Golden Galaxy

Tennyson

The Lover’s Tale (opening)

Tennyson began The Lover’s Tale when he was 23, but completion and publication were delayed until he was 70.

He knew he still hadn’t got it right.

But he also knew that the feelings of the unnamed Lover were very close to his own when he was a young man.

And the beloved (Camilla) is not unrelated to Shakespeare’s Perdita, Viola—and Miranda.

Here far away, seen from the topmost cliff,
Filling with purple gloom the vacancies
Between the tufted hills, the sloping seas
Hang in mid-heaven, and half-way down rare sails,
White as white clouds, floating from sky to sky.

Oh! pleasant breast of waters, quiet Bay,
Like to a quiet mind in the loud world,
Where the chafed breakers of the outer sea
Sink powerless, even as anger falls aside,
And withers on the breast of peaceful love.

See, Sirs,
Even now the Goddess of the Past (that takes
The heart, and sometimes toucheth but one string,
That quivers, and is silent, and sometimes
Sweeps suddenly all its half-moulder’d chords
To an old melody) begins to play
On those first-movèd fibres of the brain.

I come, great Mistress of the ear and eye:
Breathe but a little on me, and the sail
Will draw me to the rising of the sun,
The lucid chambers of the morning star,
And East of life.

O Love, O Hope,
They come, they crowd upon me all at once,
Moved from the cloud of unforgotten things:
They flash across the darkness of my brain,
The many pleasant days, the moonlit nights,
The dewy dawnsings and the amber eyes,
When thou and I, Camilla, thou and I
Were borne about the Bay, or safely moor’d
Beneath some low brow’d cavern.

Trust me, long ago
I should have died, if it were possible
To die in gazing on that perfectness
Which I do bear within me;

I had died,
But from my farthest lapse, my latest ebb,
Thine image, like a charm of light and strength
Upon the waters, pushed me back again
On these deserted sands of barren life.

To me alone,
The Present is the vassal of the Past:
So that, in that I have lived, do I live,
And cannot die; and am, in having been—
A portion of the pleasant yesterday,
Thrust forward on to-day, and out of place;

Even as the all-enduring camel, driven
Far from the diamond fountain by the palms,
Toils onward thro' the middle moonlit nights,
Shadow’d and crimson’d with the drifting dust,
Or when the white heats of the blinding noons
Beat from the concave sand; yet in him keeps
A draught of that sweet fountain that he loves,
To stay his feet from falling, and his spirit
From bitterness of death.

Ye ask me, friends,
When I began to love. How should I tell ye?

Ye know not what ye ask.
How should the broad and open flower tell
What sort of bud it was, when press’d together
In its green sheath, close lapt in silken folds,
It seemed to keep its sweetness to itself?

For as men know not when they fall asleep
Into delicious dreams, our other life,
So know I not when I began to love.

This is my sum of knowledge—that my love
Grew with myself—say rather, was my growth,
My inward sap, the hold I have on earth,
My outward circling air wherein I breathe:
For how should I have lived and not have loved?

Shakespeare

from The Tempest

(Miranda and Ferdinand)

Shipwrecked on the enchanted island,

the courtly Ferdinand is forced to do manual labour for Prospero,
but he does so willingly because he is in love with Miranda, Prospero’s daughter.

She, brought up on the island, has never seen a young man before and is enraptured.

Her innocence and impetuosity are set off by the more courtly language of her lover.

ACT 1

FERDINAND

My spirits, as in a dream, are all bound up.

My father’s loss, the weakness which I feel,
The wrack of all my friends, nor this man’s threats
To whom I am subdued, are but light to me,
Might I but through my prison once a day
Behold this maid.

All corners else o’ th’ Earth
Let liberty make use of. Space enough
Have I in such a prison.

ACT 3

Enter Ferdinand bearing a log.

FERDINAND

There be some sports are painful;
    some kinds of baseness
Are nobly undergone; and most poor matters
Point to rich ends. But this my mean task
Would be as heavy to me as odious, save that
The mistress whom I serve quickens what’s dead
And makes my labours pleasures.

I must remove
Some thousands of these logs and pile them up,
Upon a sore injunction. My sweet mistress
Weeps when she sees me work, and says such baseness
Had never like executor.
But these sweet thoughts do even refresh my labours
Most busiest when I do it.

Enter Miranda

Miranda

Alas now, pray you,
Work not so hard. I would the lightning had
Burnt up those logs that you’re enjoined to pile.

Pray, set it down and rest you. When this burns
’Twill weep for having wearied you. My father
Is hard at study. Pray now, rest yourself.
He’s safe for these three hours.

Ferdinand O most dear mistress,
The sun will set before I shall discharge
What I must strive to do.

Miranda If you’ll sit down,
I’ll bear your logs the while. Pray, give me that.
I’ll carry it to the pile.

Ferdinand No, precious creature,
I had rather crack my sinews, break my back,
Than you should such dishonour undergo
While I sit lazy by.

Miranda It would become me
As well as it does you, and I should do it
With much more ease, for my good will is to it,
And yours it is against.

You look wearily.

Ferdinand No, noble mistress, ’tis fresh morning with me
When you are by at night.

I do beseech you,
Chiefly that I might set it in my prayers,
What is your name?

MIRANDA    Miranda. (O my father,
I have broke your hest to say so!)

FERDINAND     Admired Miranda!
Indeed the top of admiration, worth
What’s dearest to the world! Full many a lady
I have eyed with best regard, but never any
With so full soul but some defect in her
Did quarrel with the noblest grace she owed.

But you, O you,
So perfect and so peerless, are created
Of every creature’s best.

MIRANDA    I do not know
One of my sex, no woman’s face remember,
Save, from my glass, mine own. Nor have I seen
More that I may call men than you, good friend,
And my dear father.

    How features are abroad,
I am skilless of; but by my modesty,
(The jewel in my dower) I would not wish
Any companion in the world but you,
Nor can imagination form a shape
Besides yourself to like of.

    But I prattle
Something too wildly, and my father’s precepts
I therein do forget.

FERDINAND    Hear my soul speak:
The very instant that I saw you did
My heart fly to your service, there resides
To make me slave to it, and for your sake
Am I this patient log-man.

MIRANDA    Do you love me?

FERDINAND     O heaven, O Earth, bear witness to this sound,
And crown what I profess with kind event
If I speak true; if hollowly, invert
What best is boded me to mischief. I,
Beyond all limit of what else i’ th’ world,
Do love, prize, honour you.

MIRANDA I am a fool
To weep at what I am glad of.

FERDINAND Wherefore weep you?

MIRANDA
At mine unworthiness, that dare not offer
What I desire to give, and much less take
What I shall die to want.

But this is trifling. Hence, bashful cunning,
And prompt me, plain and holy innocence.

I am your wife if you will marry me.
If not, I’ll die your maid. To be your fellow
You may deny me, but I’ll be your servant
Whether you will or no.

FERDINAND My mistress, dearest, and I thus humble ever.
MIRANDA My husband, then?

FERDINAND Ay, with a heart as willing
As bondage e’er of freedom.
Here’s my hand.

MIRANDA And mine, with my heart in ’t. And now farewell
Till half an hour hence.

FERDINAND A thousand thousand.

Exeunt

Tennyson

Morte d’Arthur

It is the evening of the last battle
during which King Arthur has received a mortal wound from his nephew, Mordred.

So all day long the noise of battle rolled
Among the mountains by the winter sea;
Until King Arthur's Table, man by man,
Had fallen in Lyonnesse about their Lord,
King Arthur.

Then, because his wound was deep,
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land.
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily:
"My end draws nigh; 'tis time that I were gone.
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,
And bear me to the margin; yet I fear
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die."

The King has commanded Bedivere to throw his sword Excalibur into the lake.

Twice the knight is tempted by the beauty of the hilt and twice he disobeys, concealing the sword among the bulrushes.

The King repeats his command a third time with a solemn injunction.

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged
Among the bulrush-beds, and clutch'd the sword,
And strongly wheel'd and threw it.

The great brand
Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
By night, with noises of the northern sea.

So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur.
But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath:
"Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.
My end draws nigh; 'tis time that I were gone".

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them; and descending they were ware
That all the decks were dense with stately forms
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream.

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere,
"Ah! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go?
For now I see the true old times are dead,
And now the whole Round Table is dissolved."

And slowly answered Arthur from the barge:
"The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils Himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.

But now farewell. I am going a long way
To the island-valley of Avalon,
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
Deep-meadowed, happy, fair with orchard-lawns
And bowery hollows crowned with summer sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound."

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail
Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan
That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull
Looked one black dot against the verge of dawn,
And on the mere the wailing died away.

**Byron**

*Manfred (Act 3, scene 4)*

The Glory that was Rome.
Memories of a moonlit night in the Coliseum inspired by the moon shining over the Alps.

MANFRED

The stars are forth, the moon above the tops
Of the snow-shining mountains.—Beautiful!

I linger yet with Nature, for the night
Hath been to me a more familiar face
Than that of man; and in her starry shade
Of dim and solitary loveliness,
I learn’d the language of another world.

I do remember me, that in my youth,
When I was wandering,—upon such a night
I stood within the Coliseum’s wall,
Midst the chief relics of almighty Rome.

The trees which grew along the broken arches
Waved dark in the blue midnight, and the stars
Shone through the rents of ruin; from afar
The watchdog bay’d beyond the Tiber.

More near, from out the Caesars’ palace came
The owl’s long cry, and, interruptedly,
Of distant sentinels the fitful song
Begun and died upon the gentle wind.

Some cypresses beyond the time-worn breach
Appear’d to skirt the horizon, yet they stood
Within a bowshot.

Where the Caesars dwelt,
And dwell the tuneless birds of night, amidst
A grove which springs through level’d battlements,
And twines its roots with the imperial hearths,
Ivy usurps the laurel’s place of growth:

But the gladiators’ bloody Circus stands –
A noble wreck in ruinous perfection –
While Caesar’s chambers, and the Augustan halls
Grovel on earth in indistinct decay.

And thou didst shine, thou rolling moon, upon
All this, and cast a wide and tender light,
Which soften’d down the hoar austerity
Of rugged desolation, and fill’d up,
As ‘t were anew, the gaps of centuries;
Leaving that beautiful which still was so,
And making that which was not, till the place
Became religion, and the heart ran o’er
With silent worship of the great of old–
The dead, but sceptred sovereigns, who still rule
Our spirits from their urns.

Robert Browning

My Last Duchess

The scene is set in the early sixteenth century.
The speaker is the Duke of Ferrara, a widower.
He is talking to an envoy who has come to negotiate the terms of the Duke’s marriage to the daughter of a Count from another powerful dynasty.

As he shows the visitor through his palace, he stops before a portrait of his first wife...

That’s my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now; Fra Pandolf’s hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.

Will’t please you sit and look at her?

I said
“Fra Pandolf” by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there.

So, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus.

Sir, ‘twas not
Her husband’s presence only called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess’ cheek; perhaps
Fra Pandolf chanced to say, “Her mantle laps
Over my lady’s wrist too much,” or “Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat.”
Such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy.

She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate’er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.

Sir, ’twas all one! My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace — all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least.

She thanked men—good! but thanked
Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody’s gift.

Who’d stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech—which I have not—to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, “Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark”—and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse—
E’en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop.

Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene’er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive.

Will’t please you rise? We’ll meet
The company below, then.

I repeat,
The Count your master’s known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter’s self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object.

Nay, we’ll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

Tennyson

Maud (three scenes)

Part I, 22

Part II, 4 and 5

In this monodrama, the mentally unstable narrator recounts his disastrous love for Maud, a childhood friend.

She seems to return his love, but her brother disapproves.

In the first excerpt the lover waits for Maud to emerge from a grand party for a clandestine meeting in the garden of the manorial hall.

She is followed out by her brother, a fight ensues and the brother is killed.

In the second excerpt, after years of exile he is back in England and dreaming of Maud.

In the third passage, he has completely lost his reason, imagining himself to be dead and buried.

To-morrow, if we live,
Our ponderous squire will give
A grand political dinner
To half the squirelings near;
And Maud will wear her jewels,
And the bird of prey will hover,
And the titmouse hope to win her
With his chirrup at her ear.

A grand political dinner
To the men of many acres,
A gathering of the Tory,
A dinner and then a dance
For the maids and marriage-makers,
And every eye but mine will glance
At Maud in all her glory.

For I am not invited,
But, with the Sultan’s pardon,
I am all as well delighted,
For I know her own rose-garden,
And mean to linger in it
Till the dancing will be over;

And then, oh then, come out to me
For a minute, but for a minute,
Come out to your own true lover.
That your true lover may see
Your glory also, and render
All homage to his own darling,
Queen Maud in all her splendour.

Come into the garden, Maud,
For the black bat, night, has flown,
Come into the garden, Maud,
I am here at the gate alone;
And the woodbine spices are wafted abroad,
And the musk of the roses blown.

For a breeze of morning moves,
And the planet of Love is on high,
Beginning to faint in the light that she loves
On a bed of daffodil sky,
To faint in the light of the sun she loves.
To faint in his light, and to die.

All night have the roses heard
The flute, violin, bassoon;
All night has the casement jessamine stirr’d
To the dancers dancing in tune;
Till a silence fell with the waking bird,
And a hush with the setting moon.

I said to the lily, ‘There is but one
With whom she has heart to be gay.
When will the dancers leave her alone?
She is weary of dance and play.’
Now half to the setting moon are gone,
And half to the rising day;
Low on the sand and loud on the stone
The last wheel echoes away.

I said to the rose, ‘The brief night goes
In babble and revel and wine.
O young lord-lover, what sighs are those,
For one that will never be thine?
But mine, but mine,’ so I sware to the rose,
‘For ever and ever, mine.’
The slender acacia would not shake
One long milk-bloom on the tree;
The white lake-blossom fell into the lake,
As the pimpernel dozed on the lea;
But the rose was awake all night for your sake,
Knowing your promise to me;
The lilies and roses were all awake.
They sigh’d for the dawn and thee.

Queen rose of the rosebud garden of girls,
Come hither, the dances are done,
In gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls,
Queen lily and rose in one;
Shine out, little head, sunning over with curls,
To the flowers, and be their sun.

There has fallen a splendid tear
From the passion-flower at the gate.
She is coming, my dove, my dear;
She is coming, my life, my fate;
The red rose cries, ‘She is near, she is near;’
And the white rose weeps, ‘She is late;’
The larkspur listens, ‘I hear, I hear;’
And the lily whispers, ‘I wait.’

She is coming, my own, my sweet;
Were it ever so airy a tread.
My heart would hear her and beat,
Were it earth in an earthy bed;

My dust would hear her and beat,
Had I lain for a century dead;
Would start and tremble under her feet,
And blossom in purple and red.

: 

(London, three years later)

A shadow flits before me,
Not thou, but like to thee.
It leads me forth at evening,
It lightly winds and steals
In a cold white robe before me,
When all my spirit reels
At the shouts, the leagues of lights,
And the roaring of the wheels.
Tis a morning pure and sweet,
And the light and shadow fleet;
She is walking in the meadow,
And the woodland echo rings;
In a moment we shall meet;

She is singing in the meadow,
And the rivulet at her feet
Ripples on in light and shadow
To the ballad that she sings.

But there rings on a sudden a passionate cry,
There is some one dying or dead,
And a sullen thunder is roll’d.

Then I rise, the eavedrops fall,
And the yellow vapours choke
The great city sounding wide;
The day comes, a dull red ball
Wrapt in drifts of lurid smoke
On the misty river-tide.

Alas for her that met me,
That heard me softly call,
Came glimmering thro’ the laurels
At the quiet evenfall,
In the garden by the turrets
Of the old manorial hall.

But the broad light glares and beats,
And the shadow flits and fleets
And will not let me be;
And I loathe the squares and streets,
And the faces that one meets,
Hearts with no love for me.

(London, a mental hospital, another two years later)

Dead, long dead,
Long dead!
And my heart is a handful of dust,

And the wheels go over my head,
And my bones are shaken with pain,
For into a shallow grave they are thrust,
Only a yard beneath the street,

And the hoofs of the horses beat, beat,
The hoofs of the horses beat,
Beat into my scalp and my brain,
With never an end to the stream of passing feet,
Driving, hurrying, marrying, burying,
Clamour and rumble, and ringing and clatter,

And here beneath it is all as bad,
For I thought the dead had peace, but it is not so;
To have no peace in the grave, is that not sad?
But up and down and to and fro,
Ever about me the dead men go;
And then to hear a dead man chatter
Is enough to drive one mad.

But I know where a garden grows,
Fairer than aught in the world beside,
All made up of the lily and rose
That blow by night, when the season is good,
To the sound of dancing music and flutes.

O me, why have they not buried me deep enough?
Is it kind to have made me a grave so rough,
Me, that was never a quiet sleeper?

Maybe still I am but half-dead;
Then I cannot be wholly dumb;
I will cry to the steps above my head,
And somebody, surely, some kind heart will come
To bury me, bury me
Deeper, ever so little deeper.

Tennyson

_The Lady of Shalott_

**Part I**

On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
And thro’ the field the road runs by
   To many-tower’d Camelot;
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
   The island of Shalott.
Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Thro' the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river
    Flowing down to Camelot.
Four gray walls, and four gray towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers
    The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow veild,
Slide the heavy barges trail'd
By slow horses; and unhail'd
The shallop flitteth silken-sail'd
    Skimming down to Camelot:
But who hath seen her wave her hand?
Or at the casement seen her stand?
Or is she known in all the land,
    The Lady of Shalott?

Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly
From the river winding clearly,
    Down to tower'd Camelot:
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers "'Tis the fairy
    Lady of Shalott."

    Part II

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colours gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay
    To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
    The Lady of Shalott.

And moving thro' a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near
    Winding down to Camelot:
There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village-churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls,
Pass onward from Shalott.

And sometimes thro’ the mirror blue
The knights come riding two and two:
She hath no loyal knight and true,
The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror’s magic sights,
For often thro’ the silent nights
A funeral, with plumes and lights
And music, went to Camelot:
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed:
“I am half sick of shadows,” said
The Lady of Shalott.

Part III

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves,
The sun came dazzling thro’ the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
Of bold Sir Lancelot.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glow’d;
On burnish’d hooves his war-horse trode;
From underneath his helmet flow’d
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
As he rode down to Camelot.
From the bank and from the river
He flash’d into the crystal mirror,
“Tirra lirra,” by the river
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces thro’ the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She look’d down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror crack’d from side to side;
“The curse is come upon me,” cried
The Lady of Shalott.

In the stormy east-wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining
Over tower’d Camelot;
Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote
_The Lady of Shalott._

And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;
The broad stream bore her far away,
_Floating down to Camelot._

And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
_The Lady of Shalott._

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,
And her eyes were darken’d wholly,
Turn’d to tower’d Camelot.
For ere she reach’d upon the tide
The first house by the water-side,
Singing in her song she died,
_The Lady of Shalott._

Under tower and balcony,
By garden-wall and gallery,
A gleaming shape she floated by,
Dead-pale between the houses high,
Silent into Camelot.

But Lancelot mused a little space;
He said, “She has a lovely face;
God in his mercy lend her grace,
_The Lady of Shalott._”

_Coleridge_

_Scenes from The Rime of the Ancient Mariner_

The Ancient Mariner’s ship
has been carried south of the Equatorial Line.

Driven by a storm toward the pole,
it has come to a land of ice and of fearful sounds.
An Albatross comes through the snow-fog
and is received with great joy.

It proves to be a bird of good omen,
following the ship as it returns northward through fog and floating ice.

But the Mariner inhospitably kills the pious bird!

The fog clears.

The fair breeze continues.

The ship sails northward, even till it reaches the Line,
where it is suddenly becalmed.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
'T was 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 every tongue, through utter drought,
Was withered at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.
Ah! well-a-day! what evil looks
Had I from old and young!
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.

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

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.

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!

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?

On board the skeleton-ship
are a Spectre-Woman—Death—and her Death-mate—Life-in-Death.

They dice for the ship's crew; and the latter winneth the ancient Mariner.

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.

The stars were dim, and thick the night,
The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed white;
From the sails the dew did drip —
Till clomb above the eastern bar
The hornèd Moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip.

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!

Life-in-Death begins her work on the Ancient Mariner.

The curse liveth for him in the eyes of the dead men.

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on the 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.

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.

The moving Moon went up the sky,
And nowhere did abide:
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
The charmèd water burnt always
A still and awful red.

By the light of the Moon the Mariner beholds God's creatures of the great calm;
and as he blesses them in his heart for their beauty and happiness, the spell begins to break.

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.

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.

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 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.

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

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 swound.

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.'

I woke, and we were sailing on 
As in a gentle weather: 
'T was 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.

But now this spell was snapt: once more 
I viewed the ocean green, 
And 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?’

A boat came close beneath the ship,
But I nor spake nor stirred;
The boat came closer to 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.

O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide, wide sea:
So lonely 't was, that God himself
Scarce seemèd there to be.

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.