



## The White Knight's Song

I'll tell thee everything I can:  
 There's little to relate.  
 I saw an aged, aged man,  
 A-sitting on a gate.  
 "Who are you, aged man?" I said,  
 "And how is it you live?"  
 And his answer trickled through my head,  
 Like water through a sieve.

He said, "I look for butterflies  
 That sleep among the wheat:  
 I make them into mutton-pies,  
 And sell them in the street.  
 I sell them unto men," he said,  
 "Who sail on stormy seas;  
 And that's the way I get my bread ~  
 A trifle, if you please."



But I was thinking of a plan  
 To dye one's whiskers green,  
 And always use so large a fan  
 That they could not be seen.  
 So, having no reply to give  
 To what the old man said,  
 I cried, "Come, tell me how you live!"  
 And thumped him on the head.

His accents mild took up the tale:  
 He said, "I go my ways,  
 And when I find a mountain-rill,  
 I set it in a blaze;  
 And thence they make a stuff they call  
 Rowland's Macassar Oil ~  
 Yet twopence-halfpenny is all  
 They give me for my toil."





But I was thinking of a way  
 To feed oneself on batter,  
 And so go on from day to day  
 Getting a little fatter.  
 I shook him well from side to side,  
 Until his face was blue:  
 "Come, tell me how you live," I cried,  
 "And what it is you do!"

He said, "I hunt for haddocks' eyes  
 Among the heather bright,  
 And work them into waistcoat buttons  
 In the silent night.  
 And these I do not sell for gold  
 Or coin of silvery shine,  
 But for a copper halfpenny,  
 And that will purchase nine.



"I sometimes dig for buttered rolls,  
 Or set limed twigs for crabs:  
 I sometimes search the grassy knolls  
 For wheels of *Hansom*-cabs.  
 And that's the way," (he gave a wink),  
 "By which I get my wealth ~  
 And very gladly will I drink  
 Your *Honour's* noble health."

I heard him then, for I had just  
 Completed my design  
 To keep the *Menai* bridge from rust  
 By boiling it in wine.  
 I thanked him much for telling me  
 The way he got his wealth,  
 But chiefly for his wish that he  
 Might drink my noble health.





And now, if e'er by chance I put  
My fingers into glue,  
Or madly squeeze a right-hand foot  
Into a left-hand shoe,  
Or if I drop upon my toe  
A very heavy weight,  
I weep, for it reminds me so  
Of that old man I used to know ~

Whose look was mild, whose speech was slow,  
Whose hair was whiter than the snow,  
Whose face was very like a crow,  
With eyes, like cinders, all aglow,  
Who seemed distracted with his woe,  
Who rocked his body to and fro,  
And muttered mumblingly and low,  
As if his mouth were full of dough,  
Who snorted like a buffalo ~  
That summer evening long ago,  
A-sitting on a gate.

