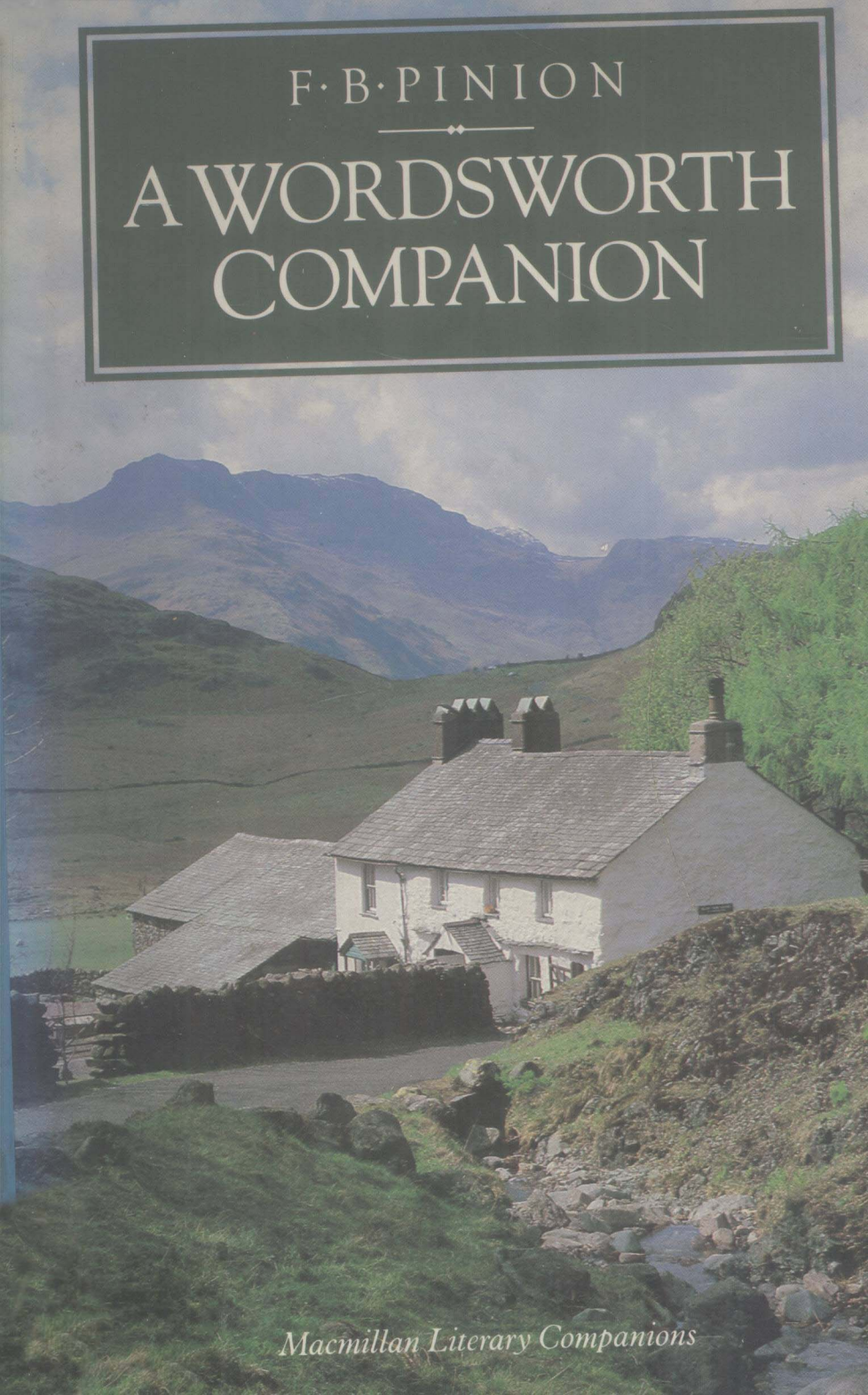
F·B·PINION

# A WORDSWORTH COMPANION



*Macmillan Literary Companions*

# A WORDSWORTH COMPANION

Survey and Assessment

F. B. PINION

MACMILLAN PRESS
LONDON

*First published 1984 by*
THE MACMILLAN PRESS LTD
*London and Basingstoke*
*Companies and representatives*
*throughout the world*

ISBN 0 333 30095 5

*Typeset in Great Britain by*
*Scarborough Typesetting Services*
*and printed in Hong Kong*

# List of Maps and Plates

## MAPS



## PLATES

# Reference Abbreviations

## POEMS

Ex *The Excursion*
Pr *The Prelude* (1850 text)
Pr.05 *The Prelude* (1805 version)

(The following abbreviations are used with *page* references to Oxford University Press editions, the PW notations indicating *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth* in five volumes.)

PR *The Prelude*, 1805 and 1850 texts, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, *second edition*, revised by Helen Darbishire, 1959
PW1 ed. Ernest de Selincourt, 1940
PW2 ed. Ernest de Selincourt, *second edition*, 1952
PW3 ed. Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, 1946
PW4 ed. Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, 1947
PW5 ed. Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, 1949
I.F. Miss Isabella Fenwick's record of observations made late in his life by Wordsworth on many of his poems

## LETTERS

All references are given by dates, e.g. (to take examples before and after 1800) 17.vi.91, 8.iv.08. See Appendix iv.

# Acknowledgments

/ main indebtedness is to the scholarly editions of *The Poetical orks of William Wordsworth* by Ernest de Selincourt and Helen rbishire. I am most grateful to Oxford University Press for nerous permission to quote from passages first published in these itions, as well as from Wordsworth's letters and other prose itings. Cornell University Press has kindly allowed me to present e text of the Cornell Wordsworth at certain points. Archaic pitalization and the most obviously unintentional ortho-aphical errors have been removed from Wordsworth quotations, nich follow as far as is reasonably necessary the most chrono-gically appropriate texts. Where the sense does not depart from at of the 1805 version, the 1850 text of *The Prelude* is given, ice it is the more widely accessible.

The two volumes of Dr Mary Moorman's *William Wordsworth* ve been of inestimable value for a long period, but the latest ition of William and Dorothy's letters has supplied much bio-aphical detail; some derives from Z. S. Fink (ed.), *The Early 'ordsworthian Milieu*, Oxford, 1958, and T. W. Thompson (ed. . Woof), *Wordsworth's Hawkshead*, London and New York, 970.

Illustrations have been included by kind permission of Mrs Mary enderson, née Wordsworth, Rydal Mount (14 left and right, 15 ft and right) and Dr Mary Moorman (13 below). 7 left and right, nd 16 are from the National Portrait Gallery. The origin of 8 bove and 9 below is indicated in their captions. 13 above is from ne second volume of W. Daniell's *A Voyage round Great Britain*, ondon, 1815; 3 above, from J. Robinson, *Guide to the Lakes*, ondon, 1819. 2 below, 3 below, 4 below, 10 below, 12 above and elow are from T. Rose, *Westmorland, Cumberland, Durham, nd Northumberland*, London and Paris, 1832, and 4 above and l above, from J. B. Pyne, *The English Lake District*, Manchester,

1853 (all by courtesy of the Sheffield City Libraries). 5 above and below are from Le Keux, *Memorials of Cambridge*, London, 1842; 8 below right, 9 above left and right, 10 above left and right, from Professor Knight's *Through the Wordsworth Country*, illustrated by Harry Goodwin, London, 1887; 1 above and 11 below, from the Houghton Mifflin *Wordsworth* of 1910 (photographs by Walmsley); 1 below, 2 above, 8 below left, from E. Robertson, *Wordsworthshire*, illustrated by Arthur Tucker, R.B.A., London, 1911; and 6 left and right, from Professor Knight's *Coleridge and Wordsworth in the West Country*, illustrated by E. H. New, London, 1913.

I am especially grateful to Mrs Mary Henderson for her great generosity; Dr Peter Laver, Resident Librarian of the Wordsworth Library, Grasmere, for practical assistance on a number of issues; Dr Terry McCormick of the Grasmere and Wordsworth Museum for advice on illustrations; Dr Carol Landon for an introduction to Windy Brow and information relative to some of Wordsworth's early poems; R. H. Fairclough of Cambridge University Library, particularly for calling attention to Jefferys' 1770 map of Westmorland; E. R. Wilkinson, local historian of the County Library, Carlisle, for unstinted research and help at all times, especially with Whitehaven illustrations; Mary Wedd for allowing me the privilege of reading her illustrated thesis on the topography of Wordsworth's poetry; John Atherton for organizing memorable visits to the Hall and Hall Farm, Coleorton; John Pentney for topographical research above Alfoxden; and Charles Pettit for advice on Racedown and Alfoxden illustrations.

My obligations to the Inter-Library Loan service, and to photographic departments, in the University of Sheffield have been continual. Much is due to the ready co-operation of Miss Julia Tame and Mrs Ann Marangos on behalf of Macmillan. Above all, I am grateful to my wife for her unfailing interest and the many benefits which have resulted from her critical reading of the text at successive stages in its preparation.

# Contents

Part IV: Supplementary

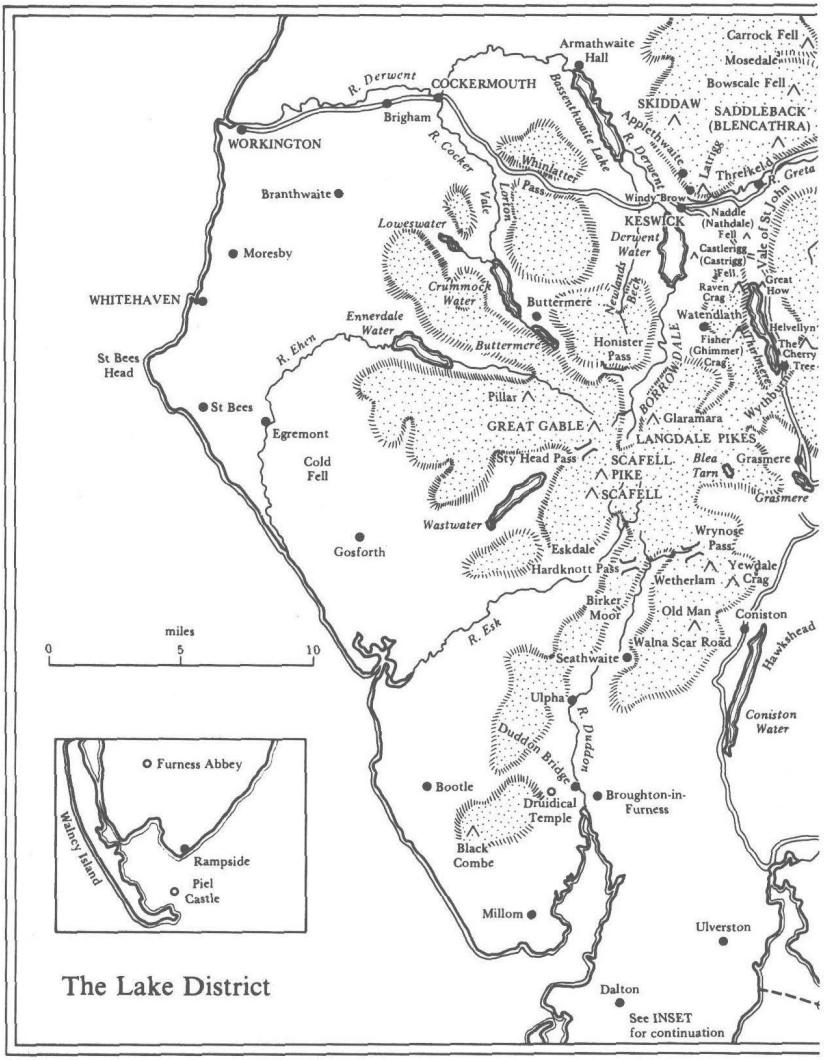
# Part I: 1770–98

# Early Years and Adolescent Poetry (1770–87)

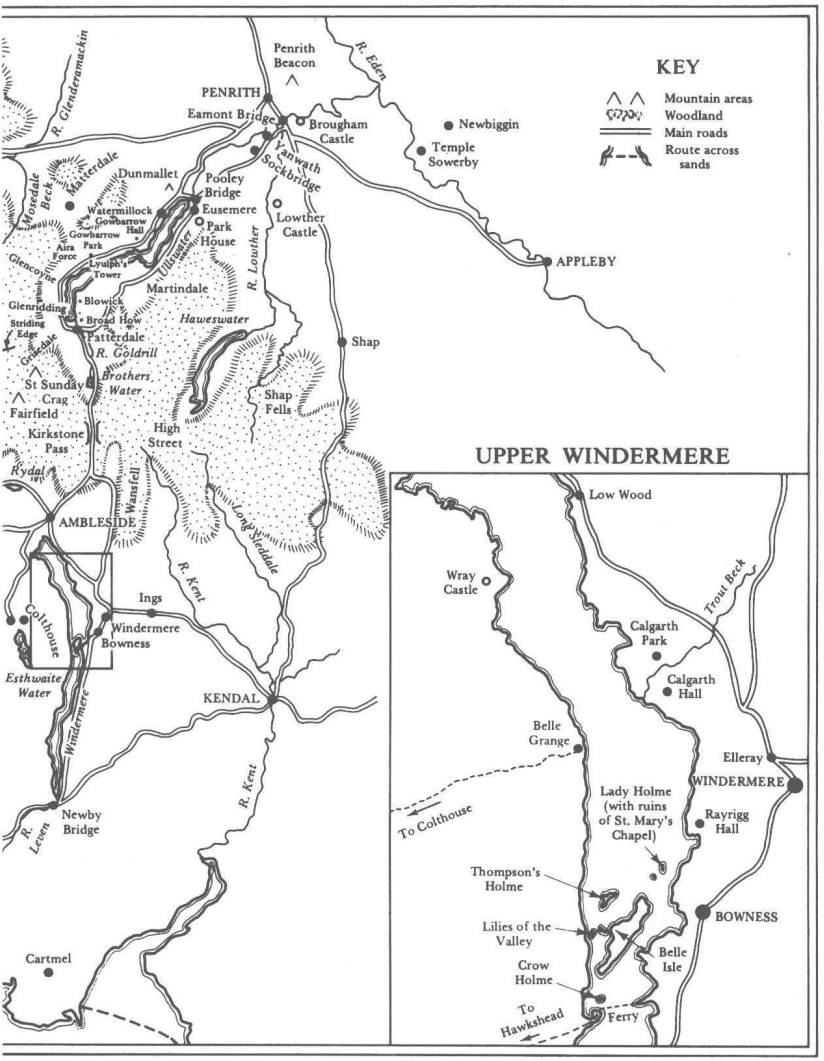
One summer, on his way home from school at Hawkshead, William Wordsworth stayed the night at Patterdale, near the head of Ullswater.[1] In the evening, eager for adventure, he set out alone. Catching sight of a boat within a rocky recess, he could not resist the temptation to row out into the lake. Suddenly he noticed a cliff-like peak rise above the craggy steep near the shore; the further he rowed the higher it towered between him and the stars, until it seemed to be striding after him. Such was the joint effect of guilt and loneliness. 'With trembling oars' he turned, and made his way back 'in grave and serious mood'. If he had heard of his grandfather's flight to Patterdale, he was too preoccupied to think of him.

Richard Wordsworth had been Receiver-General for Cumberland, and his aim in 1745, when the beacon above Penrith flared for the last time, announcing the approach of the Young Pretender and his Scottish supporters, was to secure the county moneys and documents in his charge. While he was at Patterdale, his wife kept watch over home and possessions at Sockbridge (between Penrith and the foot of Ullswater), which he had bought after a period as attorney in London. Owing to unfortunate mining speculations his father had been compelled to sell the family property in West Yorkshire, where his ancestors had lived for centuries.

Years later the Receiver-General was probably offended by his elder son Richard, who became Collector of Customs at Whitehaven, for the Sockbridge estate passed to the younger son John, who had served his legal apprenticeship at Penrith. There he fell in love with Ann Cookson, daughter of a linen-draper whose wife Dorothy belonged to the more distinguished Crackanthorpe


Armathwaite Hall
Carrock Fell
Mosedale
Bowscale Fell
R. Derwent
COCKERMOUTH
Bassenthwaite Lake
SKIDDAW
SADDLEBACK (BLENCATHRA)
Brigham
WORKINGTON
R. Cocker
Whinlatter Pass
Applethwaite
R. Derwent
Latrigg
Threlkeld
R. Greta
Branthwaite
Windy Brow
KESWICK
Naddle (Nathdale) Fell
Vale of St John
Loweswater
Lorton Vale
Derwent Water
Castlerigg (Castrigg) Fell
Moresby
Newlands Beck
Great How
WHITEHAVEN
Crummock Water
Buttermere
Raven Crag
Watendlath
Ennerdale Water
Honister Pass
Fisher (Shimmer) Crag
Helvellyn
The Cherry Tree
R. Ehen
Buttermere
BORROWDALE
Pillar
Glaramara
Wythburn
St Bees Head
St Bees
Egremont
GREAT GABLE
LANGDALE PIKES
Sty Head Pass
SCAFELL PIKE
Blea Tarn
Grasmere
Cold Fell
SCAFELL
Grasmere
Wastwater
Wrynose Pass
Gosforth
Eskdale
Hardknott Pass
Yewdale Crag
Wetherlam
Birker Moor
Old Man
Coniston
R. Esk
Walna Scar Road
Hawkshead
Seathwaite
Ulpha
R. Duddon
Coniston Water
Duddon Bridge
Furness Abbey
Bootle
Broughton-in-Furness
Druidical Temple
Walney Island
Rampside
Piel Castle
Black Combe
Millom
Ulverston
Dalton
See INSET for continuation
miles
0
5
10
The Lake District

**Map 1**


KEY
Mountain areas
Woodland
Main roads
Route across sands
Penrith Beacon
PENRITH
Eamont Bridge
Brougham Castle
Newbiggin
Temple Sowerby
Lanwath
Sockbridge
Lowther Castle
APPLEBY
R. Eden
R. Glenderamackin
Matterdale
Dunmallet
Pooley Bridge
Watermillock
Gowbarrow Hall
Gowbarrow Park
Aira Force
Lyulph's Tower
Ullswater
Eusemere
Park House
R. Lowther
Martindale
Glencoyne
Glenridding
Striding Edge
Blowick
Broad How
Patterdale
R. Goldrill
Haweswater
Shap
Shap Fells
St Sunday Crag
Fairfield
Kirkstone Pass
Brothers Water
High Street
Rydal
Wansfell
AMBLESIDE
Long Sleddale
R. Kent
Ings
Windermere Bowness
Colthouse
Esthwaite Water
Windermere
KENDAL
R. Kent
R. Leven
Newby Bridge
Cartmel
UPPER WINDERMERE
Low Wood
Wray Castle
Trout Beck
Calgarth Park
Calgarth Hall
Belle Grange
Elleray
WINDERMERE
Lady Holme (with ruins of St. Mary's Chapel)
Rayrigg Hall
To Colthouse
Thompson's Holme
Lilies of the Valley
BOWNESS
Belle Isle
Crow Holme
To Hawkshead
Ferry

family of Newbiggin Hall. John became law agent to Sir James Lowther, a wealthy proprietor who had inherited extensive estates near Penrith, the new town and harbour of Whitehaven, and the coalfields in its vicinity. His numerous other possessions included a large handsome house in Cockermouth, the tenancy of which John secured not many months before he married Ann in February 1766. Both at Cockermouth, where he became bailiff and recorder, and further south at Millom, where he was made coroner, he helped to ensure that freeholders supported his master's cause at elections. Lowther exercised great political power through his 'ninepins', the parliamentary representatives he controlled in nine constituencies. So mean was he that, as far as is known, John Wordsworth received no payment for his Lowther loyalties, and had to continue in private practice as an attorney. His natural reserve, the position of trust he occupied as agent of a man hated by many, his frequent travel, and his private business, all conspired to make him few firm friends. When he married Ann Cookson, he was twenty-four, and she, eighteen. From 1768 to 1774 five children were born to them: Richard, William (on 7 April 1770), Dorothy, John, and Christopher.

Below the terrace at the end of the garden behind the house they occupied runs the Derwent. A field on the other side belonged to John Wordsworth, and it is characteristic of William's poetic spirit that, becoming familiar with the sight of a road which ascended through it, to reach the sky on the crest of a 'bare steep', he imagined it 'a guide into eternity'. The sound of the river delighted him, and day and night its 'ceaseless music' composed his thoughts, as nature continued to do during most of his life. His young mother was not over-anxious about her children; she wanted them to be happy, and Wordsworth remembered alternately bathing in a small mill-race, and basking naked in the sunshine, at the age of five, until the western slopes of distant Skiddaw were 'bronzed with deepest radiance'.

Sometimes the children were taken to stay with their grandparents at Penrith. One of the early experiences Wordsworth remembered somewhat confusedly was an outing on horseback with the servant 'honest James'; their course lay in the direction of Penrith Beacon. Suddenly young William found he was alone; afraid to ride down a rough stony slope, he dismounted and led his horse until he came to the remains of a gibbet on which a murderer had been hanged in 1767, not far from the scene of his crime. Whether

he saw the letters in the turf commemorating this site, and imagined them near the gibbet, must remain conjectural. Not daring to linger, he reascended the bare common until he caught sight of a naked pool and, higher up, below the beacon tower at the top, a girl making her way with difficulty against the wind, as she carried a pitcher on her head. The sight was ordinary, but so perturbed was the boy by what he had seen in his loneliness that all the visual features of the ascent, and of the surrounding moorland, assumed a haunting 'visionary dreariness'.

Excursions to uncle Richard and his family had happier associations. It was on the road near Moresby that Wordsworth was first struck by the view of Whitehaven and its busy port, 'the white waves breaking against its quays and piers'; here too that Dorothy, when she first heard the sound of the sea 'and beheld the scene spread before her, burst into tears', a circumstance 'often mentioned among us', the poet noted late in life, 'as indicating the sensibility for which she was so remarkable'. He remembered it when they were living at Grasmere before his marriage: bright blue eggs in a sparrow's nest recalled her nervous approach for such a sight in the hedge of privet and roses which overtopped the wall of the garden terrace, their favourite playground, above the river at Cockermouth. A butterfly revived memories of the same period: in pursuit of one, he would rush like a hunter, but 'she, God love her! feared to brush The dust from off its wings'. The same kind of chase in conjunction with bolder feats was recalled by the sight of Cockermouth Castle in 1833; Wordsworth imagines the spirit of the place addressing him:

> Erewhile a sterner link
> United us; when thou, in boyish play,
> Entering my dungeon, didst become a prey
> To soul-appalling darkness. Not a blink
> Of light was there; – and thus did I, thy tutor,
> Make thy young thoughts acquainted with the grave;
> While thou wert chasing the wing'd butterfly
> Through my green courts; or climbing, a bold suitor,
> Up to the flowers whose golden progeny
> Still round my shattered brow in beauty wave.

Thoughts in the darkness of this dungeon initiated the taste for

Gothic horror which William exercised in some of his early poems and *The Borderers*.

In 1776 he began to attend the small grammar school which stood in Cockermouth churchyard. (In later years he probably remembered Fletcher Christian, a senior pupil who was destined to make his name as a leading mutineer on *The Bounty*.) One day, after being dared to enter the church, where a woman in a white sheet was doing penance, he was disappointed not to receive the penny he had been led to expect. Hearing this, his mother expressed the hope that he would remember the scene for life. Only he of her children gave her cause for worry, and she felt that he had capacities for good or for ill. She died in March 1778, probably from pneumonia, after a visit to a friend in London, where she slept in a cold, damp room. Wordsworth remembered how, after her death, his father never recovered his habitual cheerfulness; he recognised too how much time he and his sister and brothers had spent with her, and how much their affection and education had depended on her care. In one of his *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* he recalls a group of youngsters who stood nervously round the pastor at their catechizing, himself among them, each in new clothes and wearing a vernal posy, his mother anxiously watching; and how her 'happy hand' had bound 'with faithful tie' the flowers he wore:

> Sweet flowers! at whose inaudible command
> Her countenance, phantom-like, doth reappear:
> O lost too early for the frequent tear,
> And ill requited by this heartfelt sigh!

How long Wordsworth remained at Cockermouth Grammar School is uncertain, but his statement that he learned less Latin there in two years than in two weeks at Hawkshead suggests that he, Richard, and Dorothy were not transferred until after their mother's death to the dame school they attended at Penrith. Among the new friends they made there was Mary Hutchinson, whom Wordsworth married in 1802. They lived with their maternal grandparents, and William proved fractious. Discipline made him sullen or angry. Once, when he had retired to the attics in dudgeon, the sight of some foils made him think of suicide; another time, after daring Richard to do it, he slashed one of the family portraits. Undoubtedly he was thinking of this period and