

Stones, undertaken by Coleridge and Wordsworth, accompanied by the latter's sister. In the course of this ramble, Wordsworth tells us, was planned the poem of the *Ancient Mariner*, founded on a dream, as Mr. Coleridge said, of his friend Mr. Cruikshank. "Much the greatest part of the story was Mr. Coleridge's invention, but certain parts I suggested; for example, some crime was to be committed that should bring upon the Old Navigator, as Coleridge afterwards delighted to call him, the spectral prosecution, as a consequence of that crime and his own wanderings. I had been reading in Shelvocke's *Voyages*, a day or two before," Wordsworth continues, "that while doubling Cape Horn they frequently saw albatrosses in that latitude, the largest sort of sea-fowl, some extending their wings twelve or thirteen feet. 'Suppose,' said I, 'you represent him as having killed one of these birds on entering the South Sea, and that the tutelary spirits of these regions take upon them to avenge the crime.' The incident was thought fit for the purpose, and adopted accordingly. I also suggested the navigation of the ship by the dead men, but do not recollect that I had anything more to do with the scheme of the poem. . . . As we endeavoured to proceed conjointly (I speak of the same evening) our respective manners proved so widely different, that it would have been presumptuous in me to do anything but separate from an undertaking upon which I could only have been a clog. . . . The *Ancient Mariner* grew and grew till it became too important for our first object, which was limited to our expectation of five pounds; and we began to think of a volume which was to consist, as Mr. Coleridge has told the world, of poems chiefly on supernatural subjects."

Out of these simple incidents was wrought that wild, weird picture of

the imagination—the *Ancient Mariner*, and whose supernatural beauties are as marked as are the supernatural characters of the poem itself. Out of this intimacy between Wordsworth and Coleridge, which began in 1797, also grew the idea of publishing, conjointly, the volume Wordsworth speaks of above, the product of which was the *Lyrical Ballads*, which appeared in the spring of 1798. How this volume came to be written, Wordsworth already gives us in part the explanation. But we have a fuller account of the project in the *Biographia Literaria*, which, we think, is of sufficient interest here to set forth.

In their daily rambles in the Quantock Hills, in Somersetshire, the two poets had had many talks together, as Coleridge remarks, "on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of the imagination. . . . The thought suggested itself (to which of us I do not recollect) that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the one the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the interest aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. . . . For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be such as will be found in every village or its vicinity, where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them when they present themselves." In this idea originated the plan of the *Lyrical Ballads*, a plan that not only had in view the publication of a joint volume of verse, but that in its style and method, would be a wholesome departure from the poetic diction,