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POET AND PEER BY HAMILTON AÏDÉ.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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POET AND PEER

BY

HAMILTON AÏDÉ,

AUTHOR OF "PENRUDDOCKE," "RITA," ETC.

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LEIPZIG
BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1880.

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TO
ROBERT, LORD LYTTON,
THIS RECORD
OF
ANOTHER "POET AND PEER"
IS INSCRIBED
BY HIS OLD FRIEND.

POET AND PEER.

CHAPTER I.

ONE August evening, before the harvest moon had risen over the golden wheatfields and slopes of orchard land that surround the village of Ripple, a little girl of eleven was seen driving home a cow and her calf from the hill-side pastures where they had been feeding. She was seen, I repeat, and it was by a lad of sixteen, who stood alone, leaning over a gate which divides the Athelstone woods from certain common grounds over which the owner of those woods is also lord of the manor. Ripple belongs mainly to him; but it lies three miles away from the Castle, and Lord Athelstone's interests are chiefly with the more populous village of Warley, which nestles at the foot of the Castle steep. There you will find model slated cottages, the national school, and the penny-reading club. At Ripple there is only a dame's school and thatched roofs, and there the sleepy old ways of fifty years since still flourish. The Rippleites lack energy, Lord Athelstone thinks; he regards them with a beneficent toleration, and ministers to their temporal wants,