THE POETICAL WORKS

OF

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

WITH INTRODUCTION

BY

EDWARD DOWDEN

WARD, LOCK & CO., LIMITED

LONDON, MELBOURNE AND TORONTO

WORDSWORTH

THE unity of Wordsworth's life of eighty years lies in its self-dedication to the work of a poet. Viewed from the spiritual side, few lives have been more remarkable; its external incidents have little in them of picturesqueness or romance. Under the great poet in his nature lay a matter-of-fact Englishman of the north country. The course of his outward career was determined by the union in him of high poetic genius and plain good sense: and the latter served the former well.

The Wordsworth family can be traced back in Yorkshire to the reign of Edward III. The poet's grandfather migrated in the first half of the eighteenth century to Sockbridge in Westmoreland. His second son, John Wordsworth, became an attorney at Cockermouth, and at the age of twenty-five married Anne Cookson, daughter of a Penrith mercer. William Wordsworth, their second child, was born at Cockermouth on April 7, 1770. His brothers were three —Richard, who became a solicitor, John, who rose to be a captain in the merchant service, and Christopher, master of Trinity College, Cambridge, from 1820 until 1846. Not a little of the poet's genius, without its creative strength or its meditative depth, appears in his only sister, Dorothy, who was younger than William by somewhat less than two years. Brother and sister remained throughout life in the closest and dearest companionship.

"I was of a stiff, moody, and violent temper," writes Wordsworth, looking back upon his childhood; and chastisement only made him obstinate and defiant. His mother died when he was eight years old, and in her were lost the central light and love within his home. In the same year he was sent to the ancient grammar-school at Hawkshead, near Esthwaite Water. He boarded in the cottage of a village dame, Anne Tyson, enjoying much happy freedom, and receiving instruction at the school-house from a succession of masters, among them William Taylor, who appears idealized as the "Matthew" of his poems. He acquired some Greek and a sound knowledge of Latin, read for his own amusement *Don Quixote*, *Gil Blas*, *Gulliver*, the *Tale of a Tub*, and Fielding's novels; and being encouraged by his master to write English verse on the theme *The Summer Vacation*, he proceeded to compose for his own pleasure a long poem on the surrounding scenery and his boyish adventures. Here, and in his schoolboy days, the foundations of his mind were laid in that inter-

course with the external world—partly made up of animal joy, partly of imaginative wonder, awe, and delight—of which we read in the first two books of *The Prelude*. The boy was vigorous and hardy of body; he climbed, he boated, he fished, he skated; and through the mere physical rapture came impulses of deeper birth from the soul—impulses which did not die, but remained in the centre of his nature and helped to shape his whole moral being. Already that interpretation of the spiritual meanings of visible things, which is characteristic of all Wordsworth's highest work, had begun.

In the winter of 1783, Wordsworth's father, who never recovered from the loss of his wife, died. The sons were placed under the care of two uncles. Mr. Wordsworth's property consisted chiefly of a sum lent to Sir James Lowther, afterwards Earl Lonsdale, whose agent he had been. The debt was claimed, but without success; it remained unpaid until 1802, when liberal restoration was made by Lord Lonsdale's successor. In October, 1787, Wordsworth, then in his eighteenth year, was sent to reside as a student at St. John's College, Cambridge.

His life at Cambridge was not a life of study; he could not distribute the force of his mind into appointed channels; he had none of the ambition of a candidate for collegiate distinctions; he did not find the influences of the place inspiring for one of his temper. The memory, indeed, of great predecessors who had trod the courts stirred his imagination; he remembered Spenser's youth, and Milton's years at Christ's; he looked on Newton's sculptured face in the antechapel of Trinity—

> The marble index of a mind for ever
> Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone.

But no living voice was a summons to his intellect; no living mind dominated or spurred his own. He yielded himself to the social enjoyments and casual pleasures of the day and hour, never seriously offending, but never concentrating his energies on an assigned task. During the week before he took his degree he occupied himself with reading *Clarissa Harlowe*. Yet he made certain scholarly gains; he became more familiar with the Latin poets, and read for his pleasure in Italian literature; and Cambridge was a miniature world, where he saw new forms of life that became a complement of his solitary communings with nature.

The long vacations were seasons of joy and inward growth. In the summer of 1788 he returned to his cherished vale of Esthwaite, to see all things with more instructed eyes and to find all as dear as in his boyhood. One moment remained for ever memorable, when walking home from a night of innocent mirth, he beheld the sun rise, and was startled into a higher joy, with peace at the heart of joy.

> 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.

During the following summer he had for companions of his wanderings in the North of England his sister Dorothy, and her and his dear friend Mary Hutchinson. His last college vacation was spent with his fellow-student, Robert Jones, in a pedestrian tour through France, Switzerland, and the Italian Lakes, returning by the Rhine. It was a season of high hope for revolutionary France; Wordsworth, as was natural to aspiring youth, was borne on the wave of political feeling, but as yet he made no study of the great phenomenon; it affected him as the awakening of nature in spring might affect him. The grandeur and beauty of mountain and lake moved him profoundly, and a record of his impressions may be found in the early poem *Descriptive Sketches*, and in the sixth book of *The Prelude*.

On taking his bachelor's degree in January, 1791, Wordsworth quitted Cambridge. Four months were spent in London, where the vast life of the city exalted his imagination with a sense of power and passion, and the endless variety of the streets occupied and amused his eye. He heard Burke speak in the House of Commons, and saw Mrs. Siddons on the stage. Yet even amid the multitudinous life of London, the spirit of nature, its solitudes, its inspiration, abode in his consciousness, bringing composure and harmony into his feelings. An excursion on foot through North Wales in company with his friend Jones occupied the summer. A memorable reminiscence of this tour—the description of a moonlight night on Snowdon—opens the last book of *The Prelude*. Wordsworth was now in his twenty-second year, and it was his duty to think of some means of obtaining a livelihood. For a moment he contemplated taking orders; again it occurred to him to write for the newspapers. Both designs yielded to the strong attractions of France in her days of revolution. Possibly a residence abroad would qualify him for obtaining a travelling tutorship. However this might be, he could not resist his desire, and before the close of November, 1791, he was on his way to Orleans.

In Paris he visited "each spot of old or recent fame," heard the orators of the Jacobin Club and of the Assembly, and chose for his relic a stone from the ruins of the Bastille. Yet the events of the time were still but half real for him. At Orleans he consorted with military officers of Royalist sympathies, and through their deep agitation he felt more truly the tumult and terror of revolution. But the new cause he believed was the cause of freedom and humanity. A heroic soldier of the approaching Republic, Michel Beaupuy, noble in character as one of Plutarch's men, became after a time Wordsworth's chief counsellor and close companion. Through him the doctrine of the Revolution and its purer passions laid hold of the young Englishman's intellect and heart. External nature was no longer supreme in his imagination; he thought first of the interests of man. When he came from Blois, where Beaupuy was stationed, to Paris, in October, 1792, the King was dethroned and imprisoned; the Prussians were flung back; the Republic had been decreed. Wordsworth felt, as it were, the ground rocking under him; he considered whether he should devote his life to the great cause. But a

return to England was necessary, and in December he was once again in the country of his birth.

A pamphlet in defence of the principles of the Revolution was written by Wordsworth in London (1793), but it remained unpublished. He occupied himself also in seeing through the press two poems—*An Evening Walk*, which is a careful study in verse of Lake country landscape, with its varying incidents, and *Descriptive Sketches*, a record of his earlier wanderings on the Continent. These pieces were published separately in quarto, and at a later date underwent careful revision. Neither poem exhibits in a high degree Wordsworth's characteristic power of interpreting nature, but each shows how steadily his eye was fixed on the object. The diction is in the manner of the eighteenth century, yet is often exact and vivid. In *Descriptive Sketches*, certain outbreaks of Revolutionary sentiment occur. Wordsworth's feeling towards the movement in France, however, gradually yielded to the strain of terrible events; his faith in the progress of the Revolution gave way; still he clung to its principles; but even these could not maintain their hold upon his mind. A painful moral confusion possessed his nature; he almost fell into despair. When recovery came, it was rather as a process of returning health than as the result of any train of reasoning. The influence of his sister helped his restoration; he still honoured man as man, but he believed less in political theories; he still cherished high hopes for humanity, but they were not the hopes of a doctrinaire. His earlier faith remained, but in a purified form.

In the summer of 1793 Wordsworth visited Salisbury Plain, Bristol, and the banks of the Wye. The tragic narrative poem, *Guilt and Sorrow*, begun at an earlier date, was now completed. But wanderings in beautiful scenery and verse-making were hardly the means to bring him a livelihood. He had thoughts of starting a periodical, to be named *The Philanthropist*. Unexpectedly in the early days of 1795 the way was cleared for his true work—that of a poet—by a dying friend's faith in his genius. Young Raisley Calvert, of Windybrow, near Keswick, placed Wordsworth in possession of a legacy of £900, declaring that he did so on public as well as personal grounds. By Calvert's foresight a difficult problem was solved: with his own small possessions and his sister's it would be possible for Wordsworth to live, devoting himself to poetry, and practising a strict economy. A young pupil, son of Basil Montagu, was placed under his care; the use of a country house at Racedown, Dorsetshire, was offered by a friend of Montagu; and thither in the autumn of 1795 came the brother and sister, and took up their abode.

His tragedy, *The Borderers*, was Wordsworth's chief occupation during the closing months of the year and the first half of 1796. Lacking dramatic efficiency, it is yet remarkable as a psychological study. A generous youth is betrayed into crime by the intellectual and moral sophistries of an elder man, who has employed his reason to kill within himself the natural instincts of the heart, and would form his disciple on his own model. The play was perhaps written in a

recoil from the doctrines of Godwin's *Political Justice ;* when offered for representation at Covent Garden, it could not but be rejected. Before Wordsworth's residence at Racedown began he had probably made Coleridge's acquaintance ; occasional intercourse in 1796 ripened into intimacy and friendship in June of the following year, when Coleridge visited his brother poet for the first time. He felt, as he says, " a little man " by Wordsworth's side ; and he was charmed by the ardour of feeling and unerring sensibility to beauty of Wordsworth's sister. To attain closer companionship with their new friend, Wordsworth and Dorothy moved to Alfoxden, a large house surrounded by wooded grounds, and let on very moderate terms, in the neighbourhood of Nether Stowey and the Quantock Hills. Youth, friendship, genius, a beautiful environment united to make this a fortunate season. Many of Wordsworth's most radiant lyrics, many of his renderings of human passion, tender and strong in their humanity, belong to this period. The *Lyrical Ballads*, to which Coleridge contributed *The Ancient Mariner* and two or three other pieces, was planned ; Coleridge's part was designed to show how truth to inward reality can support and purify work of an imaginative origin ; Wordsworth's to show how imagination can purify and interpret the appearances and incidents of the actual world. The volume was published in 1798 by Joseph Cottle, of Bristol. It was republished, with a second volume wholly by Wordsworth, in 1800, and reached a fourth edition in 1805.

Before *Lyrical Ballads* was issued, Wordsworth, accompanied by his sister and Coleridge, had quitted England to reside for the winter in Germany. At Hamburg they parted, Coleridge proceeding to Ratzeburg, while William and Dorothy Wordsworth chose Goslar as their place of abode. Their solitude was deep, and the winter proved one of bitterest ice and snow. But the poet's heart and imagination at this period lived with peculiar intensity in his native land. No trace of German influence, unless it be in the ballad fragment *The Danish Boy*, appears in his verse. To Goslar belong the *Lucy* poems, the Quantock poem *Ruth*, the *Poet's Epitaph*, and *Lucy Gray ;* and here it was that his poetical autobiography, *The Prelude* was designed and meditated.

Towards the close of April, 1799, passing through Göttingen, where Coleridge now stayed, the Wordsworths, after some wanderings in Germany, returned to England. A long visit was paid to the Hutchinsons at Sockburn-on-Tees ; in the autumn Wordsworth rambled on foot through the Lake District, and finding at the Town End, Grasmere, a small house—Dove Cottage—vacant, his heart closed upon it as a home with fondest hope. A few days before Christmas he and his sister entered into possession of this dwelling-place, which still exists, and is now guarded in the general interest of those who honour the poet's memory. Here in 1800 visitors were welcomed —Coleridge with his wife ; John Wordsworth, the sailor brother, a man of strong and gentle spirit, and a lover of what is best in literature ; and Mary Hutchinson, their dear friend since childhood. In

this year the creative impulse came with might upon Wordsworth; day by day the poems included in the second volume of *Lyrical Ballads*—*Michael, The Brothers, Hart-Leap Well*, and others—were wrought into form, and Wordsworth's deep, imaginative excitement often left him exhausted both in mind and body; and now he enlarged the "Advertisement" of his volume of 1798 into the celebrated "Preface," which set forth his dominant convictions on the purposes of poetry and the nature of its vehicle of words. The manner of living at Dove Cottage was frugal to an extreme; but in books there was a store of intellectual delights; and mountains and lake enriched the senses and the heart with ever-present beauty. The household happiness was deepened, steadied and assured when on October 4, 1802, Mary Hutchinson became Wordsworth's wife. She brought him wise and tender affection, a gentle strength of soul, good sense with all the gifts of practical activity, and unerring sympathy in his work as a poet. No union of two lives was ever more rich in tranquil happiness.

Just before his marriage, Wordsworth and his sister spent a short time upon the northern coast of France. He had been deeply moved by the majesty of Milton's sonnets, and at Calais he wrote the earliest of his own series of lofty political poems in that form. The entire series deals with the course of public events in Europe from 1802 to the battle of Waterloo. The Revolutionary violences had alienated Wordsworth's sympathies from France; the despotism and ambition of Napoleon completed his change of feeling; he saw in England the armed champion of European liberty; he entered ardently into the struggle on behalf of Spanish independence; the cause to which he was attached seemed to him the good old cause to which he had given the enthusiasm of youth, but now the same enthusiasm was more wisely directed; all the passion, all the courage of hope, all the sternness of his nature, found utterance in these poems that cheer and rally as with a trumpet's note.

In June, 1803, Wordsworth's first child, a son, was born. When the mother had fully recovered, Wordsworth left his home and enjoyed, in company with his sister, a six-weeks' tour in Scotland. Coleridge was their fellow-traveller for a while, but at the Inversnaid ferry-house he parted from his friends, with a profession of ill-health. In Dorothy Wordsworth's exquisite journal the delights and incidents of their wanderings are recorded. At Dumfries they mourned by the grave of Burns; at Lasswade they were cordially received by Scott, who for a while became their guide to places of interest; they turned aside from Yarrow, though, as Wordsworth confesses, not altogether for the reason assigned in his *Yarrow Unvisited*. The poems suggested by this tour are illuminated by a spiritual radiance, which is softened by a tender human sympathy; they are the earliest of Wordsworth's many itinerary poems.

Somewhat more than a year later sorrow of a profound kind for the first time became a part of Wordsworth's life. On February 5, 1805, his brother John, in command of an East Indiaman, was

lost with his ship off the coast near Weymouth. His behaviour in extremity was admirable, and when death became inevitable he accepted it with resignation to God's will. Wordsworth's grief was for a time overwhelming; then he threw himself upon work—the completion of his poetical autobiography; and by degrees his sorrow was chastened, mingling with all his feelings and influencing all his work as a gain that had been wrought out of loss. The radiance of his joy was henceforth tempered; the sense of duty as a blessed control was fortified; a deep distress had humanized his soul. The *Elegiac Stanzas suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle* tells of this discipline of pain. In the *Ode, Imitations of Immortality* we recognize its power. A veiled memorial of his brother, to which is added something drawn from another heroic sailor—Lord Nelson—may be discovered in *The Happy Warrior*.

In his work as a poet Wordsworth found sustenance during his trial, and children were born to gladden his home. In 1806 he was the father of two sons and a daughter—John (his first-born), Dorothy (1804), and Thomas (1806). Dove Cottage proved too small for his growing needs, and for the winter of 1806–1807 he gladly accepted the loan of the farm-house of Coleorton, Leicestershire, from his wealthy friend—a landscape painter of some repute—Sir George Beaumont. Here was written a poem in which the spirit of chivalry mingles with a sentiment for nature and humanity peculiarly his own—the *Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle;* and here he read aloud for Coleridge the later books of *The Prelude*, awakening in his friend's heart a passion of self-pity, a throng of reviving hopes, and a great joy that at least one of the two poets had been wholly loyal to his allotted task. Two slender volumes of *Poems* were published by Wordsworth in 1807; no nobler gift of verse had appeared in England since Milton wrote; it was received by the critics with derision; but the writer was supported amid such discouragement by his "faith in the whispers of the lonely Muse." "These poems," he wrote to Lady Beaumont, "will, in their degree, be efficacious in making men wiser, better, and happier." A century has given its confirmation to Wordsworth's just self-confidence.

Part of the summer of 1807 was spent in Yorkshire, where Wordsworth for the first time saw the remains of Bolton Priory, and visited the striding-place where young Romilly leaped and was lost. Having gathered the needful material of history and tradition, he composed at Stockton-on-Tees before the close of the year a considerable part of his poem connected with the Priory—*The White Doe of Rylstone*. It remained unpublished until 1815. In narrative and descriptive power *The White Doe* is by no means deficient, but it is far less a poem of chivalric action, such as Scott might have written, than a record of spiritual events. The subject essentially belongs to Wordsworth's own experience, for it deals before all else with the purification or, one may say, the sublimation of sorrow. Emily, the heroine, abides the shock of pain and grief, and finally obtains an exalted triumph. Such a poem could not compete in popularity

with the *Giaours* and *Corsairs* which had taken the public by storm; but it bears a gift of healing to those who suffer as effectually at the present day as when it was first put forth.

In the summer of 1808 Wordsworth removed to a house—Allan Bank—just built under the northern flank of Silverhowe, on the way from Grasmere into Easedale. Here a little daughter, whom they named Catherine, was born in September, and in May, 1810, Wordsworth's last child, William. Coleridge, engaged during 1809-1810 on his periodical *The Friend*, was for a long period domesticated with his old friends; and for a time De Quincey was a visitor. To *The Friend* Wordsworth contributed some poems and a remarkable letter of *Advice to the Young*. He was chiefly occupied with *The Excursion* (published in 1814); but deeply interested as he was in the affairs of Spain, he could not forbear uttering his mind in a long prose pamphlet (1809) suggested by the Convention of Cintra, in which passionate meditation is expressed in a style of weighty eloquence. Its general thesis, that the hopes for the Spaniards resided not in military armaments or diplomatic negotiations, but in the moral spirit of an indignant people, is applied to show the injustice, and therefore the folly, of Wellesley's arrangement with the French. The pamphlet was delayed too long, and it fell upon unheeding ears. A little later, in 1810, another remarkable piece of prose, but of a different kind, appeared—Wordsworth's introduction to Wilkinson's *Views of Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Lancashire*, afterwards enlarged and separately published as a guide to the English lakes. It is especially interesting as exhibiting Wordsworth's intellectual grasp of all those features of landscape and varying aspects of nature interpreted in poetry by his imagination and passions.

His residence at Allan Bank terminated in the spring of 1811, when the landlord required the house for his own use. A temporary resting-place, far from satisfactory, was found at the Parsonage, Grasmere, which stood until lately close to the churchyard. In 1812 it became a house of grief; on June 4 of that year little Catherine, a child of sweet and gay temper, sickened and died. The lines beginning "Loving she is and tractable though wild," tell of her innocent mirth; the sonnet *Surprised by Joy* records her father's abiding sorrow. Six months later little Thomas lay beside her in the churchyard. A house haunted by such memories of anguish could not be endured. Rydal Mount, standing above Rydal Mere, on the slope of Nab's Scar, fell vacant; it was in every way suitable for a poet's home; thither the household was transferred in the spring of 1813. It was Wordsworth's final home for life.

Through the influence of Lord Lonsdale, Wordsworth was appointed in March of the same year distributor of stamps for the county of Westmoreland; the value of the post was said to be £400 a year; the duties were not over-burdensome, and they were lightened by the help of a clerk. Thus happily provided for, Wordsworth applied a portion of his time to preparing his son John for the University. In reading the classics again, some of their spirit passed into his own

verse. A rare dignity of expression, a majesty of versification, a new grace of style, are united in such poems as *Laodamia* and *Dion* with gravity of thought and restrained passion. A few pieces of a different kind were suggested by Wordsworth's second Scottish tour, that of the summer of 1814. His wife and her sister Sara were his companions, and, guided by the Ettrick Shepherd, they now looked with bodily eyes on Yarrow, the stream of romance. All the spirit of the place has passed into the poem *Yarrow Visited*. A third of Wordsworth's Yarrow poems, and one touched by sadness which is yet courageously resisted, belongs to his old age, when in 1831 he visited Scott, then broken in health and about to seek vainly for restoration in Italy.

In 1814 appeared Wordsworth's narrative and philosophical poem *The Excursion*, itself designed as part of a still vaster poetical work, *The Recluse*, in which the poet meant to set forth at large his views on man, nature, and society. The history of the formation of his mind in *The Prelude* was to serve as an introduction to the whole; the first and third parts of *The Recluse* were to consist chiefly of meditations in the author's own person; in the intermediate part, *The Excursion*, something of a dramatic form, adapting itself to philosophical dialogue, appears. Besides *The Excursion* and *The Prelude* only a single book of the first part of *The Recluse* was ever written. *The Excursion* has level tracts, but also illuminated heights of vision. It is a profound and passionate study of the bases on which rest man's faith and hope and charity, and the sanity and joy which spring from these. In it Wordsworth speaks as a son of consolation; it is a work of thought indeed, but the thought had grown and matured through a personal experience. *The Excursion* was followed in 1815 by *The White Doe*, and by the first collected edition of Wordsworth's miscellaneous poems, in which he adopted a classification carefully considered, and adhered to in all future editions which have his authority. It had reference partly to the progress of human life from childhood to old age, death, and immortality; partly to the dominant faculties of the soul which are represented in his various writings. So much of the author's mind entered into this arrangement that it cannot without serious loss be disturbed.

A small sheaf of poems, including the *Thanksgiving Ode* for Waterloo and the restoration of peace, appeared in 1816; and three years later was published a long lyrical ballad of 1799, *Peter Bell*, in which with some errors of grotesqueness and ungainly vivacity, there is a masterly study of the wild lover's character, and a passionate inquisition into strange processes of the human spirit. It was ridiculed, but it was read, and indeed few of its author's poems are more characteristic of his genius in its earlier development. *The Waggoner*, written in 1805 and dedicated to Charles Lamb, followed; it does not pretend to greatness and profundity, but it shows as much geniality and gaiety of temper as were possible to Wordsworth, and its vivid topographical associations make it dear to all who cherish memories of the district of the Lakes.

During several years Wordsworth was engaged from time to time on a series of sonnets connected with the course of the river Duddon from its source to the point where it is lost in the sea. The sonnets, with other miscellaneous peoms, were issued in 1820. They are eminent among his writings for grace, for tranquil beauty, and delicate play of fancy. A second sequence of sonnets, those which deal with ecclesiastical history, and especially with the history of the Church of England, are less spontaneous, but they maintain the level of a high table-land, from which occasionally rises an altitude of contemplative passion. The design was formed in the winter of 1820, and the volume, entitled *Ecclesiastical Sketches*, appeared two years later, but additions were made almost to the date when Wordsworth ceased to write. In earlier days his spiritual life had been fed by the influences of nature and by his own exultant feelings. Gradually he came to value aright the power for good of organised institutions, rites, and ceremonies ; he felt himself more than formerly a member of a devout society ; an historical feeling united itself with his private and personal life of the soul. If something was lost there was a compensating gain. Unhappily that strong creative impulse which makes artistic work inevitable was often lacking in the ecclesiastical sonnets ; he sometimes sought for his subjects rather than was sought and compelled by them.

A delightful tour of 1820 to Switzerland and the Italian lakes, in company with his wife, his sister, and some chosen friends, gave its origin to another volume of verse published in 1822—*Memorials of a Tour on the Continent*. The power of Wordsworth's genius had unmistakably begun to ebb ; but sometimes there is strength and often there is beauty in the refluent wave. The illumination of morning and of noon had passed away ; but a clarity remains in the evening sky, and this is sometimes thrilled with some beautiful surprise of radiance. No one who values Wordsworth's work aright can regard with light esteem the best of his later poems ; they give us something which we cannot find elsewhere, and make us feel how beautiful and harmonious even a decline may be. Many of these poems of his elder days were suggested by travel. In 1827 Sir George Beaumont died, and left by his will to Wordsworth an annuity of £100, to be spent on a yearly tour. Belgium, the Rhine, Holland, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, were at various times visited. In 1837 Wordsworth for the first time saw Florence and Rome ; at Rome no object moved him so deeply as a pine-tree, seen against the evening sky, which had been preserved from destruction at Beaumont's entreaty. The traveller was now not far from seventy, and his strength and spirits were not always equal to the excitement of such wanderings. He returned by Venice and Munich, and was glad to rest again in his beloved home at Rydal.

Wordsworth's latest volumes of verse were *Yarrow Revisited and other Poems* (1835), and *Poems, Chiefly of Early and Late Years* (1842), in which the tragedy of *The Borderers* was first printed. His conscientious sense of a craftsman's duty in literature led him to

frequent revision of his work, and on the whole the gains were great. For the stereotyped edition of 1836 the alterations were carried too far, but in 1845 Wordsworth, in those instances where it was desirable, with a few exceptions, reverted to the earlier readings. There can be no question, speaking generally, that the latest text is also the best text. Such work as this was like setting his house in order and devising his gift to the world before the approaching end. And indeed there were sufficient tokens that the end could not be far off. Many who were dear to Wordsworth had passed away or were encompassed with the infirmities of old age. His sister was a confirmed invalid, weakened in intellect. Scott, Coleridge, Lamb, Hogg, Felicia Hemans, Southey, followed each other in quick succession "from sunshine to the sunless land." Friends, indeed, of a younger generation loved and revered Wordsworth, and the honours of old age were his. In 1839 he received, amid enthusiastic plaudits, the honorary D.C.L. of Oxford. Four years later he was appointed Poet Laureate, with a dispensation from the irksome task of official odes, and was granted a Civil List pension of £300 per annum. He had resigned his position as distributor of stamps, and was succeeded in the office by his son William.

The slope towards death would have been gentle but for one great sorrow. Wordsworth's beloved daughter Dora, married in 1841 to Edward Quillinan, a man of culture and literary tastes, died in the summer of 1847. To her father the blow was overwhelming; he submitted with devout resignation, but he could not recover his accustomed cheerfulness. During the remaining years he was silent as a poet, and waited for the end. It came in the spring of 1850. On March 10th of that year he returned from church chilled by the north-east wind; ten days later he was dangerously ill; bronchial and pleuritic inflammation was fully developed. For a month he lingered in view of death. On April 20th Mrs. Wordsworth, announcing to him the verdict of the physicians, said, gently, "William, you are going to Dora." He made no reply, and it was doubted whether he had heard the words. "More than twenty-four hours afterwards one of his nieces came into the room, and was drawing aside the curtain of his chamber, and then, as if awakening from a quiet sleep, he said, 'Is that Dora?'" On the 23rd, exactly as the cuckoo-clock was striking the hour of noon, he calmly breathed his last. His body was laid to rest, near the bodies of his children, in Grasmere churchyard. "He desired," wrote his nephew and biographer, "no splendid tomb in a public mausoleum. He reposes, according to his own wish, beneath the green turf, among the dalesmen of Grasmere, under the sycamores and yews of a country churchyard, by the side of a beautiful stream, amid the mountains which he loved."

In person Wordsworth was tall, and neither massive nor meagre. His features were strongly marked, indicative of a strenuous energy of mind. Hazlitt, describing his appearance in youth, speaks of "a severe, worn presence of thought about his temples, a fire in his

eye (as if he saw more in objects than the outward appearance), . . . cheeks furrowed by strong purpose and feeling." The mouth, says De Quincey, "composed the strongest feature in his face." Constant exposure to the open air hardened the surface of the skin, and "the secret fire of a temperament too fervid" caused him to look older than his years. Of many portraits, that by Haydon, which represents him standing upon Helvellyn, best records the brooding power that sometimes came into his face; the droop of the head, weighed down by imaginative thought and feeling, is true and characteristic. An idealised portrait in words, written by Wordsworth himself, may be found in the first four stanzas of his verses *Written in my Pocket-Copy of Thomson's "Castle of Indolence."* Most of his poetry came into being in the open-air; desk-work or any use of the pen was irksome to him, and often he dictated to his wife or sister as amanuensis. His conversation was earnest and weighty with thought; he could be genial with his friends, but he did not conceal his strength of moral indignation against what seemed to him evil or mean. In his rural neighbours he took a kindly interest, but he did not become an easy companion to them. His self-esteem was high, not the self-esteem of vanity, but that of one who recognises his own greatness as if it were an objective fact, like the greatness of a mountain height; towards all that is above the human soul he looked upward in aspiration and deep humility.

"The essential characteristic of Wordsworth's poetry at its best," I have written elsewhere, "is the essential characteristic of Wordsworth's genius—the organic, vital unity in it of sense and spirit, of thought and feeling, of reason and imagination, of reality and ideality, of calm receptiveness and creative energy, of passion and conscience, of ardour and serenity, of freedom and obedience to law." Powers which commonly war against one another in our nature he reduced or restored to harmony; more truly than any other great poet of the century he may be called a reconciler. He brings to us the gift of peace; but at the heart of this peace are rapture and power.

EDWARD DOWDEN.

PUBLISHERS' NOTE.

THIS edition of Wordsworth's Poetical Works contains every poem published by the author, and the text here followed is that which he finally revised for the last collected edition issued in his lifetime. The author's own arrangement of the poems has been followed throughout save for the transference of the "Additional Poems" which were formerly printed after the Notes, Appendix, and Prefaces, to the concluding pages of the poems.

To these "Additional Poems" have been added the verses which formerly appeared at the end of the long prose "Postscript" of 1835. The famous "Preface" with the "Appendix," "Essay," and "Preface to the edition of 1815" are printed in their entirety, together with a somewhat abbreviated version of the "Notes."

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