

Naturally, the same idea of frank enjoyment of life is given to things which have organic life. The hare runs races in her mirth, the flowers enjoy the air they breathe. The waves dance beside the daffodils, but they

Outdid the sparkling waves in glee,
A Poet could not but be gay
In such a jocund company

The bluecap in the appletree cannot contain himself for glee, nor the lambs, in spring. Thus, he says of the linnet:

Thou, ranging up and down the bowers,
Art sole in thy employment;
A Life, a Presence like the Air,
Scattering thy gladness without care,
Too blest with any one to pair;
Thyself thy own enjoyment.

And though, when autumn had come, these gave no sign of open joy, yet it did not follow that they had no enjoyment, for other pleasures might be

Sweeter e'en than gaiety.

And all this life was praise to God, natural, unconscious praise, praise because the givers could not help giving it; their enjoyment their greatest praise, as ours should be; full and deep as that with which each morning the lark sang its hymn to God.

Happy, happy Liver!
With a soul as strong as a mountain river,
Pouring out praise to the Almighty Giver.

That was the religious aspect of this delight in life. But it passed from the religious to the theological when this infinite pleasure of the whole of Nature was felt to be by Wordsworth, not only symbolic of, but actually, the joy of God in His own life. It was God who renewed each moment in the boundless delight of all things, his "ancient rapture" in the continuous act of creation; it was God Himself who rejoiced in the brook and the tree, in the daisy and the lark. It is a thought which should

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add a new element to our happiness. For in our worst sadness we ought not to be too morose to be glad of the pleasure of all things—in our worst grief the sense of God's enjoyment which we receive from the joy of Nature ought to come with healing to our hearts.

The second characteristic of the life of Nature is its quietude. She has joy, ecstasy in her life, but it is untroubled ecstasy. We are "pressed by heavy laws," tormented by doubt, and rent by struggle against conditions which we will not obey at once. Nature's life is at peace, for her children never wage a foolish strife with her; nor does self enter their hearts to make them weary of life. Deep calm is at her heart, the mountains rest in their own peace, the stars shine quietly, the sun "sinks down in his tranquillity," the flowers keep a still silence, and though there are storms which drive the clouds in passionate course, and torrents which rend the earth, and strong forces which sweep to and fro the elements in bewildering and endless motion, yet in the higher region of thought in which these things are seen in their relation to the great whole, there is

Central peace subsisting at the heart
Of endless agitation.

And this, too—this tranquil being in each thing which sends "its own deep quiet to restore our hearts," this central peace, was not self-born in Nature—it was in Wordsworth's thought the ineffable calm of God's existence which spoke to us and redeemed us.

The third characteristic is ceaseless intercommunion, and that was founded on the unutterable love which flowed through all things, and with which each thing acted on each other. The whole world was linked together. Every part, every element, gave and received, honoured and did service to each other. Each plant and hill, cloud and stream, has its own life and character, and they delight in social intercourse like friends who love each other—there is no jar, no jealousy, no envy there—their best joy is in being kind to one another.

This idea is the loveliest of all which Wordsworth

introduced into English poetry, and it flowed from his conception of everything in Nature having its own peculiar life. I might give a hundred instances of it, for it runs like a living stream through all the woodland of his poetry. It is varied in many ways; the waves are brothers which run after one another; he says of the great eminence which of all his hills last parleyed with the setting sun that the meteors made of it their favourite haunt, as if even those wild bodies had their power of choice to love one cliff especially; the lake rejoices to receive into her bosom the scenery which surrounds her:

Through all her depths St. Mary's lake
Is visibly delighted,
For not a feature of the hills
Is in her mirror slighted.

And Windermere prepares herself, like a woman for one she loves, to receive the evening:

The lake though bright is of a placid blue
As if preparing for the peace of evening.

In spring time the whole world gives and receives joy; and earth and sky and man feel their communion each with each:

There is a blessing in the air,
Which seems a sense of joy to yield
To the bare trees, and mountains bare,
And grass in the green field.
.
Love, now an universal birth,
From heart to heart is stealing,
From earth to man, from man to earth—
It is the hour of feeling.

But the noblest passage out of many is in the *Excursion* where the Solitary speaks of the two great brother peaks which overpeered the glen. I read it: mark how the wind rejoices in them, and they give back its wild pleasure; how all the things which touch and haunt them get their reply; how they are loved and love; how busy are the

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mute agents there; how proud the stars to shine on them:

“Those lusty twins,” exclaimed our host, “if here
It were your lot to dwell, would soon become
Your prized companions.—Many are the notes
Which, in his tuneful course, the wind draws forth
From rocks, woods, caverns, heaths, and dashing shores;
And well those lofty brethren bear their part
In the wild concert—chiefly when the storm
Rides high; then all the upper air they fill
With roaring sound, that ceases not to flow,
Like smoke, along the level of the blast,
In mighty current; theirs, too, is the song
Of stream and headlong flood that seldom fails;
And, in the grim and breathless hour of noon,
Methinks that I have heard them echo back
The thunder’s greeting. Nor have Nature’s laws
Left them ungifted with a power to yield
Music of finer tone; a harmony
So do I call it, though it be the hand
Of silence, though there be no voice;—the clouds,
The mist, the shadows, light of golden suns,
Motions of moonlight, all come thither—touch,
And have an answer—thither come, and shape
A language not unwelcome to sick hearts
And idle spirits:—there the sun himself,
At the calm close of summer’s longest day,
Rests his substantial orb;—between those heights
And on the top of either pinnacle,
More keenly than elsewhere in night’s blue vault,
Sparkle the stars, as of their station proud.
Thoughts are not busier in the mind of man
Than the mute agents stirring there:—alone
Here do I sit and watch.”

The deep underlying thought of all this belief in the love and intercommunion of all things—the thought which makes Nature, in this conception of her, divine—was that this endless interchange of life and joy was in reality, not the type of, but actually, the never-ceasing self-reciprocation of God. He divides Himself into a myriad forms, and lives in each distinctly, and makes His own ineffable society and enjoyment by living with Himself from form

to form, by loving Himself, and by self-communion through infinitely varied activity and beauty and sacrifice, giving and receiving Himself for ever in the universe. And yet, though I say self in these sentences, it is because we must so express it, in order to get the idea. There is no Self in our sense of the word in God, none except the consciousness of perfect Being: and we can best express what that consciousness of Being is by saying that it is for ever the unspeakable delight of everlasting thought unremittingly passing into creative activity, in which that which we call self is so lost as never to be known.

This is the idea of Life in Nature which Wordsworth has given to the world. It fills the heart of his readers; it makes of Nature a new thing to them; it makes the commonest walk in the woods a delight, a teaching, a society, it fills the world with life and energy and joy; it uplifts us sometimes when alone among the hills—when Nature is in one of her wild moods, and her life most intelligent and most eager, into a kindred ecstasy in which we long to be borne away with wind and cloud to join the mighty stream of rejoicing Life. So was it once at least with Wordsworth: and with this I close.

Oh! what a joy it were, in vigorous health,
To have a body (this our vital frame
With shrinking sensibility endued,
And all the nice regards of flesh and blood)
And to the elements surrender it
As if it were a spirit!—How divine
The liberty for frail, for mortal man,
To roam at large among the unpeopled glens
And mountainous retirements, only trod
By devious footsteps; regions consecrate
To oldest time! and, reckless of the storm
That keeps the raven quiet in her nest,
Be as a presence or a motion—one
Among the many there; and while the mists
Flying, and rainy vapours, call out shapes
And phantoms from the crags and solid earth
As fast as a musician scatters sounds
Out of an instrument; and while the streams
(As at a first creation and in haste

To exercise their untried faculties)
Descending from the region of the clouds,
And starting from the hollows of the earth
More multitudinous every moment, rend
Their way before them—what a joy to roam
An equal among mightiest energies;
And haply sometimes with articulate voice,
Amid the deafening tumult, scarcely heard
By him that utters it, exclaim aloud,
“Rage on ye elements! let moon and stars
Their aspects lend, and mingle in their turn
With this commotion (ruinous though it be)
From day to night, from night to day, prolonged!”

LECTURE VI

WORDSWORTH—*continued*

IN my last lecture I spoke of the meaning Wordsworth had for the term "Nature," of his conception of Nature as having a life of her own and of the characteristics of that life, its endless joy, central peace, and how all its forms, each having their own life, were knit together by unselfish love. But these are terms which are true of humanity also; we can say that human nature is capable of joy and peace and love, and Wordsworth does say that we see in Nature similar passions to our own. But though he thought them similar, he did not think them identical; he drew a clear distinction between them, between the life in Nature and that in Man. On this distinction I must now enlarge, in order that I may come to that part of my subject which treats of the education that Nature gives to man; a thought that pervades the whole of Wordsworth's poetry.

There are poets who impute to Nature their own moods and feelings, as when Tennyson makes the larkspur listen for Maud's footstep, or when Coleridge, giving to natural things the power of Man, makes the Wind an actor or a poet. This is what Ruskin calls the "pathetic fallacy;" and a few instances, such as the phrase "forlorn cascades," where the lonely waterfall seems to him abandoned by the world because he feels himself forlorn, exist in Wordsworth; but he always means to distinguish clearly between his own feelings and those which he believes belong to things outside himself. The Me and the not-Me are not the same. It is not the poet who makes Nature this or that by giving himself to her; it is she who builds up part of his being by communicating herself to him. It is not that the sea is in this or that special mood, because

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he is in it, or that the birds sing of certain things of which he is thinking, but that the sea has its own moods, and that the birds sing their own emotions:

The birds around me hopped and played
Their *thoughts I cannot measure* :

He does not define their thoughts: he is only certain that they do think, and have pleasure and pain of their own:

But the least motion that they made
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

It is the same thing with flowers and rocks and clouds; he could not express their kind of existence, but he was certain of its being a feeling existence:

And 'tis my faith, that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

He is, of course, obliged to use the same terms as we use about our thinking and feeling, when he speaks of the life which natural things live, but he does not identify their thoughts and feelings with ours. They are similar to ours but they differ from ours, being conditioned by the different material through which they work, in a much greater degree, though in the same way as the thoughts and feelings of a man differ from those of a woman.

It is important in reading Wordsworth to understand this clearly—this separate life of Nature and Man, this distinctness which enables a dramatic action to take place between them. We have wholly got rid of the thought of Coleridge that Nature lives by the projection of our self upon it: we do not receive what we give, we give and receive back something wholly different. It is not the reflection of ourselves which we have from Nature, it is the friendship of another than ourselves.

It is this which makes Wordsworth's poetry so fresh, so healthy, and of such a morning quality. He forgets himself in the beauty, joy, and life of things; he will not spoil Nature by tracing in her any likeness to his own

moods; he would not willingly have written that stanza in *In Memoriam*, beginning with these lines:

Calm is the morn without a sound,
Calm as to suit a calmer grief:—

they would have contradicted his philosophy—nor traced in the gathering storm and looming cloud the “wild despair” of grief which filled Tennyson’s heart for the loss of his friend. Nor would he, even by permitting human associations to cluster thickly in certain places, prevent these places from making their own natural impression upon him—a thing which Tennyson does frequently. The whole of the descriptions of Nature in *In Memoriam* are tinged with one or the other of these faults: skies, flowers, clouds, and trees, are full of the self of the poet, or of recollections of his friend; and the result is that a partly morbid impression is left on the reader, even in the triumphant passages at the end—an impression of the tyranny of Human Nature over Nature, of ourselves as being the only thing in the universe—which is a depressing element in the poem. It is painful to be deprived by this imposition of Man on Nature of the only chance we have of getting rid of ourselves, or of feeling another life than human life. It is the first excellence of Wordsworth that though he does not pass by this “pathetic fallacy” altogether, he only treats it as a transient and unhealthy phase.

The poem on the picture of Peele Castle in a storm has been so explained as to be an example of this pathetic fallacy, but Wordsworth is true in it to his philosophy.

He sees in it the Sea at peace, but he does not see it as the image of his own peace. It has its own quiet from its own nature, not from his. Being thus distinct, it sends its impression of calm to influence his heart. That being received, the powers of his mind take it up, and add their own work to it, “the consecration and the poet’s dream.” From both these things—from the impression passively received, and the active energy of thought upon

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it—another thing arises, the poetic picture, the work of art.

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.

Thou shouldst have seemed a treasure-house divine
Of peaceful years; a chronicle of heaven;
Of all the sunbeams that did ever shine
The very sweetest had to thee been given.

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.

Such, in the fond illusion of my heart,
Such Picture would I at that time have made
And seen the soul of truth in every part,
A steadfast peace that might not be betrayed.

It is an illustration, in a small way, of what he means in the lines soon to be quoted, when he says that the individual mind and the external universe are fitted, in difference, to each other, and when wedded together accomplish a *creation*—something different from both—with blended might.

The latter part of the poem is another side of the same thought, only the Art work which he wished to do for the calm, is done by Beaumont for the storm. He can no longer look on a calm sea and find the impression of calm. Something has happened which forbids it; the sea has engulfed his brother. But he neither imposes the storm in his own heart on the calm, nor sees the sea in the storm as in sorrow for his loss. The sea has *its own* anger and fury. But Beaumont has seen it in storm, and receiving from it an impression of anger, has added to that impres-

sion, by imagination, correlative human emotion, and composed both into one creation by Art. And on this creation Wordsworth loves to look. It, the human work, the artistic result of the blended might of Nature and of the human mind, consoles him by its sympathy with his sorrow. The conclusion follows easily from this analysis.

Nothing can be more remote than all this from the faded sentiment which we found in Warton and the other poets of his class. To sit in the shade of yew trees, and feel a charm in their gloom reflecting our own—as was the case with the youth on whom Wordsworth wrote his *Lines near Esthwaite*—to trace in the barren landscape an emblem of our own unfruitful life, is the most sickly of all pleasures:

The man whose eye
Is ever on himself, doth look on one
The least of Nature's works, one who might move
The wise man to that scorn which wisdom holds
Unlawful, ever.

And he went further still: not only were we bound to resist this tendency, but Nature herself had against it a sad resentment. Against it she continually fought, her one effort being to redeem us from this self-consideration, to lead us to lose our stormy passions in her quiet, our consuming sadness in her joy. An instance of this in his own experience occurs in the Ode on the intimations of Immortality. He begins by feeling that a glory has passed from the earth since he was young: grief falls on him, and in the shade of disenchantment the splendour leaves the grass, and the freshness the sunlight. But with the very utterance of the thought he springs away from this diseased condition. Nature speaking to him, he hears her voice; and joy returns, not the joy of early life, but a stiller, more grave delight. "No more shall grief of mine the season wrong," he cries; it would indeed be an evil day if he were sullen,

While the earth is herself adorning
This sweet May morning.

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There shall be no severing of his love from fountains,
meadows, hills, and groves:

Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;
I only have relinquished one delight
To live beneath your more habitual sway;
I love the brooks which down their channels fret
Even more than when I tripp'd lightly as they;
The innocent brightness of a new-born day
Is lovely yet.

The lines have their own special connection, but through them also runs the thought of which we speak—of the distinctness of the being of Nature from the being of Human Nature, and of the work which Nature, as distinct, does on Man. His own mood of morbid melancholy which he tried to lay on Nature, she had refused to receive; she sent him back, on the contrary, her mood of joy. When he had opened his heart to that influence, though the melancholy did not wholly depart, it was freed from weakness and selfishness. His heart was opened, his sadness was filled with strength and the hope which comes of delight in other things than our own emotions.

All this may not be theological, but it is distinctly religious. It is the very element in which a high religion becomes possible, a freedom from looking into self which enables men to love and lose themselves in others; to win power by taking into themselves a thousand influences; to conquer life by the possession of that sound mind which, in freedom from the prejudices to which self-consideration gives birth, can see things and opinions directly as they are. Hence, and especially because of this, the religion of Wordsworth is the noblest we possess in our poetry, and the healthiest.

And, apart from personal religion, if we pass into the realm of theology, we are rescued in Wordsworth's poetry from the sight of our self in Nature, and enabled to see God in it. The man who finds in Nature only the reflection of his own passions and thoughts can only find God therein in His relation to himself, or his fellow-men. He sees God only as human, and missing thus all the abso-

lute side of the Deity, his idea of God is very imperfect. But he who, escaping through passionate love of Nature from self, looks straight into Nature and sees her as she is, beholds God not only as personal, but as impersonal, not only as the human God, but as far beyond humanity; and realises that there is an infinite sublimity, an eternal calm, a glory of order, beauty, and variety, to which he dare give no name nor allot a human personality, but which he truly knows is active and loving, wise and of unweariable power. And our modern theology bitterly wants that conception. It would tend to free it from its ceaseless and diseased insistence on humanity alone, and let us loose a little from ourselves.

II. Having now spoken of Wordsworth's separation of Man from Nature, and its moral result on his poetry, I ask what philosophic conception he founded on it. I shall try to approach it by an analogy. We get a hint in the first chapter of Genesis that God conceived of man and woman as originally one being, as Man—who held in one person all the male and female qualities, and as such, was a perfect ideal of Human Nature; that afterwards He divided this one Being into two persons, having similar passions, volitions, and appetites, but differently conditioned by sex; that each of these was the complement of the other and fitted to unite with one another, in order that by the mutual play of the divers qualities of each on the other the education of both might take place; and that when both, through this mutual action on each other, became at one, Human Nature would be again, as it was at first, complete.

The conception of Wordsworth with regard to Man and Nature is much the same. The spirit which lives in each differs as Man differs from Woman, not indeed in the same, but in a similar manner, but—they differ for the purpose of union, and there is between them a pre-ordained fitness. Each educates the other, and in their final marriage is the consummation of the perfection of the human mind and Nature. Here are the lines in which Wordsworth sketches this conception. It lies at the root of his philosophy:

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For the discerning intellect of Man,
When wedded to this goodly universe
In love and holy passion, shall find these—

that is, Beauty, Paradise, the Elysian Fields, all ideal dreams of men—

A simple produce of the common day.
—I, long before the blissful hour arrives,
Would chant, in lonely peace, the spousal verse
Of this great consummation—and by words
Which speak of nothing more than what we are,
Would I arouse the sensual from their sleep
Of Death, and win the vacant and the vain
To noble raptures; while my voice proclaims
How exquisitely the individual Mind
(And the progressive power, perhaps no less
Of the whole species) to the external World
Is fitted:—and how exquisitely, too—
Theme this but little heard of among men—
The external World is fitted to the Mind:
And the *creation* (by no lower name
Can it be called) which they with blended might
Accomplish:—This is our high argument.¹

So the whole grand idea is that God has made these two—Man and Nature—for one another and to develop each other, and His mighty object is that we should realise in the marriage of the mind and the external world the pre-arranged harmony. It is a sketch which is filled up in various ways in the minor poems. It forms the true burden of the *Excursion* and the *Prelude*. To reveal, to explain this underlying unity, to urge us to realise it by revealing the beauty in Man and Nature, is, in Wordsworth's thought, the special work of poetry. "Poetry is the image of Man and Nature," and the object of the poet is to produce such pleasure in the individual man by his imaging of Nature and Man as to induce love of

¹ Preface to the *Excursion*. See also the preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, where he says that the poet is one "pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar"—observe, he says similar, not identical—"volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them."

Nature and union with her. "He considers Man and the objects which surround him as acting and reacting upon each other, so as to produce an infinite complexity of pain and pleasure." "He considers Man and Nature as essentially adapted to each other, and the mind of Man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and most interesting properties of Nature."¹

And when we look into our intuitions and emotions, when we are with an open heart alone with Nature, we seem to know that this is a true philosophy. We ask if Nature, so distinct from us, has no longing to unite herself to us, to find the complement of her Being in ours; and we cannot but trace this desire in the animals which love us, in the pleasure all of them, when we are kind, take in our company. And what we trace in the animals we need not fear to apply further, at least in the sphere of poetic feeling. There is a way in which things seem to look at us, and beg for our affection and sympathy. The trees nod to us, and we to them, as Emerson said. In hours when we have most shaken off the coil of self and the troubles of the world, we are impressed with delight by the love which all things seem to bear to us. A real emotion, as deep, but more clear and pure than that awakened by human love, is kindled in us by the knowledge that the trees are whispering their affection in our ear, and the brook singing its song to us, and the flowers adorning themselves to please our eye. Nor is there an atom of selfishness in this. We are frankly delighted with it, and accept it with healthy joy. We rejoice as much in the pleasure which Nature feels in uniting herself to us as in the pleasure she gives us. And when we feel so, we are ourselves purer and kinder, and less envious than at other times. She loves us and desires the time when her "marriage" with us shall be complete; and when we are most conscious of that and most give back the wish, then we know best what St. Paul meant when he said—"The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God."

¹ Preface to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*.

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And we, on our part, we also possess this desire of union. Most of us have felt it at times to be unutterable, so secret and deep is its passion; and when—rarely, indeed, for they are the most consecrated moments of life—we have realised the emotion of harmonious alliance with the world, I know not if any purely human joy can be so exquisite. When we cannot realise it, the way in which our whole nature chafes against the secrecy and reticence of Nature shows how much the feeling partakes of true passion, while the very existence of such a passion prophesies the time when the marriage of the soul to the soul of Nature shall be accomplished. Men have tried to explain this longing by saying that it is the human element which we have projected into Nature, or that it is our own thought there to which we desire to reunite ourselves. It may be, they say, that the trees and the stream are really we, and that we love ourselves in loving them; and philosophy claps her hands and says that she has settled the question for poetry. But the contradiction of that is rapid and instinctive; in the realm of feeling it is impossible to believe it; one cannot love oneself in that manner. Moreover, whenever we are in that humour, when we try to say that the life of waters, clouds, and leaves is but “the eddying of our living soul,” it is curious with what a mocking spirit they look upon us: walk in the woods with only that idea, or by the sea, and every tree and wave will say to you—“*You find my secret, little fellow!*”¹

But a single rush of love to the great spirit who lives there will make her open her arms and heart to you. Turn to the trees and waves, as to friends, in that sudden expansion which one feels at times to human friends and in which all barriers melt, and there will not be a blade of grass nor a drift of cloud which will not partake its life with you, teach you its lesson, interpose between your

¹ One remembers Emerson's phrase—“Nature will not have us fret or fume. She does not like our benevolence or learning much better than she likes our frauds and wars. When we come out of the Caucus, or the bank, or the Abolition Convention, or the Transcendental Club, into the fields and woods, she says to us, ‘So hot, my little sir.’”

heart and yourself its kindness, whisper to you infinite secrets and fill you with joy and calm.

How bountiful is Nature; he shall find
Who seeks not, and to him that hath not asked,
Large measure shall be dealt.

This is the task of Nature, and she fulfils it at the command of God, or rather it is God himself who in all her life gives us this education and help; and teaches us of Himself through her.

In the *Excursion*, Book iv., Wordsworth traces this work of hers into distant times. Long, long ago it began: Man was not left to himself to corrupt in apathy;

to feel the weight
Of his own reason, without sense or thought
Of higher reason and a purer will,
To benefit and bless, through mightier power.

The Persian, when he sacrificed "to moon and stars, and to the winds, and mother elements," felt through them "a sensitive existence and a God." The Chaldæan shepherds entered the invisible world through the thoughts which the moving planets and the still star of the Pole awakened in their minds; the Greek idolatrously served a hundred gods:

And yet—triumphant o'er this pompous show
Of art, this palpable array of sense,
On every side encountered; in despite
Of the gross fictions chanted in the streets
By wandering Rhapsodists; and in contempt
Of doubt and bold denial hourly urged
Amid the wrangling schools—a *spirit* hung,
Beautiful region! o'er thy towns and farms,
Statues and temples, and memorial tombs:
And emanations were perceived;—

For Nature spoke through the things of sense and told of spirit; and when the votary, thankful for his son's return, shed his severed locks upon Cephisus' river, then

Doubtless, sometimes, when the hair was shed
Upon the flowing stream, a thought arose
Of Life continuous, Being unimpaired;
That hath been, is, and where it was and is
There shall endure.

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This was the work of Nature teaching an indefinite religion, telling of God to men who knew Him not, speaking of the infinite world beyond, through the emotions which the finite roused.

And now, in our later times, such training has gone so far that we would not give to the trees or brook a wild half-human soul, and make a Dryad or a Naiad take their place; for that would be to lose the tree or the brook itself. We keep the natural object, but we know within it is the life of God. It tells us in its own way part of the character of our Father. It is one of the forms He takes to us. Listen to Wordsworth speaking of the brook that the poet and the painter sought:

If wish were mine some type of thee to view,
Thee and not thee thyself, I would not do
Like Grecian artists—

No Naiad shouldst thou be—

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.

Then transferring in another place the same thought from one object to all objects, he sees in the whole universe the revealer of God to Man—the great Evangelist to Man. “I have seen”—the lines are well-known—

A curious child, who dwelt upon a tract
Of inland ground, applying to his ear
The convolutions of a smooth-lipped shell.
To which, in silence hushed, his very soul
Listened intensely; and his countenance soon
Brightened with joy; for from within were heard
Murmurings, whereby the monitor expressed
Mysterious union with its native sea.
Even such a shell the universe itself
Is to the ear of Faith; and there are times
I doubt not, when to you it doth impart
Authentic tidings of invisible things;
Of ebb and flow, and ever-during power;
And central peace, subsisting at the heart
Of endless agitation. Here you stand,

Adore, and worship, when you know it not;
 Pious beyond the intention of your thought;
 Devout above the meaning of your will.

It is God then who unites Nature to us, and directs her teaching; it is His life acting on ours.

But in order to be able to receive her training there must be certain qualities in us. What are these in Wordsworth's philosophy? They are the qualities of the child. The first is the simple heart which loves, and to which the world is sweet, it knows not why. We then accord the measure of our hearts to the music of His power who attunes the world to love; and loving things we know them. But our meddling intellect, working without love, misshapes the beauty of the world. It can only divide and subdivide, and isolate for discussion thing from thing, element from element. It cannot see the living, thinking, feeling whole:

It substitutes an universe of death
 For that which moves with light and life informed,
 Actual, divine, and true.

The world, which science "examines, ponders, searches, vexes, criticises," is not the real life of things; and Nature refuses to speak to those who prize

the transcendent universe
 No more than as a mirror that reflects
 To proud self-love her own intelligence.

But to those who enter her kingdom with that listening love of a child which watches and receives, she gives her teaching:

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

But Wordsworth never meant to depreciate the nobler science, but only that which, striving after no vast ideal conception of the whole, pored alone over what it could hold in its hands, and fixed itself exclusively on phenomena.

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Wordsworth disliked, as much as Socrates did, the people who would believe in nothing or consider nothing but that which lay before their eyes. But the larger science of to-day, such as Faraday practised, which works through imagination as well as through experiment and observation, he would not have disliked. From geometric science, for example, he drew

A pleasure quiet and profound, a sense
Of permanent and universal sway,
And permanent belief—there, recognised
A type, for finite natures, of the one
Supreme existence, the surpassing life
Which—to the boundaries of space and time,
Of melancholy space and doleful time,
Superior and incapable of change,
Not touched by welterings of passion—is
And hath the name of God.

Another quality which fits us to receive the training of Nature is reverence, the food and source of admiration. The scornful spirit is the blind spirit and the unthoughtful one; and to its blindness Nature displays in vain her beauty, and Man his wonderful life; contempt sees nothing, and seeing nothing has no materials for thought. He who feels it for any living thing—and when Wordsworth says “living thing” he means things which we call inanimate, as well as things animate—

hath faculties

Which he hath never used, and thought with him
Is in its infancy.

But he who bends in loving reverence before the beauty and majesty of the universe, receives its teaching at every pore.

But of all qualities, the two most necessary were purity of heart and unworldliness of character, and in Wordsworth's thought they mingled into one. There is one well-known sonnet which enshrines this belief of his in a statement of its opposite.

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!
The Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are upgathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this—for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not.

And in a letter he says the same thing—"It is an awful truth, that there neither is, nor can be, any genuine enjoyment of poetry among nineteen out of twenty of those persons who live, or wish to live, in the broad light of the world—among those who either are, or are striving to make themselves, persons of consideration in society. This is a truth, and an awful one, because to be incapable of a feeling for poetry, in my sense of the word, is to be without love of human nature and reverence for God."

Now as these qualities are found chiefly in their purity in the child, it is then that the work of Nature, as education, begins. Of what that work is, and how it is carried on, he has given two examples—one in the first book of the *Excursion*, another in tracing his own growth under the influences of Nature in the *Prelude*. Of these two I will give an analysis.

He traces in the first the history of a Highland child, early thrown into solitary life among the hills. As he came home at evening and saw the hills grow larger in the mist, and the stars steal out in the infinite expanse, and felt the horror of the pine wood in his heart, he received impressions of greatness and its power, indefinite, but full of force to awaken and develop feeling. These feelings, in their turn, reacted on the forms of Nature till the impressions they made became like real existences in his soul. Image after image thus received and made into living things, soon made him unconsciously mingle up the living image in his soul with the natural image of which it was the counterpart; till he slowly began to feel that every image became living in him, not only because he gave it life, but also because the object which produced it possessed a life of its own which, coming to the life in him, stirred and kindled it into creation.

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And 'mid the hollow depths of naked crags
He sate—and e'en in their fixed lineaments—
Or from the power of a peculiar eye,
Or by creative feeling overborne,
Or by predominance of thought oppressed,
Even in their fixed and steady lineaments
He traced an ebbing and a flowing mind,
Expression ever varying.

This was the work of the awe which Nature produces in the child—a sense of sublimity, and of life as the source of that sublimity.

As he grew, the fear which somewhat spoiled the awe died away; and when it perished and awe alone was left, then the whole vast world Being, when, at the sunrise, it appeared to him from the mountain top, drenched in light as with joy, and all its glory seeming to him—trained as he was to feel that Nature was alive—not glory only but love, awoke unspeakable love in him. His mind became one mighty sacrifice of gratitude and love to God. And this reacted on the religion he had learnt and added to it the element of feeling. He had received revealed religion at his mother's knee, had given it his reverence, but it yet was cold to emotion. But it was different now; emotion had come to him from Nature, and his spirit was stirred to feel it towards the things of Faith.

A Herdsman on the lonely mountain tops,
Such intercourse was his, and in this sort
Was his existence oftentimes *possessed*.
O then how beautiful, how bright, appeared
The written promise! Early had he learned
To reverence the volume that displays
The mystery, the life which cannot die;
But in the mountains did he *feel* his faith.
All things responding to the writing, there
Breathed immortality, revolving life,
And greatness still revolving; infinite:
There littleness was not; the least of things
Seemed infinite; and there his spirit shaped
Her prospects, nor did he believe,—he *saw*.

That is the sketch given of this early education by Nature in the *Excursion*. It resembles in one or two points the

more elaborate one given in the *Prelude*, which I analyse now, and which is the history of Wordsworth himself. Even from his birth he holds that Nature was his friend. The "ceaseless music" of Derwent flowed through his infant dreams, and gave him an unconscious foretaste, a dim earnest of the calm

That Nature breathes among the hills and groves.

Then, as he became a boy her real work began to tell. As before, it began with vague impressions of fear. When at night upon the moors, so profound was the vast impression of peace, he felt his bustling presence almost a trouble in the calm of skies and earth. There, when conscience touched him (having robbed the prey of another's trap than his own), Nature herself was felt as the avenger. Low breathings came after him, and steps, "silent as the turf they trod," were heard among the solitary hills.

Did he, as cragsman, shoulder the naked crag and cling to the perilous ridge?—then, if his courage held, Nature was his companion; if it gave way, she became his destroyer. Did he, half by stealth, row on the lake when evening fell?—then, the huge peak which suddenly rose upon his view seemed to be instinct with voluntary power, and stride after him with a purpose of its own; and for days afterwards his brain

Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of Being,—

half glimpses of the dweller on the threshold.

These were the vague impressions, mostly of dim yet delightful fear, which, repeated in many forms and woven together, not confusedly but as notes which fell into harmony, began to build up his character. For such impressions stirred in him germs of feeling—the sense of moral wrong, the sense of indefinite sublimity, the sense of a vast and invisible *life* without himself. And these germs of emotion, becoming conscious of themselves, were sent back to Nature, and made the impressions which were afterwards received from her more vivid, more infinite,

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more overwhelming: and they in turn stirred deeper emotion in him, and the deeper emotion again found itself met by a mightier answer—till in the mutual play of action thus established, his character grew daily into form. His mind *began* to be married to the external world and the external world to it; the first steps of that union were made which, when fulfilled, should make up that “calm existence which was to be his when he was worthy of himself.”

It was the living Soul of the universe which was doing this work; a personal Being, ever melting on the skirts of consciousness into the impersonal. The eternal Thought that watches over the thought of men, watched over his development; and itself linked to the majestic forms and scenes of Nature, acted through them upon his soul, and wrought in him the passions that build up character, and the ideals that ennoble it.

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe
Thou Soul that art the Eternity of thought,
That giv'st to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion, not in vain
By day or starlight thus, from my first dawn
Of childhood, didst thou interwine for me
The passions that build up our human soul;
Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
But with high objects, with enduring things—
With life and nature—purifying thus
The elements of feeling and of thought,
And sanctifying, by such discipline,
Both pain and fear, until we recognise
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.

Nor did this mutual intercourse cease its movement for a moment. By day and night, summer and winter, the silent education went on till at last he felt the “presence of Nature in the sky and on the earth,” and saw the “visions of the hills,” and spoke with the “souls of lonely places,” and, in dim perception—but without an intellectual form being given to the feeling—felt that the whole world was alive and speaking to him as his companion, greater than himself, but yet at one with

him. Each of these presences, visions, souls, ministered to him, haunted him, partook of his danger and desire, and had a distinct desire and danger of their own; till, at last, as examples multiplied of this intercommunion (and what the forms of nature said were met at once by a response in his own heart, that fitted the impressions made), the whole earth became like a great Being and,

With triumph and delight, with hope and fear,
Worked like a sea.

The whole of this is an explanation given in after life of that which he insensibly felt as a child. There was no reasoning possible then. It was a wild tempestuous time, full of giddy bliss, and the physical joy of being: and the images he received from Nature partook of this wild and even vulgar character, images undignified by any association, made quiet by no thoughtfulness.

But (and here is another element in the education Nature gives the child) in the midst of this wild extravagance of boyish life with Nature, there were moments of quietness in which a calmer beauty, of which he was then unconscious, entered into his soul and took up there its dwelling.

Looking back on them, he sees them as a part of that great work by which the universe and the mind of Man are wedded together. They are the result of that pre-established harmony which God has set between His thought in us and His thought in Nature. He calls them, in lines as beautiful as they are profound,

Those hallowed and pure motions of the sense
Which seem, in their simplicity, to own
An intellectual charm: that calm delight
Which, if I err not, surely must belong
To those first-born affinities that fit
Our new existence to existing things;
And, in our dawn of being, constitute
The bond of union between life and joy.

By both were sown the first seeds of a deep love of Nature which now began to take the place of a dim dread of her. The quieter impressions remained as they were; the

common and vulgar joys through which the others were received slowly died out of the memory; but the impressions remained and their beauty. His mind became filled with solemn and lovely images; he linked those images to the places from which he had received them, and loved the places for their sake. In this way, year by year, Nature grew more dear, and with his love to her his soul grew into completer being.

It was thus the poet's education began. How it went on, I shall tell in my next lecture. But does it not do one good to read of it? How pure and fresh it is; how healthy and natural, how true to Nature and how near to God. For so ought always to begin, if possible, the building of the soul. Natural religion should go before spiritual; vague feelings of joy and calm in the presence of One whom we know not yet, but who knows us—in these best begins the religion which afterwards, in the sadness and trouble of life, teaches us to know that Presence in Nature as the Father in our hearts; in these best arises that spiritual life which, at first content with nature-worship, learns, when it has become sadly conscious of sin and sorrow, to love God as the Redeemer, and to trust Him as the Comforter.

LECTURE VII

WORDSWORTH—*continued*

THE simple ways in which the childhood of Wordsworth walked, and how he was taught by the rivers, woods, and hills, were spoken of in my last lecture. The education thus begun by Nature was carried on steadily, and I shall explain its further course to-day. It divides itself into two parts, the first period when the influences of Nature were unconsciously received; the second, when the new element of the relation of his own soul to Nature slowly introduced itself. For, becoming conscious of his own being, he became also conscious of its distinctness from the external world, and of the power and life which he was able to project from it over Nature—conscious, that is, of that action and reaction between the mind and the world without, the possibility of which was contained in the prearranged harmony which God had established between them. This point I shall fully speak of, and also how far this consciousness of the soul of its relation to Nature modified the continuous education which Nature gave him.

And throughout, and after nearly every point, I shall mark how the various lessons he learnt influenced or were likely to influence the poetic character of Wordsworth, the growth of his religious life, and those theological ideas which he held with regard to the relation of God and Man to the natural world.

Wordsworth begins the second book of the *Prelude* by a description of the tumultuous joy and eagerness of boyhood in its sports among a rich and varied scenery. Looking back in tranquil manhood to this unconscious time, he half sighs to think that these things are no more.

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It tames our "pride of intellect and self-esteem of virtue,"
to think how little we can give

to duty and to truth
The eagerness of infantine desire.

So that an ideal of eagerness in pursuit of things, and a respect for the enthusiasm which makes us unconscious of self, are part of the indirect teaching which we receive from Nature in boyhood. They were two lessons which formed part of his poetic training, for a poet is one who is bound to lose himself in Beauty and Truth, and to see things more eagerly than other men. And they have also their moral influence, for it inspirits a man who has strength enough for self-restoration, to know in after-life, in times of depression and pain, that he has once possessed joy and force; for then he believes in their existence in his nature, and works towards their recovery. And this is one of the continually recurring moral ideas of Wordsworth. You will find it running through a hundred poems.

But this kind of teaching that Nature now gave him was not consciously received by the boy; nor was it direct, but incidental. It could not be consciously sought for; but it came suddenly, in flashes of impulse in the midst of holiday delights. On Windermere were lovely and lonely islands, and to these he and his companions rowed in rivalry. But when they landed and wandered among the lilies or beneath the oaks or by the ruined shrine, emulation, jealousy, and pride were insensibly tempered by the stillness of the place, so that they did not care, after a time, whether they had the crown of boyish fame or no.

It was such silent influences of Nature frequently repeated that instilled drop by drop into Wordsworth's being that "quiet independence of the heart," that sense of

The self-sufficing power of solitude,

so remarkable in him afterwards as man and poet.

Again, in the midst of noisy sport, a single, sharp impression came, the voice of Nature, not in rebuke of

their delight, but in her desire to make herself felt, which stilled them for a moment into thoughtfulness. Once in St. Mary's nave the sudden song of the wren singing to herself, invisible, made one of those hushed surprises which no one can ever forget. Sometimes, pausing for a moment when racing home, the sound of streams among rocks and the "still spirit shed from evening air" made their presence felt in his heart. Sometimes, when the games were over, and the minstrel of their troop blew his flute alone on the island, and they lay resting and listening upon the lake, the whole scene entered into his soul:

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.

He imputes the same experience to the boy, his playmate who lived by Winander, and of whom he tells in a famous passage. After describing him as in wild mirth he stood by the shore of the lake and blew hootings to the owls that answered till all the hills re-echoed—he marks how, suddenly, in the midst came a lengthened pause of silence. Then it was that the invisible quiet Life in the world spoke to him.

Then sometimes, in that silence while he hung
Listening—a gentle shock of mild surprise
Has carried far into his heart the voice
Of mountain torrents: or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind,
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received
Into the bosom of the steady lake.

Those are the lines of which Coleridge said, "Had I met these lines running wild in the deserts of Arabia, I should instantly have screamed out—Wordsworth." But the deep meaning of them is, that there is in the material universe a spirit at work on us, to calm, to exalt, and to suggest to our boyhood thoughts which sleep within, like seeds, till future events develop them.

And now, accumulating from every quarter, these accidental impressions enlarged his sympathies till every day some new scene in Nature becoming dear, the conception of Nature as an organic Being, having a life beyond his, and existing in a direct relation to him, began, not to be realised, but to quicken in his mind.

A change then took place. Nature had been secondary in his life; his boyish sports were first, and she had intervened among them with these surprises. She was the seeker, he the sought. But now, he sought her directly for the pleasure she gave. She had conquered his unthinking pleasure in play and replaced it by the enthusiasm of herself. He did not know well why he sought her, but a trouble came into his mind, which drove him away from the sports of boyhood. They had been the props of the impressions he had received from Nature. But, behold, when the scaffolding was removed, there was the building, sustained by its own spirit, the building of the love of natural Beauty and Life, a house not made with hands. Hence, the trouble was the first trouble of a youth who was leaving boyhood and who had begun to realise consciously all he had learnt unconsciously. It was such a trouble as moved the waters of the Bethesda spring.

The sensibility of his soul to Nature now went directly and with known purpose to commune with her. It was like two lovers who had seen one another only at intervals meeting at last for daily communion. Every hour brought new happiness, because it brought new knowledge of the life of things. And the source of the knowledge was love, refined to intense watchfulness by desire. Formerly he had received large indefinite impressions, now he saw into the "transitory qualities" of things, such as, if I may explain the phrase by an illustration, the subtle changes in colour of the lime-tree leaves as summer draws on day by day from spring, or the difference of the sound of a brook in winter and summer, or the way in which a passing cloud will alter the whole sentiment of a landscape, or even closer still, the way in which a sudden stroke of life will enlighten a lonely place;

as when, in one of his own inimitable touches, he says of a lonely mountain lake—

There sometimes doth a leaping fish
Send through the tarn a lonely cheer.

Running along with these numberless small impressions, and derived from them, were "gentle agitations of the mind" from observation of these manifold differences, so that whatever came from Nature was answered by a different but correspondent feeling, and that marriage of the soul and the world began to grow towards its fulfilment.

One might object that this minute habit of observance would take away from the poet the power of receiving a grand impression of the whole. On the contrary, when the soul is freely receiving, and this sort of work is done by the feeling, and not by the understanding, it prepares the soul, by kindling and quickening emotion, for a sublime impression. Nay more, since it brings the knowledge of particulars, it educates us for the moment when the vast, single conception of the Whole dawns like a sun upon the mind.

But this has its stages of growth in single impressions, made by separate scenes of sublimity and calm, and Wordsworth dwells on both. I would walk alone, he says,

Under the quiet stars, and at that time
Have felt whate'er there is of power in sound
To breathe an elevated mood, by form
Or image unprofaned; and 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.

These moments were the origin of an ideal of sublimity. In after life, we forget what we felt, but not *how* we felt at such times: remembrance of the way in which we have been impressed creates and supports the obscure sense of

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a sublimity possible to the soul, to which with growing faculties the soul inspires—

feeling still
That whatsoever point they gain, they yet
Have something to pursue.

To have such an ideal is in itself a kind of religion. And Wordsworth, in the *Excursion*, taking up the same point, shows how an ideal of sublimity, won in early life from Nature, will make a man impatient of any pettiness of temper or life, of any wanting in noble simplicity, of any want of directness, of any of those meannesses, which, though they seem only paltry, have their root in some foulness or other. Nor will he ever become basely content. He shall feel

congenial stirrings late and long
In spite of all the weakness that life brings—

however tranquil—

Wake sometimes to a noble restlessness.

Correlative with sublimity is calm; it is the other side of the shield. The power which, in Nature, moves the mind to delight, and which arises from her inner order, made her hours of calm produce calm in him. And a certain love of calm in himself strengthened the impression. When, in early morning walks, he saw beneath him the valley sleeping in the lonely dawn—"How shall I seek the origin," he breaks out:

Where find
Faith in the marvellous things which then I felt?
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.

This was also destined to grow into an ideal, and it was necessary for his poetic work. One must have the power of compelling rest in the soul in order to work nobly. Nor

is that self-control which can use passion and not be used by it, less needful for the man than for the poet. It is not the calm of indifference which we want in order to be great, but the calm which will and temperance produce in a nature capable of storm. The perfect moral work of life is done by him who has passion, but who subdues it to the workable point of heat.

From the time, now, that he had sought Nature directly, he had gained two things; a multitude of minute impressions awakening a multitude of thoughts: a sense of sublimity and of calm, which the work of his own soul was to change into moral ideals of them. So far the preparation for the grasp of Nature as a great whole had gone.

But something more was needed, *the influence of his own soul on Nature*; and this now began to be felt. Looking back, as he writes, on that time, he knew that his soul had been insensibly at work on the impressions Nature had given it. This was true, he thought, even of his infancy. The infant is frail and helpless then, yet he is

An inmate of this active universe:
 For feeling has to him imparted power
 That through the growing faculties of sense
 Doth like an agent of the one great Mind
 Create, creator and receiver both,
 Working but in alliance with the works
 Which it beholds.

The lines re-illustrate the philosophic view of the distinctiveness of Nature and man on which I have dwelt, and in this mutual reaction of the two, and in having it, consciously in manhood, unconsciously in childhood, is the poetic spirit:

Such, verily, is the first
 Poetic spirit of our human life,
 By uniform control of after years,
 In most, abated or suppressed; in some
 Through every change of growth and of decay,
 Pre-eminent till death.

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In becoming conscious, then, of this interaction he first began to be a poet.

Therefore he now knew that, unsubdued by the torrent of natural glory and beauty poured into his heart, he retained a plastic power to form and shape the images he received. Nay more, though his mind was still subservient to Nature, it gave back a glory of its own to Nature:

An auxiliar light
Came from my mind, which on the setting sun
Bestowed new splendour;
And the midnight storm
Grew darker in the presence of my eye.

Added to this was the power of imagination, which brought into poetic relation remotely connected objects, and which transferred his own enjoyments and passions to inorganic natures. Yet when he says that he did that, he feels that he is partly untrue to his special view of the difference between man and Nature; and he says that this transference of himself to Nature was perhaps due to an excess in the great social principle of life which naturally coerced all things into sympathy—or, on the other hand, that he did not really impose himself on Nature, but conversed with things as they really were, with the enjoyments and passions, that is, of Nature herself. But however that might be, the end of all this was, that what he had unconsciously felt as a boy became at last a conscious possession; he realised that all Nature was one great organic Being, with whom he could commune through the means of love, who directly communed with him, and whose ceaseless prayer and anthem was the adoration and love of God.

Thus while the days flew by and years passed on,
From Nature and her over-flowing soul,
I had received so much that all my thoughts
Were steeped in feeling. I was only then
Contented, when with bliss ineffable
I felt the sentiment of Being spread
O'er that all moves and all that seemeth still;
O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
And human knowledge, to the human eye
Invisible, yet liveth to the heart.

Wonder not

If high the transport, great the joy I felt,
 Communing in this sort through earth and heaven
 With every form of creature, as it looked
 Towards the Uncreated with a countenance
 Of adoration, with an eye of love.
 One song they sang, and it was audible,
 Most audible, then, when the fleshly ear,
 O'ercome by humblest prelude of that strain,
 Forgot her functions, and slept undisturbed.

It is a wonderful picture of a youthful life—this young and solitary creature, living in communion only with the Being of the World, in a world which only lived to him and to God who sees the heart.

He had now reached his seventeenth year, and the results of his experience were these—he was conscious of the direct influence of Nature on him; of his own mind and the power it had to speak with and to answer Nature; and of both Nature and himself as living powers acting on each other. With these was united a vague sentiment of religion, which chiefly appeared in a simple, pure, and manly morality of life. This, he held, was the direct result of the work of Nature upon his soul, and looking back on his life then and afterwards, and summing up the result, it is to this early association with the beautiful and sublime things of the outward world that he traces the whole quiet, and faithful, and temperate character of his life, and of his self-training as a poet. The passage is long, but it is necessary to quote it, and it completes the history of his boyhood. It follows directly on the last quotation.

If this be error and another faith
 Find easier access to the pious mind,
 Yet were I grossly destitute of all
 Those human sentiments that make this earth
 So dear, if I should fail with grateful voice
 To speak of you, ye mountains, and ye lakes
 And sounding cataracts, ye mists and winds
 That dwell among the hills where I was born.
 If in my youth I have been pure in heart,
 If, mingling with the world, I am content

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With my own modest pleasures, and have lived
 With God and Nature communing, removed
 From little enmities and low desires,
 The gift is yours; if in these times of fear,
 This melancholy waste of hopes o'erthrown,
 If, 'mid indifference and apathy,
 And wicked exultation when good men
 On every side fall off, we know not how,
 To selfishness, disguised in gentle names
 Of peace and quiet and domestic love,
 Yet mingled not unwillingly with sneers
 On visionary minds; if, in this time
 Of dereliction and dismay, I yet
 Despair not of our nature, but retain
 A more than Roman confidence, a faith
 That fails not, in all sorrow my support,
 The blessing of my life; the gift is yours,
 Ye winds and sounding cataracts! 'tis yours,
 Ye mountains! thine, O Nature! Thou hast fed
 My lofty speculations; and in thee,
 For this uneasy heart of ours, I find
 A never-failing principle of joy
 And purest passion.

Prelude, Bk. ii.

He now passed, thus educated by Nature, out of her special guidance, and went to Cambridge as a student. It was a strange change from the solitary glen. He was excited, full of spirit and hope, and when he saw the turrets of the University rising in the distance, he felt his heart racing before him. He puts with one of his characteristic touches his own feeling into the place itself:

As near and nearer to the spot we drew
 It seemed to suck us in with an eddy's force.

He entered, and was at once full of the blithe delight of a young fellow, fresh from the hills, to whom everything was new. "I was the dreamer, they the dream"—His new dress—and he became a dandy—the society, the lecture-rooms, the motley spectacle, the sound of frequent bells at night, the ante-chapel of Trinity where the statue stood—

Of Newton, with his prism and silent face,
The marble index of a mind for ever
Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone—

all dazzled him at first, and he forgot his early aspirations. But he soon returned to his more natural self, and felt even the more for this short forgetfulness how native were his poetic instincts. Prizes, examinations and their fame, for these things he had no care; and the little interests of the place were not great enough for one accustomed to the solemn and awful interests of Nature. He was not, he felt, for that hour nor for that place. And we must hold that he was right. Special gifts have special duties, and they override the duties incumbent on ordinary men. It might be the duty of this or that youth to read for a prize; it was Wordsworth's instinct, and the instinct may be called a duty, not to do so. It marks the strong and independent character of his mind that he felt so early in life, that the bent of his genius set him apart, and must be followed. The mountains had taught him wisdom, and he turned—even in the fen-country, and among men—to Nature again, and looked in her for universal things, and called on the earth and sky to "teach him what they might." And when they spoke he turned into himself, and asked what their revelations were in him, till he felt, as he had felt in his native glen, that they were in truth "visitings of the Upholder of the tranquil soul." And receiving these, he recognised with joy a new power in his own soul, and sending it forth to work on Nature, found in her life enjoyments and passions similar but not identical with his own.

To every natural form, rock, fruit, or flower,
Even the loose stones that cover the highway,
I gave a moral life: I saw them feel,
Or linked them to some feeling: the great mass
Lay bedded in a quickening soul, and all
That I beheld respired with inward meaning.
And that whate'er of Terror or of Love
Or Beauty Nature's daily face put on
From transitory passion, unto this
I was as sensitive as waters are

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To the sky's influence in a kindred mood
Of passion; was obedient as a lute
That waits upon the touches of the wind.
Unknown, unthought of, yet I was most rich—
I had a world about me—'twas my own;
I made it, for it only lived to me,
And to the God who sees into the heart.

Prelude, Bk. iii.

Sometimes he betrayed his joy in all this by gestures,
and those who saw him called it madness. And it was
madness, he says—

If childlike fruitfulness in passing joy,
If steady moods of thoughtfulness matured
To inspiration, suit with such a name.

Nor could that be well called madness in which there
was so intense a development of what one might call the
logic of the eye—

For the bodily eye
Amid my strongest workings evermore
Was searching out the lines of difference
As they lie hid in all external forms,
Near or remote, minute or vast; an eye
Which, from a tree, a stone, a withered leaf,
To the broad ocean and the azure heavens
Spangled with kindred multitudes of stars,
Could find no surface where its power might sleep;
Which spake perpetual logic to my soul,
And by an unrelenting agency
Did bind my feelings even as in a chain.

Is not that a splendid commentary upon the passionate
minuteness of his natural description—"Could find no
surface where its power might sleep?"

It was thus that Nature continued to exercise her
power over him, and moulded even his university life.
He was kept, by the continuance of her influence, from
overwork, and from that tendency of a college career to
lessen originality. At the same time, the lively society, the
first clash of life with other men, lessened the somewhat
overwhelming influence of Nature, and not only prepared
him for his future interest in mankind, but stirred to life

those germs of it which had been insensibly sown in the north. The idle life was also, I think, good for him; he wanted idleness and repose; there was no need for him to do anything but drift and have that "wise passiveness" which he afterwards recommends, but which he took then as unconsciously as a child. In these first months, then, he read the face of Nature, he read Chaucer, Spenser, Milton, he amused himself and rested—and since he was Wordsworth, he could not have done better.

But the time spent at Cambridge was not without its special influence: a human element, as I said, crept into his life. When, then, after eight months' absence, he returned to his mountain home, he found that certain changes had been wrought in his relation to Nature. He had a human-heartedness about the love he bore to objects lately the absolute wealth of his own private being. He had loved rocks and brooks and stars as one angel might love another—now human feelings and changes were connected with them, and a pensive shade stole over Nature. It was no longer only sublimity or calm which he felt, but something kinder, sweeter—an inner touch of love, delight, or hope. His human soul, awakened by life among men, began to wed Humanity to Nature, and out of that came the first emotional feeling of a personal religion. It was on a day when the hour of evening was "sober, the air untuned." It influenced him like the face of a friend in trouble, thrilling him through and through with love and pain. And in the air of this emotion, strength and comfort, which "he only knew he needed when they came," entered his heart, and with them came "inward hopes, and swellings of the spirit,"

glimmering views

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

Prelude, Bk. iv.

—the sense of the majestic strength of man if he will but

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live in the "light of high endeavour," and the glory of the close that endurance wins.

The second religious impression was a deeper and more important one. It made a crisis in his life, and it is worth remarking that it came not as the first in the sombreness of evening, but in the freshness of dawn.

When he returned from Cambridge he had felt not only more human, but also an inner falling off; less fiery aspiration in his soul, some taint of the world, some touch of vanity and its corruption. He could not, as before, forget himself in Nature. But he was wrong in this regret. It was a backward motion, but had it not been, love of Nature could never have passed into love of Man. We must often reach the higher by going back a little, and Wordsworth's "boundless chase of trivial pleasure" was a necessary parenthesis in his education. Through it the image of mankind had room to creep into his heart, and in reaction from it he drew nearer to God. It was in the very midst of this light and thoughtless gaiety, returning from a rustic ball—just as impressions of calm and beauty came on his boyhood in the midst of careless sport—that his highest early revelation broke upon him. For often in these opposing currents of the life of Man—and Wordsworth's life was now a parti-coloured show of grave and gay—at a moment when the force of the currents being equal, calm ensues, we are surprised by the voice of God in the hush of exhausted excitement. It is then that Solitude and Nature do their work, and we never can forget the surprise. I quote the lines in which he describes this baptismal hour when he was consecrated to his lofty work. He is going home after a night of merriment:

Magnificent

The morning rose, in memorable pomp.
Glorious as e'er I had beheld—in front
The sea lay laughing at a distance; near
The solid mountains shone, bright as the clouds,
Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light;
And in the meadows and the lower grounds
Was all the sweetness of a common dawn—

Dews, vapours, and the melody of birds,
And labourers going forth to till the fields.
Ah! need I say, dear Friend! that to the brim
My heart was full; I made no vows, but vows
Were then made for me; bond unknown to me
Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
A dedicated Spirit. On I walked
In thankful blessedness, which yet survives.

This was the God of Nature speaking in solitude. But solitude is still more solitary, says Wordsworth, where it has a human centre, and he finishes his account of his vacation time by narrating a dull story of his meeting an old soldier in a lonely road, and how far more deeply the loneliness sank into his soul, and with benign power separated him from worldliness, when this appropriate human centre impressed it on his mind. That would not have been the case some years before. I note it now to show how his mind was veering towards interest in Man as well as in Nature.

The next great religious impressions received through Nature were made on him during his journey on the Continent, and were more distinctly connected with Man; one was sublime when he crossed the Alps, the other beautiful as he wandered through the Italian lakes. They were prefaced by a certain growth in his own soul; gladness and tenderness alike had made the air of thought more fine and pure. And further, the capacities of his own soul had now been so stirred that it began to assert itself as creator: the expressing power had begun to dawn.

It was then that, inspired with desire to see the larger forms of Nature, he went abroad. There his interest in Man was still further aroused, for he landed at Calais and went through France when the land was thrilling with the first youthful passion of the Revolution. He joined with the frank pleasure of youth in all the delight of the land, he felt the excitement of the ideas of the time even in the midst of the dark solitudes of the Chartreuse, he looked with the pleasure of a natural Republican on the quiet valleys of Switzerland where

men were free. But these things were but incidents in the devotion he gave to Nature and in the interest with which he watched his own soul working upon her. First, in lighter scenery, it was only that fantastic pensiveness which we all have felt that came upon him. There were hours of delightful dejection, like flowers "gathered from formal gardens of the Lady Sorrow." But these in turn were mixed with others in which a different impression came, not of the fancy, but wholly of the imagination. He crossed the Alps, and swept downwards towards Italy through the gorge of Gondo. There the stupendous powers of the world of the higher mountains spoke one language to him:

The immeasurable height
Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
And in the narrow rent at every turn
Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,
The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,
Black drizzling crags that spake by the wayside
As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
The unfettered clouds and region of the Heavens,
Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light—
Were all like workings of one mind, the features
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree:
Characters of the great Apocalypse,
The types and symbols of eternity:
Of first and last and 'midst and without end.

Prelude, Bk. vi.

The majesty and awfulness of the place seized on him and ravished him beyond himself—he was lost in the revelation. The same note is struck in the last verse of the hymn of the spirits to Asia in the *Prometheus* of Shelley:

Lamp of Earth, where'er thou movest,
Its dim shapes are clad with brightness,
And the souls of those thou lovest
Walk upon the winds with lightness,
'Till they fail as I am failing,
Dizzy, lost, yet unbewailing.

That was something of Wordsworth's feeling. Nature came upon him, imagination rushed into union with Nature, and in the fierce ardour of their creative embrace within him he lost all consciousness of self. Shelley could have stayed there, did stay there; the passionate pleasure of being lost in the Spirit of Nature through love of it would have been enough for him. He would have kept all his life the memory of that hour of rapture, and felt it over and over again without ever subjecting it to thought. It was different with Wordsworth; having felt this wonderful emotion, and wholly lost himself in it at the time, he returned to it afterwards that he might discover its meaning. It is perhaps less poetical, it is certainly less characteristic of the pure artist to do this; but it is just as well that all poets are not like Shelley, and instead of contrasting the two methods to the disadvantage of either, we may be thankful to have the delight of both.

Afterwards, then, Wordsworth looked back on this experience, and saw in it the glory of the soul in union with God. It can usurp sense, and joining itself as brother to the invisible and spiritual world, enter into that infinitude of God of which Nature is the voice and symbol. This is its greatness, this power bespeaks that its true home is in the Eternal, that its rightful world is the world of aspiration, desire, undying hope,

And something evermore about to be.

And in this the soul is blest in thoughts,

That are their own perfection and reward,
Strong in herself and in beatitude
That hides her.

It was here, then, that through a sublime impression of Nature, the knowledge of the super-eminent power of the human soul which had been growing up in his mind was fixed and recognised.

Descending into serener beauty, a tenderer revelation came on him from a tenderer Nature. He felt the loveliness and calm of the world as similar to moral loveliness and calm. The things he saw were gracious as virtue

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and goodness, sweet as love or the memory of a generous deed, or those visitations of pure thought,

When God, the Giver of all joy, is thanked
Religiously in silent blessedness.

Nor were such scenes only analogous to moral qualities; he seems—and it is a thought which, though fantastic, has its ground in his theory—to imagine that characteristic types of landscape had the power of suggesting each their correspondent virtue to the mind, and of giving to the heart the sensation, as it were, of that virtue.

So far Nature acted directly upon him, but in all these new scenes, as in the previous case, it was not without his own action on her work. He asserts his right as poet and man to offer no slavish worship in this temple. He was not prostrate, overborne as Shelley was, by the splendour of Nature; he never let loose the right of his own mind to co-operate with her. He began to feel that she was the complement of his soul, as natural religion is the complement of spiritual. He drew on still further to the full conception of that marriage of the mind of Man to the external world which he afterwards fulfilled. Whatsoever he saw or heard or felt was but “a stream which flowed into a stream kindred” to it in his own mind:

A gale,
Confederate with the current of the soul,
To speed my voyage; every sound or sight,
In its degree of power, administered
To grandeur or to tenderness—to the one
Directly, but to tender thoughts by means
Less often instantaneous in effect;

And the action of all, in Wordsworth's deep religion, was to lead him, at last, to reach the point marked out for him by God.

One might say that having now become so conscious of the power of his own soul, he would naturally begin to have interest in Man more than in Nature. Everything that was then happening—the expectancy of the whole world, the sudden waking of the nations, the

wonderful emotion of mankind—was, one would think, calculated to place Man first. But Wordsworth grew slowly; he reached that point afterwards, but not now. Nature was still predominant in his life. “Among the more awful scenes of the Alps,” he says in one of his letters, “I had not a thought of Man, my whole soul was turned to Him who produced the terrible majesty before me.” It was the same in the peaceful beauty of the lakes. The happy, glorious time, and the universal cry for liberty that strengthened his interest in Man, were but an additional gleam of sunshine which enhanced his sense of the beauty of the world. He was touched, “but with no intimate concern.” He did not seem to need any human joy, for

the ever-living Universe,
Turn where I might, was opening out its glories,
And the independent spirit of pure youth
Called forth, at every season, new delights
Spread round my steps like sunshine o'er green fields.

This is the close of the early education given him by Nature. What had it done for him? It had made him conscious of the might and dignity of his soul. It had shaped the views and aspirations of his soul to majesty. It had made him realise a Soul of beauty and enduring life without himself, and he knew, from the power by which it moved him, that that Soul was God. It had awakened in him ideals of sublimity in which self was lost, of calm and “ennobling Harmony” in which moral strength was gained, of tenderness in which joy and hope were born; and the sublimity and calm and tenderness were God. It had so spoken to him that he had separated himself for his work, and felt that he was a dedicated spirit, and the Power that had done this through Nature was God. He had secured in this way a noble natural religion.

But Nature had not only educated his soul, it had also done service to his intellect. In scanning the laws and watching the forms of Nature, by seeing things at first hand, he had gained a standard for measuring the value

of things and thoughts; and he could now tell, as if by intuition—what in books “carried meaning to the natural heart”—

What is passion, what is truth,
What reason, what simplicity and sense.

Again, her order, which made itself felt within him, taught him to reverence the abstract truths of science and filled them with the spirit of imagination. As he worked at geometric science, he was able to clothe the nakedness of its austere truths with the hues and forms and with the spirit of the forms of Nature. The same calm which was impressed on him by Nature, in which he felt the ineffable oneness of its life—a thought created by the calm of Nature, and yet its source—he found again in the permanent and universal sway of law, that type of the supreme existence of God in whom all discords, untouched by passion, were harmonised and mingled.

The laws themselves were also made more interesting by being taken into the world of imagination. It did no harm to his work in the sphere of science, that when away from it he clothed its laws with life, and asked, as he wandered and wondered among the hills, how did it happen that these great genii came to serve Man?

Again, as the solemn and simple aspects of Nature gave grandeur to Man's mind, and wrought to kindle and exalt the soul—so the changes of Nature, rapid and forceful, which told of life, were powerful to stir and train the intellect:

Like virtue have the forms
Perennial of the ancient hills; nor less
The changeful language of their countenances
Quickens the slumbering mind, and aids the thoughts,
However multitudinous, to move
With order and relation.

Prelude, Bk. vii.

And now that imagination and intellect were awakened, they could not rest content with Nature only, or their own work; they turned to seek their food in books. And in this sphere also Nature intervened. He thanks God

that he was allowed to run wild, and saved by Nature from a forced and artificial education; that he was handed over to the natural training of wild Nature and took up things as the external world woke interest in them. He lit by chance on books, and faëry tale and legend seemed more in harmony with Nature than manuals of science. She taught him not to lose her in over-education, so that at least in his case old Grandame Earth had not to grieve that the

Playthings which her love designed for him

were unthought of, that the flowers and the river-sides were neglected. The pupil of Nature, his was a larger, grander teaching than that which merely trains the understanding. Books were good, he thought, yet how much less good than that invisible lesson which comes to us through the visible universe, even to the wild and careless child. But who gives that lesson, whose is the voice that works so silently? In Wordsworth's deep religion it is God:

A gracious spirit o'er this earth presides,
And o'er the heart of man—invisibly
It comes—to works of unreproved delight,
And tendency benign, directing those
Who care not, know not, think not what they do.

Prelude, Bk. v.

And surely he is right. When we cram our children to the throat with mere instruction, or make them move over roads of learning like machines, we are really shutting out from them God and God's teaching; we are forgetting the wisdom that is gained by freedom; we are killing originality and the poetic spirit. True force and grandeur of character have their roots in early freedom to drink in other lessons than those that instructors give, and come in the child and man, as they come in the forest tree:

Not by casting in a formal mould
But by its own divine vitality.

We have no need to trouble ourselves to give so much to

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our children, nor would we do so if we believed, as we ought, that God is educating them Himself, that,

In the unreasoning progress of the world
A wiser spirit is at work for us,
A better eye than theirs, most prodigal
Of blessings, and most studious of our good
Even in what seem our most unfruitful hours.

Prelude, Bk. v.

And lastly, as Wordsworth passed from childhood into youth, the books that most attracted him were naturally the poets; and Nature stepped in here also and gave him a deeper insight into them. It is a splendid thought of his when he describes how he, who had been intimate with Nature in his youth, sees something more in the work of the great masters of song than mere glittering verse: he sees in them great Nature herself. Their words are viewless winds which visionary power attends; darkness and all the host of shadowy things make their abode in their poetry. In it, things, as in Nature, weave and unweave, change in shadow and sunshine of thought. That is one of the finest thoughts of Wordsworth, and the finest thing ever said of poetry. But it was Nature who taught him to feel and say it. It completes the history of this early education of Nature, and I quote it in conclusion:

Here must we pause: this only let me add,
From heart experience, and in humblest sense
Of modesty, that he, who in his youth
A daily wanderer among woods and fields,
With living Nature hath been intimate,
Not only in that raw unpractised time
Is stirred to ecstasy, as others are,
By glittering verse; but further, doth receive,
In measure only dealt out to himself,
Knowledge and increase of enduring joy
From the great Nature that exists in works
Of mighty Poets. Visionary power
Attends the motions of the viewless winds,
Embodied in the mystery of words:
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 veil with light divine,
And, through the turnings intricate of verse,
Present themselves as objects recognised,
In flashes, and with glory not their own.

Prelude, Bk. v.