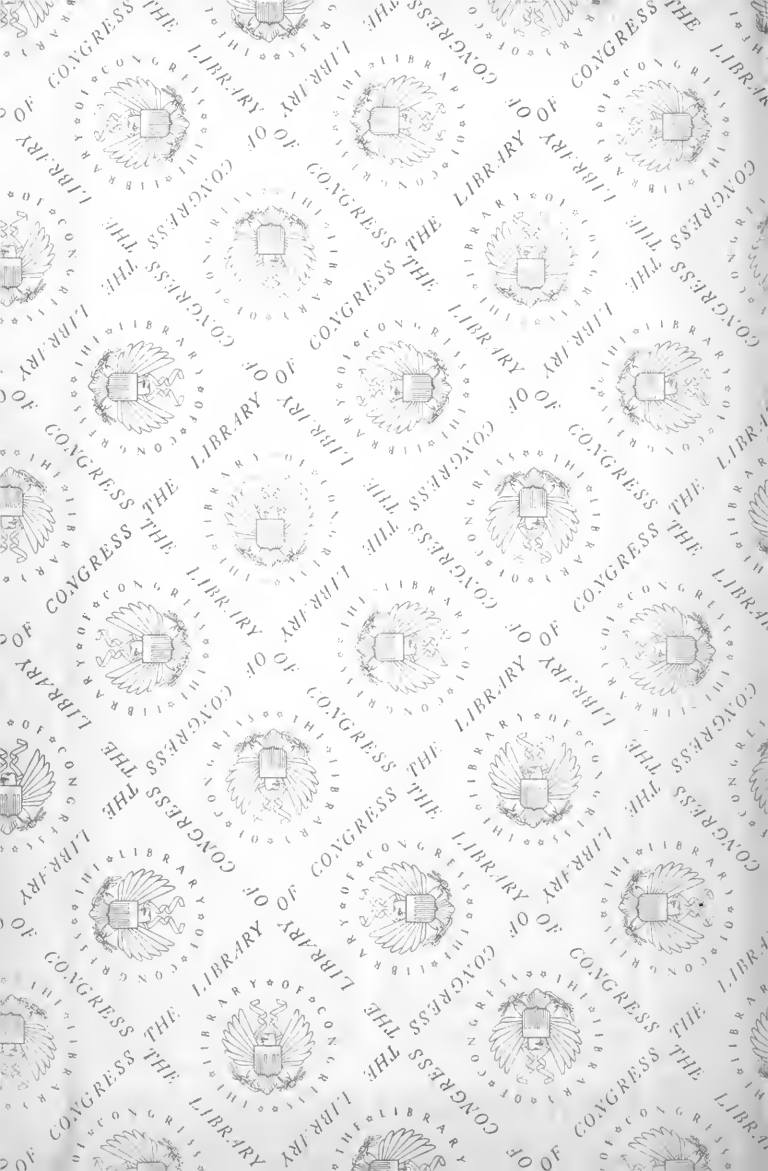


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WORDS WORTH

A STUDY IN MEMORY AND MYSTICISM

BY

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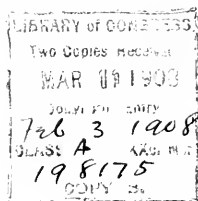


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By S. F. GINGERICH.

PREFACE

Readers acquainted with the critical writings on Wordsworth will no doubt find much in this volume that is old and familiar, especially in Chapters I and II. It is hoped, however, that the treatment of this old and well-known material is sufficiently novel and original to warrant its appearance in print. Such novelty and originality are claimed for the bit of psychology brought out near the close of Chapter II, for the intermediary stages of mysticism as developed in Chapter V, for the renunciation of the mystical proper and yet the retention of the highest mystical intensity possible for artistic excellence as shown in Chapter VII, and for the attempt in Chapter VIII to answer the question how far and in what sense Wordsworth is a philosopher.

Perhaps more obvious than novelty and originality is the indebtedness these pages show to various men and various writings. The existence of this volume in its present form is due in part to the work in an English Seminary on Words-

worth in Indiana University, to the inspiration and personal help of Professor Will D. Howe, to the sympathetic and searching criticism of Professor C. J. Sembower, to some valuable suggestions of Professor Alfred M. Brooks (members of the Faculty of Indiana University), and to the host of writers of the past century who have written well on William Wordsworth and his poetry.

S. F. G.

Goshen, Indiana.

February, 1908.

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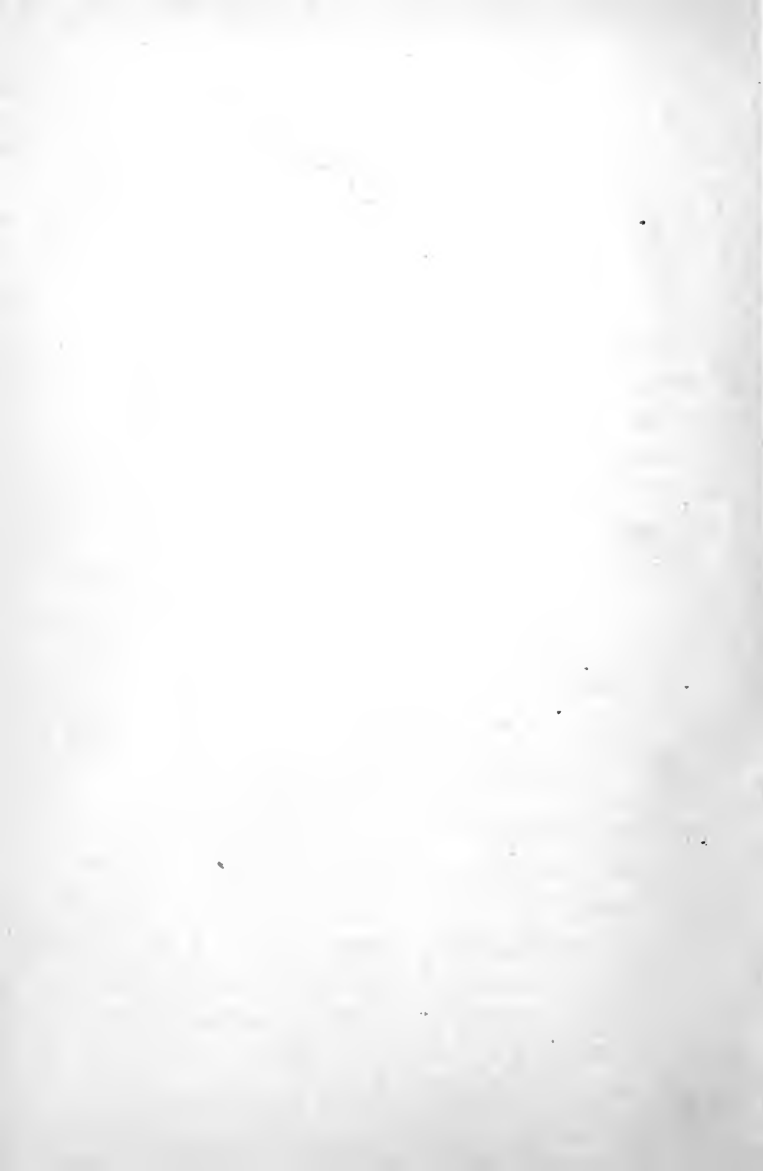
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INTRODUCTION

It is the purpose of this study to trace the development, in Wordsworth, of his psychology of childhood memories and his theory and practice of mysticism, and to show their relation to each other and their relation indirectly to his poetry. This study is to be made mainly, if not wholly, in the light of the original qualities of Wordsworth's character and of the times in which he lived—in the light of the action and reaction of the time upon the character. The chief emphasis, however, must be placed upon the development of his character. For whatever argument may be made in favor of the independence of art and morals, it can hardly be denied that the art products of Wordsworth have their sources deep in his moral being; and without a strong sense and appreciation of his moral nature, we cannot arrive at any just conclusion as to the peculiar influence the times exerted on him. Without the key to his character, all study of him is in vain.

The excuses for undertaking such a task as here

proposed are two. First, the genius of Wordsworth himself is so towering, and the period in which he spent his first thirty years, and especially the last ten of those years, is so replete with human interest, that, although a great literature has already sprung up dealing with the man and his times, this literature is not all written as yet, but will continue to be written in succeeding generations. Secondly, our progress in civilization depends upon the clearness of vision with which we perceive, and the energy with which we seize upon the greatest achievements of the race in the past, and especially the achievements of its geniuses. How well we can appropriate to our use the highest acquirements of past civilizations determines our success in the future. Thus, it is the duty of each generation in its own way to re-interpret for itself the vital elements of a past civilization. Perhaps this can be done in no better way than by the simple and time-honored method of observing the action and reaction of a great time upon a great character, with special reference to some phase of that character's thought and experience. And Wordsworth's time and Wordsworth's character and the particular phase of his thought upon which we wish to dwell are all great enough to make unnecessary any further apologies.

Whether we believe with Carlyle that geniuses are not made but are born, and assert themselves in spite of the conditions that birth and society may impose on them, or whether we believe with others that even geniuses are but mouthpieces of their own time-spirit, or whether we take a middle ground and say that somehow both the power of the moment and the power of the man are necessary for the most excellent achievement, we can perhaps agree that a great poet, by virtue of his sensitive, responsive, and sympathetic nature, is more indebted to his age than other men, and that by virtue of his imaginative and creative powers he makes the world indebted to himself more than other men do. And notwithstanding the fact that throughout his whole life, Wordsworth drew much of his light and joy from within and became a conservative rather early in life, setting himself in opposition to mechanical and industrial progress, to the Reform Bill of 1832, to the introduction of railways, to formal education, to the Catholic Emancipation, etc., there is still much reason to believe that he is in no sense an outstanding fact of his day and generation, but that he is essentially a part of it, first absorbing its vital elements, and secondly reacting upon those elements and giving them new direction of development. The man who

could say, as Wordsworth did say, in speaking of an experience as early in youth as when he first remembered the sun and the waters—

Oh, then, the calm
And dead still water lay upon my mind
Even with a weight of pleasure, and the sky,
Never before so beautiful, sank down
Into my heart and held me like a dream—

and who could say of a later experience—an experience caused by the declaration of war by England against France—

No shock
Given to my moral nature had I known
Down to that very moment; neither lapse
Nor turn of sentiment that might be named
A revolution, save at this one time:—

such a man shows that he was at least extremely susceptible to two great objective and environmental forces that play upon men's lives and help to mold their characters—the forces of external nature and organized human society.

But Wordsworth held that

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

He believed that

Happy is he who lives to understand
 Not human nature only, but explores
 All natures—to the end that he may find
 The law that governs each—

and that

The array
 Of act and circumstance, and visible form,
 Is mainly to the pleasure of the mind
 What passion makes them.—

And the man who could boldly proclaim that it is the legitimate business of a poet to explore all natures in order to find the law that governs each, that it should be his ideal to perceive objects unseen before and to color the array of act and circumstance and visible form with the passions of the mind itself, must have possessed an original force of mind that retained its identity throughout his whole career, even though he was extremely susceptible to objective and environmental forces. And yet, one is constrained to ask, Whence come these bold assertions of the high and far-reaching purposes and ideals of the poet? Why especially should Wordsworth believe it to be a peculiar faculty of the poet to perceive objects unseen before? How did he come to feel that the poet should discover the law that governs all natures

and at the same time attempt to color the array of act and circumstance and visible form with the passions of his own mind? It is quite clear that these statements of his are not only an indication of a strong individuality, but are distinctive echoes of a particular time—a time when men, as DeQuincey says, were *forced* to think, and particularly to think on the first principles of things; and to take sides on almost all the questions of the day, a time when men were encouraged to give full expression to their individual experiences instead of repressing them, a time, in short, more or less revolutionary, which made men earnest exponents and apostles of new faiths and various and oftentimes conflicting theories. Would even a Wordsworth have given expression to just these sentiments had he lived in the time of Pope? And is it fanciful to ask, in passing, whether it is not a significant fact that Wordsworth was about thirty-four years old, in the prime of life, feeling the full measure of native strength and unusual vigor of soul, when he gave expression to these and other similar sentiments?

It is always impossible, however, to determine with exactness how much of the product of a poet is due to personal and how much to environmental forces. The subtle and intangible nature of the

spirit of the times and the inexplicable qualities and powers of the genius preclude the possibility of the scientist ever giving an exact formula for the influence of the environment on the individual and the individual on the environment, respectively. Moreover, historical study is as helpless in this respect as science. There are many events and incidents that play a part in the making of any period of history which are beyond the power of discovery of the historian. Besides there are motives and impulses beneath and behind the facts of history, which themselves give the facts a coloring of their own, so that the conscientious historian can never be absolutely positive of his results, and he is often driven to call in the imagination to fill in at points where facts escape him. Again, in a time of great political and social disturbances, when the genius of a people or the spirit of the times work deeply and vitally on an individual, much of these workings are unconscious. Accidental affairs and events that have a temporary influence proclaim their presence with a noise and a flourish that cannot be mistaken. On the other hand, the vital forces of such a time are exactly those that are the most pervasive and the most subtle, and it is the special gift of the genius to divine the difference between the accidental on the one hand and the

vital on the other, and to identify himself wholeheartedly with the latter. Thus in dealing with our problem, which is at bottom the problem of the philosophy of history, the historian, like the scientist, can obtain only partial and inadequate results.

The literary critic can not come any nearer the solution of the problem than either the scientist or the historian except so far only as he can successfully combine the method of the scientist and the knowledge of the historian with his own special faculty of sensibility to his work in hand. But this advantage is immediately offset by another difficulty, peculiar to the problem of the literary critic. The history of the development of poetry is harder to trace than is, for example, the history of philosophic thought. Philosophy deals mainly with intellectual matters, matters that have to do with theories and with systems. And many of these systems are more or less sharply defined and are differentiated from other systems, and, therefore, their development can be traced with comparative ease. Poetry, on the other hand, deals more generally with personal experiences, and with the instincts and intuitions and feelings of common humanity. Whatever else a great poetry may deal with, it deals, first of all, with the deep, abiding and universal experiences of the heart, which ex-

periences are much the same in all places and in all ages. It is possible, therefore, for a great poetry to spring up directly from the soil, as it were, and its relation to other great poetry may be hard to find, if, indeed, it have any important relation to it at all.

Let the proposition be stated from another point of view. A philosopher, like Hume, holds that one should not believe in immortality. His philosophic system develops this thoroughly and systematically. But when Hume thinks of his mother he says he cannot believe that her character can ever suffer dissolution. Why is there this difference in attitude in the same man? Simply that in the former case he speaks from a purely intellectual standpoint and in accord with a developed system and a school to which he belongs, while in the latter case he allows his affections to play a part in his experience. In the first instance he speaks like a philosopher; in the second, like a man. The first view accords with the views of a certain school of philosophers with a particular skeptical bias, and the origin and development of the view can be traced easily enough. But the second view accords with the common experience of humanity, and, as such, has no particular history. And it is precisely this second kind of experience that gives the poet the

matter with which he deals. Poetry is related to the times out of which it comes as a river is related to the country in which it has its source and through which it flows—distinctly individual, it yet carries in itself something of the very soil and substance of the regions through which it has traveled. And the poet's relation to his time is like that of a tree to the soil from which it springs—its marrow and strength and volume are drawn from the very elements that surround it and threaten its destruction, but in the process the elements themselves undergo a mysterious change by means of the vital force in the tree itself. Though the relation between a poet and his time is always vital, it is also always extremely pervasive and intangible, consisting for the most part of deep under-current connections.

And since it is thus, there have always been some literary critics who have given up in despair to carry out such a program as here suggested. They have contented themselves with giving critical expositions of particular works, or, at most, they have included in their criticism the consideration of the character of the poet in relation to his works. A few have even discouraged this latter and especially any larger problem, because the results obtained are correspondingly less exact and final.

And for these reasons there will perhaps always be a minority of literary critics of this stamp. But should a method be given up because it yields only partial and relative results? Should we not rather distrust as superficial, a method that strictly limits itself to a chosen sphere and then attempts final and absolute answers to all questions that arise within that sphere? And though it be insisted upon that our problem shall be developed in the broadest possible way, it will no doubt be seen by this time that there is no intention here to present the detailed facts of Wordsworth's outward life. It is intended, on the contrary, to trace out the inward evolution of his character. And it will also be seen that it is not the purpose here to set down an array of historical facts pertaining to the times, nor to trace out temporal influences to their origins. Such facts and influences and origins can be found written in the books, and it would be a thankless task to restate them here. But it is intended to seize upon a few of the most essential and fundamental characteristics of the times and to use those characteristics in conjunction with the enfoldment of Wordsworth's character, with the hope of giving a more detailed and complete psychological explanation than has hitherto been given of his introspective tendencies that became embodied in

his doctrine of childhood memories and in his theory and practice of mysticism. It is to be shown that these tendencies were not only peculiar to him, but that they were peculiarly influenced in their development by his environment.

CHAPTER I

THE MAN AND HIS TIMES

What, then, are the chief characteristics of the times and the vital qualities in Wordsworth's character with which we must begin our study? The most general formula for those times is that they were times of revolution with a strong tendency toward the readjustment of society, and of insistence on personal liberty with the result of giving wide divergence in the expression of personal experience. This formula is not intended to be in any sense a complete expression of those characteristics. One needs but to glance at the literature dealing with this period of time to notice the futile efforts of writers in their attempt to express in single phrases the forces and tendencies then at work. Some of the phrases include so much that they are vague; others are so specific that they do not include enough. "A time of growing

intolerance of antiquated and artificial forms," a time of "reaction on eighteenth century civilization," of a "return to nature," of "simplification," a time of the "recreation of medievalism," of the "rediscovery and vindication of the concrete," a time of "a sudden increase of the vital energy of the species," a time of "growth in the notion of the brotherhood of man," a time of the "strengthening of the national consciousness of the different countries of Europe"—all these are partial failures and partial successes; they fail to give an adequate conception of the times; they succeed in expressing some important aspects of them. The complexity of forces then at work makes it impossible ever to express those forces in a single phrase. And perhaps our own formula can claim no more than the statement of a few important aspects of the times. They are such aspects, however, as will be shown to have the most important bearing on the development of Wordsworth's experiences regarding the memories of childhood and mysticism.

Moreover, the forces included in our formula are among the most vital and permanent of the times. Though many of the others, such as a "return to nature" and the "rediscovery and vindication of the concrete," have done their work, those included in our formula have still not spent

their energy, even though a hundred years span the time between then and now. Our times are still revolutionary, only in a milder sense, but even with an increased effort at the readjustment of society; and, although we may not proclaim personal liberty with the same vehemence as men did a hundred years ago, yet the divergence of the expression of personal experience is greater than ever, and is ever widening. The times of Wordsworth initiated and gave a tremendous impetus to two forces that characterize the whole of the nineteenth century, the forces, namely, of increased efficiency and adjustment of organized society, and the widened powers and range of personal liberty.

The revolutionary forces of those days were by no means confined to the settlement and readjustment of political problems. They invaded all the departments of human affairs, even the affairs of practical religion. In a preface to a sonnet written in 1827, Wordsworth makes this suggestive statement, "Attendance at church on prayer-days, Wednesdays and Fridays and Holidays, received a shock at the Revolution. It is now, however, happily reviving." The spirit of revolution was in the atmosphere, and it found its way into every nook and corner of town and hamlet, and most of all into the hearts of men:

'Twas in truth an hour
Of universal ferment, mildest men
Were agitated; and commotions, strife
Of passion and opinion filled the walls
Of peaceful houses with unquiet sound.

Dominant in all the activities of the times was the note of an equilibrium less secure than in the period of time preceding, of an old anchorage breaking up, of maladjustments and instabilities, and, at the same time, of promises and potencies of a slow but ever higher development. By the shock of the Revolution men were compelled to revert to first principles, to explore all natures in order to find the law that governs each. And when, in the presence of danger, a man sinks deeply into himself to discover the grounds upon which to think and act, he not only finds his own opinions to diverge from those of others, but he also gathers courage for his own convictions. Such was the experience of Wordsworth in the time of the Revolution. But while the insecure equilibrium and the maladjustments of the times encouraged and reinforced the expression of personal experience, they also tended to produce the excess of individualism, false perspectives of life, wild theories and unattainable ideals. They account in part, it has been alleged and rightly, for the incoherencies of

Shelley and the terrific convulsions of Byron. But do they not also in part account for the "amazing inequalities" in Wordsworth that have been the wonder of critics from that day to this? It is the misfortune, or the fortune, of the great and the good to understand the burdens and the sorrows of a people and to bear those burdens and sorrows in their own hearts. (Is it not indeed by virtue of this sympathetic understanding and this burden-bearing that posterity gives them the title of greatness and goodness?) And when those burdens are exceptionally heavy and those sorrows profoundly deep, do they not leave their scars in the characters of even the greatest? As our theme unfolds, we shall be able to watch the dramatic interplay of the spirit of the times and the character of the man until we arrive at the psychological and mystical attitude toward life that is both characteristic of the man and a natural outcome of the troubled times in which he lived.

Since we have now before us the chief characteristics of the times, let us next consider the qualities of mind that were original with Wordsworth and that remained a personal possession with him through life. The powers that were given to him by nature and inheritance were the powers of passion with extreme sensitiveness, and volition

with a moral predisposition. Like our formula for the spirit of the times, this is not intended to be a complete formulation of all of Wordsworth's excellent gifts of mind. Besides these, for example, he possessed an imagination that was not only "essentially scientific, and quite unlike the fancy that decorates and falsifies fact to gratify an idle mind with a sense of neatness and ingenuity," but an imagination that was penetrating and contemplative and that saw, in a very great measure, the "soul of truth in every part" of the object of its vision. Yet, though it is hard to establish precedences in the order of development, it seems to be peculiarly true of Wordsworth that his imagination is the product of these more elemental powers of our formula. At any rate, it is the combination of these elemental powers which furnish the nucleus of his moral and intellectual being and give the key to his character.

In writing to a friend in 1792, the sister of Wordsworth says, "William has a sort of violence of affection, if I may so term it, which demonstrates itself every moment of the day, when the objects of his affection are present with him, in a thousand almost imperceptible attentions to their wishes, in a sort of restless watchfulness which I know not how to describe, a tenderness

that never sleeps." With keen penetration Miss Wordsworth points out the basic elements in the character of her brother. "Restless watchfulness," "a tenderness that never sleeps," and "violence of affection" are the chief characteristics of it. The key words are watchfulness, tenderness, and violence. And this characterization accords remarkably with Wordsworth's description of his own childhood character, given to his intended biographer many years later. He says, "I was of a stiff, moody, violent temper." Allowing for some freedom in the use of terms, these characteristics may be respectively dignified (as, indeed, they were dignified in Wordsworth's manhood) into volition, sensitiveness, and passion. The stiffness of temper of his childhood grew into the "restless watchfulness" of his youth, and matured into that thoroughgoing volition which directed the events of his whole after-life; the moodiness of his childhood grew, under the forming agency of the will, into the "tenderness that never sleeps" of his youth, and flowered into that exquisite sensitiveness characteristic of his whole subsequent career; while the violent temper of his childhood grew into the "violent affections" of his youth, and, tempered by the influence of a masterful will, finally bore fruit a hundred fold in the deepest and most thoroughly

subdued passions of any literary man in the world.

Passion, sensitiveness, volition—these were the powers that were with him when a child hidden away among the silences of the Westmoreland hills, long before the terrible rumblings of the French Revolution broke upon his ears. Wordsworth attests to the possession of them in his childhood:

I cannot paint (he says)
 What then I was. The sounding cataract
 Haunted me like a passion; the tall rock,
 The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
 Their colors and their forms, were then to me
 An appetite; a feeling and a love,
 That had no need of a remoter charm,
 By thought supplied, nor any interest
 Unborrowed from the eye.

There were not only "aching joys" and "dizzy raptures" with the child, but he was strangely sensitive to all objects. Before he was ten years old he would range through half the night among the mountain slopes and on the "open heights where woodcocks run along the smooth green turf," and would ply his anxious visitation:

Sometimes it befell
 In those night wanderings, that a strong desire
 O'erpowered my better reason, and the bird
 Which was the captive of another's toil
 Became my prey; and when the deed was done

I heard among the solitary hills
Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
Of undistinguishable motion, steps
Almost as silent as the turf they trod.

This not only expresses the child's sensitiveness of mind, but also contains the germ of a moral disposition. The silent steps, the sounds of undistinguishable motion and the low breathings coming after him were due mainly to the deed he had committed. In speaking of a time before he was seventeen, he says:

But let this
Be not forgotten, that I still retained
My first creative sensibility;
That by the regular action of the world
My soul was unsubdued.

He not only retained his creative sensibility throughout, but he very early in youth learned through the strength of his will to keep his soul from being subdued "by the regular action of the world." And in the earliest of those days his strong will, similar to that of other boys with strong wills, manifested itself in the form of wilfulness and even stubbornness. His mother once told an intimate friend of hers that the only one of her five children about whose future life she was anxious was William, and that he would be remarkable either for good or for evil. But the deposit of

moral conviction in his constitution was easily sufficient to save him from his mother's anxious fears and to give him not only the will to live, but to live morally, to realize the better alternative of his mother's prophecy, and become remarkable only for good.

These same powers of passion, sensitiveness and volition were with him in his youth. If any further testimony than that of his sister, which is clear and unmistakable, is needed, it can be found in his early attitude toward the French Revolution. It especially illustrates his volitional activity. We all know the difference in effect on us of two characters, one of whom orders the activities of his life toward some definite end and always moves in a straight line when the direction is once chosen, and the other of whom is frequently at variance with himself and is easily turned from any course by accident or circumstance. The first impresses us as having will and volition. The latter as lacking will and volition. Now, Wordsworth, whose temperament from childhood was somewhat "stiff," was very slow in choosing a direction of activity, but when it was once chosen he held to it with a tenacity equalled by very few men. As the *Prelude* shows and as Myers in his book on Wordsworth has well demonstrated, Wordsworth for a

time accepted the French Revolution as a matter of course, without being deeply stirred. But even after he was thoroughly aroused and his "inmost soul was agitated," and he could almost

Have prayed that throughout earth upon all men,
...The gift of tongues might fall, and power arrive
From the four quarters of the winds to do
For France, what without help she could not do,
A work of honor;—

even then he was slow to throw himself into the cause. He checked and interrogated his emotions. It was his wont always to hold his emotions in restraint. He would not decide blindly, he would wait for light:

A mind whose rest
Is where it ought to be, in self-restraint,
In circumspection and simplicity,
Falls rarely in entire discomfiture
Below its aim, or meets with, from without,
A treachery that fails it or defeats.

But finally, when he felt sure of the worthiness of the cause, he gave himself, not partly or stingily, but whole-heartedly, to it. He was then for France, out and out. And when once this decision had been reached, no one but as strong-willed and resolute a person as Wordsworth himself can realize what a shock his moral and sensitive nature must have sustained when his hopes for France

were blasted. Wordsworth was a man who accepted great human issues seriously. He believed in what truth he possessed as few men believe in truth. And when once in his life he was compelled to witness the complete and absolute failure of his highest hopes, it was by means of a slow and painful process that he readjusted himself to another course. Had his desire to see the truth victorious been less intense, had the issues at stake in France been taken to heart less seriously, had his will in the matter been less strong, he would have passed through the moral crisis with correspondingly greater ease. So important is this crisis that it must be considered more in detail in another connection. It has been cited here merely as a proof of Wordsworth's tenacity of mind and unexcelled volitional and moral temper in youth.

But these same powers of passion with sensitiveness and volition with a moral predisposition were with him in his mature years and manifest themselves in his maturest works. Though we cannot pluck the heart out of Wordsworth's mystery, it is quite certain that it lies in the direction of his wonderful sensitiveness to the simple and elemental forces of life, his insight into them, his firm grasp on them, and his power of compelling the reader to feel them, colored as they always are by his own

moral disposition. The following familiar passage:

I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thoughts
And rolls through all things—

does not primarily owe its strength and wonder to any new and original philosophical conception underlying it. The conception that there is a unified and living spirit back of all things and in and through all things, is as old as the thinking race. But this passage owes its uniqueness and fame almost wholly to the mysterious vitality of volition. The power of it is due to the intimacy of the presence, to the fact that the presence disturbs one's inmost being. One is compelled to feel the motion and the spirit that impels all things. If there is any new philosophical conception here at all, it is the conception of vital movement—of attributing volition to the goings-on of the universe. It should be remembered that the chief part of Wordsworth's definition of a poet, is, that he is "a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who re-

joices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them." And this passage of poetry is an illustration of his definition. It deepens immeasurably one's sense of the vital and sublime energies of volition—volition in the vast spaces of the universe without and in the heart and mind of man within. It is not dramatic, but it is dynamic; and, though Wordsworth possessed little of the power of characterization and dramatic presentation, there is, nevertheless, an undercurrent of motion in his poetry which is at once an essential source of his power. It seems to be a sublimation of activity but expressed with such a strong grasp on reality that its force is extremely effective.

In the little poem, "She Was a Phantom," there is drawn a woman that is "a spirit, yet a woman too":

She was a Phantom of delight

When first she gleamed upon my sight.

This character does not impress one with the qualities of color, concreteness, flesh and blood, and the like, for she is too phantom-like and sublimated to possess these qualities. But she impresses one with a very different kind of

reality. She "gleams" upon one's sight. There is intense and vital movement inherent in

Her household motions light and free
And steps of virgin liberty—

and the vitality of her motions is directly felt as a reality by the reader. She is

A perfect woman, nobly planned
To warn, to comfort, and command.

She is at once the embodiment of spiritual sublimation and reality, and her power over us lies in the complete fusion of these two opposite forces in her character by means of the mysterious vitality and intensity of the poet's volition.

It may be remarked, in passing, that perhaps the most favorite words of Wordsworth, especially during the period of his greatest literary production, are the words "motion" and "gleam" with their various adjectival and verbal forms, together with words of kindred meaning—words at once dynamic and volitional. In addition to the examples already given, a few more must suffice:

To cut across the reflex of a star
That fled, and, flying still before me, *gleamed*
Upon the glassy plain.

Even then I felt
Gleams like the flashing of a shield.

And add the *gleam*,
The light that never was, on sea or land.

Lighted by *gleams* of moonlight from the sea
We beat with thundering hoofs the level sand.

Now is crossed by *gleam*
Of his own image, by a sunbeam now
And wavering *motions* sent he knows not whence.

Sounds of undistinguishable *motion*—

No *motion* but the *moving* tide, a breeze—

All the shadowy banks on either side
Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still
The rapid line of *motion*.

Ye *motions* of delight that haunt the sides
Of the green hills.

From the blessed power that *rolls*
About, below, above.

No *motion* has she now, no force,
She neither hears nor sees,
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course
With rocks, and stones, and trees.

Those hallowed and pure *motions* of the sense—

On the first *motion* of a holy thought—

And all the tender *motions* of the soul—

Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought
That gives to forms and images a breath
And everlasting *motion*.

Listen! the mighty Being is awake,
And doth with his eternal *motion* make
A sound like thunder—everlastingly.

This list might very easily be extended. Too much emphasis, however, should not be placed upon the point that these are favorite words with Wordsworth. And unless the point immediately commends itself to the student familiar with Wordsworth's poetry, it is of little value. It can nevertheless be seen from these passages that Wordsworth, in a very peculiar sense, attributes vital movement, not only to all the objects of the outer world, but also to the senses, the thoughts, and the soul of man, and even to God. And the mere act of pronouncing repeatedly the words, "gleam" and "motion" and "roll" in the sense Wordsworth uses them, gives a healthy and voluntary thrill to the soul.

In the great lyrical poetry of Wordsworth, then, there is not the purely lyrical strain which arises simply from a mood or a feeling. Nor in his great narrative poetry is there anything like the purely dramatic power. But alike in both his lyrical and narrative poetry there is a union of feeling and force, of mood and self-control, of emotion and volition.

And volition has two functions to fulfil in the production of Wordsworth's poetry. He himself says that "poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity; the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins and in a mood similar to this it is carried on." First, the will, by a species of reaction, whips a recollected emotion into a state of excitement, and secondly, the overflow of the powerful emotion thus excited must be held under restraint as it enters into the making of a poetic composition. Though this theory for the production of poetry is by no means true for the production of all successful composition, it is certainly a careful and exact transcript of what took place in the conscious part of Wordsworth's own mind. And since it is not merely the description of an intellectual process, but involves the activities of passion and volition as well as intellect, it offers an excellent insight into Wordsworth's whole nature and character. His was a life of continuous "high endeavors" at "plain living and

high thinking," conscious and purposive. To everything he did he imparted a touch of volition. Even his "wise passiveness" requires a certain mental alertness that does not belong to a lazy man, since it presupposes more or less conscious effort. In the early days of Wordsworthian criticism Anbrey De Vere made a noble plea for Wordsworth's possession of passion. He says, "The whole of Wordsworth's nature was impassioned, body and spirit, intellect and imagination." The reason for the necessity for such a plea was that Wordsworth was so completely the master of his passions that unsympathetic critics at once alleged that he did not possess any. In Wordsworth's mature years the will always dominates the feelings. "There is volition and self-government in every line of his poetry," says Hutton, and there is likewise volition and self-government in every act of his life. It is with him as though there were a great underground reservoir of passion. But the reservoir is so deeply and firmly set in adamant that there is no possible chance for an explosion to occur.

There is something of the wariness of a logician in Wordsworth's statement, "Had I been a writer of love-poetry it would have been natural to me to write with a degree of warmth which could hardly have been approved by my principles, and

which might have been undesirable for the reader." Like the logician who is, more than others, conscious of the limitations of logic, Wordsworth, the man of volitions and self-government, is constantly aware of the limits of the power of self-control; and like the logician again who is forever dealing with matter that is refractory to logic, Wordsworth is always dealing with forces that lie just outside of his control, with intuitive impulses, with acts in which "we associate ideas in a state of excitement," with half-conscious forces that are defiant to the subordination of the mind, yet do not overwhelm its conscious self-possession. In close juxtaposition to a passage in the Fourth Book of the *Prelude* in which he emphasizes the independent and self-directing power of the soul—

How life pervades the undecaying mind;
 How the immortal soul with God-like power
 Informs, creates, and thaws the deepest sleep
 That time can lay upon her—

there is this passage, which tells of half-conscious influences, to the finer influx of which his sensitive "mind lay open to a more exact and close communion":

Around me from among the hazel leaves,
 Now here, now there, moved by the straggling wind,

Came ever and anon a breath-like sound,
Quick as the pantings of a faithful dog,
The off-and-on companion of my walk;
And such, at times, believing them to be,
I turned my head to look if he were there;
Then into solemn thought I passed once more.

With the soul's subordination of powers like these—pervasive, yet only half-conscious—Wordsworth was constantly dealing, but with the passion of love, which is sufficiently strong and self-conscious to require a degree of warmth in treatment that could hardly be approved by his principles, and which is likely to invade the power of self-control, he refused to deal directly. Though he acknowledged that

Love, blessed Love is everywhere
The spirit of my song—

yet he preferred to keep so far from the border line of conflict between passionate love and self-control that he would always be absolutely sure of the supremacy of the latter. But he who would aspire to fathom the "depth" of the human soul and at the same time remain human-hearted, must also be willing to sound its "tumult." Wordsworth, however, consistently refused to do the latter, which resulted not only in a distinct loss of human-heartedness, but also in the gain of a certain con-

scious self-mastery which is at once the source of both his weakness and his strength.

A precaution must be thrown out at this point. It is not intended in these pages to convey the idea that Wordsworth's best and most characteristic poems were the product of self-directed effort and the "conscious conquests of insight." There is at bottom no contradiction in saying that there is volition and self-government in every line of his poetry and that at the same time in his best poetry nature not only gave him the matter of his best poems, but also wrote his poems for him. For, just as psychologists of late years have disproved the old idea that animals have more instincts than man, and have shown that man's richer nature has a much greater variety of instincts than animals and besides possesses higher powers of reason which overlay those instincts and of which animals know very little; so it may be conceived analogously that a nature like Wordsworth's may have a great variety of instinctive and spontaneous qualities and still possess a more than usual amount of self-consciousness and self-government, overlaying, as it were, those spontaneous activities. Self-possession and spontaneity are thus not mutually exclusive, but may both be abounding in a genius of a volitional type. This seems to be the truth in

the case of Wordsworth. His strength, from this point of view, lies in the happy co-operation, at rare moments, of self-possession and spontaneity. This co-operation is of such a rare and generally unattainable sort that we should not expect Wordsworth to attain to it always, but to fail at times, as indeed he does, on the side of spontaneity. How these unconscious and spontaneous elements are wrought into artistic structures we may never know from the very fact that they are unconscious and spontaneous. In his prefaces to his poems Wordsworth does not make enough allowance for the part they actually play in the making of his poetry. But in those same prefaces, on the other hand, he gives the most accurate and profound descriptions of what took place *consciously* in his own mind, and, as such, the prefaces are invaluable, not only as a criticism of the conscious side of his art, but as giving us excellent insights into his character.

We have now seen that the powers that were with Wordsworth in childhood, in youth, and in his mature life, were the powers of passion with extreme sensitiveness, and volition with a moral predisposition; that these powers were the nucleus of his moral and intellectual being and are the key to his character. We have also seen that the spirit

of the times in which Wordsworth lived was a spirit of revolution with serious efforts of men to readjust society on a higher level, and a spirit of personal liberty resulting in a wide divergence in the expression of personal experience. How these forces conspired together in developing the theory of childhood memories is to be the theme of the next chapter of this study.

CHAPTER II

MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD: THEIR DEVELOPMENT

When Wordsworth, in his mature years, looked back over the passionate life of his childhood he felt that he had then lived too much the life of the senses. He says in the Prelude:

I speak in recollection of a time
When the bodily eye, in every stage of life
The most despotic of our senses, gained
Such strength in *me* as often held my mind
In absolute dominion.

He very kindly and genially ascribes his mind's redemption from this thralldom to the powers of nature, and suggests that if he cared to enter upon "abtruser argument," he could "unfold the means which nature studiously employs to thwart this tyranny." Whatever the agency by which this tyranny was thwarted, it is quite certain that by the time he was writing the Prelude his own mind was a safeguard against any such tyranny, and that, too, without the agency of natural forces.

Just as he resisted the power of passionate love to master his will, so he carefully guarded against the despotism of the senses and even looked with a jealous eye upon their despotism in his childhood. He had now shaken off the domineering habit of the senses:

I had known
 Too forcibly, too early in my life,
 Visitings of imaginative power
 For this to last: I shook the habit off
 Entirely and forever, and again
 In Nature's presence stood, as now I stand,
 A sensitive being, a *creative* soul.

And he had now become the example of his own text:

Man, if he do but live within the light
 Of high endeavors, daily spreads abroad
 His being armed with strength that cannot fail.

With a mind that was sensitive and creative and that constantly lived in the light of high endeavors, Wordsworth had attained to a large and glorious personal freedom. He was like a man on a high eminence overlooking a broad expanse of country. The slightest change of position presents views of objects remote from each other and varied in kind and nature. He was like the Solitary of his own Excursion, who in the wilds of America

Having gained the top
Of some commanding eminence, which yet
Intruder ne'er beheld, he thence surveys
Regions of wood and wide savannah, vast
Expanse of unappropriated earth,
With mind that sheds a light on what he sees;
Free as the sun and lonely as the sun,
Pouring above his head its radiance down
Upon a living and rejoicing world!

And thus, with a mind that shed light on what it saw and that was as free as the sun and oftentimes as lonely as the sun, Wordsworth had attained a high vantage ground from which to explore nature and human life. But in this unusual self-mastery of his there was wrapped up the weakness of the man as well as his strength. And among those weaknesses is certainly that of arbitrariness. Arbitrary rule is dangerous even though its dominion extends only over one's personal being. Having controlled the despotism of the senses in childhood and the passions and loves of youth, volition now was "free as the sun" and often acted arbitrarily.

There is, of course, a certain amount of arbitrariness in all human natures, as Wordsworth was well aware. He illustrates the presence of this principle in children in the poem, "Anecdote for Fathers." When the five-year-old child in the poem is pressed

for a reason why he would rather be at Kilve than at Liswynfarm, he suddenly catches sight of a weather-cock, and in order to evade further questioning he arbitrarily answers:

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

This principle of arbitrariness is again illustrated in a sonnet the incident of which was drawn from Wordsworth's own experience. He once stood by a harbor that was sprinkled with ships far and nigh. But suddenly, and with no explainable reason, he fixed his eye upon one goodly vessel:

This Ship was naught to me, nor I to her,
Yet I pursued her with a Lover's look;
This Ship to all the rest did I prefer.

He not only preferred to single out a particular ship with the eye, which in itself were a trivial matter, but in weightier affairs, he showed decided preferences rather arbitrarily. His choice of books, his judgment of contemporary authors, his selection of subject matter for poetry, his preference for certain regions of thought—all bear more or less the marks of arbitrary choice. Though not always, he often followed the line of least resistance. But when once the direction was chosen, he followed it resolutely and persistently to the end. His volition focused his feelings and imagination on single ob-

jects of perception and thought until those objects became vivid realities to him and gave up, as he felt, their secret meaning.

Now, from the extraordinary frequency with which allusions are made to his childhood in Wordsworth's poetry, it may be suspected that he chose somewhat arbitrarily to vivify in his later life the memories of that childhood. We are strengthened in our suspicion when we consider with what interest, or rather with what lack of interest, he regarded the period of his life between childhood and maturity. To be sure in the Books from the Third to the Sixth, inclusive, of the *Prelude*, in which poem he deliberately sets out to trace the growth of a poetic mind from childhood to maturity, there is considerable said about adolescence and maturing youth. But even here, especially in the Fourth and Fifth Books, he has a tendency often to slip back into the period of "our simple childhood," which "sits upon a throne that hath more power than all the elements." Again and again he returns to this point of view. Even in the Eighth Book, where according to the natural evolution of the poem he should have passed this period, he not only gives a long retrospective view of that time when nature was "prized for her own sake" and became his joy, but he describes the qualities

of childhood fancies at great length. In the Twelfth and Thirteenth Books, where one would think surely he had done with the subject, he turns upon it more strongly than ever in his attempt to explain the mystery of imagination and taste. He exclaims:

Oh! mystery of man, from what a depth
Proceed thy honors! I am lost, but see
In simple childhood something of the base
On which thy greatness stands.

In fact, with the exception of the Seventh Book, which describes his residence in London and which is perhaps the duller book in the Prelude, and the Ninth, Tenth and Eleventh Books, into which political considerations enter, the Prelude continually eddies about the idea of childhood and never really passes beyond it.

Outside of his inner communings with himself and nature which he had begun in his childhood, Wordsworth has little to say about his college life and vacations that is instructive and inspiring. As if by a preconception that this life can be made up of nothing but superficialities and conventions, he seems resolutely to have set his mind against it. We grant that at Cambridge in Wordsworth's time and at all colleges in his time and in our time, too, there is a vast deal of life that never goes below the surface of things—shallow, mechanical, super-

ficial, conventional, well-nigh dead. But we see, too, that beneath this show of things, deep in the heart of many an adolescent and growing youth there is sincerity, freshness, vitality, genius—which qualities this same college, or these same colleges, will help to unfold and develop, if the youth but give them a chance. And what revelations could a Wordsworth have made had he given himself to study sympathetically some of these same growing and unfolding youths—youths as interesting, one would think, as Westmoreland dalesmen! But Worthworth chose positively not to do this. To state it more charitably, his austere and unbending nature did not permit him to do it. Still more charitably, he actually made efforts to do it; but as he could not do it sympathetically, his efforts were futile. Of himself in those days he says:

My mind was at that time
A parti-coloured show of grave and gay,
Solid and light, shortsighted and profound;
Of inconsiderate habits and sedate,
Consorting in one mansion unproved.

Of course, the gay, the light, the shortsightedness, the inconsiderate habits, were the result of his contact with the sort of society that he considered contaminating. Its repellent force on him was sufficiently strong to prevent him from penetrating

through it to the deeper life that lay hidden there. It may be noted incidentally that Wordsworth observed a duality existing in his nature at this time; but the gay and light self was so feeble in him that it soon dwindled away and died a natural death. This death, however, could not have taken place had Wordsworth not been far less interested in his college experiences than in the experiences of his childhood. He says somewhat indifferently:

Not seeking those who might participate
 My deeper pleasures, easily I passed
 From the remembrance of better things,
 And slipped into ordinary works
 Of careless youth, unburthened, and unalarmed. . . .
 Companionships,
 Friendships, acquaintances, were welcome all.
 We sauntered, played, or rioted; we talked
 Unprofitable talk at morning hours;
 Drifted about along the streets and walks,
 Read lazily in trivial books, went forth
 To gallop through the country in blind zeal
 Of senseless horsemanship, or on the breast
 Of Cam sailed boisterously, and let the stars
 Come forth perhaps without one quiet thought.

It is highly instructive to contrast this allusion to sailing boisterously "on the breast of Cam" and letting the "stars come forth perhaps without one quiet thought," with the description in the First

Book of the Prelude of sailing in an "elfin pinnacle,"
which boat moved on,

Leaving behind her still, on either side,
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,
Until they mettled all into one track
Of sparkling light.

It was not only the boisterous sailing on the breast of Cam, but the companionships, the unprofitable talk, the reading of trivial books, the senseless horsemanship—these all were matters of indifference to him; and the fact that they were so, produced a sort of a gap in the otherwise continuousness of his life. A link between his childhood and manhood was lost, which void gave rise to a sense of double consciousness, a consciousness of himself and some other Being:

So wide appears
The vacancy between me and those days
Which yet have such self-presence in my mind
That, musing on them, often do I seem
Two consciousnesses, conscious of myself
And of some other Being.

There is an important psychological observation underlying this passage. The claim for Wordsworth that he is a philosopher has often been challenged, but it has never been disputed that he is the keenest of psychologists. One of the professed purposes of his work was to trace "the

primary laws of our nature, chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement." He was both an experimental and an introspective psychologist. Although antedating modern science and modern scientific methods, he put such a series of questions to children and peasants about their reasons for things that would do justice to a modern psychological questionnaire:

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

Wordsworth was introspective also, and when he writes such an introspective passage as the second above, we must look carefully into its psychological import. It is a simple fact of psychology that when any memory images are recalled and brooded over they become more vivid and lifelike than ordinary memory images, and can be made as vivid and lifelike as the images of immediate perception. Our theory thus far has been that Wordsworth, following somewhat the line of least resistance, deliberately and arbitrarily vivified the "remem-

brance of those long past hours" of childhood at the expense of the memories of adolescent years; and that, as a consequence, the aggregate memories of childhood stood in his mind somewhat apart from his ideas and images of immediate perception, so that he simultaneously felt conscious of himself and some other Being.

There is a curious affirmation of our theory in a passage near the close of the Third Book of the Prelude. After recounting a tournament of blows, "feuds, factions, flatteries, enmity, guile, murmuring, submission, bold government," and sundry other uninteresting matters relating to college life, Wordsworth says:

Of these and other kindred notices
I cannot say what portion is in truth
The naked recollection of that time,
And what may rather have been called to life
By after meditation.

This is an affirmation of our theory because one can conceive of Wordsworth admitting the possibility of mistake in such a judgment only in case of a profound indifference to the subject in hand; it is a curious affirmation because there is not a single admission of doubt anywhere in the Prelude with regard to his childhood memories. The intensity with which Wordsworth brooded over his

childhood experience canceled all doubt that perhaps some of the memories of them might have been "called to life by after meditation."

The fact, however, that Wordsworth arbitrarily vivified the memories of childhood is not a fact of sufficient weight to account fully for this strangely divided consciousness. There is a deeper cause for it. There was another force that wrought in conjunction with his will toward the same end. That force was the great external fact of Wordsworth's late youth and early manhood, the fact, namely, of the French Revolution. During his adolescent years and up to the dawn of his vital interest in the Revolution, he was much given to introspective tendencies. In the parts of the *Prelude* relating to this period of time, are many passages that speak of the "reasonings of the mind turned inward." It was his wont to separate himself from his companions and allow his "mind to turn into herself." He early discovered that

Caverns there are within my mind which sun
Could never penetrate.

But in early days of youth this tendency towards introspection may easily become abnormal, and there is a slight touch of the morbid and the hectic in some of Wordsworth's youthful moodiness. There existed in his mind, he says, at this time,

A treasonable growth
Of indecisive judgments, that impaired
And shook the mind's simplicity.

He slightly overstrained the instrument of introspection that was to do such effective work in later years. This excess, however, can easily be overlooked in the light of the fact that he now also perfected this instrument for future use.

But when, in his twenty-second year, Wordsworth became vitally alive to the agitation, the sorrow, and the terror of the Revolution, he was completely, though slowly, taken out of himself. His mind turned from within, outward:

I gradually withdrew
Into a noisier world, and thus ere long
Became a patriot; and my heart was all
Given to the people, and my love was theirs.

And when later he was at the point of leaving France, he assures us that he would

At this time with willing heart
Have undertaken for a cause so great
Service however dangerous.

And the only reason why he did not perform this "service however dangerous" was that he was preemptorily called home by his guardians. His summons home, however, did not lessen his enthusiasm for the cause of the Revolution but rather heightened it. It is a common experience that a

man's enthusiasm for a cause is heightened when his hands are tied so that he cannot play the part in it he has espoused in his heart. Wordsworth had been at Orleans and had learned the local and national characteristics of the French. He had been at Blois and for three months had associated intimately with Beaupuy, who opened his mind to the real issues of the Revolution. He had seen the hunger-bitten girl and the heifer, which incident greatly enforced the arguments of Beaupuy that a benignant spirit was abroad to destroy such poverty; and Wordsworth's deepest chords of sympathy were touched. He had accepted the September Massacre as a necessary violence during a revolution, for, as he explained a little later, "a time of revolution is not a season of true liberty." He had been in Paris and had "passed the prison where the unhappy Monarch lay," and that night in a high and lonely room he had felt most deeply in what world he was, what ground he trod on, what air he breathed. He thought of the September Massacre and of the Monarch in the prison, and conjured up similar scenes from "tragic fictions or true history." "And in this way," he says,

I wrought upon myself
Until I seemed to hear the voice that cried
To the whole city, "Sleep no more."

He had already clearly perceived that the forces at work in the Revolution did not arise in a day and were not the harvest of "popular government and equality," but he clearly saw

That neither these nor aught
Of wild belief engrafted on their names
By false philosophy had caused the woe,
But a terrific reservoir of guilt
And ignorance filled up from age to age
That could no longer hold its loathsome charge,
But burst and spread in deluge through the land.

What he did not perceive as clearly at this time was that it would take as many ages for the reservoir of guilt and ignorance to disappear as it had been in filling up from age to age. He had, on the contrary, looked for the immediate appearance of a new and glorious era of liberty.

He had also revolved in his mind "how much the destiny of man had still hung upon single persons," and if perchance he himself were destined by providence to lead the people through the present crisis, he would not thwart the designs of providence, but would be ready for the sacrifice. Reluctantly indeed, then, did he obey the summons that called him back to England. When once at home, he was unable to act, but was given much time to meditate. Then it was that the full power and the spirit of the Revolution reverberated

through his whole sensitive nature. His senses and feelings and moral being were as alive to the issues of the Revolution as they had ever been to the forces of nature. He was filled with the highest hopes and the most sanguine aspirations; but these hopes and aspirations were soon doomed to disappointment. It was only a few months after this that England declared war against the French Revolutionists, and Wordsworth's moral nature was given its first great shock:

No shock

Given to my moral nature had I known
Down to that very moment; neither lapse
Nor turn of sentiment that might be named
A revolution, save at this one time;
All else was progress on the self-same path
On which with a diversity of pace
I had been travelling; this a stride at once
Into another region.

But the stride was not as swift as one would surmise from this passage. Wordsworth's affections for his native country and his native soil were of slow growth and were deeply rooted. And slowly and painfully his alienation wrought itself into his character.

But a second shock was awaiting him. It came when the French Revolutionists took aggressive steps in subduing the efforts made for liberty in

Switzerland. France herself was abandoning the cause of human liberty, and Wordsworth's sympathies were alienated:

Frenchmen had changed a war of self-defence
For one of conquest, losing sight of all
Which they had struggled for.

Cut off from sympathy with his own country and with the country whose cause he had espoused, he was thrown back into himself more violently and more completely than he had been taken out of himself. For a number of years his depression was as great as his hopes and aspirations had been high. Were all his aspirations for the relief of suffering humanity vain and foolish? Were there no grounds at all for the confidence he placed in human good? Was he, then, utterly wrong in his social and political ideals, and was life after all nothing but an empty mockery? These questions demanded answers. For Wordsworth there was just one method of finding answers to them and of escaping from his depression, the method, namely, of associating with the simple life and society of his early surroundings. Unfortunately this method was remote from his thoughts at first and he attempted another way of escape. He tried to find solace for his tempest-tossed soul in the speculative philosophies of his day:

This was the time, when, all things tending fast
To depravation, speculative schemes—
That promised to abstract the hopes of Man
Out of his feelings, to be fixed thenceforth
Forever in a purer element—
Found ready welcome.

But in that speculative scheming which promised to abstract the hopes of Man out of his feelings. Wordsworth was wholly outside of his natural sphere. Perhaps none of the world's great geniuses have been more helpless than Wordsworth in mere abstract speculation. Here he was not only "out of the pale of love," his sentiment "soured and corrupted, upwards to the source," but he was really doing violence to his nature, his affections and his powers. And the result of this prolonged experience was that he lost

All feeling of conviction, and, in fine,
Sick, wearied out with contrarities,
Yielded up moral questions in despair.

This was the "soul's last and lowest ebb," and he turned for a time to the study of abstract science with the faint hope that his mind might be drawn away from the dark moral questions that had haunted it.

But now he had come to live with his sister, and her association, together with the surroundings of simple life and nature, began to be a healing

balm to the wounds of his mind, and gradually, as by inches, he recovered from his depression. As the process went on, memories of his early childhood joys, sweet and strong, came trooping into his mind. Associations with familiar haunts of childhood vividly recalled many memories that had been these years slumbering but half consciously in his mind. In the presence of these new joys of childhood memories, the immediate past became almost as a blank to him. His voluntary indifference to his college experiences and the tragic reaction of his interest in the Revolution, that is, the character of the man and the spirit of the times, wrought together to cut his life, as it were, in twain, and the days of his childhood stood out in bold relief from the rest of his life. They were now the only memories of the past that he could associate with all that he held most dear. Separated from him in point of time, they stood in his mind as an aggregate whole distinctly apart from his ideas and images of immediate perception. "So wide appears the vacancy between me and those days," it will be remembered the passage runs, that "often do I seem two consciousnesses, conscious of myself and of some other Being." What a unique and interested bit of psychology is this when viewed in the right perspective!

Since these childhood memories were the most sacred things of the past to him he would cling to them as to life, and with that frugality of mind which loses no opportunities, he would turn them to the best account. So he cherished them and nurtured them all back to life, and they became to him a living and vital reality. It is not to be wondered at, then, as he came back into the same surroundings and atmosphere in which he had spent his passionate life of childhood, and heard the same sounds and saw the same sights over again that he would make one of his characters in a poem say :

My eyes are dim with childish tears,
My heart is idly stirred,
For the same sound is in my ears
Which in those days I heard;—

nor that in many another poem written soon after his recovery from the depression of the Revolution his mind would constantly slip back to the time of childhood, which he now believed held the key to the secret of the profoundest meanings of life :

Our childhood sits,
Our simple childhood, sits upon a throne
That hath more power than all the elements,
I guess not what this tells of Being past,
Nor what it augurs of the life to come;—

nor that, finally, in the Twelfth Book of the Prelude, after having finished the story of his despondency following the Revolution in the Eleventh, he would luxuriate, nay, fairly revel, in the beauties and powers wrapped up in the potencies of childhood with such passages of strength and intensity as the following :

I roamed from hill to hill, from rock to rock,
Still craving combinations of new forms,
New pleasure, wider empire for the sight,
Proud of her own endowments, and rejoiced
To lay the inner faculties asleep.

Before I was called forth
From the retirement of my native hills,
I loved whate'er I saw ; nor lightly loved,
But most intensely ; never dreamt of aught
More grand, more fair, more exquisitely framed
Than those few nooks to which my happy feet
Were limited. I had not at that time
Lived long enough, nor in the least survived
The first diviner influence of this world,
As it appears to unaccustomed eyes.

I roamed, in daily presence of this scene
Upon the naked pool and dreary crags,
And on the melancholy beacon, fell
A spirit of pleasure and youth's golden gleam ;
And think ye not with radiance more sublime
For these remembrances, and for the power
They have left behind ? So feeling comes in aid

Of feeling, and diversity of strength
Attends us, if but once we have been strong.
Oh! mystery of man, from what a depth
Proceed thy honors! I am lost, but see
In simple childhood something of the base
On which thy greatness stands.

And although these and like passages are not to be wondered at when viewed in the light of their development, they are also not to be accepted uncritically as having universal validity and as giving a normal perspective of the truth of life. They are rather to be regarded as exaggerated and highly individualized experiences, with a certain amount of truth and validity underlying them.

And now, that we have, in the light of the enfoldment of Wordsworth's character and the Revolutionary times through which he had just passed, traced the development of his interest in childhood memories and have seen how it happened that he came to prize them so highly, it will be our next task to consider what particular meaning and validity they had for Wordsworth, and what universal meaning and validity they may have permanently.

CHAPTER III

MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD: THEIR ETHICAL MEANING.

Since Wordsworth's life of childhood was almost wholly a life of passionate love for natural objects, his return to the memories of his childhood was simultaneous with his returning interest in nature. Hence these two experiences of his are inextricably bound up with each other, and we only speak of them separately for the purpose of exposition. In his essay on Wordsworth's Ethics, Leslie Stephen says, "The great problem of life, that is, as he conceives it, is to secure continuity between the period at which we are guided by half-conscious instincts, and that in which man is able to supply the place of those primitive impulses by reasoned conviction. This is the thought which comes over and over again in his deepest poems and round which all his teachings center." It would perhaps be more accurate to say that a great many poems

written round and about the time of the composition of the Prelude, touch upon this idea; that in the light of the enfoldment of Wordsworth's character and the revolutionary times through which he had just passed, it was peculiarly necessary for him to attempt a unity of the two ends of his life that had been almost broken asunder; and that, instead of attempting to find a continuity between the instincts of childhood and the reason of man as such, Wordsworth, who had just been thoroughly convinced of the absolute hollowness of rationalism and of all abstract speculation, was really attempting either to transcend reason or to level it down to the basis of childhood experiences themselves. Wordsworth was now wholly on the side of the intuitionists, and he would give no quarters to the rationalists. He carried the revolutionary method and spirit with him. Though he may have become a "lost leader" from the political point of view, he had no intentions of giving up revolutionary leadership in other fields. He fell back upon his personal experiences as a basis for operation. Since the experiences of his childhood were the only ones that had not played him false, he believed in their validity; and he would dare to make the most of them.

And here he comes into harmony with the

movement in English Literature called the Romantic movement. As has often been said, the Romantic movement can be defined only in negative terms. If there was one quality, however, that all the leaders of the movement possessed, it was the insistence on the expression of personal liberty and personal experience. These experiences were as varied as the individuals engaged in the movement, and, therefore, the movement has no other important quality common to all its leaders. But this spirit of insistence on the expression of personal experience gave Wordsworth the courage of his convictions; and would it not have been so, perhaps those strange and beautiful raptures of his childhood would have never been brought to light. It must not be supposed, however, that he was acting with a conscious gusto in the matter. He was being deeply and vitally moved by the spirit of his times, and his conscious will wrought in harmony with that spirit; and he was in dead earnest. The robe of the prophet had now fallen upon him. He had become a mystic and a seer. He had already come into possession of his poetical powers. He was now formulating his poetic principles both in prose and in verse. He had said that the poet, like the prophet, has "a sense that fits him to perceive objects unseen before." His

mind ranged down the scale of thought to the instincts and impulses of childhood; it ranged up the scale through reasoning to a transcendent region of experience. And these two remote ends of experience, he felt, met in a harmony of truth in one's immediate experience of memory, or recollection. And so the memories of childhood, which had been rejected by the builders, became one of the foundation stones in his experiment of life.

These memories of childhood, then, were for Wordsworth no mere poetic fancies or figments of the imagination, but they stood in his mind as a great reality. And, first of all, they were an ethical reality, since they were for him the source of joy, tranquility, and intimations of immortality. In late years once, it is true, in a very scientific and unpoetic frame of mind, Wordsworth declared that in his childhood he was of a "stiff, moody, violent temper." No doubt this is scientifically and unpoetically accurate. But according to his theory now, there was beneath this moody and unbending self, another and deeper self in the child, not tainted with original sin, but invested with glorious and heavenly attributes; and the experiences of this deeper self of the child furnished the material for the will and memory to act upon. It cannot be stated too early that one of the

characteristics of the mystic is that he insists on the validity of immediate experience. Wordsworth, it will be remembered, said that an early emotion may be contemplated in tranquility, "till, by a species of reaction, the tranquility gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind." His will, focusing his feelings upon some past experience, produces an emotion that does actually exist in the mind and has immediate validity. In this sense, a memory image or an imaginative picture is as valuable to the mind as an actual perceptive image. This is characteristic of much of Wordsworth's experience. Witness one of many examples that might be given:

That very day,
From a bare ridge we also first beheld
Unveiled the summit of Mont Blanc, and grieved
To have a soulless image on the eye
That had usurped upon a living thought
That never more could be.

The "living thought" of imagination is to be valued more than the "soulless image" of perception. The important point to seize is that a mental image is to be valued for its own sake. So, upon the most sacred experiences of his past, Wordsworth long

and earnestly focused his feelings and imaginative thought until, around these experiences as a center, there irradiated a dome of light which he called the golden age, heaven, immortality. These glorified present memory experiences which had their concrete basis in childhood was what Wordsworth prized. They brought him joy and tranquility and intimations of immortality.

Immortality is at best a vague and shadowy thing for us here below. We can never do more than speculate about it on this side of the grave. We can only have intimations of it. We can see it only, so to speak, through a key hole; and there are many key holes; and it matters little which we choose. Naturally we choose that which appeals most to our experiences. Wordsworth chose the key hole of his childhood experiences. Long and earnestly he peered through it into the shadowy and invisible world. Often he thought "of Eternity, of first, and last, and midst, and without end," and of "life, death, eternity! momentous themes;" and he could not guess what our childhood, our simple childhood "tells of Being past, nor what it augurs of the life to come." Joy, tranquility, intimations of immortality—these are substantial results in the experiment of life. And since our childhood, which "sits upon a throne that hath more power than all

the elements," is the substantial basis upon which they rest, the memories of childhood have absolute validity in Wordsworth's scheme of life.

To the question as to the ultimate ethical meaning and validity of Wordsworth's theory of childhood memories, our answers are various. Because of the very nature of the question, personal experiences and temperamental differences enter into the opinions of those who judge. Perhaps the only point upon which there can be a real consensus of opinion is that a number of passages, as, for example, those quoted in the preceding chapter, taken singly cannot be accepted at their face value. They must be considered as polemical and exaggerated statements of a well enough defined principle that underlies them. The reason for these exaggerations lies in Wordsworth's revolutionary zeal in opposing abstract speculation and logical reason, in his vigorous defence of a doctrine opposed to cold-hearted science, that "false secondary power by which we multiply distinctions." Not that he was opposed to scientific facts as facts. No one was a closer and more careful observer of the habits and conduct of animals, children, and human beings. But the whole energy of his mind was leveled against dry scientific and speculative systems; and in his fervor to state his

own positive convictions, he fell into making exaggerated statements. Incident to these exaggerations, there is sometimes a lack of clearness to distinguish between childhood experiences and the memories of those experiences. When cleared of its exaggerations and its ambiguity, the doctrine is essentially a doctrine of recollection, which resolves itself really into the simplicity of a psychological method rather than the dignity of a philosophical system. The child is not really the philosopher *in esse* but is the philosopher *in posse*. He possesses fresh and divine potencies which, if conserved and transmuted, will constitute the solid substance in the experience of the philosopher that is to be.

Reduced, then, to its normal proportions, what is the ultimate meaning and validity of this doctrine? Here it is that the widest difference of critical opinion prevails, and perhaps will always continue to prevail, due mainly to personal experience and temperamental preferences. It all depends upon the point of view. To the hard-headed reasoner there is little in this doctrine that commends itself. He will insist that it must be submitted to the arbitrament of scientific fact. It is certain that in childhood there is a great deal

of impotence. The perceptive faculties are not trained. The imagination is crude. Thought is embryonic. To be sure, in childhood there is innocence and sweetness. But it is the innocence of ignorance and the sweetness of inexperience. Besides, in some types of childhood, at least, there is plenty of anger, spiteful jealousies, wrangling, screaming, and getting red in the face. And it is precisely the memory of these sharp and thorny experiences that rankle in the mind in after years. True indeed is all this, Wordsworth would reply. He himself had visitings of those moodier hours. He had experienced all the manifest weaknesses of childhood. He would not write himself down as a polished and philosophical little scholar. He would not put a false veneer on the facts. They are written large in the *Prelude*, so that he who runs may read. But deeper and more vital facts than these Wordsworth also found in his childhood. His childhood, at bottom, he discovered was a wonderful compact of instincts and impulses that defied all analysis. There were gleams of light at opportune times. There were occasional flashes of insight into the life of things. His soul, like every other serious soul, had known its god-like hours:

There's not a man
That lives who hath not known his god-like hours,
And feels not what an empire we inherit,
As natural beings in the strength of Nature.

It does not require the occult wisdom of a philosopher to distinguish broadly between these higher moments of inspiration and the lower moods of sullenness. It lies within the power of every individual's will and memory to recreate the exalted moments of life until they are lived over again in the mind. This, then, may become a universal method of life and a panacea for its ills.

There is, however, a still more serious objection to be made from the standpoint of scientific fact. Our perspective of childhood naturally tends to become untrue. There is a natural inclination in us to give additional colors to the joys and pleasures of the past. In his zeal to revive his memories of childhood experiences Wordsworth did not guard against the possible deception that some of them might have been "called to life by after meditation." And, therefore, he unconsciously drifted into an attitude towards his childhood experiences that is essentially unscientific and seems to be based on prejudice. To a disinterested person this natural inclination of the mind can easily be illustrated from experience. I remember

the schoolhouse in which I attended school as a child. It was the largest schoolhouse in the neighborhood. To me it seemed spacious indeed. I always carried an idea of its spaciousness with me. Some years after I had left the schoolhouse I came back to it. Then it appeared to me not spacious, but small, dingy, and stuffy. My memory image that I had carried with me these years was shattered. Most of our early memory images, if they could be tested likewise, would be shattered. From the scientific standpoint, then, Wordsworth seems to take a prejudiced position, for he deliberately chose not to have his memory images shattered. But he would not, of course, defend this position from the standpoint of prejudice; he would defend it from the standpoint of subjective experience. He would not have the vision from within invaded and outdone by the outward facts of life:

We have a vision of our own

Oh! why should we undo it?

The immediate psychic entity in the form of a memory image was to him as valuable as the original experience from which that memory image took its rise. Though showing a reverent attitude toward the outward and verifiable facts of science, he showed a greater reverence for the immediate

facts of consciousness. Whether an imaginative picture, or a memory image, or a transfused or interfused presence, the inner fact of consciousness held priority of validity in his mind. And at this point, Wordsworth, the mystic, parts company with those who insist on objective standards of scientific accuracy to decide what is true reality. And it is exactly on these grounds of difference that critics are divided as to the ultimate value of Wordsworth's theory of childhood memories.

This same divergence, based on two widely different methods of approaching the problems of life, is manifested in the criticism that has been written on the famous "Ode on Intimations of Immortality." The conclusion, it may be argued, that there is a future life is based on the hypothesis of a pre-existent life. The hypothesis of a pre-existent life is based on the hypothesis that heaven lies about us in our infancy, which latter hypothesis, being the major premise, ought to be an uncontroversial fact—a thing which most of us are quite unwilling to admit. Wordsworth reasons in a circle and there is no logical foundation for his thought. So says the man of logical thought and of scientific accuracy. On the other hand, it may be argued that in the immortal life which is a new state of existence, there may be a complete transcendence

of our known order of time. Accordingly, then, in eternity there is no such thing as time. Before and after, past and present, are terms not in the vocabulary of angels and the immortals. This idea is presented more clearly in a passage in the Fourteenth Book of the Prelude. One night after a glorious vision from the top of a mountain in which Wordsworth says—

The Moon hung naked in a firmament
Of azure without cloud, and at my feet
Rested a silent sea of hoary mist—

after this vision had partially dissolved into air, it appeared to him the “type of a majestic intellect”:

There I beheld the emblem of a mind
That feeds upon infinity, that broods
Over the dark abyss, intent to hear
Its voices issuing forth to silent light
In one continuous stream.

And like unto this majestic intellect that feeds upon infinity and that broods over the dark abyss, are the higher minds of human beings when inspired, which minds live in a world of life,

By sensible impressions not enthralled,
But by their quickening impulse made more prompt
To hold fit converse with the spiritual world,
And with the generations of mankind
Spread over time, past, present, and to come,
Age after age till Time shall be no more.

Just as time—past, present, and to come—is nothing to the inspired mind that can hold fit converse with the spiritual world, so our known order of time seems to be transcended in the Ode in which Wordsworth reached his highest point of inspiration. We have here, then, practically nothing to do with pre-existence and future life as such—it is simply one ever-present eternal state. And why should not the stray gleams of the pure white light of childhood intimate to us, as strongly as does any other phase of our experience, the life immortal?

Or, waiving the point of actual transcendence of time and granting that the poem is of a sufficiently earthly mold to have remained within the regular mundane order of time, we can still maintain from the intuitionist's or mystical standpoint that Wordsworth's grounds are perfectly tenable. The fulcrum, so to speak, upon which the mind turns from pre-existence to the future life, is not the objective experience represented in the child, but the subjective immediate memory experience of the poet. From the standpoints of tone, feeling, motive, and meaning of the poem as a whole, the passage,

O joy! that in our embers
Is something that doth live—

is much more nearly at the core of it than the passage,

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting.

In after years Wordsworth explained to his readers that he had used the theory of pre-existence merely as a device, making the best of it that he could as a poet. Some have said the explanation was due to the weakness of old age; it would be more fair perhaps to say that it was due to the sanity of old age. Leslie Stephen says Wordsworth took unnecessary pains in making the explanation. It may be so, but judging from the extraordinary proneness of human beings to clutch at something outward and objective, something away from themselves, as a basis for reasoning and faith, Wordsworth's admonition is not at all superfluous. He publicly said of the theory that "it is far too shadowy a notion to be recommended to faith, as more than an element in our instincts of immortality." But in spite of his disclaiming all rights to the theory, critics have again and again foisted it upon him as though there were something distinctly Wordsworthian in it.

In short, Wordsworth's theory of childhood memories has constantly been discussed as though the question of *origin* were the prime question to decide. Undoubtedly the whole trend of modern

thought on the question of origin is to explain the marvellous illuminations that come to children as the reverberations of past life in its physical and psychical evolution. A modern scientist, Dr. G. Stanley Hall, who of all living men has perhaps collected the largest number of facts concerning childhood and adolescence, speaks like a poet, yet with the authority of science, when he says, "Whatever soul-stuff may or may not be, it is most susceptible and responsive to all present influences, and also, in a yet far deeper sense, most pervaded with reverberations from an innumerable past." And again, "We are influenced in our deeper, more temperamental dispositions by the life-habits and code of conduct of we know not what innumerable hosts of ancestors, which like a cloud of witnesses are present through our lives; and our souls are echo chambers in which their whispers reverberate." No doubt, the pre-existent theory must gradually give way to the more scientific theory. Nor does this latter theory in any way degrade the value and meaning of childhood memories. For the theory in question is influenced by a second trend of modern thought, the trend, namely, to distinguish sharply between two kinds of judgments—existential and spiritual. The first is a judgment of origin, the second a judgment of value. Since these two

judgments are independent of each other, the value of a thing cannot be determined by its origin, whether that origin be lowly or high. Whether the child is a product of a long physical and psychological evolutionary process, or whether its soul comes directly from a state of spiritual pre-existence, its present spiritual experience has precisely the same value. "By their fruits ye shall know them, not by their roots." And with this latter conception Wordsworth was thoroughly in harmony. Whatever we may believe about the origin of child life, and whatever Wordsworth may have believed about it, it was "from a sense of the indomitableness of the spirit" that was in him as a child, and much more from the sense of the volitional and indomitable spirit in him as a man, which he felt would not and could not die, that gives genuineness and permanent vitality to the Ode. The fame of the Ode cannot rest on any question of origin.

Although Wordsworth was intellectually curious enough to wish to know the origin of life, yet his chief interest centered in the operations of his will and memory upon his childhood experiences, for the purpose of producing an immediate illumination in his mind. And, in the moment of inspiration, he joined the memories of instinctive and impulsive childhood with an experience that transcended

reason and time. But this new experience defies any sensible and rational explanation, says the man of a scientific temper of mind. Be it so; and since it must be so, men of this temper of mind will always find in Wordsworth a rock of offense after a certain point has been reached. They will find a permanent satisfaction in Jeffries's and Macaulay's commonsense way of dealing with Wordsworth. On the other hand, men whose temperaments are like that of Wordsworth's, will always rate Wordsworth and his doctrine of childhood memories extremely high. The intensity with which he focused his mind upon his childhood experiences, and the still greater intensity with which he penetrated the mysterious truths of consciousness to which the memories of those experiences were an inlet, will be to these critics but a natural complement to his extraordinary grasp on the essential and fundamental facts of every-day life, and to his power of extracting out of the very pain and sorrow and tumult of that life, deep pleasure, joy, and tranquility.

Let us now turn from the speculative side of the theory of childhood memories to the practical side. No doubt there is something in this doctrine that has validity for all alike. The two views we have just been discussing are by no means mutually

exclusive. They are not diametrically opposed. It is only a question of emphasis, whether the emphasis be placed on the objective, verifiable facts of life, or on the inner visions of the mind and the unverifiable facts of consciousness. But there is a large ground between that is common to both. Much of this common ground is in the practical and the ordinarily human. Whether we be of a scientific or of a mystical temper of mind, it is laid upon us all to live largely by some memories of the past, for out of the past we construct the present and very largely determine the future. Childhood memories, purged of all crassness by time, are beautiful and pure. They are as good to live by as any others, far better than the memories, let us say, of some youthful carousal. Every one has some memories of childhood—innocent, sweet, spontaneous childhood, ignorant, inexperienced, and weak though it be—and such memories, glorified and idealized, act as vitalizers of our living present; they simplify and purify, they bring peace and tranquility, and they produce substantial fruits for life. All men in their old age revive the memories of childhood. Through the influence of strange circumstances and by conscious effort, Wordsworth merely hastened the process. Any one can hasten the process by

conscious effort. By way of experiment, I fixed my mind for a half hour upon some particularly pleasing experience of my childhood. The memory of that experience grew more and more vivid. Forgotten details of the incident came to life. Was that little child that figured in the incident really I, I myself? I caught the spirit of childhood innocence and naturalness. Peace and tranquility came. I can fully recommend the experiment to persons too much care-worn with the affairs of this world. The practice of recalling childhood experiences can be engaged in by every one. The exercise furnishes not only a source of perennial charm, but produces a moral and tranquillizing effect.

Another practical phase of the doctrine is that when it is connected, as it was in Wordsworth, with a general theory of optimism, time and nature help to bring about good results with the memories of the past. For, if we conceive the world in which we live as constitutionally good instead of evil, and that everything tends toward the development of the former, then good memories have a better chance of surviving in the mind than bad memories. And, as time goes on, nature assists the mind in purifying the memories of the past and in giving them a lovely halo in the present. Even to a less

optimistic mind than that of Wordsworth, the doctrine is practical, as, for example, to Matthew Arnold's mind, for Arnold says that

Tasks in hours of insight will'd,
Can be through hours of gloom fulfill'd.

Even as to a stoical mind, the very fulfilment of the tasks willed in hours of insight will dispel the gloom and lighten the drudgery of life, much more will this result follow in an optimistic temper of mind.

There is still another practical observation that may be made on this doctrine. It is that in a much deeper sense than that of which we are conscious our lives have taken their bias from childhood experiences. As we grow older we learn more and more that what we have been all these years has been determined for us largely by the conditions of our childhood; that the very molds of our minds have been cast into their characteristic shapes at an early and pliable age; that sometimes the slightest incidents of childhood may give a coloring to all our subsequent thoughts and actions: that the depth of our insights and sincerity is distinctly foreshadowed by the depth of our childish insights and serious moments; that, just as to the boy whom the "cliffs and islands of Winander" knew so well,

“a gentle shock of mild surprise has carried far into his heart the voice of mountain torrent,” so the impact of our first impressions has carried far into each man’s heart those “first-born affinities that fit our new existence to existing things.” Of these facts Wordsworth was far more deeply conscious than we.

He was also aware that he was wrought upon by the experiences of childhood in ways that defied conscious exposition. These unconscious and unfathomable workings in the child’s mind is what gives Wordsworth a profound reverence for child-life. This is most touchingly and powerfully expressed in the last six lines of the following sonnet, which sonnet, it may be said parenthetically, has as many felicitous lines as any sonnet can have, since they are all felicitous:

It is a beauteous evening calm and free,
The holy time is quiet as a Nun
Breathless with adoration; the broad sun
Is sinking down in its tranquility;
The gentleness of heaven broods o’er the Sea:
Listen! the mighty Being is awake,
And doth with his eternal motion make
A sound like thunder—everlastingly.
Dear Child! dear Girl! that walkest with me here,
If thou appear untouched by solemn thought,

Thy nature is not therefore less divine :
Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year ;
And worship'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee when we know it not.

And since God is with the child "when we know it not," the ultimatum of Wordsworth's doctrine of childhood memories was left by him, as it must always be left, shrouded in deep mystery. Yet he had learned, a thing that many of us never do learn, that the traditions of our childhood can and ought to be the most sacred traditions of the past—traditions that will give us the buoyancy of youth, that will tend to smooth down the rough places in life, that will help to build up and sustain our moral being.

We have now seen that the memories of childhood stood in Wordsworth's mind as a great ethical reality; that, due to his opposition to the rationalism and the cold-hearted science of his day and to the intensity of his own convictions, he fell into exaggerated and sometimes ambiguous statements of his doctrine; that the doctrine is at the bottom one of recollection—an immediate memory experience accompanied by such an intensity of feeling as to produce a state of mind that transcends reason; that men of cool, calculating temperaments will never have much sympathy with this doctrine;

that men of emotional and mystical temperaments will find in it the highest expression of some of their deepest intuitions and innermost experiences; that the questions of origin and of time are not important in the consideration of the "Ode on Intimations of Immortality"; that the subjective, immediate-memory experience, transcending reason and time, together with the volitional and indomitable spirit in the poet, lie at the core of the Ode and give the poem its genuineness and permanent vitality; that men will differ temperamentally in their judgment on the Ode in the same way as on the doctrine of childhood memories; and that, finally, on the practical and ordinarily human side, the doctrine of childhood memories may have validity for all alike in the following points: 1. Since we must all live by some memories of the past, childhood memories are especially commendable because they naturally tend to bring peace and tranquility. 2. Granting the basis of an optimistic scheme of life, we may be sure that the best memories will survive and the best moments of life will be recalled and lived over again. 3. Since the experiences of our childhood always deeply mold our subsequent life, it is the part of wisdom to recognize them as the most sacred traditions of our past.

The memories of childhood, however, were not only an ethical, but also an aesthetic reality to Wordsworth. We shall, therefore, now turn to the study of the subject from the standpoint of aesthetics.

CHAPTER IV

MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD: THEIR ARTISTIC VALUE

In the preceding chapter a distinction has been made between the doctrine of childhood memories as held by Wordsworth and one that may be of universal practicability. Undoubtedly Wordsworth brooded so intensely on his childhood experiences that his doctrine in its real essence will never be practiced by any considerable number of individuals; for it is this degree of intensity rather than any peculiar view attached to it that gives the doctrine its mark of distinction. It is the degree of intensity that produced an illumination in Wordsworth's mind, which illumination in turn caused him to feel that these memories were an inlet into new truths of consciousness. And it must further be noted that this intensity could not be kept up even in Wordsworth for any great length of time, but that it gradually burnt itself out and

produced a hardened and solidifying effect on his character. We need not be surprised to find, therefore, that nearly everything that is distinctive concerning this doctrine was expressed within a period of about eight years, that is, between the time of the composition of "Tintern Abbey" in 1798 and the completion of the "Ode on Intimations of Immortality" in 1806.

The little poem, "We Are Seven," it is true, was written before "Tintern Abbey," but here the point of view of the poet is comparatively more objective. The poem is based on a psychological observation made upon the mind of a little child eight years of age. The child herself is drawn as a simple but an unusual rustic beauty:

She had a rustic woodland air,
And she was wildly clad:
Her eyes were fair, and very fair;
—Her beauty made me glad.

Informed with the spirit of life and vitality, the child, Wordsworth found, could only think of her dead brother and sister laid in the church-yard as really informed with the same life and vitality as herself. Though in the closest proximity to death, the child could form no notion whatever of the meaning of death. In this fact of childhood intuition Wordsworth found a strong confirmation of his

own remembered experience that nothing in childhood had been more difficult than to admit the notion of death as a state applicable to his own being. He seems not to have perceived with the same clearness, however, that if a child were to be questioned as to its ideas of abstract principles it would be as helpless in this as in forming an idea of death, which is but another form of an abstraction to the mind. But this somewhat naive acceptance of the child's positive notion of life, resulting from the indomitable spirit of activity within, lies at the root of much of Wordsworth's theory and practice of life during the years immediately following the recovery of the reactionary influence of the Revolution. And although in "We Are Seven" the point of view is somewhat objective, the poem already contains the germ of the idea that almost completely absorbed Wordsworth's mind for a time, and that became more and more subjective with him until it finally found full expression in the "Ode on Intimations of Immortality."

It must be granted also that there are a good many poems after 1806 that have to do with childhood. But here the point of view of the poet has again become quite objective, and the poems contain only such ideas as would be expressed by any poet

of power were he to compose poems about children, without claiming to hold any distinctive doctrine about childhood memories. Such, for example, is the poem "Characteristics of a Child Three Years Old," which begins with:

Loving she is, and tractable, though wild;
And Innocence hath privilege in her
To dignify arch looks and laughing eyes.

This child is a "happy creature," who of herself
Is all sufficient, solitude to her
Is blithe society, who fills the air
With gladness and involuntary songs.

Such is the poem "The Infant," which likewise sets forth the spontaneity of childhood:

Unquiet Childhood here by special grace
Forgets her nature, opening like a flower
That neither feeds nor wastes its vital power
In painful struggles.

Such is the poem addressed to a mother "upon the birth of her first-born child":

Like a ship-wrecked Sailor tost
By rough waves on a perilous coast,
Lies the Babe, in helplessness
And in tenderest nakedness,
Flung by laboring nature forth
Upon the mercies of the earth.

And in this case there is no special need of a pre-existent state to give the child power to baffle death, for heavenly guardians are constantly brooding near the child and are breathing upon it

Something like the faintest breath
That has power to baffle death—
Beautiful, while very weakness
Captivates like passive meekness.

These extracts illustrate sufficiently the statement that the poems about children after 1806 are sympathetic studies of the sweetness, meekness, and spontaneity of children, and express only such ideas as are held in common by all lovers of children.

To this statement, however, there must immediately be made one important exception. Once only during these years did Wordsworth reproduce vividly the magic inward experience based on the memory of his childhood. Near the close of the poem "composed upon an evening of extraordinary splendor and beauty," written in 1818, the transformation occurs:

Oh, let thy grace remind me of the light
Full early lost, and fruitlessly deplored;
Which, at this moment, on my waking sight
Appears to shine, by miracle restored;
My soul, though yet confined to earth,
Rejoices in a second birth!

Though no hard and fast lines can be drawn, the

quality of this passage is decidedly different from the quality of those that have just been quoted. Not that this passage is necessarily better poetry than the others. Nor is it intended here to convey the idea that the poem in which this passage occurs is the only great poetry of this period. Professor Dowden undoubtedly is right in his insistence on the statement that a considerable amount of great and original poetry was produced by Wordsworth during this period. But the point to be seized here is, that, with the single exception of the above passage, none of this great and original poetry illustrates the doctrine of childhood memories in its real essence. Here in this passage, however, something is shown to have happened in the immediate memory experience of the poet. The light shines in as of old. A second birth takes place in the mind. The miracle of transcendence has occurred and the poet suddenly feels that he has a clear insight into a higher kind of truth than the ordinary, or commonplace. This is the essence of the doctrine. This passage, isolated in its production in point of time from those of its own kind, at once possesses the characteristic intensity of them and avoids the excess of overstatement that has been pointed out in some of them.

Although this magic transformation happened but once in the productions of later years, the spirit of the doctrine of childhood memories occurs in poem after poem between the years 1798 and 1806, in varying degrees of intensity. At the close of Chapter II illustrative passages have been quoted from "The Fountain" and the Prelude. This same spirit fairly saturates the poems "Influence of Natural Objects" and "There Was a Boy," both written in 1799, and later incorporated in the Prelude, and the poems "My Heart Leaps Up" and "To Hartley Coleridge," both written in 1802. The closing lines of the latter poem may be quoted to indicate the temper of these poems:

Thou art a dewdrop, which the morn brings forth
 Ill fitted to sustain unkindly shocks,
 Or to be trailed along the soiling earth;
 A gem that glitters while it lives,
 And no forewarning gives;
 But, at the touch of wrong, without a strife
 Slips in a moment out of life—

asserting that the glittering gem is likely to slip in a moment out of life, but implying, according to the doctrine, that it can be retained, or, at least, reproduced in the memory in after years. The spirit of this doctrine is found in "Tintern Abbey" with its

Glams of half extinguished thought,
 With many recognitions dim and faint,
 And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
 The picture of the mind revives again;—

with its recreation of the feelings and sensations
 in this passage:

Sensations sweet
 Felt in the blood and felt along the heart;
 And passing even into my purer mind,
 With tranquil restoration—

and with its passage of address to the poet's
 sister:

Thou art with me here upon the banks
 Of this fair river; thou, my dearest Friend,
 My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch
 The language of my former heart, and read
 My former pleasures in the shooting lights
 Of thy wild eyes.

The spirit of this doctrine, with somewhat less
 intensity, is found in "Expostulation and Reply"
 with its passage of genuine naivete:

You look round on your Mother Earth,
 As if she for no purpose bore you;
 As if you were her first-born birth,
 And none had lived before you;—

in the "Lucy" poems, of which the following lines
 must serve as an example:

She died, and left to me
 This heath, this calm, and quiet scene;
 The memory of what has been,
 And never more will be;—

in "The Two April Mornings" with its suggestive backward look, in the words of Matthew:

Yon cloud with that long purple cleft
 Brings fresh into my mind
 A day like this which I have left
 Full thirty years behind—

and with its accompanying picture of incomparable beauty of the "blooming girl, whose hair was wet with points of morning dew":

No fountain from its rocky cave
 E'er tripped with foot so free;
 She seemed as happy as a wave
 That dances on the sea;—

in the poem "To a Butterfly," which closes with the lines:

We'll talk of sunshine and of song
 And summer days, when we were young,
 Sweet childish days, that were so long
 As twenty days are now.

Likewise in "Michael" with its famous passage:

A child more than all other gifts
 That earth can offer to declining man
 Brings hope with it and forward looking thoughts;—

in the "Brothers," in the "Sparrow's Nest," in a second poem "To a Butterfly," in "It is a Beauteous Evening Calm and Free," in "To a Highland Girl," in "She Was a Phantom," in the "Ode to Duty," in "Louisa" and in the opening lines of "The Happy Warrior"—in all these and still others the spirit of the doctrine of childhood memories is found. These poems, together with the Prelude, were all written during the years following Wordsworth's recovery from the reactionary influence of the Revolution. So that during this time he kept his mind intently concentrated upon the experiences of childhood, and was, as he says in the Prelude,

Loth to quit

Those recollected hours that have the charm
Of visionary things, those lovely forms
And sweet sensations that throw back our life,
And almost make remote infancy
A visible scene, on which the sun is shining.

"Loth" indeed he was "to quit those recollected hours that have the charm of visionary things," until he had penetrated both their outward and inward meaning, had gathered up the power of them, and had, with one supreme effort, given them an ultimate expression in the "Ode on Intimations of Immortality." And immediately after this the reaction came. The fire had burned itself out. The

intensity of it had spent its force; and Wordsworth swiftly passed into another stage of his poetic career.

The chief purpose, however, in citing the above poems and in quoting from them has been to show that Wordsworth found an aesthetic meaning as well as ethical reality in the memories of childhood. In the last analysis it will be found that for Wordsworth the chief function of those memories was to furnish material for purely artistic purposes. In poetry more than in philosophy the ultimate validity and worth of a thing depends upon the success with which it can be used. And with respect to using the memories of childhood in his poetry, it must at once be granted that Wordsworth was eminently successful. No doubt all poets find the memories of childhood an important source of poetic material. If we could only enter behind the scenes we should most certainly find that Shakespeare drew from this source poetic material of inestimable value. Byron and Tennyson, to mention no others, each in his own peculiar way, worked this rich vein with success. But there is something in the nature and character of the man and in the spirit of the times in which he lived that makes Wordsworth, in a special sense, the poet of childhood memories.

There were in the first place two strongly

divergent tendencies in the character of Wordsworth. There was a strong tendency in him toward realism. He would see things as they are. He would be true to outward facts with scientific accuracy. He would write with his eye on the object. He would find poetic material right before his eyes that would be wrought into a new and original kind of poetry. The opposite tendency in him was toward spiritualization. He would not only see things as they are outwardly, but he would "feel the soul of nature and see things as they are," inwardly. He would penetrate to the spiritual meaning of objects of the slightest outward importance, with the hope of finding spiritual essence of value within. Again, there was a third tendency that came to him from the spirit of his times, from the spirit of the Romantic movement of which he was a part and to which he gave a new impetus. This tendency, under the pressure of personal liberty and power of personal conviction, was a tendency in Wordsworth toward the strange and the wonderful.

Now, the memories of childhood furnish the best material for the fusion of these three opposing tendencies. First, these memories satisfy the requirements of realism, for they have their basis in concrete experience, in the personal experience,

in fact, of the poet himself. Secondly, they are far enough removed in point of time to satisfy the requirements of romantic strangeness. And thirdly, not dominated wholly by the concrete, they are easily detached from time and place and readily lend themselves to spiritualization and mystic interpretation. Wordsworth's scientific sincerity and realism prevented him from going outside of his personal experience for poetic material, from entering a region as remote from the personal as that, say, of the "Rime of the Ancient Mariner." But his desire for strangeness and wonder led him, so to speak, to the rim of his personal experience. The remote ends of the real and the strange met together in the memories of his childhood, which could readily be sublimated into a spiritual experience. Wordsworth, it may be said in passing, was in almost every respect the opposite of Scott. But in one respect they were alike, which likeness at the same time involves a contrast. They both lived much in the past. Scott's past was historic feudalism, Wordsworth's past was his own childhood. Scott saw the beautiful and ideal side of feudalism, Wordsworth saw the beautiful and ideal side of childhood. Each conceived his past in some sort of reality. Scott built a castle on the principles of feudalism, Wordsworth built a castle, too, with

his inheritance of the past—a castle not made with hands.

But the perfect fusion of realism, spiritualization, and mystery into an artistic unity is a feat beyond the strength of ordinary mortals. It requires a strict fidelity to the outward facts of life, a subtle and penetrating insight into their inward and intuitional meaning, and a voluntary intensity of mind which can be sustained alone by deep and genuine feelings. The wonder is, not that Wordsworth failed sometimes, but that he succeeded as often as he did. And much of his success must be attributed both to his personal instincts and the circumstances of his times that led him to make use of his childhood memories. The failure in the perilous attempt at such a high and rare union is nearly always due to following to excess one of these three tendencies at the expense of the other two. "Alice Fell," "The Thorn," and "Simon Lee," are examples that instantly come to mind illustrating the domination of realism, with a corresponding lack of spiritual and mystical interpenetration. The poem "Gypsies" is a familiar example of too bold and over-wrought spiritualization for the slight outward incident of the poem. And there are passages in the Prelude which, even to a man of a mystical temperament, one can fancy,

the mystery is tantalizingly just beyond the point of any satisfactory understanding. It is more pleasant, however, to dwell on instances which show Wordsworth's success in this respect, and nowhere, as has already been intimated, is he more successful than when the magic of childhood memories blends together the real and the strange into an artistic union of spiritual experience.

Although exhaustive treatment in the way of illustration can not be entered upon here, yet one illustration, which is at once the most beautiful and the most perfect, must be given. It is the poem "To the Cuckoo," a poem which Wordsworth himself placed first in merit among his shorter productions. The idea of mystery which pervades and underlies the whole poem is slightly suggested in the first stanza:

O blithe Newcomer! I have heard,
I hear thee and rejoice.
O Cuckoo! shall I call thee Bird,
Or but a wandering Voice?

In the next two stanzas the necessary outward facts, the situation, and the immediate sense perceptions of the poem are given, but at the close of these stanzas there is again a suggestion of mystery slightly stronger than the first:

While I am lying on the grass
Thy two-fold shout I hear,
From hill to hill it seems to pass,
At once far off, and near.

Though babbling only to the Vale,
Of sunshine and of flowers,
Thou bringest unto me a tale
Of visionary hours.

In the next stanza the mystery is more pronounced, and the "even yet" suggests that this impression of mystery had been experienced before:

Thrice welcome, darling of the Spring!
Even yet thou art to me
No bird, but an invisible thing,
A voice, a mystery.

And then suddenly the whole scene, as by magic, is thrown back to "those recollected hours that have the charm of visionary things," and romantic strangeness is added to mystery:

The same whom in my school-boy days
I listened to! that Cry
Which made me look a thousand ways,
In bush, and tree, and sky.

To seek thee did I often rove
Through woods and on the green;
And thou wert still a hope, a love;
Still longed for, never seen.

And now the scene is suddenly brought back to the immediate present, producing that subjective transformation which the spell of childhood memories always wrought upon Wordsworth:

And I can listen to thee yet;
Can lie upon the plain
And listen, till I do beget
That golden time again.

And this potent charm of inward delight makes the ordinary outward world of reality fade into "an insubstantial faery place":

O blessed Bird! this earth we pace
Again appears to be
An unsubstantial faery place
That is fit home for Thee.

This is perhaps the finest example of the perfect harmony of sense-perceptions, childhood memories, spiritualization, and mystery that can be found in the language. And it is chiefly the potency of childhood memories that deepens and vitalizes the meaning of the ordinary cry of an ordinary bird, and creates in the soul an inward light and joy of such intense reality that the outward world seems to float in a faery-like and insubstantial substance.

The memories of childhood, then, have a real aesthetic meaning and an artistic function of absolute worth and validity. When the doctrine of

pre-existence (whether Wordsworth held it or not) shall have failed, and when our perspective of childhood generally shall have been proved by science to be false, the memories of childhood will still and forever remain a vital source of poetic material to satisfy deeply the artistic impulse in us toward the beautiful and the true. And the world shall have long to wait before another child of genius shall come who shall extract as deep and unalloyed pleasures from this source as did William Wordsworth, the supreme poet, not of childhood, but of childhood memories:

With heart as calm as lakes that sleep,
In frosty moonlight glistening;
Or mountain rivers, where they creep
Along a channel smooth and deep,
To their own far-off murmurs listening.

CHAPTER V

MYSTICISM: ITS DEVELOPMENT

The stuff which a true poet principally makes use of is that which comes to him from first-hand experience, and from such experience that gives genuine pleasure. But the moment of pleasure which the poet wishes to seize and enshrine in his poem, is, when drawn from experience, a thing of the past—always something of yesterday. With the exquisite sense for pleasure values that belongs to a poet, he will attempt to snatch from devouring time the thing of beauty, give it permanent expression, and really make it a joy forever. The point, or points, of his past experience upon which the poet will most habitually fix his attention will depend upon the character of the poet and the conditions and circumstances of his environment. On account of particular traits in his character and peculiar circumstances into which he was thrown, Wordsworth, we have seen, fixed his attention, more

than other poets, upon the experiences of his childhood. We have also seen that the experiences of childhood which had value for him were those that were bound up with his interest in nature. We have had abundant proof that, in his effort of recollection to produce an immediate subjective experience in the mind, there was present a deep strain of what is called the mystical. But when the memory of those experiences is connected with outward sense perceptions there is produced a still deeper strain of the mystical, as in the poem "To a Cuckoo." And when Wordsworth attaches a moral value to this double experience of memory images and sense perceptions, as in "Tintern Abbey," the full tide of the mystical is on.

The general outline of thought in "Tintern Abbey" is as follows: First, the picture of the mind is revived. The landscape, the plots of cottage-ground, the orchard-tufts, the groves and copses, the hedge rows, "little lines of sportive wood run wild," the pastoral farms, the wreathes of smoke—all these beautiful forms, through a long absence, had not been to the poet as a landscape to a blind man's eye, but had frequently been partially revived in his mind. But now, as he stood in the very presence of the beautiful forms themselves the memory of them was revived in full measure.

Secondly, there is a development of immediate sense perceptions—perceptions of

The meadows and the woods,
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye and ear—both what they half create,
And what perceive.

And thirdly, a moral value is given to this double experience of memory and sense perceptions. “Therefore am I,” he says,

Well pleased to recognize
In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.

And in the same strain of moral interpretation he adds:

Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to 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 tongues,
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.

The genesis of giving such a high moral value to the power of nature working through memory and the senses, is important and instructive in the history of the development of the poet's mind. It will be remembered that in the crisis following his over-wrought interest in the Revolution, Wordsworth considered that his soul had attained its "last and lowest ebb" when "wearied out with contrarities" he "yielded up moral questions in despair." But it is a fair question to ask whether Wordsworth actually gave up moral questions completely. It is to be suspected rather that his nature so imperatively demanded moral solace that he could not give up the moral problem at all. No doubt for a time he made conscious efforts to avoid the contrarities of moral issues; but even "The Borderers," which was written in his despondency, is much greater as a study in the moral nature of man than as a play. He makes Marmaduke, the young hero of the play, say to Oswald, his tempter:

Young as I am, I might go forth a teacher,
And you should see how deeply I could reason
Of love in all its shapes, beginnings, ends;
Of moral qualities in their diverse aspects;
Of actions, and their laws and tendencies.

And so Wordsworth really never ceased reasoning of love in all its shapes, of moral qualities, and of

actions; and the poems written immediately after his recovery are steeped with moral sentiment. In the poem "To My Sister" he writes:

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

One moment now may give us more
Than years of toiling reason:
Our minds shall drink at every pore
The spirit of the season.

Some silent laws our hearts will make
Which they shall long obey:
We for the year to come may take
Our temper from today.

And from the blessed power that rolls
About, below, above,
We'll frame the measure of our souls:
They shall be tuned to love.

The mind, drinking at every pore the spirit of the season, and the heart, taking its temper from the day, are attuned to the highest law of morals—the law of love. In "Expostulation and Reply" we have this passage:

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.

This mind of ours is to be fed through the eye and the ear by the powers of nature—"this mighty sun of things forever speaking." And in "The Tables Turned" the poet says :

And hark! how blithe the throstle sings!
He, too, is no mean preacher:
Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your teacher.

She has a world of ready wealth,
Our hearts and minds to bless—
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
Truth breathed by cheerfulness.

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

These passages all possess an unmistakable moral temper, and the source of their strength lies in extracting moral nurture from "the blessed power that rolls about, below, above," from drawing upon the "ready wealth" of nature and allowing her to be our teacher. It may be that to some persons impulses from vernal woods cannot teach anything of moral evil or of good, as Morley would have it;

but they greatly err who maintain that Wordsworth did not find this the prime source of moral strength. What happened to Wordsworth, then, is not that he gave up the consideration of moral questions, which was impossible to a nature like his, but that he ceased to look for moral strength in the social and political philosophies of his day. And, thrown back upon the dignity and strength of his own inner life, he revived the memories of childhood, joined them to outward sense perceptions, and in that double process, he rediscovered himself—his moral nature. From thenceforth those memory and sense impressions became the vehicle of expression for his inner moral life. It was through his reaction, therefore, on the French Revolution that Wordsworth's eyes were opened and that his peculiar moral principles were formulated. And, carrying the revolutionary method and spirit with him, he would teach men the new principles. He would explain to them how to build up their moral being. He would readjust society on a new and simple basis, on the basis of the primal affections and moral strength derived through memory and sense from the powers of nature. Thus, with the intensity and wholeheartedness characteristic of Revolutionary leaders, Wordsworth became the prophet and leader of a new moral and revolutionary movement.

But this synthesis of memory images, sense perceptions, and a moral idea by a mind that is volitional and passionate, is eminently productive of a mystical state of mind. When the most common ideas that are naturally remote from each other, are held in close juxtaposition under the stress of passion, the mystical state of mind always results. There is, therefore, some mystical deposit in every human constitution, but the quantity of it is greater in some individuals than in others. There was in Wordsworth, to start with, an unusually great deposit of the mystical consciousness. The original powers of his mind—the powers of sensitiveness, passion and volition—were well fitted to develop the mystical. In his earliest childhood, he made elaborate preparations to bring on the mystical state, although, of course, he was not then conscious of their meaning.

Again, in some periods of history more than in others, the spirit of the times favors the development of the mystical. The age of Pope, for example, with its aversion to passion and to any new and strange combination of ideas, was decidedly unfavorable to the development of it. If, in that age, a young person were possessed by nature with a large deposit of mystical tendencies, the spirit of the times would help him to hush them up, would

deaden them for him, and finally destroy them. This is why no mystics appeared in the age of Pope. The age of Wordsworth, on the contrary, with its revolutionary tendencies, with its efforts at the readjustment of society in new and strange ways, with its insistence on personal freedom, and with its powerful emphasis on personal convictions, was emphatically favorable to the development of the mystical. What the spirit of the times did for Wordsworth was to encourage him to bring to light and to perfect the elaborate mystical practices of his childhood. In tracing their development, then, we must recur again to the experiences of his childhood.

One precaution, however, is necessary at this point. It is not profitable to trace this development closely in the sequence of time. For the mystical proper, that is, the pure mystical state, is not developed gradually in the mind and then permanently possessed. It is rather a state of mind that is arrived at occasionally, and held transitorily, and with irregular recurrence. It is altogether too intense and strained to be permanently possessed. What is more important, therefore, is to note in its development the degree of intensity it has reached, and the different stages of its development marked by that degree of intensity.

The simplest rudiment of mystical experience is based upon the most common experiences of humanity, and is developed out of them. It deals with

Unshaped half-human thoughts
Which solitary Nature feeds
'Mid summer storms or winter's ice.

Strange, unshaped, half-human thoughts come to all of us and out of them the will builds its mystic temple. The heart of the mystic, on the basis of common experience, tends to

Luxuriate with indifferent things,
Wasting its kindliness on stocks and stones
And on the vacant air.

The following characterization of Peter Bell is universally recognizable, yet it expresses such rigidity and fixedness of attention that it unmistakably possesses the rudiment of the mystical experience:

There was a hardness in his cheek,
There was a hardness in his eye,
As if the man had fixed his face,
In many a solitary place
Against the wind and open sky!

These passages represent the most common experiences, but they also possess the germ of the

mystical consciousness, the suggestion of deeper strains of fixed attention. They represent the very beginnings of the mystical state of mind.

When, however, the kindliness that is wasted "on stocks and stones, and on the vacant air" becomes more intense, when the face that is fixed "in many a solitary place, against the wind and open sky" becomes more passionately fixed, then a higher and more distinct stage of the mystical presence is recognizable and it becomes more clearly separated from other experiences. Not only did Wordsworth as a lover fix his eye upon the moon that descended to Lucy's cot, but when he came home from school on vacation and lay down in his accustomed bed he tells us with what fixedness he aforesaid had gazed upon the moon:

That lowly bed whence I had heard the wind
Roar, and the rain beat hard; where I so oft
Had lain awake on summer nights to watch
The moon in splendor couched among the leaves
Of a tall ash, that near our cottage stood;
Had watched her with fixed eyes while to and fro
In the dark summit of the waving tree
She rocked with every impulse of the breeze.

Even the grave of a dead companion is of sufficient interest to arouse the active but mute gazing tendency:

The grassy churchyard hangs
 Upon a slope above the village school,
 And through that churchyard when my way was led
 On summer evenings, I believe that there
 A long half hour together I have stood
 Mute, looking at the grave in which he lies!

Not only do we learn that Wordsworth "gazed and gazed" at the daffodils. but often "gleams of sky and clouds and intermingling mountain tops, in one inseparable glory clad" bring on the rapt gaze:

On the fulgent spectacle
 That neither passed away nor changed, I gazed
 Enrapt.

In the above passages the common qualities are volitional activity, fixed attention and deep stirrings of the feelings. They are well on the way toward the distinctly mystical consciousness.

Representative passages of a more highly developed stage—a stage in which sense perceptions begin to pale in the intense light of memory and vision, and in which the moral and spiritual idea is present—are the following:

I would stand,
 If the night blackened with a coming storm,
 Beneath some rock, listening to notes that are
 The ghostly language of the ancient earth,
 Or make their dim abode in distant winds.

Thence did I drink the visionary power ;
 And deem not profitless those fleeting moods
 Of shadowy exultation.

And the reason why he listens so intently and deems the exercise profitable is that the "soul retains an obscure sense of possible sublimity," and that it is through such an exercise that the sense of its sublimity is heightened. Memory, sense perceptions, and the moral idea are beautifully brought together in this passage. Likewise in the passage:

Oh, then, the calm
 And dead still water lay upon my mind
 Even with a weight of pleasure, and the sky,
 Never before so beautiful, sank down
 Into my heart, and held me like a dream!

In the following passage the light of sense goes out altogether under the volitional intensity of the inner gaze, and the outer world of reality again becomes "an insubstantial faery place":

And sate among the woods
 Alone upon some jutting eminence,
 At the first gleam of dawn-light, when the Vale,
 Yet slumbering, lay in utter solitude. . . .
 Oft in these moments such a holy calm
 Would overspread my soul, that bodily eyes
 Were utterly forgotten, and what I saw
 Appeared like something in myself, a dream
 A prospect in the mind.

And likewise in the passage:

But to my conscious soul I now can say
 "I recognize thy glory"; in such strength
 Of usurpation, when the light of sense
 Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed
 The invisible world—

the light of sense goes out with a flash, and, in a flash, the invisible world, a new order of moral and spiritual truth is revealed; physical sense is transcended, and we have duly arrived at the mystic's rapturous state of mind.

Just at the vanishing point of the senses is where the mystical proper, the pure mystical, begins. And the completest expression of the highest stage of it is found in a passage in "Tintern Abbey." To the beauteous forms that through a long absence had not been to him like a landscape to a blind man's eye, Wordsworth says he owed a gift of sublime aspect, the gift of

That blessed mood,
 In which the burthen of the mystery,
 In which the heavy and the weary weight
 Of all this unintelligible world,
 Is lightened:—that serene and blessed mood,
 In which the affections gently lead us on—
 Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
 And even the motion of our human blood
 Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
 In body, and become a living soul:

While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

The critics have been loud in their praise of this famous passage. Stedman, for example, speaks of it as having been produced when Wordsworth's vision penetrated the quintessence of nature, and when he was "in his very highest mood." One wonders whether after the burden of the mystery and the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world is lightened, and after the motion of our human blood is almost suspended and we are laid asleep in body—whether then our being is in the proper condition to enter the very highest experience known to men. One wonders what actually is seen when "we see into the life of things." One naturally asks what are the fruits for life of such a rare experience. Wordsworth himself is wholly in doubt about the value of the experience and its consequent results, for he immediately adds:

If this

Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft— . . .
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods—

and we again suddenly find ourselves in an intelligible world. In fact, what has generally been considered contemplation *par excellence* is con-

temptation in excess. After having committed the excess Wordsworth's essential sanity makes him retract immediately and take more easily tenable grounds. The passage, however, is a profound and delicate rendering of a possible and somewhat unusual mood. The description of the process by which the mind enters into this mood is delicately accurate. First the ordinary burdens of life are removed and the mystery of the unintelligible world is lightened, that is, since there is no absoluteness but only relativity of knowledge of our ordinary life, that knowledge is renounced as an unintelligible world of knowledge, categories of thought are given up, all distinctions of grades and degrees are obliterated; and what remains is a mood divested of intellectual content, an abstraction without any concrete counterpart. Next the human blood, smelling entirely too much of earthiness, is suspended in its action, the body is laid asleep, and the soul, having transcended physical experience, enters into the "blessed consciousness of unutterable reality."

The result of this intense excitation of the mind is to produce two qualities which Professor William James declares to be two of the chief qualities of mysticism, namely, the noetic quality and that of ineffability. According to the first, "we see into

the life of things." These states of mind are "states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect. They are illuminations, revelations full of significance and importance." According to the second quality—ineffability—the experience in this state of mind remains inarticulate "The subject immediately says that no adequate report of its contents can be given. . . . It cannot be imparted or transferred to others." For lack of a sufficient number of points of connection with ordinary life and of adequate terms of expression the mystic can never communicate to others the wonderful truths which he beholds.

To put the description of the process in other words, the necessary conditions for producing this extraordinary state of mind seem to be the mental act of forcing the feelings to divest themselves of their ordinary contents of concrete material and the imagination of its ordinary intellectual content, and to fix themselves upon some abstract spot—which spot in some mysterious way begins to illuminate under the focus of the feelings and imagination. Under the strained condition into which the will has forced the feelings and the imagination a new order of truth is generated by them, great gleams of light flash out in a thousand directions from the radiating center, vast strata

of wonderful truth are revealed. But when the illuminating process has once fairly set in, the will, which has been the chief power at work thus far, is temporarily held in abeyance, and for a short time the subject "sees into the life of things."

It is a long way from the point where the heart rather indifferently wastes "its kindness on stocks and stones, and on the vacant air" to the point where its experience is so intense that it sees, or thinks it sees, "into the life of things." We have traced out a number of more or less distinct intermediary stages. We have seen that the very highest stage is for the most part a moral and intellectual abstraction; yet it always held a certain charm for Wordsworth:

Mighty is the charm

Of those abstractions to a mind beset
With images and haunted by herself,
And specially delightful unto me
Was that clear synthesis built up aloft
So gracefully.

His mind, haunted as it was by concrete images, delighted to penetrate through the images and build up a clear synthesis aloft and gracefully out of the inner meanings and abstractions suggested by these images. Almost constantly, however, Wordsworth remained just below the very highest stage of the

mystical. His method seems to have been to force his way as near to it as possible without losing the vitality of passion and of concrete representation. Here, in the next to the highest stage of the mystical, where the light of sense does not quite go out, where ordinarily intelligible distinctions remain, lies the most distinctive and the most solid part of his work. Here is where the synthesis of memory images, sense perceptions, and the moral idea, is most effectively made. It is on this level of the mystical that Wordsworth must be tested. It is our next task, therefore, to consider the meaning and validity of this mystical synthesis.

CHAPTER VI

MYSTICISM: ITS ETHICAL MEANING

The power of volition, of self-control, which is true freedom, and the power of deep and intuitive feelings, feelings of love, faith, joy, rapture—these are the foundation stones of Wordsworth's mysticism. The union of these powers is the union of what is highest in man—self-control and freedom—and of what is best in child life—passionate love, faith, joy, and rapture. Volition and self-control save the feelings from sentimentality, and from the malign opprobrium with which cold-hearted critics are wont to treat them. Thus Wordsworth attained to a high dignity of life and at the same time retained the simplicity of a child. Though the union of these powers can hardly attain to the dignity of a philosophic system of thought, yet the powers themselves are grounded deep in the common heart of man. They are little influenced by the accidents of time or place, or by the force of environment.

It is for this reason that after a century (the Nineteenth Century) of prodigious efforts to lay bare the heart of nature and to discover her laws, of a vast collection of facts concerning her, giving us new and profound insights into her mysterious workings, the treatment of her by Wordsworth is still fresh "with points of morning dew" and has lost scarcely any of its meaning and vitality. With the grasp of a giant, Wordsworth seized upon the permanent and fundamental qualities of volition and passion, at a point where man is not an object apart from the vast forces that surround him and play upon his life, but at a point where he is essentially in harmony with the forces that are constantly "breathing grandeur upon the humblest face of human life."

Why, then, should there be any question as to the meaning and validity of Wordsworth's mystical synthesis of memory images, sense perceptions and the moral idea. The question of doubt is not usually raised with regard to the foundation upon which it rests—although that may be questioned, too, but with regard to the particular synthesis Wordsworth built on that foundation. Is the way of memory and the senses the true way of life? Does moral virtue really flow from the heart of external nature into the heart of man? Is not this

synthesis of memory, sense, and the moral idea a factitious synthesis, and is it not true that the quicker we get rid of the illusion the better? Many great and wise men have been against Wordsworth on this score. We have seen in our study of childhood memories and the "Intimations of Immortality" that critics were temperamentally divided on the question of the validity of those memories. But here the temperamental differences are more highly accentuated. There are represented here two widely different ways of approaching some of the most important problems of life—the common-sense way and the mystical way. The common-sense way holds in contempt the intuitions, the dreams, and the raptures of the mystic. The mystic way seems to subvert into strange and interfusing presences the facts of every-day life that ought to be taken as a matter of course. And perhaps between these two ways of thinking, and especially of feeling, no reconciliation can ever be made. The only thing that can be done is to show, with as much sympathy as possible, how far common sense and reasonableness will be on the side of Wordsworth's way of feeling about the important facts of life involved in his synthesis.

It has just been said that since the powers of volition and passion, which are made the ground-

work of Wordsworth's mysticism, are deeply grounded in the heart of man, they are not much influenced by the accidents of time or place or by the force of environment. But not so with the particular synthesis he built on that groundwork. That was due mainly to the accidents of his times and to his particular environment. Have given the man, his early surroundings, and the peculiar circumstances of his life that we have previously traced out, and the result must be this particular synthesis. Mysticism manifests itself in outward expression in many forms. Mysticism is intuitive, deeply subjective, close to the very inner core of life, to the very "beatings of the human heart." But it craves outward expression; and just because it is so deeply from within, its outward expression differs in different individuals. Men do not differ much in their statement of an outward fact of life, say, of the statement of the law of gravitation. It is objective and verifiable. But in the expression of an inner experience a man must recur to some form of pictorial or symbolical language. He must work by hints and suggestions; and the mystic experience on its way to outward expression may take diverse courses. Cathedrals, angels, seraphs, symbolism ready made from the Bible, may serve as a channel of expression for the different

hierarchical stages of mystical excellence, as in Swedenborg. Nature may even be mystically interpreted in terms of Biblical symbols, as in Newman. In speaking of the angels, Newman says, "Every breath of air and ray of light and heat, every beautiful prospect, is, as it were, the skirts of their garments, the waving of the robes of those whose faces see God." And the Catholic Church, with its hierarchy of officers and its ritualistic forms of worship, may serve as an outward embodiment of the religious and mystical consciousness. So in Wordsworth, different from Swedenborg and from Newman respectively, the objects and powers of external nature furnished the embodiment and means of expression of his mystical and religious consciousness.

But the tone in which we have just been speaking of the mystics and their symbols is by no means the tone in which they themselves speak. The precise difficulty with them is that they take themselves together with their symbols, with absolute seriousness; and this is what alienates the critics. Swedenborg's religion to him is the true religion. Catholicism to Newman is the only right religion. And Wordsworth feels that he actually draws unbounded moral and religious strength from the heart of external nature. The synthesis stands

in his mind as an absolute fact, and admits of no doubt. In the words of Tennyson, this state of mind is "not a confused state, but the clearest, the surest of the surest, utterly beyond words." It is not the result of imagination, so called, but of bare and unaided vision. Undoubtedly any and all of these mystics make too great claims for their particular formulas as means of the development of character and life. They are too insistent in making their particular cures the panacea for all ills. A specific formula cannot have universal validity. The method of each one, and of Wordsworth especially, is a little too exclusive. Moral strength does not flow so exclusively from external nature. Is it not possible that from the atmosphere enveloping religious ceremonies—great cathedrals, elaborate rituals, accumulations of historic associations—moral strength may flow into the mind as effectively as from external nature? And is it not true that these systems need not be mutually exclusive? With these limitations in mind, let us see what may be said in favor of Wordsworth's mystical synthesis in particular.

First, we cannot really exclude the forces of nature from us if we will. Whatever transcendental qualities man may possess he has evolved out of the very heart of nature, and is completely

enveloped by her through his whole life. He is fortunate if he can live where he can tread the solid earth and can see the sky overhead. It is not disputed that men, for their moral as well as their physical well-being, should live in wholesome sunshine and in the presence of blowing breezes a good part of their lives. These are the primal necessities of life, and just as Wordsworth in his poetry would use "a selection of language really used by men," so in the appropriation of primal necessities he would use a strictly selective process. He would not be blind to the destructive power of "the lightning, the fierce wind, and trampling waves," but he would select the best portion of natural influences. He would not all his life breathe the murky atmosphere of a great city, but would choose to let the "motions of delight that haunt the sides of the green hills" touch his life. He would allow the brooks, muttering "a busy noise by day, a quiet sound in silent night," the waves and the groves, to play upon his life and mold his character. All this we must let Wordsworth himself tell in his own incomparable "selection of language really used by men":

Ye motions of delight that haunt the sides
Of the green hills; ye breezes and soft airs,
Whose subtle intercourse with breathing flowers,

Feelingly watched, might teach Man's haughty race
How without injury to take, to give
Without offence; ye who, as if to show
The wondrous influence of power gently used,
Bend the complying heads of lordly pines,
And, with a touch, shift the stupendous clouds
Through the whole compass of the sky; ye brooks,
Muttering along the stones, a busy noise
By day, a quiet sound in the silent night;
Ye waves, that out of the great deep steal forth
In a calm hour to kiss the pebbly shore,
Not mute, and then retire, fearing no storm;
And you, ye groves, whose ministry it is
To interpose the covert of your shades,
Even as a sleep, between the heart of man
And outward troubles, between man himself,
Not seldom, and his own uneasy heart:
Oh! that I had a music and a voice
Harmonious as your own that I might tell
What ye have done for me.

This indeed sounds beautifully mystical, but it may become a practical reality to any man. At least, no man is capable to judge what nature can or can not do for him until he has given her, at her best, a fair and reasonable chance.

Secondly, it lies within the power of a man's will to make Wordsworth's mystical synthesis his own. Although his method may not be exclusive of all others, it will work if one but gives it a

chance. If one puts himself in the way of it, it will produce character of a high order. To start with, Wordsworth demands manliness, that is, humility and courage, of every individual. Then one must use his *will*—this is Wordsworth's peculiar lesson. One must will with mental alertness, not with mental laziness, to give himself up, not passively, but "in a *wise* passiveness," to the powers that are forever speaking. For the majority of human beings it is a very hard task to be wisely passive in the presence of great and enduring objects. It is vastly easier to engage in a constant round of aimless, nervous, and sporadic activities, which really is mere passiveness. There is, therefore, a wide difference between mere passivity and wise passiveness. And when that difference is taken fully into account, the combination of a moral idea and the life of the senses is not as factitious as it may seem.

In the third place, there is nothing degrading in the life of the senses themselves when under proper restraint. It is only when they are made an end in themselves that they are not elevating. It is not only the will that puts a restraint on the life of the senses, according to Wordsworth, but memory also has an important purifying power. The tone of much criticism on Wordsworth's

interpretation of nature is as though he held that the power of high morals came only and immediately from and through the senses. This is essentially unfair to Wordsworth's interpretation. For the power of memory, as we have already partially seen, plays an important part in Wordsworth's scheme of things. It is not only what the eye and ear perceive, but what they half-create that gives value to an experience with nature. And the half-creating power of the mind lies in previous experiences conserved and carried forward by the means of memory, and present in every act of the mind. "What want we?" he asks in the "Recluse";

Have we not perpetual streams,
Warm woods, and sunny hills, and fresh green fields,
And mountains not less green, and flocks and herds,
And thickets full of songsters, and the voice
Of lordly birds, an unexpected sound
Heard now and then from morn to latest eve,
Admonishing the man who walks below
Of solitude and silence in the sky?
These have we and a thousand nooks of earth
Have also these, but nowhere else is found,
Nowhere (or is it fancy?) can be found
The one sensation that is here; 'tis here,
Here as it found its way into my heart
In childhood, here as it abides by day,
By night, here only; or in chosen minds
That take it with them hence, where'er they go,

—'Tis, but I cannot name it, 'tis the sense
Of majesty, and beauty, and repose,
A blended holiness of earth and sky,
Something that makes this individual spot,
This small abiding place of many men,
A termination, and a last retreat,
A center, come from wheresoe'er you will,
A whole without dependence or defect,
Made for itself, and happy in itself,
Perfect contentment, Unity entire.

It is the "one sensation" that found its way into Wordsworth's heart in his childhood and that in chosen minds goes with them wherever they go, that possesses a power to purify and hallow the present life of the senses. And when "the sense of majesty, and beauty, and repose, a blended holiness of earth and sky" join with the power of memory, not only to purify and hallow, but to restrain and control the life of the senses—do we not have here a synthesis, mystical though it be, that commends itself to reason and to common sense?

The final test, however, of Wordsworth's mysticism is the test of the foundation upon which its synthesis rests. It is "the mind of man," Wordsworth says, that is "my haunt, the main region of my song." The mystical experience, after all, is mainly a subjective experience, whatever outward

expressions and connections it may have. "Wordsworth," says Emerson, "alone in his time, treated the human mind well, and with an absolute trust." And it was a trust in the mind's power of self-direction and self-support—its power of will. "The trait," says Morley, "that really places Wordsworth on an eminence above his poetic contemporaries, and ranks him, as the ages are likely to rank him, on a line just short of the greatest of all time, is his direct appeal to will and conduct." We have already seen that in the production of poetry the will has two functions to fulfil—to reproduce by a species of reactions a former emotion and to hold under restraint the new emotion. In the process of life the will has still greater functions to fulfil. First of all, by the doctrine of recollection, it is to conserve and transmute all that is valuable of former experiences. Secondly, it is to hold the eyes and the ears, heart and mind, close to the bosom of mother earth:

Long have I loved what I behold—
The night that calms, the day that cheers;
The common growth of mother earth
Suffices me—her tears, her mirth,
Her humblest mirth and tears.

And thirdly, the heart must "watch and receive." Man is to "live within the light of high endeavors,"

and when he does so, he "daily spreads abroad his being armed with strength that cannot fail."

There is naturally a certain similarity at this point between the philosophy of Schopenhauer, the great philosophical exponent of the will, and the practices of Wordsworth; but there is also a radical difference. The chief difference is that according to Schopenhauer the will creates ideas, while according to Wordsworth the will causes the mind to strike a proper attitude toward the powers that lie without. It is most likely true that the will cannot create ideas of its own accord and that Schopenhauer's philosophy is futile. But in Wordsworth the mind, by means of the will, recalls old ideas and absorbs new ones, and selects and retains the best. And the chief function of these ideas is to nourish the passions; so that through the channel of ideas the will and the passions constantly re-enforce each other. And thus the will is saved from becoming barren and unproductive as in Schopenhauer, and the passions are saved from the excesses so common among the mystics.

But when the will does its work intensely and passionately, then, by the stress of feeling, the experience is carried along through the different mystic stages, and it becomes more and more subjective and intuitive, more and more inexplicable,

“the clearest, the surest of the surest” states of mind, “utterly beyond words.” And, like chemicals that will act and form new combinations after a certain intensity of heat has been reached, so the will and the passions, counteracting and reinforcing each other, both strongly and highly wrought, beat out new combinations of high character. This is the groundwork of Wordsworth’s mystical synthesis, and it is solid groundwork—as solid and enduring as the heart of man itself. Born out of a time of revolution which stirred the vital energies and deepest personal convictions of men, it yet bears the stamp of an original and masterful mind. It is a truth arrived at not by the calculating and analytical methods of a philosopher, but by the demands of an intuitive and sensitive nature charged with volitional and moral earnestness. It is no doubt wrong to call this a system of philosophy—it is rather a method of practice in the fundamental terms of human life. It is when Wordsworth is dealing with this original stuff of human nature that he rises above the accidental influences of his times and identifies himself powerfully with those forces in men that are permanent and enduring.

Their passions and their feelings, chiefly those
Essential and eternal in the heart.

It is here that his utterances, in the words of Lowell, "have the bare sincerity, the absolute abstraction from time and place, the immunity from decay, that belong to the grand simplicities of the Bible."

CHAPTER VII

MYSTICISM: ITS ARTISTIC VALUE

Wordsworth always and primarily had before him the purpose of writing poetry about man, nature, and childhood, however completely that purpose may have been obscured at times by social, political, or metaphysical interests. The poetry, to be sure, was to be philosophical poetry. It was to deal with new and original kinds of matter. It was to reform the tastes of readers and was to create a special taste for itself. It was to be an enduring kind of poetry and was to teach mankind enduring lessons. And, with these distracting interests, the only reason it proved to be genuine poetry is that Wordsworth was at bottom a genuine artist. We have seen that he, for the most part, renounced the purely mystical, that he dispensed with the pleasure of building charming abstractions through the concrete images of the outer world, and from seeing "into the life of things." We shall

now see that he renounced the pleasure of the pure mystic because of artistic purposes, because his deepest impulse of life was the artistic impulse. "Faith," says E. Recejac, "identifies mind with its object in a way that artistic reflection can never do. When we reflect we find that we get the feeling of love, joy, being, from within, and then we picture them as belonging to all sorts of things: but in the mystic state, the consciousness and the world meet directly in a world that transcends them both—in God who at once contains them and carries the sense of their affinities to the highest point. It is this meeting of the inner life of the spirit and the outer life which leaves behind every aesthetic effect." In the purely mystic consciousness, then, the inner and outer life meet in such close affinity that the artist, who must work in concrete imagery, pictures, colors, etc., in order to be effective, cannot find expression for the purely mystical experience. The pure mystic may indeed be able to "see into the life of things," as he says, but it does not help the artist, for he has no way of representing what he sees, and, as has just been said, representation is essential to the artist.

Wordsworth, then, gave up for the most part the mighty charm of abstraction because he chose to be a poet primarily and not a mystic. But for

this very same reason, namely, that he chose to be a poet, Wordsworth carried the mystic experience, by the intensity of will and passion, to as near the vanishing point of the senses as possible. In the preceding chapter we have seen that, within certain important limitations, the mystical synthesis of Wordsworth possessed practical and ethical validity. But in the last analysis it will be seen that the chief function of childhood memories, sense perceptions, and the moral idea taken together (as we have already seen in the case of childhood memories taken separately), is to furnish material for purely artistic purposes. "Every thing good," says Emerson, "is on the highway. The middle region of our being is the temperate zone. We may climb into the thin and cold realm of pure geometry and lifeless science, or sink into that of sensation. Between these extremes is the equator of life, of thought, of spirit, of poetry. . . . The mid-world is the best." In this region of the equator of life, however, Wordsworth kept along the very highest zone; and this is the prime necessity for all great poetry. Volition and high passion are not only the means by which character is beaten into shape, but they are essential to the production of great and enduring poetry.

Poetry may deal with common things and the

common affairs of life, but it must deal with them more intensely than their commonness would suggest. Shakespeare, to use a familiar example, could deal with the common affairs of English life, but his great characters are filled with the mystery of power and with the intensity of high passion. Macbeth feels his heart knocking at his ribs and clutches at air-drawn daggers in his delirium. Othello is wrought upon by green-eyed jealousy until he is thrown into a trance. Hamlet is familiar with states of rapturous ecstasy. Lear, driven into the storm by the heinous wickedness of his daughters, is stirred to mountain peaks of passion. We do not call these experiences mystical because so many other elements—elements of mind derangement, which is permissible in drama, elements of acting and dramatic effects, etc.—enter into them. But they have essentially the same source with the mystical experiences. Wordsworth believed the truth could be found in the commonest things right before one's eyes. But the penetration, the vision necessary to discover the truth there really created new values for them. Wordsworth wrote poems about common objects, but the poems do not especially have the element of commonality in them. His poems about children are not for children; they are for mature minds. His poems about

peasants are not to be fully appreciated by peasants. The intensity of treatment removes the poems a great distance from the objects treated. The intensity of treatment gave little chance for ornamental display. It made the language of his poetry as simple as that of common people, but of a far different quality than that of common people. Wordsworth found when the holy passion was stirring that simple language would best express his feelings, just as Lady Macbeth, in the night walk scene, when she was charged with the greatest possible intensity, found (that is, the poet found for her,) simple language best suited to her purpose. To produce the greatest poetry, then, with common subjects, the poet must use power and intensity, and must express himself in the simplest language.

The chief question with Wordsworth, however, was how to carry this mystic and poetic rapture to the highest point without losing control of it and without losing the vitality of concrete representation. Shakespeare's art was to create a storm of passions and then ride successfully on the waves. Wordsworth's art was to create deep undercurrent stirrings of the water, but to retain a perfect calm on the surface. If Shakespeare's art was greater, Wordsworth's was perhaps more difficult. One

essential aid in carrying the mystic intensity to a high point without going beyond the power of poetic representation, is to deal with primary and fundamental passions of human nature. The simple and most permanent passions of the heart are capable of being stretched farthest before breaking. Like the physical heart, they are so deeply inwrought into the very structure of our being, that they continue beating faithfully as long as life lasts:

There is comfort in the strength of love;
 'Twill make a thing endurable, which else
 Would overstrain the brain or break the heart.

In the "Afflictions of Margaret," the subdued self-control of the character is matched only by the intensity of her feelings. The surface is calm, but there are stirrings to depths unfathomable:

Perhaps some dungeon hears thee groan,
 Maimed, mangled by inhuman men;
 Or thou upon a desert thrown
 Inheritest the lion's den;
 Or hast been summoned to the deep,
 Thou, thou and all thy mates, to keep
 An incommunicable sleep.

I look for ghosts; but none will force
 Their way to me; 'tis falsely said
 That there was ever intercourse
 Between the living and the dead;

For, surely, then I should have sight
Of him I wait for day and night,
With love and longings infinite.

My apprehensions come in crowds;
I dread the rustling of the grass;
The very shadows of the clouds
Have power to shake me as they pass;
I question things and do not find
One that will answer to my mind:
And all the world appears unkind.

Swinburne has compared this poem to Tennyson's "Rizpah," much to the advantage of the latter. No doubt "Rizpah" is in some respects the superior poem, but from the standpoint from which we are discussing poetry now, Tennyson's poem is quite inferior to Wordsworth's. Take the following three stanzas which hold practically the same relation to the poem as a whole as do the three stanzas we have quoted from "The Afflictions of Margaret" to that poem as a whole:

Then since I couldn't but hear that cry of my boy that was
 dead,
They seized me and shut me up: they fasten'd me down on
 my bed.
"Mother, O Mother!"—he call'd in the dark to me year
 after year—
They beat me for that, they beat me—you know that I
 couldn't but hear;

And then at the last they found I had grown so stupid and
still,

They let me abroad again—but the creatures had worked
their will.

Flesh of my flesh was gone, but bone of my bone was left—
I stole them all from the lawyers—and you, will you call it
a theft?—

My baby, the bones that had suck'd me, the bones that had
laughed and had cried—

Theirs? Oh, no! they are mine—not theirs—they have
moved in my side.

Do you think I was scared by the bones? I kiss'd 'em, I
buried 'em all—

I can't dig deep, I am old—in the night by the churchyard
wall.

My Willy 'ill rise up whole when the trumpet of judgment
'ill sound,

But I charge you never to say that I laid him in holy ground.

There is complete abandonment in this character,
lack of reserve and of quiet self-possession. There
is much excitement and even intensity in the poem,
but it is comparatively more objective and on the
surface. There is not the firm grasp on the vital
and the deeply elemental, not the unfathomable
depths nor the subdued self-control as in the
"Afflictions of Margaret."

Another essential aid in carrying the mystic
intensity and rapture to a high point without

passing into abstraction, was the investiture of the material universe with spirituality and movement. Everything for him, Wordsworth says in the *Prelude*, "respired with inward meaning." Everything was transfused with a living spirit. All the objects of nature, great and small, remote and near—rocks and flowers and birds and trees, the very air we breathe, the very earth upon which we tread, the pageantry of earth and sea and sky, "the broad ocean and the azure heavens spangled with kindred multitude of stars"—all are, before our very eyes, transfused by the "blessed power that rolls about, below, above." We are made to feel that we ourselves are "rolled round in earth's diurnal course, with rocks, and stones, and trees." Charged with mystical intensity, but void of mystical excess, Wordsworth intensifies, with naturalness and spontaneity, the world round about us until it becomes a new world for us. He makes it a transfusing and animating presence that mingles with our works and pours its living spirit about us. This conception gives suppleness and mobility to the imagination and keeps it whole. And the mystic intensity of it is thereby carried to a high point without losing the vitality of concreteness.

With an unusual hold on fundamental passions of hardy human characters and with attributing

movement and moral power to the sense world in which we live, Wordsworth succeeded in carrying mystic intensity to its utmost in the realm of poetry. We have seen in an earlier chapter that the memories of childhood, as materials for artistic use, have absolute validity. And now we can see that the synthesis of those memories with the physical world and moral power has the same artistic validity.

It has validity because with it Wordsworth remains close to actuality and yet creates new and ideal values. The highest function of the poet is creation, of "widening nature without going beyond it," of enlarging the sphere of life and freedom. We demand from the poet enough contact with the actual to make us sure we are on solid ground. We demand also new idealizations that are self-supporting, and that seem to us reasonable and worth while. Wordsworth at one and the same moment gives us both solid substance and intense idealizations.

The power of the mind by which this unity of ideality and actuality is effected is penetration, or vision. The measure of the mind's power is the measure of the tension we feel resulting from the attempt to express the universal in the particular, the ideal in the actual. The whole history of

Wordsworth's literary life may be summed up as a constant and persistent endeavor to substitute this power of vision for imagination as ordinarily conceived, to put himself at once at the center of nature and at the center of his own life, and to make those centers, not imaginatively but actually, identical. To attain this end completely, however, is an impossibility forever, for it is always by a leap of the imagination that the final identity is made. Perhaps in the "Ode to Duty" more nearly than anywhere else, Wordsworth attained to this identity by pure vision, as, for example, in the following eight lines where he draws the power of the inner and personal life into identity with the "Stern Law Giver" of the outer world:

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.

To humbler functions, awful Power!
I call thee: I myself commend
Unto thy guidance from this hour;
Oh, let my weakness have an end!

But even in these lines the transition from the thought in the first four to that in the last four is

made by a leap of the imagination. Thus the very last step in the attempt at any such identity is an imaginative step, and the result obtained is the result almost, but not wholly, of pure vision. But it is precisely by such an artistic aim (even though it is not ideally attainable) and by such a mystical conception of life and nature that Wordsworth has won the distinction of depending more than any other poet upon the power of unaided vision.

His method as the result of his artistic aim was productive of many artistic effects that are characteristically Wordsworthian. It led him, for example, to renounce the conventional language of the poets, to brand all extrinsic ornament as unnecessary and insincere, and to depend absolutely upon the concreteness of the thing he was talking about for poetic representation. He considered that every object, however minute, was itself sufficient for the stimulation of the senses. But by his intense penetration upon minute objects of life and nature he steeped those objects with a splendor not really their own. For extrinsic ornamentation commonly used by other poets he substituted visions of universal nature and the power of his own spirit. In a sonnet, for example, in which he addresses a brook he has these words:

I would not do
 Like Grecian Artists, give thee human cheeks,
 Channels for tears; no Naiad should'st thou be—
 Have neither limbs, feet, feathers, joints nor hairs:
 It seems the Eternal Soul is clothed in thee
 With purer robes than those of flesh and blood,
 And hath bestowed on thee a safer good;
 Unwearied joy, and life without its cares.

The meadow-flower and the forest-tree are made to possess individual life and universal freedom:

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

“Lives there a man?” Wordsworth asks in the poem “To the Lady Fleming”:

Who never caught a noon-tide dream
 From murmur of a running stream;
 Could strip, for aught the prospect yields
 To him, their verdure from the fields;
 And take the radiance from the clouds
 In which the sun his setting shrouds?

In like manner the sweet and simple “Highland Girl” is identified with the spirit of her surroundings:

Nor am I loth, though pleased at heart,
 Sweet Highland Girl! from thee to part:
 For I, methinks, till I grow old,
 As fair before me shall behold,
 As I do now, the cabin small,
 The lake, the bay, the waterfall;
 And Thee, the Spirit of them all!

In one of the "Lucy" poems he makes the Spirit of Nature say of Lucy:

"Myself will to my darling be
 Both law and impulse: and with me
 The Girl, in rock and plain,
 In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,
 Shall feel an overseeing power
 To kindle or restrain.

"She shall be sportive as the fawn
 That wild with glee across the lawn
 Or up the mountain springs;
 And her's shall be the breathing balm,
 And her's the silence and the calm
 Of mute insensate things.

"The floating clouds their state shall lend
 To her; for her the willow bend;
 Nor shall she fail to see
 Even in the motions of the Storm
 Grace that shall mould the Maiden's form
 By silent sympathy.

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

The brook, the flower, the tree, the child—small and common objects indeed—are thus seen simply but also intensely by the poet. And as a result of that simple and intense penetration the poet reflects in these objects visions of universal nature and the power of his own spirit. To particularize from the last of the illustrations just given, the child seen thus simply and intensely, suggests, not by way of comparison, but by means of the poet's direct seeing, pictorial visions of floating clouds, bending willows, moving storms, midnight stars and dancing rivulets that subtly mold her life into shape; and the whole poem similarly suggests that the divine spirit of the poet himself interpenetrates that subtle power of nature which serves as law and impulse to kindle or restrain the child and which lends balm and grace and beauty to her spirit. This artistic method and aim, together with his firm grasp upon fundamental passions of hardy human characters and with his attributing movement and moral power to the sense world in which we live, makes Words-

worth successful not only in carrying mystic intensity to its utmost in poetry but in giving us in his own poetry solid substance and actuality on the one hand, and, on the other, intense and highly wrought idealizations.

That Wordsworth always aims to produce idealizations he seems to deny in his "Elegiac Stanzas" on the death of his brother John. This denial, however, is made on the grounds of mysticism rather than on the grounds of poetry. It is due no doubt to Wordsworth's mystic earnestness in taking the world he has half-created as the world of absolute reality. We have seen, however, that the light of the pure mystic's faith is too intense for the attainment of artistic and poetic effects, and it is best to be somewhat skeptical, from the standpoint of the poet's art, after a certain point of intensity has been reached. Let us first get the poem itself before our minds. The poem was suggested by a picture of Peele Castle in a storm. The poet begins:

I was thy neighbor once, thou rugged Pile!
Four summer weeks I dwelt in sight of thee:
I saw thee every day and all the while
Thy Form was sleeping on a glassy sea.

After telling in the next two stanzas "how perfect was the calm," he continues:

Ah! *then* if mine had been the Painter's hand
 To express what then I saw; and add the gleam,
 The light that never was, on sea or land,
 The consecration, and the Poet's dream;

I would have planted thee, thou hoary Pile,
 Amid a world how different from this!
 Beside a sea that could not cease to smile;
 On tranquil land, beneath a sky of bliss.

The gleam of light that was to be added, it may be explained, was to be "borrowed from the youthful poet's dream." After telling how, in the fond illusion of his heart, he would have painted the picture, he says:

So once it would have been—'tis so no more;
 I have submitted to a new control:
 A power is gone, which nothing can restore;
 A deep distress hath humanized my Soul.

And in the conclusion:

Farewell, farewell, the heart that lives alone,
 Housed in a dream, at distance from the kind!
 Such happiness, wherever it be known,
 Is to be pitied; for 'tis surely blind.

But welcome fortitude, and patient cheer,
 And frequent sights of what is to be borne!
 Such sights, or worse, as are before me here—
 Not without hope we suffer and we mourn.

The point in the poem to seize is that from henceforth to attain to happiness the poet means to see

reality only, "frequent sights of what is to be borne." Since he has submitted to a new control, he means to paint pictures not as they might be, but as they are in reality. He means to dispense with the poet's dream, and thereby, it is implied, with the power of idealization.

And this conception is in harmony with his definition of imagination in the Fourteenth Book of the Prelude which was written about the same time as the "Elegiac Stanzas." There he explains that imagination, in truth,

Is but another name for absolute power
And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,
And Reason in her most exalted mood.

And what he means by "Reason in her most exalted mood," it must be remembered, is passion. This he explains in the Fifth Book of the Prelude, where he speaks of

Adamantine holds of truth
By reason built, or passion, which itself
Is highest reason in a soul sublime.

We have, then, in volition which is "absolute power" and an adamantine hold on the truth, in passion which "itself is highest reason," and in insight which is sensitive and sympathetic vision—in these we have the ingredients of the imagination. And this, it may be added, is, for all practical

purposes, an accurate description of the conscious elements of Wordsworth's imagination. And we have noted in an earlier chapter, it is peculiarly true of Wordsworth that his imagination is the product of the elemental powers of volition, passion, and sensitiveness.

The chief point of interest for us here, however, is that this conception of the imagination has its limitations, that when the poet attempts to substitute what he feels to be the facts of absolute reality for imagination he goes beyond the limits of the power of poetic representation. It is all very well for a mystic who sees the absolute facts of reality in his symbols or even in a deep distress that has humanized his soul, to disparage the poet's imagination that is "housed in a dream" and that loves to build an ideal castle

Beside a sea that could not cease to smile;
On tranquil land, beneath a sky of bliss.

But the mystic's sense of absolute reality, carried to its logical sequence, places the poet's art in a false light. For, in his substitution of the supposed facts of absolute reality for imagination, he encroaches upon and limits the poet's power of idealization and creation. The poet can never avoid being a creator, for that is the highest function. He is no doubt to try to see things as they are,

but it is equally important that he should create new values for those things, and the mystic's ideal of absolute reality is an impossibility in a world where creation is going on. Are not the "Elegiac Stanzas" themselves, from the artistic standpoint, a refutation of the mystic's theory? Let us place side by side two stanzas from the poem, one from the earlier part, in which he tells how he once *would have* painted the picture, and one from the latter part, where the picture is given *in reality*:

A Picture had it been of lasting ease,
Elysian quiet, without toil or strife;
No motion but the moving tide, a breeze,
Or merely silent Nature's breathing life.

* * * * *

And this huge Castle standing here sublime,
I love to see the look with which it braves,
Cased in the unfeeling armour of old time,
The lightning, the fierce wind, and trampling waves.

Are not both of these stanzas creations? Do they not both have the added gleam, the "consecration and the poet's dream"? And does not the first possess as much reality as the latter, and is it not just as legitimate as a poetic creation? Wordsworth's poetic art defies his mystic theory; and though in theory he was often a pure mystic, in practice he was a genuine creative artist. The poet in him prevailed over the mystic. But the

conflict and the renunciations which it brought with it were boundlessly fruitful. For out of the struggle between the mystic, who by the intensity of pure vision would have his "eye on his object" and would see "into the life of things," and the poet, who, bound by his art, must find words and concrete imagery in which to express his thoughts, there was born a synthesis of the actual and the ideal, of solid substance and idealization, that led the poet a long way toward permanent and fundamental truths of human nature; a long way toward, yet somewhat on the hither side, of absolute truth and absolute reality.

In the Second Book of the *Prelude*, which was written considerably earlier than the *Fourteenth* and the "Elegiac Stanzas," Wordsworth, in tracing the growth of his poetic mind, gives a less mystical and a more just account of the poet's idealizing power:

An auxiliary light

Came from my mind, which on the setting sun
Bestowed new splendor: the melodious birds,
The fluttering breezes, fountains that run on
Murmuring so sweetly in themselves, obeyed
A like dominion, and the midnight storm
Grew darker in the presence of my eye:
Hence my obeisance, my devotion hence,
And hence my transport.

Here the eye is on the object and it also idealizes the object. This is in accordance with the facts of realistic depiction and poetic creation, together with the power of intensifying by mystical vision.

To give exhaustive illustrations of this artistic principle would be to write down most of the poetry that is truly characteristic of Wordsworth. But perhaps no better short and single example can be given than one of the "Lucy" poems. Here the deepest heart passion is stirred to the depths, and the movement of the whole universe intensely idealized. But after many readings of the poem, one is convinced of the utter inadequacy of any words to describe its mystic intensity:

A slumber did my spirit seal;
I had no human fears;
She seemed a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force;
She neither hears nor sees;
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
With rocks, and stones, and trees.

CHAPTER VIII

PHILOSOPHY: ITS LIMITATIONS

In the discussion of the memories of childhood and of mysticism in the preceding pages, philosophic considerations tended to press in at every turn, but the main philosophic issue has been evaded until now. It has already been said, however, that Wordsworth's doctrine of childhood memories did not possess the dignity of a philosophic system, but rather the simplicity of a psychological method, and that his mystical synthesis of childhood memories, sense perception and a moral idea, based on the union of self-control and passion, however closely bound up with philosophy, could hardly attain to the dignity of a philosophical system of thought. But Wordsworth himself believed that "poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge: the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science," and his highest ambition was to write

what he called a "philosophic song of truth."

Then a wish,
My last and favorite aspiration, mounts
With yearning toward some philosophic song
Of Truth that cherishes our daily life;
With meditations passionate from deep
Recesses in man's heart, immortal verse
Thoughtfully fitted to the Orphean lyre.

Was his ambition realized? How far and in what sense is his poetry philosophic, and how far and in what sense is he a philosopher?

In the various critical writings on Wordsworth there is perhaps more confusion in the answers to these questions than on any other question relating to Wordsworth. Leslie Stephen, for example, says that Wordsworth is "a true philosopher. His poetry wears well because it gives solid substance. He is a prophet and a moralist as well as a mere singer. His ethical system in particular is as distinctive and capable of systematic exposition as that of Butler. By endeavoring to state it in plain prose, we shall see how the poetical power implies a sensitiveness to ideas, which, when extracted from the symbolical embodiment, fall spontaneously into a scientific system of thought." In contrast to this, Morley says: "His theology and his ethics, and his so-called Platonical metaphysics, have as

little to do with the power of his poetry over us, as the imputed Arianism or any other aspect of the theology of 'Paradise Lost' has to do with the strength and the sublimity of Milton, and his claim to a high perpetual place in the hearts of men. It is best to be entirely skeptical as to the existence of system and ordered philosophy in Wordsworth." Again, Church says: "Wordsworth was, first and foremost, a philosophical thinker; a man whose intention and purpose of life it was to think out for himself, faithfully and seriously, the questions concerning 'Man and Nature and Human Life';" and Stopford Brooke finds "ordered thought" and a personal theology in Wordsworth, and thinks him the greatest philosopher of the century. On the contrary, Matthew Arnold says rather sharply: "We must be on our guard against the Wordsworthians, if we would secure for Wordsworth his due rank as a poet. The Wordsworthians are apt to praise him for the wrong things, and to lay far too much stress on what they call his philosophy—so far, at least, as it may put on the form and habit of a 'scientific system of thought,' and the more that it puts them on—is the illusion. Perhaps we shall one day learn to make this proposition general, and to say: Poetry is the reality, philosophy is the illusion. But in Wordsworth's case, at any

rate, we cannot do him justice until we dismiss his formal philosophy," and Swinburne sanctions with all his heart this particular statement of Arnold.

Of course, some of these statements have been called out by some of the others. Arnold, for example must have had Leslie Stephen's passage in mind when he wrote the above. So that in most of the cases some allowance must be made for personal warmth in the controversy; but that does not eradicate the differences. Is it that these eminent critics use their terms with different meanings? But how can the word "system" be mistaken in its meaning? Allowing for possible difference in the use of terms, there still remains a deep underlying difference in their views of poetry and philosophy and in their approach to the problems of life. In our approach to the subject, then, it will be necessary, first of all, to define our terms somewhat, and to discuss briefly and in very general terms the relation between philosophy and poetry. Though poetry has glories all its own and independent of philosophy, it will not be necessary to discuss them here. On the contrary, the discussion shall be confined to the question as to what poetry can do in the field of philosophy.

Many literary critics have insisted upon certain

distinctions between poetry and science. They have pointed out, that, while poetry and science frequently make use of the same objective materials—flowers, trees, birds, animals, land, sea, oceans, stars, etc.—they have distinctly different purposes in view and proceed by widely different methods: so that either one can never be outgrown or superseded by the other. Similar distinctions have been made between poetry and philosophy; however, not with the same emphasis, since the two are more nearly alike in purpose and in method. It must undoubtedly be admitted that the fields of poetry and philosophy frequently overlap each other, but this admission should not blind us to the fact that there still remain fundamental and radical differences between the two. Although there is much philosophy in Hamlet or in the Prelude one instinctively feels that even here he is in a different world than when he reads Kant or Aristotle. The difference lies not so much in the materials that are dealt with as in the temper and the attitude of mind of the authors in their approach to their respective subjects. The most general formula for this difference is, that, while they both may apprehend the same world of material and immaterial objects, the poet apprehends them intuitively and emotionally through the imagination,

and the philosopher intellectually through contemplation. And the poet's way of apprehending his objects carries two limitations with it. First, he can only approach general and abstract truth by way of and through the concrete; and, secondly, his method of procedure must be almost wholly synthetic, scarcely at all analytic. Let us take these points up separately and in detail.

1. In one sense philosophy has a wider range than poetry. Philosophy can and does deal directly with things in the abstract. This is especially fitting to analytical processes and to contemplation. Poetry, on the other hand, cannot deal directly with the abstract. When it attempts to deal directly with the abstract it loses its vitality, from the simple fact that its moving power is passion and its principal forming agency is the imagination, and passion and imagination cannot long sustain themselves in the barren fields of abstraction. Poetry, limited as it is to deal mainly with the concrete, is fully rewarded for the price it pays for its limitations. It avoids barrenness, and remains close to life—two things which cannot always be said of philosophy.

How, then, does it happen that poetry deals with philosophical matters at all? It deals with them only indirectly and by implication. The con-

crete lends itself to this method quite readily. When Wordsworth says:

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky;
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So shall it be when I grow old,
Or let me die!—

he implies much more than is explicitly stated. In the third, fourth and fifth lines he implies that a man's life should have continuity throughout, and should be in harmony with itself. He also implies the agency by which this continuity and harmony is to be effected. Had Wordsworth not written any more of this poem than the above lines, we could, with considerable certainty, have decided that the agency by which this harmony and continuity are to be effected is suggested in the first two lines. The implications of these lines are that not merely does his heart leap up at the sight of the rainbow (for why should he especially single out the rainbow from other beautiful objects?), but that his heart is affected likewise by all beautiful objects of the external world. The further implication is that all hearts that are as sensitive and as responsive to the beauty of external objects as is the poet's will in the same manner be power-

fully affected, and their lives, as a result, will possess continuity and harmony. To be sure, in the lines that follow—

The Child is father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety—

the poet, with considerable more directness, gives expression to these generalizations. Still they are stated in the concrete, and their implications certainly carry the mind far beyond the mere statement of a wish.

It does not follow, however, that when one traces out these philosophic implications to their end that he has arrived at the best and essential things in the poem. A child can read this poem and enjoy the essential pleasure which the poem ought to produce, without being aware of its philosophic implications. He can enjoy the color, the concrete pictures, the mood created by these pictures, and the subtle beauty that slips in unconsciously from every side; and can realize that the vague feelings he has had about a rainbow have been expressed for him. A number of very young students have been known who selected this poem as their favorite, from a number of much simpler poems, and who, when questioned, showed they had no clear understanding of its philosophical

bearing. Perhaps the cause of their choice lay in the strangely stirring and peculiarly heightening effect of the first two lines. Is it not true, after all, that the simplicity and the simple beauty which commends itself directly to the affections of the young student, and which produces that strangely stirring and peculiarly heightening effect on the minds of us all are the chief sources of the most important poetic excellencies? And if a man professes that he has actually outgrown the need of feeling such effects, is he not therefore the less wise? On the other hand, if the young student is given a simple exposition of the philosophic implications of the poem, his love for the poem is not destroyed, but is deepened. In the best poetry the philosophic implications are merely adjuncts and concomitants to the poetry itself. In this particular poem, they are unique adjuncts and natural concomitants, and the fullest appreciation of the poem demands an understanding of its philosophy as well as the appreciation of its simpler power and beauty.

It is not necessary to conclude that since such a poem as "My Heart Leaps Up" contains by implication a unique and profound philosophy that all other equally good poems must likewise point toward some far-reaching principle of philosophic

truth. It would be difficult, for example, to determine the underlying philosophy of the "Rime of the Ancient Mariner"; and, if one should undertake the task, the result would be so shadowy that he would hardly be rewarded for his pains. Poems can be placed on a scale, beginning with those whose philosophic implications are rather vague or altogether wanting, and ending with those whose philosophic implications are evident and pronounced. Certainly the "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" would be placed near one end of the scale, and undoubtedly "My Heart Leaps Up" and many another poem of Wordsworth would be placed near the other end of the scale. Perhaps Gray's "Elegy" would be placed somewhere near the middle, since it contains some generalized truth, but in the main simply recites the "short and simple annals of the poor." The scale itself and the poems ranged upon it would not determine the chief merits of the poems. It would merely indicate how the fields of poetry and philosophy overlap each other, and how philosophy blends itself into poetry in all sorts of varying shades and degrees.

Furthermore, if a poet deliberately undertakes to write philosophical poems, he does not necessarily commit himself to make his different poems point toward the same ethical or philosophical

system of thought. This is an important point in our consideration of Wordsworth. Truth, as it appeals to our intellect, is so vast and manysided that it can never be reduced to a single system in any absolute sense. And even though it were capable of being systematized, poetry would certainly not be the instrument by which such systematization were to be accomplished. No one can write good poetry for any length of time with his eye primarily upon some particular ethical or philosophical system of thought. His poetry will lose that spontaneity, vitality and concreteness without which no good poetry can exist. Besides, such poems evidently would be written with a bias; and disinterestedness is a quality we insist on in the best poetry. The true poet allows the power of his passion and his selective imagination to fashion the concrete material into such form that is most natural and most consistent with that material; and thus the philosophic implications of the poem will be determined mainly by the intuitions, passion, and imagination of the poet, together with the particular concrete material with which he deals. For this reason each new poem may point toward a different philosophical truth from its predecessor, and the implications of different poems by the same author may, therefore,

not be reducible to the same system of ethical or philosophical thought.

The truth is that it is in a poem rather than in a poet that we should look for consistent principles. A philosophical poem should be a self-supporting whole in its philosophy as well as in its artistic structure. It may be said with very little fear of contradiction that if a poet attempts to write a long poem and make it truly philosophical, he will, from the fact of his constant effort to make its philosophy consistent with itself throughout, lose a certain spontaneity and freedom that belong to the poet by right of his vocation. But whether a poem be long or short, there are no laws of art which compel its philosophy to be consistent with the philosophy of another poem, even though it be by the same author. As a work of art it must stand independently. It is for these reasons that it is impossible, for example, to reduce the poetry of Shakespeare to a system. Lovers of Wordsworth should therefore be reluctant to admit with Leslie Stephen that "his ethical system, in particular, is as distinctive and capable of systematic exposition as that of Butler." One wishes that the chief distinction between Wordsworth and Butler might be that Wordsworth's ethical system, in particular, might *not* be as distinctive and capable of sys-

tematic exposition as that of Butler. At any rate, whatever philosophic implications the most characteristic poems of Wordsworth may have, it can hardly be said that these implications point toward some one definitely formulated principle of ethics or philosophy. They indicate rather an escape from a formulated creed. As far as these poems possess a philosophy, each possesses a distinct and unique philosophy of its own. The poet here under the sway of his imagination at white heat and the power of his passion molded these poems, not according to some preconceived system of ethics or philosophy, but according to the deep impulses of his own nature and according to the particular concrete materials of each particular poem. Let us look at these points more in detail and by illustration.

The poet, according to this view, approaches a general truth intuitively and emotionally through the concrete. It is always through a flower, a star, a rock, an animal, a personal mood, a particular moral act, the serious act or the prank of a child, an individual character—always through some bit of concrete and detached experience or observation that the poet attains to his larger generalizations. In "My Heart Leaps Up" it was through the rainbow that the poet was led first to think of an

earlier experience with it, then was led to push his generalization farther until he had arrived at the general truth that individual life should have continuity and that such continuity could be effected by natural piety.

Likewise in the poem "The Primrose of the Rock" a bit of concrete object attracts the poet's attention:

A Rock there is whose homely front
 The passing traveller slights;
 Yet there the glow-worms hang their lamps,
 Like stars, at various heights;
 And one coy Primrose to that Rock
 The vernal breeze invites.

In the next stanza the concrete description goes on, but in the very last lines a generalization is reached:

What hideous warfare has been wages,
 What kingdoms overthrown,
 Since first I spied that Primrose tuft
 And marked it for my own;
 A lasting link in Nature's chain
 From highest heaven let down!

And this generalization is worked out fully and beautifully in the two following stanzas, and, as good poetry must have it, all in the concrete:

The flowers still faithful to the stems,
Their fellowship renew;
The stems are faithful to the root,
That worketh out of view;
And to the rock the root adheres
In every fibre true.

Close, clings to earth the living rock,
Though threatening still to fall;
The earth is constant to her sphere;
And God upholds them all:
So blooms this lovely Plant, nor dreads
Her annual funeral.

Thus, starting from the little primrose, the poet pushes his generalization out, as it were, through the roots and the rock, out until the earth, "constant to her sphere," and God upholding them all are included in his generalization. At this point the complete generalization that there is a law in the universe which binds the greatest and smallest things indissolubly together has been reached, and a natural division of the poem comes to a close. Thus the approach to the abstract has been made through the concrete.

The latter division of the poem deals with flowers and men in general. The moralizing and generalizing tendency is somewhat palpable and the poem here loses in spontaneity. Moreover, if one cared to engage in philosophical niceties, he

would find that at bottom the philosophy of the latter division of the poem is in contradiction to that of the former. The poet morally and intuitively takes the opposite position from his observations made in the first division. He faces the facts in the first and intuitively and moralizingly hopes the opposite in the latter. The poem is not a self-supporting whole in its philosophy, but each division makes such a whole.

This last consideration is only of secondary importance to the poet, but to the philosopher it is of prime importance. The philosopher seeks, first of all, a system of general truths into the scheme of which all acts, objects and facts will naturally fall. But the concrete things of this universe are so various in their nature and so infinite in number that the philosopher has never yet found a system by which all facts can be satisfactorily explained. The poet generally is not as ambitious as the philosopher to acquire a world-view, and he approaches the truth by an opposite method. He takes his concrete object, and if he is not satisfied with pure description or exposition, which he often is not, he will penetrate its inner meaning and see how much of universal law is reflected in this object. And the poem, if it is a poem, that comes out of it, will be a philosophic

poem. But his next bit of concrete matter will perhaps reflect some general aspect of universal truth different from the first, and the two poems will not fall into quite the same system of philosophy.

To be sure, these poems will be an expression of the poet's personality, and the poet's personality is a distinct entity. But a distinct and recognizable personality does not make a system of philosophy. This statement needs further elucidation. Whatever view we may hold about style—whether it is the man himself, or the economy of attention, or something else—it is certain that one of the great outstanding facts of history is that a great poet, more than a philosopher, impresses us with a unique, profound and universal personality. And whatever opprobrium may be attached to the word "system"—and there really should be none—the word in its highest and best sense (and that is the sense in which it is used in this discussion) is peculiarly the thing for which a great philosopher stands. There are many philosophers who are partial poets, but let us think for a moment of two men who are distinctively philosophers, men with whom the exponents of philosophy are willing to rest their case—Aristotle and Kant. When we call to mind the work of these men we see that in each

case there was a powerfully critical and minute analysis of the possibility and meaning of human knowledge, and then the construction of a marvellous synthesis—a system, embracing in its ordered outlines the chief facts of human life. There was with each an analytic and synthetic grappling with the seeming disordered universe in which we live, that wins the profound respect and gratitude of all thinking men. Now, set over against this the work, say, of Shakespeare, and how very different it is! Yet a work a little more enduring, and, on the whole, a little more worth while, the literary critic must confess, than that of the philosopher. And the thing which the poet possesses to match the gigantic intellect of the philosopher is the power of a distinct and universal personality, however completely it may be hid behind the conventions of the poet's art—a personality, which, imaginatively unified, tremblingly emotional, vibrating as it were, in the whole essence of its being, goes out toward its object, polarizes and vitalizes it, produces a reflection of universal law and universal life in it—a personality which, thus unified, can completely express itself in a single pregnant, sententious phrase or line, in the presence of the most common and simple situation in life—a personality which is sensitively open to every new experience, and

is therefore essentially a growing and creative personality. And it is for these reasons alone, if for no others, that the poet cannot with his artistic and intellectual furnishings engage in constructing a system of philosophy.

By way of illustration we have now seen why a poem, which must always be an artistic whole, may with perfect consistency have by implication and through the concrete a philosophy at its base, and why the poet who may choose to write such poems may not have—and should not have if he would remain perfectly spontaneous, in touch with concrete life, truly disinterested and creative—a fixed and articulate system of philosophy.

But is this last statement in accord with Wordsworth's experience and practice? Let us bring together the generalizations of three poems we have already analyzed—"My Heart Leaps Up," "To the Cuckoo," and "The Primrose of the Rock" (the division we have analyzed)—and see whether they will fall into a system. In "My Heart Leaps Up" we have seen that the general truth is that individual life should have continuity and that such continuity could be effected by natural piety. But this continuity is made by the poet to rest chiefly upon memory and sense, the memory of a sense perception. The child has an experience with

nature. His heart was made to leap up by the sight of a rainbow, and since it was a precious experience, let us retain it from day to day, or be willing to die if we fail. Continuity, then, based on the conserving power of the memory of natural objects is the more comprehensive statement of the general truth of this poem. Although in the poem "To a Cuckoo" the mind's method of procedure is very much the same as in "My Heart Leaps Up," yet the philosophic implications in the former point in an opposite direction. Here the outer world is conceived as "an insubstantial faery place." Reality is subjective. The physical world is transcended. If there is reality in the outer world, it is spiritual reality, not physical—physical things are but appearances. On the other hand, in the "Primrose of the Rock" the outer world is conceived as a physical reality, as governed by an inexorable law—a law which binds the smallest things to the greatest. Now, how and on what philosophic grounds are these three general conceptions to be drawn into a single philosophic system of thought? In philosophic terms, the first would chiefly be recollection, the second transcendentalism, and the third determinism, and they naturally fall into different systems of thought. But suppose we add to these general truths

the general truths of "The Fountain," "Elegiac Stanzas," "Ode to Duty," and especially a number of the sonnets, and our systematization would become impracticable, if not impossible.

Again, there are many poems of Wordsworth—and some of his best ones are included here—of which it can be said they belong to no system of philosophic thought whatever. Of the story of Michael and that of Margaret, Professor Raleigh says: "It is wrong, indeed, to call these works stories; they are all the very stuff of first-hand experience, and their reader lives through many more hours than they take in the telling," and for the same reason that they cannot be called stories in the proper sense, the reason, namely, that they are the very stuff of first-hand experience, they cannot be classified under the head of a philosophic system. And what shall be said of such poems as "The Daffodils," "She Was a Phantom," "The Solitary Reaper," "To a Highland Girl," from the philosophic standpoint? These poems are little patches of transcendental beauty, born of the overflow of powerful emotions and rooted deeply in the concrete of memory and sense perceptions, but whose concrete bases are sublimated into spiritual presences. And two-thirds of the beauty and the powerful feelings and the magic spiritualization vanish at

the touch of cold philosophy. In truth, men who have drawn any sort of connected philosophic system from Wordsworth's writings, have left out of account a goodly number of his best and most characteristic poems. Our conclusion thus far, then, is that a number of Wordsworth's poems contain, by implication, unique and profound general philosophic truths, somewhat alike because they are touched by the same personality, but different because they are produced by a free, creative energy of the mind, and because their respective concrete bases suggest different phases of general truth.

2. We have thus far been approaching the philosophic question from the standpoint of poetry, from the way poetry, by implication and through the concrete, approaches the truths of philosophy. Let us now look at the question of philosophy more purely on the philosopher's own grounds, and see what the poet can do with analysis. Let us take some general and fundamental problem of philosophy, say, the problem of free-will, and see what the pages of Wordsworth will contribute to it. The philosophic question with regard to the freedom of the will may be summed up under three heads. First, is there such a thing as the freedom of the will, that is, does self-consciousness possess

an independent, self-directing and self-developing power, or, is self-consciousness an illusion, a mere cerebration of cells, the product of a materialistic evolution, subject wholly to the influence of environment? Secondly, if the philosopher assumes that man has freedom of the will, then the question arises: What are the grounds on which the assumption rests, and what are the evidences in favor of it? And thirdly, it is agreed on all hands that the will is not absolutely free. How far, then, and in what sense is it free? What are the conditions that limit it?

Now, when the philosopher turns to the pages of Wordsworth for light, he finds everywhere an assumption of the freedom of the will. To instance an example from the Fourth Book of the Excursion:

Within the soul a faculty abides,
That with interpositions, which would hide
And darken, so can deal that they become
Contingencies of pomp; and serve to exalt
Her native brightness. As the ample moon,
In the deep stillness of a summer even
Rising behind a thick and lofty grove,
Burns, like an unconsuming fire of light,
In the green trees; and, kindling on all sides
Their leafy umbrage, turns the dusky veil
Into a substance glorious as her own,
Yea, with her own incorporated, by power

Capacious, serene. Like power abides
 In man's celestial spirit; virtue thus
 Sets forth and magnifies herself; thus feeds
 A calm, a beautiful, and silent fire,
 From the encumbrances of mortal life,
 From error, disappointment—nay, from guilt;
 And sometimes, so relenting justice wills,
 From palpable oppressions of despair.

By a self-directing faculty from within, the soul can "exalt her native brightness," and "virtue thus sets forth and magnifies herself." In the opening of the Ninth Book of the *Excursion*, Wordsworth says that this principle of freedom subsists in all things:

Whate'er exists hath properties that spread
 Beyond itself, from link to link,
 It circulates, the Soul of all the worlds.
 This is the freedom of the universe.

But he adds that "its most apparent home" is in the human mind. And when the facts of life—the fact, for example, that men, who in the morn of youth defied the elements, must vanish—seem to deny that freedom has its most apparent home in the human mind, we are still intuitively to "feel that we are greater than we know." As he expresses it in the address to the river Duddon, in the Sonnet "After Thought":

I see what was, and is, and will abide ;
Still glides the Stream, and shall forever glide ;
The Form remains, the Function never dies ;
While we, the brave, the mighty, and the wise,
We Men, who in our morn of youth defied
The elements, must vanish ;—be it so !
Enough, if something from our hands have power
To live, and act, and serve the future hour ;
And if, as toward the silent tomb we go,
Through love, through hope, and faith's transcendent dower,
We feel that we are greater than we know.

In many passages, then, in Wordsworth's poetry we find the assumption of the freedom of the will. But on what grounds does this assumption rest? interrogates the philosopher. This very assumption becomes the object of unsparing criticism and analysis by the philosopher, for it is by this method that he builds up his scientific and philosophic system. The poet can make no appreciable contribution to the problem, for at this point a sharp line is drawn between poetry and scientific system of thought. Poetry cannot be analytic, only synthetic. Wordsworth himself understood the limitations of his art in theory, although he seems not always to have observed it strictly in practice. Of the use that poetry can make of scientific knowledge, he says, "The remotest discoveries of the chemist, the botanist, or mineralogist will be

as proper objects of the poet's art as any upon which it can be employed, if the time should ever come when these things shall be familiar to us. If the time should ever come when what is now called science, thus familiarized to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration and will welcome the Being thus produced, as a dear and genuine inmate in the household of man." It is not the business of the poet to make searching analyses and criticisms of general truths, but to wait patiently and make use of those that are familiarly known, to whatever philosophical system they may belong; to make them take on a form of flesh and blood; to give them, as it were, a new birth; to make them give us a new sense of their presence, their intimacy and their reality; to idealize them and make them have new values for us. Thus the poet's contribution is not a contribution to the problems of philosophy but to life. *χ*

As to the philosopher's third question, how far and in what particular sense is the will free, the limitations of the poet's art prevent him from making any distinct or definite contribution. Minute observation of many data, critical analysis of them, close and careful reasoning on minute

differences—these are required to make an advance on the problem. The critic may say these are mere intellectual niceties. The literary critic is especially prone to say so. Even so; but it is precisely by these analytical methods and by these marginal differences that a system of philosophy makes an advance on those of the past. Wordsworth's conception of the marriage of the mind with external nature, out of which some critics have tried to make a great deal, is a conception entirely too general to be of service to the philosopher, and is indeed too vague to make a specific appeal to his intellect. And because Wordsworth was a poet he was unable to enter into philosophical minutae and subtilities, and was prevented from making a distinct contribution to the problem of free-will, or to any other similar problem.

The fact is, however, that Wordsworth's mind, with all its other tendencies, had a strong natural tendency toward the minute and the analytical. From his earliest childhood his bodily eye amid its

Strongest workings evermore
Was searching out the lines of difference
As they lie hid in all external forms,
Near or remote, minute or vast.

And with this exact knowledge of the lines of

difference in the outward world, he had added careful observation of

Those passages of life that give
Profoundest knowledge to what point, and how,
The mind is lord and master—outward sense
The obedient servant of her will.

These passages indicate that he was familiar with both the sources and methods of science and philosophy. And in the early days of the French Revolution his mind was open to scientific and philosophic truths, from whatever quarters they might blow. He was extremely susceptible to the influences of social and political systems of philosophy. In France with Beaupey his constant theme of conversation was how to build liberty

On firm foundations, making social life,
Through knowledge spreading and imperishable,
As just in regulation, and as pure
As individual in the wise and good.

But after the shock of the Revolution and his experience with Godwinian and rational philosophies of the times, he, from that time hence, put his faith in no single system of philosophy. Although his moral nature, as we have seen, pre-emptorily demanded moral nurture, he now declared his philosophical independence. His analytic and philosophical bent of mind, however, was not taken

from him, and there was a long struggle between his artistic and analytic faculties, between the poet and the philosopher in him. But the poet came off the victor:

The imaginative faculty was lord
Of observations natural.

His sister, he attests, helped him to attain the victory:

She, in the midst of all, persevered me still
A poet, made me seek beneath that name
And that alone, my office upon earth.

And yet the analytic faculties at times would persist in him. The results of the struggle were both fruitful and fruitless. It was fruitful in that region where philosophic and poetic truth naturally overlap each other. Here it was Wordsworth's good office to "lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration" of familiar philosophic truth into poetic truth. From various philosophies with which he had been familiar—now from Platonic idealism, now from German transcendentalism or Coleridgean metaphysics, which is very much the same, and sometimes even from the sterner and harsher philosophies of determinism and necessity—he distilled material for various of his poems. His efforts were also often fruitless. Sometimes his philosophic

material was too refractory for poetic treatment. Sometimes it was too analytic, arid and abstruse to be transfigured by the divine spirit of the poet; and the evil results of these efforts were three-fold: They produced a considerable body of poetry that is of little worth; they furnished abundant material for too philosophically inclined critics to find in Wordsworth an articulate and scientific system of thought; and their reactionary effect tended to harden and solidify the character of the poet.

- If, then, we must forego calling Wordsworth a philosopher in the strict sense of the term, there are two other things that may with emphasis be said of him, which these pages have tried to show. Namely, that he is a psychologist and a mystic—a psychologist of the memory and of the senses, of the actions of men in states of excitement, of the thoughts and intuitions of children; and a patient reader and describer of his own moods, thoughts and volitions; a mystic in interpreting the strange and low-breathing intuitions that lie deep within us, beckoning us into worlds of wonder, joy and rapture. Wordsworth was master of the following kinds of goings-on in the universe and in the heart of man—activities which, under the inspiration of poetry and in the light of mystic intensity, may be

conceived as subject to law, but which defy any scientific or philosophic systematization:

Visionary power

Attends the motions of the viewless winds:
There darkness makes abode, and all the host
Of shadowy things work endless changes—there
As in a mansion like their proper home,
Even forms and substances are circumfused
By that transparent vale with light divine,
And through the turnings intricate of verse,
Present themselves as objects recognized,
In flashes, and with glory not their own.

Having given the psychological power of reading the mind and feelings aright, and the mystic's intense love of intuitive truth and suggestion, together with its solid foundation in the enduring volitions and passions of men, one has practically accounted for that permanent and solid substance in his work that has so constantly been praised by the lovers of Wordsworth.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

The formation of Wordsworth's character came at a time of great social and political disturbances. These disturbances wrought profoundly upon his sensitive, finely moral and peace-loving nature, and the burden of life early lay heavily upon him. He not only felt the weight of great personal responsibilities, but he bore the burden of the people. He carried upon his heart for a time the burden of the people of France, later the people of Switzerland and of Spain; and always felt deeply the rise and the fall, the successes and failures of his own people. He was a devotee of freedom—freedom in its highest and purest forms. His political sonnets are the finest of their kind in the language. They breathe the spirit of intense patriotism—a patriotism that rises above narrowness, selfishness and provincialism. What he finely says of Milton is true of himself:

Thou hast a voice whose sound was like the sea :
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free.

With the trumpet tone of a statesman, with the intensity of a mystic and the fine scorn of a prophet, he could denounce the avarice and selfishness of the people :

The world is too much with us : late and soon,
Getting and spending we lay waste our powers :
Little we see in Nature that is ours ;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon !
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon ;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers ;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune ;
It moves us not.—Great God ! I'd rather be
A pagan suckled in a creed outworn ;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn ;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea ;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

Yet he had faith in the people. He trusted the general heart of humanity. He had the same faith in human beings as he had in himself, and his faith in himself was well-nigh unbounded. Upon a very unfavorable reception of some of his poems, he wrote to Lady Beaumont: "My ears are stone-dead to this idle buzz, and my flesh as insensible as iron to these petty stings, and, after what I

have said, I am sure yours will be the same. I doubt not that you will share with me an invincible confidence that my writings will co-operate with the benign tendencies in human nature and society, wherever found; and that they will in their degree be efficacious in making men wiser, better and happier." Sometimes this faith in his genius and his will faltered and the burden of his own free will lay heavily upon him. In the "Leech Gatherer" he says:

- But as it sometimes chanceth, from the might
Of joy in minds that can no further go,
As high as we have mounted in delight
In our dejection do we sink as low;
To me that morning did it happen so;
And fears and fancies thick upon me came;
Dim sadness—and blind thoughts, I knew not, nor
could name.

But the lone leech gatherer on the moor taught
him the way of recovery:

I could have laughed myself to scorn to find
In that decrepit man so firm a mind.
"God," said I, "be my help and stay secure,
I'll think of the leech-gatherer on the lonely moor."

Thus his despondency was only temporary and most usually he was "insensible as iron to these petty stings" of life.

But high as he had mounted in the "might of joy" or in the strength of his genius, he held ideals before himself that were beyond the power of his mind. And there is something almost pathetic in his "high endeavors" at purposes and ideals impossible to realize. He would write an Orphean "philosophic song of truth." He would build a grand cathedral-like edifice, "The Recluse," of which the Prelude and the Excursion are parts. The Excursion was to be the central part of the building, the Prelude its ante-chapel, and his minor pieces, "little cells, oratories and sepulchral recesses ordinarily included" in such an edifice; but the edifice was never completed. He set himself to be a teacher of mankind. "Every great poet," he said, "is a teacher. I wish either to be considered as a teacher or as nothing." But to be a teacher in his sense of the word meant to write an original and enduring kind of poetry, not with the "gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers," but in a "selection of language really used by men"—a poetry made up mainly from the original stuff and first-hand experiences of human nature—a poetry that was to be drawn from the "common things that round us lie," from the common heart of man:

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.

The burden of his message, indeed, slept and brooded on his own heart. The strenuousness of it, the ideality of it, the mystic intensity of it, together with the burden of his own times and his own people, who often heard him with obloquy, solidified and hardened the character that was somewhat "stiff and moody" from childhood. It tended to eradicate from his mind a sense of values in poetry. It made him "insensible as iron" to the "amazing inequalities" of his own works, to the "afflicting blocks of prose" that are there. It early extracted all the humor out of his naturally serious and somewhat juiceless character. It gradually accumulated a deposit of stiffness and immobility in his character. These were the reactionary results of the efforts of a high-minded person to carry, in times of revolutionary zeal, a revolutionary movement into the field of morals and literary life.

Whatever pathos there is in some of his broken hopes, it is relieved by the fact that he lived an overcoming life. He willed mightily. He would not be thwarted even though his ideals were

unattainable. He not only makes "a profound application of ideas to life," but he has life itself, abundant life, to offer. Out of the deep of his own heart come calls to the deeps of our own. It is his, as no other poet's perhaps, to make and retain disciples. To explain his mystic power over them, his early followers ascribed to him occult wisdom, systematic philosophy and what not. It is hard even now to speak of him perfectly unprejudiced when once caught in the iron grasp of his will and the towering strength of his passion, but it is best to be modest. To walk with him is to learn humility and courage—humility in the presence of the awful forces of life that envelop us, courage that steels the heart to meet calmly all obstacles, pain, and even death:

A Power is passing from the earth
To breathless Nature's dark abyss;
But when the great and good depart
What is it more than this—

That Man, who is from God sent forth,
Doth yet again to God return?—
Such ebb and flow must ever be,
Then wherefore should we mourn?

Wherefore, indeed, should we mourn, for out of the deep come mystic echoes and beckoning voices:

Yes, it was the mountain Echo,
Solitary, clear, profound,
Answering to the shouting Cuckoo,
Giving to her sound for sound!

* * * * *

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 something from afar—
Listen, ponder, hold them dear;
For of God—of God they are.



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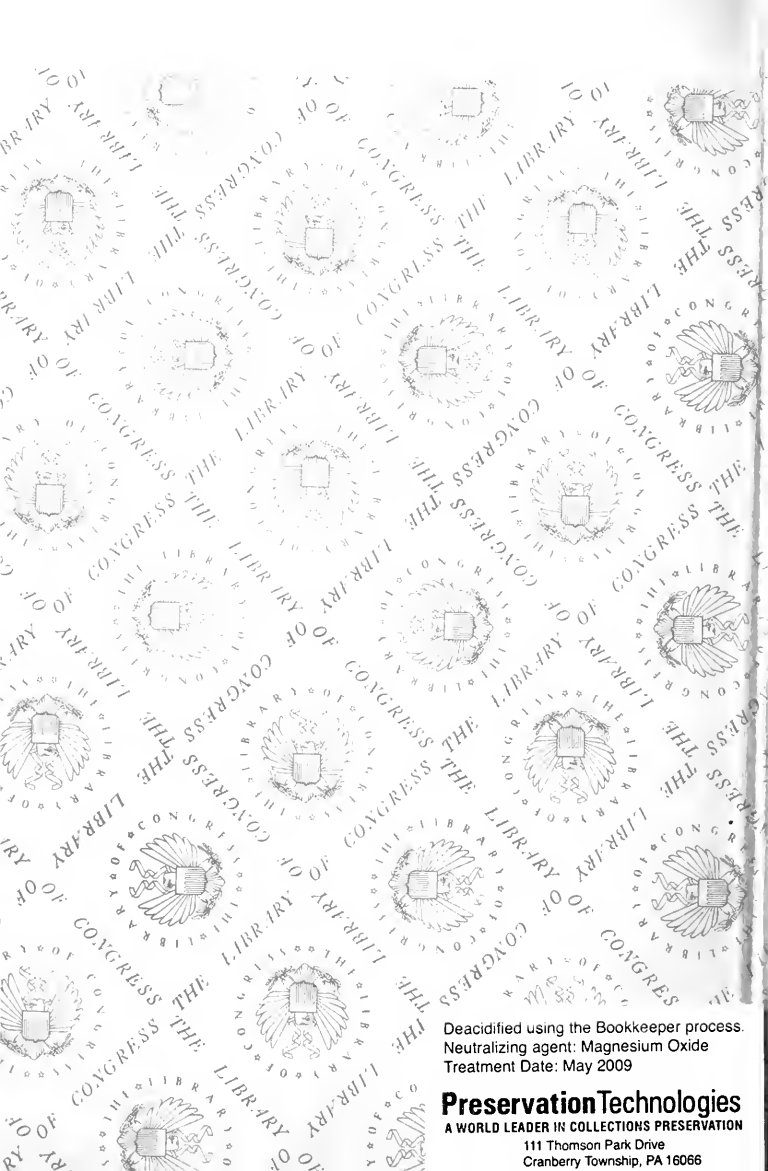
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