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Wordsworth as an
Educator
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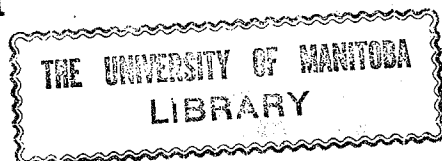
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Wordsworth as an Educator,

Human beings have in all ages lived much below their possibilities. Traces of a holy plan may now be found throughout the whole cosmic process. A golden thread runs through it connecting heaven and earth. a gracious spirit o'er this earth presides, And o'er the heart of man.

Wordsworth speaking of the officiousness of the educators of his time says:

"When will their presumption learn,
That in the unreasoning progress of the world
A wiser spirit is at work for us,
A better eye than theirs, most prodigal
Of blessings, and most studious of our good,
Even in what seems our most unfruitful hours."



It is doubtless the divine purpose that this earth should become the beautiful home of a happy people, and that man should assist in bringing about this very desirable result, and that while engaged thus engaged co-operating with his Creator, he should be perfecting himself, so that he may be able to do higher and better work and at the same time, qualify himself for the enjoyment of the ever increasing beauty of his place of habitation, but man failed to perform aright his part of the great work, he seems to have wilfully disobeyed the voice of the "gracious spirit" and the race experienced and still feels the first fruits of the disadvantages and evils arising from its disobedience.

In order to restore man to his lost estate the Almighty has employed various means, All seeming to have the one object in view, namely, to teach us that "His Yoke is easy and His burden is light", It would seem that the creature has, at all times, thwarted its own development, has retarded the upward evolutionary progress inherent in its nature, mainly because it did not sufficiently and rightly know its Creator, because it has often had wrong and imperfect conceptions of the relations that existed between them. We have been a long time learning the lesson,

"That God wishes to dwell with us in love and Holy fellowship."

He, accordingly, has been pleased to reveal Himself to us "At different times and in divers manners."

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At one time He raises up a Moses with whom He holds converse and to whom he delivers the Decalogue on tables of stone . Then appears in succession a long array of holy prophets, each with a vision of and a message from the Most High, each earnestly striving to impart their view of the great Truth and to impress upon the hearts of people the meaning scope and spirit of the immortal commandments . Then in the fullness of time Christ appears , He is the well Beloved Son, the express image of His person. Christ changed the negative law of the Jews into a positive law. It became enlarged , a great vital principle was put into it. Since His time the essence of morality has consisted in being good and in doing good.

His character, His teaching, His whole revelation for the first time so enlarged men's narrow hearts, that many were enabled to conceive of a universal love for their kind. The seeds of a new virtue were planted in human hearts . Some of these seeds fell upon good ground and philanthropy sprang into existence.

"Whence but from Thee, The true and only God
And from the faith derived from Him who bled
Upon the Cross, this marvellous advance
Of good from evil."

In another place Wordsworth says:

"The way is marked, the guide appointed and the ransom paid."
Human nature in all its forms was invested with a new sacredness.
Christ aroused a passion that was latent in every man.

The love that had hitherto lain dormant was awakened. So that the pure in heart may see something of Christ in every human being.

This must be what is meant by such words as these;

'Then shall I run in the way of Thy commandments , when thou shalt enlarge my heart.'

Along with the command to love all men , even our enemies, was given a new motive power to the soul. Christ became the new centre of existence, And thus was laid the foundation of living morality and of vital religion.

He gave to His followers some of His own power. His own spirit, His own sympathy and joy in doing works of righteousness.

Thus to the human family was given not only the power to discern what is good but also a new and marvellous power to do it cheerfully and with joy.

This sacred gift has been handed down from age to age, each recipient endowed with power to use it best in some particular way. By such influences the sentiments of individuals and of nations from time to time are changed. Each new, deeper and clearer aspect of truth arouses the feelings and emotions which in turn act so as to become the parent of corresponding action.

Among the human agents which produce these sentiments none are more powerful than great poets. They are filled with inspired thought, thought animated by emotion. To them is also given the "accomplishment of verse" by which they can express these thoughts and sentiments in a beautiful, attractive and forcible manner.

Among those who by virtue of inspired insight have been enabled to place before us, in the truest and most attractive light, whatever is best and most beautiful, the highest things we can admire, hope for, love, few deserve a higher place than William Wordsworth.

He thus estimates the poets' work;

' Poets even as prophets, each with each
Connected in a mighty scheme of truth,
Have each, his own peculiar faculty,
Heavens' gift, a sense that fits him to perceive
Objects unseen before.'

He speaks of himself and "The rapt one, of the god-like forehead" thus:

' Prophets 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.'

Wordsworth was gifted with truly prophetic powers, his wonderful poetic sense, quickened by a peculiar and strong emotional nature enabled him to penetrate regions closed to ordinary men. This vital imagination, "the vision and the faculty divine" enabled him to

withdraw the veil, to remove the external wrappings that hide from us many of the ~~wrappings~~ truths "of Man of Nature and of Human Life". These are the deep and interesting questions on which he muses. He is drawn to them by "the fair trains of imagery that oftentimes before him rise accompanied by feelings of delight whose presence soothes or elevates the mind."

He sang of "Truth of Grandeur, Beauty, Love and Hope

Of melancholy fear subdued by faith;
Of blessed consolations in distress;
Of moral strength and intellectual power;
Of joy in widest commonalty spread."

Surely, from one possessed of such a gift of genuine insight, who feels the greatness and the need of the lessons he would teach, we may learn something that will make us wiser, happier and better. We thus may see that he has the qualifications of a great teacher. He is not only filled with his subject but rejoices in it and has power to express his message in an impressive and felicitous manner. As he reveals to us truth after truth we see them as it were written in letters of Gold. He takes some scene ^{or} of character perhaps long familiar to us, or it may be some old neglected truth and in a few words throws off their mask, lets us into their secret, he becomes our guide to what is beautiful, and as our companion he invites us to see as he sees, to think as he thinks, and to share his strong feelings. He never allows us to linger on anything that would degrade us, and we leave him delighted, ennobled and instructed, we feel that we have not only beheld a new scene, a character or truth but that we have had the inspiration that comes from communion with a mind greater than our own, that we have been endowed for a time with the keen ^{perception of a more} penetrating intelligence.

Wordsworth laid the foundations of his work which, he hoped would become "a power like one of Natures", broad and deep. He saw clearly that morality must be based on religion, that religion was an eternal reality, that in this respect also the law of progress held good, that in spiritual development there is an adjustment of inner to outer relations, that the soul is only accommodating its self to the "all pervading spirit", but putting itself in harmony with the Life that fills all forms.

When he would ascend those "imaginative heights that yield far-
stretching views into eternity" he apprehended;

An everduring power and central peace,
Subsisting at the heart of endless agitation .

In an age abounding in materialism his voice proclaims;

"How weak those arts and high inventions
If unpropped by virtue.

How baseless in itself, is the philosophy
Whose sway depends on mere material instruments.

All glory rests, all praise, all safety
And all happiness upon the Moral Law. "

To him the world is but the vestibule of an eternal state of
existence. That man and nature have one origin , their source
is God ,who is ever present in both and may be discerned by all who
have eyes to see.

Now let us consider what he has taught us about Nature.

"Me didst thou constitute a priest of Thine. "

At a time when people little thought of the earth except as the
producer of their daily bread or as ~~or as~~ their lordly pleasure
house, he felt the meaning of the words of the Great Architect, who
when He had looked upon the works, of His hands, said "it is good."
To Wordsworth the "solid earth" and "ocean's liquid mass" the "heavens
blue vault" all shewed evidences of beneficent design and bore, even
on their surface , the impress of a Creator, who with infinitive
wisdom had blended together utility and beauty , who had so formed
the mind of man that he was admirably fitted to use and to enjoy the
earth on which he had been placed,

"How exquisitely the individual Mind,

(And the progressive powers perhaps of the whole species,)

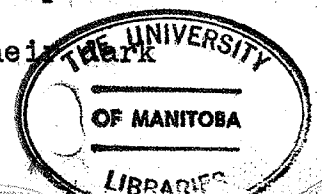
To the external world is fitted. "

This great question was doubtless, as he himself says,

'A theme but little heard of among men.'

And now after a century of progress and discovery we see some of the
profound truth that it contains.

Man and Nature are very intimately related, one is the complement of
the other, There is "An all ^{er}prevading spirit on which their



foundations rest", He believed that from the daisy, the woodland linnet, from the restless clouds and the silent stars the deepest wisdom , and highest joy might be obtained. The snowdrop becomes

"The pensive monitor of fleeting years .
Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife;
Come, hear the woodland linnet,
How sweet his music! on my life
There's more of wisdom in it.

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

Duty may be learned from the stars who have obeyed the law of their being;

'Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;
And the eternal heavens through Thee are fresh and strong. '

He teaches us that these things may bring us in happy contact with Him who is the author and upholder of Nature and of man.

Wordsworth saw that man was not only seperated from God, who wished to dwell with him in love and holy fellowship , but he was seperated from Nature.

Centuries of Artificial civilization had blinded men's eyes to the beauty of the common and familiar things of earth, and their ears were deaf to the far-reaching moral lessons they were designed to teach. To Wordsworth is due the special merit of removing the thick veil of custom that kept others from the natural delight that always comes from the contact of the spirit of nature and the Soul of man.

" For the discerning intellect of Man,
When wedded to this goodly universe
In love and holy passion
..... Shall find Beauty
A simple produce of the common day."

" He stood at the meeting place where inflowing nature and the soul of man touch each other,
Showed how they fit each to each and what exquisite joy comes from the contact."

He stood where these two meet, introduced them to each other, like brothers that had been long estranged and separated.

There, thus seems to be joy when things, person and all created beings are seen as they really are .

This thought beautifully corresponds to the joy that mortals feel when they behold the sensible presence of God and the shining of his clear-discovered face on them . And this again may be but a faint tremor of the joy the redeemed shall feel as they sing the "new song" which only they can sing who "see Him as He is".

Wordsworth not only experienced these feelings of delight but he has so expressed them that others may feel some of the beauty that stirred his own soul and learn some of the lessons which he calls,

' Truth breathed by cheerfulness.

As might be expected of one holding such views of Nature he exhorts us to study it, the great and mighty commonwealth of things, "up from the creeping plant to Sovereign Man", to find the law that governs each, the constitutions, powers, and faculties which they inherit, and to assign to every class its station and its office.

Such converse ,if directed by a meek, sincere and humble spirit, teaches love.

(' For knowledge is delight, and such delight
Breeds love; yet, suited as it rather is
To thought and to the climbing intellect,
It teaches less to love than to adore;
If that be not indeed the highest love! //

He also urges us to learn from it in what he calls, a wise passiveness.

" 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. "

He asks us to trust ourselves abroad, to range her blooming bowers, her spacious fields ,pierce the gloom of her majestic woods,

" Where living things and things inanimate
 Do speak at Heaven's Command,
 How bountiful is Nature, he shall find
 Who seeks not, and to him who hath not asked,
 Large measure shall be dealt. "

Let us now consider more fully some of the advantages arising from intercourse with Nature and touch on the conditions from which the best results may be obtained.

If things "do speak at Heaven's command," What do they utter? what part of the "mighty scheme of truth" do they reveal?

Wordsworth taught us how to interpret these aright, and how to apply the knowledge thus gained that it may become the steps of a stair ascending towards the eternal.

This as far as education is concerned must be the result, at least the only desirable one, For ;

'Unless above himself he can erect himself
 How poor a thing is Man!'

Nature, alone cannot give us moral conceptions of God.

" We must not read the forms of nature with an unworthy eye".

If its beauty is to lead the soul upward, the eye of faith must be fixed on the goal, the end of the narrow way. Man must come to the contemplation of the splendid vision spread out before him feeling his need, his guilt, his helplessness, and with the knowledge of God in his heart.

The works of Nature will then become the symbols of something higher than themselves, They will become proofs of the goodness of God, and earnest of what he has in store for them who shall serve Him to the end.

All physical glory will become the foreshadow of a higher glory which the eye cannot see. Sight the noblest of our senses will be regarded as the type of the highest mental act of the soul hereafter.

The beauty of the world that comes to us through the natural eye, and the moral light that shines upon the soul will be thought of as coming from the same source, and guiding, leading and alluring to the thought of Him who sitteth in the Heavens. Thus man will discover a power that is not his own, a redemption not in himself, but for him, planned by