

IV

His Poetry from 1799 to 1808: Nature

From 1799 to 1808 Wordsworth wrote about two hundred poems. One third of them are about nature which is his main interest. Because of this, he is sometimes called the nature poet. Wordsworth "wrote as he lived, and he lived as he wrote"¹ and he almost always lived in natural surroundings. De Quincey said, "Wordsworth had his passion for nature fixed in his blood; it was a necessity of his being". He developed "the Return to Nature" movement of the early eighteenth century and later came to a deeper understanding of nature. Some of his nature poems are merely descriptions of his enjoyment of nature. Some show pleasing and accurate observation of natural objects, in minute detail. Some are about his ideas about the power, unity and "presence" of nature.

The nine well known lines in "My heart leaps up when I behold" (1802) sum up Wordsworth's idea about nature. He enjoyed nature as a boy and as a grown up and would enjoy it when he grew old. He would rather die than be unable to enjoy it. But he was sure that he would because a boy always has the characteristics which he will still have when he grows older. Wordsworth wished that the different parts of his life would be connected to each other by his pious love of nature :

My heart leaps up when I behold
 A rainbow in the sky :
 So was it when my life began;
 So is it now I am a man;
 So be it when I shall grow old,
 Or let me die!
 The child is father of the man;
 And I could wish my days to be
 Bound each to each by natural piety.

"The Simplicon Pass" (1799) expresses his idea of the unity of nature. The woods, the waterfalls, the winds, the clouds, the darkness and the light that he saw while crossing the pass were all like "workings of one mind, the features of the same face, blossoms

1. Helen Darbishire, Wordsworth, p. 9.

upon one tree". To him, these natural objects are "types and symbols of Eternity."

The words and expressions in this poem are very effective. We can imagine "the torrents shooting from the clear blue sky" and "the sick sight and giddy prospect of the raving stream." He described Eternity as "first, last, and midst, and without end." He observed everything closely and was able to choose the most suitable adjective to describe what he saw, for example : "the stationary blasts of waterfalls" and "the unfettered clouds".

In "Influence of Natural Objects" (1799), he calls nature "Wisdom and Spirit of the universe". It has a soul and is the eternity of thought. He said that his intercourse with nature gave him life and motion and built his soul. He said that all we received from nature is enduring, being able to purify our feeling and thought and make our pain and fear holy until we "recognise a grandeur in the beatings of the heart".

He described how he, as a boy, went walking alone both day and night in the woods, near the bay, among the hills and in the fields. On winter nights when people lit their fires, he went skating and found that "it was a time of rapture". He enjoyed country sports like hare-hunting. But sometimes, when he went to a quiet bay and fixed his eyes on a star and stayed still, he could feel the motion of the earth. He said :

the solitary cliffs
 Wheeled by me — even as if the earth had rolled
 With visible motion her diurnal round!
 Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,
 Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched
 Till all was tranquil as a summer sea.

The comparison of tranquillity with a summer sea is very realistic. But later he changed the last line into "all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep"; this is even more effective.

"There Was a Boy" (1799) is the description of a boy's enjoyment of nature. At first the poem was written in the first person which meant that the boy was Wordsworth himself. Later, he changed it into a friend who died young. The boy was fond of standing beneath

a tree near the lake. He would press his hands to his mouth and he :

Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,
That they might answer him.

Then the owls would cry :

Across the watery vale, and shout again,
Responsive to his call, - with quivering peals,
And long halloos, and screams, and echoes loud
Redoubled and redoubled; concourse wild
Of jocund din !

The boy was very sensitive. The noise of the mountain streams was impressed in his heart with "a gentle shock of mild surprise". He remembered the beautiful pictures of the rocks, the woods and the "uncertain heaven received into the bosom of the steady lake". The boy died before he was even twelve years old and was buried on the slope above the village school. The poet stood looking quietly at his grave for a long time.

These three poems were later incorporated in The Prelude.

"Nutting" (1799) was written with the intention of putting it in The Prelude but it was "struck out as not being wanted there". It tells about the poet's joy when he went nutting in the wood when he was still a boy. As usual, he was glad to sit under a tree, listen to the sound of the water with his cheek on one of the stones overgrown with moss which lay "scattered like a flock of sheep" around him. Then he broke a rich bough and dragged it down. He suddenly felt a sense of pain when he saw "the silent trees" and the "intruding sky" and he said :

with gentle hand
Touch — for there is a spirit in the woods.

The Lucy Poems

✓ The "Lucy Poems" are among Wordsworth's best poems. They appear in almost every anthology. In them, nature is still the central idea. The poems were based on the poet's yearning for England and the love he felt for home when he was away in Germany. Besides his interest in nature, he expressed the feeling most akin to love that he ever expressed in any poem. They are surely love poems. Lucy was a composite character and seemed to be identical with different persons in different

poems.

In "Strange fits of passion have I known" (1799) the poet rode to Lucy's cottage at night. He was in a mood that only lovers could understand. He fixed his eyes on the descending moon above her cottage as he came nearer. Suddenly the moon dropped behind the cottage roof. Its disappearance brought into his mind the fear that Lucy might be dead.

LUCY¹

Strange fits of passion have I known:
 And I will dare to tell,
 But in the Lover's ear alone,
 What once to me befell.

When she I loved looked every day
 Fresh as a rose in June,
 I to her cottage bent my way,
 Beneath an evening-moon.

Upon the moon I fixed my eye,
 All over the wide lea;
 With quickening pace my horse drew nigh
 Those paths so dear to me.

And now we reached the orchard-plot;
 And, as we climbed the hill,
 The sinking moon to Lucy's cot
 Came near, and nearer still.

In one of those sweet dreams I slept,
 Kind Nature's gentlest boon!
 And all the while my eyes I kept
 On the descending moon.

My horse moved on; hoof after hoof
 He raised, and never stopped:
 When down behind the cottage roof,
 At once, the bright moon dropped.

What fond and wayward thoughts will slide
 Into a Lover's head!
 "O mercy!" to myself I cried,
 "If Lucy should be dead!"

1. Written in Germany in 1799.

In "She dwelt among the untrodden ways" (1799), Lucy lived and died unknown. To him alone was her death most important.

Bateson believed that Lucy was Dorothy. He said that Wordsworth was actually in love with Dorothy and he knew that it was impossible for him to marry his own sister. Therefore, because he wanted to relieve his guilty conscience, he killed Dorothy symbolically:

She dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove,
A Maid whom there were none to praise
And very few to love:

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

She lived unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be;
But she is in her grave, and, oh,
The difference to me!

"I travelled among unknown men" (1799) shows his yearning for his country and for his love who was happy living in the English countryside where she died.

I travelled among unknown men,
In lands beyond the sea;
Nor, England! did I know till then
What love I bore to thee.

'Tis past, that melancholy dream!
Nor will I quit thy shore
A second time; for still I seem
To love thee more and more.

Among thy mountains did I feel
The joy of my desire;
And she I cherished turned her wheel
Beside an English fire.

Thy mornings showed, thy nights concealed
The bowers where Lucy played;
And thine too is the last green field
That Lucy's eyes surveyed.

In "Three years she grew in sun and shower" (1799), Lucy was a real child of nature. Her life, her senses, her delight, her thought and her beauty — all came from nature. The poem shows Wordsworth's ideas

about the connection of nature and human beings and nature's good effects on men.

Three years she grew in sun and shower,
Then Nature said, "A lovelier flower
On earth was never sown;
This Child I to myself will take;
She shall be mine, and I will make
A Lady of my own.

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

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

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

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

"And vital feelings of delight
Shall rear her form to stately height,
Her virgin bosom swell;
Such thoughts to Lucy I will give
While she and I together live
Here in this happy dell."

Thus Nature spake—The work was done—
How soon my Lucy's race was run!
She died, and left to me
This heath, this calm, and quiet scene;
The memory of what has been,
And never more will be.

The last poem of the "Lucy" series explains his creed about nature. All natural objects belong to one unity. When men die, they become the same as other natural things and join the unity. When they go back to nature, they become lasting and are insensitive to time. They roll in earth's daily course eternally.

Lucy's early death represents Wordsworth's attempt to end what Read calls his "sinister love" for his sister. It is interesting to note that after this he went back to England and married Mary Hutchinson. ✓

A slumber did my spirit seal;
 I had no human fears :
 She seemed a thing that could not feel
 The touch of earthly years.
 No motion has she now, no force;
 She neither hears nor sees;
 Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
 With rocks, and stones, and trees.

Naming Places.

Wordsworth's interest in nature was ever increasing. He gave importance to whatever he saw in nature. The "Poems on the Naming of Places", written in 1800, are the records of his giving names to unknown dells, rocks, the shore of a lake and an out-of-the-way place. He gave the name Emma, by which he always called Dorothy, to a lovely dell where :

The Rivulet, delighting in its strength,
 Ran with a young man's speed;

Its sound made him feel that

The spirit of enjoyment and desire,
 And hopes and wishes, from all living things,
 Went circling, like a multitude of sounds.

The trees, the animals and birds and the shepherd's dog delighted him and his heart was "alive to all things and forgetting all." He called the place "Emma's Dell".

He gave the name "Joanna" to a rock in memory of Joanna, a friend who is so familiar with city life that her heart

Is slow to meet the sympathies of them
 Who look upon the hills with tenderness,
 And make dear friendships with the streams and groves.

In the third poem, he related that his sister gave his name to a peak that can be seen from his garden and that

often seems to send
 Its own deep quiet to restore our hearts.

In the fourth poem, he named the part of the beach where he, Coleridge and Dorothy went for a walk one beautiful morning "Point of Rash Judgment".

"To M. H." was dedicated to Mary Hutchinson whom he married two years after the poem was written. He gave Mary's name to a pleasant grove with a pool in it. Its beauty made him feel that the spot was "made by Nature to herself." He thought that

. . . if a man should plant his cottage near,
 Should sleep beneath the shelter of its trees,
 And blend its water with his daily meal,
 He would so love it, that in his death-hour
 Its image would survive among his thoughts:

Imaginary Conversations.

"The Waterfall and the Eglantine" and "The Oak and the Broom" (1800) are imagined conversations between a waterfall and a wild rose bush and a strong oak tree and a weak plant. Wordsworth was so attracted by nature that he could imagine what the trees might have said. He closely observed natural objects until he understood their characteristics and was able to give to them appropriate personifications. In the first poem, the waterfall is proud of its strength and accused the briar of blocking its way. The briar represents the good side of nature. It says that they can live together peacefully, being useful to each other. It says to the waterfall :

What pleasure through my veins you spread
 The summer long, from day to day,
 My leaves you freshened and bedewed;
 Nor was it common gratitude
 That did your cares repay.

When spring came on with buds and bell,
 Among these rocks did I
 Before you hang my wreaths to tell
 That gentle days were nigh!
 And in the sultry summer hours,
 I sheltered you with leaves and flowers;
 And in my leaves -- now shed and gone,
 The linnet lodged, and for us two
 Chanted his pretty song, when you
 Had little voice or none.

In the second poem, the oak tells the broom that the weak plant and the foolish shepherd boy who comes to sleep under it may die in an hour. The broom thanks the oak for warning her but she already knows that :

Frail is the bond by which we hold
 Our being, whether young or old,
 Wise, foolish, weak, or strong.

She is not afraid because she used to be happy there. She says :

The butterfly, all green and gold,
 To me hath often flown,
 Here in my blossoms to behold
 Wings as lovely as his own.
 When grass is chill with rain or dew,
 Beneath my shade, the mother ewe
 Lies with her infant lamb; I see
 The love they to each other make,
 And the sweet joy which they partake,
 It is a joy to me.

The storm came and blew down the oak but the broom survived. The briar's gratitude and love of peaceful co-existence and the broom's courage stress Wordsworth's belief in the good qualities and lasting character of nature, even in its humblest forms.

Trees.

Later in 1803 Wordsworth wrote another poem about trees. "Yew-Trees" is about five yew trees. The one in Lorton Vale, he thought, was :

a living thing
 Produced too slowly ever to decay;

Of form and aspect too magnificent
To be destroyed.

But he liked the other four in Borrowdale which :

Joined in one solemn and capacious grove;
Huge trunks! and each particular trunk a growth
Of intertwined fibres serpentine
Up ~~to~~ coiling and inveterately convolved;

Under the trees, no grass grew. The floor was covered with fallen leaves and decorated with wild berries. It looked so gloomy that it gave the idea that :

. ghostly Shapes

May meet at moontide; Fear and trembling Hope,
Silence and Foresight; Death the Skeleton,
And Time the Shadow; — there to celebrate,
As in a natural temple scattered o'er
With altars undisturbed of mossy stone,
United worship; or in mute repose
To lie, and listen to the mountain flood
Murmuring from Glaramara's inmost caves.

Hart-Leap Well.

"Hart .. Leap Well" (1800) is a sad story about a hart.

Wordsworth tells us :

The moving accident is not my trade;
To freeze the blood I have no ready arts:
'Tis my delight, alone in summer shade,
To pipe a simple song for thinking hearts.

The main characters in the poem are the animal and nature.

Sir Walter went hunting. He rode so speedily that no one could follow him and went pursuing the hart alone. The hart fled and was so exhausted that he took three leaps, then fell dead near a spring. The knight looked around the spot and found that it was extremely beautiful. He named the spring "Hart - Leap Well" and had a pleasure house built near it. Later Sir Walter died; the house fell, leaving only three stone pillars. The place looked gloomy; no grass or trees grew there. It was said that the place was cursed. Neither men nor animals came to drink the spring water because

. . . oftentimes, when all are fast asleep,
This water doth send forth a dolorous groan.

People believed that the unhappy hart called for its revenge. Nature sympathized with the hart because it loved her. It had run thirteen hours to die at the spring because :

Here on the grass perhaps asleep he sank,
Lulled by the fountain in the summer-tide;
This water was perhaps the first he drank
When he had wandered from his mother's side.

When it died,

This Beast not unobserved by Nature fell;
His death was mourned by sympathy divine.

The Being, that is in the clouds and air,
That is in the green leaves among the groves,
Maintains a deep and reverential care
For the unoffending creatures whom he loves.

However, in due time, the pillars would be overgrown and nature would display her beauty there once more. The last two lines of the poem say that we should not cause pain even to animals in order to get pleasure :

Never to blend our pleasure or our pride
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels.

Flowers.

Flowers are one of Wordsworth's favorite topics. He is fond of common flowers and tries to reveal their good qualities. Those he honours are wild flowers. which are common and attractive, such as the small celandine, the daffodil and the daisy.

He wrote three long poems to the small celandine. The one written in 1802 explains that though there are numerous kinds of flowers, he chooses the humble celandine as his flower :

Pansies, lilies, kingcups, daisies,
Let them live upon their praises;
Long as there's a sun that sets,
Primroses will have their glory;
Long as there are violets

They will have a place in story :
 There's a Flower that shall be mine,
 'Tis the little Celandine.

Other people praise other flowers. Some travel far to find a star.
 But Wordsworth feels that he is like a "sage astronomer" because he
 has that small flower. It is modest, but it is bold. It grows
 abundantly and comes early in spring,

Telling tales about the sun,
 When we've little warmth, or none.

Proud poets never pay attention to *the flower*, but a cottager sees
 it and knows that spring is coming. The celandine is kind and un-
 assuming. It is not particular about the place where it grows. It
 grows near the cottage, on the moor, in the wood and in the lane. It
 deserves all the praises that prouder flowers receive, but does not
 receive any. It foretells happy spring time but it is not properly
 repaid. It is :

Prophet of delight and mirth,
 Ill requited upon earth;
 Herald of a mighty band,
 Of a joyous train ensuing,
 Serving at my heart's command,
 Tasks that are no tasks renewing,

Wordsworth found the value of the unimportant flower and he praises
 it. He said,

I will sing, as doth behove,
 Hymns in praise of what I love!

In "To the same Flower", also written in 1802, he tells
 about his pleasure when he saw the humble flower :

Pleasures newly found are sweet
 When they lie about our feet :

He thinks that the man who paints the picture of the rising sun may
 have taken his idea from the celandine's glittering countenance. He
 knows that nobody else pays attention to it but it makes him so happy
 that he says :

Often have I sighed to measure

By myself a lonely pleasure
Sighed to think, I read a book
Only read, perhaps, by me;

He calls it "blithe of heart" and says that he notices that

from week to week
Thou dost play at hide-and-seek;
While the patient primrose sits
Like a beggar in the cold,
Thou, a flower of wiser wits,
Slipp'st into thy sheltering hold;
Liveliest of the vernal train
When ye all are out again.

He closely observes that it grows here and there like playing hide-and-seek. He notices the "dim-eyed curious Bee" that comes to settle on the flower. Though it is not "beyond the moon" but is "beneath our shoon", he loves it and would be glad if only three or four persons praised it.

In "The Small Celandine" written in 1804, the withering flower gave him a sad idea :

The sunshine may not cheer it, nor the dew;
It cannot help itself in its decay;

It is also necessary for man to become old :

O Man, that from thy fair and shining youth
Age might but take the things youth needed not.

Wordsworth gives much importance to the daisy. He says :

In youth from rock to rock I went,
From hill to hill in discontent
Of pleasure high and turbulent,
Most pleased when most uneasy;
But now my own delights I make, —
My thirst at every rill can slake
And gladly Nature's love partake,
Of Thee, sweet Daisy !

(To The Daisy 1802)

In winter, the daisies grow scattered. In spring, the sun shines on them and in summer, they cover the fields. When autumn comes, they look delighted in the rain :

Thee Winter in the garland wears
 That thinly decks his few grey hairs;
 Spring parts the clouds with softest airs,
 That she may sun thee;
 Whole Summer } (fields are thine by right;
 And Autumn, melancholy Wight!
 Doth in thy crimson head delight
 When rains are on thee.

The daisy is unambitious and can be found everywhere. It greets the traveller; it gives pleasure to one who goes to a lonely place and it is "The Poet's darling."

In shoals and bands, a morrice train,
 Thou greet'st the traveller in the lane;
 Pleased at his greeting thee again;
 Yet nothing daunted,
 Nor grieved if thou be set at nought :
 And oft alone in nooks remote
 We meet thee, like a pleasant thought,
 When such are wanted.

A lonely man can find it near to him and it drives away his melancholy. By watching the daisy, the poet derives

Some apprehension;
 Some steady love; some brief delight;
 Some memory that had taken flight;
 Some chime of fancy wrong or right;
 Or stray invention.

When he has elevated thoughts, the flower will check him and make him enjoy humble things and pleasant knowledge :

If stately passion in me burn,
 And one chance look to Thee should turn,
 I drink out of an humble urn
 A lowlier pleasure;
 The homely sympathy that heeds
 The common life, our nature breeds;
 A wisdom fitted to the needs
 Of hearts at leisure.

The flower makes him glad. He says its image in his memory

Hath often eased my pensive breast
 Of careful sadness.

The poet thinks that he owes much to the daisy. It has had great influence on him. Therefore, he praises it and believes that in future, men will love it as much as before. He tells it,

thou not in vain
Art Nature's favorite.

In "To the same Flower", he says that he turns to it when he has nothing else to do because he loves its unassuming nature, its' homely graceful look. He compare it to a nun, a gay young girl and a queen. Its eye makes it look like a little one-eyed giant :

A nun demure in lowly port;
Or sprightly maiden, of Love's court
In thy simplicity the sport
Of all temptations;
A queen in crown of rubies dressed;
A starveling in scanty vest;
Are all, as seems to suit thee best,
Thy appellations.

A little cyclops, with one eye
Staring to threaten and defy,

When he looks at it from afar, it looks like a star :

I see thee glittering from afar --
And then thou art a pretty star;
Not quite so fair as many are
In heaven above thee!

Those who reprove the daisy will never have peace of mind. The daisy which he calls "sweet silent creature" delights him and at the same time teaches him to be humble.

In the last poem about the daisy (1802), he says that when he looks at this flower that is bold and grows everywhere, he feels that there is some agreement between it and humanity :

Methinks that there abides in thee
Some concord with humanity,
Given to no other flower I see
The forest thorough !

He asks if man has become depressed, thoughtless, unhappy and has neither memory nor reason, will the daisy :

teach him how to find
 A shelter under every wind,
 A hope for times that are unkind
 And every season ?

The daisy's "home is everywhere". It has no pride and doubt. It is always pleased and willing and does not care whether it is welcome or not. It is a yielding flower which can be used on all occasions. It has endurance and suffers from all things without complaining. It is like a missionary that comes to teach people and does it peacefully.

Thou wander'st the wide world about,
 Unchecked by pride or scrupulous doubt,
 With friends to greet thee or without,
 Yet pleased and willing;
 Meek, yielding to the occasion's call,
 And all things suffering from all
 Thy function apostolical
 In peace fulfilling.

In 1805, Wordsworth wrote another poem, "To the Daisy". He told the daisy that his brother John loved it "more silently" than he did. John was proud of his ship but when he came ashore :

To your abodes, bright daisy Flowers !
 He then would steal at leisure hours,
 And loved you glittering in your bowers
 A starry multitude.

John's ship sank in the storm and he was drowned, intending never to leave the ship. His body was found and buried near the grove and the field. Wordsworth hopes that :

The birds shall sing and ocean make
 A mournful murmur for his sake;
 And Thou, sweet Flower, shalt sleep and wake
 Upon his senseless grave.

He hoped that the daisy would grow upon the grave and make it beautiful.

Another kind of flower that Wordsworth loved is the daffodil. He wandered alone and saw thousand of the daffodils dancing in the wind near the lake. He was delighted and gazed at them. Long after he came back from the field, he saw the golden flowers in his imagination. His heart was filled with pleasure and it danced with the daffodils.

The Butterfly

Besides flowers Wordsworth and his sister were also fond of the butterfly. He wrote two poems under the same title, "To a Butterfly", about it in 1802. In the first poem, he asked the butterfly to stay near him because it reminded him of former times when he was happy with his family :

Historian of my infancy !
 Float near me; do not yet depart !
 Dead times revive in thee :
 Thou bring'st, gay creature as thou art !
 A solemn image to my heart,
 My father's family.

He and his sister had a very pleasant time chasing the butterfly. But his sister was very sensitive and was careful not to disturb even the dust on the butterfly's wings:

Oh! pleasant, pleasant were the days,
 The time, when, in our childish plays
 My sister Emmeline and I
 Together chased the butterfly !
 A very hunter did I rush
 Upon the prey:- with leaps and springs
 I followed on from brake to bush;
 But she, God love her, feared to brush
 The dust from off its wings.

In the second poem, he watched the butterfly for half an hour. He compared the motionless butterfly as more motionless than the frozen seas. He invited it to rest long in his garden :

This plot of orchard ground is ours;
 My trees they are, my Sister's flowers;
 Here rest your wings when they are weary;
 Here lodge as in a sanctuary!

He told it not to be afraid because he and his sister would not hurt it. He told it :

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

Birds

Wordsworth loved birds as much as he loved flowers. In "The Redbreast Chasing the Butterfly" (1802), he told the robin that it was the cheerer of his "in door sadness" when "Autumn winds are sobbing." He said it was the bird that man loved best. He asked whether it was :

The bird, that by some name or other
All men who know thee called their brother,
The darling of children and men ?

He asked the bird not to chase the butterfly because the butterfly was his friend and was "the friend of our summer gladness". They should be:

Playmates in the sunny weather,
And fly about in the air together !

He said if the bird did not love it, he should leave it alone. He expressed the idea that all creatures should live together in love and peace.

"The Green Linnet" (1803), shows his appreciation of the bird. He said it was sweet to sit in the garden among the birds and flowers to welcome back the green linnet. Its happy voice and green wings made it outstanding. It was the "Presiding Spirit of the May day. Other birds, butterflies and flowers joined in one hand but the green linnet went its own way. It was "a Life, a Presence like the Air". It spread joy wherever it flew and it enjoyed itself. It was too happy to need a mate. He said to the bird;

While birds, and butterflies, and flowers,
Make all one band of paramours,
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.

Wordsworth observed the bird's movement. He saw that in the hazel tree, stirred by the breeze, it :

perched in ecstasies,
Yet seeming still to hover;
There ! where the flutter of his wings

Upon his back and body flings,
Shadows and sunny glimmerings,
That cover him all over.

When it was among the leaves, it was difficult to see because of its colour. When it came near the cottage, its song came out freely as if it mocked the leaves that could not sing. From the cottage eaves, the bird :

Pours forth his song in gushes;
As if by that exulting strain
He mocked and treated with disdain
The voiceless Form he chose to feign,
While fluttering in the bushes.

"To The Cuckoo" (1804) tells us about Wordsworth's delight upon hearing the cuckoo. He called it "Blithe New-comer" but he could not see the bird. He asked,

O Cuckoo! shall I call thee Bird
Or but a wandering Voice?

To him, it was :

No bird, but an invisible thing,
A voice, a mystery;

Though he heard only its voice, he was reminded of the past when he, as a boy, had looked and searched for it in vain. The bird had been :

a hope, a love;
Still longed for, never seen.

He called it "darling of the spring" and said,

Thou bringest unto me a tale
Of visionary hours.

When he listened to it, it made recollect his school days. Its voice made him feel that the world was like a fairy place :

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

O blessed Bird! the earth we pace
Again appears to be

An unsubstantial, faery place;
That is fit home for Thee !

"To the Sky" (Lark" written in 1805 is a lively poem. The first stanza seems to lead the reader up into the sky with the bird and the poet :

Up with me! up with me into the clouds!
For thy song, Lark, is strong;
Up with me, up with me into the clouds!
Singing, singing,
With clouds and sky about thee ringing,
Lift me, guide me till I find
That spot which seems so to thy mind!

The quick rhythm enables us to imagine the poet's heart going up, higher and higher, with the bird whose song filled the sky around it.

The second stanza provides a sharp contrast of mood. The metre and words he used form long and slowly dragging lines :

I have walked through wildernesses dreary
And to-day my heart is weary;
Had I now the wings of a Faery,
Up to thee would I fly.

The poet said there was madness around the lark and "joy divine" in its song. He asked the bird to lift him to its merry place in the sky.

The bird was so happy that it seemed drunk. It was joyous, laughing and proud. Its soul was strong and it praised the "Almighty Giver". Even so, the bird would not be willing to lead the life the poet was leading. The poet's life had passed through unhappy events; his heart was depressed. He had suffered because the course of his life was :

rugged and uneven,
Through prickly moors or dusty ways must wind;

But when he heard the bird's song which was full of gladness, he had courage to go on suffering, hoping to find greater happiness after death :

I, with my fate contented, will plod on,
And hope for higher raptures, when life's day is done.

His thought of "Almighty Giver"; his submission to fate and his hope indicate that when he wrote this poem, Wordsworth had strong faith in God and had been much humanized. The sky X lark gives him not only joy like the cuckoo, the redbreast and the green linnet, but also stoic resolution to persevere.

His last poem about a bird, "O nightingale! Thou Surely Art" was composed in 1807. He said that the nightingale had strong passion; it was :

A creature of a "fiery heart" :- / Its song was piercing and fierce. It sang as if it was drunk. The song was proud and it seemed that the bird mocked and despised the things around it. Its song was:

A song in mockery and despite
Of shades, and dews, and silent night;
And steady bliss, and all the loves
Now sleeping in these peaceful groves.

Wordsworth's dislike for the passionate nightingale suggests that all his passions had ended. He had become calm and come to care for family life. He preferred the homely stock X dove because it sang gently and unceasingly. Its song was quiet and thoughtful. It sang about serious faith and the pleasure it brought was deep. Above all, it was the symbol of domestic life which he was then living. Its song was for him :

I heard a Stock X dove sing or say
His homely tale, this very day;
His voice was buried among trees,
Yet to be come at by the breeze;
He did not cease; but cooed — and cooed;
And somewhat pensively he wooed;
He sang of love, with quiet blending,
Slow to begin, and never ending;
Of serious faith, and inward glee;
That was the song - the song for me!

Descriptions of Nature.

From birds, flowers and trees and other natural agents, Wordsworth received all his serious thoughts. But quite often, he looked at nature for sheer delight. He sometimes did not feel "the presence" of nature and did not learn from nature. At such times, he

wrote poems which are mere descriptions of his feelings. He wrote them successfully and beautifully.

"The Sparrow's Nest" was written in 1801. It tells about his delight when he, as a boy, came across a Sparrow's nest by chance.

The bright blue eggs :

Gleamed like a vision of delight.

He was excited and felt

that the nest was like a "home and sheltered bed". His sister was with him at the moment. She was all confused with gladness and excitement :

She looked at it and seemed to fear it;

Dreading, tho' wishing to be near it :

Such heart was in her, being then

A little Prattler among men.

His sister was always with him and made him happy. Her strong sensibility strengthened his and enabled him to see, to hear, to feel and to think more clearly :

She gave me eyes, she gave me ears;

And humble cares and delicate fears;

A heart, the fountain of sweet tears;

And love, and thought and joy.

The lines "Written in March", 1802, are a very pleasing description of a landscape. It was composed *ex tempore* but gives attractive imagery. The words flow so easily that even children may appreciate them. The poem's simplicity gives a feeling of freshness, liveliness and joy :

The Cock is crowing, .

The stream is flowing, .

The small birds twitter,

The lake doth glitter

The green field sleeps in the sun;

His observation of the farmers and their cattle is very accurate. Many people may have seen the cattle eating the grass quietly but none has described them so effectively.

The oldest and the youngest

Are at work with the strongest;

The cattle are grazing,

Their heads never raising;

There are forty feeding like one!

His comparing the melting snow to a retreating army is very realistic :

Like an army defeated
The snow hath retreated,
And now doth fare ill
On the top of the bare hill;

Everything is full of life and joy :

The ploughboy is whooping - anon - anon:
There's joy in the mountains;
There's life in the fountains;
Small clouds are sailing,
Blue sky prevailing;
The rain is over and gone!

In "Foresight" (1802), he forbade his sister to pluck the strawberry blossoms so that they would be left to grow into berries :

Pull the primrose, sister Anne!
Pull as many as you can.
— Here are daisies, take your fill;
Pansies, and the cuckoo flower:
Of the lofty daffodil
Make your bed, or make your bower;
Fill your lap, and fill your bosom;
Only spare the strawberry blossom.

"The Sun Has Long Been Set". (1802), describes a beautiful night in June. There is a half-moon in the sky and the night is full of "innocent blisses".

The sun has long been set,
The stars are out by twos and threes,
The little birds are piping yet
Among the bushes and trees;
There's a cuckoo, and one or two thrushes,
And a far-off wind that rushes,
And a sound of water that gushes,
And the cuckoo's sovereign cry
Fills all the hollow of the sky.

In such a beautiful atmosphere, no one would think of the noisy London night. The poem is very simple and yet beautiful. It shows that the poet liked the country more than the city.

The countryside always gives deep thoughts to the poet. In "Yes, it was the mountain echo" (1806), the echo of the cuckoo's song in the mountain makes him think that human beings also have an echo and the echo comes from God.

He heard the clear echo of the cuckoo and noticed that it was :

Like her ordinary cry,
Like — but oh, how different.

Human echo exists but thoughtless men who are slaves of folly, love and strife cannot hear it. They cannot see the difference between their own voice and the voice that echoes from beyond the grave. Sometimes when we are thoughtful, we hear the voices from afar with "our inward ear". We should :

Listen, ponder, hold them dear;
For of God - of God they are.

His Tour in Scotland.

Wordsworth always loved the country deeply. He loved his country house so much that in 1802 when he had to leave it for a short time, he wrote "A Farewell" to it. In 1804, he went on a walking tour in Scotland and wrote a long series of poems, "Memorials of a Tour in Scotland", beginning with the one about the departure from the Vale of Grasmere. He said it was calm and all could live there in freedom with nature. He left it in order to see new people and new places but even at the beginning of the tour, he looked forward to happiness upon his return :

— A bright adieu,
For a brief absence, proves that love is true;
Ne'er can the way be irksome or forlorn
That winds into itself for sweet return.

"At the Grave of Burns" shows his appreciation of the Scottish farmer-poet. Burns' genius was original. He wrote about humble things and gave new light to the world :

Fresh as the flower, whose modest worth
He sang, his genius "glinted" forth,
Rose like a star that touching earth,

For so it seems,
Doth glorify its humble birth
With matchless beams.

Now that Burns lay in his grave among the unknown, Wordsworth was sad as others who mourned for him but his sorrow was deeper than theirs. He appreciated Burns' poetry and when he was young Burns' work taught him how to write poetry about ordinary truth :

He was gone
Whose light I hailed when first it shone,
And showed my youth
How Verse may build a princely throne
On humble truth.

Wordsworth's house was not very far from Burns'. If Burns had not died, he and Wordsworth might have been good friends because they had much in common. In "Thoughts", Wordsworth looked at the scenery which Burns had enjoyed. He thought it was nature that inspired Burns and enabled him to write better poetry than other poets. Wordsworth invited his sister who accompanied him to rest there,

And ask of Nature, from what cause
And by what rules
She trained her Burns to win applause
That shames the Schools.

In "To the Sons of Burns", he told the sons to follow their father's example : to be good, independent, generous and brave.

He proceeded from Burns' grave and met a girl to whom he wrote "To a Highland Girl." She looked like a person in a dream. He loved her beauty, her innocence and her free and happy gestures. He wished he could come to live near her and adopt her way of living and be a father or a brother to her. He said he would always remember her and would enjoy his recollection of her. He was not unwilling to go away, he said,

For I, methinks, till I grow old,
As fair before me shall behold,
As I do now, the cabin small,
The lake, the bay, the waterfall;
And Thee, the Spirit of them all!

"Glen - Almain" was written when he passed the narrow valley where Ossian, the Gaelic poet, was buried.

In "Stepping Westward", Wordsworth was attracted by the countrywoman's greeting, "What, you are stepping westward?" Her sweet voice impressed him and encouraged him to travel on :

The echo of the voice enwrought
A human sweetness with the thought
Of travelling through the world that lay
Before me in my endless way.

Then comes one of his most pleasant poems, "The Solitary Reaper". The girl, her song and nature around her was beautifully and effectively described.

Behold her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland Lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! for the Vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

The girl worked by herself in the field. Her song was melancholy and her voice spread through the deep valley. The nightingale's song in the desert or the cuckoo's song in spring were less sweet than hers :

No Nightingale did ever chaunt
More welcome notes to weary bands,
Of travellers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian sands:
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In spring-time from the Cuckoo bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Wordsworth could not understand the song, but its melancholy tune suggested that it was about sad events; whether of the old time or of the present :

Will no one tell me what she sings?
Perhaps, the plaintive numbers flow,
For old, unhappy, far off things,

And battles long ago:
 Or is it some more humble lay,
 Familiar matter of to-day?
 Some natural sorrow, loss or pain,
 That has been, and may be again?

The girl sang, bending her back to cut the grain. Her song seemed as if it would never end. He stood still to hear her song. When he went away and did not hear the song any more, he still heard it in his imagination.

Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang
 As if her song could have no ending;
 I saw her singing at her work,
 And o'er the sickle bending;—
 I listened, motionless and still;
 And, as I mounted up the hill
 The music in my heart I bore,
 Long after it was heard no more.

"Address to Kilchurn Castle, Upon Loch Awe" was about the ruin of a castle that he passed. When he came to the place which he thought was Rob Roy's grave, he wrote "Rob Roy's Grave" in admiration for the Scottish hero's courage, generosity and love of liberty. Rob Roy was wise. He learned moral lessons from the things around him, not from books :

Said generous Rob, "What need of books?
 Burn all the statutes and their shelves:
 They stir us up against our kind;
 And worse, against ourselves.

Rob Roy lived in the mountains and led a natural kind of life :

And thus among these rocks he lived
 Through summer heat and winter snow:
 The Eagle, he was lord above,
 And Rob was lord below.

He loved liberty and always followed his own thought. He said :

I, too will have my kings that take
 From me the sign of life and death:
 Kingdoms shall shift about, like clouds,
 Obedient to my breath.

Rob Roy helped the poor and fought for their liberty. They loved him and were glad to hear his name.

In "Sonnet Composed at — Castle", Wordsworth complained about the trees that were cut down near the castle. However, nature did not care because the flowers, the trees, the mountains and the green pastures remained.

"Yarrow Unvisited" was about the River Yarrow which he had at first intended to visit. But he later changed his mind. He said he would leave the river unvisited and keep enjoying the vision which he had built up in his imagination. The poem is remarkable for its metre which is like that of a song :

From Stirling castle we had seen
The mazy Forth unravelled;
Had trod the banks of Clyde and Tay,
And with the Tweed had travelled;
And when we came to Clovenford,
Then said my "winsome Marrow,"
"Whate'er betide, we'll turn aside,
And see the Braes of Yarrow."

"The Matron of Jedborough and Her Husband" shows Wordsworth's minute observation of common people's character and feeling. The husband was a cripple. He sat in one room, sick and unhappy. His wife, though over seventy, was cheerful and gay. She still danced and sang merrily. Though from time to time, the weariness caused by the burden showed in her eyes, she managed to look happy to cheer up her sad husband.

Then he returned to Grasmere. When he was a few miles away from home, he composed "Fly, some kind harbinger, to Grasmere Vale", wishing that some messenger would bring the news of his return to his wife and his child.

"The Blind Highland Boy" is the story about a boy living on the high mountain of Scotland. He described the boy in direct narration with simple metre :

He ne'er had seen one earthly sight
The sun, the day; the stars, the night;
Or tree, or butterfly, or flower,
Or fish in stream, or bird in bower,
Or woman, man, or child.

The boy had been born blind but he was not so sad. He found enjoyment of his own,

For God took pity on the Boy,
And was his friend; and gave him joy
Of which we nothing know.

His mother pitied him and loved him more than the other children and was proud of him. Maternal love here is as strong as in other poems.

The blind boy had a faithful dog to play with. He played the bagpipe better than any other boy. The boy was quite happy but when he heard the voice of the eagle and the sound of the water, he was disturbed by dreams.

The boy's cottage stood near a large tidal lake. The neighbour sea-men told him about the distant lands they travelled to. He heard every tale and enjoyed it and wished to go to sea. His mother knew the danger and asked him never to do so.

The seamen brought back with them some gifts from the places they had visited. They were all precious to the boy. One of the gifts which they brought to the village was a big turtle shell.

The blind boy had heard the story about an English boy who went sailing in a shell. One day, he stole the shell, put it in the water and sat in it. The tide carried him rapidly from the shore. He felt extremely glad,

his thoughts all free
As the light breezes that with glee
Sang through the adventurer's hair.

Then he was seen. His mother came weeping to the shore to watch him,

But for the child, the sightless Boy,
It is the triumph of his joy!
The bravest traveller in balloon,
Mounting as if to reach the moon,
Was never half so blessed.

The crew took a boat and followed to rescue him. He asked them to leave him alone but they brought him back. His delight ended suddenly and he felt a great loss.

His mother was so glad to have him back that she could not punish him. The boy then became content and agreed to live peacefully with his mother. Unfortunate boys, poor women and their love for their children always appeal to Wordsworth.