

**LYRICAL BALLADS. 1798. EDITED
WITH CERTAIN POEMS OF
1798 AND AN INTRODUCTION
AND NOTES BY THOMAS
HUTCHINSON**

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Lyrical Ballads.1798. Edited with Certain Poems of 1798 and an Introduction and Notes by
Thomas Hutchinson by William Wordsworth & S. T. Coleridge

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WILLIAM WORDSWORTH & S. T. COLERIDGE

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BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH
AND S. T. COLERIDGE
1798

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BY THOMAS HUTCHINSON

THIRD EDITION



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INTRODUCTION.

THE little book here reprinted appeared at Bristol on or about the first of September 1798. A small octavo of two hundred and fourteen pages, humbly put up in paper boards, it came from the house of Joseph Cottle, poetaster, printer, publisher, and bookseller: anonymously, and without a hint, either in title-page, advertisement, contents-table, or body of the book, to reveal the presence of more than one hand. The book was the work of two friends, William Wordsworth, then twenty-eight, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, then twenty-five years of age; and the contents, for the most part, were an experiment to see how far the public taste would endure verse of an absolutely natural and simple kind—verse that totally discarded the hackneyed artifices of poetic style, and employed such words only as were common in everyday speech. Both writers had already come forward with work of a very different kind: Wordsworth in 1793,

with two descriptive poems in heroic metre, of great and original merit, but written in the vicious style of Erasmus Darwin; and Coleridge (amongst other things) with a volume (1796) of miscellaneous verse (now in a second edition), reminiscent chiefly of Gray, Collins, and Aken-side. For this reason, and because they craved beyond everything a free and unbiassed opinion from the public, they now endeavoured to ensure, so far as they could, the anonymity of their latest venture. The *Ballads*, as originally put together in the summer of 1798, had included *Lenti, or The Circassian Love-Chant*, a lyric which had appeared in the *Morning Post* of April 13 over the signature *Nicius Erythræus*, but was known to many besides Dan. Stuart, the editor, as the work of Coleridge. At the last moment the sheet (ε) containing this piece was cancelled, and *The Nightingale*, a newly composed idyl in blank verse, put in its place. And the same motive that prompted the rejection of *Lenti* possibly led to the adoption of what seems to have been the original imprint. Fired with the ambition of ushering into the world three such poets as Southey, Coleridge, and Wordsworth—a rare distinction, as he justly observes,¹ for a

¹ *Early Recollections*, i. p. 369.