

Lewis Carroll (1832-98)

1 *The Aged Aged Man*

‘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. 5  
‘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: 10  
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 — 15  
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. 20  
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: 25  
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 — 30  
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 35  
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!' 40

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 45  
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: 50  
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 55  
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. 60  
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 65  
My fingers into glue,  
Or madly squeeze a right-hand foot  
Into a left-hand shoe,

