

William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

It was in 1797 that the new romantic movement in our literature assumed definite form. Wordsworth and Coleridge retired to the Quantock Hills, Somerset and there formed the deliberate purpose to make literature "adapted to interest mankind permanently", which they declared classic poetry could never do. Helping the two poets was Wordsworth's sister Dorothy with a woman's love for flowers and all beautiful things and a woman's divine sympathy for human life even in its lowliest forms. Though a silent partner she furnished perhaps the largest share of the inspiration which resulted in the famous Lyrical Ballads of 1798. In their partnership Coleridge was to take up the "Supernatural, or at least romantic", while Wordsworth was "to give the charm of

novelty to things of every day... by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us." The whole spirit of their work is reflected in two poems of this remarkable little volume, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" which is Coleridge's masterpiece and "Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey" which expresses Wordsworth's poetical creed and which is one of the noblest and most significant of our poems. That the Lyrical Ballads attracted no attention and was practically ignored by a public that would soon go into raptures over Byron's 'Childe Harold and Don Juan' is of small consequence. Many men will hurry a mile to see skyrockets who never notice Orion and

the Pleiades from their own
doorstep. Had Wordsworth and
Coleridge written only this
one little book, they would
still be among the represen-
tative writers of an age
that proclaimed the final
triumph of Romanticism.

The end.

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