

His Poetry from 1799 - 1808 : Common People.

Hazlitt once said that Wordsworth wrote poetry to use it as a means of delivering household truth. This truth Wordsworth found in the countrymen among whom he lived. He was interested in them, observed them and wrote about them as no other poets could. It is true that his intimate friends were not countrymen, or even common people. Sir George Beaumont, Coleridge, and Raisley Calvert belonged to the classes far above the people whom most of Wordsworth's poems concern. It is also true that Wordsworth had never been mixed up with the villagers and never related to us his close contact with his farmer neighbours. But his descriptions of them are more realistic than any other poets', or even the farmers' of themselves. Though he observed them from a distance, he did so with keen eyes. He understood them and described them with extreme accuracy. Dorothy's journals reveal that from time to time she and Wordsworth gave food and shelter to beggars and vagrants. These people enabled him to see closely into their lives. Wordsworth paid much attention to the condition of their living, sympathized with their thought and their feeling. He studied their joy, their pain and their way of living thoroughly. He considered them with respect and reverence. He gave equal importance to poor children, old beggars and unfortunate people. "The Reverie of Poor Susan" written in 1797 shows that a beautiful poem can be about a mere village girl and her feeling and imagination. Susan heard a thrush singing when she was walking in a London Street. It reminded her of her country home and made her see the beautiful scenery there through imagination. She was glad but when the vision faded she was sad. The lines run beautifully as follows :

At the corner of Wood Street, when daylight appears,
Hangs a Thrush that sings loud, it has sung for three years:
Poor Susan has passed by the spot, and has heard
In the silence of morning the song of the Bird.

'Tis a note of enchantment; what ails her? She sees
A mountain ascending, a vision of trees;

Bright volumes of vapour through Lothbury glide,
And a river flows on through the vale of Cheapside.

Green pastures she views in the midst of the dale,
Down which she so often has tripped with her pail;
And a single small cottage, a nest like a dove's,
The one only dwelling on earth that she loves.

She looks, and her heart is in heaven: but they fade,
The mist and the river, the hill and the shade:
The stream will not flow, and the hill will not rise,
And the colours have all passed away from her eyes!

Poor old men draw Wordsworth's attention. In "The Old Cumberland Beggar" he watched how the beggar sat and ate his poor meal alone. The beggar was extremely old. Every one pitied him. For him :

The sauntering Horseman throws not with a slack
And careless hand his alms upon the ground,
But stops - that he may safely lodge the coin
Within the old Man's hat; nor quits him so,
But still, when he has given his horse the rein,
Watches the aged Beggar with a look
Sidelong and half ~~re~~ reverted.

The old man went begging around the village. No one paid attention to him. But Wordsworth did not think that the man was useless. He thought that there was some good in the beggar. The beggar, like all beings, had life and a soul.

'Tis Nature's law
That none, the meanest of created things,
Or forms created the most vile and brute,
The dullest or most noxious, should exist
Divorced from good - a spirit and pulse of good.
A life and soul, to every mode of being
Inseparably linked.

No human being was "so low as to be scorned without sin". Moreover, the beggar had some good influence on the villagers. They saw him, they pitied him and gave him food or money. He reminded them of generosity in the past. By giving alms, they kept kindness growing in their hearts.

While from door to door,

This old Man creeps, the villagers in him
Behold a record which together binds
Past deeds and offices of charity,
Else unremembered, and so keeps alive
The kindly mood in hearts which lapse of years,
And that half-wisdom half-experience gives
Make slow to feel, and by sure step resign
To selfishness and cold oblivious cares.

Even from this old Cumberland beggar, Wordsworth learned one of the human virtues.

Wordsworth admired common men who learned from the things that surrounded them. In "A Poet's Epitaph" (1799), he preferred humble rustic man to all ^{other} kinds of people because the countryman lived modestly, enjoyed himself in nature and learned from nature.

In common things that round us lie
Some random truths he can impart, —
The harvest of a quiet eye
That broods and sleeps on his own heart.



"Address to the Scholars of the Village School of —" (1799), was written in sympathy with the village school boys' sorrow over the death of their teacher. Wordsworth praised the dead man. He invited every one to mourn for the man who had "sanctified" the boys' childhood with "heavenly truth". He said the boys should change their sorrow into thankfulness for having had him and praise his deeds. He wished that the memory of the teacher would comfort them when they had pain.

"Matthew", "The Two April Mornings" and "The Fountain" were written in 1799 in memory of another schoolteacher. Wordsworth said Matthew deserved more than "common sympathy". He sympathized with Matthew when Matthew felt sad over his dead daughter in "The Two April Mornings". In "The Fountain", he described Matthew's thought and enjoyment. Matthew sang a pleasant song to the sound of the water. Matthew knew the eternal quality of nature. He said the stream that flowed merrily would flow on forever. Matthew was so happy to hear what he used to hear that tears came to his eyes. Matthew understood the story of human decay. He knew that every one must grow old and die. He understood the eternal quality of nature as opposed

to the mortality of man. Therefore he, unlike other people, mourned less for what age took away from him than for what it left to him. He said that the birds were always happy because :

With Nature never do they wage
A foolish strife; they see
A happy youth, and their old age
Is beautiful and free :

but men were depressed by everyday life and were not happy. Even so,

We wear a face of joy, because
We have been glad of yore.

Wordsworth admired Matthew's courage. The village schoolteacher knew that death was approaching but he was still cheerful. He was able still to sing happy songs and did not want anybody to be his son since his beloved children were dead.

A lot of Wordsworth's poems were written about uninteresting people. "To a Sexton" (1799), was about a man who worked in a church. Wordsworth said that the churchyard full of graves was to the sexton like a garden full of beautiful flowers. In the churchyard, dead people lay together as "neighbours in mortality". "Andrew Jones" is about a man, cruel and hard-hearted enough to take away half-a-crown from a crippled beggar. "The Two Thieves" is the story about two thieves who went stealing things together, one was about three years old and the other almost ninety. Nobody paid attention to them. When they stole anything, the owner asked the old man's daughter to pay for it. Wordsworth loved the two thieves. He observed them and saw that :

They hunt through the streets with deliberate tread,
And each, in his turn, becomes leader or led;
And, wherever they carry their plots and their wiles,
Every face in the village is dimpled with smiles.

Wandering outcasts also appealed to Wordsworth. He thought that they are not less important than other human beings. They were not different from others. In "Gipsies" (1807), the wandering people are like others,

Only their fire seems bolder, yielding light,
Now deep and red, the colouring of night;

That on their Gipsy-- faces falls,
Their bed of straw and blanket-walls.

He said :

In scorn I speak not; — they were what their birth
And breeding suffer them to be;
Wild outcasts of society !

Poor farmers won much of Wordsworth sympathy. In "The Farmer of Tilsbury Vale" (1803), he studied the farmer's life story carefully. This farmer lived in the center of London. He was old but still had bright eyes and red cheeks. Formerly he had lived in the country. The strength that showed in his face was derived from his happy boyhood in the field. Though he had had unhappy experiences, the strength remained. In Tilsbury Vale, he was known as successful farmer. He was very generous and the poor could come and stay at his house. But misfortune came, his farm failed and the farmer had to beg for his living. People gave him money because they remembered his generosity. Later, he left the valley and went to London. He did every kind of work to earn his living. However, he was happy and became stronger. The source of his strength by which he could endure hardship was the recollection of nature in his village home :

And Nature, while through the great city he hies,
Full ten times a day takes his heart by surprise.

This gives him the fancy of one that is young,
More of soul in his face than of words on his tongue;
Like a maiden of twenty he trembles and sighs,
And tears of fifteen will come into his eyes.

He watched the clouds and felt as if he were watching reapers at work,
and :

With a thousand soft pictures his memory will teem,
And his hearing is touched with the sounds of a dream.

He loved the smell of grass and cows because it made him feel as if he were back on his farm again.

Up the Haymarket hill he oft whistles his way,
Thrusts his hands in a waggon, and smells at the hay;

He thinks of the fields he so often hath mown,
And is happy as if the rich freight were his own.

But chiefly to Smithfield he loves to repair, —
If you pass by at morning, you'll meet with him there.
The breath of the cows you may see him inhale,
And his heart all the while is in Tilsbury Vale.

Wordsworth pitied him for his love of nature and wished that when he died, he would be buried among the trees.

"Repentance" (1804), shows Wordsworth's interest in the fate of poor farmers and their love of their land. They said :

— we'll die

Before he (the buyer) shall go with an inch of the land!
They used to live happily and freely on their land. They had to sell their land. They often went to look sadly at the land which was theirs no more. They felt that the tree said to them :

What ails you, that you must come creeping to me ?

Wordsworth understood the farmers' feeling toward their farm. They said :

With our pastures about us, we could not be sad;
Our comfort was near if we ever were crost;
But the comfort, the blessings, and wealth that we had,
We slighted them all, - and our birth right was lost.

Now that they had sold their land, they repented. When they heard the church bell, they were sad and thought that they had no land except the small plot where they would be buried when they died.

Wordsworth also observed the countrymen's pet animals.

"Fidelity" (1805), is the story of a faithful dog which stayed three months with its master's dead body. The man fell from the steep cliff and was killed. The dog did not leave him. It stayed near him and made a sad cry until a shepherd came and found ^{the} master's skeleton.

"Incident" (1805), was about a dog which tried to help its friend which fell into the water when the ice broke. "Tribute to the Memory of the Same Dog" was also written in 1805. Wordsworth described his and the master's sorrow over its death.

Children contributed quite a big part to Wordsworth's poetry.

While he was interested in country people, he was interested both in the grown-ups and the young. The children's enjoyment, their love and their pain were subjects of his observation. The "Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early childhood" can explain the reason why he paid so much attention to children. He said they were closer to immortality than grown-ups were. They were able to understand truth better because the trouble of everyday life had not corrupted them. Moreover, he said, "The Child is father of the Man". If he was interested in country people, he was equally interested in their children.

"The Danish Boy" (1799), is about a boy's enjoyment of nature. The boy had a lovely dell of his own. He played his harp and sang alone. The flocks on the hills loved him. The mountain - ponies pricked up their ears to hear his song. The boy was happy in his beautiful dwelling place covered with flowers. His thoughts were innocent. As he was fond of the supernatural atmosphere of the ballads, Wordsworth often added it to his simple poems about children. In this poem, the Danish boy had a mysterious existence. He was a shadow that no storm could destroy. The boy walked alone in the dell :

In clouds above, the lark is heard,
But drops not here to earth for rest;
Within this lonesome nook the bird
Did never build her nest.
No beast, no bird hath here his home;
Bees, wafted on the breezy air,
Pass high above those fragrant bells
To other flowers :

The boy's beautiful clothes, his words of a forgotten tongue, and the warlike tune of his songs that were like songs of love added to the mystery of the boy. But the main idea of the poem is the boy's enjoyment of nature.

"Rural Architecture" (1800), was about the light-hearted school boy's fun building up a man's figure with stone on a mountain crag. Wordsworth understood them and would like to go to help them build a giant on the mountain.

"The Pet Lamb" (1800), was about a very beautiful little girl and her love of her pet animal. The lamb was also beautiful, as white

as snow. In a sweet voice, the girl invited the lamb to eat its meal. Wordsworth looked at the beautiful pair with delight. The pet - lamb pulled the cord and the girl looked at it with surprise. The girl's and the lamb's beauty, her sweet voice and her affection for the lamb enabled Wordsworth to imagine the song that she might have sung to the lamb if she could have :

What ails thee, young One ? what ? Why pull so at thy cord?
Is it not well with thee ? well both for bed and board ?
Thy plot of grass is soft, and green as grass can be;

What is it thou wouldst seek ? What is wanting to thy heart?
Thy limbs are they not strong ? and beautiful thou art :
This grass is tender grass; these flowers they have no peers;
And that green corn all day is rustling in thy ears !

He imagined that she might have told it of when her father fetched it from the mountain. She would have told it what good food she fed it with, what dangers were in the mountains, how she would yoke it to the plough and play with it and keep it warm in winter. He said that the beautiful song belonged more to her than to him,

For she looked with such a look and she spake with such a tone
That I almost received her heart into my own.

" Louisa " (1805), is also about a girl's pleasure in nature. Louisa was like a nymph. She was strong and liked to run quickly, among the rocks. She liked to walk along the moorland in rough weather and in the the rain. The poet was happy to be near her. He said

Take all that's mine "beneath the moon",
If I with her but half a noon
May sit beneath the walls
Of some old cave, or mossy nook,
When up she winds along the brook
To hunt the waterfalls.

Unfortunate children like young beggars, solitary girls and destitute orphans are Wordsworth's favorites. He enjoyed observing little beggars telling lies, sympathized with the girl who had no friends and helped a poor orphan to feel happy. "Beggars" (1802), was about two poor little boys who enjoyed themselves chasing a butterfly

while their mother went begging. The boys lied to him, saying that their mother was dead. He looked at them reproachfully but they were not aware of their mischief. They went back to their joyful play :

"Come ! Come !" cried one, and without more ado,
Off to some other play the joyous Vagrants flew!

" Alice Fell " was about a less happy girl. The poet was travelling in a coach when he heard a girl crying sorrowfully. He asked the driver to stop and see what the matter was. It was a little girl, crying hard because her cloak was caught in the wheel. The cloak was as worn as a rag but the girl cried as if she had lost something precious. He tried to console her but,

Insensible to all relief
Sat the poor girl, and forth did send
Sob after sob, as if her grief
Could never, never have an end.

She may seem to be a sentimental little girl. But when we know that her parents were dead and she lived in poverty, we sympathize with her. She cried so much for her ragged cloak because it was her only property. When the poet bought a warm cloak for her,

Proud creature was she the next day,
The little orphan, Alice Fell !

This poem is not a real ballad in theme and is not so tragic as "Lucy Gray" but it shows Wordsworth's sympathy with the poor orphan.

"Lucy Gray" or "Solitude" is a real tragedy and has the supernatural element often found in popular ballads. The poem shows the importance Wordsworth gave to a person of small value. He had heard of and seen Lucy.

No mate, no comrade Lucy knew;
She dwelt on a wide moor,
— The sweetest thing that ever grew
Beside a human door !

In the next stanza, the poet introduced the tragic event :

You yet may spy the fawn at play,
The hare upon the green;
But the sweet face of Lucy Gray

Will never more be seen.

One winter night, her father told her to take a lantern to light the way back from town for her mother. She gladly did as her father told her. While she was climbing the hill, a storm came up suddenly and Lucy lost her way. Her parents searched for her all night. In the morning they found only her footprints leading to a broken bridge over a stream. They knew that she was drowned but they did not find her body. They were sad and hoped to find her again when they died.

People said that Lucy still lived. She wandered along in the wood and mingled her song with the wind. The idea of a ghost made the poem a true ballad :

— Yet some maintain that to this day
She is a living child;
That you may see sweet Lucy Gray
Upon the lonesome wild.

O'er rough and smooth she trips along,
And never looks behind;
And sings a solitary song
That whistles in the wind.

" Lucy Gray " is Wordsworth's masterpiece in the ballad category. He was attracted by ballad form and theme and from time to time practised them. The story of "Ellen Irwin" (1800), was taken from an old Scottish ballad. Bruce and Gordon loved Ellen but she returned only Bruce's love. Gordon was jealous when he saw them making love. He launched his spear to kill Bruce. Ellen protected her lover with her body and was pierced to death. Bruce killed Gordon but his sorrow did not decrease. He went places to forget it but at last came to die on Ellen's grave, broken-hearted. The tragic love story is typical of ballads.

" Repentance ", the story of sad farmers who sold their farm has the name "A Pastoral Ballad" as its subtitle. "The Seven Sisters" is the story of a knight who left his daughters in solitude. They were frightened by a horseman, fled, jumped into a lake and drowned. The story of "The Horn of Egremont Castle" has real ballad elements. The

horn was a magic horn. It made a sound only when blown by the rightful heir of the castle. Sir Hubert's treachery to his elder brother contributed to another ballad element. The brothers went to the crusades and fought against the Moors together. The younger wanted to inherit their father's land and castle. He hired ruffians to murder his brother. They told him that they had done their work. Sir Hubert paid them and went back to claim the castle. He did not blow the horn. He led a happy life, had a beautiful wife and children. One day he and other people heard the horn. He knew that his brother was not dead and had come to claim his right. Hubert repented. He asked for forgiveness and went to live in melancholy in a monastery where he died. Sir Eustace regained his property and lived happily. From then on, his son and grandson blew the magic horn. All these stories show that Wordsworth retained his interest in the ballad and ballad themes.

Peter Bell

" Peter Bell " was written in 1798 and was first published a year later. Peter Bell, though a composite character, is very realistic. In the note to the poem, Wordsworth wrote, "The countenance, gait and figure of Peter, were taken from a wild rover with whom I walked from Builth, on the river Whye, downwards nearly as far as the town of Hay." This shows how minutely Wordsworth observed the kind of person he was interested in. The other characteristics of Peter were taken from real people also closely observed.

To add charm to the story of the unimportant rover, Wordsworth put in the poem supernatural events. Except for the supernatural, the poem is a complete study of the rogue's wicked conduct and thought and his repentance.

The supernatural atmosphere was introduced in the prologue. The story-teller promised little Bess a tale. Before telling the story, he went up in the sky in his little boat. The boat was bright and had the shape of the crescent moon. It could sail all over the world, over the Pacific Ocean, Siberia and Africa. It could sail to fairyland and among the constellations like the Crab, the Scorpion and the Bull, leaving ten thousand stars beneath it. Then he came down to

tell the story,

It was the story of Peter Bell, the potter. He was a real rover and had been everywhere,

But not the value of a hair
Was heart and head the better.

He was a wicked man. Travelling did not do him any good. He was so hard-hearted that he was insensible to the beauty of nature (which seemed to be a grave sin among Wordsworth's country people). Moreover,

"Of all that lead a lawless life,
Of all that love their lawless lives,
In city or in village small,
He was the wildest far of all:-
He had a dozen wedded wives.

His savage appearance suggested that he had lived in wild nature. His vice, his cunning, his cowardice and wicked thoughts showed in his face. One night Peter was travelling alone, paying no attention to the shining moon and the murmuring river. At one spot, he took the path which seemed to be a short cut. When he was thinking that he had lost his way, he came to a beautiful field. There an ass was standing, hanging its head over the river. Peter was glad to have the ass to continue his journey. He jumped on its back and urged it to move, but the ass stayed still. Peter was angry and his usual evil mind suggested "There is some plot against me laid," and he looked around him carefully but saw nobody. He thought there was some witchcraft done to him. When the ass moved its ear, his suspicion became fear and he gave the ass a hard blow. The ass fell on the ground. It looked like one that mourned and turned its eyes on Peter reproachfully. Then it looked at the river again and groaned three times. Though his heart was full of hatred, Peter noticed that the animal was very lean. Out of anger and fear, Peter beat the animal once more and the animal gave another groan. Peter was all confused. He let his stick drop, then intended to break the ass' neck. He looked around, saw that everything was distorted and fell into a swoon.

When he recovered, Peter turned to the stream and put his stick down to sound its depth. The ass rose up suddenly and licked Peter's hand fondly. From the river, Peter dragged a dead body to the

bank. He understood that the man was the ass' master, drowned some days before. The ass knelt sadly by the body as if it was mourning for the dead man. Peter mounted the ass and this time it yielded faithfully. Peter had gone a short distance when he heard a doleful cry, the saddest that he had ever heard in his life. The ass, startled at the cry, stayed silent and turned to follow the cry. Peter was annoyed by the animal's manner. He thought of his wicked deeds and thought that vengeance would be wreaked upon him. He felt sorry to see the blood run from the wound in the ass' head. Peter was perplexed. He saw a vision, he saw the ass grin and he thought of his wicked past and the women he had wronged. He repented and cried and felt that he was innocent.

The ass took Peter to its master's cottage. The wife and the child, whose cry the ass had followed, lamented the man's death. The sight affected Peter's mind :

Beside the woman Peter stands;
His heart is opening more and more;
A holy sense pervades his mind;
He feels what he for human kind
Had never felt before.

And now is Peter taught to feel
That man's heart is a holy thing;
And Nature, through a world of death,
Breathes into him a second breath,
More searching than the breath of spring.

He pitied the widow and her seven fatherless children. He realized that he had been worse than the ass. When he saw the orphan kiss the ass, Peter burst into tears.

All these happenings changed Peter Bell into another man.

He

Forsook his crimes, renounced his folly,
And, after ten months' melancholy,
Became a good and honest man.

The Waggoner

" The Waggoner " was written in 1805. In this poem, Wordsworth was not interested only in the country people's life but also

in their problems. He studied both the rich and the poor and his sympathy was with the poor. He knew the poor, their virtues and their defects and he understood them. His tendency to support the poor and his sympathy for them hints that he might have become a fervent social reformer.

Benjamin was a capable man and knew his job about the waggon very well. He was kind to the horses and the dog and they trusted and loved him. Benjamin had one defect : he drank. This was quite human.

One night when he was driving up a mountain, a storm broke out. It was dark, the rain flooded the ground but Benjamin, knowing the route very well and being skillful, managed to go on. He heard a voice asking for help. Out of kindness he stopped and rescued a woman and her sailor husband. He brought them and the waggon safely to a village.

The people were having a feast. Benjamin joined them, drank and danced with them. After ^{two hours} Benjamin drove the waggon to his destination. He began to feel sorry for having wasted the time. The ass seemed to understand his thought, they sped on to make up the lost time. But Benjamin's employer was waiting, very angry at the delay. He put all the blame on Benjamin, did not forgive him and dismissed him. He was not human enough to understand that the delay was partly due to the storm. He did not appreciate Benjamin's good qualities. He thought only of profits. This made him lose the best driver of the village. He could not find anyone so skillful to replace Benjamin and as a result, lost his whole route. Benjamin was sad to part from his team, the waggon the good ass and the mastiff. He gave up work and consequently the village lost a good waggoner.

Benjamin the good,
The patient, and the tender ~~X~~ hearted,
Was from his team and waggon parted;
When duty of that day was o'er,
Laid down his whip - and served
Nor could the waggon long survive,
Which Benjamin had ceased to drive:
It lingered on; - guide after guide
Ambitiously the office tried;
But each unmanageable hill
Called for his patience and his skill;

And sure it is, that through this night,
 And what the morning brought to light,
 Two losses had we to sustain,
 We lost both Waggoner and Wain!

Wordsworth is a poet of joy and delight when he writes about nature. Nature has power to delight, to comfort and to heal. But when he writes about people, he is preoccupied with the sadder side. He sympathizes more with the unfortunate than the happy. He is interested in their feelings and understands their love but writes mostly about their unhappy love. Quite often, in poems that could be called love poems, he gives more importance to nature and love becomes secondary.

The love that is prominent in Wordsworth is the love of parents for their children. He is impressed by the farmers' love for their children and by unfortunate women and their beloved sons.

✓ "Michael" was written in 1800. Its theme is paternal love. Michael was a skillful shepherd. He was a man of nature, gaining knowledge, strength and pleasure from nature. His wife was a hard-working old woman. She helped him in his hard work. In Michael's old age, a son was born to him. The child was precious to his parents. He became part of their life and shared everything with them. Michael brought his son up in a natural way and acquainted the boy with the work he himself was accustomed to. The three people lived closely together. There was no doubt that the shepherd loved his wife,

but to Michael's heart
 This son of his old age was yet more dear —
 Less from instinctive tenderness the same
 Fond spirit that blindly works in the blood of all —
 Than earth can offer to declining man,
 Brings hopes with it, and forward-looking thoughts,

The boy grew up and Michael was happy to have him work by his side :

Old Michael, while he was a babe in arms,
 Head done him female service, not alone
 For pastime and delight, as is the use
 Of fathers, but with patient mind enforced
 To acts of tenderness; and he had rocked

His cradle, as with a woman's gentle hand.
 And, in a later time, ere yet the Boy
 Had put on boy's attire, did Michael love,
 Albeit of a stern unbending mind,
 To have the Young-one in his sight.

The boy grew to be good and diligent. Nature had a good effect on him as she had had on his father. Soon misfortune came. Michael's relative ruined himself and Michael had to help him. A big sum of money was needed. Michael at first thought of selling his land but he loved the land too much to do so. He decided to send his son to work for the money in the city. The boy's departure was heart-breaking but they had strength to endure it. The country people's strength was shown when the wife,

That evening her best fare
 Did she bring forth and all together sat
 Like happy people round a Christmas fire.

Before the boy went, Michael took his son to the place where he planned to build a sheepfold. He told the boy about his intention and told him how much he loved him. The boy laid the foundation stone and promised to come back to complete the sheepfold. Then he left home with courage and hoped to fulfill his duty. Before the corrupt life in town had any influence over the boy, Michael received good news from him and he was full of hope. But soon the boy became a victim of the wickedness of town life and ruined himself. He went to sea and was never heard of again. Michael was heart — broken but he did not love his son less. He went often to the place where his son ^{had} promised to build the sheepfold. Nature near which he lived and his love for his son gave him strength to suffer. The loving father found that ;

There is a comfort in the strength of love;
 'Twill make a thing endurable which else
 Would overset the brain, or break the heart.

" The Childless Father " (1800), is the story of a man whose children were all dead. The last child died six months before the story was told but the father still missed her. When the merry people of the village went hunting, he joined them reluctantly. He had to

lock up his house because Ellen, his daughter who used to take care of the house was dead. He thought of her and "went to the chase with a tear on his cheek".

When he became a father, Wordsworth loved his daughter deeply. He wrote a poem, addressed to her, entitled "The Kitten and the Falling Leaves" (1804), in which he recorded his observation of Dora, watching the kitten play. His love of his own children enabled him to understand and sympathize with other fathers.

Maternal love is another theme that interested Wordsworth. In Lyrical Ballads, he wrote successfully about it. Later, he wrote about unfortunate mothers and their children again. "The Sailor's Mother" (1802), was about an old woman who carried a caged bird with her wherever she went. She heard that her son had died at sea. She travelled wearily to the place where he used to live to see if he had left anything that she could have as a keepsake. She found the bird and took it with her. She carried it under her cloak. It was precious to her because her son had loved it.

"The Emigrant Mother" (1802), is about a woman who had to part with her child. She took refuge in a foreign land. She mourned over her fate. She was a little happy to be near a neighbour's child. She loved it because it reminded her of her own child. She loved it because she was able to show her maternal love to it. She was glad to take care of the child while its mother was at work. She told the baby:

While thou art mine, my little Love,
This cannot be a sorrowful grove;
Contentment, hope, and mother's glee,
I seem to find them all in thee:
Here's grass to play with, here are flowers;
I'll call thee by my darling's name;
Thou hast, I think, a look of ours,
Thy features seem to me the same;
His little sister thou shalt be;
And, when once more my home I see,
I'll tell him many a tale of Thee.

"The Affliction of Margaret" (1804), is about the sorrow of a mother who had not heard from her only child for seven years. She wished to have him back whether he was rich or poor. If he was dead,

she would like to know so that could rest. She would not blame him or make him sad. All those years, she waited for him, glad at the thought that he would come and despairing when he did not. She thought of when he was a little child, how she loved him and was proud of him. She said,

Ah! little doth the young one dream,
 When full of play and childish cares,
 What power is in his wildest scream,
 Heard by his mother unawares!
 He knows it not, he cannot guess:
 Years to a mother bring distress;
 But do not make her love the less.

She had been crying for him and was ready to forgive him for whatever he might have done. If he was unhappy, she would try to comfort him :

Alas! the fowls of heaven have wings,
 And blasts of heaven will aid their flight;
 They mount - how short a voyage brings
 The wanderers back to their delight!
 Chains tie us down by land and sea;
 And wishes, vain as mine, may be
 All that is left to comfort thee.

Sometimes she thought that he might be dead but she wondered why his ghost did not come to her. She asked people about him, but she was never answered and she felt that the world was unkind.

"The Cottager to her Infant" written in 1805 also shows a mother's love.

Wordsworth's love for his brother John, as shown in his elegiac poems, was very strong. Therefore, when he wrote about fraternal love, he did it with genuine sympathy. "The Brothers" (1800) is about two orphans brought up by an old man. The boys enjoyed nature together and loved each other dearly. Then Leonard, the elder brother, left the village and there was no news of him. James missed him very much. In his sleep, he walked in search of his brother. Twelve years passed, but James never stopped his yearning. One day, when he went up the mountain with his sheep, he fell asleep. He walked in his sleep and fell from the precipice on which he had been

lying. Leonard came back to the village, he saw James' grave and a priest told him the story of James' love. He was sad. He did not tell the priest who he was, but went back to sea and became a sailor.

While he was able to write successfully about these different kinds of love, it is noticeable that he almost completely omitted the love of lovers. His strong sensibility and his passion could have made his love poems excellent but he never dealt with love directly.

"Vaudracour and Julia" is more a story of the unhappy result of love than of the enjoyment of love. "George and Sarah Green" written in 1808 tells how a wife died because her husband had died. It does not tell about the time when they were happily in love. In "Ruth" (1799), one of his most beautiful poems and one which comes nearest to what we call a love poem, he seemed to give more importance to love of nature and its influence.

Ruth had nature as her friend; her father remarried and did not care for her. She met a handsome soldier from America. He too, had received good influence from nature and enjoyed nature :

— While he was yet a boy,
The moon, the glory of the sun,
Had been his dearest joy.

The comparison of the youth to natural objects is very pleasing and effective :

He was a lovely Youth! I guess
The panther in the wilderness
Was not so fair as he;
And when he chose to sport and play,
No dolphin ever was so gay
Upon the tropic sea.

The two people fell in love. The soldier told her about his adventures in the remote land where nature was splendidly beautiful. He asked her to go and live with him :

Sweet Ruth! and could you go with me
My helpmate in the woods to be,
Our shed at night to rear;
Or run, my own adopted bride,
A sylvan huntress at my side,
And drive the flying deer!

She believed him and agreed to marry him. All preparations were made but the youth betrayed Ruth and deserted her. Naturally he was good, he had :

Pure hope of high intent :
 For passions linked to forms so fair
 And stately, needs must have their share
 Of noble sentiment.

But his intercourse with men had corrupted him. From time to time he struggled to be good but he was overcome. He mixed with bad people, was influenced by their wickedness and returned wickedness for wickedness. Ruth's love could not conquer his wickedness, therefore she was left alone. She became mad because of her sorrow. Her love brought her a short moment of happiness and then made her suffer. She was put in prison where her only joy was the recollection of the sun, the rain and the sound of water and of spring time. When she fled from prison, the healing power of nature restored her. She went begging for food. In winter she slept in the barn and in summer she lived in the woods, making music with her pipe made of straw. Therefore, Ruth's love only led her to find relief in nature.

Wordsworth seemed to prefer the mature and sedate kind of love between men and their wives. In "Michael", the shepherd and his wife were deeply attached to each other but their love was quiet and stern. They never spoke words of love to each other. "She Was a Phantom of Delight" enables us to understand Wordsworth's love. He speaks of himself in this poem and the "Phantom of delight" is unmistakably his wife. In his note to it, he said, "It was written from my heart, as is sufficiently obvious."

When he first saw her, her beauty made him glad. She was like a person in a dream :

She was a Phantom of delight
 When first she gleamed upon my sight;
 A lovely Apparition, sent
 To be a moment's ornament;
 Her eyes as stars of Twilight fair;
 Like Twilight's too, her dusky hair.
 But all things else about her drawn
 From May - time and the cheerful Dawn;

A dancing Shape, an Image gay,
To haunt, to startle, and waylay.

When he knew her better, he found that she, besides being a "lovely apparition", had all the good qualities a woman needed. She was sweet, she knew household work, she was clever and understood human sorrow, love and happiness. She was a woman suitable for every-day companionship.

Later when he had a better understanding of life, he saw that she was thoughtful, enduring and intelligent. He loved her more for these qualities. His delight in her was increased by mature affection :

And now I see with eye serene
The very pulse of the machine;
A Being breathing thoughtful breath,
A Traveller between life and death;
The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endurance, foresight, strength and skill;
A perfect Woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, and command;
And yet a Spirit still, and bright
With something of angelic light.

From his observation of common people, their lives, their pain and their love, Wordsworth understood life better. He learned from observation and found the solution to the problems of his life. In "Resolution and Independence" (1802), a leech-gatherer gave him courage to face the hardship of life. This is the reason why Wordsworth gave much value to the country people.

This poem is an excellent one. It gives us both pleasure and serious idea. The first and the second stanzas give pleasant imagery of beautiful nature. Everything is fresh, lively and enjoyable.

There was roaring in the wind all night;
The rain came heavily and fell in floods;
But now the sun is rising calm and bright;
The birds are singing in the distant woods;
Over own sweet voice the Stock-dove broods;
The Jay makes answer as the Magpie chatters;
And all the air is filled with pleasant noise of waters.

All things that love the sun are out of doors;
The sky rejoices in the morning's birth;

The grass is bright with rain-drops;—on the moors
 The hare is running races in her mirth;
 And with her feet she from the plashy earth
 Raises a mist, that, glittering in the sun,
 Runs with her all the way, wherever she doth run.

The serious thought begins in the third stanza. He said that the beautiful morning made him happy and made him forget the sad ways of human life. But suddenly his spirits were low. He was sad but could not tell why he was so :

. . . as it sometimes chanceth, from the might
 Of joy in minds that can no further go,
 As high as we have mounted in delight
 In our dejection do we sink as low;
 To me that morning did it happen so;
 And fears and fancies thick upon me came;
 Dim sadness - and blind thoughts, I knew not, nor
 could name.

Though he was happy at that moment, he dreaded that in future he might meet with :

Solitude, pain of heart, distress and poverty. He said :

My whole life I have lived in pleasant thought,
 As if life's business were a summer mood;
 As if all needful things would come unsought
 To genial faith, still rich in genial good;
 But how can He expect that others should
 Build for him, sow for him, and at his call
 Love him, who for himself will take no heed at all?

He thought of poets who were famous when they were young but died unhappy :

We Poets in our youth begin in gladness;
 But thereof come in the end despondency and madness.

While he was so thinking, he saw an old man walking alone in the moor. His descriptions of the man are very good :

Beside a pool bare to the eyes of heaven
 I saw a Man before me unawares :
 The oldest man I seemed that ever wore grey hairs.

As a huge stone is sometimes seen to lie
 Couched on the bald top of an eminence;

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Such seemed this Man, not all alive nor dead,
 Nor all asleep - in his extreme old age:
 His body was bent double, feet and head
 Coming together in life's pilgrimage;
 As if some dire constraint of pain, or rage
 Of sickness felt by him in times long past,
 A more than human weight upon his frame had cast.

The old man was stirring the water with his stick, his body was as " motionless as a cloud ". The poet came to talk with the man. His language and his manner showed that he had once been an important man. He said that he earned his living by gathering leeches. The leeches had become rarer and rarer and he had to work harder to get them. But seeing that it was an honest way of gaining money, he had the courage to endure. The poet was disturbed by the man's voice. He could not hear it clearly and the man was :

Like one whom I had met with in a dream;
 Or like a man from some far region sent,
 To give me human strength, by apt admonishment.

The poet was confused with all thoughts : fear, hope, misery and the thought of death and sickness. He asked the old man again, hoping to be comforted. The man repeated his story, his face smiling. It affected the poet and he said

In my mind's eye I seemed to see him pace
 About the weary moors continually,
 Wandering alone and silently.

The old man continued his conversation cheerfully. He seemed to be kind and had a dignified manner. The poet admired the leech-gatherer's firm mind and courage. Poor and old as he was, he did not complain or pity himself. The poet was ashamed of himself for being weak. He called to God to help him and thought that when he lost courage, he would remind himself of the old man :

"God," said I, "be my help and stay secure;
I'll think of the Leech-gatherer on the lonely moor!"