! Home and Thou are one.
The peacefull'st cot, the moon shall shine upon,
Lulled by the thrush and wakened by the lark,
Without thee were but a becalmed bark,
Whose helmsman on an ocean waste and wide
Sits mute and pale his mouldering helm beside.

And art thou nothing? Such thou art, as when
The woodman winding westward up the glen
At wintry dawn, where o'er the sheep-track's maze
The viewless snow-mist weaves a glist'ning haze,
Sees full before him, gliding without tread,
An image with a glory round its head;
The enamoured rustic worships its fair hues,
Nor knows he _makes_ the shadow, he pursues!

?1805.

PHANTOM OR FACT

A DIALOGUE IN VERSE

AUTHOR

A Lovely form there sate beside my bed,
And such a feeding calm its presence shed,
A tender love so pure from earthly leaven,
That I unneth the fancy might control,
'Twas my own spirit newly come from heaven,
Wooring its gentle way into my soul!
But ah! the change--It had not stirr'd, and yet--
Alas! that change how fain would I forget!
That shrinking back, like one that had mistook!
That weary, wandering, disavowing look!
'Twas all another, feature, look, and frame,
And still, methought, I knew, it was the same!

FRIEND

This riddling tale, to what does it belong?
Is't history? vision? or an idle song?
Or rather say at once, within what space
Of time this wild disastrous change took place?

AUTHOR

Call it a _moment's_ work (and such it seems)
This tale's a fragment from the life of dreams;
But say, that years matur'd the silent strife,
And 'tis a record from the dream of life.

?1830.

LINES

SUGGESTED BY THE LAST WORDS OF BERENGARIUS
OB. ANNO DOM. 1088

No more 'twixt conscience staggering and the Pope
Soon shall I now before my God appear,
By him to be acquitted, as I hope;
By him to be condemned, as I fear.--

REFLECTION ON THE ABOVE

Lynx amid moles! had I stood by thy bed,
Be of good cheer, meek soul! I would have said:
I see a hope spring from that humble fear.
All are not strong alike through storms to steer
Right onward. What though dread of threatened death
And dungeon torture made thy hand and breath
Inconstant to the truth within thy heart?
That truth, from which, through fear, thou twice didst start,
Fear haply told thee, was a learned strife,

Or not so vital as to claim thy life:
And myriads had reached Heaven, who never knew
Where lay the difference 'twixt the false and true!

Ye, who secure 'mid trophies not your own,
Judge him who won them when he stood alone,
And proudly talk of _recreant_ Berengare--
O first the age, and then the man compare!
That age how dark! congenial minds how rare!
No host of friends with kindred zeal did burn!
No throbbing hearts awaited his return!
Prostrate alike when prince and peasant fell,
He only disenchanted from the spell,
Like the weak worm that gems the starless night,
Moved in the scanty circlet of his light:
And was it strange if he withdrew the ray
That did but guide the night-birds to their prey?

The ascending day-star with a bolder eye
Hath lit each dew-drop on our trimmer lawn!
Yet not for this, if wise, will we decry
The spots and struggles of the timid Dawn;
Lest so we tempt the approaching Noon to scorn
The mists and painted vapours of our Morn.

?1826.

FORBEARANCE

Beareth all things.--2 COR. xiii.7.

Gently I took that which ungently came,
And without scorn forgave:--Do thou the same.
A wrong done to thee think a cat's-eye spark
Thou wouldst not see, were not thine own heart dark
Thine own keen sense of wrong that thirsts for sin,
Fear that--the spark self-kindled from within,

Which blown upon will blind thee with its glare,
Or smother'd stifle thee with noisome air.
Clap on the extinguisher, pull up the blinds,
And soon the ventilated spirit finds
Its natural daylight. If a foe have kenn'd,
Or worse than foe, an alienated friend,
A rib of dry rot in thy ship's stout side,
Think it God's message, and in humble pride
With heart of oak replace it;--thine the gains--
Give him the rotten timber for his pains!

1832.

SANCTI DOMINICI PALLIUM

A DIALOGUE BETWEEN POET AND FRIEND

FOUND WRITTEN ON THE BLANK LEAF AT THE BEGINNING
OF
BUTLER'S "BOOK OF THE CHURCH" (1825)

POET

I note the moods and feelings men betray,
And heed them more than aught they do or say;
The lingering ghosts of many a secret deed
Still-born or haply strangled in its birth;
These best reveal the smooth man's inward creed!
These mark the spot where lies the treasure Worth!

Butler made up of impudence and trick,
With cloven tongue prepared to hiss and lick,
Rome's brazen serpent--boldly dares discuss
The roasting of thy heart, O brave John Huss!
And with grim triumph and a truculent glee
Absolves anew the Pope-wrought perfidy,
That made an empire's plighted faith a lie,

And fix'd a broad stare on the Devil's eye--
(Pleased with the guilt, yet envy-stung at heart
To stand outmaster'd in his own black art!)

Yet Butler-

FRIEND

Enough of Butler! we're agreed,
Who now defends would then have done the deed.
But who not feels persuasion's gentle sway,
Who but must meet the proffer'd hand half way
When courteous Butler--

POET (_aside_)

(Rome's smooth go-between!)

FRIEND

Laments the advice that sour'd a milky queen--
(For "bloody" all enlighten'd men confess
An antiquated error of the press:)
Who, rapt by zeal beyond her sex's bounds,
With actual cautery staunch'd the Church's wounds!
And tho' he deems, that with too broad a blur
We damn the French and Irish massacre,
Yet blames them both--and thinks the Pope might err!
What think you now? Boots it with spear and shield
Against such gentle foes to take the field
Whose beckoning hands the mild Caduceus wield?

POET

What think I now? Even what I thought before;--
What Butler boasts though Butler may deplore,
Still I repeat, words lead me not astray
When the shown feeling points a different way.

Smooth Butler can say grace at slander's feast,
And bless each haut-gout cook'd by monk or priest;
Leaves the full lie on Butler's gong to swell,
Content with half-truths that do just as well;
But duly decks his mitred comrade's flanks,
And with him shares the Irish nation's thanks!

So much for you, my friend! who own a Church,
And would not leave your mother in the lurch!
But when a Liberal asks me what I think--
Scared by the blood and soot of Cobbett's ink,
And Jeffrey's glairy phlegm and Connor's foam,
In search of some safe parable I roam--
An emblem sometimes may comprise a tome!

Disclaimant of his uncaught grandsire's mood,
I see a tiger lapping kitten's food:
And who shall blame him that he purs applause,
When brother Brindle pleads the good old cause;
And frisks his pretty tail, and half unsheathes his claws!
Yet not the less, for modern lights unapt,
I trust the bolts and cross-bars of the laws
More than the Protestant milk all newly lapt,
Impearling a tame wild-cat's whisker'd jaws!

1825, or 1826.

ON DONNE'S POETRY

With Donne, whose muse on dromedary trots,
Wreathes iron poker into true-love knots;
Rhyme's sturdy cripple, fancy's maze and clue,
Wit's forge and fire-blast, meaning's press and screw.

?1818.

ON A BAD SINGER

Swans sing before they die--'twere no bad thing
Should certain persons die before they sing.

NE PLUS ULTRA

Sole Positive of Night!
Antipathist of Light!
Fate's only essence! primal scorpion rod--
The one permitted opposite of God!--
Condensed blackness and abysmal storm
Compacted to one sceptre
Arms the Grasp enorm--
The Interceptor--
The Substance that still casts the shadow
Death!--
The Dragon foul and fell--
The unrevealable,
And hidden one, whose breath
Gives wind and fuel to the fires of Hell!--
Ah! sole despair
Of both the eternities in Heaven!
Sole interdict of all-bedewing prayer,
The all-compassionate!
Save to the Lampads Seven
Reveal'd to none of all the Angelic State,
Save to the Lampads Seven,
That watch the throne of Heaven!

?1826.

HUMAN LIFE

ON THE DENIAL OF IMMORTALITY

If dead, we cease to be; if total gloom
Swallow up life's brief flash for aye, we fare
As summer-gusts, of sudden birth and doom,

Whose sound and motion not alone declare,
But _are_ their _whole_ of being! If the breath
Be Life itself, and not its task and tent,
If even a soul like Milton's can know death;
O Man! thou vessel purposeless, unmeant,
Yet drone-hive strange of phantom purposes!
Surplus of Nature's dread activity,
Which, as she gazed on some nigh-finished vase,
Retreating slow, with meditative pause,
She formed with restless hands unconsciously.
Blank accident! nothing's anomaly!
If rootless thus, thus substanceless thy state,
Go, weigh thy dreams, and be thy hopes, thy fears,
The counter-weights!--Thy laughter and thy tears
Mean but themselves, each fittest to create
And to repay each other! Why rejoices
Thy heart with hollow joy for hollow good?
Why cowl thy face beneath the mourner's hood,
Why waste thy sighs, and thy lamenting voices,
Image of Image, Ghost of Ghostly Elf,
That such a thing as thou feel'st warm or cold?
Yet what and whence thy gain, if thou withhold
These costless shadows of thy shadowy self?
Be sad! be glad! be neither! seek, or shun!
Thou hast no reason why! Thou canst have none;
Thy being's being is contradiction.

?1815.

THE BUTTERFLY

The Butterfly the ancient Grecians made
The soul's fair emblem, and its only name--
But of the soul, escaped the slavish trade
Of earthly life!--For in this mortal frame
Our's is the reptile's lot, much toil, much blame,

Manifold motions making little speed,
And to deform and kill the things whereon we feed.

?1815.

THE PANG MORE SHARP THAN ALL

AN ALLEGORY

I

He too has flitted from his secret nest,
Hope's last and dearest child without a name!--
Has flitted from me, like the warmthless flame,
That makes false promise of a place of rest
To the tired Pilgrim's still believing mind;--
Or like some Elfin Knight in kingly court,
Who having won all guerdons in his sport,
Glides out of view, and whither none can find!

II

Yes! he hath flitted from me--with what aim,
Or why, I know not! 'Twas a home of bliss,
And he was innocent, as the pretty shame
Of babe, that tempts and shuns the menaced kiss,
From its twy-cluster'd hiding place of snow!
Pure as the babe, I ween, and all aglow
As the dear hopes, that swell the mother's breast--
Her eyes down gazing o'er her clasped charge;--
Yet gay as that twice happy father's kiss,
That well might glance aside, yet never miss,
Where the sweet mark emboss'd so sweet a targe--
Twice wretched he who hath been doubly blest!

III

Like a loose blossom on a gusty night
He flitted from me--and has left behind
(As if to them his faith he ne'er did plight)
Of either sex and answerable mind
Two playmates, twin-births of his foster-dame:--
The one a steady lad (Esteem he hight)
And Kindness is the gentler sister's name.
Dim likeness now, though fair she be and good,
Of that bright boy who hath us all forsook;--
But in his full-eyed aspect when she stood,
And while her face reflected every look,
And in reflection kindled--she became
So like him, that almost she seem'd the same!

IV

Ah! he is gone, and yet will not depart!--
Is with me still, yet I from him exiled!
For still there lives within my secret heart
The magic image of the magic Child,
Which there he made up-grow by his strong art,
As in that crystal orb--wise Merlin's feat,--
The wondrous "World of Glass," wherein inisled
All long'd for things their beings did repeat;--
And there he left it, like a Sylph beguiled,
To live and yearn and languish incomplete!

V

Can wit of man a heavier grief reveal?
Can sharper pang from hate or scorn arise?--
Yes! one more sharp there is that deeper lies,
Which fond Esteem but mocks when he would heal.
Yet neither scorn nor hate did it devise,
But sad compassion and atoning zeal!
One pang more blighting-keen than hope betray'd!

And this it is my woeful hap to feel,
When, at her Brother's hest, the twin-born Maid
With face averted and unsteady eyes,
Her truant playmate's faded robe puts on;
And inly shrinking from her own disguise
Enacts the faery Boy that's lost and gone.
O worse than all! O pang all pangs above
Is Kindness counterfeiting absent Love!

?1811

THE VISIONARY HOPE

Sad lot, to have no Hope! Though lowly kneeling
He fain would frame a prayer within his breast,
Would fain entreat for some sweet breath of healing,
That his sick body might have ease and rest;
He strove in vain! the dull sighs from his chest
Against his will the stifling load revealing,
Though Nature forced; though like some captive guest,
Some royal prisoner at his conqueror's feast,
An alien's restless mood but half concealing,
The sternness on his gentle brow confessed,
Sickness within and miserable feeling:
Though obscure pangs made curses of his dreams,
And dreaded sleep, each night repelled in vain,
Each night was scattered by its own loud screams:
Yet never could his heart command, though fain,
One deep full wish to be no more in pain.

That Hope, which was his inward bliss and boast,
Which waned and died, yet ever near him stood,
Though changed in nature, wander where he would--
For Love's Despair is but Hope's pining Ghost!
For this one hope he makes his hourly moan,
He wishes and _can_ wish for this alone!

Pierced, as with light from Heaven, before its gleams
(So the love-stricken visionary deems)
Disease would vanish, like a summer shower,
Whose dews fling sunshine from the noon-tide bower!
Or let it stay! yet this one Hope should give
Such strength that he would bless his pains and live.

?1807 ?1810.

THE PAINS OF SLEEP

Ere 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 eye-lids 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 yester-night I pray'd aloud
In anguish and in agony,
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.
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.

LOVE'S BURIAL-PLACE

Lady. If Love be dead--
Poet. And I aver it!

Lady. Tell me, Bard! where Love lies buried
Poet. Love lies buried where 'twas born:
Oh, gentle dame! think it no scorn
If, in my fancy, I presume
To call thy bosom poor Love's Tomb.
And on that tomb to read the line:--
"Here lies a Love that once seem'd mine.
But took a chill, as I divine,
And died at length of a decline."

1833.

LOVE, A SWORD

Though veiled in spires of myrtle-wreath,
Love is a sword which cuts its sheath,
And through the clefts itself has made,
We spy the flashes of the blade!

But through the clefts itself has made,
We likewise see Love's flashing blade
By rust consumed, or snapt in twain:
And only hilt and stump remain.

?1825.

THE KISS

One kiss, dear Maid! I said and sighed--
Your scorn the little boon denied.
Ah why refuse the blameless bliss?
Can danger lurk within a kiss?

Yon viewless wanderer of the vale,
The Spirit of the Western Gale,
At Morning's break, at Evening's close
Inhales the sweetness of the Rose,

And hovers o'er the uninjured bloom
Sighing back the soft perfume.
Vigour to the Zephyr's wing
Her nectar-breathing kisses fling;
And He the glitter of the Dew
Scatters on the Rose's hue.
Bashful lo! she bends her head,
And darts a blush of deeper Red!

Too well those lovely lips disclose
The triumphs of the opening Rose;
O fair! O graceful! bid them prove
As passive to the breath of Love.
In tender accents, faint and low,
Well-pleased I hear the whispered "No!"
The whispered "No"--how little meant!
Sweet Falsehood that endears Consent!
For on those lovely lips the while
Dawns the soft relenting smile,
And tempts with feigned dissuasion coy
The gentle violence of Joy.

?1794.

NOT AT HOME

That Jealousy may rule a mind
Where Love could never be
I know; but ne'er expect to find
Love without Jealousy.

She has a strange cast in her ee,
A swart sour-visaged maid--
But yet Love's own twin-sister she,
His house-mate and his shade.

Ask for her and she'll be denied:--
What then? they only mean
Their mistress has lain down to sleep,
And can't just then be seen.

?1830.

NAMES

[FROM LESSING]

I ask'd my fair one happy day,
What I should call her in my lay;
By what sweet name from Rome or Greece;
Lalage, Nesera, Chloris,
Sappho, Lesbia, or Doris,
Arethusa or Lucrece.

"Ah!" replied my gentle fair,
"Beloved, what are names but air?
Choose thou whatever suits the line;
Call me Sappho, call me Chloris,
Call me Lalage or Doris,
Only, only call me Thine."

Morning Post, August 27, 1799.

TO LESBIA

Vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus.--CATULLUS.

My Lesbia, let us love and live,
And to the winds, my Lesbia, give
Each cold restraint, each boding fear
Of age and all her saws severe.
Yon sun now posting to the main
Will set,--but 'tis to rise again;--

But we, when once our mortal light
Is set, must sleep in endless night.
Then come, with whom alone I'll live,
A thousand kisses take and give!
Another thousand!--to the store
Add hundreds--then a thousand more!
And when they to a million mount,
Let confusion take the account,--
That you, the number never knowing,
May continue still bestowing--
That I for joys may never pine,
Which never can again be mine!

Morning Post, April 11, 1798.

THE DEATH OF THE STARLING

Lugete, O Veneres, Cupidinesque.--CATULLUS.

Pity! mourn in plaintive tone
The lovely starling dead and gone!
Pity mourns in plaintive tone
The lovely starling dead and gone.
Weep, ye Loves! and Venus! weep
The lovely starling fall'n asleep!
Venus sees with tearful eyes--
In her lap the starling lies!
While the Loves all in a ring
Softly stroke the stiffen'd wing.

?1794.

ON A CATARACT

FROM A CAVERN NEAR THE SUMMIT OF A MOUNTAIN
PRECIPICE

[AFTER STOLBERG'S _UNSTERBLICHER JÜNGLING_]

STROPHE

Unperishing youth!
Thou leapest from forth
The cell of thy hidden nativity;
Never mortal saw
The cradle of the strong one;
Never mortal heard
The gathering of his voices;
The deep-murmur'd charm of the son of the rock,
That is lisp'd evermore at his slumberless fountain.
There's a cloud at the portal, a spray-woven veil
At the shrine of his ceaseless renewing;
It embosoms the roses of dawn,
It entangles the shafts of the noon,
And into the bed of its stillness
The moonshine sinks down as in slumber,
That the son of the rock, that the nursling of heaven
May be born in a holy twilight!

ANTISTROPHE

The wild goat in awe
Looks up and beholds
Above thee the cliff inaccessible;--
Thou at once full-born
Madd'nest in thy joyance,
Whirlest, shatter'st, splitt'st,
Life invulnerable.

?1799.

HYMN TO THE EARTH

[IMITATED FROM STOLBERG'S _HYMNE AN DIE ERDE_]

HEXAMETERS

Earth! thou mother of numberless children, the nurse and the mother,
Hail! O Goddess, thrice hail! Blest be thou! and, blessing, I hymn thee!
Forth, ye sweet sounds! from my harp, and my voice shall float on your
surges--

Soar thou aloft, O my soul! and bear up my song on thy pinions.

Travelling the vale with mine eyes--green meadows and lake with green
island,

Dark in its basin of rock, and the bare stream flowing in brightness,

Thrill'd with thy beauty and love in the wooded slope of the mountain,

Here, great mother, I lie, thy child, with his head on thy bosom!

Playful the spirits of noon, that rushing soft through thy tresses,

Green-hair'd goddess! refresh me; and hark! as they hurry or linger,

Fill the pause of my harp, or sustain it with musical murmurs.

Into my being thou murmurest joy, and tenderest sadness

Shedd'st thou, like dew, on my heart, till the joy and the heavenly
sadness

Pour themselves forth from my heart in tears, and the hymn of
thanksgiving.

Earth! thou mother of numberless children, the nurse and the mother,

Sister thou of the stars, and beloved by the Sun, the rejoicer!

Guardian and friend of the moon, O Earth, whom the comets forget not,

Yea, in the measureless distance wheel round and again they behold
thee!

Fadeless and young (and what if the latest birth of creation?)

Bride and consort of Heaven, that looks down upon thee enamour'd!

Say, mysterious Earth! O say, great mother and goddess,

Was it not well with thee then, when first thy lap was ungirdled,

Thy lap to the genial Heaven, the day that he woo'd thee and won thee!

Fair was thy blush, the fairest and first of the blushes of morning!

Deep was the shudder, O Earth! the throe of thy self-retention:

Inly thou strovest to flee, and didst seek thyself at thy centre!

Mightier far was the joy of thy sudden resilience; and forthwith

Myriad myriads of lives teem'd forth from the mighty embracement.
Thousand-fold tribes of dwellers, impell'd by thousand-fold instincts,
Fill'd, as a dream, the wide waters; the rivers sang on their channels;
Laugh'd on their shores the hoarse seas; the yearning ocean swell'd
upward;
Young life low'd through the meadows, the woods, and the echoing
mountains,
Wander'd bleating in valleys, and warbled on blossoming branches.

?1799.

THE VISIT OF THE GODS

IMITATED FROM SCHILLER

Never, believe me,
Appear the Immortals,
Never alone:
Scarce had I welcomed the Sorrow-beguiler,
Iacchus! but in came Boy Cupid the Smiler;
Lo! Phoebus the Glorious descends from his throne!
They advance, they float in, the Olympians all!
With Divinities fills my
Terrestrial hall!

How shall I yield you
Due entertainment,
Celestial quire?
Me rather, bright guests! with your wings of upbuoyance
Bear aloft to your homes, to your banquets of joyance,
That the roofs of Olympus may echo my lyre!
Hah! we mount! on their pinions they waft up my soul!
O give me the nectar!
O fill me the bowl!

Give him the nectar!
Pour out for the poet,

Hebe! pour free!
Quicken his eyes with celestial dew,
That Styx the detested no more he may view,
And like one of us Gods may conceit him to be!
Thanks, Hebe! I quaff it! Io Pæan, I cry!
The wine of the Immortals
Forbids me to die!

? 1799.

TRANSLATION OF A PASSAGE IN OTTFRIED'S
METRICAL PARAPHRASE
OF THE GOSPEL

She gave with joy her virgin breast;
She hid it not, she bared the breast
Which suckled that divinest babe!
Blessed, blessed were the breasts
Which the Saviour infant kiss'd;
And blessed, blessed was the mother
Who wrapp'd his limbs in swaddling clothes,
Singing placed him on her lap,
Hung o'er him with her looks of love,
And soothed him with a lulling motion.
Blessed! for she shelter'd him
From the damp and chilling air;
Blessed, blessed! for she lay
With such a bade in one blest bed,
Close as babes and mothers lie!
Blessed, blessed evermore,
With her virgin lips she kiss'd,
With her arms, and to her breast,
She embraced the babe divine,
Her babe divine the virgin mother!
There lives not on this ring of earth
A mortal that can sing her praise.

Mighty mother, virgin pure,
In the darkness and the night
For us she _bore_ the heavenly Lord!

? 1799.

THE VIRGIN'S CRADLE-HYMN

COPIED FROM A PRINT OF THE VIRGIN IN A
CATHOLIC VILLAGE IN GERMANY

Dormi, Jesu! Mater ridet
Quæ tarn dulcem somnum videt,
Dormi, Jesu! blandule!
Si non dormis, Mater plorat,
Inter fila cantans orat,
Blande, veni, somnule.

ENGLISH

Sleep, sweet babe! my cares beguiling:
Mother sits beside thee smiling;
Sleep, my darling, tenderly!
If thou sleep not, mother mourneth,
Singing as her wheel she turneth:
Come, soft slumber, balmily!

1811.

EPITAPH ON AN INFANT

Ere Sin could blight or Sorrow fade,
Death came with friendly care;
The opening bud to Heaven conveyed,
And bade it blossom there.

1794.

ON AN INFANT
WHICH DIED BEFORE BAPTISM

"Be, rather than be call'd, a child of God,"
Death whisper'd!--with assenting nod,
Its head upon its mother's breast,
The Baby bow'd, without demur--
Of the kingdom of the Blest
Possessor, not inheritor.

April 8th, 1799.

EPITAPH ON AN INFANT

Its balmy lips the infant blest
Relaxing from its mother's breast,
How sweet it heaves the happy sigh
Of innocent satiety!

And such my infant's latest sigh!
Oh tell, rude stone! the passer by,
That here the pretty babe doth lie,
Death sang to sleep with Lullaby.

1799.

AN ODE TO THE RAIN

COMPOSED BEFORE DAYLIGHT, ON THE MORNING
APPOINTED FOR THE DEPARTURE OF A VERY
WORTHY, BUT NOT VERY PLEASANT VISITOR,
WHOM IT WAS FEARED THE RAIN MIGHT
DETAIN.

I

I know it is dark; and though I have lain,
Awake, as I guess, an hour or twain,
I have not once open'd the lids of my eyes,
But I lie in the dark, as a blind man lies.
O Rain! that I lie listening to,
You're but a doleful sound at best:
I owe you little thanks, 'tis true,
For breaking thus my needful rest!
Yet if, as soon as it is light,
O Rain! you will but take your flight,
I'll neither rail, nor malice keep,
Though sick and sore for want of sleep.
But only now, for this one day,
Do go, dear Rain! do go away!

II

O Rain! with your dull two-fold sound,
The clash hard by, and the murmur all round!
You know, if you know aught, that we,
Both night and day, but ill agree:
For days and months, and almost years,
Have limp'd on through this vale of tears,
Since body of mine, and rainy weather,
Have lived on easy terms together.
Yet if, as soon as it is light,
O Rain! you will but take your flight,
Though you should come again to-morrow,
And bring with you both pain and sorrow;
Though stomach should sicken and knees should swell--
I'll nothing speak of you but well.
But only now for this one day,
Do go, dear Rain! do go away!

III

Dear Rain! I ne'er refused to say
You're a good creature in your way;
Nay, I could write a book myself,
Would fit a parson's lower shelf,
Showing how very good you are. --
What then? sometimes it must be fair!
And if sometimes, why not to-day?
Do go, dear Rain! do go away!

IV

Dear Rain! if I've been cold and shy,
Take no offence! I'll tell you why.
A dear old Friend e'en now is here,
And with him came my sister dear;
After long absence now first met,
Long months by pain and grief beset--
We three dear friends! in truth, we groan
Impatiently to be alone.
We three, you mark! and not one more!
The strong wish makes my spirit sore.
We have so much to talk about,
So many sad things to let out;
So many tears in our eye-corners,
Sitting like little Jacky Homers--
In short, as soon as it is day,
Do go, dear Rain! do go away!

V

And this I'll swear to you, dear Rain!
Whenever you shall come again,
Be you as dull as e'er you could
(And by the bye 'tis understood,
You're not so pleasant as you're good),
Yet, knowing well your worth and place,

I'll welcome you with cheerful face;
And though you stay'd a week or more,
Were ten times duller than before;
Yet with kind heart, and right good will,
I'll sit and listen to you still;
Nor should you go away, dear Rain!
Uninvited to remain.
But only now, for this one day,
Do go, dear Rain! do go away!

1802.

ANSWER TO A CHILD'S QUESTION

Do you ask what the birds say? The Sparrow, the Dove,
The Linnet and Thrush say, "I love and I love!"
In the winter they're silent--the wind is so strong;
What it says, I don't know, but it sings a loud song.
But green leaves, and blossoms, and sunny warm weather,
And singing, and loving--all come back together.
But the Lark is so brimful of gladness and love,
The green fields below him, the blue sky above,
That he sings, and he sings; and for ever sings he--
"I love my Love, and my Love loves me!"

1802.

SOMETHING CHILDISH, BUT VERY NATURAL

WRITTEN IN GERMANY

If I had but two little wings
And were a little feathery bird,
To you I'd fly, my dear!
But thoughts like these are idle things,
And I stay here.

But in my sleep to you I fly:
I'm always with you in my sleep!
The world is all one's own.
But then one wakes, and where am I?
All, all alone.

Sleep stays not, though a monarch bids:
So I love to wake ere break of day:
For though my sleep be gone,
Yet while 'tis dark, one shuts one's lids,
And still dreams on.

April 23, 1799.

LINES ON A CHILD

Encinctured with a twine of leaves,
That leafy twine his only dress!
A lovely Boy was plucking fruits,
By moonlight, in a wilderness.
The moon was bright, the air was free,
And fruits and flowers together grew,
On many a shrub and many a tree:
And all put on a gentle hue,
Hanging in the shadowy air
Like a picture rich and rare.
It was a climate where, they say,
The night is more belov'd than day.
But who that beauteous Boy beguil'd,
That beauteous Boy to linger here?
Alone, by night, a little child,
In place so silent and so wild-
Has he no friend, no loving mother near?

1798.

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.

FIRE, FAMINE, AND SLAUGHTER

A WAR ECLOGUE

_The Scene a desolated Tract in La Vendée. _FAMINE_
is discovered lying on the ground; to her enter
FIRE _and_ SLAUGHTER.

Fam. Sisters! sisters! who sent you here?

Slau. [to Fire]. I will whisper it in her ear.

Fire. No! no! no!

Spirits hear what spirits tell:

'Twill make an holiday in Hell.

No! no! no!

Myself, I named him once below,

And all the souls, that damned be,

Leaped up at once in anarchy,

Clapped their hands and danced for glee.

They no longer heeded me;

But laughed to hear Hell's burning rafters

Unwillingly re-echo laughter!

No! no! no!
Spirits hear what spirits tell:
'Twill make an holiday in Hell!

Fam. Whisper it, sister! so and so!
In the dark hint, soft and slow.

Slau. Letters four do form his name-
And who sent you?

Both. The same! the same!

Slau. He came by stealth, and unlocked my
den,
And I have drunk the blood since then
Of thrice three hundred thousand men.

Both. Who bade you do't?

Slau. The same! the same!
Letters four do form his name.
He let me loose, and cried Halloo!
To him alone the praise is due.

Fam. Thanks, sister, thanks! the men have bled,
Their wives and their children faint for bread.
I stood in a swampy field of battle;
With bones and skulls I made a rattle,
To frighten the wolf and carrion-crow
And the homeless dog--but they would not go.
So off I flew: for how could I bear
To see them gorge their dainty fare?
I heard a groan and a peevish squall,
And through the chink of a cottage-wall--
Can you guess what I saw there?

Both. Whisper it, sister! in our ear.

Fam. A baby beat its dying mother:
I had starved the one and was starving the other!

Both. Who bade you do't?

Fam. The same! the same!
Letters four do form his name.
He let me loose, and cried Halloo!
To him alone the praise is due.

Fire. Sisters! I from Ireland came!
Hedge and corn-fields all on flame,
I triumph'd o'er the setting sun!
And all the while the work was done,
On as I strode with my huge strides,
I flung back my head and I held my sides,
It was so rare a piece of fun
To see the sweltered cattle run
With uncouth gallop through the night,
Scared by the red and noisy light!
By the light of his own blazing cot
Was many a naked Rebel shot:
The house-stream met the flame and hissed,
While crash! fell in the roof, I wist,
On some of those old bed-rid nurses,
That deal in discontent and curses.

Both. Who bade you do't?

Fire. The same! the same!
Letters four do form his name.
He let me loose, and cried Halloo!
To him alone the praise is due.

All. He let us loose, and cried Halloo!
How shall we yield him honour due?

Fam. Wisdom comes with lack of food.
I'll gnaw, I'll gnaw the multitude,
Till the cup of rage o'erbrim:
They shall seize him and his brood--

Slau. They shall tear him limb from limb!

Fire. O thankless beldames and untrue!
And is this all that you can do
For him, who did so much for you?
Ninety months he, by my troth!
Hath richly catered for you both;
And in an hour would you repay
An eight years' work?--Away! away!
I alone am faithful! I
Cling to him everlastingly.

1797.

THE TWO ROUND SPACES ON THE TOMBSTONE

The Devil believes that the Lord will come,
Stealing a march without beat of drum,
About the same time that he came last
On an old Christmas-day in a snowy blast:
Till he bids the trump sound neither body nor soul stirs
For the dead men's heads have slipt under their bolsters.

Ho! ho! brother Bard, in our churchyard
Both beds and bolsters are soft and green;
Save one alone, and that's of stone,
And under it lies a Counsellor keen.
This tomb would be square, if it were not too long;
And 'tis rail'd round with iron, tall, spear-like, and strong.

This fellow from Aberdeen hither did skip
With a waxy face and a blubber lip,

And a black tooth in front to show in part
What was the colour of his whole heart.
This Counsellor sweet,
This Scotchman complete
(The Devil scotch him for a snake!),
I trust he lies in his grave awake.
On the sixth of January,
When all around is white with snow
As a Cheshire yeoman's dairy,
Brother Bard, ho! ho! believe it, or no,
On that stone tomb to you I'll show
After sunset, and before cock-crow,
Two round spaces clear of snow.
I swear by our Knight and his forefathers' souls,
That in size and shape they are just like the holes
In the large house of privy
Of that ancient family.
On those two places clear of snow
There have sat in the night for an hour or so,
Before sunrise, and after cock-crow
(He hicking his heels, she cursing her corns,
All to the tune of the wind in their horns),
The Devil and his Grannam,
With the snow-drift to fan 'em;
Expecting and hoping the trumpet to blow;
For they are cock-sure of the fellow below!

1800.

THE DEVIL'S THOUGHTS

From his brimstone bed at break of day
A walking the DEVIL is gone,
To visit his little snug farm of the earth
And see how his stock went on.

Over the hill and over the dale,
And he went over the plain,
And backward and forward he swished his long tail
As a gentleman swishes his cane.

And how then was the Devil drest?
Oh! he was in his Sunday's best:
His jacket was red and his breeches were blue,
And there was a hole where the tail came through.

He saw a LAWYER killing a Viper
On a dung heap beside his stable,
And the Devil smiled, for it put him in mind
Of Cain and _his_ brother, Abel.

A POTHECARY on a white horse
Rode by on his vocations,
And the Devil thought of his old Friend
DEATH in the Revelations.

He saw a cottage with a double coach-house,
A cottage of gentility!
And the Devil did grin, for his darling sin
Is pride that apes humility.

He went into a rich bookseller's shop,
Quoth he! we are both of one college,
For I myself sate like a cormorant once
Fast by the tree of knowledge.

Down the river there plied, with wind and tide,
A pig with vast celerity;
And the Devil look'd wise as he saw how the while,
It cut its own throat. "There!" quoth he with a smile,
"Goes 'England's commercial prosperity.'"

As he went through Cold-Bath Fields he saw
A solitary cell;
And the Devil was pleased, for it gave him a hint
For improving his prisons in Hell.

* * * * *

General ----- burning face
He saw with consternation,
And back to hell his way did he take,
For the Devil thought by a slight mistake
It was general conflagration.

1799.

COLOGNE

In Kohln, a town of monks and bones,
And pavements fang'd with murderous stones,
And rags, and hags, and hideous wenches;
I counted two and seventy stenchs,
All well denned, and several stinks!
Ye Nymphs that reign o'er sewers and sinks,
The river Rhine, it is well known,
Doth wash your city of Cologne;
But tell me, Nymphs! what power divine
Shall henceforth wash the river Rhine?

SONNETS ATTEMPTED IN THE MANNER OF CONTEMPORARY WRITERS

[SIGNED "NEHEMIAH HIGGINGBOTTOM"]

I

Pensive at eve on the hard world I mus'd,
And my poor heart was sad: so at the moon

I gaz'd-and sigh'd, and sigh'd!--for, ah! how soon
Eve darkens into night. Mine eye perus'd
With tearful vacancy the _dampy_ grass
Which wept and glitter'd in the paly ray;
And I did pause me on my lonely way,
And mused me on those wretched ones who pass
O'er the black heath of Sorrow. But, alas!
Most of Myself I thought: when it befell
That the sooth Spirit of the breezy wood
Breath'd in mine ear--"All this is very well;
But much of _one_ thing is for _no_ thing good."
Ah! my poor heart's inexplicable swell!

II

TO SIMPLICITY

O! I do love thee, meek _Simplicity_!
For of thy lays the lulling simpleness
Goes to my heart and soothes each small distress,
Distress though small, yet haply great to me!
'Tis true on Lady Fortune's gentlest pad
I amble on; yet, though I know not why,
So sad I am!--but should a friend and I
Grow cool and _miff_, O! I am _very_ sad!
And then with sonnets and with sympathy
My dreamy bosom's mystic woes I pall;
Now of my false friend plaining plaintively,
Now raving at mankind in general;
But, whether sad or fierce, 'tis simple all,
All very simple, meek Simplicity!

III

ON A RUINED HOUSE IN A ROMANTIC COUNTRY

And this reft house is that the which he built,
Lamented Jack! And here his malt he pil'd,
Cautious in vain! These rats that squeak so wild,
Squeak, not unconscious of their father's guilt.
Did ye not see her gleaming thro' the glade?
Belike, 'twas she, the maiden all forlorn.
What though she milk no cow with crumpled horn,
Yet _aye_ she haunts the dale where erst she stray'd;
And _aye_ beside her stalks her amorous knight!
Still on his thighs their wonted brogues are worn,
And thro' those brogues, still tatter'd and betorn,
His hindward charms gleam an unearthly white;
As when thro' broken clouds at night's high noon
Peeps in fair fragments forth the full--orb'd harvest-moon!

1797.

LIMBO

Tis a strange place, this Limbo!--not a Place,
Yet name it so;--where Time and weary Space
Fettered from flight, with night-mare sense of fleeing,
Strive for their last crepuscular half-being;--
Lank Space, and scytheless Time with branny hands
Barren and soundless as the measuring sands,
Not mark'd by flit of Shades,--unmeaning they
As moonlight on the dial of the day!
But that is lovely--looks like human Time,--
An old man with a steady look sublime,
That stops his earthly task to watch the skies;
But he is blind--a statue hath such eyes;--
Yet having moonward turn'd his face by chance,
Gazes the orb with moon-like countenance,
With scant white hairs, with fore top bald and high,
He gazes still,--his eyeless face all eye;--
As 'twere an organ full of silent sight,

His whole face seemeth to rejoice in light!
Lip touching lip, all moveless, bust and limb--
He seems to gaze at that which seems to gaze on him!
No such sweet sights doth Limbo den immure,
Wall'd round, and made a spirit-jail secure,
By the mere horror of blank Naught-at-all,
Whose circumambience doth these ghosts enthrall.
A lurid thought is growthless, dull Privation,
Yet that is but a Purgatory curse;
Hell knows a fear far worse,
A fear--a future state;--'tis positive Negation!

1817.

METRICAL FEET

LESSON FOR A BOY

[** Macron and breve accent marks have been left off, see the note in the Forum.]

Trochee trips from long to short;
From long to long in solemn sort
Slow Spondee stalks; strong foot! yea ill able
Ever to come up with Dactyl trisyllable.
Iambics march from short to long;--
With a leap and a bound the swift Anapaests throng;
One syllable long, with one short at each side,
Amphibrachys hastes with a stately stride;--
First and last being long, middle short, Amphimacer
Strikes his thundering hoofs like a proud highbred Racer.
If Derwent be innocent, steady, and wise,
And delight in the things of earth, water, and skies;
Tender warmth at his heart, with these metres to show it,
With sound sense in his brains, may make Derwent a poet,--
May crown him with fame, and must win him the love

Of his father on earth and his Father above.

My dear, dear child!

Could you stand upon Skiddaw, you would not from its whole ridge
See a man who so loves you as your fond S. T. COLERIDGE.

1803.

THE HOMERIC HEXAMETER DESCRIBED AND EXEMPLIFIED

[FROM SCHILLER]

Strongly it bears us along in swelling and limitless billows,
Nothing before and nothing behind but the sky and the ocean.

? 1799.

THE OVIDIAN ELEGIAC METRE DESCRIBED AND EXEMPLIFIED

[FROM SCHILLER]

In the hexameter rises the fountain's silvery column;
In the pentameter aye falling in melody back.

?1799.

CATULLIAN HENDECASYLLABLES

[FROM MATTHISON]

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,
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.

TO ----

I mix in life, and labour to seem free,
With common persons pleased and common things,
While every thought and action tends to thee,
And every impulse from thy influence springs.

? 1796.

EPITAPH ON A BAD MAN

Under this stone does Walter Harcourt lie,
Who valued nought that God or man could give;
He lived as if he never thought to die;
He died as if he dared not hope to live!

1801.

THE SUICIDE'S ARGUMENT

Ere the birth of my life, if I wish'd it or no,
No question was asked me--it could not be so!
If the life was the question, a thing sent to try,

And to live on be Yes; what can No be? to die.

NATURE'S ANSWER

Is't returned, as 'twas sent? Is't no worse for the wear?
Think first, what you are! Call to mind what you were!
I gave you innocence, I gave you hope,
Gave health, and genius, and an ample scope.
Return you me guilt, lethargy, despair?
Make out the invent'ry; inspect, compare!
Then die--if die you dare!

1811.

THE GOOD, GREAT MAN

"How seldom, friend! a good great man inherits
Honour or wealth with all his worth and pains!
It sounds like stories from the land of spirits
If any man obtain that which he merits
Or any merit that which he obtains."

REPLY TO THE ABOVE

For shame, dear friend, renounce this canting strain!
What would'st thou have a good great man obtain?
Place? titles? salary? a gilded chain?
Or throne of corpses which his sword had slain?
Greatness and goodness are not _means_, but _ends_!
Hath he not always treasures, always friends,
The good great man? _three_ treasures, LOVE, and LIGHT,
And CALM THOUGHTS, regular as infant's breath:
And three firm friends, more sure than day and night,
HIMSELF, his MAKER, and the ANGEL DEATH!

Morning Post, Sept. 23, 1802.

INSCRIPTION FOR A FOUNTAIN ON A HEATH

This Sycamore, oft musical with bees,--
Such tents the Patriarchs loved! O long unharmed
May all its aged boughs o'er-canopy
The small round basin, which this jutting stone
Keeps pure from falling leaves! Long may the Spring,
Quietly as a sleeping infant's breath,
Send up cold waters to the traveller
With soft and even pulse! Nor ever cease
Yon tiny cone of sand its soundless dance,
Which at the bottom, like a Fairy's Page,
As merry and no taller, dances still,
Nor wrinkles the smooth surface of the Fount.
Here twilight is and coolness: here is moss,
A soft seat, and a deep and ample shade.
Thou may'st toil far and find no second tree.
Drink, Pilgrim, here! Here rest! and if thy heart
Be innocent, here too shalt thou refresh
Thy spirit, listening to some gentle sound,
Or passing gale or hum of murmuring bees!

1802.

INSCRIPTION FOR A TIME-PIECE

Now! it is gone.--Our brief hours travel post,
Each with its thought or deed, its Why or How:--
But know, each parting hour gives up a ghost
To dwell within thee-an eternal NOW!

? 1830.

A TOMBLESS EPITAPH

'Tis true, Idoloclastes Satyrane!
(So call him, for so mingling blame with praise

And smiles with anxious looks, his earliest friends,
Masking his birth-name, wont to character
His wild-wood fancy and impetuous zeal)
'Tis true that, passionate for ancient truths,
And honouring with religious love the Great
Of older times, he hated to excess,
With an unquiet and intolerant scorn,
The hollow puppets of an hollow age,
Ever idolatrous, and changing ever
Its worthless idols! Learning, power, and time,
(Too much of all) thus wasting in vain war
Of fervid colloquy. Sickness, 'tis true,
Whole years of weary days, besieged him close,
Even to the gates and inlets of his life!
But it is true, no less, that strenuous, firm,
And with a natural gladness, he maintained
The citadel unconquered, and in joy
Was strong to follow the delightful Muse.
For not a hidden path, that to the shades
Of the beloved Parnassian forest leads,
Lurked undiscovered by him; not a rill
There issues from the fount of Hippocrene,
But he had traced it upward to its source,
Through open glade, dark glen, and secret dell,
Knew the gay wild flowers on its banks, and culled
Its med'cinable herbs. Yea, oft alone,
Piercing the long-neglected holy cave,
The haunt obscure of old Philosophy,
He bade with lifted torch its starry walls
Sparkle, as erst they sparkled to the flame
Of odorous lamps tended by Saint and Sage.
O framed for calmer times and nobler hearts!
O studious Poet, eloquent for truth!
Philosopher! contemning wealth and death,
Yet docile, childlike, full of Life and Love!
Here, rather than on monumental stone,

This record of thy worth thy Friend inscribes,
Thoughtful, with quiet tears upon his cheek.

? 1809.

EPITAPH

Stop, 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.

NOTES

I am indebted to Mr. Heinemann, the owner of the copyright of Dykes Campbell's edition of Coleridge's Poetical Works (Macmillan & Co., 1893)

for permission to use that text (one of the most carefully edited texts of any English poet) in this volume of selections. My aim, in making these selections, has been to give every poem of Coleridge's that seems to me really good, and nothing else. Not every poem, none perhaps of those in blank verse, is equal throughout; but I think readers of Coleridge will be surprised to find how few of the poems contained in this volume are not of

almost flawless workmanship, as well of incomparable poetic genius. Scarcely any English poet gains so much as Coleridge by not being read in a

complete edition. The gulf between his best and his worst work is as wide

as the gulf between good and evil. Even Wordsworth, even Byron, is not so

intolerable to read in a complete edition. But Coleridge, much more easily than Byron or Wordsworth, can be extricated from his own lumber-heaps; it is rare in his work to find a poem which is really good in parts and not really good as a whole. I have taken every poem on its own merits as poetry, its own technical merits as verse; and thus have included equally the frigid eighteenth-century conceits of "The Kiss" and the modern burlesque license of the comic fragments. But I have excluded everything which has an interest merely personal, or indeed any other interest than that of poetry; and I have thus omitted the famous "Ode on the Departing Year," in spite of the esteem in which Coleridge held it, and in spite of its one exquisite line--

"God's image, sister of the Seraphim"--

and I have omitted it because as a whole it is untempered rhetoric, shapeless in form; and I have also omitted confession pieces such as that early one which contains, among its otherwise too emphatic utterances, the most delicate and precise picture which Coleridge ever drew of himself:

"To me hath Heaven with bounteous hand assigned
Energic Reason and a shaping mind,
The daring ken of Truth, the Patriot's part,
And Pity's sigh, that breathes the gentle heart--
Sloth-jaundiced all! and from my graspless hand
Drop Friendship's precious pearls, like hour-glass sand.
I weep, yet stoop not! the faint anguish flows,
A dreamy pang in Morning's feverish doze."

Every poem that I have given I have given in full, and, without exception, in the form in which Coleridge left it. The dates given after the poems are

Dykes Campbell's; occasionally I have corrected the date given in the text of his edition by his own correction in the notes.

p. I. _The Ancient Mariner_. The marginal analysis which Coleridge added in reprinting the poem (from the _Lyrical Ballads_) in _Sibylline Leaves_, has been transferred to this place, where it can be read without interrupting the narrative in verse.

PART I

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

The Wedding-Guest is spell-bound by the eye of the old sea-faring man,
and
constrained to hear his tale.

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

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

The ship driven by a storm toward the south pole.

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

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

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

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

PART II

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

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

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

The ship hath been suddenly becalmed.

And the Albatross begins to be avenged.

A Spirit had followed them; one of the invisible inhabitants of this planet, neither departed souls nor angels; concerning whom the learned Jew, Josephus, and the Platonic Constantinopolitan, Michael Psellus, may be consulted. They are very numerous, and there is no climate or element without one or more.

The shipmates, in their sore distress, would fain throw the whole guilt on the ancient Mariner:

In sign whereof they hang the dead sea-bird round his neck.

PART III

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

At its nearer approach, it seemeth him to be a ship; and at a dear ransom
he freeth his speech from the bonds of thirst.

A flash of joy;

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

It seemeth him but the skeleton of a ship.

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

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

Like vessel, like crew!

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

No twilight within the courts of the Sun.

At the rising of the Moon,

One after another,

His shipmates drop down dead.

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

PART IV

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

But the ancient Mariner assureth him of his bodily life, and proceedeth
to

relate his horrible penance.

He despiseth the creatures of the calm.

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

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

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.

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

Their beauty and their happiness.

He blesseth them in his heart.

The spell begins to break.

PART V

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

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

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

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

guardian saint.

The lonesome Spirit from the south-pole carries on the ship as far as the Line, in obedience to the angelic troop, but still requireth vengeance.

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

PART VI

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

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

The curse is finally expiated.

And the ancient Mariner beholdeth his native country.

The angelic spirits leave the dead bodies,

And appear in their own forms of light.

PART VII

The Hermit of the Wood,

Approacheth the ship with wonder.

The ship suddenly sinketh.

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

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

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

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

p. 27. Christabel. Coleridge at his best represents the imaginative temper in its essence, pure gold, with only just enough alloy to give it firm bodily substance. "Christabel" is not, like "Kubla Khan," a disembodied ecstasy, but a coherent effort of the imagination. Yet, when we come to the second part, the magic is already half gone out of it. Rossetti says, in a printed letter, with admirable truth: "The conception, and partly the execution, of the passage in which Christabel repeats by fascination the serpent-glance of Geraldine, is magnificent; but that is the only good narrative passage in part two. The rest seems to have reached a fatal facility of jingling, at the heels whereof followed Scott." A few of the lines seem to sink almost lower than Scott, and suggest a Gilbert parody:

"He bids thee come without delay
With all thy numerous array.

* * * * *

And he will meet thee on the way
With all his numerous array."

But in the conclusion, which has nothing whatever to do with the poem, Coleridge is his finest self again: a magical psychologist. It is interesting to know that Crashaw was the main influence upon Coleridge while writing "Christabel," and that the "Hymn to the Name and Honour of the admirable S. Teresa" was "ever present to his mind while writing the second part."

p. 61. Love. This poem was originally published, in the Morning Post of December 21, 1799, as part of an "Introduction to the Tale of the Dark Ladié." This introduction begins:

"O leave the lily on its stem;
O leave the rose upon the spray;
O leave the elder-bloom, fair maids!
And listen to my lay.

A cypress and a myrtle bough
This morn around my harp you twined,
Because it fashion'd mournfully
Its murmurs in the wind.

And now a tale of love and woe,
A woeful tale of love I sing;
Hark, gentle maidens! hark, it sighs
And trembles on the string."

p. 65. The Three Graves. Coleridge only published what he calls "the following humble fragment" of what was to have been a poem in six parts; but he wrote an imperfect sketch of the first two parts, which was published from the original MS. by Dykes Campbell in his edition. The poem as Coleridge left it is sufficiently complete, and I have ventured to divide it into Part I. and Part II., instead of the usual Part III. and Part IV. It is Coleridge's one attempt to compete with Wordsworth on

what

Wordsworth considered his own ground, and it was first published by Coleridge in *The Friend* of September 21, 1809, on the advice of Wordsworth and Southey. "The language," we are told in an introductory

note, "was intended to be dramatic; that is, suited to the narrator; and the metre corresponds to the homeliness of the diction. It is therefore presented as the fragment, not of a poem, but of a common Ballad-tale. Whether this is sufficient to justify the adoption of such a style, in any metrical composition not professedly ludicrous, the Author is himself in some doubt. At all events, it is not presented as poetry, and it is in no way connected with the Author's judgment concerning poetic diction. Its merits, if any, are exclusively psychological." Exclusively, it would be unjust to say; but to a degree beyond those of any similar poem of Wordsworth, certainly.

p. 78. *Dejection*. This ode was originally addressed to Wordsworth, but before it was published in its first form, the "William" of the still existing MS. was changed to "Edmund"; in later editions "Edmund" was changed to "Lady," except in the seventh stanza, where "Otway" is substituted. The reference in this stanza is to Wordsworth's "Lucy Gray," and the germ of the passage occurs in a letter of Coleridge to Poole, printed by Dykes Campbell in the notes to his edition: "Greta Hall, Feb. 1,

1801.--O my dear, dear Friend! that you were with me by the fireside of my

study here, that I might talk it over with you to the tune of this night-wind that pipes its thin, doleful, climbing, sinking notes, like a child that has lost its way, and is crying aloud, half in grief, and half in the hope to be heard by its mother."

p. 90. *Fears in Solitude*. Coleridge, who was so often his own best critic, especially when the criticism was to remain inactive, wrote on an autograph copy of this poem now belonging to Professor Dowden:

"N.B.--The

above is perhaps not Poetry,--but rather a sort of middle thing between

Poetry and Oratory--_sermoni propria_.--Some parts are, I am conscious, too tame even for animated prose." It is difficult to say whether, in such poems as this, Coleridge is overtaken by his besetting indolence, or whether he is deliberately writing down to the theories of Wordsworth. Another criticism of his own on his early blank verse, where he speaks of "the utter want of all rhythm in the verse, the monotony and dead _plumb down_ of the pauses, and the absence of all bone, muscle and sinew in the single lines," applies only too well to the larger part of his work in this difficult metre, so apt to go to sleep by the way.

p. 107. _Hymn before Sun-rise_. Coleridge was never at Chamouni, and the suggestion of his poem is to be found in a poem of twenty lines by a German poetess, Frederike Brun. Some of the rhetoric of his poem Coleridge got from the German poetess; the imagination is all his own. It is perhaps a consequence of its origin that the imagination and the rhetoric never get quite clear of one another, and that, in spite of some magical lines (wholly Coleridge's) like:

"O struggling with the darkness all the night,
And visited all night by troops of stars:"

the poem remains somewhat external, a somewhat deliberate heaping up of hosannas.

p. 114. _The Nightingale_. The persons supposed to take part in this "conversation poem" are of course William and Dorothy Wordsworth.

p. 134. _A Day-Dream_. "There cannot be any doubt, I think, that the 'Asra' of this poem is Miss Sarah Hutchinson; 'Mary,' her sister (Mrs. Wordsworth); 'our sister and our friend,' Dorothy and William

Wordsworth."

(DYKES CAMPBELL.)

p. 142. *_Work without Hope_*. "What could be left to hope for when the man could already do such work?" asks Mr. Swinburne. With this exquisite

poem, in which Coleridge's style is seen in its most faultless union of his finest qualities, compare this passage from a letter to Lady Beaumont, about a year earlier: "Though I am at present sadly below even *_my_* par of health, or rather unhealth, and am the more depressed thereby from

the consciousness that in this yearly resurrection of Nature from her winter sleep, amid young leaves and blooms and twittering nest-building birds, the sun so gladsome, the breezes with such healing on their wings, all good and lovely things are beneath me, above me, and everywhere around

me, and all from God, while my incapability of enjoying, or, at best, languor in receiving them, is directly or indirectly from myself, from past

procrastination, and cowardly impatience of pain." It was always upon some

not less solid foundation that Coleridge built these delicate structures.

p. 147. *_Phantom_*. This, almost Coleridge's loveliest fragment of verse, was composed in sleep, like "Kubla Khan," "Constancy to an Ideal

Object," and "Phantom or Fact?" There is a quality, in this and some other

poems of Coleridge, which he himself has exquisitely rendered in the passage on Ariel in the lectures on Shakespeare: "In air he lives, from air he derives his being, in air he acts; and all his colours and properties seem to have been obtained from the rainbow and the skies. There is nothing

about Ariel that cannot be conceived to exist either at sunrise or sunset: hence all that belongs to Ariel belongs to the delight the mind is capable of receiving from the most lovely external appearances. "Coleridge is the

Ariel of English Poetry: glittering in the song from "Zapolya," translucent in the "Phantom," infantine, with a note of happy infancy almost like that of Blake, in "Something Childish, but very Natural." In these poems, and in the "Ode to the Rain," and the "Inscription for a Fountain on a Heath," there is a unique way of feeling, which he can render to us on those rare occasions when his sensations are uninterrupted; by thought, which clouds them, or by emotion, which disturbs them. He reveals mysterious intimacies with natural things, the "flapping" flame or a child's scarcely more articulate moods. And in some of them, which are experiments in form, he seems to compete gaily with the Elizabethan lyrists, doing wonderful things in jest, like one who is for once happy and disengaged, and able to play with his tormentor, verse.

p. 153. *Forbearance*. "Gently I took that which urgently came" is from Spenser's "Shepherds' Calendar": "But gently tooke that ungently came."

p. 154. *Sancti Dominici Pallium*. The "friend," as Dykes Campbell points out, was Southey, whose "Book of the Church" had been attacked by Charles Butler. This is one of Coleridge's most masterly experiments in dealing with material hardly possible to turn into poetry. What exquisite verse, and what variety of handling! The eighteenth-century smooth force and pungency of the main part of it ends in an anticipation of the burlesque energy of some of Mr. George Meredith's most characteristic verse. Anyone coming upon the lines:

"More than the Protestant milk all newly lapt,
Impearling a tame wild-cat's whiskered jaws,"

would have assigned them without hesitation to the writer of "A Certain People" and other sonnets in the "Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth."

p. 158. Ne plus ultra. This mysterious fragment is one of the most original experiments which Coleridge ever made, both in metre and in language (abstract terms becoming concrete through intellectual passion) and may seem to anticipate "The Unknown Eros."

p. 164. The Pains of Sleep. In a letter to Sir George and Lady Beaumont, dated September 22, 1803, Coleridge wrote, describing his journey to Scotland: "With the night my horrors commence. During the whole of my journey three nights out of four I have fallen asleep struggling and resolving to lie awake, and, awaking, have blest the scream which delivered me from the reluctant sleep.... These dreams, with all their mockery of guilt, rage, unworthy desires, remorse, shame, and terror, formed at the time the subject of some Verses, which I had forgotten till the return of my complaint, and which I will send you in my next as a curiosity."

p. 169. Names. Coleridge was as careless as the Elizabethans in acknowledging the originals of the poems which he translated, whether, as in this case, he was almost literal, or, as in the case of the Chamouni poem, he used his material freely. The lines "On a Cataract" are said to be "improved from Stolberg" in the edition of 1848, edited by Mrs. H. N. Coleridge; and the title may suit the whole of them.

p. 182. Answer to a Child's Question. I have omitted the four lines, printed in brackets in Campbell's edition, which were omitted, I think rightly, by Coleridge in reprinting the poem from the Morning Post

of October 16, 1802.

p. 183. Lines on a Child. This exquisite fragment is printed in Coleridge's works in a prefatory note to the prose "Wanderings of Cain." It

was written, he tells us, "for the purpose of procuring a friend's judgment on the metre, as a specimen" of what was to have been a long poem, in imitation of "The Death of Abel," written in collaboration with Wordsworth.

"The Ancient Mariner was written instead."

p. 188. The two Round Spaces on the Tombstone. This poem was printed in the Morning Post of December 4, 1800, under the title: "The two Round Spaces: a Skeltoniad;" and it is this text which is here given, from Campbell's edition. The "fellow from Aberdeen" was Sir James Mackintosh.

Coleridge apologised for reprinting the verses, "with the hope that they will be taken, as assuredly they were composed, in mere sport." No apology

was needed; they are the most rich, ripe, and Rabelaisian comic verses he

ever wrote, full-bodied and exultant in their exuberance of wayward and good-humoured satire.

p. 192. Sonnets Attempted in the Manner of Contemporary Writers. Dykes Campbell quotes a letter of Coleridge to Cottle, which he attributes

to the year 1797, in which Coleridge says: "I sent to the Monthly Magazine three mock sonnets in ridicule of my own Poems, and Charles

Lloyd's, and Charles Lamb's, etc. etc., exposing that affectation of unaffectedness, of jumping and misplaced accent, in commonplace epithets,

flat lines forced into poetry by italics (signifying how well and mouthishly the author would read them), puny pathos, etc. etc. The

instances were all taken from myself and Lloyd and Lamb. I signed them 'Nehemiah Higginbottom.' I think they may do good to our young Bards."

Coleridge's humour, which begins as early as 1794, with the lines on "Parliamentary Oscillators," is one of the outlets of an oppressively ingenious mind, over-packed with ideas, which he cannot be content to express in prose. He delights, as in an intellectual exercise, in the grapple with difficult technique, the victorious wrestle with grotesque rhymes. All the comic poems are unusually rich and fine in rhythm, which seems to exult in its mastery over material so foreign to it.

Yet he has not always or wholly command of this humour. The famous "Lines to a Young Ass" were first written as a joke, and there is some burlesque strength in such lines as:

"Where Toil shall wed young Health, that charming Lass!
And use his sleek cows for a looking-glass."

But the mood went, the jest was so far forgotten as to be taken seriously by himself, and turned into the sober earnest which it remains; a kind of timidity of the original impression crept in, and we are left to laugh rather at than with the poet.

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