

'The Inchcape Rock' by Robert Southey (1774-1883)

No stir in the air, no stir in the sea,
The Ship was still as she could be;
Her sails from heaven received no motion,
Her keel was steady in the ocean.

Without either sign or sound of their
shock,
The waves flow'd over the Inchcape Rock;
So little they rose, so little they fell,
They did not move the Inchcape Bell.

The Abbot of Aberbrothok
Had placed that bell on the Inchcape
Rock;
On a buoy in the storm it floated and
swung,
And over the waves its warning rung.

When the Rock was hid by the surge's
swell,
The Mariners heard the warning Bell;
And then they knew the perilous Rock,
And blest the Abbot of Aberbrothok

The Sun in the heaven was shining gay,
All things were joyful on that day;
The sea-birds scream'd as they wheel'd
round,
And there was joyance in their sound.

The buoy of the Inchcape Bell was seen
A darker speck on the ocean green,
Sir Ralph the Rover walk'd his deck,
And fix'd his eye on the darker speck.

He felt the cheering power of spring,
It made him whistle, it made him sing;
His heart was mirthful to excess,
But the Rover's mirth was wickedness.

His eye was on the Inchcape Float;
Quoth he, "My men, pull out the boat,
And row me to the Inchcape Rock,
And I'll plague the Abbot of Aberbrothok."

The boat is low'd, the boatmen row,
And to the Inchcape Rock they go;
Sir Ralph the Rover from the boat,
And he cut the bell from the Inchcape
Float.

Down sank the Bell with a gurgling sound,
The bubbles rose and burst around;
Quoth Sir Ralph, "The next who comes to
the Rock,
Won't bless the Abbot of Aberbrothok."

Sir Ralph the Rover sail'd away
He scour'd the seas for many a day;
And now grown rich, he plund'rd store,
He steers his course for Scotland's shore.

So thick a haze dispers'd the sky,
They cannot see the sun on high;
The wind hath blown a gale all day,
At evening hath died away.

On the deck the Rover takes his stand,
So dark is they see no land.
Quoth Sir Ralph, "It will be lighter soon,
For there is the dawn of the rising Moon."

"I cannot hear," said one, "the breakers
rear'd
or I rethink we should be near the
shore."
"How, where we are I cannot tell,
But I wish we could hear the Inchcape
Bell."

They hear no sound, the swell is strong,
Though the wind hath fallen they drift
along;
Till the vessel strikes with a shivering
shock,
"Oh Christ! It is the Inchcape Rock!"

Sir Ralph the Rover tore his hair,
He curst himself in his despair;
The waves rush in on every side,
The ship is sinking beneath the tide.

But even in his dying fear,
One dreadful sound could the Rover hear;
A sound as if with the Inchcape Bell,
The Devil below was ringing his knell.