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OUR WORDSWORTH KEYSTONE

By FREDERICK A. POTTLE

THIS year, in which the hundredth anniversary of the death of William Wordsworth has been widely commemorated, seems to offer a proper occasion for letting our readers know that during the last few years the Colby College Library has been quietly assembling a Wordsworth collection. It all began some years ago, shortly after the formation of the Colby Library Associates, when the members of the teaching staff of the Department of English at Colby clubbed together to purchase, at the A. Edward Newton sale, a copy of the so-called second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* as a gift to the Library. At that time, having begun—much too late—to read Wordsworth with lively interest, I remarked to Professor Weber that, though it was customary to rank Wordsworth among the five greatest English poets, he had not been much patronized by collectors, and that as a consequence even a library like Colby could afford a good Wordsworth collection. Professor Weber perhaps already had the same idea. At any rate, he set himself at once to do something about it.

This past summer he surprised me with a list showing that, with one exception (*Poems*, 1807—a book we shall certainly pick up soon with no great outlay of cash), we already have all but three or four of the Wordsworth first editions, those three or four being so excessively rare that it will be great luck if we ever get them.

The keystone was placed in the arch recently, in the most

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appropriate manner possible, by the purchase through the Associates of the *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798. This, the most influential and famous single volume of poetry published in the last hundred and fifty years, was a joint publication of Wordsworth and Coleridge; it was printed at Bristol, and the original plan called for publishing it there. Though it is not at all certain that the book was ever really on sale in Bristol, half a dozen copies bearing a Bristol imprint are known to exist. If ever one of these should come up for sale, the price would run into three or even four figures. The great majority of copies were furnished with a new title-page and were published in London. Our copy is of the London issue—the one that really got read and made literary history. Though somewhat cheaper than one with a Bristol imprint, it still cost a good deal more than the Colby Library ordinarily spends for a single volume. It can without exaggeration be called a noble acquisition.

May I suggest that we now start on one of Wordsworth's forerunners, George Crabbe? He is a very interesting poet just due for a revival, and, with one or two exceptions, still very cheap.



THOMAS HARDY'S CHAIR

WHEN Carroll Wilson's *Catalogue of the Grolier Club Exhibition of the Works of Thomas Hardy* appeared in 1940 as Colby College Monograph No. 9, it carried the illustration of Thomas Hardy, reproduced in this issue, showing the novelist comfortably seated in a cushioned arm-chair in his study at Max Gate. This chair is now in the Colby College Library. It stands in a corner of the Treasure Room, a close neighbor of the books from the Max Gate library—books whose titles were given in our issue for August, 1950.

The Hardy chair is the gift of Mr. E. N. Sanders, of