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UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE

THE RELATION BETWEEN MAN AND NATURE
IN WORDSWORTH'S POETRY.

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty
Of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Of Master of Arts

Department of English

By

Elizabeth Hoskins

1921

INTRODUCTION.

Introduction.

While democracy was developing, while men were seeking to reform national politics and to find some means by which the people might be represented justly in the government, a new movement entered into literature to give it a broadened scope and a deepened meaning. This was the philosophical movement, - at times strongly influenced by a metaphysical spirit, which often "not only prescribed the form of poetry, but furnished it with its elements". (Taine, History of English Literature, p. 87). The questions, What is the meaning of life? What is man, and what is his purpose in the world? turned the thoughts of men inward upon their own souls to find, if possible, the answers. The question, how to live, was recognized as a moral one; "it is the question which most interests every man, and with which, in some way or other, he is perpetually occupied". (Arnold, Essays in Criticism, p. 142). As a result, the habits of introspection and of profound meditation characterized the poets of this period, and it remained for Wordsworth, as the chief representative of this new movement, to establish a name and place for himself unlike that of any other English poet.

In this paper, then, it is my purpose to examine Wordsworth's position as a philosophic poet and to show that this position does not rest upon the dry dust of a "scientific

system of thought". By tracing the development of his love for Nature through his childhood, his youth, and his maturity, I wish to present Wordsworth's wholly new and individual view of Nature, which forms the basis for his unique position. Further, I desire to show how, through the influence of Nature, he was brought to that love and sympathy for mankind, that broad comprehension of the workings of man's mind, which make him, in the truest sense, a philosophical poet for those who approach him with "a seeing eye and an understanding heart".

CHAPTER I.

WORDSWORTH'S POSITION AS A POET.

Wordsworth's Position as a Poet.

Before we consider the position which Wordsworth maintains as a poet, let us see, first, in what light Wordsworth regards a poet and a poet's responsibilities. Although endowed with greater sensibilities, a greater understanding, and "a more comprehensive soul" (Lyrical Ballads, p. 237) than the average person, what is a poet, after all, but a man whose realm is mankind,—"a man speaking to men" (Lyrical Ballads, p. 237). Further, "to these qualities the Poet has added a disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things", and "from practice he has acquired a greater readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels, especially those thoughts and feelings which, by his own choice, or from the structure of his own mind, arise in him without immediate external excitement". (Lyrical Ballads, p. 237). The poet's wish is "to bring his feelings near to those of the persons whose feelings he describes, nay, for short spaces of time perhaps, to let himself step into an entire delusion, and even confound and identify his own feelings with theirs (p. 239). It was his own purpose as a poet, Wordsworth tells us, "to follow the fluxes and refluxes of the mind when agitated by the great and simple affections of our nature" (p. 229) in language "near to the language of men". (p. 232), and "to illustrate the manner in which our feelings and ideas are associated in a state of excitement" (p. 229).

He does not choose his characters from among the demi-gods and heroes of history and romance; neither does he sing of court life and court figures, with all the ceremonial, artificial environment surrounding them. Instead, he presents to us as his heroes, living children, women, and men from humble rustic life. In the life of the peasant, Wordsworth feels that the true dignity of manhood is more apparent, and that its development is more certain than it is in the life of the courtier, because there "the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language". (Lyrical Ballads, p. 226). He loves and understands the sturdy peasant folk; he makes no attempt to anatomize the structure of the human mind or heart, but by watching closely the simple people among whom he walked daily-- both old and young,-- he does observe with remarkable sympathy and knowledge their ways, thoughts, and emotions. With intense interest he notes the diverse manifestations of these thoughts and "passions of the heart", and records his observations so that we can understand. But Wordsworth has a deeper purpose in writing than merely to portray the trials, the joys, the thoughts, and the feelings that are common to us all. Wordsworth definitely announces the task that he has undertaken and the theme of his work.

"On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life,
 Musing in solitude I oft perceive
 Fair trains of imagery before me rise,
 Accompanied by feelings of delight
 Pure, or with no unpleasing sadness mixed,
 And I am conscious of affecting thoughts
 And dear remembrances, whose presence soothes
 Or elevates the Mind, intent to weigh
 The good and evil of our mortal state.
 -- To these emotions, whencesoe'er they come,
 Whether from breath of outward circumstance,
 Or from the Soul-- an impulse to herself--
 I would give utterance in numerous verse.

* * *

Of the individual Mind that keeps her own
 Inviolable retirement, subject there
 To Conscience only, and the law supreme
 Of that Intelligence which governs all--
 I sing-- 'fit audience let me find, though few!'"
 (Recluse)

He does more, however, than simply announce his theme. He insists again and again that "the discerning intellect of Man, when wedded to this goodly universe in love and holy passion" (Recluse, lines 52-54) is "my haunt, and the main region of my song" (line 41). After searching the mysterious depths of his own impulses and experiences, Wordsworth is convinced that man has within himself all the elements necessary to perfect his life, if only he will follow Nature steadfastly as his guide, so that she may show him how to learn the great lesson of living. His "high argument" (line 71) is to show

"How exquisitely the individual mind
 * * * To external Worlds
 Is fitted:- and how exquisitely, too--
 Theme this but little heard of among men--
 The external World is fitted to the Mind."
 (Recluse, lines 63-66)

Here is a subject, then, to inspire a true poet to the noblest poetry! Therefore, we must believe that Wordsworth is not interested in Nature primarily for Nature's sake. He is not a simple, naive poet who, because he is an enthusiastic naturalist, writes about the buds, the flowers, the beauty, and the wonder of Nature. The love of natural things is, in Wordsworth, a different feeling from the attraction which other poets, previous to him and in his own day, felt toward Nature. His profound and original conviction is that between man and nature exists a harmonious consciousness, a mystic inter-dependence and strength. Nature reveals to him, in ways without number, fascinating and mysterious openings into the apparently impenetrable depths of things. Although he rejoices in the sprightly, dancing daffodils, in the rich gold of their color, the wealth that this happy host of flowers brings to him is not purely the transitory feeling of pleasure at the pretty sight; his cause for rejoicing lies in this fact:

"Oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude."

(I Wandered Lonely As a Cloud)

Thoughts too deep for tears he finds in Nature's poorest, most unattractive blossom, and

"One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can."

(The Tables Turned)

Thus, it was Wordsworth's special mission to interpret rather than to describe, and he dedicated his life to show how "the life of the human spirit interprets the life of Nature". (Dowden, Introduction to Wordsworth's Poems).

We cannot doubt that Wordsworth was keenly aware of a deep sense of consecration to his task. He has a trust to fulfill, a message to proclaim, which he feels is of divine inspiration. The poet, even as the prophet, possesses a gift of Heaven, a "sense that fits him to perceive objects unseen before". (Prelude, XIV, 303). As a prophet of Nature, then, and as a teacher, above all else, Wordsworth would speak

"A lasting inspiration, sanctified
By reason, blest by faith: what we have loved,
Others will love, and we will teach them how;
Instruct them how the mind of man becomes
A thousand times more beautiful than the earth
On which he dwell." (Prelude, XIV, 445)

"What Wordsworth did was to deal with themes that had been partially handled by precursors and contemporaries in a larger and more devoted spirit, with a wider amplitude of illustration, and with the steadfastness and persistency of a religious teacher". (Morley, Introduction to Wordsworth's Poems) He, himself, had no teachers save Nature and the power of tranquil contemplation, which enabled him to make "his powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life". (Arnold, Essays in Criticism, "Wordsworth", p. 138).

Therefore, if we accept Wordsworth's self-expressed desire to be considered as a teacher or as nothing, we must

believe that he has a philosophy, - a very noble one,- which urges him on and justifies his desire. Mr Arnold rebukes the Wordsworthians for praising Wordsworth's system of philosophy and his scientific system of thought. He tells us that "his poetry is the reality, his philosophy,- so far, at least as it may put on the form and habit of a 'scientific system of thought', and the more that it puts them on,- is the illusion." (Arnold, Essays in Criticism, "Wordsworth", p. 148). If, by this statement, Arnold means that Wordsworth determined to clothe in verse an ordered system of philosophy and scientific thought which he would thrust upon us, then I agree with Arnold that the less emphasis placed upon such a mechanical procedure, the better. Such a system would be only for the few, not for man as a whole! To me, however, Wordsworth's philosophy goes deeper than a formal, scientifically arranged system. It is impossible for me to believe that, in the brooding meditation which characterized his life, in his profound reflections on man and nature, he could escape being a philosophic poet; nor do I think that he could have written on life as he did without that philosophy. Arnold asserts that Wordsworth's superiority to other poets lies in the fact that "he deals with more of life than they do; he deals with life, as a whole, more powerfully". This fact, I think, entitles him to be called a philosophic poet. He has earned it by his plain living and lofty thinking,- not by his system of philosophy. In writing his best poetry of life, "Nature

herself seems * * to take the pen out of his hand, and to write for him with her own bare, sheer, penetrating power." Arnold, Essays in Criticism, "Wordsworth", p. 158). Since it is Nature's undisputed role to comfort, to heal, to strengthen, ✓ and to guide, Nature and philosophy are inseparably bound together; therefore, Wordsworth's poetry must be philosophical. In his own life his philosophy enabled him to be true, above everything else, to himself and his convictions, and it taught him the great lesson of "living, not for things temporal, but ✓ for things eternal".

"We will grieve not, rather find
 Strength in what remains behind;
 In the primal sympathy
 Which having been must ever be;
 In the soothing thoughts that spring
 Out of human suffering;
 In faith that looks through death
 In years that bring the philosophic mind".

(Ode. Intimations of Immortality.)

CHAPTER II.

WORDSWORTH'S FEELING TOWARD NATURE

IN HIS CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH.

Wordsworth's Feeling toward Nature
in His Childhood and Youth.

From my study of Wordsworth, I feel that upon his new and individual conception of Nature rests the basis of the philosophy which characterized his poetry. I have already said that Wordsworth is not a poet of Nature for Nature's own sake. His genius "lay in detecting Nature's influences just at the point where they were stealing unobserved into the very essence of the human soul", (Hutton, Wordsworth and his Genius, p. 218), and in interpreting the living expressions of those influences. Wordsworth, more than any other poet, stresses the moral influences that Nature brings to bear upon man's life and spirit; and in his recognition of her divine influence as well, he perceives that "it is in the power of Nature to penetrate his spirit, to reveal him to himself, to communicate to him divine instructions, to lift him into spiritual life and ecstasy." (Dawson, Literary Leaders of Modern England, p. 22). To Wordsworth, Nature is a living, inspiring personality, animated by a soul which can ennoble man's nature and elevate his soul by its contact. Confident that "Nature never did betray the heart that loved her", (Lines), he is content in her ministry. She is

"The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart and soul,
Of all my moral being." (Lines)

that Wordsworth tells us he experienced in his childhood.

In the Ode on Intimations of Immortality, Wordsworth asserts that the simple creed of childhood consists of liberty and delight, and certainly these formed the creed of his own early adolescent years. Again and again he remarks on the perfect freedom of the period of his life, and the pure, animal enjoyment that was his through his companionship with the glad, external things of Nature. We know that when he was five years old, he rejoiced in Nature like a little savage, running wild among the hills and woods, or making "one long bathing of a summer's day". (Prelude, I, 289). As a child he says he learned to love the sun because of the sheer beauty of sunrise and sunset on the hills and the "aching joys" it caused him; for its purely physical charm, the moon was also dear to him, and the blue gleaming river that flowed past his home was a tempting, much-loved playmate. He was free to scour the fields of sand about his home, or to leap "through flowery groves of yellow ragwort" in thoughtless happiness. His blood seemed to flow for its own pleasure, and he tells us that he "breathed with joy".

The love of "ature was, in this period of Wordsworth's life, a healthy appetite; at this time every changing phase of Nature held a new interest and wonder for him. (

"While yet a child, with a child's eagerness
Incessantly to turn his ear and eye
On all things which the moving seasons brought
To feed such appetite." (Excursion, I, 149)

Again in Tintern Abbey he repeats this thought.

" * * * * The tall rock,
The mountain and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colors and their forms, were then to me
An appetite."

The love that Wordsworth felt for Nature as a child had "no need of a remoter charm by thought supplied, nor any interest unborrowed from the eye". (Tintern Abbey). What we speak of in philosophy as the "eye sense" was then the predominating faculty; thus Nature reached him entirely through sensations or sense-impressions which, growing in power as he approached the period of his youth, gradually awakened "gentle agitations of the mind", and aroused his mental activity.

"Oft amid those fits of vulgar joy
Which, through all seasons, on a child's pursuits
Are prompt attendants, 'mid that giddy bliss
Which, like a tempest, works along the blood
And is forgotten; even then I felt
Gleams like the flashing of a shield;- the earth
And common face of Nature spake to me
Rememberable things." (Prelude, I, 581)

Wordsworth, in The Prelude, marks the tenth year of his life as the beginning of his boyhood or youth, as distinct from his childhood. From this time, the range of his boyish sports increased; the forbidding, dizzy crags of the mountains which surrounded the Lake Region dared him to perilous ascents with a temptation as welcome to him as it was insistent. The sounding cataract at this time haunted him "like a passion". Thus among his native hills and valleys he led a vigorous life of sport and activity such as any normal, healthy boy enjoyed;

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" * * A figure quaint
Tricked out in proud disguise of cast off weeds,
Motley accoutrement, of power to smile
At thorns, and brakes, and brambles."
(Nutting)

place where they grew; but, tempted by the sparkling water, he rested for a bit with his cheek on one of the cool, mossy stones. Then he plunged enthusiastically into his nut gathering.

"Dragged to earth both branch and boughs, with crack
And merciless ravage; and the shady nook
Of hazels, and the green and mossy bower
Deformed and sullied, patiently gave up
Their quiet being." (Nutting)

But in the midst of his exultation over the quiet wealth of nuts he has gathered, he feels a sense of pain at having plundered a sacred spot; for in the solitude, among those silent trees, he is conscious that "there is a spirit in the Woods"! (Nutting)

In the Prelude, we find striking examples of Nature's curious ability to make her presence known to the boy Wordsworth on the most unexpected occasions. While still retaining the "great birthright of our being", childhood's sensibility to external Nature, Wordsworth became conscious gradually of a "plastic power", a "forming hand" within himself, which transferred to the objects of Nature his own feelings, making them subjective and internal, instead of objective and external. Take, for example, his description of how he spent one of his starlit nights on the hills, gleefully setting traps for woodcocks. Hastening expectantly from snare to snare, he came across birds entrapped by another's efforts, and the temptation to steal them was irresistible. But afterwards, when he had

captured the prey that was not rightfully his, he had heard low breathings coming to him and "sounds of undistinguishable motion, steps almost as silent as the turf they trod."

(Prelude, I, 325).

Again, while hanging high on a slippery crag above a raven's nest which he had set out to rob, he was impressed not by the fear of falling from his perilous position but by the curious sound of the wind in his ears.

"With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind
Blow through my ear! The sky seemed not a sky
Of earth -- and with what motion moved the clouds!"
(Prelude, I, 338)

As a boy, Wordsworth seems to have responded to anything which in its accomplishment required an element of disobedience. Forbidden pleasures which he must obtain by stealth attracted him as they do the average boy today, and he relates vividly his experience while rowing on the lake one summer evening. We appreciate his "troubled pleasure" as he furtively unloosened a little boat that he found in a rocky cave tied to a willow tree; we can hear the "voice" of the mountain-echoes" as he tried unsuccessfully to push the boat off shore without a sound. Then Wordsworth give us an unusually beautiful picture, a thing he does not always accomplish when he is interested chiefly in recording an experience and not a pure description. He says:

" * * My boat moved on;
Leaving behind her still, on either side,
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,
Until they melted all into one track
Of sparkling light."
(Prelude, I, 363)

Fixing his gaze on a craggy ridge, "the horizon's utmost boundary", he set out to row toward that ridge as a goal, rejoicing in his lusty strength and skill. Suddenly, from "behind that craggy steep" a strange apparition appeared.

" * * * A huge peak, black and huge,
As if with voluntary power instinct,
Upreared its head. I struck and struck again,
And growing still in stature, the grim shape
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
And measured motion like a living thing
Strode after me." (Prelude, I, 378)

Frightened, trembling, Wordsworth turned and rowed back over the silent water to the place where he had found the boat. Then he went home, grave and pondering, and for many days he was aware "of a dim and undetermined sense of unknown modes of being". (Prelude, I, 392).

On still another occasion, Nature intervened with one of her phenomena to make him feel her mystic power. One cold, clear evening, Wordsworth and some of his boy companions, rejoicing in the keen, frosty air, strapped on their skates, and on "the polished ice", skimmed like spirited horses through the crisp twilight. The precipices and the distant hills sent their echoes to mingle with the din of happy voices and the clatter of steel. Then Wordsworth, as he often did, when with a crowd, left his companions, and alone on a silent bay attempted

"To cut across the reflex of a star
That fled, and, flying still before me, gleamed
Upon the glassy plain." (Prelude, I, 450)

With the swift motion of skating, the shadowy banks of the bay whirled spinning by as he swept along; but suddenly he stopped short, and then a strange thing happened. The cliffs continued wheeling past him, as if the earth were moving around with a visible motion! Wondering, he watched until gradually the movement ceased and "all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep". (Prelude, I, 463). By these means Nature made her presence known to Wordsworth, and

" * * through many a year
Haunting me thus among my boyish sports
On caves and trees, upon the woods and hills
Impressed, upon all forms, the characters of
Danger or desire." (Prelude, I, 468)

Thus, in his youth, disciplined by fear as well as love of Nature, Wordsworth could say:

"Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
Fostered alike by beauty and by fear."
(Prelude, I, 301)

He had felt the power of Nature within him and was now prepared

"By his intense conceptions to receive
Deeply the lesson deep of love which he,
Whom Nature, by whatever means, had taught
To feel intensely, cannot but receive."
(Excursion, I, 193)

✓ We find, then, that by degrees the joyous, unthinking animal activities of his childhood days lost their charm for him; in this period of youth, as his mind was beginning to develop and the power of thought was awakened, Nature dominated his life-- she became all in all to him. Before his eighteenth year, he tells us that "he was o'erpowered by

Nature". (Excursion, I, 282).

"Thus while the days flew by, and the years
 passed on,
 From Nature and her overflowing soul
 I had received so much, that all my
 thoughts
 Were steeped in feeling." (Prelude, II, 396)

Since Wordsworth had not yet come into maturity, the age of Reason, Imagination, which is the keynote of the unifying principle of his life and work in his manhood, still slept, Fancy, "Nature's secondary power", by which term Wordsworth means the mixing of the objective with the subjective, colored the world about him in his youth with the glamour and misleading hues of his own feelings.

"To every natural form, rock, fruit, or flower,
 Even the loose stones that cover the highway,
 I gave a moral life: I saw them feel,
 Or linked them to some feeling: the great mass
 Lay bedded in a quickening soul, and all
 That I beheld respired with inward meaning."
 (Prelude, III, 127)

He says:

"I had a world about me-- it was my own;
 I made it, for it only lived in me."
 (Prelude, III, 141)

This world which he built around himself under the enthralling sovereignty of Nature was an inevitable and a vital one at this particular stage of his life; through it he was able to mount "to community with highest truth" when in maturity, under the domination of thought, the "open eye of Reason" converted it into a real and ordered universe.

CHAPTER III.

NATURE IN WORDSWORTH'S MANHOOD:

UNITY BETWEEN NATURE AND MAN.

Nature in Wordsworth's Manhood:

Unity between Nature and Man.

In the early years of Wordsworth's manhood, the revolutionary movement was developing in France, and now Wordsworth transferred the passionate and absorbing interest with which he had regarded Nature to the political affairs of France. With the blood of the Cumberland dalesmen in his veins, he was, literally speaking, a born democrat; for the dalesmen in this region maintained a sturdy independence and a perfect equality in all their relations with each other that fostered such a spirit. From the very first, Wordsworth was intensely affected by the Revolution; and now with all the ardor and zest of his liberty-loving nature he flung himself into the cause. To political problems he had always been indifferent. Now, their solution became a real and engrossing experience for him. With a faith that was too sanguine and optimistic, he foresaw only a glorious, triumphant outcome for the Revolution, and the sweeping away of the evil and horror of the old regime. The belief in human perfectibility possessed him; hopes for a world-wide regeneration of ideas and institutions filled his heart, and he eagerly awaited the day that

"Should see the people having a strong hand
In framing their own laws; whence better days
To all mankind."
(Prelude IX, 530)

Cheered by the outlook of affairs after his first visit to France, Wordsworth returned to Paris where the subsequent developments utterly demolished his hopes and filled his soul with grief and despair. His spirit sickened at the madness and the carnage of the Reign of Terror. That England, his country, should take up arms against the French Republic confounded and shamed him; and he was overcome

" * * * by dark
 Imaginations, sense of woes to come,
 Sorrow for human kind, and pain of heart."
 (Prelude X, 328)

But the greatest shock that he suffered was the realization that this war for liberty and ideals, which so nearly cost him his love for his native land, was turned by those very advocates of freedom into a war for the conquest of weaker peoples.

"But now, become oppressors in their turn,
 Frenchmen had changed a war of self-defense
 For one of conquest, losing sight of all
 Which they had struggled for." (Prelude XI, 206)

At first stubbornly resentful, attempting to hide "the wounds of mortified presumption", he felt the absolute need of something to save his faith in the goodness of human nature and his trust in the whole framework of social and political life. And so in desperation, to restore his hopes and belief, he turned to Rationalism and abstract reasonings of political philosophy.

"I summoned my best skill, and toiled, intent
 To anatomize the frame of social life;
 Yea, the whole body of society
 Searched to its heart." (Prelude, XI, 279)

But what mental chaos resulted from his efforts to drag "all precepts, judgments, maxims, creeds, like culprits to the bar"! (Prelude, XI,). Convinced one moment, disbelieving the next, Wordsworth was wearied out and perplexed; and "the heart that had been turned aside from Nature's way by outward accidents" was forced to abandon moral questions in despair.

At this period came the great turning point in Wordsworth's life. At "his soul's last and lowest ebb", his sister Dorothy, who understood his nature better than he understood himself, brought him by her wise and gentle influence to the conviction that he had a mission to fulfill, a message to communicate to mankind. She realized, when he did not, that he was unfitted by Nature for participation in public affairs, and with untiring devotion she revealed to him his own peculiar power and encouraged him to develop it. Wordsworth tells us that she maintained for him a saving intercourse with his true self.

"She in midst of all, perceived me still
 A Poet, made me seek beneath that name,
 And that alone, my office upon earth."
 (Prelude, XI, 346)

She helped him to renew that former communion with Nature, whom he had thrust aside for other interests; and in Nature he found healing and comfort. Surrounded again by the

and mind as

" * * Nature's self,
By all varieties of human love
Assisted, led me back through opening day
To those sweet counsels between head and heart
Whence grew that genuine knowledge fraught
with peace." (Prelude, XI, 350)

Communion with Nature was now fraught with a different meaning for Wordsworth the man. Having made the acquaintance of evil, pain, and sorrow during the years of the France Revolution, he returned to Nature with his vision deepened and broadened, and his sensibilities more keen than before. Byron, his tempestuous, warring spirit in revolt against society, also turned from his fellow man to Nature, and in her wilder and more turbulent aspects found an outlet for his own stormy emotions. But such an attitude toward Nature served only to alienate Byron more completely from the interests and affairs of other men. On the other hand, although Wordsworth's pride had been deeply hurt, and although the falseness of men to their principles had caused him to suffer poignantly and had strained his faith in both principles and men to the point of breaking, still the consolation which Nature offered served to bring him into a closer and a more understanding relation with his fellow men than before.

"For I have learned
To look on Nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity." (Lines)

"Wordsworth lived with Nature, yet waged no angry, railing war against society." (Morley, Introduction, p. 11).

Patiently and surely, Nature wrought in him "tranquil restoration" of the loved objects and sensations of his childhood and youth; but no longer, as in his youth, did his own moods and feelings color the familiar aspects of Nature. "He does not take his mood to Nature and persuade himself that she reflects it; but he goes to Nature with an open mind, and leaves her to create the mood in him. He does not ask her to echo him; but he stands docile in her presence and asks to be taught of her." (Dawson, Literary Leaders in Modern England, p. 22). That world which in his youth he had built about him was now inadequate. Like some great building, constructed out of the most enriching, most enduring materials according to a plan that, architecturally, was ornate, perhaps, but inferior and unsound, Wordsworth had fashioned his youthful world out of substantial stuff. The "glad animal movements" and the joyousness of his childhood, the feelings and sensations of his boyhood, resulting from his close and constant touch with Nature, were in its making, and they were imperishable. But the design was faulty. Fancy, which made up the flimsy framework of the structure, weakened and gave way. In his maturity, with an altogether new plan drawn up by Reason, he set about reconstructing, out of the same indispensable materials, a real and harmonious world which had as its foundation the unity existing between Nature and Man.

As he adjusted himself to this new world and to new phases of thought and interests, he realized that to his manhood Nature had intrusted the consummation of her plans for him. In subduing him, he says, she

"Hath dealt with me as with a turbulent stream,
Some nurseling of the mountains which she leads
Through quiet meadows, after he has learnt
His strength, and had his triumph and his joy,
His desperate course of tumult and of glee.

* * * Her deliberate Voice
Hath said: be mild, and cleave to gentle things,
Thy glory and thy happiness be there.

* * *
All that inflamed thy infant heart, the love,
The longing, the contempt, the undaunted quest,
All shall survive, though changed their office, all
Shall live, ~~it~~ is not in their power to die."

(Recluse, I, 726)

Now we recognize that the eager impulses, the passions of his youthful days, and the distressing anxieties of his early manhood were neither wasted nor without avail. We find that they remained, transmuted and exalted, to perfect his life and work by their influence. And so, instead of a world harassed by ceaseless strivings of his intellect which sought in vain to make it conform to a system, Wordsworth discovered a world of peace. The mere wonder of living enthralled him, and he was now content to accept Nature's teachings as he contemplated her in "wise passiveness".

"Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;
Our meddling intellect
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things:-
We murder to dissect.

Enough of Science and of Art;
Close up those barren leaves;
Come forth, and bring with you a heart
That watches and receives." (The Tables Turned)

Wordsworth's heart, watching silently and reverently before Nature's majestic presence, received in infinite measure rich gifts from her "world of ready wealth". In this period of maturity, his vigilant, attentive attitude of heart was accompanied by a resulting involuntary alertness of his sense perceptions; and together they constituted the means by which Nature instructed him.

"The eye - it cannot choose but see;
We cannot bid the ear be still;
Our bodies feel, where'er they be,
Against or with our will.

Nor less I deem that there are Powers
Which of themselves our minds impress;
That we can feed this mind of ours
In a wise passiveness.

Think you, 'mid all this mighty sum
Of things forever speaking,
That nothing of itself will come,
But we must still be seeking?"

(Expostulation and Reply)

Her "school sublime" was

"Not 'mid the World's vain objects that enslave
The free-born Soul - that World whose vaunted skill
In selfish interest perverts the will,
Whose factions lead astray the wise and brave,-
Not there; but in dark wood and rocky cave,
And hollow vale which foaming torrents fill
With omnipresent murmur as they rave,
Down their steep beds, that never shall be still:
Here, mighty Nature!"

(Composed While the Author was Engaged in Writing
a Tract Occasioned by the Convention of Cintra)

Thus his eyes and ears were ever open, not, as formerly, however, with only the mere appetite for sight or sound. By consciously relaxing his will and thereby increasing

his power to receive impressions, he watched or listened until the "Wisdom and Spirit of the universe", Nature's own tranquil soul, seemed to steal imperceptibly into his being to commune with and refresh his spirit. He felt as well as saw how beautiful things were.

"From Nature doth emotion come, and moods
Of calmness equally are Nature's gift;
This is her glory." (Prelude, XIII, 1)

Nor did Wordsworth insist that Nature's educational processes were for the mind and heart alone. He was confident that by her precepts, Nature could mould the physical appearance, and could impart to human qualities and features the distinguishing characteristics of her own animated personality. In Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower, Wordsworth gives us probably the most complete statement of his theory that contact with Nature has a formative influence on the physical being. In this exquisite, somewhat mystical poem, Nature claims the child Lucy for her own, and is "both law and impulse" to her. Under her instruction, Lucy shall reflect the grace of moving clouds and bending trees in her movements; the agility of the swift-footed fawn shall be hers; and all "mute insensate things" shall contribute their calm to her development.

"The stars of midnight shall be dear
To her; and she shall lean her ear
In many a secret place
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
And beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face."

(Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower)

In She Was a Phantom of Delight, the perfect, lovable woman was "nobly planned" by the skillful hand of Nature.

"Her eyes as stars of Twilight fair;
Like Twilight's, too, her dusky hair;
But all things else about her drawn
From May-time and the cheerful Dawn."

(She Was a Phantom of Delight)

But if the fair and beautiful things of Nature tend to impress their characteristic qualities upon man's being, as he gives himself over to Nature's teachings, so do her wild and desolate aspects stamp upon him their distinguishing features, if he affronts the wise mandates of the "grave Teacher, stern Preceptress". In the wild, lawless, unkempt creature, Peter Bell, we have just such a character. Nature attempted, "through every changeful year", to find a way to reach his heart. Vainly she tempted him with soft, blue sky -- but he never felt its witchery! She offered him primroses, -- and his nature refused to respond!

"A primrose by the river's brim
A yellow promrose was to him
And it was nothing more."

(Peter Bell)

But although Nature could not touch his heart nor move him to silent ecstasy by lovely forms or gentle sounds, still one could recognize that Peter Bell and she had been together often. He, after all, was Nature's child!

"A savage wildness round him bung
As of a dweller out of doors;
In his whole figure and his mien
A savage character was seen
Of mountains and of dreary moors.

* * *
 There was a hardness in his cheek,
 There was a hardness in his eye,
 As if the man had fixed his face
 In many a solitary place
 Against the wind and open sky."
(Peter Bell)

However, after a long and difficult struggle,
 Nature reclaims Peter Bell from his wickedness.

"And now is Peter taught to feel
 That man's heart is a holy thing;
 And Nature, through a world of death
 Breathes into him a second breath,
 More searching than the breath of spring."
(Peter Bell)

In Ruth, the savage and lawless or the irregular
 aspects of Nature caused a similar condition in the mind of
 the youthful soldier. As a child, he had found the moon and
 sun and streams his greatest joy; but later on, the scarlet-
 gleaming flowers, the fragrant magnolias of the tropics, --
 even the breezes that wove their own languor into his
 thoughts, -- fostered low desires and dangerous impulses in
 him. Also

"The wind, the tempest roaring high,
 The tumult of a tropic sky,
 Might well be dangerous food
 For him, a Youth to whom was given
 So much of earth - so much of heaven,
 And such impetuous blood."
(Ruth)

Since this "Youth of the green savannahs" deliberately
 sought those things which degraded his better nature, whatever
 "he found irregular in sight or sound" in the tropical regions

seemed to possess kindred impulses to his own, and to justify the evil workings of his heart. Thus does Nature influence not for good those who disregard her wise tutelage, and who will not give themselves unreservedly to her kindly discipline.

If we understand these powers that Wordsworth ascribes to Nature as an educator of man or a moulding influence upon him, I think we must feel that the comparisons which he draws between man's characteristic qualities and Nature's do more than fulfill the customary requirements for comparisons as mere figures of speech. With that penetrating gift of vision which he possessed, Wordsworth seemed to discern the actual kinship between Man and Nature, which swept away the old lines of demarcation between the two. When he makes a comparison, we feel that the resemblance lies deeper than a purely external likeness. For he does not recognize Man as belonging to a kingdom distinct and apart from Nature, but as a part of Nature's own universal kingdom. Since "his men are spirits of the earth, wrought upon by the elements from which they are compounded", (Walter Raleigh, Wordsworth, p. 187), we appreciate more fully than before the depth of meaning his chance comparisons cover. The happy freedom of a child bespeaks a similar quality to be found in Nature.

"No fountain from its rocky cave
 E'er tripped with foot so free;
 She seemed as happy as a wave
 That dances on the sea." (The Two April Mornings)

The little six year old child possesses the same delicate,

perishable quality that characterizes a drop of morning dew.

"Thou art a dew-drop, which the morn brings forth,
 Ill fitted to sustain unkindly shocks,
 Or to be trailed along the soiling earth."

(To H.G., Six Years Old)

As light and unexpected as whiffs of wind that just touch
 and ever so slightly sway the field flowers on a meadow are
 the playful sallies of another blithe little girl of three
 years.

"Light are her sallies * * *
 Unthought-of, unexpected, as the stir
 Of the soft breeze raffling the meadow-flowers."

(Characteristics of a Child Three
 Years Old)

Again, Wordsworth points out the shy, retiring
 nature of the Poet, which withdraws into itself as unobtrusive-
 ly as the dew disappears in the heat of the noon-day.

"He is retired as noontide dew
 Or fountain in a noon-day."

(Poet's Epitaph)

This same Poet speaks, and the tinkling, sparkling melody
 of flowing streams sounds in his words.

"He murmurs near the running brooks
 A music sweeter than their own."

(Poet's Epitaph)

Of the beautiful Highland Girl, Wordsworth exclaims,

"Thou art to me but as a wave
 Of the wild sea." (To a Highland Girl)

Upon her he has no more claim than upon a wave itself
 which comes and goes at will on the ocean.

The loneliness of a cloud, remotely drifting this
 way or that without purpose over the miles and miles of sky,

is comparable to Wordsworth feeling, as without end in view or companion, he says,

"I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills."
(I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud)

In the Nature of Charles Lamb, Wordsworth found "affections, warm as sunshine, free as air." (Written After Death of Charles Lamb). He perceives the counterparts of Lamb's humor and wit in the elements as they frolic harmlessly about the mountain tops.

"And as round mountain-tops the lightning plays,
Thus innocently sported, breaking forth
As from a cloud of some grave sympathy,
Humor and wild instinctive wit, and all
The vivid flashes of his spoken words."
(Written After the Death of Charles Lamb)

From the inaccessible heights of star above us, we gain a conception of how infinitely far removed from the selfishness and worldliness of the England of Wordsworth's day was the lofty spirit of Milton. We hear, also, the kindred sound of his voice to the voice of the sea.

"Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart:
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea."
(London, 1802)

The illustrations seem sufficient to prove that, to Wordsworth, Nature's characteristic qualities are reproduced in the qualities displayed by man, "the child who is bone of her bone, and who inherits her form and favor."
(Walter Raleigh, Wordsworth, p.189)

And this form of Nature's! With what wonderful

insight has Wordsworth conceived it, and presented it to us so that we are at all times aware of the living personality of Nature, and yet always distinctly conscious that Wordsworth does not mean a human character with human shape and features. Indeed, in addressing the Brook, he says emphatically:

" * * I would not do
 Like Grecian Artists, give thee human cheeks,
 Channels for tears, no Naiad should'st thou be,-
 Have neither limbs, feet, features, joints nor
 hairs." (Brook! Whose Society the Poet Seeks)

Throughout his works, Wordsworth is consistent in regarding Nature as the Mother of Man and as his "prime teacher". In Yarrow Revisited, he speaks of "parent Nature", and in Expostulation and Reply, we hear Matthew say:

"You look round on your Mother Earth,
 As if she to no purpose bore you."
 (Expostulation and Reply)

Therefore it is fitting that Nature, everywhere in his poems, should disclose those same characteristic qualities which a human mother displays toward her child; and with that inherent feeling of the unity between Man and Nature, Wordsworth endows our universal parent with form and features which in the deepest imaginative sense correspond to those of a human mother.

Because the relation of a mother to her child is the tenderest, the most encompassing - in love - of all human relationships, Wordsworth ascribes to Nature those

particular qualities and kindly attitudes which we look for in a mother. With gentle, brooding love, she watches over her children, and when all is not well with them,

"Gentle Nature grieved." (Excursion, V, 975)

It is with the truest motherly instinct that when her child is hurt,

"Doubly pitying Nature loves to show'r
Soft on his wounded heart her healing pow'r."
(Descriptive Sketches--Quarto 1793--Reprinted,
Oxford ed.)

She is "self-respecting" Wordsworth tells us in the sixth book of the Excursion, and because she has been the wise mother of countless generations of men, she is "venerable". With tender compassion, .

"Kind Nature keeps a heavenly door
Wide open for the scattered Poor."
(Devotional Incitements)

But more than merely to show pity, Wordsworth urges humanity to love "as Nature loves, the lonely Poor." (Highland Hut)
No human parent is more kindly indulgent than she; she gives freely of her gifts to men.

"How bountiful is Nature! he shall find
Who seeks not; and to him who hath not asked,
Large measures shall be dealt."
(Excursion, IV, 466)

Yet the kindest mother must, at times, be stern.
So, when her child is willful or disobedient, Nature quickly brings her displeasure to bear upon him for his own good; and when the occasion demands, she displays righteous indignation.

"But human vices have provok'd the rod
Of angry Nature to avenge her God."

(Descriptive Sketches--Quarto 1793--
Oxford ed.)

Nature possesses a great, living frame, for in the poem, September, 1819, the poet tells us,

"For that from turbulence and heat
Proceeds, from some uneasy seat
In Nature's struggling frame,
Some region of impatient life."

(September, 1819)

The countenance of Nature Wordsworth mentions again and again, but always with the feeling that it is the embodiment of all expressive, speaking aspects of Nature,- never with the idea that it is a human face.

" * * * My mind hath looked
Upon the speaking face of earth and heaven
As her prime teacher." (Prelude, V, 13)

" * * * The earth
And common face of Nature spake to me
Rememberable things." (Prelude, I, 587)

The poet tells us that he is

" * * * pleased to see
In Nature's face the expression of repose."
(To the Lady E.B. and the Hon. Miss P.)

Another time, the very austerity of her expression strengthens him:

"Stern was the face of Nature: we rejoiced
In that stern countenance, for our souls thence drew
A feeling of their strength." (Recluse, I, 163)

We know that material eyes do not form a part of Nature's features, but Wordsworth makes her personality more real and more easily grasped than otherwise, by the conception of those features which he gives us. Certainly we can better visualize

her countenance to ourselves when he tells us:

"As in the eye of Nature he has lived,
So in the eye of Nature let him die!
(Old Cumberland Beggar)

And as we understand the power of the human eye to change expression with varying moods, so do we appreciate the fact that Nature's eyes also manifest that same power.

" * * * Nature humbly joins the rite,
While flash her upward eyes severe delight."
(Descriptive Sketches)

In To a Painter, Wordsworth, wishing that the artist could share with him "that inward eye" says:

"Then, and then only, Painter! could thy Art
The visual powers of Nature satisfy,
Which hold, whate'er to common sight appears,
Their sovereign empire in a faithful heart."
(To a Painter)

Nature speaks to man, her child, in a voice most often persuasive and soothing, but at other times commanding or threatening. In the sixth book of the Prelude, Wordsworth mentions the tones of her voice:

"Where tones of Nature smoothed by learned Art,
May flow in lasting current."
(Prelude, VI, 674)

Again, he says:

"Dread Power! whom peace and calmness serve
No less than Nature's threatening voice."
(An Evening of Splendor)

Nor is her language one in which difficult rules must be mastered before Man can understand it. It is a universal language for all who care to read. The noblest aristocrat has no advantage over the poorest, most ignorant peasant in

this respect.

" * * And the strain of thought
 Accords with Nature's language -- the soft voice
 Of yon white torrent falling down the rocks
 Speaks, less distinctly, to the same effect."
 (Excursion, VI, 523)

Our Mother Nature has the power to smile, which
 brings her immeasurably closer to us.

"All Nature smiles and owns beneath her eyes
 Her fields peculiar, and peculiar skies."
 (Descriptive Sketches)

Her hands perform, with untiring devotion, the
 mission of comforting that falls to the maternal lot.

" * * The gentler work begun
 By Nature, softening and concealing,
 And busy with a hand of healing."
 (The White Doe of Rylstone)

And those same hands, which soothe and heal, also accomplish
 more difficult tasks, for

"The stars are mansions built by Nature's hand,
 And, haply, there the spirits of the blest
 Dwell, clothed in radiance, their immortal vest."
 (The Stars are Mansions Built
 by Nature's Hand)

The power to breathe animates her mighty being.
 Wordsworth, in describing Peele Castle which stood in a
 tranquil spot by the sea, observed that neither sound nor
 motion disturbed the perfect quiet of place save

" * * the moving tide, a breeze,
 Or merely silent Nature's breathing life."
 (Elegiac Stanzas, suggested by
 picture of Peele Castle)

In another happy hour, he says:

" * Universal Nature breathed
 As with the breath of one sweet flower."
(Sequel to the 'Beggars')

Again the poet's heart is filled with unutterable peace at

" * * the calm
 That Nature breathes among the hills and groves."
(Prelude, I, 280)

But it is the soul of Nature, that "soul of beauty and enduring Life", which surrounds man's soul with its "ennobling harmony" and lifts it to exalted heights above the "self-destroying, transitory things" of life. It is that which links man's spirit to "the Soul of all the Worlds", and through which humanity recovers from its feverish restlessness, its unquenchable thirst for power and wealth, and blends itself with Nature.

"O Soul of Nature! excellent and fair!
 That didst rejoice with me, with whom I, too,
 Rejoiced through early youth."
(Prelude, XII, 93)

"From Nature and her overflowing soul,
 I had received so much, that all my thoughts
 Were steeped in feeling." (Prelude, II, 397)

"Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe!
 Thou Soul, that art the Eternity of thought!
 And giv'st to forms and images a breath
 And everlasting motion, not in vain,
 By day or star-light, thus from my first dawn
 Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
 The passions that build up our human soul."
(Influence of Natural Objects)

Thus, with her soul enveloping and enriching his own, Nature began the work of bringing Wordsworth to recognize man as "Earth's paramount creature",

"As long as he shall be the child of earth."
(Prelude, V, 25)

CHAPTER IV.

THE "OPEN SCHOOLS" ** HUMANITY.

The "Open Schools" -- Humanity.

When Wordsworth sought Nature's soothing power to heal his troubled heart and perplexed mind, the poet tells us that gradually he became aware of a change in his feeling toward Nature.

" ** Nature, destined to remain so long
Foremost in my affections, had fallen back
Into a second place, pleased to become
A handmaid to a nobler than herself."
(Prelude, XIV, 256)

His predominant interest now became Man, and in order to understand humanity as a whole, Wordsworth first directed his attention to the study of the individual and the human mind. For he realized that by Nature's unceasing training he was now fitted to undertake the task.

"Long time in search of knowledge did I range
The field of human life, in heart and mind
Benighted; but the dawn beginning now
To reappear, 'twas proved that not in vain
I had been taught to reverence a Power
That is the visible quality and shape
And image of right reason; that matures
Her processes by steadfast laws; gives birth
To no impatient or fallacious hopes,
No heat of passion or excessive zeal,
* * * * *
* * * * * but trains
To meekness, and exalts by humble faith;
Holds up before the mind intoxicate
With present objects, and the busy dance
Of things that pass away, a temperate show
Of objects that endure." (Prelude, XIII, 16)

And thus we find Wordsworth, at this time, seeking

"In man, and in the frame of social life,
 Whate'er there is desirable and good
 Of kindred permanence." (Prelude, XIII, 35)

Through the countless, varied, educational processes which Nature employed to teach Wordsworth the unity existing between herself and man, the poet at last was able to comprehend how Man's mind has the power to become more wonderful than the earth on which he lives. As Wordsworth gradually adjusted himself to calmness and reflection, Reason asserted itself, and "clearest insight, amplitude of mind" resulted from these conditions. Therefore, it followed naturally that

"Thus moderated, thus composed, I found
 Once more in Man an object of delight,
 Of pure imagination, and of Love."
 (Prelude, XIII, 48)

With convictions more sure than ever before, he renewed his trust in Man's essential spiritual dignity and moral worth, recognizing him as

"All-beholding Man, Earth's thoughtful lord."
 (Excursion, VIII, 164)

Ambitious schemes and projects for the betterment of mankind no longer, as in his early manhood, occupied his mind. In these later years, he saw all things in their true proportion, undistorted by fancy, and he was content to seek the good in the here and now, building on that his hopes for future happiness.

" * * * I sought
 For present good in life's familiar face,
 And built thereon my hopes of good to come."
 (Prelude, XIII, 61)

Because Wordsworth felt that "the great city" lacked many of the things which would enable him to get nearer to other men, he tells us that

" * * Therefore did I turn
To you, ye pathways, and lonely roads,
Sought you enriched with everything I prized,
With human kindnesses and simple joys."
(Prelude, XIII, 116)

Accordingly, Wordsworth wandered along the highways, studying with loving inquisitiveness the people as they passed "on the windings of the public way." Here in these "open schools," he learned that a poet is truly "a man speaking to men". On these roads he found that

" * * if we meet a face,
We also meet a friend." (Prelude, XIII, 138)

He not only studied those whom he met, but he stopped to talk with them; in these conversations, he endeavored to glean from the "fluxes and refluxes" of their minds when aroused by the "great and simple affections" insight into the depth of their souls, that to the careless observer seemed to have no depth at all.

" * * When I began to enquire,
To watch and question those I met, and speak
Without reserve to them, the lonely roads
Were open schools in which I daily read
With most delight the passions of mankind,
Whether by words, looks, sighs, or tears revealed;
There saw into the depth of human souls,
Souls that appear to have no depth at all
To careless eyes." (Prelude, XIII, 160)

No vagrant lingering along the roadside was passed

unheeded by the poet. In the most ancient, decrepit beggar, he found qualities that made human nature a sacred thing, worthy of his consideration and reverence. Each person whom he met was, to Wordsworth, a new and fascinating experience, and from these experiences he learned lessons which he presents to us as his wisest teachings.

The Leech-gatherer, old and poorest of the poor, yet had that message to give Wordsworth, which moved him profoundly, and proved a highest inspiration to him. One beautiful, invigorating morning, with one of those sudden, unaccountable changes that often come over us, Wordsworth was reduced from a state of utter happiness, such as he had experienced as a boy, to the lowest depths of dejection.

"And fears and fancies thick upon me came,
Dim sadness -- and blind thoughts, I knew not,
nor could name." (Resolution and Independence.)

Although he felt as much "a happy Child of earth" as the singing skylark or the playful hare, a strange foreboding crept over him that

"There may come another day to me --
Solitude, pain of heart, distress, and poverty."
(Resolution and Independence)

He was haunted by the wretched remembrance that

"We Poets in our Youth begin in gladness,
But thereof come in the end despondency and
madness." (Resolution and Independence)

Wordsworth knew this fact to be only too true in the case of

the majority of poets; and while struggling with these "untoward thoughts", he saw an old, old man, his body noticeably bent and twisted, standing propped against his long, gray staff and gazing fixedly into the muddy pond.

The sight of this stranger promised new adventure in the field of human nature, and Wordsworth, always eager as a boy in search of it, engaged the old Leech-gatherer in conversation. Skillfully directing his questions so that he could lead the ancient man to speak of himself and his occupation, Wordsworth was astonished to find his speech stately, as well as courteous.

"With something of a lofty utterance drest --
Choice word and measured phrase, above the reach
Of ordinary man." (Resolution and Independence)

The old man related how from pond to pond he wandered over the lonely moor in search of leeches, and how exhausting was his task. Yet, instead of complaining of his hard lot, he expressed pride and thankfulness that, by this labor and with God's help, he could live honestly. Almost unable to persuade himself that he was not dreaming, Wordsworth listened, and as his own troubled thoughts returned, he begged the Leech-gatherer to repeat his words, by asking him again:

"How is it that you live, and what is it you do?"
(Resolution and Independence)

Kindly, the aged man explained a second time how he managed to live, and, apparently undismayed by the fact

that leeches were fast disappearing, he added:

"Yet still I persevere, and find them where I may."
(Resolution and Independence)

In such philosophy, Wordsworth found the help he needed to lift the distress from his own heart. He was both ashamed and glad to discover such cheerful courage and determination in so infirm an old man; and with scorn, now, for his fears, he cried:

"'God', said I, 'be my help and stay secure;
 I'll think of the Leech-gatherer on the lonely moor!'"
(Resolution and Independence)

Although the unobserving, thoughtless person passed them by unnoticed, these qualities which make the human character strong could not be hidden by age or poverty; Wordsworth was fast learning that "man was dear to man", and no matter how humble, how decrepit a human creature might be, he was worthy of understanding sympathy and genuine respect.

In the old Cumberland Beggar, apparently a "burthen of earth", Wordsworth also found a character who unconsciously influenced all with whom he came in contact. The poet remembered that, as a child, he had seen the poor old man begging from door to door, and now, scarcely able to wander about day after day, the ancient creature seemed to be of no use in the world, whatever. Yet to Wordsworth, intent on his study of man, was revealed the fact that this Beggar played a definite and very necessary part on earth.

His feebleness moved the "sauntering Horseman" to stop and place his alms carefully in the old man's hat, instead of thoughtlessly flinging them upon the ground as he rode by. The woman who kept the toll-gate interrupted her work to lift the latch for the aged man; the post-boy, the villagers, both young and old, performed little kindly deeds, "acts of love" and pity, for the poor old mendicant. For this great service which he rendered to mankind, Wordsworth blessed his bowed and aged head.

" * * The villagers in him
Behold a record which together binds
Past deeds and offices of charity
Else unremembered, and so keeps alive
The kindly mood in hearts which lapse of years,
And that half-wisdom, half-experience gives,
Make slow to feel, and by sure steps resign
To selfishness and cold oblivious cares."
(Old Cumberland Beggar)

* * * *

"Then let him pass, a blessing on his head!
And while in that vast solitude to which
The tide of things has borne him, he appears
To breathe and live but for himself alone,
Unblamed, uninjured, let him bear about
The good which the benignant law of Heaven
Has hung around him; and while life is his
Still let him prompt the unlettered villagers
To tender offices and pensive thoughts."
(Old Cumberland Beggar)

As recompense, Wordsworth desired that the freedom of Nature should be the old Beggar's while he lived -- the freshness of the valleys, the sweep of the wind, the silence of mountains, the music of birds, and the light and warmth of the sun.

Thus we find that Wordsworth, through his deferential interest and veneration for individuals such as the Leech-gatherer and the old Cumberland Beggar, arrived at that sympathetic comprehension of the affections, joys, and griefs of humanity which established in him a reverent understanding of the inherent grandeur of all human life.

The men, women, and children that he describes in his poems display those "essential passions of the heart" that are common to all men, and are, therefore, natural feelings. Their lives reflect the human virtues, faults, and emotions to be found in the lives of men, and consequently Wordsworth really keeps the reader "in the company of flesh and blood".

Thus, the instinct of mother-love, whether it be manifested in an Indian mother or in a poor, mad, deserted woman, is a palpable emotion which Wordsworth does not attempt to explain in elaborate phraseology, but which he accepts as unquestionably natural. Therefore, he presents it to us in simple, natural language. In Her Eyes are Wild, her child has given the mother something for which to live, when the very foundations of her reason are gone.

"Sweet babe! they say that I am mad,
But nay, my heart is far too glad;
To thee I know too much I owe;
I cannot work thee any woe.

* * *

For I thy own dear mother am."

(Her Eyes are Wild)

And in the line, "For thee bold as a lion I will be," The innate impulse of the mother-heart to protect its young is only one of the "essential passions" expressed in the most unaffected way.

The unhappy mother in The Thorn, deprived of her child, and therefore of any incentive to strive for happiness, presents the other side of the story -- desertion without compensation. In the desolate misery of Martha Ray, we have a straightforward portrayal of human misfortunes, trivial though they may be to the world at large, Martha's wretchedness instructs us how much of passion and of pain may lie in suffering that is ordinary in the sense of not being extraordinary. This is the poet thinking and feeling in the spirit of the passions of mankind. It is the poet writing, not for poets alone, but for men.

The relationship between father and child also came under Wordsworth's observation in his study of man. The Two April Mornings deals with the tragedy in the life of Matthew, the old schoolmaster. As Wordsworth and Matthew walked together on one exquisite April morning, when the very charm and colorful beauty of the surroundings should have been conducive to joyousness, the poet was astonished to hear Matthew sigh. He asked in surprise:

" * * What thought
Beneath so beautiful a sun
So sad a sigh has brought?"

(The Two April Mornings)

And the schoolmaster told him of another April morning,
 "of this the very brother", though "full thirty years
 behind". On that morning, he had stood beside his daughter's
 grave --

"Nine summers had she scarcely seen,
 The pride of all the Vale;
 And then she sang: - she would have been
 A very nightingale." (The Two April Mornings)

This is the human touch that makes Matthew akin to all
 fathers, - his pride in the little girl who would, not might,
 have been a mightingale, he knew.

The Fountain relates another conversation between
 Wordsworth and Matthew, in which the poet offers to fill the
 empty place in the old man's heart.

"And, Matthew, for thy children dead
 I'll be a son to thee!"
 At this he grasped my hand and said,
 'Alas! that cannot be.'" (The Fountain)

Such, from his study of human nature, did
 Wordsworth perceive the natural relation between a father
 and his child to be, that no outsider could possibly enter
 into it, much as he might desire to do so.

Everywhere in his poems dealing with human
 nature, Wordsworth emphasizes the qualities of endurance and
 fortitude which enable man to go on performing the routine
 tasks of daily life, even though sorrow has come to him.
 Old Timothy, in The Childless Father, is an illustration of

this fact; and after the funeral of his last child, his quiet resignation as he takes up his staff to go to the chase, is but a "prosaism" of life. Most of us know just such a Timothy as this one who

"Perhaps to himself at that moment said,
 'The key I must take, for my Ellen is dead.'
 But of this in my ear not a word did he speak,
 And he went to the chase with a tear on his cheek."
(The Childless Father)

In Michael, Wordsworth portrays a perfect range of domestic affections. Surely this poem speaks the "language of men" and deals with the simple, familiar incidents of life. Here, "the elementary feelings are less under restraint, and speak a more emphatic language", indeed. (Lyrical Ballads, Preface, p. 226). For in the Introduction Wordsworth himself says:

" * * * having felt the power
 Of Nature, by the gentle agency
 Of natural objects, led me on to feel
 For passions that were not my own, and think
 (At random and imperfectly indeed)
 On man, the heart of man, and human life."
(Michael)

The exceedingly strong and tender love with which Michael surrounded Luke, - a love even greater than his deep affection for his old wife, because of the hopes he cherished for his son's future, - his honest pride in his land, - that eternal love of possessions in man -- all these are but feelings exhibited by mankind everywhere today. Though weighed down by the sorrow of his son's disgrace, the dignity and fine

courage of the old peasant must be "felt in the blood and felt along the heart "of each one of us.

And in the midst of grief, Michael realized the potency of love to help him:

"There is a comfort in the strength of love,
'Twill make a thing endurable which else
Would upset the brain, or break the heart."
(Michael)

Neither protesting against the heart-breaking circumstances that caused the sorrow and anguish in Michael's life, nor attempting to smooth over the genuine tragedy of the story in any way, Wordsworth tells the simple narrative very simply. Matthew, after a time, took up the work on the sheepfold again,

" * * * and as before,
Performed all kinds of labor for his sheep,
And for the land, his small inheritance."
(Michael)

But before it was finished, the old man died; and years afterwards, when great changes took place in the neighborhood, only the great old oak tree that stood near Michael's cottage, the "boisterous brook", and the unfinished sheepfold remained.

Among other "elementary feelings", fraternal attachment is one that always has existed and always will be manifested as long as that relationship endures among men. Wordsworth seems to reach the depth of brotherly affection, to comprehend the motives and feelings of the mariner in

The Brothers perfectly. Leonard and James had been "pals" from boyhood, and were almost inseparable. When the brothers were left destitute, Leonard went to sea to seek his fortune for his brother's sake, and when after many years he was able to return, he found strange faces in the village, and strange graves in the churchyard. Unrecognized, he questions the village priest cautiously and timidly, just as persons do when they suspect some disastrous happening and crave, yet dread, to know the truth. The priest told this apparent stranger about the death of the brother James who was left at home after Leonard, the other boy, had set out to sea.

"The stranger would have thanked him,- but he felt
 A gushing from his heart, that took away
 The power of speech, Both left the spot in silence;
 And Leonard, when they reached the churchyard gate,
 As the Priest lifted up the latch, turned round,-
 And, looking at the grave, he said, "My Brother!"
 The Vicar did not hear the words; and now
 He pointed toward his dwelling place, entreating
 That Leonard would partake his homely fare;
 The other thanked him with an earnest voice;
 But added, that, the evening being calm,
 He would pursue his journey."

(The Brothers)

I felt particularly in reading this poem, that "the feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation, and not the action and situation to the feeling." (Lyrical Ballads, Preface, p. 230).

In his ardent study of human nature, Wordsworth did not overlook children. They also have human thoughts,

ways, and characteristics which fascinated the poet; and although not always thoroughly at ease with children, Wordsworth delighted to watch them and talk to them. Eager to learn from them, he questioned them endlessly, and gratefully acknowledged the illumination their artless replies brought to him.

In the Ode on Intimations of Immortality, Wordsworth expresses the belief that the child sees more clearly than the man-- can read more truly "the eternal deep". But this "visionary gleam" fades as the child grows older, and in maturity it is entirely lost.

"But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home;
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy.

* * * *

At length the Man perceives it die away
And fade into the light of common day."

(Ode on Intimations of Immortality)

In We Are Seven, Wordsworth relates his conversation with a little girl which confirmed and strengthened the belief set forth in the Ode. On questioning the little maid about her brothers and sisters, Wordsworth learned that she had seven,-

"And two of us at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea.

'Two of us in the churchyard be,
My sister and my brother;
And in the churchyard cottage, I
Dwell near them with my mother.'" (We Are Seven)

With stupid insistence, Wordsworth argued with the child that if two of them were dead, they were no longer able to run about with her, and consequently there could only be five brothers and sisters left. In vain he tried to move the child to reason as he did. With matter-of-fact certainty, she persisted in her first statement.

"But they are dead; those two are dead!

Their spirits are in heaven!"

'Twas throwing words away; for still

The little Maid would have her will,

And said, 'Nay we are seven!'"

(We Are Seven)

To the little girl, the mystery of death had brought no change in the number of her brothers and sisters, and therefore it presented no difficulty to her mind as it did to Wordsworth's adult intelligence. She was not stubborn in her refusal to admit that there were only five of them left. And the importance of this incident to Wordsworth lay in the fact that it was perfectly obvious to her that they really were seven in number. To the poet, this assurance seemed to come from something within the child, which he, because of his maturity, did not possess. He saw her as a child

"On whom those truths do rest,
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
In darkness lost."

(Ode on Intimations of Immortality)

Another experiment that brought interesting results to Wordsworth was his conversation with a little boy,

five years old, the son of his friend. As the poet and the child strolled about the grounds of his home, Wordsworth idly asked the child,

"'Now tell me, had you rather be,'
I said, and took him by the arm,
'On Kilve's smooth shore, by the green sea,
Or here at Liswyn farm?'"

(Anecdote For Fathers)

The child, with equal carelessness, answered:

"'At Kilve I'd rather be
Than here at Liswyn farm.'" (Anecdote For Fathers)

To the little boy this was an answer sufficient to close the matter, but Wordsworth, eager to explore further the child's reasons for such a reply, asked him why he preferred to be at Kilve rather than at the farm. The boy, having no reason at all for his preference, frankly said,

"'I cannot tell, I do not know.'" (Anecdote For Fathers)

Nevertheless, the poet was determined to find out, and three times he repeated his question, while little Eduard hung his head, embarrassed and unhappy. Then as he looked up suddenly, his eyes rested on a bright, gilded weathervane on the roof of the house. Totally at a loss before for something to give as his reason, the child immediately grasped at the weather-cock as a tangible excuse, and now he readily offered to ~~be~~

Wordsworth.

"'At Kilve there was no weather-cock,
And that's the reason why.'"

The lesson was obvious enough to Wordsworth, and he humbly and thankfully took it to heart.

"O dearest, dearest boy! my heart
For better lore would seldom yearn,
Could I but teach the hundredth part
Of what from thee I learn."

(Anecdote for Fathers)

Wordsworth's position as a poet is not to be determined by the literary merit of these poems. He did not write them, nor do we read them for any beauty of expression or of style. But they show how the poet proceeded in his quest for knowledge and understanding of the human mind; they show how, absolutely without any system or means other than his observations of Nature and his fellow-men, and his own habits of introspection and reflection, he became a psychologist and a philosophical teacher.

Certainly no one will question the difference between the language of We Are Seven and the Ode, for instance, or the sonnet, It is a Beauteous Evening, Calm and Free. But the very simplicity of poems like We Are Seven, or Anecdote for Fathers, has something noble in it; and a truly sincere style can, as the subject demands, be either childlike or magnificent, just as a really noble nature may be clothed

in the garments of a peasant or of an aristocrat. These poems which relate his experimental observation and questioning of living people are but laboratory exercises in which we are permitted to watch Wordsworth work. In the poem, It is a Beauteous Evening, Calm and Free, we have the essence of all that the poet discovered in his experiments with children in its finished state,- a marvelously perfect expression, which is the consummation of the poet's observations combined with exquisite poetic diction and form.

"Listen! the mighty Being is awake,
 And doth with his eternal motion make
 A sound like thunder -- everlastingly.
 Dear Child! dear Girl! that walkest with me here,
 If thou appear untouched by solemn thought,
 Thy nature is not therefore less divine:
 Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year;
 And worship'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
 God being with thee when we know it not."
(It is a Beauteous Evening, Calm and Free)

From his study of the children, men, and women who lived around him in the vale or passed him on the highway, Wordsworth has pictured the trials, the emotions, the thoughts, and the characters that are common to us all. Mankind reflects the same feelings and actions today; qualities of endurance, perseverance, independence, courage, and kindness, and their opposites exist now as then; and love is still an eternal instinct. And so I repeat that Wordsworth did not write his poetry for another poet or for some sage philosopher, but for those who "think and feel". Briefly, then, we learn how

Wordsworth, having been awakened to reverent love for humanity through his devout love of Nature, was led by her to see that, in his proper environment of Nature, Man takes his rightful place.

" * * * stood Man,
 Outwardly, inwardly contemplated,
 As, of all visible natures, crown, though born
 Of dust, and kindred to the worm; a Being,
 Both in perception and discernment, first
 In every capability of rapture,
 Through the divine effect of power and love;
 As, more than anything we know, instinct
 With godhead, and, by reason and by will,
 Acknowledging dependency sublime."
 (Prelude, VIII, 485)

CONCLUSION.

Conclusion.

First with Nature and later with Man as his teachers, during those years that brought the "philosophical mind", Wordsworth reached

" * truths that wake,
To perish never."

(Ode on Intimations of Immortality)

He found principles of happiness and joy animating all Nature, which Man, as a part of Nature, - her Child, indeed, - may share.

"And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

* * * *

The budding twigs spread out their fan,
To catch the breezy air;
And I must think, do all I can,
That there is pleasure there."

(Lines written in Early Spring)

And he attained at last,

" * * to confident repose
In God; and reverence for the dust of Man."
(Excursion, VII, 1057)

With a positive and serene faith, which a knowledge of human suffering and hardship could not shake, he recognized that the controlling law of the universe is love -- that it is a God-made law, and therefore, divine.

"Love, now a universal birth,
 From heart to heart is stealing,
 From earth to man, from man to earth;
 -- It is the hour of feeling."

And from the blessed power that rolls
 About, below, above,
 Will frame the measure of our souls;
 They shall be turned to love."
(To My Sister)

It is this law of love that joins, in one great, continuous chain, the infinitely great with the smallest things in Nature, -- that holds the earth "constant to her sphere", and at the same time makes the Primrose clinging to the rock

"A lasting link in Nature's chain
 From highest heaven let down!"
(The Primrose on the 'Rock)

I, for one, feel that Wordsworth determinedly broke away from musty, ordered systems of philosophy and thought, to teach those things which, from his own experience, he knew would refresh and ennoble Man's soul. And with his teachings, Wordsworth "satisfies the heart; he inspires and stimulates the thought". With his ever encouraging voice, "he becomes to us more than a poet -- he is our guide, philosopher, and friend." (Dawson, Literary Leaders of Modern England, p. 59). Truly, we cannot offer him higher tribute than to say he comes to us

"like the presence of Nature herself", with the power "to touch 'the depth and not the tumult of the soul', to give us quietness, strength, steadfastness, and purpose, whether to do or to endure." (Morley, Introduction to Wordsworth's Poetical Works, p. 16)

"To know him is to learn courage; to walk with him is to feel the visitings of a larger, purer air, and the peace of an unfathomable sky." (Raleigh, Wordsworth, p. 228)

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