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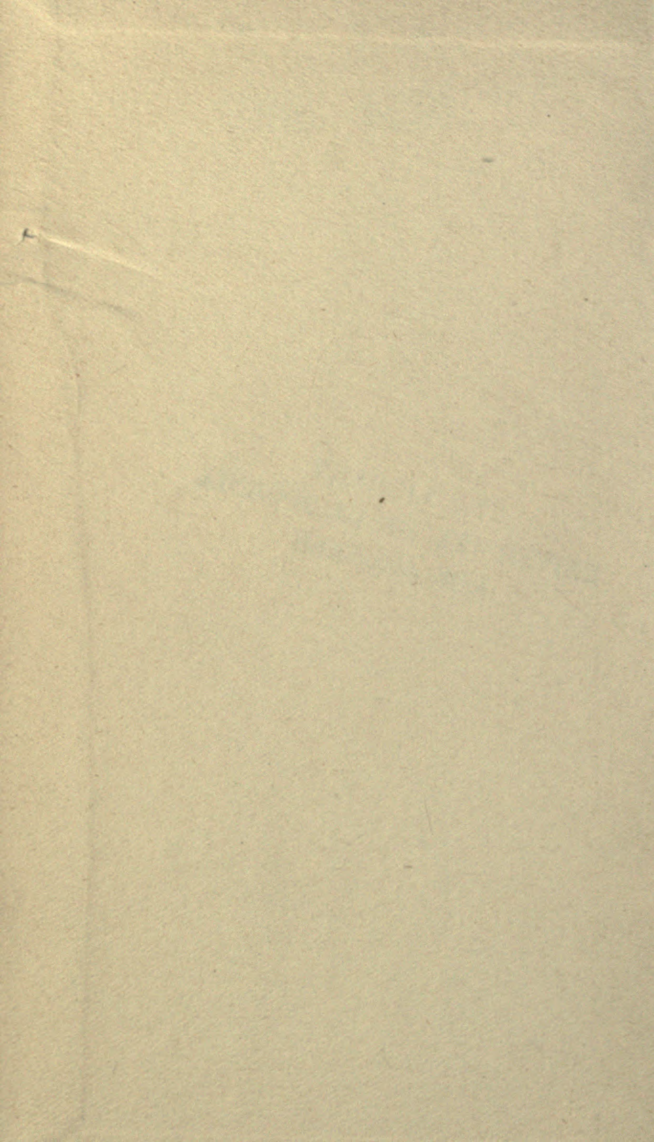

WORDSWORTH'S "PRELUDE" AS A STUDY OF EDUCATION

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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U. C. L. A.

NOTE

Parts of this Essay were originally read to the Bradford Branch of the Teachers' Guild. Their wish to have it is one reason for its publication. But as now issued it is much fuller than and otherwise different from the paper they heard with such friendly interest.

J. F.

August, 1899.

U. C. L. A.
EDUC. DEPT.

WORDSWORTH'S *PRELUDE* AS A STUDY OF EDUCATION

THE *Prelude* has suffered the usual fate of long poems, especially when such poems are of a philosophical cast, of an intellectual texture—it has been but little read even by readers of the other poetry of its author—his lyrics and odes. And yet it has some of Wordsworth's most characteristic poetry, and not a little of his characteristic wisdom. Few, indeed, of the poet's works are more important for the comprehension of his Ethic than this "philosophic Song of Truth which cherishes our daily life" (*Prelude*, i. 229–30).

But this poem was not published by its author, nor was it named by him. It was published by the poet's wife shortly after his death, and its title was assigned by her. As to both points she showed that insight and judgment which made her through so many years a true helpmeet of the poet in

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the things of his genius as of his life. It must have been touching for her just then to give the public this record of years so long gone past.

And the *Prelude*, in fact, belongs to an early time in the work of the poet. It was deliberately composed at intervals during a period of some six years—the years following the poet's settlement at Grasmere. The "preamble" of the poem (cf. bk. vii. 1–12) was made at the time when, on leaving Goslar, the poet felt the "quickening breeze" that met him as he turned his face again to his own country. This stir of feeling and thought led him to sing "with fervour irresistible" the theme that came to him as he reviewed his past and considered his future. That fervid impulse was "short-lived," but the theme was soon resumed with "less impetuous stream," that flowed steadily for a time and then stopped for some years. It was again taken up in "the primrose time" five years later, and finished after a further interval in the following year.

The poem was thus composed between February, 1799, and May, 1805. About half of it had been composed by the end of April, 1804; a great part of the rest of it

was done between October and December of 1804; and the closing books during April and May, 1805, after the death of the poet's brother, John Wordsworth.

It was dedicated to the friend on whose interest and sympathy he could implicitly count—Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Coleridge took five books of it with him when he went to Malta in 1804, and the whole poem was read to him in December, 1806. It was revised in 1832; but the poet left it unpublished for more than forty years. Coleridge was greatly impressed by its verse and its matter, by its poetry and its truth. He speaks of it (vide *Sibylline Leaves*, "To William Wordsworth") as

> An Orphic song indeed,
> A song divine of high and passionate thoughts,
> To their own music chaunted!

But, in the judgment of its author, the time had not come for its publication, and that time did not arrive during his own life. The *Prelude* is, in fact, in the nature of an autobiography, and an autobiography of a special kind. The sub-title of the poem gives the kind and its theme. It is, so the title justly tells us, the story of *The Growth of a Poet's Mind*. Coleridge's phrase had been "the growth of an individual mind"—

the story of "the foundations and growth of a human spirit." Now the study of a poet's life, uneventful as such lives mostly are, might seem bad enough; but the history of a poet's mind—the unfolding of his genius, of his poetic intuition and principles, what is called with a shrug a "psychological study," a study of moral growth and little more—seems to be many degrees worse. Wordsworth possibly felt this, and partly deferred to it. But besides this, he felt that his own position in English poetry, and the interest so far shown in his work, scarcely justified such length and intimacy of autobiography as the *Prelude* contained, although indeed his poetic position was fairly recognised in the late "thirties," and his value well assured some years before his death.

The recognition of the poem after its issue in the summer of 1850 was cold enough. It was the "Life," we may say, of the most original poet of his time. It threw a flood of light on his mental history and growth during the most important period of that history and growth, and through his experience and course of thought it cast much light on the life of his time during important years of that age of revolutions. But the public had other

interests, and did not see the interest or the significance of these things.

A few things have, however, happened since 1850, and not the least of them, perhaps, a considerable intellectual and spiritual change. The world seems to move in the line of growth of its greater and more original poets; and works which one generation finds obscure, impossible, the next finds legible and quick with meaning. The *Prelude* may seem a case in point. We have now a pocket edition of the poem, and a considerable and excellent volume by a French scholar devoted to its study.

The poem, we have said, is an "Autobiography"—that delicate and dangerous, and yet in the best instances how interesting, kind of autobiography which is termed "spiritual autobiography"—a history not of events or doings, but of thoughts, feelings, experiences and vital constructions. In such writings it is hard rather to see the facts that are to be presented, to see them with clear eyes and in due proportions, to know what is valuable and what is not, to keep out the distortions of egoism, the taint of morbidity. It is desirable to escape these defects, these faults, and not easy to do so in this kind of writings; so we say. And

yet it has to be admitted that there are autobiographies which by no means fulfil these conditions, and still are most interesting, and are so, moreover, in part because they do not fulfil the above conditions of "good autobiography." The age of Wordsworth, as we all know, saw an astonishing instance of this in the *Confessions* of Rousseau, that document of "the age of feeling."

The work before us is, anyhow, a sound and healthy record. It was done, we have seen, in the poet's best years. Its best passages stand safely among the best parts of his work. It throws much light on the larger principles of his interpretation of nature and human nature. Its grasp of his poetic ideas is firm, its statement of them fresh and luminous. It may be that the poem is too long for its theme, that it is tiresome in parts, and heavy at times. Its temper and diction are too uniformly weighty and serious; but it is honest and lofty and true. Distinctly self-conscious it may be—that is in the point of view, and in the process of the work—but it is proudly sincere, and, in spite of the risks of its theme, it is surely free from vanity. As Mr. F. Myers has said, "You can read it with implicit

confidence." And, as M. Legouis says, "There are no theatrical attitudes," no arrangements or utterances for effect. The poet knows his own value too well for that kind of show. He has "too much pride to be vain." His aim, let us say, was simply to trace his own growth, to know his own powers, his principles, himself, the gifts and truths his culture had brought him and the destiny of his mind. His aim was no way to determine the "merit" of those powers and attainments. He does not think of their value in relation to others.

It will now be clear that the *Prelude* may be usefully and suggestively studied on several sides—literary, historical, ethical. It may, of course, be taken in the literary and historical way, and considered fruitfully with reference to its sources in the life and literature of the time. Professor Legouis has done very good work here. It may be taken as a study of the "origin and progress" of this poet's powers—the rise and growth within his experience of his gifts and insights. It may be regarded in a more general way as a study of man—of man as this poet knew him, in relation to man's whole environment in nature and human nature. Or it may be regarded in relation

to the poet's works as "the prelude" to those, setting forth in a deliberate and deeply-considered introduction the grounds and elements of that interpretation of nature and human nature which the rest of his works were to illustrate and unfold. It was in this light and relation that Mrs. Wordsworth took the poem when she called it the *Prelude*. For her it was the first great section of his total work. It was for her an "Essay" opening his work as a whole, giving for the years up to his maturity as man and poet his experience, his discipline, his point of view, the factors and attainments of his culture, his fundamental principles as a poet and master of life.

It will be seen from the title of this essay which of the lines thus sketched has been selected for consideration now. It is the *Prelude* as a study of education simply we propose to take on this occasion. Our specific aim is to show the value and interest of the *Prelude* in this aspect of it, to set out the principles and truths of this poetry, the ideas and intuitions of this poet, in their bearing on education in its larger sense and scope. This seemed an inquiry very suitable for a guild of teachers, and not less suitable because somewhat off the usual

track of professional discussions regarding education.

Students of the *Prelude*, whether they regard its literary or its biographic value, may indeed raise objections. They may urge that the poet conceived and planned the poem as a study of the poetic mind—of his own mind—and that, in the phrase of Coleridge, a highly "individual mind," with a unique experience. But allowing its full value to this view of such work, it cannot be thought that that is its whole value, or even the better part of its value. For the poet as poet is not apart from other men, however much he may for a time be ahead of them. He is, we may say, in virtue of his powers, a leader and helper of other men, a bringer of joy to them out of the deeper, fresher wells of his nature and experience. Other men are his heirs, and in time enter into his experiences. If his experience were not in measure yet sincerely open to other men, then Art were an illusion or an impossibility. Its appeal to us, and our sympathy with it, spring from kinship in nature and community of experience. The poet, with reference to his own matters, is quicker, more vital, richer it may be, than most of us, but the principles and the laws are the

same for all of us, and the last test of the poet's vision and genius is his power to bring other men to see what he has seen, to enjoy what has pleased him, to be what he is in the things where he is most human.

The general plan of the *Prelude* is to follow the course of the poet's life, and select the things and the events in its course which had a significant influence in shaping his mind and his character, in unfolding his intellectual powers and principles, and the moral elements of his nature as well. And the survey of things and events from this point of view is full of meaning. In its mere conception, in its starting-point, in what it selects and in what it omits, there was much significance at a time when the whole question of education was under discussion and when treatises on the subject were a fashion, and many new and plausible schemes of human culture were being zealously advocated as a part of the passion of the time for human improvement.

And our poet's survey, if the *Prelude* be taken as in a certain true sense a "treatise" on education, was, we say, extremely significant in its conception of culture, in its starting-point, and in the things put forth as really influential. In the large concep-

tion of the poem regarded from the educational point of view there was great significance, since it presented "the growth of a mind" from childhood to maturity, and yet took all that was merely scholastic, technical, formal, as incidental rather than essential—as even relatively unimportant. It may be thought that this was in the theme, and in the poet's purpose as a poet, and, of course, there is truth there; otherwise the *Prelude* would not have been a poem, though it might have been a "treatise" of much interest. Yet that surely in no way lessens the significance of the conception from our present point of view, seeing that it is of the very substance of the conception that, as regards both intellectual and moral growth, life is a scheme of stimulus, discipline, training, in which the scholastic and academic elements and factors are always subsidiary and often comparatively unimportant. Hawkshead Grammar School did not badly for William Wordsworth. It taught him Latin pretty well, and some mathematics, and one teacher there made a distinct and genial impression on the boy. And St. John's College, Cambridge, according to the temper of the age and its "lights," and as far as he let it, may be said to have

done fairly for the by no means studious north country youth entrusted to her care. But in the scheme of his true culture as he saw and described it in his early manhood, when the scheme had become clear to him, neither St. John's College nor the old Grammar School counted for much with reference to that development of his genuine powers—that self-knowledge and that mastery of himself and of life which were the basis of all he had thus become and of all he was to do.

Now from the educationist's point of view this may appear a heresy or a truism. Most of us would, when the matter is thus broadly put, regard it as perfectly "sound doctrine." We recognise in terms, and as a general truth, that what is technically called education is but a part of the real education of a human being. But, as thus loosely allowed, the truth has often no practical value—is, perhaps, only admitted to be ignored. And the question is, What is the bearing of the truth so conceived on the scholastic scheme as such—on its aims, and on our estimate of the place and scope of the scheme in life itself? In so far as the *Prelude* may give clues for a right answer to that question, it would render an

important service indeed. What clues has it then for an answer to this question which is always facing the educationist, and always bringing his particular scheme and procedure under trenchant criticism? The poet's conception of the mind's growth and of life's real culture, as proceeding through all experience, his idea of life itself as education, is the first point. The *Prelude* makes that stand out as few writings do. We must get a just perception of that. We must clearly and frankly recognise that larger scheme, and in the spirit of Emerson admit that what we do not call education is more precious than that which is so called by us. We must increasingly, and with careful judgment, fit our scholastic means and scheme into the vital order. We can only do this as we are on our guard against what a recent writer has well called the *idola scholarum*, as we keep a free and active sympathy with life, as we see how little our technical means can do as compared with the great things life is always doing.

And then we have said the poet's starting-point is significant. His starting-point is childhood and the child-mind. The interest and importance of childhood and the child-

mind was one of the ruling ideas of Wordsworth's poetry. It was part of the spiritual movement of the age of Wordsworth, part of its deeper naturalism. It is well known that a "return to nature" was, perhaps, the most characteristic passion and deepest movement in the mind of the later 18th century in France, England, and Germany, manifesting itself in art and philosophy, in politics and conduct. Romanticism itself may be conceived as part of that great movement. And that "return to nature," to "natural things and principles," so strongly marked in the sentiment as in the thought of the time, led in one aspect of it to what has been called "the glorification of the savage," and in another aspect to what has been termed "the worship of the child." It is clear that many of those who took up the cry of a "return to nature"—to work from it, to reform with it—forgot to inquire what they meant by nature, though that inquiry was equally important on the philosophic and on the practical sides. In the same way it has to be said that fervid followers of Wordsworth seem apt to forget to ask what their master really meant by the sovereign importance he gave childhood and the child-mind in his "scheme of virtues."

Our childhood sits,—
Our simple childhood sits upon a throne
That hath more power than all the elements.
(*Prelude*, v. 508.)

So the poet sings. But in regard to the culture of life, what does this mean? We all recognise that mental and moral growth begin from early childhood, and that a certain body of principles and habits is unfolded, and partly organized then. That is a bit of natural history and of interest for the nursery. But beyond that it would seem that the doctrine we are considering has for many no practical use, and is even for some a piece of misleading sentimentalism. It was, however, a living principle for the age of Wordsworth, and one it greatly needed to break the bonds of the past, to quicken and enlarge the life of the time. It has been fruitful in our own century in many ways, and it is a principle the educationist surely needs, and tends somewhat to thrust aside.

Let us see, then, by help of the poetry in which the idea was best interpreted, what it means, and how it bears on education. Wordsworth has put it in certain verses which may be taken as the classical statement of the idea.

> The child is father of the man,
> And I would have my days to be
> Bound each to each by natural piety

—"the child" "father of the man," and "natural piety" as the bond of all our habits and all our days—what law of growth, what truths of culture, do the words contain? The principle is not, perhaps, stated anywhere in the *Prelude* quite so explicitly as in the lines just quoted, but the whole study of growth in that poem is subject to the principle, and throws light on the meaning it had for the poet. At the opening of the poem the poet tells how, in the case of his own mind, impressive training began with the first dawn of childhood. Then, as he came to see his own growth, was "the seed-time of the soul." The voice of the Derwent "blent its murmurs with his nurse's song," and "flowed along his dreams." And all the things of his first days are conceived as bearing a part in the foundation of his powers and the texture of his mind (*Prelude*, bks. i., ii. *passim*). Nor is it a matter of things and experiences only; it is also a matter of affections and principles. The lines above quoted—which are of 1802—set forth a law, enforce a certain loyalty—loyalty to the instincts and

principles of childhood; while the lines quoted from the *Prelude* (bk. v.) declare the native strength of the mind, and its power from the first to transform experience—it rules, as we may say, by "right divine."

In such words the poet seems to some of us to speak only as an "oracle" speaks, words of no sure meaning. And, in fact, the words and his doctrine on this matter have been taken often in that way. And yet if we read them in due relation to the movement of which they are a part, they have plain and fruitful meanings. They mean that in all our culture, in our treatment of mind and in our estimates of things, we must respect nature and natural principles. They mean that we must value the great simple things of life and nature, the primitive and general principles and powers of mind and heart. They mean that in one aspect of it the right culture is a loyal evolution of the native powers of the soul, and that we must respect the Ideal implicit in nature, and not seek to constrain her to some idea of ours—to some end arising out of our utilities, our conventions, or our pride. "Natural piety" is thus allegiance to "the nature of things," and to the true order of life. It is fidelity

to the great and simple laws of intelligence and morality.

And still to some of us it will seem that we have here only a "counsel of perfection," open to the charge of vague ideality. It goes without saying that only as we do our sensible best to ascertain what in respect of minds the true nature is, and to what principles our obedience is demanded, can any good come of the truth Wordsworth so much emphasized. In part through his own happy experience, and in part through his deep insight into the great movement of which his poetry was so true an expression, Wordsworth at the point in hand grasped one of the greatest principles of the movement to give it his own form. But it often happens that the form into which an original and vivid poetic mind puts a truth partly reveals and in part conceals his principle for many who follow him. It has been so here. Wordsworth's praise of childhood has often been so read that his principle has been missed by mere deference to the "letter" of his statement. And yet the poet had himself put his underlying principle into terse and happy phrases, both in verse and prose. In the preface to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* such state-

ment is found (cf. Works, vi. 308). And there it is defined as a "religious" regard for "the essential passions of the heart," for "the primary laws of human nature," for "the sacred simplicities of life." Elsewhere it is seen to be the poet's sense of and reverence for that "empire" which every human being "inherits," and which he stands answerable for "as a natural being in the strength of nature."

It thus appears that Wordsworth's stress on the child-nature, and on other simplicities, was rather a consequence of his principle and spirit than the principle itself from the educational point of view. But, in any case, he did a capital service by his study of a growth and a culture far behind the first schooldays, and behind all teaching through words and notions. It is owing to the movement he so well interpreted, and in good part it is owing to him, that we have studied the child-nature so much and so carefully as we have lately been doing. And, without doubt, all who face the problems and responsibilities of the education of young children, especially now that by law we virtually bring them under a process of formal education so much earlier than we were wont to do—all of us, at least, who are

not, in Professor Laurie's phrase, "teachers by grace of God," and of the scholastic tradition as such—will agree that a still fuller and more exact study of the primary laws and conditions of intelligence, and of the factors of mental growth in a well-ordered educational scheme, is desirable. We have yet to work out more carefully the lines on which, the means by which, the steps through which, the ideas, feelings, and efforts of children may be healthily and fruitfully stimulated, guided, unfolded. Perez, Preyer, Darwin, and Professor Sully have worked in the field, and they bring help; but our range of observations is not as yet sufficiently wide, nor are our generalizations on many points sufficiently definite and exact. And the fallacy of ready inference from single cases, or from a few cases, a fallacy specially apt to arise in the teacher's field of practice and observation, has to be watchfully guarded against, and shut out from the writings of investigators and from the judgment and work of teachers.

In other ways also our gains from the movement and principle we are considering have been important. It is one of its consequences that more and more our schemes and machinery in education are being set

to find and to unfold the "nature"—the true powers—of the minds to be trained, and less and less to force "another nature" on them than that which after due care and proper tests we infer to belong to them. The idea of a "nature" in things, which must be observed and respected, is as a working conception comparatively recent. The idea of a "nature" in minds which must be studied and served, not browbeaten, is largely a result of the romantic and scientific movements since the Revolution. It means an attitude of modesty and inquiry towards mind as towards a natural structure, giving up wholly the old notion that you can and may make of minds just what you wish, and in "the best cases" anything whatever. It means that whether there be a "science of mind" practically available for the teacher or not—and some appear to assume a posture of impatience or superiority to extant psychologies—it is the interest and some part of the business of the teacher to study mind in its elements and laws. It is a troublesome study possibly; but once recognise that there is a nature and a "reign of law" in minds, and the inference is straight and swift that the art and matter of teaching must fit themselves to that

nature and its laws, and can do so only as the teacher understands Mind.

And if Wordsworth's naturalism carries in it the conception that Mind is a natural structure and must be so treated, his "natural piety" carries the conception that the stages of human growth and culture as they are bound to each other by vital coherence so they should be by moral fidelity; and that only as each stage is honourably treated for all it is worth, and duly fulfilled, can we reach integrity and strength, whether of mind or character. Now this, it will be seen, is one of Froebel's great ideas; and, in fact, Froebel and Wordsworth are in frequent agreement and close sympathy on the matters of humane education and human welfare. Froebel was but twelve years younger than Wordsworth; and though he lived amid different circumstances and for different purposes, he belonged to the same naturalistic and romantic movement, and as the "prophet and apostle of a kingdom of God" to be reached through a wise and real education covering the whole of life, his ideas often, his aims almost always, are such as the poet of the *Prelude* and the *Excursion* would have heartily approved. And so when Froebel, in his mystic way, insists that

human development should go from point to point, should go steadily, should be viewed and treated as continuously advancing, when he insists that the child, the boy, the youth, the man are not separate from, but intimately and vitally related to, each other, and that the vigorous and complete unfolding of each successive stage of life depends on the vigour and completeness of the development of the preceding stages (cf. *Student's Froebel*, Herford, p. 11), Wordsworth would have understood and heartily agreed. And when Froebel further insists that while we must foresee development—must see the man and the youth in the child—we must certainly not expect the child or the youth to act or think as if he were already a man, but respect loyally the stage reached (*Student's Froebel*, pp. 17, 18), the poet would again have agreed with the educationist. His own trouble at the crisis of his life was to break with his past and with the great principles of growth. He came to see that only as each part of life is read in the light of the whole, and is loyal to the whole, do we live truly. He came to understand that not only is the child, by the laws of growth, and by the very quality of life, "father of the man," but that only as the man is loyal to

the principles of his childhood does he reach wisdom and power. Our theory of life, our scheme of discipline, must embrace and do justice to all parts of life, and be capable of interpreting and fulfilling its powers genially throughout its course.

Then, connected with points we have just touched, there comes up here a truth of which the *Prelude* is full. By its temper and its theme the poem stresses, over-stresses it may be thought, the deep individuality of all real education. It is, to some, one of the offences of the *Prelude* that it is so intensely individual. It has been said that the "hero" in all parts of it is William Wordsworth, austerely complacent as he reviews everything in his story from that standpoint. We have said the *Prelude* wears an aspect of that sort. It was in the special subject and plan of the poem. It was in the quality of the poet. It was part of his independence, of his life-long self-reliance. It was, besides, in the movement of revolt, and romanticism. The return to nature was in part a return to the individual. It affirmed the interest and worth of each man. It stood for his "rights." It stirred him to a sense of his place and his powers. And in many a passage of the *Prelude* all the goings and

even the "ends" of nature appear to find their function and centre in the child of the Derwent Valley, in the boy of Esthwaite Vale, and in the young man of later days. For our serious poet it almost seems as if the "Wisdom and Spirit of the universe" had set and shaped all things to build up this human soul.

And surely in a deep, and a very true sense, it is so. In respect of education it certainly is so. As subjects of that process we are each of us centres, and must be treated as such. All that is done is ours only as it comes that way, in that relation. It must come for, it must act on and through our minds. The idealist is right there. We must all be individualists so far. Nature and the scheme of life, as it goes on around us, play on us at every moment as persons, and the result as "read," as "organized," is personal.

This was one of the truths of "the Revolt," we have said. It seems now to some of us perhaps a truism. No one who has measured the significance of the truth will think so. But in any case our educational schemes and methods must accurately recognise it, and in so far as they do not, or do not cordially take account of it, they

are working on wrong lines, and in a wrong spirit. Every mind must be treated as an unit, and as a moral factor, with respect for its powers and for its uses, and especially with respect for its own proper good.

There is, of course, that other truth which "the Revolt" did not see, or saw very partially, which Wordsworth saw in time, and which our recent developments in various ways have been bringing out and emphasizing, the truth without which education could not go a step—the truth that intelligence and morality are social. It is through the general mind, the "universal heart," that we know each other. It is the "common reason" that makes knowledge possible, and society. It is the will towards a common good that humanizes and unites. But the truth of "the Revolt" stands, if it must submit to a larger reading, for it is only through minds that you have mind, only through personalities that reason and conduct are possible. And so in our methods as in our ideals of education, not only at the top, but right through our system, we must loyally recognise the personal constitution of mind, and the sacred rights of every child and every youth to be and to remain a person, while at the same time we under-

stand that paradox of the higher reason, and open secret of the true life—that it is only as each accepts the "common reason" and serves the "general good" that he reaches and fills out his true nature. The value of our results both practical and intellectual largely depends on our knowing how to recognise both sides of this truth and the scope of this law.

Another truth the *Prelude* finely illustrates, and towards its close strongly insists on, is this—that any education that is mainly intellectual is so far forth futile and injurious. You must get, and cultivate, right, sound, active, vital feeling. In a phrase of this poet that is in true sympathy with the best naturalism of his age, the "vital soul" is the ground of all real education, and the free expansion of the "vital soul" is the true end of education. In the case of Wordsworth this doctrine, which he held strongly, and never wearied of urging, was cordially out of the poetic mind. It was also on his part, especially in the *Prelude*, a protest against a narrow and really absurd intellectualism in which he had himself been caught for a time. In the crisis of his life, when the new democratic movements were disappointing him, and his Re-

publican hopes were in distress, when the Revolution in France seemed a satire on freedom and an insult to reason, the young poet took up with the philosophy to be found in Godwin's *Political Justice.* According to that philosophy, if we may roughly sum it up, our only hope lies in each man becoming, and the ideal state will be reached when each of us has become, an independent and rational agent. And for Godwin, who complacently sought to spread his own type over the wide and various field of human function and character, it was all a matter of reason. When you have got men completely rationalized, and when they have made use of their trained reason to adopt a sound philosophy, the problems of education and of society too will have been duly solved. You will then have got enlightened citizens in a reasonable social order. And Wordsworth took up that position, and held it for a time (cf. *Prelude*, bk. xi. 224–254). But it was only for a short time that so narrow and morally ungenial a doctrine could have seemed to him tenable, not to say adequate. By his build as by his culture it could for him have been possible only for a short time. And, in fact, he soon saw, and felt to the very heart

of it, the narrowness and absurdity of such a philosophy. It ignored a great part of human nature, and lacked the root power, the propelling and sustaining force, of life. It left out in apparent strength, in real weakness, that which gives life its energy and interest, and very largely its meaning and its value — the "vital soul" — the life of feeling, and all the wealth and energy of the heart. In the closing books of the *Prelude* the poet dwells earnestly on this truth. And in other poems of his great period it is a leading idea. There is no real and right growth for human minds without depth and cordiality of feeling. The culture that does not give this is barren, and in a large degree a failure. Knowledge without this is almost nothing, and little good. Whatever is merely formal and not vital is a mistake; whatever tends to dull or impoverish interests to narrow or deaden feeling, is not only a loss, but an injury. The cultivation and enrichment, the direction and development of feeling, is in a sense the end and finer use of knowledge itself. To bring out and organize, to enlighten and get power for a body of just and noble feelings is a better and wiser result, and for the happiness of the individual, as for the good

of society, a finer and more valuable result, than any merely or mainly intellectual culture. So this poet held with a strengthening conviction. Such, it seems to us, is the truth, a truth of first-rate importance in education.

Closely connected with the foregoing principle are other truths to be found in the *Prelude*, regarding it as a study of education. Wordsworth held very strongly, in spite of the notes of austerity and parsimony to be felt in his poetry and in his character, that a great and necessary force in the growth of mind, and in the evolution of will and character, is what he terms "vital feelings of delight." Through things kindly fitted to our natures, and to which our natures are in turn genially fitted, the mind is fed and grows. Through genial relations to all the things that are ours the spirit in us, which is right feeling and right reason harmonized and united, grows rightly. This poet held indeed, as all his readers know from certain lines of the great *Tintern Abbey* poem, that it is really through "the power of joy" that we "see into the life of things." A certain deep yet frugal pleasure is for him the medium of light, and the true pitch of life. His

poetry is full of the spirit and results of this conviction. It was for Wordsworth a poetic and an ethical law. His whole view of life is full of the light of it. His view of the world is so. His simplicity, his matter-of-fact quality, in art as in life, are made beautiful by his cordial and pervading sense of this principle.

This principle has other bearings of course, since it is a principle of poetic apprehension because it is a principle of things, and on these we shall touch later. Our concern now is with its bearing on the method and spirit of education. The older educationists had made everything, or most things, hard, distasteful. They even seemed to act on the principle that the educational value of things in a course of training turned on their hardness, their unpleasantness. The early sentimentalists in education, following Jean Jacques, their prophet, went to the opposite extreme. Just as they went to the extreme of individualism, abolishing constraint and authority, they went to a kindred extreme here. They wanted to make everything easy, genial in the shallow sense, and agreeable at once. We were to slide along on the level, or the line of ascent was to be so nearly level that we

should never have the sense of effort. But very plainly that is not the order of the world. The conditions and circumstance of life, however they got set, have not been set to that strain. And to follow that strain, that quality and method of work, were to degrade and enfeeble humanity. Wisdom, goodness, joy, have all another strain than that. Happiness of the healthy and lasting, of the permanently stimulating sort, has ever a strain of austerity and strenuousness in it. It comes of the play and equilibrium of the finer forces of our natures. Our work, therefore, and all real discipline of mind and will, must be keyed to this, only remembering that work and discipline are not ends in themselves, that our end is life and the good of life, and that the last test of the right life and its proper activities is the good they bring.

This matter of pleasure, when it should arise and to whom it should come, raises questions that are highly important in education and in conduct. The sentimentalists —and they are " still in the land "—seem to think that the pleasure should arise " all the time," and that " pleasure " is the end. The individualists hold that the pleasure should accrue with " quick returns " to each

individual. But such positions unguardedly taken are misleading, and have, in fact, misled not a few since the gospel of Rousseau began to be preached. The truth is that in education and in conduct our aim must be set and our effort adjusted not to the nearer pleasure but to the larger good. We must learn more and more to regard the common reason as our standard and to take the common good as our law; and the scope of all just and real education is to bring the subjects of it to this power and to this aim.

In keeping with the foregoing truths, and, in fact, as our poet thought of matters, springing out of some of them, is another, that the closing books of the *Prelude* set forth with emphasis (cf. bks. xii., xiii.)—this, viz.: that the right method in knowledge and therefore in education is constructive, not analytic; that the real apprehension of things is a creative and not a mechanical process. Taking things to bits, and regarding them singly, we never know them. Taking them coldly, and through a medium of logical processes only, we never grasp them, and cannot give them to other minds. We must grasp them as living facts, in a whole that itself lives for us. In analytic

processes "we murder to dissect." In that kind of approach to, and investigation of, things the life, the reality of things, escapes us. Merely intellectual processes of the type of 18th century rationalism, of the type of Hume's critical scepticism, give us no contact with things, and certainly no hold of them in their proper reality.

The loss of a true hold of, and vital interest in, things was a great part of the trouble of Wordsworth's mind at the crisis of his life (cf. bk. xi. 270–320). Things went "meagre and stale," all the things of human life and of the world too. He tried to recover his faith, his interest, in things through reasoning and intellectual appreciation; but this only aggravated the trouble. His sceptical, analytic habit, his demand that each thing should "prove" itself at the bar of the "abstract reason," only brought the very "crisis of his strong disease."

What brought his cure? How did he recover again a real hold of things and a right relation to them? This is the "burden" of the last three books of the *Prelude*. Briefly and simply it may be said his cure was wrought by his again taking up a true relation to things, and by a right use of his powers in their apprehension, since the only

cure for a malady that has arisen through thought is a deeper and truer thought. It is not easy to give more fully and still very briefly the "argument" of these books, which tell of this new method, and give the "secret of the new life" of the poet. Yet some of his phrases put clues in our hands: "genial faith," "sympathies" with and "love" towards the things of life and of nature, "wise" as poets and "as women are" (cf. bk. xii. 68–72, and ll. 156–8), truths of "the universal heart," "spiritual love" that is one with intellectual power, and imagination that is one with "reason in her most exalted mood" (cf. bk. xiv. 187–205). Keeping in view only the matter that now concerns us, since there is a good deal of other matter in those books, it will be seen that the author of this poem might have entitled his organ of knowledge Imaginative Reason. It is through processes akin to the poetic, it is through imagination as the faculty of vital constructions, the faculty that "strikes into one" and sees things from the heart of a vital appreciation—it is thus that you get at things and know them. There must be a genial care for things. There must be an intellectual love of them. We must value the fact of things without

self-regards and with no vain or mean comparisons. We must bring a spirit that feels and appreciates. We must open eye and heart to their life. We must bring an active, not a passive, taste to the apprehension of them. Enjoyment more than criticism is wanted—a spiritual rather than a microscopic view. We must judge not by abstract standards, by "rules of mimic art applied to things above all art," but by intuitions of things taken in their own life and place. Our judgments of things must be not of "one sense," but of "all the senses," and of our free and total power, and our knowledge result of

> A balance, an ennobling interchange
> Of action from without and from within;
> The excellence, pure function, and best power
> Both of the object seen and eye that sees.
> (Bk. xiii. 370–78; cf. 151–57.)

And again he gives his method and secret in the lines (bk. xiii. 206–7):—

> In Nature's presence stood as now I stand,
> A *sensitive* being, a *creative* soul.

It is, then, by faithful use of this method and function of mind that we gain a knowledge of things. It is through such method and power that we can give a knowledge of things. Only the mind that has the life

and interest of things in itself, in its own honest care for, and appreciation of, them, can rightly teach, conveying the interest and life of things to other minds. Only one who stands "in the light of things," with power over them through a degree of imaginative reason, can give those things to be possessions of other minds. And this is the truer because the end of the business of learning is not merely to have a knowledge of things, but to get the truth and worth of things to enrich one's own life —the "vital soul" in each of us. And if any should stumble at the poet's phrase, there are others in which it can very well be put. Put it thus: Knowledge itself is never a true end any more than the things you can gain by its means are such an end. It is life, and the wealth and good of that, that are the end. And no one more than the teacher needs to keep this wisely and steadily in view, not as a "counsel of perfection," but as a constant test of right method and results in educational work.

Cognate with the point we have just handled is a point we have already touched, but which it will be well to deal with here, since it runs through the *Prelude*, and is indicated in more than one happy phrase in

the poem. We refer to that subtle conception of the nature of mind, its laws and mode of operation, which the poet owed partly to Coleridge, but mostly to his own genius as a master of the moral nature of man: the conception, namely, that mind is vital, organic, built up of living elements by organic processes, experiences, and actions, not by mechanical additions. The poet is here, again, in sympathy with Froebel, who was but little of a psychologist, and with the best psychologists of both schools since the organic conception entered the science. The finest expression of the idea in the poem is in those lines (bk. i. 340–47), but most of the poet's references to mind and to his own growth are fully in keeping with them:—

> Dust as we are the immortal spirit grows
> Like harmony in music; there is a dark
> Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles
> Discordant elements, and makes them cling together
> In one society.

The idea of mind as a living power, formed by, yet informing, all experience, is present in those lines—poetically, not psychologically, of course. Our concern with them is, that they are well on the path of the right idea, and that this idea of mind

as organic in its nature and operations is an idea of fruitful importance in education. It is impossible to do more than suggest the bearings of the idea here. It seems well to do so much. The mind, then, is a living power—active, not passive. Intelligence is a vital function. It is not merely taking or reviving impressions, absorbing or arranging "facts." Knowledge is creative apprehension. Perception and memory, as well as conception and judgment, are vital constructions. The relation of states of mind to their objects may be as obscure as Professor James argues; but the mind is a living force, not a camera, and thought a function of life, not of mechanism. As organic, the mind is, moreover, a living whole. Every moment of conscious life is a vital unity, and so is the whole complex life of the mind.

But how does such conception of the working of mind apply, and what value has it in education? Some of its bearings have been usefully developed by Froebel and by Herbart. The well-known and fruitful dictum of Froebel, that only by creative activity does mind grow and knowledge become real, springs from such a conception of mind; and the kindergarten is a fruit of it. And

Herbart's idea of the operation of mind as "apperception" is from the same principle. The mind is built not by notions or words, nor by things or facts, but by its own activities and by all it becomes. You have to deal with a living whole of actions and reactions, and you have to work in your instruction, your knowledge, on those terms, as a living addition to such a whole of life. It has to find its place in such a whole. It will live and serve only as it is fitted within mind as such a whole. You do not "put" knowledge into the mind, nor do you "accumulate" it within the mind. Something called "knowledge" may indeed be "put" there and "accumulate" considerably, and nothing be known at all. The aim of education is not of that sort. It is to promote and unfold those activities of mind, that evolution of mind, through which only knowledge is real and by which only it can be retained and used. And this is still true if we agree that there is no process nor any product of mind that can be shown to be independent of experience.

When we turn to the question of *the factors of education*—the means and powers by which the growth of the human soul is promoted—it is a commonplace to say that

this poet counted nature, external nature, and the total order and beauty of the world, as one factor, and a great one. In its early books this poem is largely the record of the influence of nature on the poet's own mind. It seems to be a common opinion, among such as know Wordsworth and do not know the history of the nature sentiment, or even English poetry before Wordsworth, that he "began" this sentiment, and first "preached" education through nature. He did not begin it, but he was the first to grasp the sentiment to its depth and exemplify its influence and scope as an educative power. And it was he who first taught us the love of nature, and a free response to her, in her whole extent. In doing this he was profoundly right, and thereby he not only enriched the poetry but the life and thought of England, and the resources of culture for ever.

There are many lovely and many strong and subtle passages in the *Prelude* in which the work and influence of nature on the mind are set forth—passages, too, in which the poet gives us a philosophy of the educative influence of nature as he read it on the basis and from the vantage ground of his own experience. And those passages are

not "sentimental," nor do they deal with what is called the picturesque and romantic parts or aspects of nature only, or chiefly. In early days the poet began to feel influences deeper and subtler than those of the external beauty of nature. The peace and loneliness of nature, a certain mystic depth and suggestiveness in her life, and something of her grandeur and awe began to be felt even in his schooldays. It was years before the full sentiment of nature, her vital loveliness and greatness, were appreciated; but she was pretty soon a moral influence on his mind and in his life.

And his philosophy of this influence of nature, of which the chief exposition is in the *Prelude* and in the *Tintern* poem, is interesting, and touches other points in his scheme. The poet holds that mind and nature are fitted to each other; that they act and react on each other. Our minds are not aliens and strangers in the world when we arrive here; we are fitted to our scene of life. Beauty old as creation touches us, gladdens us, because our minds and our senses have been formed by the very powers and processes that have given form to all the beauty of the world. We respond to, we interpret, nay, in our finest moments we

"create," the truth and loveliness and splendour of the world, because the life of our senses, and the laws of our minds, are wrought in true affinity and vital correspondence with these. The "Spirit of the universe," that gives to all natural "forms and images breath and motion," builds up our souls by pure response to "works" that are the expression of a life akin to our own.

It was a bold doctrine at the time when the *Prelude* was written, and even when it was published. It was, we may say, a hypothesis devised to account for the action of nature on the poet's own mind, and the extraordinary freshness and vigour of that action. The sense of loveliness and joy that fell on his heart at dawn, or at midnight, or in the glory of the day, by the waters or among the hills, when the voice of winds or the stars of night touched the springs of feeling—that sense of beauty, that deep response of the soul to the life of things, seemed too great to have grown up in his brief life-time, in his single life. So he thought.

And now we should say that the poet's intuition, or hypothesis, must, in some sense, be true. We are made for nature, and

nature for us, to train intellect, feeling, sense, and all the passions that build up our minds in wisdom and strength. And the pity of it at present is, that so many of us have to go months and years without any real contact with it, so that many are losing sense of nature's eternal function in respect of human health and happiness. The growth of the mind and the heart cannot, in such cases, our poet held, be sound or satisfactory; and no doubt he is right. For, with some over-stress, he stood for a great truth, and for a true law of culture. Those of us who have scarcely ever seen the dawn, or felt the freshness of the morning, who have scarcely ever stood under the open sky and seen some wide landscape full of light and air, who have never felt the loneliness and peace of nature in quiet places, who have never in some still hour stood under the arch of the midnight sky alone—such, and there are not a few of them in our towns to-day, miss not only precious knowledge of the great world, but knowledge of themselves — of the heart, and the high powers of emotion and thought.

And our poet recognised almost more emphatically, though that is by no means a common opinion, our human environment

and our close and healthy relation to human life as a factor in our culture. He sees and sets forth in some remarkable passages of the *Prelude* his conviction that this is a condition of all culture that is real and to the quick. It is by touch with others, by knowing others, by taking and keeping in simple fidelity our due place with other lives, our full and frank relation to them, that "the human heart by which we live" is unfolded and nourished in us. The poet is grateful that he grew up in the freedom and simplicity of the little country town of Hawkshead, scarcely more than a village. When he returns to Hawkshead and the simple home where he had lived during his schooldays, he sees its human facts from a new point of view, and feels in a new and deeper way their interest, and something of their pathos and their moral significance. His very passion for nature, his sense of her grandeur and loveliness, gave an added meaning and dignity to human life, for nature is not merely the theatre of human life, she is the minister and teacher of man. He shares her life, he reads her meaning and rejoices in her beauty. She reflects something of her glory and her amplitude on man, even on peasants as they go about

their tasks and live their lives in her presence and by her help.

Thus it happens that this poet of the *Prelude*, who for many is no more than the poet of nature, is also the poet of the *Excursion*; is in truth even more the poet of simple lives and virtues, of rustic men and women, and the teacher for all of us of the precious life to be won, and the mellow wisdom to be got, from the essential virtues and simple tasks and relations of every honest human life. It was part of the "malady" of his crisis—that time when the good of things, their vital ground, seemed to have gone—that he lost the simple, cordial sense of the worth of the common life. It had gone dull and small; it had come to seem "a kind of trouble of ants" on the surface of a vast mechanism we call nature Both the world and human life had lost their "soul," he says—their substance and their value. And the recovery of his humanity, and a new conviction of the spirituality, the livingness of the world, brought back to him his poetic power—gave him that power, indeed, for the first time fully. He felt as he had never felt before the pure and tender interest of human lives, and a kind of sacred beauty in the simplest.

We may smile at his *Peter Bells* and *Simon Lees*, and even at his *Margarets*, his *Pedlars* and *Leech-Gatherers*—and they are rustics of course—but the vision and truth they are the vehicle of is a vision and truth of increasing value, and one that, whether for discipline or for life, can never grow old.

The position taken in the *Prelude* on this matter, and the strong conviction of the poet that no part of culture is so important as true human relations, raises the question of the best environment for this part of training, and the place of school life in it. Wordsworth was sent to school at Hawkshead when only eight years old, and he was there until he was seventeen. But the life at Hawkshead was of the simplest and most frugal kind, and extremely natural and homely. The boys were no way a class apart. They lived in the village, and the homely village life was a part of their lives. They knew the men and women of the place, and its events, its joys and sorrows. And Wordsworth holds that such normal environment and healthy experience of life is best. The heart is nourished, and grows familiar with the quality and relations of life, its facts of good and ill, of joy and

sorrow, and in time understands and responds to them.

To many this will seem but a part of this poet's "rusticity," and almost stoical frugality of experience. Yet on the main point we shall agree. A full and free natural environment is better for this part of training than an artificial one, and things on this side of life are learned rather by examples and deeds than by words. A selected environment for the better education of youth was one of the ideas of the poet's age. Wordsworth prefers the natural circumstances of life, and the children trained healthily amid such circumstances. In this matter, too, his "love of nature" sways him, and he prefers natural children, with their wits and feelings in sound order, to the children of artifice and pressure. His scheme is home and school life, not school life only. He would have recognised the moral training in a good school system, and given it a high value, but as poet and moralist he clung to the daily humanities. It is, of course, in part, a question of what you are training for, and of what your ideal of life is. If you are training for life simply as a rough struggle of wits and wills, and your ideal be skill and success

in such a contest, then a certain school system will give the training you want; but if your aim be a friendly and generous life and character, and a society whose citizens live in this spirit with each other, then perhaps the poet is right.

It is impossible to read the *Prelude*, especially to read it as a suggestive study of education, without thinking pretty frequently of Rousseau and the views he expounded in his *Émile*. There is little evidence that Wordsworth had studied the theories of Rousseau seriously; but the ideas and spirit of Rousseau were "in the air," and to get clearly the significance of some parts of the *Prelude*, it is useful, it is even necessary, to compare the two writers. On this matter of the scheme and factors of a true education a comparison is interesting; and on comparison important differences are found. Rousseau proposes an artificial scheme—he would isolate, and select conditions. He is thus working to a more or less abstract standard, and would form the child to a pattern of his own, while he regards himself as defending it against everything that might hinder or even disturb the natural development of its powers. And pretty largely Rousseau's "nature" and

his "natural being" are a fiction of "the revolt." He assumes a body of "native" instincts and impulses, which are there to act and which know what to do. As a consequence his doctrine is to a great extent a glorification of impulse; his scheme a plan to give leisure and scope to individual preferences. But life is not such a sphere, nor is society such a structure as he imagines, and no individual is ever constituted in the way he assumes. If the individual were such as Rousseau assumes, and his relation to society such as Rousseau supposes, then one could quite understand why social relations should bring feelings of constraint, and why it might be well to get the young into artificial utopias to train them freely, congenially. On the other hand, if the true individual and society belong to each other, and are closely interwoven from the first, the whole situation is very different from what Rousseau imagined, and our poet's views represent a better philosophy and a wiser *régime.* His is the old method of the world, we may say. He sees in the wholesome relations and process of life itself a priceless education for heart and will. For him the natural discipline and setting of life is best. In that order, helped

by the experience and by the love of others, and stimulated by our relations with them, we learn a careful wisdom, and that love of our kind without which "we are as dust," and life a thing of little worth.

Rousseau resented "interference," and stood for "the rights of nature." Wordsworth had a vigorous part in the protest, we have seen. But in his maturity he felt another resentment, and made another protest—those against the rash theorist and the sentimental reformer. One of these protests is to be found in the *Prelude* (bk. v. 347–363), where he speaks of—

These mighty workmen of our later age,
Who, with a broad highway, have overbridged
The froward chaos of futurity,
. . . ; they who have skill
To manage books, and things, and make them act
On infant minds as surely as the sun
Deals with a flower; the keepers of our time,
The guides and wardens of our faculties,
Sages who in their prescience would control
All accidents, and to the very road
Which they have fashioned would confine us down
Like engines; when will their presumption learn
That in the unreasoning progress of the world
A wiser spirit is at work for us—
A better eye than theirs, most prodigal
Of blessings, and most studious of our good,
Even in what seem our most unfruitful hours?

There is a "naturalism," modest and truthful, a moral induction, patient and very cautious, only impatient of self-confident meddlers and their ways. Now in this passage and the parts of his "argument" connected with it the poet was protesting against certain changes and on behalf of certain principles. He is opposed to those who would be for ever "instructing" and "improving," and who recognise nothing for education but their sort of instruction and improvement. He dislikes the self-conscious intellectualism and moral priggishness which their sort of education tended to produce, and holds the freedom and simplicity of his own training to have been better, and to have taught him greater things, besides giving his true nature a deeper stimulus and a sounder ethic. He draws "the model child" of the new education, "a miracle of scientific lore," shut "within the pinfold of his own conceit," and, for all his lore of science, shut away from nature (*Prelude*, v. 298–340). He wholly prefers "a race of real children; not too wise, too learned, or too good," but fresh, buoyant, natural, serious at times, and full of spirit (cf. *Prelude*, v. 411–420).

The protest here is not yet out of date on

the intellectual, or on the moral side of it. But as against this new type the poet gives certain further points in his own training which we ought to note: (1) The place of free reading from pure interest, and the worth of that. (2) The uses of romantic and childish literature. (3) The place of sports. (4) The proper spirit of youthful effort. (5) The worth and power of wonder and awe in the training of character.

Wordsworth put less value on books than most of us do, but he counted it one of the advantages of the simple scheme of education at Hawkshead that there were a few good books there, and that he was left free to read them out of pure interest in the spirit and matter of them. These books counted for much in opening his mind. They make a short list, but they are all good: Fielding, Swift, Cervantes, Lesage. They made a stronger impression on him than his class work. And it is a thing of the first importance for a capable young mind to come for itself into contact with the great minds that live through literature. The better part of education is in that contact. But what can be done to this end? Books can be put within reach, and inducements given to read them, or else the matter be left quite

open if the books be there. There is the difficulty of time and "used up" interest, which our crowded curriculum makes; and there is the danger, great at present, of reading the many books that are worth so little, and often nothing at all, and leaving unread the great books. The whole matter demands thoughtful attention.

Then it is interesting to find the poet defending against the prosaic educationists of his day the beautiful uses of the old romances and fairy books (cf. *Prelude*, v. 341–46). After naming some of them in glad reminiscence—*Old Fortunatus*, *Jack the Giant Killer*, *Robin Hood*, and "Sabra in the Forest with St. George,"—he says:

> The child whose love is here at least doth reap
> One precious gain,—that he forgets himself.

Further on in the same book of the *Prelude* (v. 460–78), he tells of a certain "yellow canvas-covered book," containing some of "the Arabian tales," which led him to long for the whole collection. The typical 18th century mind did not know the moral or the intellectual worth of these things, but it was fit that the poet of the new romantic movement should thus early respond to the charm of the old romances, and he speaks

finely of their appeal to feeling and imagination — those "dreamers" and "forgers of fairy tales" who make us strangely aware of

> Faculties to whom
> Earth crouches, the elements are potter's clay,
> Space like a heaven filled up with northern lights,
> Here, nowhere, there, and everywhere at once.
> (*Prelude*, v. 510–33.)

It is a further point of interest in the *Prelude*, the zest with which this boy threw himself into the sports and pastimes of his youth; the zest, too, with which the poet describes them and the place he assigns them in the "growth of his mind." In that he is English. Thousands of youths have done and will do that. That is a lively form of "self-education," it may seem, and one we have carried pretty far, without any poet's encouragement. There are schools, it is hinted, that exist largely for that form of education. That it is education, not exercise only, and valuable education too, goes without saying. But the points to be noted in the parts of the *Prelude* in which the poet describes the sports of his youth are that they are all associated with nature, and that some of the subtlest and deepest glimpses into nature of the poet's school-

days arose in connection with those pleasant sports. The keen play of the senses and the nerves, the state of exhilaration and delight connected with healthy sports in the face of nature, were the occasion of those insights, doubtless. But the fact has possibly an educational value. It points to more than the poetic sensibility of this lad. It points also to the extraordinary purity and delicacy of the senses when cultivated by vigorous exercise and constant contact with nature. The pity of it is that our sports are so often dissociated from nature, and that they seem to leave no leisure for what of nature there may be about (cf. bk. i. 326–339, 425–498, 567–596; bk. ii. 5–77, 115–137, 164–175; bk. v. 364–388).

There is another point that comes up in connection with these sports, but has a much wider bearing. This poet condemns emulation and rivalry in sports and in studies. On both lines the competition was "mild" in his day. We have developed it greatly since the early years of this century. Wordsworth was quite against it. To him it seemed the poorest of principles to appeal to in education, the least fruitfully stimulating, and, as a motive with reference to character, the least social and humanly

serviceable. For himself he refused to act on it, and indeed he acted through life on the contrary principle, standing with stoical independence on the merit of his work whatever it might prove to be.

The principle of rivalry has gone deeply into our system of education since then. It is indeed now assumed to be a fundamental principle of the struggle of existence and of the progress of life. It is a fair question what our standard of "progress" is in that case, and whether the best common good is not better. In any case we are paying a good deal for this "competition" and our constant appeal to this principle of selection; and it behoves us to see what we are doing, and whither it is taking us.

It is said that you cannot get the general mind to work without, that you will not get the best results of the best minds without "emulation." Our poet, on the contrary, urges that "toil and pains should spread from heart to heart" by sympathy and by the spirit of the place and the society (bk. iii. 378); and that knowledge should be "sincerely sought and prized for its own sake" (bk. iii. 389–90). He says elsewhere (in a letter of 1846), "I have from my youth cultivated knowledge for

its own sake and for the good that may come out of it." It is pretty certain that he there speaks for the highest class of "workers" of every sort. Truth and beauty can only be won on terms of pure service. The more we can get of such "service" the better. And if we urge that our "great competitive system" is simply a rough and ready test for the readiest, if not the best, practical talent, let us give it the value it has in that way. Only let us make a strong stand against covering the field of educational influence and work with the spirit and appeal of emulation. For even if it be admitted that it must come into play in practical life, and that it is a part of life's discipline there, that may be a reason against, and not at all in favour of, bringing it into the earlier years. It is surely to be desired that those years should be kept for higher and more generous emotions and principles.

Then in the matter of education, conceived as a full and genial growth of mind, there is a further principle in the *Prelude* we ought not to omit, and that is the value the poet puts on the emotion of admiration deepening into wonder and awe. This is a chord of the romantic spirit which the

Prelude, like other works of its author, frequently strikes. It was in part because in his own experience nature, in impressive hours and great phenomena, struck this chord so strongly, that he urges her function in education, her value for imagination. He thought his age lacking in what was for him a principle rather than a sentiment, and it was one great aim of his art to recover and interpret this principle. Are we not in some danger of losing it? Is nature not made often enough to seem a great and interesting machine, and nothing more? Is there not a tendency for our "little light" to banish wonder and leave only curiosity, and in certain cases a sense of our own cleverness chiefly? But the "higher mind" is then best nourished and expanded when it is drawn on to admire and feel little of itself and much of the greatness of the world that offers itself through all experience to be known.

"We live by admiration," says our poet. And for him the principle of wonder meant not only that there is more to be known, nor only that that more is immeasurable, but that it is of such sort that it upholds and cherishes the amplest and best life of our minds. And then only are we "reading"

things rightly when our science has this result. There is a kind of teaching which makes knowledge and the world too seem little and of no great interest. And there is a way of teaching which makes knowledge, as a human achievement, seem great, yet hardly touches the sense of wonder at all, and never the sense of worship. Yet the latter is not more necessary to consummate knowledge than it is to stimulate mind, and only the teaching that modestly has it can reach the finer results, or maintain them through fruitful activity in the life of the mind.

And if the *Prelude* has thus our poet's intuition of the greatness of the world, it has even more distinctively his sense of the greatness, and what is often called the spirituality, of the mind. "Dust as we are" our natures have yet an "immortal" quality. Through spirit we have intuition of the nature of things. Through wisdom and goodwill we share that nature. We have seen how the poet implicitly held the organic quality of mind. We have noted his large and subtle conception of "the growth of mind," and how his idea of the correspondence of Nature and Mind carries in it a large and subtle conception of "the history of mind." And we have seen how

for our poet mind is a "creative" power, and knowledge a "creative" interpretation.

In this he is romantic, not rationalist. He is here in sympathy with Coleridge, in reaction from Hartley and against Hume. He was one of the first to strike the roots of his view of human nature into the deep grounds of the new thought. He is "transcendentalist" as well as romantic. He was one of the first to reject the mechanical theory of mind—one of the first to get a glimpse of the evolution of mind in relation both to its own life and the life of nature. Very largely through sympathy with the moral nature of man, and through an original insight into, and an independent judgment regarding, moral facts, he got behind the sensualism of Hobbes, the individualism of Locke, the atomism of Hume. For him mind is great, not merely through its achievements, but in its principles and its essential relations. The most living part of a living universe, it has not only been built by the elements and laws of that universe through its whole process, but it stands somehow above it as interpreter, clothed with a power and a dignity that are all its own. The play of nature's

forces and relations upon mind does not explain mind, nor the tissue and structure of inferences from any sensuous experience as such. Mind brings a principle of its own to give structure and meaning to such experience, and is aware of a Law above all laws—of a Reason that is the "fountain light of all our day," the "Master light of all our seeing."

But whether this be true or matter of opinion only, what has it to do with education? Not a little, as it seems to us. It is enough to suggest its bearings. The great teachers have been those who have worked with a great and fruitful idea of mind, and of human nature. A temper of exhaustless interest in, and of reverence towards, the human mind is needed if the teacher would keep the patience and gather the wisdom required for his work. Only such interest and reverence can help him to watch, or enable him to guide, that fair development of minds which is his best task and his finer reward. For if the poet's idea of the nature and destiny of minds be right, then knowledge is for minds, not minds for knowledge. Mind is greater and richer than the science we have hitherto systematised, than the art we have so far

shaped; and the temper of the true teacher, and the scope of his teaching, will recognise this even where such recognition is very simple or may be quite implicit. It will be seen in his respect for growing and flexible intelligences. It will keep him from pedagogic hardening and dogmatism. It will be felt in his spirit of openness and hopefulness towards young minds. It will lift, ahead of means and tasks alike, a generous notion of what these minds ought to become—a fair ideal of the life that belongs to them, and will give, too, a grounded hope of its realisation.

Then these later points bring us to certain ethical ideas of Wordsworth's poetry which have such bearing on education that we must, at least, indicate that bearing ere we bring this paper to a close. Most of the poet's critics have dealt with those ideas in a wider relation. M. Legouis has an interesting criticism of some of them in the last part of his *Study*. But there is one that is not dealt with, and that is not perhaps easy to state fully. It is the way in which our poet reached his sense of ethical reality, and took up that posture of interest, acceptance and free response to life and the world as they are around us, which is a

critical point in the development of most natures. This is sometimes dealt with as "the rise of belief," sometimes as the awaking of "moral consciousness." In the case of a good many in recent years, as in the case of Wordsworth, it may be said to pass through more than one stage, and to be consummated only after a "crisis." In its main principle it is the sense of ethical reality, the sense of a world and an order of life about us which sets the conditions of our lives, and towards which we must take up a certain posture. Like most who have lived, and learned by living, our poet passed through a period of alienation and even revolt, and thereafter came to a time of cordial acceptance and loyal response. He then knew his place, the meaning of duty, and the worth of things, for the first time. He not merely recognised that a man must put himself into the world as it is because it is his only world, but he took his place in frank and simple allegiance and obedience to the great order in which he found himself.

Is one mistaken in thinking that many—that all—natures of any force and independence, of any earnestness or ideality, need wise help here, and that the time when such help is needed is always critical?

Goethe recognises the crisis in his *Wilhelm Meister*, and Carlyle in his *Sartor*; and Omar Khayyám, in a different temper, long before either. It comes as we become aware of will and judgment in face of a "world"; it comes acutely with the sense of a world that does not answer to desire or to reason apparently, and is thrust upon us. We then need the poet's truth. We must be brought to see that our "seed-plot of time" is our one field, and that we must take it heartily and till it, "for good and all." To unfold "belief" in this sense, to cultivate a ready allegiance to reality, is an important part of training, and if life does the greater part of it, wise help can often guide heart and will to the right attitude and decision.

This will appear a small matter, a slight achievement. It may even seem that most minds achieve it unawares. We should say that such is not the case, and that most minds pass through the "crisis" we are describing when they turn from dreams and fancies, and wishes, and vague hopes, that yet are scarcely hopes, of a scheme of life shaped to the heart's desire, to accept the fact as it is and make what they can of it. But not to get farther than this were certainly to stop at the beginning. To

accept reality, even if we accept it ethically, with a frank determination to take it for all it is worth, is to have got but a little way. If we "nor love nor hate our life," we shall hardly, any of us, most of us pretty certainly will not, "live well what we live." Much reasonableness, a certain goodness, a certain austere pleasure can be got on those terms; but that loyalty to and zeal for reality, without which most find it impossible to live "well," demands more surely. We need for that not only the eye to see the fact, and the will to take it for all it may be worth, but the heart to love it. And how get and how keep that? Through perception of its lovableness, through the conviction that it is good. But the fact, as it is, is not wholly fair or good, and it often seems hard to put the heart cordially into it. To the poet, as we have seen, it was so at one time. All things in the life of man seemed worse than unprofitable, and the world itself dull and poor. Through the "thinking heart" it was that he again took up the facts of life and of the world and found for the first time their simple beauty and goodness, and a meaning in them that proved to be now too rich for words.

It often seems as if this part of vital

culture were omitted or forgotten. It is thought, perhaps, that every one can get at this "secret" for himself, and that none can really help another. Yet one great lesson of this poetry is that a mind that has the secret can put other minds on the track of it, and even make it one of their possessions. The joy of beauty, the sense of good, a deep faith in things, and a strong, simple love of man can be thus communicated. Can any gift of culture be more precious? Yet often enough this sense of the interest and worth of life and of the world is the one thing education fails to give. It fosters a certain impatience with, or superiority to, the old and simple things of the world. It begets a tendency to pessimism. It raises a doubt whether goodness be worth the effort it costs, the reward it brings. To such cynicism and leanness of soul the poet virtually says, "Open your eyes to the world, your hearts to the life about you. Learn to see things through faith in and love of them, through their 'total beauty and meaning,' not through their 'partial appearances.' Live simply for high ends. Put yourself in touch with your kind. Learn to care for them if only because they are tied up in the same bundle of life with yourself.

Learn the value and beauty of simple lives and lowly virtues. Set yourself to live kindly with all sorts of men, and you will soon find that the best you can bring to the general good will seem all too little. And therein you will have found that which gives satisfaction through the sense of a growing and an infinite good."

Wordsworth's conviction of the goodness of things and of the worth of life was thus a moral intuition and an imaginative truth. It did not rest on any dogma, and still less on any dream. It rested squarely, we may say, on a poetic construction of the life of things in relation to human nature and the mind of man. He gave up his dreams—his scheme of a world as he would have it; he gave up his revolt from a world that would not have his dreams thrust on it there and then; he gave up his rationalism, his abstract scheme of a world according to reason. And for what did he give up dreams, doubts, and the dogmas of reason? For the customary way, for the old tradition, and things as they are? No, not so really. What he did really, and what gives value, on the large question in hand, to the *Prelude*, to the *Lyrics*, and even to the *Excursion* is this, as it seems to us, that he

says on this question through the whole of his mature work, "Take the world and the life of man as they are, make the best of them, and you will find that all necessary good is possible. You will find the adequacy of the kindly honest life, however simple. You will find besides that the life and powers of man make his spiritual hopes reasonable. And you will join the great fellowship of men moving towards the unknown goal with patient and splendid trust." So we read many passages which it is impossible here to quote. And if we read them rightly you have there a temper and a truth needed then, needed now, and good always. Well is it for the youth, or the man, whose larger education brings him to these convictions, and settles him in this spirit, in despite of all that fights against them.

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