

of questions;* whilst the defender finds his task of accounting for his enthusiasm, much less easy than it would be in the case of a play of Shakespeare or, indeed, of almost any other work which has given to its writer a high place among English poets. The chief cause of all this lies in the fact that *The Ancient Mariner* appeals so exclusively to the æsthetic sense, and so little either to the intellect or to normal human sympathies.† The perception of truth, of the successful representation of life and character, and the understanding and feeling for human joys and sorrows are developed by every-day experience; whereas the lack of such inevitable education of the sense for artistic beauty makes the power of appreciating it the rarer. A sagacious mind little open to poetic effects may find much to interest and to excite admiration in the dramas of Shakespeare, as he who has no sense for beauty of form and colour, may appreciate the truth of a portrait; whilst on the one hand, knowledge of the world and clearness of intellect are of no avail in such an art as music, where there is no appeal except to the sense of beauty of sound and its combinations. Poetry, unlike music, deals not with sounds merely, but with language, which is necessarily the expression of thought. Hence in poetry we *may* find what appeals to common sense:—truth, the

*To the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth appended an apologetic note on *The Ancient Mariner*, which is interesting as showing the limitation of Wordsworth's poetic taste and as enumerating some objections which may be taken against the poem: "I cannot refuse myself the gratification of informing such Readers as may have been pleased with this Poem, or with any part of it, that they owe their pleasure in some sort to me; as the Author was himself very desirous that it should be suppressed. This wish had arisen from a consciousness of the defects of the Poem, and from a knowledge that many persons had been much displeased with it. The Poem of my Friend has indeed great defects; first, that the principal person has no distinct character, either in his profession of Mariner or as a human being who having been long under the control of supernatural impressions might be supposed himself to partake of something supernatural; secondly, that he does not act, but is continually acted upon; thirdly, that the events having no necessary connection do not produce each other; and lastly, that the imagery is somewhat too laboriously accumulated. Yet the Poem contains many delicate touches of passion, and indeed the passion is everywhere true to nature; a great number of the stanzas present beautiful images and are expressed with unusual felicity of language, and the versification, though the metre is itself unfitted for long poems, is harmonious and artfully varied, exhibiting the utmost powers of that metre, and every variety of which it is capable."

†"It would need Coleridge the critic to discover the secrets of the genius of Coleridge the poet. To solve intellectual puzzles in verse, to condense a diffused body of doctrine, to interpret what is called a poet's criticism of life is after all not difficult; but to find expressions in the language of thought corresponding to pure melody and imaginative loveliness is a finer exercise of wit." (*Dowden's Coleridge as a Poet.*)