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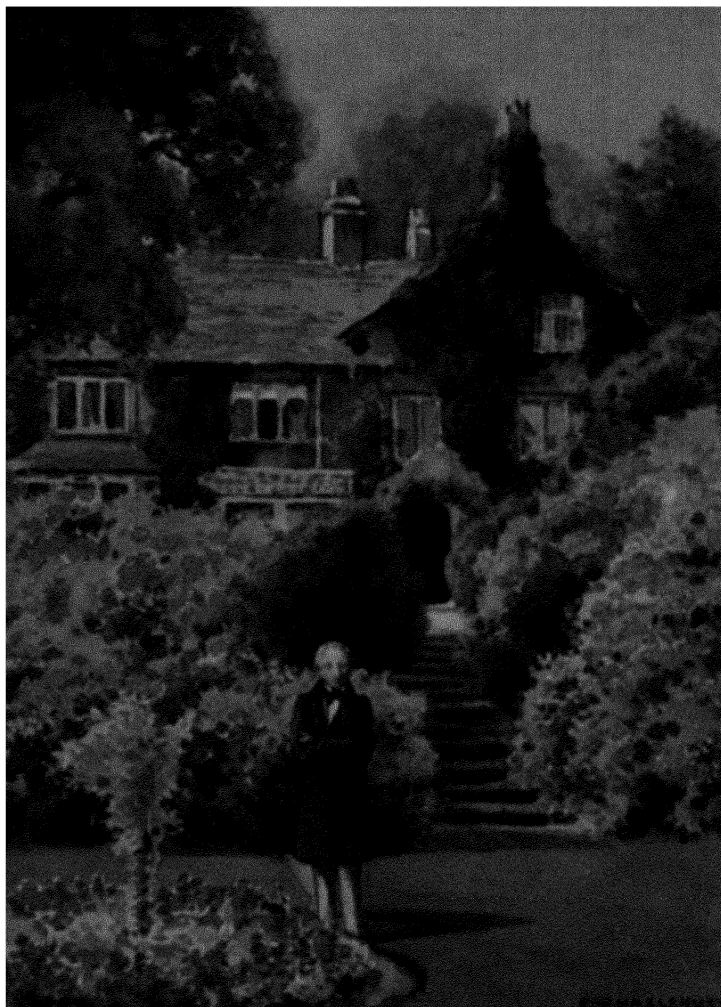
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Painting by E. W. Haslehurst.

WORDSWORTH'S HOME AT RYDAL MOUNT

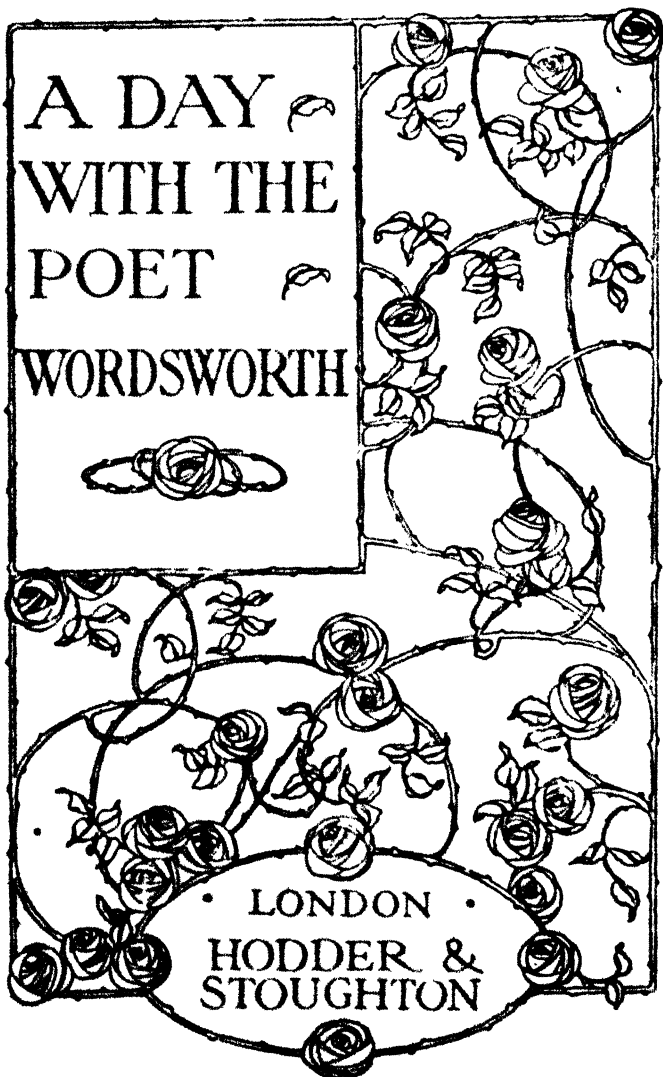
"A low, grey, cottage-like building swathed in roses and ivy, and embowered in a luxuriant growth of trees."



A DAY
WITH THE
POET
WORDSWORTH



• LONDON •
HODDER &
STOUGHTON



In the same Series.

Burns.

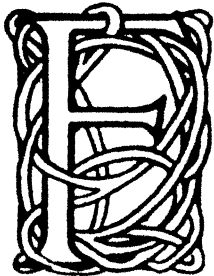
Tennyson.

Longfellow.

Browning.

Keats.

ADAY WITH WORDSWORTH



FROM a low, grey, cottage-like building, swathed in roses and ivy, and embowered in a luxuriant growth of trees, a tall man came forth one fine spring morning about ninety years ago. He passed along the paths of his picturesque irregular garden, where wild flowers and ferns grew interblended with old-fashioned garden blossoms, and, descending to the green mound a few steps below his house, looked out upon the magnificent views which surrounded him, towards Wansfell, Windermere and Loughrigg Fell. To gaze upon the incomparable beauty of this scenery, among which he had pitched his dwelling, was a joy which never palled—new every morning to the heart of William Wordsworth.

“I do not know any tract of country,” he had remarked, “in which, within so narrow a compass, may be found an equal variety in the influence of light and shadow upon the sublime

A DAY WITH WORDSWORTH

and beautiful features of landscape.” And the contemplative yet passionate delight in nature, which superseded every other emotion in the poet’s mind, transfused these colours and contours, already sufficiently lovely in themselves, with “the light that never was on sea or shore.”

“Paradise, and groves
Elysian, Fortunate Fields, like those of old
Sought in the Atlantic main—why should they be
A history only of departed things,
Or a mere fiction of what never was?
For the discerning intellect of man,
When wedded to this goodly universe
In love and holy passion, shall find these
A simple produce of the common day.”

The Excursion.

In personal appearance, Wordsworth was not out of keeping with his *milieu*. “More like a mountain farmer than a lake poet,” with his dark rugged face, grey hair, and fine build, he had a certain gallant bearing, “curiously reminding one,” as Leigh Hunt observed, “of the Duke of Wellington.” He was large-boned, lean, firm-knit: an indefatigable walker, and an excellent skater to his life’s end. And over his whole mien and manner there sat what Carlyle

A DAY WITH WORDSWORTH

termed "a pure, wholesome rusticity, fresh as his mountain breezes." For the rest, he has drawn his own portrait, as none else could, in a few terse lines.

"But who is he, with modest looks,
And clad in homely russet brown?
He murmurs near the running brooks
A music sweeter than their own.

He is retired as noontide dew,
Or fountain in a noon-day grove;
And you must love him, ere to you
He will seem worthy of your love.

The outward shows of sky and earth,
Of hill and valley, he has viewed;
And impulses of deeper birth
Have come to him in solitude.

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

A Poet's Epitaph.

Wordsworth turned, after a few ecstatic moments, and re-entered the door of Rydal Mount, with its *Salve* giving greeting to all

A DAY WITH WORDSWORTH

comers. In the dining-room, a simple apartment unceiled and with the rafters showing, he sat down and summoned his household to family prayers, always the first function of the day. For this was a man who "seemed to be living as if in the presence of God by continual recollection," and a consciousness of the Divine Presence permeated all his words and deeds. He read in a dignified and exalted manner, with a deep rough voice and a strong north-country burr.

Breakfast followed—the simplest of meals, principally consisting of porridge. At the table were seated Wordsworth's three children, John, William, and Dora: his wife Mary, and his sister Dorothy. He was, as it has been said, "fortunate above the ordinary lot of mortals in his woman-kind." His sister, who had lived many years with him, practically devoting her life to him, sharing his most strenuous mountain excursions, supplied exactly that lightness and gaiety which he lacked. "She is a woman indeed!" Coleridge has declared, "in mind, I mean, and heart: for her person is such that if you expected to see a pretty woman, you would think her rather ordinary: if you expected to see an ordinary woman, you would think her pretty." Her

Painting by Lewis Baumer.

SHE WAS A PHANTOM OF DELIGHT

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 way-lay.

A DAY WITH WORDSWORTH

tastes were exactly similar to her brother's: no more perfect companion could have been found. And he had addressed to her these lines of thrilling beauty—

“ . . . Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk ;
And let the misty mountain-winds be free
To blow against thee : and, in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure ; when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies ; oh ! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing
thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me ! ”

Tintern Abbey.

As for Mrs. Wordsworth, whom her husband always addressed with tenderness, whose presence of peace and purity was like a perpetual benediction, she was the very complement of his own being. She conveyed an element of repose and stability into his existence. She had a keen poetical instinct and appreciative taste: and, in short, no happier marriage than

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theirs can be imagined: in every sense of the word it was a union. Mary Wordsworth was not a beautiful woman; but in this fact her husband rather gloried:

“Let other bards of angels sing,
Bright suns without a spot ;
But thou art no such perfect thing :
Rejoice that thou art not!

Heed not tho’ none should call thee fair ;
So, Mary, let it be
If nought in loveliness compare
With what thou art to me.

True beauty dwells in deep retreats,
Whose veil is unremoved
Till heart with heart in concord beats,
And the lover is beloved.”

And he has commemorated her gracious and tender sweetness,—not only in the “Lucy” poems, of which she is supposed to be the heroine, but in that unrivalled word-painting, showing “how divine a thing a woman may be made,” *She was a Phantom of Delight*.

She was a Phantom of delight
When first she gleamed upon my sight;

A DAY WITH WORDSWORTH

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 way-lay.

I saw her upon nearer view,
A Spirit, yet a Woman too!
Her household motions light and free,
And steps of virgin-liberty;
A countenance in which did meet
Sweet records, promises as sweet;
A Creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food;
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.

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,

A DAY WITH WORDSWORTH

To warn, to comfort, and command;
And yet a Spirit still, and bright
With something of angelic light.

Breakfast over, the poet retired into his study for a while. It was not his best working-place: he always composed and wrote, when possible, walking to and fro in some spot where nothing was likely to break the continuity of his thought—and a straight gravel path, or lonely road, pleased him best for this purpose. Moreover, to Wordsworth the mental effort of creation was productive of a corresponding physical exhaustion—and a strange, uneasy discomfort. His eyes were unsuited for literary work—those inspired and supernatural eyes, smouldering with deep-seated fire, which impressed so many observers. He seemed to see in all objects something far beyond their outward semblance: but this rarefied and abnormal outlook could hardly be tied down to pen and paper: and, in short, he not only hated the manual labour of writing,—and his caligraphy was singularly bad,—but his whole build was that least intended for a sedentary life. “Poetic excitement,” he said, “has throughout my life brought on more or less physical derangement.”

A DAY WITH WORDSWORTH

But certain tasks must be accomplished indoors; and he never ceased to polish and revise what he had already written: he was “patiently laborious over the perfection of his work.”

Meanwhile, the cheerful voices of the children were heard about the house and garden: and, dimly through his meditations, Wordsworth heard them, with what one may term an austere satisfaction. He did not care for children in general; other people’s children were rather afraid of the big, gaunt, abstracted man. For his own, he had a deep and silent love—and nothing could obliterate from his mind the loss of two who had died before the Rydal days. And little Hartley Coleridge, that creature “exquisitely wild,” was dear to him as his own: and the inspiration of one of his loveliest poems.

“O thou! whose fancies from afar are brought;
Who of thy words dost make a mock apparel,
And fittest to unutterable thought
The breeze-like motion and the self-born carol:
Thou faery voyager! that dost float
In such clear water, that thy boat
May rather seem
To brood on air than on an earthly stream;

A DAY WITH WORDSWORTH

Suspended in a stream as clear as sky,
Where earth and air do make one imagery;
O blessed vision! happy child!
Thou art so exquisitely wild,
I think of thee with many fears
For what may be thy lot in future years.

.

Thou art a dew-drop, which the morn brings
forth,
Ill fitted to sustain unkindly shocks,
Or to be trailed along the soiling earth;
A gem that glitters while it lives,
And no forewarning gives;
But, at the touch of wrong, without a strife
Slips in a moment out of life.

To H. C., Six years old.

But, on the whole, the poet was too grave; too transcendental to take children as they were. He passed them "through the crucible of his own personality:" and it is not the child itself, so much as the man's wonder at it, which speaks in such poems as *Alice Fell*, *The Pet Lamb*, and—

Painting by Lewis Baumer.

WE ARE SEVEN

. A simple child,
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death?

I met a little cottage girl :
She was eight years old, she said ;
Her hair was thick with many a curl
That clustered round her head.

She had a rustic, woodland air,
And she was wildly clad :
Her eyes were fair, and very fair ;
Her beauty made me glad.

We Are Seven.



A DAY WITH WORDSWORTH

WE ARE SEVEN.

. . . A simple Child,
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death?
I met a little cottage Girl:
She was eight years old, she said;
Her hair was thick with many a curl
That clustered round her head.
She had a rustic, woodland air,
And she was wildly clad:
Her eyes were fair, and very fair;
—Her beauty made me glad.
“Sisters and brothers, little Maid,
How many may you be?”
“How many? Seven in all,” she said,
And wondering looked at me.
“And where are they? I pray you tell.”
She answered, “Seven are we;
And two of us at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea.
“Two of us in the church-yard lie,
My sister and my brother;
And, in the church-yard cottage, I
Dwell near them with my mother.”

A DAY WITH WORDSWORTH

“You say that two at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea,
Yet ye are seven! I pray you tell,
Sweet Maid, how this may be.”

Then did the little Maid reply,
“Seven boys and girls are we;
Two of us in the church-yard lie,
Beneath the church-yard tree.”

“You run about, my little Maid,
Yours limbs they are alive;
If two are in the church-yard laid,
Then ye are only five.”

“Their graves are green, they may be seen,”
The little Maid replied,
“Twelve steps or more from my mother’s
door,
And they are side by side.

“My stockings there I often knit,
My kerchief there I hem;
And there upon the ground I sit,
And sing a song to them.

“And often after sun-set, Sir,
When it is light and fair,
I take my little porringer,
And eat my supper there.

A DAY WITH WORDSWORTH

“The first that died was sister Jane;
In bed she moaning lay,
Till God released her of her pain;
And then she went away.

“So in the church-yard she was laid;
And when the grass was dry,
Together round her grave we played,
My brother John and I,

“And when the ground was white with snow,
And I could run and slide,
My brother John was forced to go,
And he lies by her side.”

“How many are you, then,” said I,
“If they two are in heaven?”
Quick was the little Maid’s reply,
“O, Master! we are seven.”

“But they are dead, those two are dead!
Their spirits are in heaven!”
’Twas throwing words away; for still
The little Maid would have her will,
And said, “Nay, we are seven!”

Wordsworth had now reached what, for him, spelt affluence. After considerable struggles with poverty and difficulty, he had been appointed Stamp Distributor for Westmoreland,

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a post involving the lightest and slightest of duties, but bringing in about £400 a year. So he was able to devote himself, without external harassment, to his purpose in poetry, as he had avowed it,—“to console the afflicted: to add sunshine to daylight, by making the happy happier: to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think, to feel, and therefore to become more actively and securely virtuous.” And this end could only be attained by surrendering one’s whole faculties to the influence of that Nature, which

“never did betray

The heart that loved her; ’tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy”,

Tintern Abbey.

until one note of bird-song shall evoke a vision ethereal as that of Poor Susan.

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.

A DAY WITH WORDSWORTH

'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!

The Reverie of Poor Susan.

It was therefore inevitable that Wordsworth, grudging every moment indoors, should soon betake himself to the open air; for thence only could he derive and maintain his marvellous gift,

A DAY WITH WORDSWORTH

that of "spreading the tone, the atmosphere, and with it the depths and height of the ideal world, around forms, incidents, and situations, of which, from the common view, custom had bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up all the sparkle and the dewdrops." (Coleridge). He went out first into the garden, and did an hour's good labour there. In this small domain there was little scope for him to exercise that remarkable talent for landscape gardening, which has left such notable effects in the northern counties. But gardening is in itself a tranquillizing and sedative occupation; and a man can think as he works. . . Then he made answer to the wilder summons of the mountains—to that perpetual voice of falling streams which calls continually through the Lake country; and strode off, a lean lonely form with a lounging gait, murmuring thunderously to himself as he paced his favourite paths. His big dog looked wistfully after him from the gate; but did not dare to follow. Wordsworth's eyes took in details almost unconsciously—those details to which he was susceptible and sensitive: for on some sides he was not so. He did not care for animals, for instance, except small ponies: if he noted them or wrote of them, it was not with any real affection. Towards trees

A DAY WITH WORDSWORTH

he had a great tenderness, often stopping to save them from the woodman's axe: and various stratagems were resorted to by the rustics, to prevent "Mister Wudswuth" perceiving the depletion of some favourite piece of copse. And, although, in theory, he loved the simple dalesfolk who surrounded him, he had no desire to speak with them, or to project himself personally into their homely lives. He was "not a man," as they said, "that folks could crack wi', nor not a man who could crack wi' folks." Occasionally he gave particular heed to some person who blended in with his thoughts and with the scene; like that Highland Girl whom he commemorated in two poems, and who always haunted his thoughts,—so that in old age he still declared, "I have a most vivid remembrance of her, and of the beautiful objects by which she was surrounded." But he only regarded her as part of the whole.

Behold her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland Lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!

A DAY WITH WORDSWORTH

Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! for the Vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

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

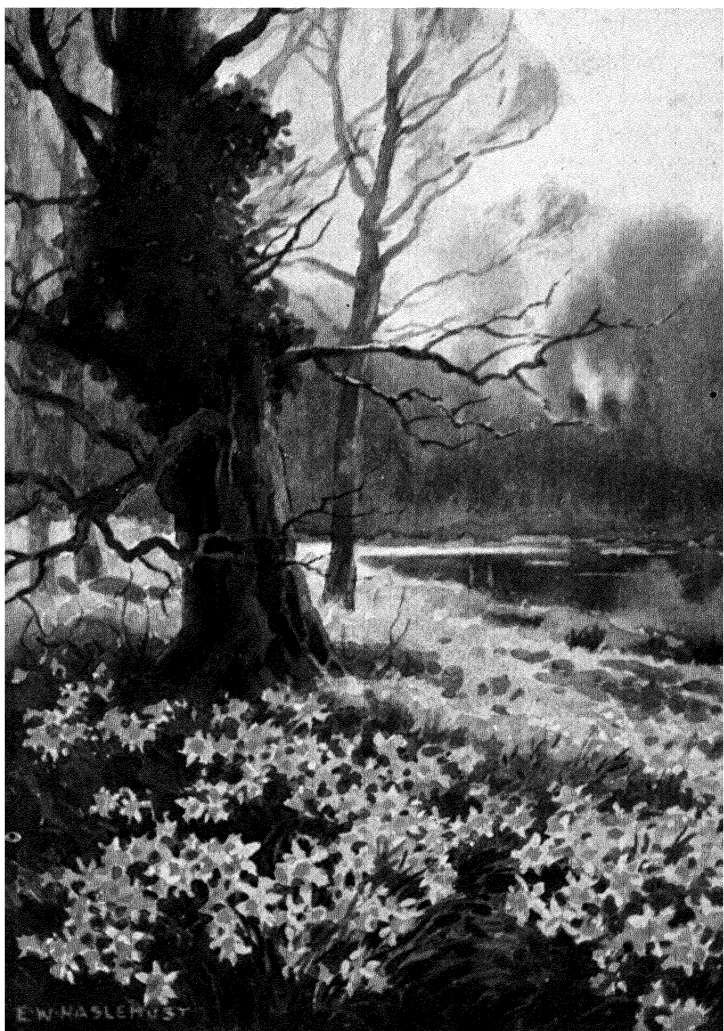
Will no one tell me what she sings?—
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago:
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been and may be again?

Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending;—

Painting by E. W. Haslehurst.

THE DAFFODILS

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils ;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.



A DAY WITH WORDSWORTH

I listened motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

The Solitary Reaper.

No, Wordsworth could never be termed a “gregarious man.” His lips moving, his head sunk down in solemn thought, it was a silent solitary figure that came down to the edge of Rydal Water, and there encountered a joyful surprise.

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the Milky Way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

A DAY WITH WORDSWORTH

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

When Wordsworth reached home again, he retired at once to his study, there to set down the impressions received during his walk. "Poetry," he had said, "is emotion remembered in tranquillity." And he would become so absorbed in his efforts, that to all extraneous matters he was deaf and blind. The dinner bell would ring in vain again and again: until Mrs. Wordsworth, despairing, would give directions for a plate to be dropped or a bottle allowed to break, just outside the study door! This was the only known way certain to conjure the recluse to his dinner;—a simple meal,

A DAY WITH WORDSWORTH

usually consisting of mutton in some form or other.

If some visitor had arrived in time for the midday meal, his first impression would be that of *peace*. Wordsworth was, as a friend had said "a *still* man;" with a smile which "was a solemn affair and speedily vanished," though on rare occasions he could be almost playful. He spoke naturally and fluently, with a total absence of affectation; but it was always on weighty subjects. He was ready to talk by the hour on politics, on religious or philosophical subjects. But of small-talk—the ordinary small-change of conversation in its lightest aspects—he had absolutely none. And there was no doubt that—for all his benignant and courteous welcome to them—he did not want visitors. His one idea, indeed, was to get away from them: and if he could escort them, after they had remained a reasonable time, to Ambleside or some other convenient jumping-off place, it is probable that he availed himself of his opportunity. While he thus artlessly made haste to speed the parting guest, the latter was not aware of it: for "never did any one so beguile the time, as Wordsworth," said Crabb Robinson. "His purity of heart, his kindness, his soundness of principle, his informa-

A DAY WITH WORDSWORTH

tion, his knowledge and the intense and eager feeling with which he pours forth all he knows, affect, interest and enchant me." He was not averse from quoting and reciting his own poems; and singularly effective they were in his deep sonorous accents, with a certain chant in the recitation, which, according to Leigh Hunt, was apt to act as a spell and disarm the judgment. Personally, he preferred to intone his more didactic and philosophic poems: but his companions would rather be vouchsafed those exquisite lyrics which were evolved while his melody still flowed freshly and spontaneous: those delicate delineations of ideal maidenhood which remain unapproached and unapproachable, such as

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

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

Painting by Lewis Bauer

LUCY

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

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

A DAY WITH WORDSWORTH

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

or the noble imagination of

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

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

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

"The floating clouds their state shall lend
To her; for her the willow bend;

A DAY WITH WORDSWORTH

Nor shall she fail to see
Even in the motions of the Storm
Grace that shall mould the Maiden's form
By silent sympathy.

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

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

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

But, in any case, the sole conversation turned on poetry, as Wordsworth accompanied his guests across the hills. Poetry had been

A DAY WITH WORDSWORTH

with him, as we have said, the sole business of life: he thought and spoke of nothing else. He had "lived the life of a hermit, partaking little of the pursuits, and knowing little of the habits of men of the world." And as he talked on, his left hand thrust into the bosom of his waistcoat, and his solemn stately utterance enhancing the simple beauty of his diction, the stranger was more than ever loth to conclude a companionship so unique.

Having parted with his visitor, the poet retraced his homeward steps, and did not loiter: for tea was punctually at six, and after tea came his best working-time of the day. He sat a few moments to rest in his big armchair, beside the large old-fashioned hearth with its high mantel-piece: a small fire burned there, for comfortable appearance rather than of necessity. And the family assembled round the tea-table, simple, happy, quiet: for the inner life of Rydal Mount was as loving as its external looks were lovely, and both master and mistress wore "the holy calmness of a heart to which love had been an unerring light."

Wordsworth then shut himself awhile in his study; a few letters had to be answered, a few ideas recorded: there were books to read, and

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proofs to revise. But, as before, four walls could not contain him. The cuckoo clock was striking seven when he emerged from the house, and was away into the darkening roads, walking to and fro with rapid measured gait, “mumbling and stopping,” as the old dalesman described him, “and seeing nowt nor nobody.” But he heard, it is certain: the murmur of the cataracts was fused into the passion of the nightingale; and the stock-dove crooned its good night among the branches.

O Nightingale! thou surely art
A creature of a “fiery heart:”—
These notes of thine—they pierce and pierce;
Tumultuous harmony and fierce!
Thou sing’st as if the God of wine
Had helped thee to a Valentine;
A song in mockery and despite
Of shades, and dews, and silent night;
And steady bliss, and all the loves
Now sleeping in these peaceful groves.
I heard a Stock-dove sing or say
His homely tale, this very day;
His voice was buried among trees,
Yet to be come-at by the breeze:
He did not cease; but cooed—and cooed;

A DAY WITH WORDSWORTH

And somewhat pensively he wooed:
He sang of love, with quiet blending,
Slow to begin, and never ending;
Of serious faith, and inward glee;
That was the song—the song for me!

And the cuckoo called across Windermere,
like a fugitive voice of dream.

O blithe New-comer! I have heard,
I hear thee and rejoice.
O Cuckoo! shall I call thee Bird,
Or but a wandering Voice?

While I am lying on the grass
Thy twofold shout I hear,
From hill to hill it seems to pass,
At once far off, and near.

Though babbling only to the Vale,
Of sunshine and of flowers,
Thou bringest unto me a tale
Of visionary hours.

.

O blessed Bird! the earth we pace
Again appears to be
An unsubstantial, faery place;
That is fit Home for thee!

To the Cuckoo.

A DAY WITH WORDSWORTH

The tall grey man climbed back to his house in the dusk: the children were in bed, and the candles were lighted, and the frugal supper of porridge and cheese awaited him. He hardly seemed to know that he was supping: every now and then his head drooped and his eyes half closed, and he was swallowed up in great gulfs of thought, "caverns measureless to man." The "call of the wild" was still upon him: soon he rose from the table and went out, for the last time that day, to commune alone with Nature. The divine fire, for which in all humility he waited, had descended upon the altar of his spirit.

The stars were now standing upon the mountain-tops, and the cold chilliness of dew held all the air. Night, divested of the trappings and conventions of day, appealed with magic force to Wordsworth's "intense and real simplicity of outlook." He felt within him once more the unimaginable faiths of childhood—what he termed its "all soulness" and absolute spirituality. "To carry on the feelings of childhood into the powers of manhood: to combine the child's sense of wonder and novelty with the appearances which every day for perhaps forty years has made familiar,

Painting by Lewis Baumer.

THOU HAPPY SHEPHERD BOY

I hear the echoes through the mountains throng,
The winds come to me from the fields of sleep,
 And all the earth is gay ;
 Land and sea
Give themselves up to jollity,
 And with the heart of May
Doth every beast keep holiday :

Thou Child of Joy,
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy
 Shepherd-boy !

Ode on Intimations of Immortality



A DAY WITH WORDSWORTH

‘With sun and moon and stars throughout the
year,
And man and woman,’

this,” as Coleridge had said of Wordsworth, “is the character and privilege of genius:” and this was the source and inspiration of his supreme achievement in poesy. Standing in the mystic palace of the night, with the mountains for pillars and the sky for roof, he recalled the radiance of the old May-mornings. . . .

There was a time when meadow, grove, and
stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore;—
Turn wheresoe’er I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no
more.

The Rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the Rose,
The Moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare,

A DAY WITH WORDSWORTH

Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth;
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath past away a glory from the
earth.

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,
And while the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound,

To me alone there came a thought of grief:
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
And I again am strong:

The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;
I hear the Echoes through the mountains throng,
The Winds come to me from the fields of sleep,
And all the earth is gay;

Land and sea

Give themselves up to jollity,
And with the heart of May
Doth every Beast keep holiday:—
Thou Child of Joy,

Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou
happy Shepherd-boy!

Ye blessed Creatures, I have heard the call
Ye to each other make; I see
The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;

A DAY WITH WORDSWORTH

My heart is at your festival,
My head hath its coronal,
The fulness of your bliss, I feel—I feel it all.
Oh evil day! if I were sullen
While Earth herself is adorning,
 This sweet May-morning,
And the Children are culling
 On every side,
In a thousand valleys far and wide,
Fresh flowers; while the sun shines warm,
And the Babe leaps up on his Mother's arm:—
I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!
—But there's a Tree, of many, one,
A single Field which I have looked upon,
Both of them speak of something that is gone:
 The Pansy at my feet
 Doth the same tale repeat:
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?
Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
 Hath had elsewhere its setting,
 And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home:

A DAY WITH WORDSWORTH

Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
 Upon the growing Boy,
But He beholds the light, and whence it flows,
 He sees it in his joy;
The Youth, who daily farther from the east
 Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
 And by the vision splendid
 Is on his way attended;
At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

Ode on Intimations of Immortality.

But for Wordsworth himself, the trailing clouds of glory were circumambient still: and gratitude for this glory was the fundamental fact of all his being. "The religion of gratitude," he said, "cannot mislead us. Of that we are sure; and gratitude is the handmaid to hope, and hope the harbinger of faith. I look abroad upon Nature, I think of the best part of our species, I lean upon my friends, and I meditate upon the Scriptures, especially the Gospel of St. John: and my creed rises up of itself with the ease of an exhalation, yet a fabric of adamant." He stood there, looking upwards to the steadfast stars, giving thanks always for all things.

A DAY WITH WORDSWORTH

O joy! that in our embers
Is something that dost live,
That nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive!

The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benediction: not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be blest;
Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of Childhood, whether busy or at rest,
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his
breast:—

Not for these I raise
The song of thanks and praise;
But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a Creature
Moving about in worlds not realised,
High instincts before which our mortal Nature
Did tremble like a guilty Thing surprised:
But for those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
Are yet a master light of all our seeing;
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make

A DAY WITH WORDSWORTH

Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal Silence:

.

And his final valediction to the departed day
was a fresh confession of the faith that was in
him—

And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills and
Groves,

Forebode not any severing of our loves!

Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;

I only have relinquished one delight

To live beneath your more habitual sway.

I love the Brooks which down their channels fret,

Even more than when I tripped lightly as they;

The innocent brightness of a new-born Day

Is lovely yet;

The Clouds that gather round the setting sun

Do take a sober colouring from an eye

That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;

Another race hath been, and other palms are
won,

Thanks to the human heart by which we live,

Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,

To me the meanest flower that blows can give

Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

Ode on Intimations of Immortality.

