

HISTORY	LITERATURE
	1770. Goldsmith's <i>Deserted Village</i> 1771. Beginning of great newspapers
1773. Boston Tea Party 1774. Howard's prison reforms 1775. American Revolution 1776. Declaration of Independence	1774-1775. Burke's American speeches 1776-1788. Gibbon's <i>Rome</i> 1779. Cowper's <i>Olney Hymns</i> 1779-81. Johnson's <i>Lives of the Poets</i> 1783. Blake's <i>Poetical Sketches</i> 1785. Cowper's <i>The Task</i> <i>The London Times</i>
1783. Treaty of Paris	1786. Burns's first poems (the <i>Kilmarnock Burns</i>) Burke's <i>Warren Hastings</i>
1786. Trial of Warren Hastings	1790. Burke's <i>French Revolution</i> 1791. Boswell's <i>Life of Johnson</i>
1789-1799. French Revolution	
1793. War with France	

CHAPTER X

THE AGE OF ROMANTICISM

THE SECOND CREATIVE PERIOD OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

The first half of the nineteenth century records the triumph of Romanticism in literature and of democracy in government; and the two movements are so closely associated, in so many nations and in so many periods of history, that one must wonder if there be not some relation of cause and effect between them. Just as we understand the tremendous energizing influence of Puritanism in the matter of English liberty by remembering that the common people had begun to read, and that their book was the Bible, so we may understand this age of popular government by remembering that the chief subject of romantic literature was the essential nobleness of common men and the value of the individual. As we read now that brief portion of history which lies between the Declaration of Independence (1776) and the English Reform Bill of 1832, we are in the presence of such mighty political upheavals that "the age of revolution" is the only name by which we can adequately characterize it. Its great historic movements become intelligible only when we read what was written in this period; for the French Revolution and the American commonwealth, as well as the establishment of a true democracy in England by the Reform Bill, were the inevitable results of ideas which literature had spread rapidly through the civilized world. Liberty is fundamentally an ideal; and that ideal — beautiful, inspiring, compelling, as a loved banner in the wind — was kept steadily before men's minds by a multitude of books and pamphlets as far apart as

Burns's *Poems* and Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*, — all read eagerly by the common people, all proclaiming the dignity of common life, and all uttering the same passionate cry against every form of class or caste oppression.

First the dream, the ideal in some human soul; then the written word which proclaims it, and impresses other minds with its truth and beauty; then the united and determined effort of men to make the dream a reality, — that seems to be a fair estimate of the part that literature plays, even in our political progress.

Historical Summary. The period we are considering begins in the latter half of the reign of George III and ends with the accession of Victoria in 1837. When on a foggy morning in November, 1783, King George entered the House of Lords and in a trembling voice recognized the independence of the United States of America, he unconsciously proclaimed the triumph of that free government by free men which had been the ideal of English literature for more than a thousand years; though it was not till 1832, when the Reform Bill became the law of the land, that England herself learned the lesson taught her by America, and became the democracy of which her writers had always dreamed.

The half century between these two events is one of great turmoil, yet of steady advance in every department of English life. The storm center of the political unrest was the French Revolution, that frightful uprising which proclaimed the natural rights of man and the abolition of class distinctions. Its effect on the whole civilized world is beyond computation. Patriotic clubs and societies multiplied in England, all asserting the doctrine of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, the watchwords of the Revolution. Young England, led by Pitt the younger, hailed the new French republic and offered it friendship; old England, which pardons no revolutions but her own, looked with horror on the turmoil in France and, misled by Burke and the nobles of the realm, forced the two nations into war. Even Pitt saw a blessing in this at first; because the sudden zeal for fighting a foreign nation — which by some horrible perversion is generally called patriotism — might turn men's thoughts from their own to their neighbors' affairs, and so prevent a threatened revolution at home.

The causes of this threatened revolution were not political but economic. By her inventions in steel and machinery, and by her monopoly of the carrying trade, England had become "the workshop of the world." Her wealth had increased beyond her wildest dreams; but the unequal distribution of that wealth was a spectacle to make angels weep. The invention of machinery at first threw thousands of skilled hand workers out of employment; in order to protect a few agriculturists, heavy duties were imposed on corn and wheat, and bread rose to famine prices just when laboring men had the least money to pay for it. There followed a curious spectacle. While England increased in wealth, and spent vast sums to support her army and subsidize her allies in Europe, and while nobles, landowners, manufacturers, and merchants lived in increasing luxury, a multitude of skilled laborers were clamoring for work. Fathers sent their wives and little children into the mines and factories, where sixteen hours' labor would hardly pay for the daily bread; and in every large city were riotous mobs made up chiefly of hungry men and women. It was this unbearable economic condition, and not any political theory, as Burke supposed, which occasioned the danger of another English revolution.

It is only when we remember these conditions that we can understand two books, Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* and Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*, which can hardly be considered as literature, but which exercised an enormous influence in England. Smith was an Oxford scholar, who wrote to uphold the doctrine that labor is the only source of a nation's wealth, and that any attempt to force labor into unnatural channels, or to prevent it by protective duties from freely obtaining the raw materials for its industry, is unjust and destructive. Paine was a curious combination of Jekyll and Hyde, shallow and untrustworthy personally, but with a passionate devotion to popular liberty. His *Rights of Man*, published in London in 1791, was like one of Burns's lyric outcries against institutions which oppressed humanity. Coming so soon after the destruction of the Bastille, it added fuel to the flames kindled in England by the French Revolution. The author was driven out of the country, on the curious ground that he endangered the English constitution, but not until his book had gained a wide sale and influence.

All these dangers, real and imaginary, passed away when England turned from the affairs of France to remedy her own economic conditions. The long Continental war came to an end with Napoleon's

overthrow at Waterloo, in 1815; and England, having gained enormously in prestige abroad, now turned to the work of reform at home. The destruction of the African slave trade; the mitigation of horribly unjust laws, which included poor debtors and petty criminals in the same class; the prevention of child labor; the freedom of the press; the extension of manhood suffrage; the abolition of restrictions against Catholics in Parliament; the establishment of hundreds of popular schools, under the leadership of Andrew Bell and Joseph Lancaster, — these are but a few of the reforms which mark the progress of civilization in a single half century. When England, in 1833, proclaimed the emancipation of all slaves in all her colonies, she unconsciously proclaimed her final emancipation from barbarism.

Literary Characteristics of the Age. It is intensely interesting to note how literature at first reflected the political turmoil of the age; and then, when the turmoil was over and England began her mighty work of reform, how literature suddenly developed a new creative spirit, which shows itself in the poetry of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats, and in the prose of Scott, Jane Austen, Lamb, and De Quincey, — a wonderful group of writers, whose patriotic enthusiasm suggests the Elizabethan days, and whose genius has caused their age to be known as the second creative period of our literature. Thus in the early days, when old institutions seemed crumbling with the Bastille, Coleridge and Southey formed their youthful scheme of a "Pantisocracy on the banks of the Susquehanna," — an ideal commonwealth, in which the principles of More's *Utopia* should be put in practice. Even Wordsworth, fired with political enthusiasm, could write,

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven.

The essence of Romanticism was, it must be remembered, that literature must reflect all that is spontaneous and unaffected in nature and in man, and be free to follow its own fancy in its own way. We have already noted this characteristic in the

work of the Elizabethan dramatists, who followed their own genius in opposition to all the laws of the critics. In Coleridge we see this independence expressed in "Kubla Khan" and "The Ancient Mariner," two dream pictures, one of the populous Orient, the other of the lonely sea. In Wordsworth this literary independence led him inward to the heart of common things. Following his own instinct, as Shakespeare does, he too

Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.

And so, more than any other writer of the age, he invests the common life of nature, and the souls of common men and women, with glorious significance. These two poets, Coleridge and Wordsworth, best represent the romantic genius of the age in which they lived, though Scott had a greater literary reputation, and Byron and Shelley had larger audiences.

The second characteristic of this age is that it is emphatically an age of poetry. The previous century, with its practical outlook on life, was largely one of prose; but now, as in the Elizabethan Age, the young enthusiasts turned as naturally to poetry as a happy man to singing. The glory of the age is in the poetry of Scott, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Moore, and Southey. Of its prose works, those of Scott alone have attained a very wide reading, though the essays of Charles Lamb and the novels of Jane Austen have slowly won for their authors a secure place in the history of our literature. Coleridge and Southey (who with Wordsworth form the trio of so-called Lake Poets) wrote far more prose than poetry; and Southey's prose is much better than his verse. It was characteristic of the spirit of this age, so different from our own, that Southey could say that, in order to earn money, he wrote in verse "what would otherwise have been better written in prose."

It was during this period that woman assumed, for the first time, an important place in our literature. Probably the chief

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Romantic
Enthusiasm

reason for this interesting phenomenon lies in the fact that woman was for the first time given some slight chance of education, of entering into the intellectual life of the race; and, as is always the case when woman is given anything like a fair opportunity, she responded magnificently. A secondary reason may be found in the nature of the age itself, which was intensely emotional. The French Revolution stirred all Europe to its depths, and during the following half century every great movement in literature, as in politics and religion, was characterized by strong emotion; which is all the more noticeable by contrast with the cold, formal, satiric spirit of the early eighteenth century. As woman is naturally more emotional than man, it may well be that the spirit of this emotional age attracted her, and gave her the opportunity to express herself in literature.

As all strong emotions tend to extremes, the age produced a new type of novel which seems rather hysterical now, but which in its own day delighted multitudes of readers whose nerves were somewhat excited, and who reveled in "bogey" stories of supernatural terror. Mrs. Anne Radcliffe (1764-1823) was one of the most successful writers of this school of exaggerated romance. Her novels, with their azure-eyed heroines, haunted castles, trapdoors, bandits, abductions, rescues in the nick of time, and a general medley of overwrought joys and horrors,¹ were immensely popular, not only with the

¹ Mrs. Radcliffe's best work is the *Mysteries of Udolpho*. This is the story of a tender heroine shut up in a gloomy castle. Over her broods the terrible shadow of an ancestor's crime. There are the usual "goose-flesh" accompaniments of haunted rooms, secret doors, sliding panels, mysterious figures behind old pictures, and a subterranean passage leading to a vault, dark and creepy as a tomb. Here the heroine finds a chest with blood-stained papers. By the light of a flickering candle she reads, with chills and shivering, the record of long-buried crimes. At the psychologic moment the little candle suddenly goes out. Then out of the darkness a cold, clammy hand—ugh! Foolish as such stories seem to us now, they show, first, a wild reaction from the skepticism of the preceding age; and second, a development of the mediæval romance of adventure; only the adventure is here inward rather than outward. It faces a ghost instead of a dragon; and for this work a nun with her beads is better than a knight in armor. So heroines abound, instead of heroes. The age was too educated for mediæval monsters and magic, but not educated enough to reject ghosts and other bogeys.

crowd of novel readers, but also with men of unquestioned literary genius, like Scott and Byron.

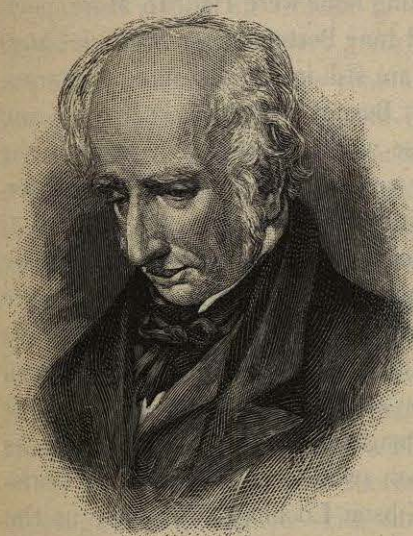
In marked contrast to these extravagant stories is the enduring work of Jane Austen, with her charming descriptions of everyday life, and of Maria Edgeworth, whose wonderful pictures of Irish life suggested to Walter Scott the idea of writing his Scottish romances. Two other women who attained a more or less lasting fame were Hannah More, poet, dramatist, and novelist, and Jane Porter, whose *Scottish Chiefs* and *Thaddæus of Warsaw* are still in demand in our libraries. Beside these were Fanny Burney (Madame D'Arblay) and several other writers whose works, in the early part of the nineteenth century, raised woman to the high place in literature which she has ever since maintained.

In this age literary criticism became firmly established by the appearance of such magazines as the *Edinburgh Review* (1802), *The Quarterly Review* (1808), *Blackwood's Magazine* (1817), the *Westminster Review* (1824), *The Spectator* (1828), *The Athenæum* (1828), and *Fraser's Magazine* (1830). These magazines, edited by such men as Francis Jeffrey, John Wilson (who is known to us as Christopher North), and John Gibson Lockhart, who gave us the *Life of Scott*, exercised an immense influence on all subsequent literature. At first their criticisms were largely destructive, as when Jeffrey hammered Scott, Wordsworth, and Byron most unmercifully; and Lockhart could find no good in either Keats or Tennyson; but with added wisdom, criticism assumed its true function of construction. And when these magazines began to seek and to publish the works of unknown writers, like Hazlitt, Lamb, and Leigh Hunt, they discovered the chief mission of the modern magazine, which is to give every writer of ability the opportunity to make his work known to the world.

I. THE POETS OF ROMANTICISM

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH (1770-1850)

It was in 1797 that the new romantic movement in our literature assumed definite form. Wordsworth and Coleridge retired to the Quantock Hills, Somerset, and there formed the deliberate purpose to make literature "adapted to interest



WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

mankind permanently," which, they declared, classic poetry could never do. Helping the two poets was Wordsworth's sister Dorothy, with a woman's love for flowers and all beautiful things, and a woman's divine sympathy for human life even in its lowliest forms. Though a silent partner, she furnished perhaps the largest share of the inspiration which resulted in the famous *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798. In their partnership Coleridge was to take up the "supernatural, or at least romantic"; while Wordsworth was "to give the charm of novelty to things of every day . . . by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us." The whole spirit of their work is reflected in two poems of this remarkable little volume, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," which is Coleridge's masterpiece, and "Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey," which expresses Wordsworth's poetical creed, and which is one of the noblest and most significant of our poems. That the *Lyrical Ballads*

attracted no attention,¹ and was practically ignored by a public that would soon go into raptures over Byron's *Childe Harold* and *Don Juan*, is of small consequence. Many men will hurry a mile to see skyrockets, who never notice Orion and the Pleiades from their own doorstep. Had Wordsworth and Coleridge written only this one little book, they would still be among the representative writers of an age that proclaimed the final triumph of Romanticism.

Life of Wordsworth. To understand the life of him who, in Tennyson's words, "uttered nothing base," it is well to read first *The Prelude*, which records the impressions made upon Wordsworth's mind from his earliest recollection until his full manhood, in 1805, when the poem was completed.² Outwardly his long and uneventful life divides itself naturally into four periods: (1) his childhood and youth, in the Cumberland Hills, from 1770 to 1787; (2) a period of uncertainty, of storm and stress, including his university life at Cambridge, his travels abroad, and his revolutionary experience, from 1787 to 1797; (3) a short but significant period of finding himself and his work, from 1797 to 1799; (4) a long period of retirement in the northern lake region, where he was born, and where for a full half century he lived so close to nature that her influence is reflected in all his poetry. When one has outlined these four periods he has told almost all that can be told of a life which is marked, not by events, but largely by spiritual experiences.

Wordsworth was born in 1770 at Cockermouth, Cumberland, where the Derwent,

Fairest of all rivers, loved
To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,
And from his alder shades and rocky falls,
And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice
That flowed along my dreams.

It is almost a shock to one who knows Wordsworth only by his calm and noble poetry to read that he was of a moody and violent temper, and that his mother despaired of him alone among her five children. She died when he was but eight years old, but not till she had

¹ The *Lyrical Ballads* were better appreciated in America than in England. The first edition was printed here in 1802.

² *The Prelude* was not published till after Wordsworth's death, nearly half a century later.

exerted an influence which lasted all his life, so that he could remember her as "the heart of all our learnings and our loves." The father died some six years later, and the orphan was taken in charge by relatives, who sent him to school at Hawkshead, in the beautiful lake region. Here, apparently, the unroofed school of nature attracted him more than the discipline of the classics, and he learned more eagerly from flowers and hills and stars than from his books; but one must read Wordsworth's own record, in *The Prelude*, to appreciate this. Three things in this poem must impress even the casual reader: first, Wordsworth loves to be alone, and is never lonely, with nature; second, like every other child who spends much time alone in the woods and fields, he feels the presence of some living spirit, real though unseen, and companionable though silent; third, his impressions are exactly like our own, and delightfully familiar. When he tells of the long summer day spent in swimming, basking in the sun, and questing over the hills; or of the winter night when, on his skates, he chased the reflection of a star in the black ice; or of his exploring the lake in a boat, and getting suddenly frightened when the world grew big and strange,—in all this he is simply recalling a multitude of our own vague, happy memories of childhood. He goes out into the woods at night to tend his woodcock snares; he runs across another boy's snares, follows them, finds a woodcock caught, takes it, hurries away through the night. And then,

I heard among the solitary hills
Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
Of undistinguishable motion.

That is like a mental photograph. Any boy who has come home through the woods at night will recognize it instantly. Again he tells us of going bird's-nesting on the cliffs:

Oh, when I have hung
Above the raven's nest, by knots of grass
And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock
But ill-sustained, and almost (so it seemed)
Suspended by the blast that blew amain,
Shouldering the naked crag,—oh, at that time,
While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,
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!

No man can read such records without finding his own boyhood again, and his own abounding joy of life, in the poet's early impressions.

The second period of Wordsworth's life begins with his university course at Cambridge, in 1787. In the third book of *The Prelude* we find a dispassionate account of student life, with its trivial occupations, its pleasures and general aimlessness. Wordsworth proved to be a very ordinary scholar, following his own genius rather than the curriculum, and looking forward more eagerly to his vacation among the hills than to his examinations. Perhaps the most interesting thing in his life at Cambridge was his fellowship with the young political enthusiasts, whose spirit is expressed in his remarkable poem on the French Revolution,—a poem which is better than a volume of history to show the hopes and ambitions that stirred all Europe in the first days of that mighty upheaval. Wordsworth made two trips to France, in 1790 and 1791, seeing things chiefly through the rosy spectacles of the young Oxford Republicans. On his second visit he joined the Girondists, or the moderate Republicans, and only the decision of his relatives, who cut off his allowance and hurried him back to England, prevented his going headlong to the guillotine with the leaders of his party. Two things rapidly cooled Wordsworth's revolutionary enthusiasm, and ended the only dramatic interest of his placid life. One was the excesses of the Revolution itself, and especially the execution of Louis XVI; the other was the rise of Napoleon, and the slavish adulation accorded by France to this most vulgar and dangerous of tyrants. His coolness soon grew to disgust and opposition, as shown by his subsequent poems; and this brought upon him the censure of Shelley, Byron, and other extremists, though it gained the friendship of Scott, who from the first had no sympathy with the Revolution or with the young English enthusiasts. Of the decisive period of Wordsworth's life, when he was living with his sister Dorothy and with Coleridge at Alfoxden, we have already spoken. The importance of this decision to give himself to poetry is evident when we remember that, at thirty years of age, he was without money or any definite aim or occupation in life. He considered the law, but confessed he had no sympathy for its contradictory precepts and practices; he considered the ministry, but though strongly inclined to the Church, he felt himself not good enough for the sacred office; once he had wanted to be a soldier and serve his country, but had wavered at the prospect of dying of disease in a foreign land and throwing away his life without glory or

profit to anybody. An apparent accident, which looks more to us like a special Providence, determined his course. He had taken care of a young friend, Raisley Calvert, who died of consumption and left Wordsworth heir to a few hundred pounds, and to the request that he should give his life to poetry. It was this unexpected gift which enabled Wordsworth to retire from the world and follow his genius. All his life he was poor, and lived in an atmosphere of plain living and high thinking. His poetry brought him almost nothing in the way of money rewards, and it was only by a series of happy accidents that he was enabled to continue his work. One of these accidents was that he became a Tory, and soon accepted the office of a distributor of stamps, and was later appointed poet laureate by the government, — which occasioned Browning's famous but ill-considered poem of "The Lost Leader":

Just for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a riband to stick in his coat.

The last half century of Wordsworth's life, in which he retired to his beloved lake district and lived successively at Grasmere and Rydal Mount, remind one strongly of Browning's long struggle for literary recognition. It was marked by the same steadfast purpose, the same trusted ideal, the same continuous work, and the same tardy recognition by the public. His poetry was mercilessly ridiculed by nearly all the magazine critics, who seized upon the worst of his work as a standard of judgment; and book after book of poems appeared without meeting any success save the approval of a few loyal friends. Without doubt or impatience he continued his work, trusting to the future to recognize and approve it. His attitude here reminds one strongly of the poor old soldier whom he met in the hills,¹ who refused to beg or to mention his long service or the neglect of his country, saying with noble simplicity,

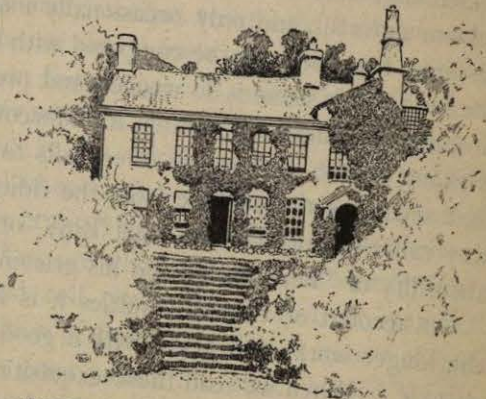
My trust is in the God of Heaven
And in the eye of him who passes me.

Such work and patience are certain of their reward, and long before Wordsworth's death he felt the warm sunshine of general approval. The wave of popular enthusiasm for Scott and Byron passed by, as their limitations were recognized; and Wordsworth was hailed by critics as the first living poet, and one of the greatest that England

¹ *The Prelude*, Book IV.

had ever produced. On the death of Southey (1843) he was made poet laureate, against his own inclination. The late excessive praise left him quite as unmoved as the first excessive neglect. The steady decline in the quality of his work is due not, as might be expected, to self-satisfaction at success, but rather to his intense conservatism, to his living too much alone and failing to test his work by the standards and judgment of other literary men. He died tranquilly in 1850, at the age of eighty years, and was buried in the churchyard at Grasmere.

Such is the brief outward record of the world's greatest interpreter of nature's message; and only one who is acquainted with both nature and the poet can realize how inadequate is any biography; for the best thing about



WORDSWORTH'S HOME AT RYDAL MOUNT

Wordsworth must always remain unsaid. It is a comfort to know that his life, noble, sincere, "heroically happy," never contradicted his message. Poetry was his life; his soul was in all his work; and only by reading what he has written can we understand the man.

The Poetry of Wordsworth. There is often a sense of disappointment when one reads Wordsworth for the first time; and this leads us to speak first of two difficulties which may easily prevent a just appreciation of the poet's worth. The first difficulty is in the reader, who is often puzzled by Wordsworth's absolute simplicity. We are so used to stage effects in poetry, that beauty unadorned is apt to escape our notice, — like Wordsworth's "Lucy":

A violet by a mossy stone,
Half hidden from the eye;
Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.

Wordsworth set himself to the task of freeing poetry from all its "conceits," of speaking the language of simple truth, and of portraying man and nature as they are; and in this good work we are apt to miss the beauty, the passion, the intensity, that hide themselves under his simplest lines. The second difficulty is in the poet, not in the reader. It must be confessed that Wordsworth is not always melodious; that he is seldom graceful, and only occasionally inspired. When he is inspired, few poets can be compared with him; at other times the bulk of his verse is so wooden and prosy that we wonder how a poet could have written it. Moreover, he is absolutely without humor, and so he often fails to see the small step that separates the sublime from the ridiculous. In no other way can we explain "The Idiot Boy," or pardon the serious absurdity of "Peter Bell" and his grieving jackass.

On account of these difficulties it is well to avoid at first the longer works and begin with a good book of selections.¹

Poems of Nature When we read these exquisite shorter poems, with their noble lines that live forever in our memory, we realize that Wordsworth is the greatest poet of nature that our literature has produced. If we go further, and study the poems that impress us, we shall find four remarkable characteristics: (1) Wordsworth is sensitive as a barometer to every subtle change in the world about him. In *The Prelude* he compares himself to an æolian 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 beautiful way in Wordsworth's poetry.

(2) Of all the poets who have written of nature there is none that compares with him in the truthfulness of his representation. Burns, like Gray, is apt to read his own emotions

¹ Dowden's *Selections from Wordsworth* is the best of many such collections. See *Selections for Reading, and Bibliography*, at the end of this chapter.

into natural objects, so that there is more of the poet than of nature even in his mouse and mountain daisy; but Wordsworth gives you the bird and the flower, the wind and the tree and the river, just as they are, and is content to let them speak their own message.

(3) No other poet ever found such abundant beauty in the common world. He had not only sight, but insight, that is, he not only sees clearly and describes accurately, but penetrates to the heart of things and always finds some exquisite meaning that is not written on the surface. It is idle to specify or to quote lines on flowers or stars, on snow or vapor. Nothing is ugly or commonplace in his world; on the contrary, there is hardly one natural phenomenon which he has not glorified by pointing out some beauty that was hidden from our eyes.

(4) It is the *life* of nature which is everywhere recognized; not mere growth and cell changes, but sentient, personal life; and the recognition of this personality in nature characterizes all the world's great poetry. In his childhood Wordsworth regarded natural objects, the streams, the hills, the flowers, even the winds, as his companions; and with his mature belief that all nature is the reflection of the living God, it was inevitable that his poetry should thrill with the sense of a Spirit that "rolls through all things." Cowper, Burns, Keats, Tennyson, — all these poets give you the outward aspects of nature in varying degrees; but Wordsworth gives you her very life, and the impression of some personal living spirit that meets and accompanies the man who goes alone through the woods and fields. We shall hardly find, even in the philosophy of Leibnitz, or in the nature myths of our Indians, any such impression of living nature as this poet awakens in us. And that suggests another delightful characteristic of Wordsworth's poetry, namely, that he seems to awaken rather than create an impression; he stirs our memory deeply, so that in reading him we live once more in the vague, beautiful wonderland of our own childhood.

Such is the philosophy of Wordsworth's nature poetry. If we search now for his philosophy of human life, we shall find four more doctrines, which rest upon his basal conception that man is not apart from nature, but is the very "life of her life." (1) In childhood man is sensitive as a wind harp to all natural influences; he is an epitome of the gladness and beauty of the world. Wordsworth explains this gladness and this sensitiveness to nature by the doctrine that the child comes straight from the Creator of nature:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home.

In this exquisite ode, which he calls "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" (1807), Wordsworth sums up his philosophy of childhood; and he may possibly be indebted here to the poet Vaughan, who, more than a century before, had proclaimed in "The Retreat" the same doctrine. This kinship with nature and with God, which glorifies childhood, ought to extend through a man's whole life and ennoble it. This is the teaching of "Tintern Abbey," in which the best part of our life is shown to be the result of natural influences. According to Wordsworth, society and the crowded unnatural life of cities tend to weaken and pervert humanity; and a return to natural and simple living is the only remedy for human wretchedness.

(2) The natural instincts and pleasures of childhood are the true standards of a man's happiness in this life. All artificial pleasures soon grow tiresome. The natural pleasures, which a man so easily neglects in his work, are the chief means by which we may expect permanent and increasing joy. In "Tintern Abbey," "The Rainbow," "Ode to Duty," and

"Intimations of Immortality" we see this plain teaching; but we can hardly read one of Wordsworth's pages without finding it slipped in unobtrusively, like the fragrance of a wild flower.

(3) The *truth* of humanity, that is, the common life which labors and loves and shares the general heritage of smiles and tears, is the only subject of permanent literary interest. Burns and the early poets of the Revival began the good work of showing the romantic interest of common life; and Wordsworth continued it in "Michael," "The Solitary Reaper," "To a Highland Girl," "Stepping Westward," *The Excursion*, and a score of lesser poems. Joy and sorrow, not of princes or heroes, but "in widest commonalty spread," are his themes; and the hidden purpose of many of his poems is to show that the keynote of all life is happiness,—not an occasional thing, the result of chance or circumstance, but a heroic thing, to be won, as one would win any other success, by work and patience.

(4) To this natural philosophy of man Wordsworth adds a mystic element, the result of his own belief that in every natural object there is a reflection of the living God. Nature is everywhere transfused and illumined by Spirit; man also is a reflection of the divine Spirit; and we shall never understand the emotions roused by a flower or a sunset until we learn that nature appeals through the eye of man to his inner spirit. In a word, nature must be "spiritually discerned." In "Tintern Abbey" the spiritual appeal of nature is expressed in almost every line; but the mystic conception of man is seen more clearly in "Intimations of Immortality," which Emerson calls "the high-water mark of poetry in the nineteenth century." In this last splendid ode Wordsworth adds to his spiritual interpretation of nature and man the alluring doctrine of preëxistence, which has appealed so powerfully to Hindoo and Greek in turn, and which makes of human life a continuous, immortal thing, without end or beginning.

Wordsworth's longer poems, since they contain much that is prosy and uninteresting, may well be left till after we have read the odes, sonnets, and short descriptive poems that have made him famous. As showing a certain heroic cast of Wordsworth's mind, it is interesting to learn that the greater part of his work, including *The Prelude* and *The Excursion*, was intended for a place in a single great poem, to be called *The Recluse*, which should treat of nature, man, and society. *The Prelude*, treating of the growth of a poet's mind, was to introduce the work. *The Home at Grasmere*, which is the first book of *The Recluse*, was not published till 1888, long after the poet's death. *The Excursion* (1814) is the second book of *The Recluse*; and the third was never completed, though Wordsworth intended to include most of his shorter poems in this third part, and so make an immense personal epic of a poet's life and work. It is perhaps just as well that the work remained unfinished. The best of his work appeared in the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) and in the sonnets, odes, and lyrics of the next ten years; though "The Duddon Sonnets" (1820), "To a Skylark" (1825), and "Yarrow Revisited" (1831) show that he retained till past sixty much of his youthful enthusiasm. In his later years, however, he perhaps wrote too much; his poetry, like his prose, becomes dull and unimaginative; and we miss the flashes of insight, the tender memories of childhood, and the recurrence of noble lines — each one a poem — that constitutes the surprise and the delight of reading Wordsworth.

The outward shows of sky and earth,
Of hill and valley, he has viewed;
And impulses of deeper birth
Have come to him in solitude.

In common things that round us lie
Some random truths he can impart —
The harvest of a quiet eye
That broods and sleeps on his own heart.

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE (1772-1834)

A grief without a pang, void, dark and drear,
A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,
Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,
In word, or sigh, or tear.

In the wonderful "Ode to Dejection," from which the above fragment is taken, we have a single strong impression of Coleridge's whole life, — a sad, broken, tragic life, in marked contrast with the peaceful existence of his friend Wordsworth. For himself, during the greater part of his life, the poet had only grief and remorse as his portion; but for everybody else, for the audiences that were charmed by the brilliancy of his literary lectures, for the friends who gathered about him to be inspired by his ideals and conversation, and for all his readers who found unending delight in the little volume which holds his poetry, he had and still has a cheering message, full of beauty and hope and inspiration. Such is Coleridge, a man of grief who makes the world glad.

Life. In 1772 there lived in Ottery St. Mary, Devonshire, a queer little man, the Rev. John Coleridge, vicar of the parish church and master of the local grammar school. In the former capacity he preached profound sermons, quoting to open-mouthed rustics long passages from the Hebrew, which he told them was the very tongue of the Holy Ghost. In the latter capacity he wrote for his boys a new Latin grammar, to mitigate some of the difficulties of traversing that terrible jungle by means of ingenious bypaths and short cuts. For instance, when his boys found the ablative a somewhat difficult case to understand, he told them to think of it as the *quale-quare-quidditive* case, which of course makes its meaning perfectly clear. In both these capacities the elder Coleridge was a sincere man, gentle and kindly, whose memory was "like a religion" to his sons and daughters. In that same year was born Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the youngest of thirteen children. He was an extraordinarily precocious child, who could read at three years of age, and who, before he was five, had read the Bible and the Arabian Nights, and could remember an astonishing amount from both books. From three to