

**THE POEMS OF
WILLIAM COLLINS**

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The Poems of William Collins by Christopher Stone

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CHRISTOPHER STONE

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**EDITED BY
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**LONDON
HENRY FROWDE
1907**

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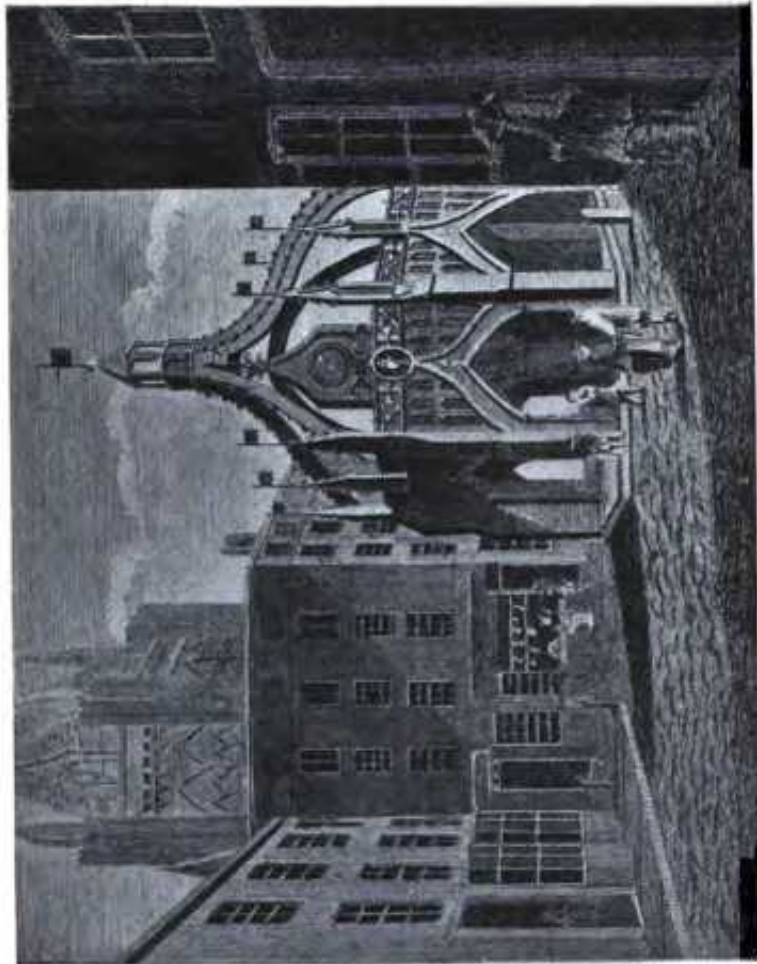
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Nixon delin.

CHICHESTER CROSS

Published by J. Burrell, 32 Cornhill, October, 1793

W. Thomas Sculp.

MEMOIR

THE only known portrait of William Collins represents him at the age of fourteen when he was at Winchester ; and in the ' keen expressive eyes ', high forehead, round cheeks, and Cupid mouth it is not hard to trace the power as well as the delicacy and fastidiousness which enabled him to write the *Persian Eclogues* three years later. If anecdotes subsequently recorded are worthy of belief, he was, even in his boyhood, conscious of the melancholy career in store for him ; for a fellow-townsmen and fellow-Wykehamist, Mr. William Smith of Chichester, remembered how one morning at school he had observed Collins to be particularly depressed, and when urged to disclose the cause, the boy spoke of a dream in which he walked through fields and climbed a lofty tree ; when he had nearly reached the top a great branch broke and let him fall to the ground. The account of this simple dream caused much ridicule, till Collins explained that the tree was the ' Tree of Poetry. ' The first time that Mr. Smith saw him after they had left the College was at an interval of twelve or fifteen years, and when, in a deplorable state of mind, he had been long under confinement ; but no sooner

had his old schoolfellow on this occasion presented himself, than he exclaimed, "Smith, do you remember my dream?" Thus it sometimes happens that a trifling apprehension may be terribly confirmed, and may exercise a lasting impression on the mind that framed it.

The materials for a memoir of Collins are very scanty: a few letters written by his friends after his death; Dr. Johnson's 'Life', first published in Fawkes' and Woty's *Poetical Calendar* and rewritten for the *Lives of the Poets*; one letter by Collins preserved in Seward's *Literary Anecdotes*; and many stray references in contemporary publications. To these must be added the results of the extensive and scholarly researches of editors, notably Langhorne, Dyce, Nicolas and Moy Thomas. The dearth of material is no doubt partly due to Collins's sister, with whom he lived during the last years of his life: according to her stepson she 'loved money to excess, and evinced so outrageous an aversion to her brother because he squandered or gave away to the boys in the cloisters whatever money he had, that she destroyed, in a paroxysm of resentment, all his papers, and whatever remained of his enthusiasm for poetry, as far as she could.'

William Collins was born on Christmas Day, 1721, in a house on the north side of East Street, Chichester (No. 21, 'Knight's'), possibly in the pannelled room now belonging to the Chichester Library; and he was christened in St. Andrew's Church, close at hand.



NORTH-WEST VIEW OF CHICHESTER CATHEDRAL