

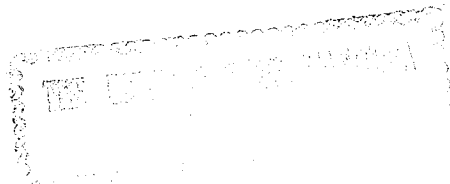
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The Personality of Wordsworth,
as revealed in his Poetry.

BY

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INTRODUCTION

All great poetry bears the impress of personality. It contains a distinctly personal as well as a universal element. The creative mind aims at self-expression and, in the poet, seeks to reveal itself imaginatively and in terms of external objects known to all. But it is only the great artist who succeeds in giving us in the same production a representation of life and an expression of his own personality. Such poetic personality is to be found in the epic and the drama as well as the lyric and elegy. It is not a petty egotism that displays itself in mannerisms and peculiarities, but the expression of the very heart of the man and centre of his being, his highest hopes and aspirations and views of life, as his own experience would teach him. In it, "the universal human type is never lost or merged, while yet the individual type is differentiated from other exemplars by an essential, not an accidental diversity." (a)

"In no modern poetry is this higher personality so strongly indicated as in Wordsworth's. (b) He has written little that is impersonal; "across almost every page there is projected the huge shadow of his own peculiar personality." (c) It often expresses itself in a single phrase or line as characteristically as in a whole volume. It speaks to us with the same

(a) Aubrey de Vere- Personal Character of Wordsworth's Poetry, p.147)
 (b) Ibid.
 (c) W. J. Dawson- Makers of English Poetry. p. 101.)

clearness and individuality which led his friend Coleridge to write of one of Wordsworth's descriptive passages," I should have recognized it anywhere; and had I met these lines running wild in the desert of Arabia, I should have instantly screamed out "Wordsworth." (a).

I. SUBJECTIVITY

The genius of Wordsworth was a genius which was naturally introspective, and his poetry is in a large measure the record of his own personal experiences, and the feelings, imaginings and reflections occasioned by them. Not that the poet was egotistical, but that he was animated by a real desire to dwell on his own feelings in such a way as might make them useful to others. He sought to relate the individual thoughts and experiences of men to the world as a whole and saw in himself a type of humanity, a part of the larger order, and his whole aim was to bring that part into closer relation to the whole and thus add to man's knowledge of himself and God.

It was because of this impersonal view of himself and his life, that Wordsworth was able to give such a keen analysis of his own character and such a true estimate of his work. This is shown most clearly in the "Prelude," in which the poet set himself the task of tracing the development of his own mind and discovering the several influences that were at work

(a) Knight Edition of Wordsworth. Vol. 2, p. 59.

in the upbuilding of his character. He relates the inner experiences of his childhood, youth, and early manhood, and dwells upon the moral crisis of his life when his ideal conceptions of liberty and democracy were shattered by the failure of the French people to carry out the ideals of the revolution. He reveals his innermost soul, yet he has no egotism; he always speaks from the viewpoint of the psychologist, the philosopher, the poet, the lover of truth.

Our first impression of Wordsworth is that of strength, and of calm growing out of strength. He is a man of strong will, strong convictions and strong emotions, and his will confirmed by his convictions balances his emotional nature giving him calm and self-control. In his many self-revelations he shows himself to be of a nature hard to govern, of violent passions disciplined with difficulty and only by incessant vigilance. He realized the need of self-discipline and its educational value;

"How strange that all

The terrors, pains, and early miseries,
 Regrets, vexations, lassitudes interfused
 Within my mind, should e'er have borne a part
 And that a needful part, in making up
 The calm existence that is mine when I
 Am worthy of myself." (Prelude. Bk. 1, l. 344.)

His sensitive nature found in external nature and her tranquillizing powers, peace of heart and self-control, for nature fills the heart with purest passion, joy and inspiration towards the best, and these alone. Indeed he finds in nature the chief influence in

building up his character and raising his ideals. She teaches him a love of mankind and an optimism that can find, even in the deep distress of heart over the failure of the ideals of the French Revolution, something to strengthen his faith; even in the sorrow over the death of a loved one, something to "humanize his soul."

Although he shows independence of thought and seeks his own answers to life's problems, he is always frank in acknowledging his indebtedness to others. To his friend Coleridge, and his wife he always expresses affection and gratitude, and he never tires of recognizing his dependence upon the love of his sister Dorothy, and her poetic insight.

"She gave me eyes, she gave me ears;
And humble cares, and delicate fears;
A heart, the fountain of sweet tears;
And love and thought and joy."

(The Sparrow's Nest, l. 17.)

So he speaks of the influence of Burns

"Whose light I hailed when first it shone,
And showed my youth
How verse may build a princely throne
On humble truth."

(at the grave of Burns, l. 32.)

He shows a fairness and an open-mindedness in his appreciation of the work of others. In passing judgment he seems always to have followed the rule he himself lays down in his comment on the Ode to Saty. "We should be rigorous to ourselves; and

forbearing, if not indulgent to others; and if we make comparison at all, it ought to be with those who have morally excelled us." (a)

Wordsworth was greatly interested in Humanity. He was convinced of the spiritual unity of man and nature, and the necessity for freedom to the individual and the nation. But at heart he was a poet, and his deepest interest went out to ideas not events, abstract truths not world-movements. Even though he showed such enthusiasm for the revolution, he admits afterwards that

"the time
Had never been when throes of mighty Nations
And the world's tumult unto me could yield,
How far so'er transported and possessed,
Full measure of content; and still I craved
An intermingling of distinct regards
And truths of individual sympathy
Nearer ourselves."

(Prelude Bk. 13, l. 106.)

Having thus made a correct estimate of the field of thought that was peculiarly his own, early in life he chose poetry as his vocation. Indeed, he tells us, there was left to him no alternative : he made no vows

"but vows
Were then made for me; bond unknown to me
Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
A dedicated spirit."

(Prelude Bk. 4, l. 333.)

(a) Fenwick Note. Knight Edition of W. Vol. 3, p. 37 .)

"A dedicated spirit," he gives himself to his life-work and adds,

" On I walked

In thankful blessedness, which yet survives."

(Prelude Bk. 4, l. 535.)

All through the years of the neglect and ridicule of his critics the "thankful blessedness" survived. He had an unshaken faith in his own genius and the value of his poems which, he was assured, would be recognized finally at their true worth. He had a high ideal of his mission. He felt that he had a message for mankind and the future, and never did he think of lowering his ideal to suit the popular taste. He writes to Lady Beaumont in 1807, " I have not written down to the level of superficial observers and unthinking minds- to console the afflicted; to add sunshine to daylight by making the happy, happier; to teach the young, and the gracious of every age to see, to think, and to feel, and therefore to become more actively and securely virtuous- this is their office, which I trust they will faithfully perform long after we (that is all that is mortal of us) are mouldering in our graves ." (a).

He never sought pecuniary benefits or worldly success by adopting popular ideas and popular ideals. He admits, in one of his letters, - " an utter inability on my part to associate with any class or body of literary men, and thus subject myself to the necessity of sacrificing my own judgment, and of lending, even indirectly, countenance or support to principles either of taste,

(a) Knight -Life of Wordsworth, Vol. 2, p. 88.)

politics, morals or religion, which I disapprove; and your lordship is not ignorant that, except writers engaged in mere drudgery, there are scarcely any authors but those associated in this manner, who find literature at this day, an employment attended with pecuniary gain." (a.)

He felt that the duty of the poet is to instruct others.

"He serves the Muses erringly and ill.

Whose aim is pleasure light and fugitive."

"Every great poet is a teacher: I wish either to be considered as a teacher or as nothing." (b.)

So strong was his faith in his poetic powers that he was assured that he alone could perform his task as teacher.

"That poets, even as prophets, each with each
 Connected in the mighty scheme of truth,
 Have each his own peculiar faculty,
 Heaven's gift, a sense that fits him to perceive
 Objects unseen before, thou wilt not blame
 The humblest of these who dares to hope
 That unto him hath also been vouchsafed
 An insight that in some sort he possesses,
 A privilege whereby a work of his,
 Proceeding from a source of untaught things,
 Creative and enduring, may become
 A power like one of Nature's."

(Prelude Bk. 13, l. 301.)

He consciously sought to express what was most central in his personality, to give an interpretation of life seen by his own

(a). Ibid Vol. 2, p. 206-Letter to Lord Lonsdale.)

(b). Christopher Wordsworth-Memoirs of W. Wordsworth-Vol. 1, p. 342.)

heaven-given "peculiar faculty." Having once decided his mission he never changes his course. He writes of his poetic ideals to his fellow-poet, Coleridge, -

"Trophies of Nature, we to them will 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 dwells, above this frame of things
 (Which 'mid all revolution in the hopes
 And fears of men, doth still remain unchanged)
 In beauty exalted, as it in itself
 Of quality and fabric more divine."

(Prelude. Bk. 14, l. 444.)

He chose as his theme
 "No other than the very heart of man
 As found among the best of those who live."

(Prelude Bk. 15, l. 241.)

He emphasized the essential oneness of humanity, but in advance of the ideals of the French Revolution, he saw that the true unity of mankind lay in spiritual equality. He realized that the majority of men are accustomed to overlook this fact and "neglect the universal heart."

"While they most ambitiously set forth
 Extrinsic differences, the outward marks
 Whereby society has parted man
 From man."

(Prelude Bk. 15, l. 217.)

Therefore he took his subjects from all stations in life, often when "the external man is rude in show" (a), but always "man as they are men within themselves." (b.)

He found his inspiration in the common things of life, in the mind of man itself.

"What more need I desire
To stir, to soothe, or elevate?
What nobler marvels than the mind
May in life's daily prospect find,
May find or there create?"

A potent wand both sorrow wield;
What spell so strong as guilty Fear:
Repentance is a tender Sprite;
If aught on earth have heavenly might,
'Tis lodged within her silent tear."

(Peter Bell, l. 141.)

Looking deep into the heart of life, he taught that life is good. He did not solve its problems philosophically, but, with a heart filled with the thoughts and memories of his own experience and observation, he writes of the good which outweighs the evil: he writes

(a) Prelude. Sk. 13, l. 228.

(b) Ibid - l. 228.)

" Of Truth, of Grandeur, Beauty, Love and Hope
 And melancholy Fear subdued by Faith;
 Of blessed consolation in distress;
 Of moral strength, and intellectual power,
 Of joy in wildest commonalty spread: "

(Excursion-Introduction , l. 14.)

and he declares these to be the great truths of life.

With the high ideal of his calling ever before him ,
 the poet sought to shape his life as a "dedicated spirit."

"Never did I, in quest of right and wrong ,
 Tampler with conscience from a private aim;
 Nor was in any public hope the dupe
 Of selfish passions;nor did ever yield
 Wilfully to mean cares or low pursuits,
 But shrunk in apprehensive jealousy
 From every combination that might aid
 The tendency, too potent in itself,
 Of use and custom to bow down the soul
 Under a growing weight of vulgar sense,
 And substitute a universe of death
 For that which moves with light and life informed,
 Actual, divine, and true."

(Prelude,Sk. 14, l.150.)

Indeed, the words "dedicated spirit" are the keynote of Wordsworth's character; a spirit dedicated to the service of man, overcoming all that was unworthy in himself that he might be more efficient for his task of unsealing for mankind those springs of joy that are

the common right of all, yet known to few.

II INTELLECTUAL QUALITIES

Introduction.

Wordsworth was endowed with remarkable powers of reasoning and powers of intuition, and in the union and balance of these two contrasting elements consists the peculiar quality of his mind. He shows an ability to comprehend general truths, and an equal capacity of accurate attention to detail, the highest imagination and the keenest powers of analysis. His desire was to make these two faculties supplement each other and, by his intuition, learn more of truth than his reason alone could find.

1. Independence of Thought

The more powerful and energetic a personality the more distinctive becomes his intellectual and emotional life, and the less is he affected by other influences. Such independence and self-sufficiency of thought early showed itself in Wordsworth. He seems never to have adopted the conventional ready-made ideas of things that satisfy the majority of men. At the age of seventeen he writes of his life at Cambridge,

"I had a world about me- 'twas my own;
I made it, for it only lived to me
And to the God who sees into the heart."

(Prelude, Bk. 3, l. 145.)

What was true of the boy was true of the mature man. He had his own world about him, thought his own thoughts, dreamed his own dreams and lived his own life, independent of all others save those whom he loved.

He believed that the highest knowledge comes from within the individual mind and not from without; that the mind of man contains all things in itself, if only it can be explored. All that he asks to realize his best is perfect freedom, as there is freedom in nature.

"How does the Meadow-flower its bloom unfold?
 Because the lovely little flower is free
 Down to its roots, and, in that freedom bold;
 And so the grandeur of the Forest tree
 Comes not from casting in a formal mould
 But from its own divine vitality."

(A poet-he hath put his heart to
 school- l. 9 .)

Depending on his "own divine vitality," Wordsworth met every problem of life and sought a solution. It is at the root of all his merits and defects. It led him to cling tenaciously to his spiritual interpretation of nature and his own new theory of poetic diction, but it also caused him to adhere to his own whims and fancies. Mr. Aubrey de Vere claims that the frequent triviality of Wordsworth is due to this fact- "that he had begun life without any of the received opinions which save most men the trouble of thinking; but has found out everything that he came to believe or be conscious of." (a).

(a) Wordsworth, Arthur Symonds. Port. 1901, Vol. 70, p. 39!

Therefore when a thought came to him it had a deeper significance than to most people who adopt them as they are, without realizing their full force. To him all discoveries were surprising, and he received them in a spirit of wonder and awe. But all were equally surprising and important, for all were equally true, and Wordsworth's great passion was for truth. Merely in his chief defect - in his desire for sincerity in all things and his longing to teach new truths to mankind, he sometimes gave undue emphasis to trivial events and thoughts which had bulked large in his own individual experience.

On the other hand, because of his independence of spirit he had a breadth of human sympathy that arose from an understanding heart. He knew all the agonies of a soul, torn by doubts and fears, that is driven by its very boldness and strength to seek independently its own solution of life's problems. He writes of the storm and stress period of his own life and his anguish of spirit after the shock of the French Revolution.

"how awful is the might of souls
And what they do within themselves while yet
The yoke of earth is new upon them, the world
Nothing but a wild field when they are sown. "

(Prelude Bk, 3, l. 180 .)

Because Wordsworth's mind was powerful and capable of great thought he built up a philosophy of life for himself, and through the anguish and suffering that such independent thought cost him, he gained an understanding and an insight into human

nature and human woes. The calm of his later life came not from a lack of passion, but a consciousness of his own strength and a faith in the power of the human mind to solve the problems of human existence. He boldly met life's difficulties and overcame them; he found calm in the storms, joy in its sorrows, hope in its struggles and life in its death. " Here is a poet who faced the fact, and against whom the fact did not prevail. 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." (a.)

2. Intuition .

Wordsworth believed in the freedom of the individual mind, and trusted its powers of self-direction and self-support. He chose, as the subject of his thought, the deep and mysterious in man and the world, and, relying upon his own "divine gift of insight", sought to penetrate to the heart of things and find new meanings and new affinities in nature and in man by a spirit of " wise passiveness," (b), to the teachings of those " Powers which of themselves the mind impress." (c). He believed that the eternal spirit expressed in nature, and, in man reveals itself to us in our emotional life and by interpreting our vague doubts and fears, hopes and delights, our shadowing recollections of childhood and its first affections, " our souls have sight of that immortal sea which brought us hither "(Immortality Ode, l.163)

- (a). Wordsworth, W. Raleigh, p. 220 .)
 (b). Expostulation and Reply- l. 28.)
 (c). Expostulation and Reply- l. 21.)

and realize our unity with God.

And this receptivity of Wordsworth, this listening wisdom and wise acceptance of the impulses of his intuitive nature was the poet's own peculiar dower. His recollections were exceptionally vivid, his introspection exceptionally penetrating, and his powers of expression so accurate, that he is able to describe these vague intuitions with such power and truth that they awaken kindred stirrings in his readers' hearts. His friend Haydon considered this his greatest gift. He writes, "Wordsworth's faculty is in describing those far-reaching and intense feelings, and glimmerings and doubts and fears and hopes in man, as referring to what he might be before he was born, or what he may be hereafter." (a). It led him to discover higher truths that reason alone could prove, and gave him the unfaltering faith that "we are greater than we know." (Prelude, Bk. 6, l. 264.)

He trusted these vague instincts and intuitions because he believed they come to man from a divine source.

"Have not we too?—Yes, we have
Answers, and we know not whence;
Echoes from beyond the grave
Recognized intelligence!
Such rebounds our inward ear
Catches sometimes from afar—
Listen, ponder, hold them dear;
For of God—of God they are."

(Yes, it was the Mountain Echo. l. 16.)

These echoes were sent, not merely for the sake of pleasure,

(a). Knight, Life of Wordsworth, Vol. 2, p. 251.)

but to be condensed into permanent principles of thought, by the exercise of the imagination and the emotions, by the contemplation of nature, by the solemn resolve to find truth. He is convinced that seeking truth, we shall find it; that to minds in which the interplay of active thought and passive acceptance is possible, there comes an unspokeable joy, and a wisdom and power to help others.

"Such minds are truly from the Deity,
 For they are powers; and hence the highest bliss
 That flesh can know is theirs- the consciousness
 Of whom they are, habitually infused
 Through every image and through every thought
 And all affections by communion raised
 From earth to heaven, from heaven to divine."

(*Prologue*, bk. 14. l. 118.)

Yet there must be the "quickening impulse," (*Ibid.* l. 107) the mental activity as well as the "wise passiveness." In order to attain the truest vision of infinity, the soul of man must not be altogether receptive, but must act in unison with nature, who is its best and truest friend. It must send forth from itself an emanation, which, meeting with natural objects, produces something better than either the soul itself or Nature by herself could give. Such creative souls, like Nature, can send abroad from their native selves "kindred mutations: for themselves create a like existence." (*Ibid.* l. 95.) Both the enduring and the transient serve to exalt their spirits.

" they build up greatest things
 From least suggestions; ever on the watch
 Willing to work and to be wrought upon
 They need no extraordinary calls
 To rouse them; in a world of life they live,
 By sensible impression not enthralled,
 But by their quickening impulse made more prompt
 To hold fit converse with the spiritual world."

(Prelude. Sk. 14, l. 101 .)

From this interchange of influence of the spirit of nature and the mind of man, Wordsworth found intimations of immortality and proof of the essential spirituality of all life. In this spiritual conception of the universe he shows the consciousness of the true mystic. He says of himself, " I was often unable to think of external objects as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or a tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality." (a.) But he did not deny the existence of the material world. His mystical mood did not abolish the world of things, it rather enabled him to gain an insight into their essential life. And this insight came by a conscious effort.

" I was only then
 Contented, when this bliss ineffable
 I felt the sentiment of Being spread

(a) Fenwick Note. Immortality Ode. Knight edition, VIII .p. 189.)

O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still,
 O'er all that lost beyond the reach of thought
 And human knowledge, to the human eye
 Invisible yet liveth to the heart."

(Prelude. St. 2, l. 590.)

This consciousness of the spirituality of all things was such a reality to the poet that he regarded it as of the nature of a revelation. He felt that as the greatest fact and influence in his own life, he should teach it to men. And because he believed in the existence of a world of sense; because when he awoke from his idealism, in which the world became a part of his consciousness and nothing more, and recovered the idea of a real universe apart from himself, so powerful were both these conceptions that he is able to bring to us the sense of belonging at once to two worlds, which gives to human life so much of its mysterious solemnity.

III. MORAL and SPIRITUAL QUALITIES

Introduction.

Wordsworth's nature was essentially moral and spiritual; moral, in his steadfastness of purpose and desire to realize in himself his ideals of personal character and obligations to others; spiritual, in his idealistic philosophy and his expression of that idealism in his life.

1. Force of Character

The unifying element in personality is the will. The

The effective and forceful personality is that in which a strong will brings the various attributes of heart and mind into harmonious relation to each other, and by a steadfast unity of purpose effects a unity of individuality. In Wordsworth we have this force of will to an unusual degree. Possessed of a large number of intellectual and moral qualities, which were not only unlike, but often apparently opposed to each other, he brought all these elements into absolute harmony and unity, and gave expression to that unity in his highest poetry with a force of conviction which seldom fails to drive a truth home even into careless or indifferent minds.

Throughout his whole life he was a man possessed of one idea, and but one message to the world. He sought to teach men the moral significance of the commonplace and the moral existence in commonplace existence. He "saw little worthy and sublime" in "power and energy detached from moral purpose," (Prelude. Bk. 13, l. 41.) and brought all the faculties of his mind and heart to bear upon the task of interpreting the truths of life, as illustrated in his own personal experiences. And he was well fitted for the work. His mind was at once active and passive. He was keenly interested in men and events, and observant of detail with an almost scientific accuracy, yet he was highly impressionable and receptive of influences from without. He was at once remarkable for his intuition and for the accuracy of his logical processes. With the "gift of genuine insight" (Excursion-Introduction, l. 66) he saw deep into the heart of things, yet his reason balanced his intuitive powers and, by just and exact thinking, he expressed his ideas in

truthfulness and accuracy of language. Then again strong qualities of heart were balanced by correspondingly strong qualities of mind. His universal sympathy and love of men and his own wild and turbulent passions were held in check by his reason, and his whole aim was to keep an even balance between them and gain a true interpretation of life by the interplay of thought and feeling. His scientific mind and his sincere love of truth led him to distinguish clearly between imagination and "that fancy that decorates and falsifies facts to gratify an idle mind with a sense of neatness and ingenuity," so that, at his best, his poetic imagination reveals "clearest insight, amplitude of mind, and Reason in her most exalted mood." (Prelude. Sk. 14. l. 131.)

From this union of what Mr. Aubrey de Vere calls his "harmonious opposites" (Aubrey de Vere-Remarks on Personal Character of his Poetry. Wordsworthiana. p. 155.) arises the sense of power and force in Wordsworth. We feel that his is a mind that has thought and felt mightily, and facts, that would not have interest otherwise, are forced upon us by the consciousness that they have interested a powerful mind. His forced calm and self-control as well as the knowledge of the great sincerity of his art impresses upon our minds the depth of emotion that the poet has experienced, and brings him into an almost personal relationship to us.

2. "Blessed Hood."

Just as the most emphatic element in any effective personality is force, so the most prominent quality is charm. The peculiar

charm of Wordsworth is his joyousness, or what he himself calls his "blessed mood." (Rintern Abbey, l. 37) No other poet has written so exclusively of the joys of life, indeed his whole works are a search after the "bond of union between life and joy." (Prelude. Br, 1, l. 558.) He entered into human sorrows and disappointments, his joy has often an undertone of sadness arising from the realization that sorrow fills a large place in human experience but "in this influx of the joyous into the sad, and of the sad into the joyous-this reciprocal entanglement of darkness in light and of light in darkness-he writes of lasting joys only." (a.)

He is always confident that "not without hope we suffer and we mourn," (b.)

"That, under heaviest sorrow earth can bring,
 If from the affliction somewhere does not grow
 Honor which could not else have been, a faith,
 An elevation, and a sanctity,
 If new strength be not given nor old restored,
 The blame is ours-"

(Prelude. Br, 10, l. 465.)

Indeed hope is "the paramount duty that Heaven lays for its own honour, on man's suffering heart". ("Here pause; the poet claims at least this praise." l. 5.) Wordsworth's joyfulness arises from hope and faith in divine goodness. He writes in the Prelude,-

(a) DeQuincey., Literary Theory and Criticism, p. 303.
 (b) Elegiac Stanzas, l. 60 .)

" A thought is with me sometimes, and I say-
 Should the whole frame of earth by inward throes
 Be wrenched, or fire come down from far to scorch
 Her pleasant habitations, and dry up
 Old Ocean, in his bed left singed and bare,
 Yet would the living Presence still subsist
 Victorious, and composure would ensue,
 And kindlings like the morning-precursor
 Of day returning and of life revived."

(Prelude, Bk. 5, l. 29 .)

It was this belief in the living Presence that would eventually bring order out of chaos, perfection out of imperfection, and, through destruction or death, would be the promise of "day returning and of life revived," that gave to Wordsworth the joyful serenity that was the prevailing mood of the poet's manhood and old age.

He felt joy in the common things of life. He sought to show men that the common scenes, the every-day incidents, and the primary affections and duties are the deepest joys that are offered to mankind. Happiness does not depend upon outward circumstances, but the use each makes of his own experiences, and the lessons he learns from them. In the "strength that remains behind" (Immortality Ode, l. 180) after the first radiance of youth's ideals has passed forever from our sight,

"In the soothing thoughts that spring
 Out of human suffering;
 In the faith that looks through death,
 In years that bring the philosophic mind."

(Ibid. l. 183.)

In such uses of the experiences of life lies the secret of individual happiness, peace and joy.

Because Wordsworth was assured of the essential unity of external nature and the human soul, he felt that man could experience the highest happiness and joy in life only when he lived in harmony with nature, and sought to make her happiness his own. For external nature has a happier existence than we; the brook that dances down "through rocky passes, among flowery creeks," has a greater gift than man. (Brook, whose society the Poet seeks, l.7).

"It seems the Eternal Soul is clothed in thee
With purer robes than those of flesh and blood,
Hath bestowed on thee a safer good;
Unwearied joy, and life without its cares."

(Ibid. l. 11).

When he goes out into the grove at springtime and compares nature's mood with " what man has made of man," (lines written in Early Spring, l.9.) he realizes that nature can be our teacher; for

" 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.
The birds around me hopped and played
Their thoughts I cannot measure;-
But the least notion that they made
It seemed a thrill of pleasure."

(Ibid. l. 11.)

In times of dejection and dismay, a faith in mankind "that fails not

in all sorrow," (Prelude, Bk. 2, l. 448.) is found in nature alone.

" - The gift is yours,
 Ye winds and sounding cataracts! 'tis yours,
 Ye mountains! things of Nature, Thou hast fed
 My lofty speculations; and in thee
 For this uneasy heart of ours, I find
 A never-failing principle of joy
 And purest passion."

(Ibid. l. 448.)

So to increase our joy and strengthen our faith we must turn to the joy-giving and tranquillizing powers of nature, for there alone can we find something akin to the highest in ourselves .

This joy derived from nature will be a lasting joy. Such emotional experiences as arise from the contemplation of beautiful scenes of nature, may be treasured up in the store-houses of memory and become sources of joy in future years. In the poem "There is a little unpretending rill," the memory of a summer's day spent beside the stream lives in the heart of the poet so

" That while ten thousand pleasures disappear,
 And flies their memory fast almost as they,
 The immortal spirit of one happy day
 Lingers beside that rill in vision clear."

("There was..... rill." l. 11 .)

Through such memories nature can increase our faith and joy.

" for she can so inform

The mind that is within us, so impress
 With quietness and beauty, and so feed
 With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongue
 Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
 Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
 The dreary intercourse of daily life
 Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
 Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
 Is full of blessings."

(Tintern Abbey. l. 128 .)

Then again through the contemplation of nature and an intellectual effort to discover the bond of unity between nature and man, the mind of man can realize how small a part of the whole is perceived through the senses, and, losing the thought of its own individuality, it can attain the highest intellectual joy in the thought of its unity with the whole universe.

Wordsworth found in life a new and elevating joy that arose from faith and hope in human life and human destiny, and a belief that the common things of life are closely linked with the infinite. "And by his secret of bringing the infinite into common life, as he evokes it out of common life, he has the skill to lead us, as long as we yield ourselves to his influence, into inner moods of settled peace, to touch ' the depth, and not the tumult of the soul,' to give us quietness, strength, steadfastness and purpose whether to do or endure." (a.) In him speaks a tranquillity which seems to soothe our souls. We feel that the sorrows and

(a) John Morley, Studies in Literature. p. 52 .)

passions of life are things that shall pass away and that, through them, we are disquieting ourselves in vain, for in the larger life, of which we are a part, they have no place.

3. Idealism.

It was in his idealism that Wordsworth found the faith that was the secret of his serenity and joy, the reason that everywhere he

"Saw blessings spread around me like a sea."

(Prelude, Bk. 2, l. 595.)

The central thought of Wordsworth's idealism, the one principle at the foundation of his whole philosophy was the simple idea of a universal, all-penetrating, all-present divine power and influence that reveals itself to man through his intuitive powers as well as by methods of reasoning. This was especially true of the poet's own mystical mind. "It was not to him a process of conscious seeking; it was rather a process of conscious finding through the abandonment of himself to the gradual revelation of a Personality higher than his own, that hovered over him from his infancy, and spoke to him in many ways ere he knew the Speaker, and finally realized the Presence that filled the temple of earth and heaven." (a).

Early in life he felt that in external nature exists an essential principle that is "motion," (Prelude Bk. 1, l. 304) "being," (Prelude, Bk. 2, l. 252.) yet it is an "unknown mode of being" (Prelude, Bk. 1, l. 595.) As the years passed, he realized that this living, quickening power in man and nature alike is a

(a) Theism of Wordsworth. John Veitch, Wordsworthiana- 298- 299.)

transcendent yet manifested Unity that is the one spring of our highest inspiration and hope.

It is the

"dread source,

Prime self-existing cause and end of all

That in the scale of being fill their place."

(Excursion. Bk. 4, l. 79.)

and combines in itself a multiplicity of good influences that are at the foundation of all life.

" Thou, Thou alone

Art everlasting and the blessed Spirits

Which thou includest, as the sea her waves."

(Ibid. l. 91.)

It is possible, by adoration, by gaining a consciousness of His will and a knowledge of the divine laws that govern all existence, for man to know, in some measure, the nature of his Being. It is his duty:

"For adoration thou endurest-endure

For consciousness the motions of thy will

For apprehension these transcendent truths

Of the pure intellect, that stand as laws

(submission constituting strength and power)

Even to thy Being's infinite majesty ! "

(Ibid. l. 94.)

The one adequate support for the calamities of life is the assured belief that man's life is ordered by a being

" Of infinite benevolence and power;
Whose everlasting purposes embrace
All accidents converting them to good."

(Excursion, Bk. 4, l. 14.)

and this belief is fortified in man's heart

" By acquiescence in the Will supreme
For time and for eternity; by faith,
Faith absolute in God, including hope,
And the defence that lies in boundless love
Of his perfections; with habitual dread
Of sight unworthily conceived, endured
Impatiently, ill-done or left undone,
To the dishonor of his holy name."

(Ibid. l. 20.)

In a faith and trust in the love of God, in a humble acquiescence
to his will, in a conscious striving towards the best, in an un-
faltering love of things eternal, in

" the silent thoughts that search for steadfast light,
Love from her depths and duty in her sight."

(" Intent on gathering wool from hedge and brake." l. 12)

He realizes that life must be a continual struggle
towards the ideal. It is difficult to " frame conceptions equal
to the soul's desires." (Excursion, Bk. 4, l. 136.) One can
despise the transient things of earth, can recognize the un-
essential things of life, but it is not easy " to converse with

heaven," (Excursion. Bk. 4, l. 131.) to gain a true conception of eternal things .

" Angels perceive
 With undisturbed and unclouded spirit
 The object as it is ;but, for ourselves,
 That speculative height we may not reach."

(Excursion. Bk. 5, l. 486.)

And after we have in a measure accomplished this feat and gained the inspiration of " Truths that wake to perish never," (Immortality Ode. l. 156.) there is left that other most difficult of tasks to " keep heights which the soul is competent to gain." (Excursion Bk. 4, l. 158.) It is only by constantly fixing one's thoughts upon the promises of immortality, by holding " among least things, the undersense of greatest" (Prelude. Bk. 7, l. 736.), by seeking "faith by virtue and yielding entire submission to the law of conscience" (Excursion. Bk. 4, l. 225.) that

" custom, time
 And domineering faculties of sense

 Idle temptations, open vanities,
 Ill-governed passions, ranklings of despite,
 Immoderate wishes, pining discontent,
 Distress and care "

(Ibid. l. 225.)

can be overcome, and with this victory

" a steadfast seat
 shall be yours among the happy few
 who dwell on earth yet breathe empyreal air
 Sons of the morning."

(Excursion, Bk. 4, l. 304.)

Wordsworth felt that belief in such a Being must necessitate a belief in the immortality of the soul.

"Hope below this, consists not with belief
 In mercy, carried infinite degrees
 Beyond the tenderness of human hearts:
 Hope below this consists not with belief
 In perfect wisdom guiding mightiest power
 That finds no limits but her own pure will."

(Ibid. l. 191.)

And, here again, the poet claims that powers of intuition will lead us farther than powers of reasoning; that childhood, with its larger faith, purer affections and trust, its utter incapacity to grasp the meaning of life and death, is nearer the infinite than maturer man. Like Rousseau, he claims the innate moral excellence of the child and the beneficent tendency of his natural instincts when uncontaminated by the influences of society. "But Wordsworth goes farther than Rousseau. For him the child's innate excellence is no abstract virtue realized only in a utopia where beings and objects exist for no other purpose than that of his instruction.

' our childhood sits,
 Our childhood sits upon a throne
 That hath more power than all the elements.'

The moral nature of the child is an active power in a real world and transforms into good the mingled elements of which the world consists

" ' Could I but teach thee the hundredth part
 Of what from thee I learn. ' " (a)

In the recollections of his own childhood with its joy in life, its pure affections, its utter inability to grasp the meaning of time and space, he finds lessons of faith and love. But, most of all, he finds convincing proof that

"Our destiny, our being's heart and home
 Is with infinitude and only there."

(Prelude. Bk. 6, l. 604.)

and by musing upon the recollections of our soul's early instinctive gropings after the larger life from which we come "trailing clouds of glory," (Immortality Ode. l. 64 .) he finds a power to uphold us, cherish us, and make

"Our noisy years seem moments in the being
 Of the eternal silence."

(Ibid. l. 153 .)

Wordsworth's conception of nature as a moral and

(a). Emile Legouis- Early Life of Wordsworth. p. 57- 8 .)

spiritual content is at the very foundation of his idealism. He distinguishes clearly between her outward forms and her inner spirit, and it was this inner essence or spirit that he wished to understand and interpret to others. Not that he was blind to the beauties of external nature, ^{indeed} his descriptions have great beauty and accuracy. In the summary or abstraction of the elementary features of a scene, in the presentation of all that is necessary, and the omission of all needless detail, few can equal Wordsworth as a landscape painter. Yet he considers these outward manifestations "nature's secondary grace," (Prelude. Bk. 14, l. 515) and constantly looks beyond and transforms the sense perceptions into symbols of spiritual truth. "He never thinks of nature in any other way than as a mighty presence before whom he stands silent, like a faithful high-priest who waits in solemn expectation for the whisper of enlightenment and wisdom." (a.) As her high-priest he claims for Nature the office of a teacher of truth to man, because in all her aspects he sees God made manifest.

"As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
 And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
 The unfettered clouds and regions of the heavens,
 Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light-
 Were all like workings of one mind, the features
 Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree,
 Characters of the great Apocalypse
 The types and symbols of Eternity
 Of first, and last, and midst, and without end."
 (Prelude. Bk. 6, l. 601.)

(a). Makers of English Poetry. R.J. Dawson. p. 122.)

Realizing her affinity with the divine in man, he solves all human problems in her calm, her sublimity, her joy. (a). Her calmness stills and refreshes him, her sublimity raises him to noble and majestic thoughts, her joy fills his soul with unspeakable happiness and peace. Then her tenderness, which, while moving in the greatest things, condescends even to the humblest, teaches him that the soul of nature is love. The hart that "not unobserved by Nature fell" "was mourned by sympathy divine" for

"The being that is in the clouds and air,
That is in the green leaves among the groves,
Maintains a deep and reverential care
For the unoffending creatures whom he loves."

(Hart-Leap Well. l. 154.)

And because the soul of nature is love, she will teach us a purer love of man through a clearer realization of the worth and dignity of the human heart. For the man-

" who with understanding heart
Both knows and loves such objects as excite
No morbid passions, no disquietude,
No vengeance, and no hatred-needs must feel
The joy of that pure principle of love
So deeply, that, unsatisfied with aught
Less pure and exquisite, he cannot choose
But seek for objects of a kindred love
In fellow-natures and a kindred joy."

(Excursion. Wk. 4, l. 1200.)

(at Cf. Sharp- Poetic Interpretation of Nature- p. 250.)

Yet Wordsworth was conscious that there is much in nature that is contradictory and that at times, she can be merciless and cruel. In such a poem as "The Robin and the Butterfly," he recognizes that in these more forbidding aspects

"Nature, red in tooth and claw

With Ravine, shrieked against his creed." (a).

But his faith was never shaken. He believed that in love is the true and essential life of nature, and all else is ~~of~~ incidental and of secondary importance in that life, and therefore to his work as nature's interpreter.

Furthermore he sees nature "to be the shape and image of right reason, reason in its highest sense, embodied and made visible in order, in stability, in conformity to eternal law." (b). Duty is the first rule of the universe for both nature and man, and but the expression of reason in its highest sense and true liberty and joy. He writes in his "Ode to Duty" (line 45)

" Flowers laugh before thee on their beds,
 And fragrance in thy footing treads;
 Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong,
 And the most ancient heavens through thee are fresh and
 strong."

In order to attain that "repose that ever is the same," (Ibid. l.40.) man must consciously aim at a self-sacrificing obedience to her laws. External nature exerts a powerful influence ;she is a moulding and

(a) Tennyson. "In Memoriam " lvi. p. 17.)

(b) Shairp. Poetic Interpretation of Nature. p. 259 .)

fashioning power, she will sometimes influence without or even against our will--as with Peter Bell, but she can only point the way. We ourselves make or mar our lives. There are moods of men's mind in which nature may prove to be other than a force for good. In Ruth's lover, "to whom was given so much of earth, so much of heaven and such impetuous blood," (Ruth. l. 124.) we see one who sought in nature all that was "irregular in sight and sound," (Ibid. l. 129) and thus "justified the workings of his heart." (Ibid. l. 131.) He is a proof of the evil influence of nature upon the human mind when she is unaided by a sense of duty and moral responsibility in the individual. The gorgeous and sensuous beauty of the tropics tended to nourish in his heart voluptuous thoughts until the higher impulses of his own nature and the better influences of the external world were lost and

"Deliberately and undecieved
 Those wild men's vices he received
 And gave them back his own."

(Ibid. l. 148.)

On the other hand, if you go to nature in a spirit of "wise passiveness," (Exhortation and Reply. l. 24.) "with a heart that watches and receives," (Tables Turned. l. 31.) and a will to learn her lessons

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

(Ibid. l. 31.)

Even the opposition of the forces of nature, if met with faith and determination, will strengthen our character. If they are "hard and pitiless servants of her command, force for force they may be matched and, though not resisted, yet subdued by a power as stern as they, the secret power of the soul." (a). Sometimes the very sternness of nature's laws gives man his greatest opportunities to display his moral force and devotion to duty.

So Wordsworth went to nature with a heart and mind open to learn of her wisdom and enjoy her beauty, and what he saw and understood, he expressed in his poetry. "In the Prelude, he compares himself to an Aeolian harp, which answers with harmony to every touch of the wind; and the figure is strikingly accurate, as well as interesting, for there is hardly a sight or a sound, from a violet to a mountain and from a bird-note to the thunder of the cataract, that is not reflected in some way in his poetry." (b). And, as well as reflecting her beauties, he has given us an interpretation of her inner spirit and its relation to the human soul. He has proclaimed how exquisitely "the external world is fitted to the mind" (Excursion. Introduction. l. 68.) and, with a genius peculiarly his own, he has looked deep into nature's heart and has breathed her very spirit into his verse so that he awakens and intensifies in our hearts the same inspiration and the same emotions of joy, tenderness, and love, the same recognition of

"God's mysterious power

Made manifest in Nature's sovereignty."

(Prelude. Bk. 9, l. 234.)

(a), Wordsworth. W. Raleigh. l. 190-191.)

(b), English Literature; Long. 1.382.)

as she brought into the poet's own heart .

As Wordsworth saw God in every phase of external nature, he saw God in every phase of human life. He felt the unity of mankind is a spiritual unity, and humanity is in harmony with external nature in as much as the spiritual essence of each is the same. But, of the two, the heart of man was his chief interest and chosen theme. He felt that we learn of God from nature as seen through the deepest human feelings, but without the medium of human emotion, nature could teach us little. It is "thanks to the human heart by which we live" that to him "the meanest flower that blows can give thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears." (Immortality Ode, l. 206.) "Seen by man's intellect inanimate Nature becomes 'an ebbing and a flowing mind.' It is intellect projected upon the bleak side of some tall peak 'familiar with forgotten years,' that gave to it its 'visionary character.' It was the transitory nature of the being that stood upon its bank that gave to the flowing stream its lesson of 'life continuous- being unimpaired.'" (a.) As a subject for the expression and proof of his idealism, he finds more in the life of man than the life of nature. "His message from nature is wonderful, but his message from man is more profound." (b.)

His attitude towards man is somewhat unique in his sympathetic, direct and reverent contemplation of essential man. He looks beyond the distinctive and individual to the one common type, and discovers that man's "inner frame is good and graciously composed" (Prelude, Sk. 13, l. 281). He even goes farther. He asserts

(a). F. S. Sherburne. *Platonism of Wordsworth. Wordsworthiana*, p. 266.)

(b). Vida B. Scudder. *Life of the Spirit of Modern English Poets*.
p. 58 - 9.)

"that none, the meanest of created things,
 Of forms created the most vile and brute,
 The dullest or most noxious, should exist
 Divorced from good—a spirit and a pulse of good
 A life and soul, to every mode of being
 Inseparably linked."

(Old Cumberland Beggar. l. 14.)

Because no living thing exists "divorced from good," contempt means
 ignorance .

" He, who feels contempt
 For any living thing, hath faculties
 Which he has never used—thought with him
 Is in its infancy."

(Lines left upon a seat in a Yew tree.
 l. 52 .)

To know is to sympathize; to understand is to love; to watch and
 question is to find revealed " whether by words, looks, sighs or tears"
 the passions that exist

" in the depths of human souls,
 Souls that appear to have no depth at all
 To careless eyes."

(Prelude. Bk. 15, l. 155.)

The fact that there is a spiritual identity in man,
 irrespective of rank or station in life, constitutes man's true
 equality, which is a moral equality .

"The primal duties shine aloft-like stars;
 The characters that soothe, and heal, and bless,
 Are scattered at the feet of Man-like flowers.
 The generous inclination, the just rule,
 Kind wishes, and good actions and pure thoughts -
 No mystery is here : Here is no boon
 For high - yet not for low; for proudly graced -
 Yet not for meek in heart. The smoke ascends
 To heaven as lightly from the cottage-hearth
 As from the haughtiest palace. He whose soul
 Ponders this true equality, may walk
 The fields of earth with gratitude and hope."

(Excursion. Bk. 9, l. 258 .)

Furthermore, because of man's moral equality, because "a spirit and a pulse of good" is common to all, the future perfection of the race is a possibility by the attainment of perfection in the individual. So, for the betterment of the race, this "true equality" must be established. For though we "may walk the fields of earth with gratitude and hope" yet in meditation we will find "Motive to sadder grief."

"Lamenting ancient virtues overthrown,
 And for the injustice grieving, that hath made
 So wide a difference between man and man."

(Ibid. l. 250.)

All governments, all industrial systems, all powers that tend to
 turn our life out of its course

" wherever man is made
 an offering, or a sacrifice, a tool
 or implement, a passive thing employed
 as a brute mean, without acknowledgment
 of common right or interest in the end.
 Used or abused as selfishness may prompt."

(Excursion. Bk. 9, l. 557.)

such forces are retrogressive, no matter what material advantages
 they may bring, because they destroy the moral equality of man by
 undermining the character of the individual. The true freedom of
 the nation exists in the heart of its people, and there alone, for
 "by the soul only, the Nations shall be great and free" (September
 1808, Year Dover, l. 13.) All great world-movements towards
 progress and freedom must come about gradually by the growth of
 the ideals of the lives of the individuals, not by the influence of
 a few leaders, but "one fixed mind for all" (Liberty, 1831, p. 26.)

" by no mere fit
 Of sudden passion roused should man attain
 True freedom where for ages they have lain
 Bound in the dark abominable pit."

(At Bologna, 1837. l. 1.)

Out of such consideration of the " worth and dignity of individual
 men", (Prelude, Bk. 15, l. 80 .) each should be considered separate
 from the rest, not lost in a class, and each should have every oppor-
 tunity for education and self-development.

Wordsworth found his ideal of moral character in the man "whose law is reason," (Happy Warrior, l. 27.) who is honorable and rises to "station of command," (Ibid, l. 35.) by open means; who in success or failure does not lower his ideal, but, independent of the judgment of the world, "finds comfort in himself and in his cause." (Ibid, l. 61) He consciously strives to fill his heart with the best influences and the best ideals that he finds in the moral forces in nature and in man. He finds happiness and joy in devotion to duty and the law of love. To love and be strong is his ideal of life. All sorrow and pain may be overcome if faced bravely; if the

"Soul doth in itself stand fast
Sustained by memory of the past
And strength of Reason; held above
The infirmities of mortal love;
Undaunted, lofty, calm, and stable
And awfully impenetrable."

(White Doe of Rylstone, l. 73.)

by its own secret power and a trust in God, comfort will come.

"There is never a sorrow of heart
That shall lack a timely end,
If but to God we turn, and ask
Of him to be our friend."

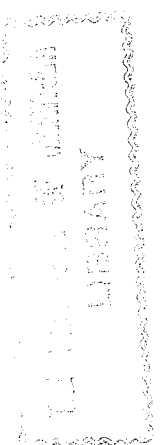
(Force of Prayer. l. 65.)

The ideal character is built upon the virtues,

"we live by Admiration, Hope and Love

And even as these are well and wisely fixed
In dignity of being we ascend."

(Excursion. Bk. 4, l. 763.)



His love of others should be "well and wisely fixed." It should be balanced by reason, impelled by sympathy and hope. He should be just, and what cannot be done by impartial laws" to erect and equalize; he should "draw from the fountain-head of self-sacrifice" (Feel for the wrongs of universal man, l. 12.) and help even the lowest to a higher state of existence that is always possible because of the inherent spiritual greatness of man.

Wordsworth's optimism grew out of a firm belief that the divine so permeates human life that every human experience has a moral value and a power for good. He has no fear of sorrow or of evil. When he views human ignorance and vice his confidence in man and his destiny remains unshaken. "He could gaze upon the dark and dismal human picture and see in it touches of the divine, and its divinity shone all the brighter by virtue of its striking contrast with the earthliness of the human." (a). "He can stand in the shadow of death and pain, ruin and failure, with a sympathy that is almost painful in its intensity; yet a sense ' of something far more deeply interfused ' which makes ' our noisy years seem moments in the being of eternal silence, ' the faith in the omnipotence ' of love and man's unconquerable mind' is never destroyed or even weakened in him. The contemplation of evil and pain always ends with him, by an inevitable recoil, in an inspired expression of his faith in the good that transmutates and transfigures it as clouds are changed into manifestations of the sunlight they strive to hide." (b.)

(a) South- Wordsworth, p. 229.)

(b) Edward Caird-Studies in Literature, p. 175- 6 .)

He does not answer the question of the origin of sorrow and misery, but he firmly asserts that the evils of life are stepping-stones to good, that life's problems can be solved by life, and when all is placed in the balance, joy outweighs sorrow, virtue exceeds vice, hope is greater than despair.

Because Wordsworth believed that moral lessons can be drawn from every experience of human life, he sought "in human nature and her subtle ways" much that he believed is ordinarily overlooked. He writes of the simple primal joys and sorrows common to all conditions of men and finds something in the life of even the humblest that speaks of God and of good. From an orphan girl with a torn cloak, from an aged leech-gatherer on a lonely heath, from idle gipsy-boys playing in the sun, even from the old beggars of the roadside, he finds something in each to inspire us to higher endeavor and loftier ideals. He has remarkable insight into human nature and boundless sympathy with its joys and pains. "He knows a father's heart, as for example, in "Michael," "The Hot April Mornings," and "The Fountain." He knows a mother's heart, as is seen in "The Affliction of Margaret." He knows a brother's heart, as is manifest in "The Brothers." He knows a lover's heart, as is indicated in "Ruth." He knows the heart of Man - its fundamental fears and loves, its joys and sorrows, its virtues and vices, as is illustrated in the large body of verse concerning Man, already considered, and as will be further manifest in the churchyard biographies related in the "Excursion." "(a).

He found in the less complex forms of rural life the essential passions and feelings of the heart of man existing

(a). Sneath- Wordsworth, p. 189 .)

"more simple in their elements," and so he chose his characters from the humbler lives of the poor and made the simple story of their hearts speak of the moral dignity of their character, and teach us lessons of love, patience, fortitude and joy. By his healthy optimism he strengthens our faith in human nature and increases our sympathy for mankind and its sorrows, and through these, gives us a larger hope for the individual and the race.

CONCLUSION

Wordsworth brought many new ideas to the poetry of his time. Christopher Worth writes of him in one of his masterly essays "We believe that Wordsworth's genius has now a greater influence on the poetry of Britain than was ever exercised by an individual mind." (a.) Many of the accepted ideas of the present day were first expressed in poetry by Wordsworth, and still find in him their greatest exponent. He combines the gifts of a poet and a philosopher. Charles Lamb thought him to be the first and greatest philosophic poet, "the only man who has effected a complete and constant synthesis of thought and feeling, and combined them in poetic form, with the music of pleasurable passion and with imagination, or the modifying power- in the highest sense of the word, in which I venture to oppose it to Fancy, or the aggregating power, in that sense in which it is a dim analogue of creation- not all that we can believe but all we can conceive of creation." (b.) As well as being the first great philosophical poet, his view of nature is unique. He is the first poet who fills all his descriptions

- (a). J. M. Sutherland- W. Wordsworth-Story of his life, p. 8 and 3.
 (b). Letter of C. Lamb- Knight. Life of Wordsworth. Vol. 2. p. 11.)

of external nature with sentiment and passion, for he is the first who found in nature a living presence and a power to tranquilize, heal, dignify, inspire, teach and bless the human soul. He is the first to vindicate the natural dignity of human nature by showing that all the elementary feelings are capable of poetry. He is the first to sing that the true equality and liberty of man is of the spirit. In his verse, he is the first to know the real province of language, and not allow it to hide the meaning of the spirit. And in all, he sought to express the main essentials of thought, and those alone with accuracy, simplicity and grace.

One of the striking facts in Wordsworth's life is his knowledge of his own poetic possibilities and limitations, and the success with which he adapted himself to his own measure of his capacity. He felt his "peculiar faculty" (*Excursion*, Bk. 15, l. 503.) was to discover new truths in commonplace experience by the interaction of his own reason and intuition, and this is the very task for which Coleridge thought him best fitted. He writes of his early impression of the outstanding qualities of Wordsworth's genius, "It was the union of deep feeling and profound thought, the fine balance of truth in observing, with the imaginative faculty in modifying the objects observed; and, above all, the original gift of spreading the tone, the atmosphere, and with it the depth and height of the ideal world, around forms, incidents, and situations of which, for the common view, custom had bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up all the sparks and the few-drops." (a).

(a) Coleridge- *Biographic Literaria*-Chapter 4, p. 4.)

Wordsworth was always conscious of his own powers and desired to express what was central to his personality, but his self-knowledge was too deep and true to allow him to become vain and egotistical.

His poetry is an expression of his life and his personality, and in that life and personality we see loyalty of purpose and nobility of thought. One of his critics says, "There is a gravity and sweetness in his poems which could only spring from a noble nature, ruled by the daily vigilance of duty, and dedicated to the daily contemplation of lofty purposes. He makes us feel his entire remoteness from all sordid aims and debasing passions, and he calls us to a higher, a simpler, a serenest life. He preaches to an age corrupted with sensationalism, the joy that lies in natural emotions; to an age stung with the hunger for impossible ideals, the attainable valour and nobility of homely life; to an age tormented by insatiable thirst for riches the old Divine lesson that 'a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth.' To the worldly he speaks of unworldliness; to the perplexed of trust; to the victims of vain perturbation and disquiet of peace. There is an ineffable, and almost saintly charm about the voice that reaches us from these green solitudes of lake and mountain. He breathes consolation and encouragement into tired hearts and failing spirits. He is the apostle of peace, the minister of cleansing to his time. He has nothing new or startling to say; he sings of love and duty, of disciplined desires and purged and regulated passions, but he speaks as one who has attained and knows the secret of perpetual content."

content. "(a)

(a). W. J. Dawson- Masters of English Poetry, p. 121-2 .)

He speaks to us with a sympathetic and understanding heart. He knows the sorrows and disappointments and temptations of humanity, but he comes as one who has overcome himself and is confident in his own strength and his power to help others. He is more than poet; he is our friend, our comforter and guide, strong in himself, "and powerful to give strength." (a) He gives us new strength to overcome and new joy to live, and shows us new delights spread round our steps " like sunshine o'er green fields. "

(Prelude, Bk. 7, l. 779.)

The secret of Wordsworth's perpetual content and his inspiration to others is his perfect faith. He solves all problems by his idealistic philosophy and his optimism; by his belief in the natural dignity of human nature, the essential harmony of all life, and the conviction that the Beautiful and the True are one. His outlook is always spiritual. Henry Hudson claims him to be " the most spiritual and the most spiritualizing of all English poets, not Shakespeare, no, nor even Milton excepted; indeed, so far as I know or believe, the world has no poetry outside the Bible that can stand a comparison with him in this respect." (b.) He finds a " tale in everything " (Simon Lee, l. 68) and it is always a tale that reveals hidden spirituality and hidden good. He inspires us with the grandeur of human life and opportunity; he fills our hearts with the calm " that nature breathes among the hills and groves." (Prelude, Bk. 1, l. 281.) He speaks to us of God and the good in all things and the joy that is " in widest commonalty spread " (Excursion, Introduction, l. 18 .) His message

(a). Coleridge- To W. Wordsworth, l. 193 .)

(b). Henry Hudson- Studies in Wordsworth-)

to mankind is of faith and hope, of sympathy and of understanding, of strength and of duty, of love, of joy and of peace. In all his poetry he reveals an earnest spirit aspiring to the highest and the best, true to his ideals and his convictions, faithful to his poetic mission, so governing his life and thought that

" His mind was a thanksgiving to the power
That made him; it was blessedness and love."

(Excursion. Bk. 1, l. 217 .)

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