

Thalaba the Destroyer: "No distance of place or lapse of time can lessen the friendship of those who are thoroughly persuaded of each other's worth."

Robert Southey

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Robert Southey was born on the 12th of August 1774 in Bristol. A poet of the Romantic school and one of the "Lake Poets". Although his fame has been eclipsed by that of his friends William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Southey's verse was highly influential and he wrote movingly against the horrors and injustice of the slave trade. Among his other classics are Inchcape Rock as well as a number of plays including Wat Tyler. He was great friends with Coleridge, indeed in 1795, in a plan they soon abandoned, they thought to found a utopian commune-like society, called Pantisocracy, in the wilds of Pennsylvania. However, that same year, the two friends married sisters Sarah and Edith Fricker. Southey's marriage was successful but Coleridge's was not. In 1810 he abandoned his wife and three children to Southey's care in the Lake District. Although his income was small and those dependent upon him growing in number he continued to write and burnish his reputation with a wider public. In 1813 on the refusal of Walter Scott he was offered by George II the post of Poet Laureate, a post Southey accepted and kept till his death 30 years later. Southey was also a prolific letter writer, literary scholar, essay writer, historian and biographer. His biographies included those of John Bunyan, John Wesley, William Cowper, Oliver Cromwell and Horatio Nelson. He was a renowned scholar of Portuguese and Spanish literature and history, and translated works from those two languages into English and wrote a History of Brazil (part of his planned but un-completed History of Portugal) and a History of the Peninsular War. Perhaps his most enduring contribution is the children's classic The Story of the Three Bears, the original Goldilocks story, first published in Southey's prose collection The Doctor. In 1838, Edith died and Southey married Caroline Anne Bowles, also a poet, on 4 June 1839. Robert Southey died on the 21st of March, 1843 and is buried in Crosthwaite Church in Keswick.



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