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ART. III.—WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

Wordsworthiana. A selection from papers read to the Wordsworth Society. Edited by Prof. W. KNIGHT. 1889.

TOWARD the close of the last century poetry was at a very low ebb. The school of Pope, so long in the ascendant, had completely triumphed over the simpler and more natural styles of verse. It is true that Burns and Cowper were far otherwise—that their best work recalled the brighter movement, the childlike joy in nature—that are the distinctive features of the great Elizabethan revival. But they were, more or less, isolated from the great mass of their contemporaries, who still clung fondly to the affectations and conceits of that school where Pope was an acknowledged master. Nay, further, though their work was an indirect challenge to the eighteenth-century versifiers, the position they took up was neither direct enough nor decided enough to effect any conspicuous change of front among the serried ranks of their opponents. To the great and splendid task—to that sacred duty (if one may call it so) of bringing poetry back to the truths that nature teaches, was “consecrated” the lifework of one man—William Wordsworth.

Anyone who will take the trouble to peruse that little volume of 1798 entitled “Lyrical Ballads,”¹ can hardly fail to observe, if he has any fairly extensive acquaintance with the model poets in which the eighteenth century delighted, that the verse contained within the covers of that book was something wholly different from the soulless metrical stuff then in vogue. “Lyrical Ballads” might be bad, wrong as to choice of material, false in its art, but it was certainly different from any contemporaneous work. It needed to be judged from a new standpoint. The book was violently enough handled, and only a few of the more discerning spirits of the age detected that a great poet had indeed arisen. There were the beautiful lines on “Early Spring,” the simple spontaneity and humanity of “We are Seven,” besides other pieces which have since become the permanent treasures of English song. In all these poems there was a grave exultation, an elemental strength, which, despite all defects of execution, forcibly communicated themselves to thinking readers; there was a “spontaneous overflow” of powerful feeling, indicative of a sympathetic insight into, and knowledge of, human life in all its varied and intricate conditions of existence. The poet himself, some years later, in a valuable prose preface to the

¹ A facsimile edition of this famous volume has recently appeared—nearly one hundred years after its first publication.

reprint of "Lyrical Ballads," endeavoured to describe the object which he had in view in the composition of these pieces, in the following remarkable words: "What I proposed to myself was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men: and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of the imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual way; and, further and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly, though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature; chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement." Wordsworth was convinced in his own mind that the simple sorrows and joys of the humble dalesman are, if we will but really and honestly face the matter, quite as suitable material for the poet to exercise his most serious art upon as the "majestic pains" of a "Dion" or a "Laodamia." And, up to a point, Wordsworth was right.¹ Feelings that are the common heritage of the race—those great *elementary* passions of the human heart which manifest themselves, irrespective of the accidents of social condition or of birth, equally in the patrician and the peasant—these were what appealed to the loftier moods of Wordsworth's genius, and these were what he endeavoured, in the light of a noble imaginative faculty, to bring within the sphere of the poet's creative skill. And, such being his purpose, his effort was to depict those elemental feelings of humanity in words suited thereto; and for this he resolutely disclaimed the "gaudiness and inane phraseology" which passed under the sounding title of poetic diction, and chose rather a language used by men in everyday life. But, as Coleridge once observed, Wordsworth strangely overrated the poetic possibilities of everyday speech. In his laudable desire to set down nothing but what he felt to be true, he too often became utterly commonplace; and his verse assumed in such cases a doddiness and prosy staleness that are wholly incompatible with poetry. To use the late J. Russell Lowell's² apt expression: "Wordsworth never quite learned the distinction between fact, which suffocates the muse, and truth, which is the very breath of her nostrils." This lack of discernment,

¹ Cf. Dean Church's criticism ("Essay on Wordsworth," reprinted in his "Collected Works," vol. ii., p. 218): "Wordsworth was right in protesting against the doctrine that a thing is not poetical because it is not expressed in a certain conventional mintage; he was wrong in denying that there is a mintage of words fit for poetry and unsuited to ordinary prose."

² "Essays on the English Poets," article "Wordsworth."

combined with a strange want of humour, caused Wordsworth to present to his readers such poems as "Simon Lee" and the "Blind Highland Boy," both of which—and they are representative of this class of uninspired episodes—are tedious by reason of their over-minute attention to needless and contemptible detail, and distasteful from their ludicrous commonplace.¹ Wordsworth was certainly a perplexing mixture. Side by side with some parochial triviality, we shall come across such lines as those on "Tintern Abbey," of which we may safely affirm that no more inspired piece of writing had been seen since the ink was wet upon the paper whereon were traced the thoughts of Milton himself. The sustained power of imagination, the noble dignity of thought and expression, the perfect ease and translucent strength of the nervous sinewy lines, combine to make that immortal poem, not merely the gem of the collection known as "Lyrical Ballads," but the finest piece in the whole body of Wordsworth's poetry. Only the "Great Ode" and the lines on "Duty" come anywhere near it.

Perhaps it may seem an exaggeration to say that, of all poets, Wordsworth is the most difficult to make a selection from. But the reader, who keeps his attention on the watch, and is careful to note the turn here and the touch there of the poet's clear "outlining of visible imagery," will not fail to understand what is signified. One is afraid, as Mr. Pater justly remarks, to miss even the most unpromising contribution, "lest some precious morsel should be lying within—the few perfect lines, the phrase, the single word, perhaps, to which he often works up mechanically through a poem, almost the whole of which may be tame enough." Take a well-known poem, "The Thorn," which is not a very promising production—not one where the imaginative light plays often or much—and yet what a subtle suggestiveness is there in the two brief lines :

And she is known to every star,
And every wind that blows.

This is what one is constantly finding in Wordsworth : the secret vein of purest gold embedded in a heap of quartz ; the

¹ Speaking of the "little muddy pond," in his poem of "The Thorn," he cannot avoid writing such doggerel as

"I've measured it from side to side,
'Tis three feet long and two feet wide."

And this is no unusual instance, as many of his verses will amply show. The odd part of it is that, when such examples were pointed out to him, he never could see the faultiness in them. "They ought to be liked!" was his remark to Crabb Robinson, who confessed that there were passages which he dared not read aloud in company.

touch of the imagination, setting everything a gleam, half-concealed in the prosaic numbers of the understanding. Or again, what delicacy, insight, and rare felicity of diction are combined in that single stanza from "Yarrow Visited":

But thou, that didst appear so fair
To fond imagination,
Dost rival in the light of day
Her delicate creation ;

a stanza which Charles Lamb—no mean critic—pronounced to be inferior to none in the whole wide world of poetry for its simple loveliness. It should be noticed that the real character of Wordsworth's best work, at its highest level, comes out rather in the shorter poems than in long and sustained efforts, like the "Prelude" or the "Excursion." It was by the shorter lyrics and ballads (nearly every one of which was composed during the period beginning with "Lyrical Ballads," in 1798, and terminating with the two-volumed collection of "Poems" in 1807) that the revolution in English poetry was inaugurated—a revolution for which we have, be it remembered, to be profoundly grateful to this day. In the best of the shorter lyrics, such as the "Solitary Reaper" or the "Fountain," Wordsworth comes before us as the poet of nature, the portrayer of elemental passions in lowly hearts, the sympathetic friend and companion of humanity in its simple, unadorned, everyday guise ; in the "Prelude" and in the "Excursion" he appears rather as the philosophic thinker and high-priest of nature. Yet it was through nature that he approached the spectacle of human life ; it was in the hour of deep meditation upon the mystery of the universe about him that the voice of travailing humanity broke in upon his heart. He has told us this in immortal lines, and he has given us the reason :

I have learned
To look on Nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth ; but hearing oftentimes
The still sad music of humanity—
Nor harsh, nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue.

To use¹ Mr. Pater's words, "these (natural) influences tended to the dignity of human nature, because they tended to tranquillize it. By raising nature to the level of human thought he gives it power and expression ; he subdues man to the level of nature, and gives him thereby a certain breadth, and coolness, and solemnity."

¹ I quote from his luminous essay on Wordsworth in "Appreciations" (1889), where will be found some of the most thoughtful criticism that has yet appeared on the poet.

In the year 1807 Wordsworth gave to the world a fresh collection of his poems, in two volumes; and with that the first great period of his literary activity definitely closed. And, though it is a sad mistake to lay it down too rigidly that in the decade which began with 1798 and ended in 1807 *all* Wordsworth's best work was produced (for how, then, are we to account for "Dion" and "Laodamia," to say nothing of many other pieces?), yet we may with truth allow that during that period were composed those poems which have had the most serious and lasting effect on all subsequent poetry—those poems which are most clearly distinctive of Wordsworth, which first sounded the challenge to the scribblers of the last century, which were the most effective protest against their hollow artificiality and poverty of thought. The spirit of Homer, free and beautiful, had come back, and the Claudians were routed. Now it is just this that constitutes Wordsworth's chief claim upon our gratitude: he brought poetry back to Nature. Long divorced from Nature, and the truths which she inculcates and on every side proclaims, poetry had languished more and more, till only the form remained. The grate was there and the bars, but whoso looked within to find fire, discovered nothing save ashes.¹ Wordsworth, not fancifully careful for the form, sought rather that something without which the form is an empty abstraction; he sought Truth, the real content of poetry, for this end threading the mazes of life in all its classes and under all circumstances, common as well as romantic, seeing in all things matter for inference and instruction.²

In later years Wordsworth's style had a tendency almost to revert to a less direct and natural mode of expression, as a comparison of the three "Yarrows" will show. There was a simplicity almost amounting to barrenness in his early work, a bleakness well-nigh painful at times; none the less, it achieved its appointed end. Moreover, Wordsworth, however bleak, had always something to say, something definite and clear, which he wished to impart to his readers—a virtue, by the way, as admirable as it is rare. Then, again, at his best he is so earnest, so simple, so childlike in the way in which he looks, and bids us look, at things. There is, withal, a subtle delicacy of instinct, which enables him in his exalted moments to set the right word in the right place, to fit the description

¹ A similar state of things prevailed among the Italian *humanists* of the fifteenth century. With them, too, correctness of diction and elegance of form were everything, while matter went for little or nothing. Compare Beard's "Hibbert Lectures" (1883), cap. ii., p. 39.

² See the interesting preface (dated 1834) to Sir Henry Taylor's "Philip van Artevelde."

given to the thing described, that seems wholly unique. Take, as a suggestive instance, his lines on the "Cuckoo":

O blithe new-comer, I have heard,
I hear thee, and rejoice ;
O cuckoo, shall I call thee bird,
Or but a wandering voice ?

These lines are useful as a typical instance of Wordsworth's extraordinary power of transmuting some seemingly trivial incident into a subject for meditative joy and the substance of pleasurable recollection. And then there is the imaginative element, which is one of Wordsworth's highest qualities :

I hear thee babbling to the vale
Of sunshine and of flowers ;
And unto me thou bring'st a tale
Of visionary hours.
Thrice welcome, darling of the spring !
Ev'n yet thou art to me
No bird, but an invisible thing—
A voice, a mystery.

Nor is this haunting mystery, this sense of the supernatural, wherewith Nature fills the meditative heart, the only blessings she has to bestow. Above all is the "deep power of joy," that upholds us and cherishes us, and this is something which does not pass away with the object which has given rise to the emotion ; rather the picture remains for ever imprinted on the mind, presenting itself to

That inner eye
Which is the bliss of solitude.

Matthew Arnold, who has done so much to interpret the *true* Wordsworth to our day and generation, speaks¹ of his power of hope and happiness, his "deep power of joy," as what is perhaps Wordsworth's most distinctive virtue of all. And, be it noted, this note is sounded, not in one or two poems, but is distinctive of all Wordsworth's best work. Mention has been made of the bleakness of much of that work, but, after all, is it not the bleakness of a fresh wind, healthy and invigorating, that seems to come piping over cool hills ?

This "power of joy" which Wordsworth teaches us ; this power to transfuse a tranquil happiness into the lives and hearts of his fellows, is the outcome—not of momentary passion—but of a soul truly in harmony with the mind that "rolls through all things." Even in the sweetest poets there is a vague feeling of unrest, the sadness—so plaintive yet so eloquent in its dim world-weariness—of unsatisfied longings,

¹ In his address as President of the Wordsworth Society, 1883.

of unsatisfied endeavour. It was Wordsworth's brave desire to overcome this, not by making the weary heart wearier, and the tortured soul more miserable still, by "high debate" on this or that insoluble problem, wherein we

Find no end, in wandering mazes lost,

but by the simple process of bringing us back again to the eternal, elemental truths and sanctities of Nature. And by interpreting Nature to us, he helped to interpret the workings of our own minds. He comes to regard Nature as a single life, capable of exercising a deep influence on himself, and with an open heart, and observant eye, and sympathetic love, he listens to what she has to teach. Nature will not solve the great riddle, the mystery of being; but her influences may help to soothe and pacify the hearts and tranquillize the lives of men.

He had felt the power
Of Nature, and already was prepared,
By his intense convictions, to receive
Deeply the lesson deep of love which he
Whom Nature, by whatever means, has taught
To feel intensely, cannot but receive.

Employ yourself, he would seem to reiterate, in appreciative study of what is not too high nor deep for human thought; be busy to see the "beauteous forms of things," and suffer the glad light of the universe to shed its beneficent beams upon your mind and soul.

Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your teacher;
She has a world of ready wealth,
Our minds and hearts to bless—
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
Truth breathed by cheerfulness.

It is this *animism* of Wordsworth (if it may be permitted thus to adopt what is a favourite word, nowadays, among our anthropologists) which causes him to regard Nature, not merely as a deep power of joy both to the external vision and also to the inner reflective mind, but as productive of a moral power for good. The well-known lines on Tintern Abbey express his meaning fully, where, after speaking of the "tranquil restoration" effected by reflective contemplation upon the visible workings of the natural world, he goes on to say:

Not less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more divine; *that blessed mood,*
In which the burden of the mystery—
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world
Is lightened;

while it is the happiest result of this that, at length,

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

One can hardly marvel, when one reads those noble lines, that Matthew Arnold, himself a true poet of much exquisite sensibility, should have recommended a study of Wordsworth to those oppressed with the gloom and moroseness engendered by latter-day¹ pessimism. Not that the *nature-cure*, as it has been called, always is effectual in everyone; but the tranquilizing influences of natural objects, calling forth and strengthening (as they do) the imagination, is of the utmost value oftentimes in restoring the mental balance; for, if the heart and eye be truly open to the genial influences of nature,² every revelation of beauty, of love, and of joy, may be treasured up in the memory, to prove an abiding solace in hours of weariness, and an ever-recurring delight in after-years. In the simplest and commonest things then, whether they be the innocent loveliness of the earth flowers, or the solemn grandeur of the hills, or the mystic light of the sunset, Wordsworth finds lessons of endurance and comfort by the way, and with unfailing felicity of language he has told us so:

To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

“The true office,” says Dr. Jowett,³ “of a poet is not merely to give amusement, or to be the expression of the feelings of mankind, good or bad, or even to increase our knowledge of human nature. There have been poets in modern times, such as Goethe and Wordsworth, who have not forgotten their high

¹ The horrible blankness of this despair seems to be gaining ground everywhere, among *dilettanti*, men of science, politicians and the rest. And nobody seems to see the reason, though it is not far to seek. “Truly, we are on the brink of the most fearful crisis in the whole world’s history. Knowledge is to be all in all.” These are the deliberate words of the greatest metaphysician of the age, Dr. J. H. Stirling (notes to the translation of Schwegler’s “History of Philosophy,” p. 474). The same thinker exclaims elsewhere: “We have had enough of this at the hands of the general Aufklärung; we would not protract the agony. What is wanted now is something quite else—an end to the misery: a renewal of faith.” (“Secret of Hegel,” vol. ii., p. 592).

² Compare the passage in the “Excursion” (Book IV.):

Then trust yourself abroad etc.,
Where living things, and things inanimate,
Do speak, at Heaven’s command, to eye and ear:
And speak to social reason’s inner sense
With inarticulate language.

³ Introduction to Plato, “Gorgias.”

vocation of teachers; and the two greatest of the Greek dramatists owe their sublimity to their ethical character. The noblest truths, sung of in the purest and sweetest language, are still the proper material of poetry. . . . The poet's mission is not to disguise men from themselves, but to reveal to them their own nature, and make them better acquainted with the world around them." These principles it is important to understand, if we would adequately comprehend the meaning of Wordsworth's life-work in its fullest extent. For, just as it is true that he found in Nature a sublime teacher of truths, and a source of peace and joy to the simple heart, so also he bids us remember that, "transcending all this, there must stand forth, as the highest goal of our best resolves and ambitions, the grand concept of duty, enforced with absolute certainty on every rational being."¹ None, perhaps, of our generation has more clearly perceived the binding necessity of duty than Wordsworth himself. Uncompromising, with its stern and unflinching "Thou must, for thou oughtest," duty will surely remain one of the few elemental *certainties* underlying our entire nature, which no rude force can shake, nor a false science make to falter. Our poet has not forgotten to give a prominent place among his poems to the well-known ode on "Duty," which, with "Tintern" and the "Great Ode," together form the high-water mark of his genius. There it stands—pure, stern, unyielding as the virtue herself, "daughter of the voice of God." Though Wordsworth invested Nature with a deeply spiritual significance, his poetry was throughout strongly tinged, nay, rather deep-dyed, in mighty convictions of truth *as* truth, eternal and divine, and therefore of God Himself. This is continually coming out in his delineation of natural surroundings, for instance, in which his truthfulness of presentation is remarkable. Even in his fieriest moods of imaginative insight, when his inspiration and spiritual passion were at their height, he never allowed himself to relax his genuine hold of truth; the feelings that prompted utterance he would faithfully record, reading them from the clear image of his own mind. Nor is his interpretation of nature characterized by anything more elaborately convincing than by his view of the great "primal duties," clearly seeing and evolving the beauty which lies in all that is truly natural in human life.²

¹ *I.e.*, what Kant calls the "imperative of morality." See his "Metaphysic of Morality," p. 264, *sqq.* (works, ed. Hartenstein). But duty must never remain a concept; it is necessary that it should be realized in every department of human action. Dr. J. H. Stirling has some thoughtful remarks on the subject ("Philosophy of Law," Lecture II., pp. 18-28).

² See a short but interesting paper by the Dean of Salisbury on "Wordsworth's Position as an Ethical Teacher," printed in "Words

This being his attitude towards ethical questions, we may now briefly inquire what constituted the poet's conception of the religious ideal. I would gladly state my conviction that Wordsworth was no pantheist, in the ordinary acceptation of the term: Pantheism is naturally to be understood in the Spinozistic sense—that all God is nature, and all nature God, with all that this involves; but, surely Wordsworth would have been the first to repudiate such a creed. Of the pantheism, too, ascribed to some passages he must have been unconscious; his creed being, as Mr. Gostwick¹ observes, that commonly accepted in the Anglican Church. If, however, by pantheism we signify that God, as

Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe,

is everywhere existent in His creations, great and small, yet at the same time transcending their mere material natures, then Wordsworth was a pantheist. But in that case are we making a legitimate use of the word? No doubt Wordsworth intuitively believed in the real *immanence* of God in the world, but allowed a certain mysticism to colour his belief, which gave rise to the notion of his possessing Pantheistic views. His mysticism mainly consisted in a vague theory of a certain sympathy existing between the material world and the human soul. What Wordsworth held merely as a vague theory was made the subject of a careful and serious inquiry by Heinrich Steffens, the Norwegian mystic. In the discourse of the Wanderer in the "Excursion" (Bk. IX.), at the very opening words, we find, it is true, such words as these:

To every form of being is assigned
An *active* principle; how'er removed
From sense and observation, it subsists
In all things;

but one should note that Wordsworth actually italicizes the word *active*, as if to guard against a Spinozistic interpretation being put on his declaration. The ground-plan of Spinoza's system was that of a *passive* principle, which is merely another term for the modern Force; to Spinoza God is as a vast and slumbering whole, whose infinite surface is fretted into infinite shapes, which are the outward bodies that reflect themselves into the inward ideas. Wordsworth's conception was something other than this:

Eternal Spirit! universal God!
Power inaccessible to human thought

worthiana," pp. 157-161. Dean Boyle says justly: "Again and again throughout Wordsworth's poetry the outward picture is nothing to the poet unless it be connected with the freedom of duty, the hope of immortality, where he finds the 'diviner air' in which man is destined to expatiate."

¹ In his work "German Culture and Christianity" (1882).

Save by degrees and steps which Thou hast deigned
 To furnish; for this image of Thyself,
 To the infirmity of mortal sense
 Vouchsafed; this local, transitory type
 Of Thy paternal splendours, and the pomp
 Of those who fill Thy courts in highest heaven,
 The radiant cherubim; accept the thanks
 Which we, Thy humble creatures here convened,
 Presume to offer; we, who from the breast
 Of the frail earth, permitted to behold
 The faint reflections only of Thy face,
 Are yet exalted and in soul adore.

"Excursion," Book IX.

Wordsworth's God was the $\Theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$ ¹ of Aristotle; no mere "everlastingness of successive thoughts in time; no mere perpetual series of relations; not the mere order of perceptions of thoughts ever going on; but 'the eternity of thought'—the ground, the substratum, the very permanent of all thinking."² The single energy (or what you please to call it) manifesting itself in all conceivable modes and every thinkable attribute, but always conscious of its own oneness of aim, and perfect self-identity, and therefore, in the highest sense personal—that was the conception which Wordsworth formed of God. The secret (I think) of Wordsworth's inspiration is to be found in the fact that thought, with him, was pre-eminent; thought in its widest scope, manifested in the realm of nature and the mind of man, controlling action, strengthening the imagination, directing the affections, and ennobling and purifying life.

For though in whispers speaking, the full heart
 Will find a vent; and thought is praise to Him,
 Audible vent to Thee, omniscient Mind,
 From whom all gifts descend, all praises flow!

"Excursion," Book IX.

"All things," says Dr. Stirling, "are for Aristotle directed to an end—an end which is good, an end and a good which are ultimate—God. There is but one life, one inspiring principle, one specular example in the whole. All is for God, and from God, and to God. He is the all-comprehending unity, in whose infinite I AM all things rest; but He is the $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\acute{\epsilon}\rho\gamma\epsilon\iota\alpha$, the actuality that realizes them all from the least to the greatest." And not alone for Aristotle, but for Wordsworth also. For him, too, God is something other than a mere potentiality; He alone *is*, too, the single existent and

¹ Compare, for a masterly dissertation on the $\Theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$ of Aristotle, Dr. J. H. Stirling's eighth Gifford Lecture, as published in his "Philosophy and Theology" (1890).

² This passage is quoted from Prof. Veitch's most searching paper entitled "The Theism of Wordsworth," reprinted in "Wordsworthiana."

truly self-conscious actuality; for him, too, there is that sublime

Faith in life endless, the sustaining thought
Of human being, Eternity and God.

Finally, Wordsworth firmly believed in the essentially divine nature of the human soul, and did not hesitate to insist upon the full logical issue of his premiss. Not only are our souls journeying to heaven, which is our home; but, further, this very journeying is but the return of the soul

To that imperial palace whence it came.

This idea, wrought out with superb majesty of diction and the most splendid imaginative insight, has frequently been compared with the Myth in Plato's Republic. But we must be careful to distinguish the difference between Plato's and Wordsworth's conceptions. To use Mr. Archer-Hind's¹ words: "According to Wordsworth, we are born with the ante-natal radiance clinging about us, and spend our lives in losing it; according to Plato, we lose the vision at birth, and spend our lives in trying to find it." This we can readily see by looking for a moment at Wordsworth's lines:

In trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home.

But the Earth, the kindly mother of our corporeal selves, does all she can to make the child forget

The glories he hath known.

Heaven lies about us in our infancy, and it is the increasing years that make the vision fade, still fade, through boyhood and ever on through youth.

At length the man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

And yet not altogether. Still something remains of all the gone glory, which the years may not utterly take away. There still lives on something to remind us of the sweet fugitiveness of the dream. And this is the thought which to the poet's heart brings "perpetual benediction." We *cannot* quite put off from us the light and the radiance, even as Moses could not at once put away the troubled glory from his face, when he came down from the crags of Sinai, after that mysterious communion with his Creator.

Although the poet of nature in a special sense, Wordsworth was even more the poet of humanity. His theme, as he himself confesses, was "no other than the very heart of man." The love of nature led him, in his later years especially, to the love of man. If, in his study of natural objects, he has

¹ Note on Plato, "Phædo," p. 76 D.

found lessons to be learned from even the meanest—if, in the simplest of the flowers that grow, seemingly unnoticed and uncared for, by the wayside, may be discovered

Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears ;

what shall he say of that strange and pathetic spectacle—conscious man amid an unconscious environment? Surely here, if anywhere, are elements purifying feeling and thought,

And sanctifying by such discipline
Both pain and fear—until we recognise
A grandeur in the beating of the heart.

The grand opening passage of the "Recluse" forbids us to entertain the idea that the poet was a mere nature-worshipper. His design embraced both man, nature, and human life ; and we see how man came first, after all. He spent his life in meditating on these things, finding material in the humblest places and among the lowliest of his kind. What perfect truthfulness to nature do we see in him ! what a noble imagination in his best work ! what piercing sympathy with man as man, united with what penetrative pathos ! What "deep power of joy" is his ! how inviolate his sense of the blessed consolation offered us in simple duties and affections ! With what austere purity his voice proclaims in accents, inspiration-touched :

How exquisitely the individual mind
. to the external world
Is fitted ; and how exquisitely, too,
The external world is fitted to the mind !

"Contemplation—impassioned contemplation—that is with Wordsworth the end-in-itself, the perfect end." Such is the verdict of Mr. Pater ; but it is only half-true. Impassioned contemplation, it is true, was an end ; but only so that there might ensue the peace of elevated thought, itself destined to be realized in carrying out, in everyday life, the "law supreme of that Intelligence that governs all."

And behind all agitation and search, all the restless unsatisfied yearning, stands forth, transfigured, that great truth, which seems to sum up into itself all the rest :

Life, I repeat, is energy of love—
Divine or human ; exercised in pain,
In strife and tribulation ; and ordained,
If so approved and sanctified, to pass,
Through shades and silent rest, to endless joy.

EDWARD HENRY BLAKENEY.

WESTWARD HO, N. DEVON.
October, 1891.