CHAPTER II
THE THEME OF LIBERTY AND THE SONNETS DEDICATED TO LIBERTY AND INDEPENDENCE

The note of liberty sounded in the sonnets is a part of the voice of liberty generously taken up by Wordsworth in many of his other poems. The theme of freedom both personal and national, forms the basis of many poems and is an essential ingredient of almost all of his best poems. It is while Wordsworth sings of liberty that he achieves his farthest creative reaches. Liberty to Wordsworth connotes a sense of free will and free action. The Cumberland Beggar should be allowed to find his solace and strength in nature "where and when he will".

Wordsworth seems instinctively to associate liberty with the countryside and rural life. That is why, he never tires of singing praises of a life led in rural natural surroundings away from the madding crowd. This type of love for liberty is expressed in many of his personal lyrics, odes and poems of relaxed personal experience. 'The Solitary Reaper', 'The Lucy Poems' 'I wandered lonely as a cloud' are permeated by the spirit of personal independence. Insistence upon freedom, the desire to have his limbs more freely, would have made young Wordsworth reluctant to carry a lady's shawl, to lead her horse, or even help her on stile 1. When manhood approaches, as Wordsworth explains in Duddon Sonnets XXVI, the same brooks and open hills that nourished the indolent fancy of boyhood

1. Literary Reminiscences p. 38
encourage a more politically significant liberty. Wordsworth perhaps, associated his youthful dawdling with adult passion for personal liberty and national independence. That is why, in many of the non-political sonnets public utterance is mingled with personal passion. 'The world is too much with us', 'Upon Westmin­ster Bridge' combine both private and public passions. Just as Machaal, the Solitary Reaper, 'The Leech Gatherer', 'The Old Cumbeland Beggar' and the Pedlar stand freely in the air, so the towers, domes, theatres, and other sleeping forms "lie open into the field, and to the sky". Even "It is a beauteous Evening, Calm and free" denotes a mood of freedom. Moments of awakened imagina­tion for the poet are the best and the happiest and involve freedom, solicitude and hope. Love of freedom ranges and swells from mood to mood in The Prelude, but it also achieves release in the sonnet's narrow compass. As an artist, he released greatest energy when he pressed free creativeness against the barrier set of poetic conven­tions.

In the political sonnets dedicated to liberty and independ­ence Wordsworth views liberty politically. Physical bondage under a tyrant is hideous. It is a worse bondage if a man walks in open air but belongs to a nation that has chosen not to oppose tyranny and has fetters for its soul. "The power of armies is a visible thing"1 but who can know the strength of a people possessing the

1. Sonnets dedicated to Liberty and Independence.
noble invisible spirit of liberty. In the sonnet written a year before beginning with "O'erwearing statesmen...." the poet affirms:

"But from within proceeds a Nation's health;
Which shall not fail, though poor men cleave with pride
To the paternal floor; or turn aside,
In the thronged city, from the walks of gain,
As being all unworthy to detain
A Soul by contemplation sanctified.

Wordsworth inherited love of freedom from Milton, Thomson, Cowper, Dyer, Bettie, Collins, Goldsmith and Burns. He also felt a kinship with Cowley and Horace as his poem 'Liberty' declares. But he differs with them in his conception. How can he share with John Dyer and other Whigs the idea of liberty which is wedded to the glories of commerce? He also avoids the Christian view of liberty, most celebrated in Milton's two epic poems. True liberty for Wordsworth includes freedom from "the darkness that dwells within". It requires self-discipline also as he late in life recognized, though early it meant only the free vent of emotions and access to the open air. As an artist he has always known the joy of freedom within the restraints of conventions. He utters this paradox most compellingly in the sonnet "Nun's fret not at their convent's narrow room" where the sonnet form is blessed for its succor to those "who have felt the weight of too much liberty".

Both Herford and J. Smith are of the opinion that Wordsworth wrote these sonnets under the influence of Milton. Herford remarks:
"Milton had given the initial stimulus and Miltonic the sonnets never cease to be in their massive eloquence, Their prophetic vehemence, their access to tenderness\(^1\). J. Smith corroborates the same view in his remark: "They are formed on the model of Milton's and have a certain stiffness\(^2\). It is undoubtedly true that these sonnets have many echoes of Milton. Wordsworth's sonnets like Milton's "On His Blindness" turn thought upon itself and show the real conflict of ideals, but we cannot overemphasise the influence of Milton. Wordsworth's mind was too original and both the outward situation and inner development were too unlike to allow of more than proximate resemblance. Milton's nature was firmer and harder than that of Wordsworth. Moreover, Wordsworth far surpasses his model both in thought and expression. A few of Milton's sonnets are exceedingly fine but these sonnets owe much of their power to ideas and feelings associated with his personal character and high and unhappy destiny, unlike that of Wordsworth whose existence was tranquil and aloof from all agitating public affairs and unconnected with the goings on of the governments, yet his spirit has been among them as vividly and energetically as Milton's. He thought very deeply of national greatness and poured his heart frankly and boldly into the sonnets to raise the dignity of human life by stripping it of its pretensions. Moreover, independent of all such personal association, Wordsworth's sonnets are much superior to

1. Herford, Wordsworth
2. J. Smith, An Estimate of Wordsworth
Milton's. They embrace a wide and various range and constitute a great work. In many a sonnet the music flows like a stream, or rolls like a river or expands like a sea. The thought is beautiful or majestic or sublime. Wordsworth's Sonnets Dedicated To Liberty And Independence form two groups — the first of 26 were written mostly between 1802 and 1807 and the second of 42 written over the years from 1807 to 1822 but mostly between 1809 and 1811. The first group of sonnets was born of his observations and reflections concerning the military movement of Napoleon. The notes sounded in these sonnets are shame for England's weakness and vices, love for her and pride in her past, oppressive fear of the menace of Napoleon and heroic reaction, ardour for freedom of other nations and passionate sympathy for the heroes who had died

1. Yearwise table 1st group

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2. Yearwise table 2nd group

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for the cause of freedom. The first sonnet of the first part of the series is an address to the evening star "Star of my country", as he calls it and is taken to be the emblem of England's banner. Sonnet V tells us of the rejoicings at Bonaparte's natal day and of Callas which caring for no one lives in hope and happiness. In sonnet X the poet rejoices seeing the boys in meadow playing, waves breaking on the chalky shore which he never felt while he was in Kent. He hails his country in the following lines against the European States falling in bondage:

Thou art free
My country! and 'tis joy enough and pride
For one hour's perfect bliss, to tread the grass
Of England once again and hear and see
With such a dear Companion at my side.

Sonnet XII "Thought of a Briton on the subjugation of Switzerland" shows the poet linking his fear for his own country with the fate

1. Contentwise distribution of 1st group

8 sonnets speak of his patriotic feeling, the ardour of the people of other nations specially that of Switzerland and a contrast with France.

4 sonnets bemoan the bad condition of England and so full of regret
7 sonnets are a tribute to heroes
1 sonnet speaks ill of Frenchmen
1 sonnet regrets the condition of a Negro woman
1 sonnet is born of fear of Napoleon's invasion
3 sonnets are in praise of liberty and virtue
1 sonnet is on the fall of Venice

Sonnet V Calais, August 15, 1802
X Composed in the Valley Near Dover, on the Day of Landing
XII Thought of a Briton on the Subjugation of Switzerland
of the Swiss who had lost their Alpine liberty and so bereft of their divine bliss. Sonnet XV contrasts the people of England with those of France. He praises England for producing hands that penned, tongues that uttered wisdom and moralists who knew how to act and comprehend but France has none:

Perpetual emptiness unceasing change
No single volume paramount, no code,
No master spirit, no determined road;
But equally a want of books and men

In sonnet XXI the poet exhorts his country to wean her heart from her emasculating food and understand the truth. He believes that his country might have reaped better harvest, had she not trespassed. Still he has faith in his country's greatness to which the world looks forward. In sonnet XXIV he warns the hordes that their thrust will not withstand the valour and discipline when English people like one man rise to fight for liberty. In sonnet XXV the poet anticipates the victory of the English people against Napoleon and asks his countrymen to assemble, make merriments, beat drums, blow trumpets and rejoice not minding the great sacrifices they made for liberty. The second group of sonnets offers tributes to heroes, sonnet III is an address to Jones with whom the poet had uninterrupted friendship and after whose death he had become "a bird whose vernal coverts winter hath laid bare". In Sonnet IV the poet...
grieves for Bonaparte because he thinks that the best mind is framed not in battles but with 'motherly' thoughts, by studying books and enjoying nature. Sonnet VII is a tribute to the king of Sweden, Gustavus IV who set an example to others how to stand and fall with dignity. Sonnet VIII is a tribute to and full of regret for Toussaint L'Ouverture whom the poet calls 'miserable chieftain' because he resisted against Napoleon's edict of re-establishing slavery in St. Domingo and died in prison. In sonnet XVIII the poet hails England as the chosen soil where 'sun and breeze shed gentle favours' and where ordinary business without care is carried but pities that the people should unite to put out the only light "of liberty that yet remains on earth" because the poet thinks that England is then the only hope and home of liberty and justice left in Europe—may in the whole world. In sonnet XXIII he calls Bonaparte 'one man, of men the meanest too' who has nothing in him to deserve veneration but has mighty nations as underlings. In sonnet XXIV the poet exhorts the men of Kent to advance against Napoleon and asks them to send a message of fierce war to prove their mettle. The sonnet concludes:

"Ye men of Kent, 'tis victory or death"

(XXIV)
In sonnet XXVI he is shocked at the defeat of Prussia as he feels that England is left alone:

"And we are left, or shall be left alone to Struggle against the foe unpropped......."

(XXVI)

Wordsworth has his misgivings when he thinks of the great moral defects in his countrymen. In sonnets XIII, XIV, XVI he bewails the avarice, rapine, and idolatry of the Britons. They have given up 'plain living and high thinking' and have lost peace, innocence and pure religion. The poet is oppressed by the thought that the people of England who have been championing liberty since antiquity are given to self-centredness. So he calls upon Milton to help them out of the stagnant pool. The poet still regards the Britons as being of Earth's finest blood' and as having a glorious past. Sonnets XIX, XX are in praise of liberty and virtue. The poet thinks that a man with fetters in his soul never has noble feelings and suffers the worst slavery and that virtue and faculties within are vital. Sonnet II speaks ill of Frenchmen and calls shame on them for bowing to Napoleon. Sonnet VI regrets the extinction of Venetian Republic which was

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Sonnet  XXVI  Anticipation. October, 1803
XIII Written in London, September, 1802
XIV London, 1802
XVI It is not to be thought of that the Flood
XIX There is a bondage worse, far worse, to bear.
XX These times strike menied worldings with dismay:
II Calais, August, 1802
VI On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic
'eldest child of liberty' and 'safeguard of the West'. Sonnet IX is a regret for the negro fellow passenger, downcast, meek, and destitute of hope but whose eyes have retained 'tropic fire'. In sonnet XI the poet is bewitched by the calm sea and clear air but is full of apprehension of France. He belittles the greatness of France before the free, wise and virtuous souls of England.

The second group of sonnets composed in honour of liberty are inspired by the same love of heroic resistance. They are an offshoot of 'Cintra'. Like 'Cintra' they are rhetorical and argumentative in character. Wordsworth also acknowledged his debt in the sonnets to Count de La Borde's Book A View of Spain published in 1809. Whenever the spirit of freedom arose in Europe against the tyrant, Wordsworth readily offered his sympathy and admiration. These sonnets, thus, have an inalienable place in the literature of the Napoleonic era. They are worthy of comparison with the noblest passages of patriotic verse or prose which history has inspired. They may not have the same fire which inspired many passages of Shakespeare and lifted Milton from polemic to the prophet or Burke from the partisan to the philosopher. Wordsworth might not have swayed senates or directed policies, or gathered into one ardent bosom all the spirit of the

Sonnet IX We had a female Passenger who came
XI Inland, within a hollow vale, I stood;
heroic age, yet it is quite clear that he was a staunch supporter of the right cause; he disdained unrighteous empires and kept the moral forces more steadfastly in view. His sonnet "Occasioned by the Battle of Waterloo" explains the viewpoint of one who essayed to be the poet of this troubled and dangerous time:

The Bard whose soul is meek as dawning day,
Yet trained to judgements righteously severe,
Fervid, yet conversant with holy fear,
As recognizing one Almighty way;
He-whose experienced eye can pierce the array
Of past events; to whom, in vision clear,
The aspiring heads of future things appear,
Like mountain-tops whose mists have rolled away-
Assailed from all encumbrance of our time,
He only, if such breathe, in strains devout
Shall comprehend this victory sublime;
(Sonnet Xlvi......)

In fact, Wordsworth's spirit for liberty was irresistible. Before 1795 he in his republican zeal had supported Napoleon but later felt that the spirit of selfish tyranny and lawless ambition had possessed him. He was now aware of the situation created by the politicians and as he was free to assert the sanctity of man's natural birth right -- the right of freedom. In his view the Spanish war was not merely a political and national struggle but also an event which concerned the whole humanity. Wordsworth believed that "The Spaniards are instruments of benefit and glory for the human race; the Deity, therefore, is with them". As long as Great Britain was united to repel the invader and looked up to such men in high place as Nelson and Fox, the sense of danger and
national unworthiness was overshadowed by pride but the death of Nelson in 1805 and of Fox in 1806 changed the situation. There was no statesman left at home who, in the poet's opinion, had the heart and mind to understand the vastness of the issues involved in the struggle with Napoleon. That is why, the whole series of 1809-11 presents a contrast to that of 1802-06. While the former strikes a note of hope in repeated disappointments, and of faith that tyranny supported by mere military support cannot endure for ever, the latter is full of unallied hope and unmixed joy in the onward march and victory of England. The sonnets of 1809-11 are thus saturated with nationalism. They are written on the progress of war in Spain, Portugal, Germany, Italy, Tyrol, Zaragoza and other European states. The poet tells us that Independence cannot be conferred upon a nation from outside; but Britain favoured by nature or by God is among the powers that must work for Hofer, Falafex and Schill, as for Troussaint and other heroes of liberty.

Most of the sonnets of part II are written on the progress of war against Napoleon. The first two sonnets describe the joy on the announcement of the liberty of Greece by T. Quintus Flamininus. In sonnet III Clarkson who got the Abolition of Slave Trade bill passed and thus performed an uphill task, a sublime enterprise, is addressed as a 'firm friend of human kind'.

Sonnet II When, far and wide, swift as the beams of morn (Part II)
III Clarkson! it was an obstinate hill to climb! (Part II)
The sonnet V has an undertone of deep sadness in its comparison of peace at Grasmere with:

...............earth's groaning field
Where ruthless mortals wage incessant wars;

And concludes the sonnet in praise of tranquillity:

'Be thankful, thou; for, if unholy deeds
Ravage the world, tranquillity is here'

Sonnets VI and VII take the poet to the past when rash spirits prompted by audacious vanities fought wars and satisfied their whims by building the 'Tower of Babel' and the Pyramids in the hope to immortalize their names. He criticises them for acting as brutes and all those who enslave a free soul. The poet amidst nature weighs the fears of suffering Spain but in sonnet VIII he is hopeful of the future when the bright calms shall succeed.

Sonnets XIV and XVIII are the product of fear in the heart of the poet when he sees lawless violence compelling empires to unjust treaties. He feels that the sacrifice and labour without pause alone can save them. For Wordsworth, the uprising of Madrid on May 2, 1808 against the French occupation was an event comparable to the outbreak of the French Revolution, being equally popular, spontaneous and passionate. Like many of his countrymen the poet was bitterly disappointed when, after a victory over the French, the generals of the British force sent to aid the Spaniards signed

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<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Clouds, lingering yet.........</td>
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<td>VI</td>
<td>Go back to antique ages,.....</td>
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<td>VII</td>
<td>Not 'mid the World's vain.....</td>
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<td>VIII</td>
<td>I dropped my pen; .......</td>
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<td>XIV</td>
<td>O'ER the wide earth, ..........</td>
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<td>XVIII</td>
<td>The martial courage...........</td>
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a convention to repatriate the defeated forces and British ships. So long as the Spanish war was considered a military one, it had limited effect, but when it was considered as a movement of national resistance, it became the centre of a new hope for millions under Napoleon's despotism. At this time, "his first and last thought", wrote Dorothy: "are Spain and Portugal". The poet writes of the situation as if with a mission to express the inarticulate hope of freedom — loving people throughout Europe bidding them to look to heaven and their own hearts for the only strength mightier than Napoleon's battalions. Events proved him right. Napoleon was overthrown as he prophesied. Nationalism was to play a glorious part in effecting the liberation of the oppressed people. Sonnets XXVII, XXVIII, XXIX, XXX and XXXI directly deal with Spain. They show the poet in sympathy with the Spaniards fighting against Napoleon. If the poet's thoughts fly to other lands, they soon return to their starting point.

During this soul-testing time the poet cannot spare a word of praise for organised military resistance to the tyrant. He is bent upon exposing the great heresy of the age in the following lines:

O'erweening statesmen have full long relied
On fleets and armies, and external wealth;
But from within proceeds a Nations' health: (XXIX)

| XXVII | We can endure....... (Part II) |
| XXVIII | Avaunt all specious...(Part II) |
| XXIX | O'erweening Statesmen....(Part II) |
| XXX | Hunger, and sultry heat,...(Part II) |
| XXXI | They seek, are sought;.....(Part II) |
He praises the strength, the might and the fortitude of the Spaniards in fighting and baffling the 'imperial slave'.

Seldom in Wordsworth's life was his mind sustained at a higher pitch of enthusiasm than in the composition of these sonnets. He asks the people of England to give up 'pliancy of mind' and be men of patience and temperance and not to swerve which are the qualities of the Spaniards. The poet has acquired a true insight into the Spanish national character which in its severer and more idealistic aspects had a striking resemblance to his own.

The Spanish group of sonnets closes with the sonnets on the elusive but indomitable 'Guerillas' in their opposition to the French forces. He praises the ferocious men for thwarting the enemy not caring for bleak hill top, heavy swamp and snow clad heights.

Sonnets IX-XI are on the rising of the Tyrolese under the Tyrolese patriot Andreas Hofer who led Tyrolese bravely and valiantly against the foe but suffered defeat. His fall was bemoaned by the torrents, hills and woods. Sonnet XI contains the feeling of a Tyrolese who reads in the infant's eye, in the wife's smile and in the placid sky and silent dust the determination to transmit the free land to his children as he himself had inherited.

The Tyrolese always march in arms

"...to assert
Out virtue, and to vindicate mankind"

(Part II)

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<td>IX</td>
<td>Of mortal parents</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>Advance- come forth</td>
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<td>XI</td>
<td>The land we from our fathers</td>
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Sonnet XYXII is on the final submission of the Tyrolese but the poet feels that the dead heroes lying in repose will rise to face the enemy when Europe will rise. Liberty is not dependent upon the barriers of Nature. There is a bulwark in the soul of men which acts as a shield and is proved by the citizens of Zaragoza—men and women 'naked to the gales of fiercely breathing war', who defended their city in what J. Holland Rose calls "the most desperate defence of modern times". In sonnet XVI he hails Zaragozans for their brave fight and assures them that their remains will survive as trophies of martial courage to posterity. In sonnet XXIII he hails Palafox of Saragossa for his martyrdom and fortitude. In sonnet XIX he praises Schill who

A meteor wert thou crossing a dark night; Yet shall thy name, conspicuous and sublime, Sand in the spacious firmament of time, Fixed as a star: such glory is thy right. (XIX)

In sonnets XX - XXII the poet meditates on the Swiss people particularly Gautavus who always slighted fear, rejected temptation and fought against Napoleon and who is now at an elevation

"Round which the elements of worldly might Beneath his haughty feet, like clouds, are laid. (XXI)

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<td>XVIII</td>
<td>The martial courage of a day is vain (Part II)</td>
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<td>XVI</td>
<td>Hall, Zaragoza!....                                                (Part II)</td>
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<td>XXIII</td>
<td>Ah! where is Palafox....                                           (Part II)</td>
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<td>XIX</td>
<td>Brave Schill.....                                                  (Part II)</td>
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<td>XX</td>
<td>Call not the royal Swede... (Part II)</td>
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<td>XXI</td>
<td>Look now on that adventurer... (Part II)</td>
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There are three sonnets XXIV – XXVI appealing to the local patriotism of the stubborn Biscayans. They inform us of their observance of the ancient rite of burying the dead child but the poet reminds them of the futility of it if they do not meet the foe with firm soul to regain the lost freedom and adds that if they do not do so, the awful light of heavenly innocence will fail to illuminate the infant's bier. Guilt and shame will descend on them against which there is no defence. The 'Oak of Guernica' under which the 'Guardians of Biscay's ancient liberty' met, will also not flourish in the blighting hour. Sonnets IV, XII, XIII, and XXVII concern Germany and Germans whose brave fight against the enemy history will record. He prophesies that the heads of twelve sovereign houses of the empire would wither. He calls Bavarian, Frederick Augustus, the first 'open traitor of German name'. He feels that the Germans have true heart and pride of intellect which will inspire them in their efforts to cast off their yoke. Sonnets XXXII, XXXIII are of a general character. One beginning with "Here pause: the poet claims at least this praise," and its predecessor are included in many anthologies. No doubt the poet has put the quintessence of his thought into these two pieces and they can hardly be spared in the whole series.

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<td>XXIV</td>
<td>In due observance.....</td>
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<td>XXVI</td>
<td>Supposed Address to the same...</td>
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<td>IX</td>
<td>High deeds, O Germans.....</td>
<td>(Part II)</td>
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<td>XII</td>
<td>Alas! what boots.......</td>
<td>(Part II)</td>
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<td>XIII</td>
<td>And is it among rude....</td>
<td>(Part II)</td>
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<td>XXVII</td>
<td>We can endure...</td>
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<td>XXXII</td>
<td>The power of Armies is a visible thing</td>
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<td>XXXIII</td>
<td>Here pause: the poet claims....</td>
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Sonnets XXXV and XXXVI deal with Russia. They are a tribute to the Russian king who brought triumph for the Russians. The poet calls upon all the Russians who fought with desperate hardihood, to celebrate the victory with blithe dance and pass their gaiety to the Zephyr. Sonnet XXXVIII describes the final overthrow of Napoleon and the consequent rejoicings in everybody's heart.

Sonnets XL is addressed to the remain of the French Royalist Duke D'Engien who was 'meek, loyal, pious and brave'. Sonnet XLIII deals with the siege of Vienna raised by John Sobieski. He calls upon the people to chant Deliverer's praise, for him conquering through God, and God through Him'. Sonnets XLI and XLIII were occasioned by the battle of Waterloo. He pays tribute to the sons of Albion and all other heroes for whom death was dearer than life. He being a bard whose soul is meek yet trained to judgements, fervid yet conversant with holy fear and leaving the eye to pierce the array of past events in a clear vision, hails this triumph over Napoleon. The series concludes with an address to the kings and Emperors who should now rejoice the victory and

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<td>XXXV</td>
<td>Ye Storms, resound the</td>
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<td>XXXVI</td>
<td>By Moscow self-devoted</td>
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<td>XXXVII</td>
<td>Now that all hearts</td>
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<td>XL</td>
<td>Dear Reliquet! from a pit</td>
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<td>XLI</td>
<td>Intrepid sons of Albion!</td>
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<td>XLII</td>
<td>The Bard--whose soul is</td>
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<td>XLIII</td>
<td>Oh, for a kinding touch</td>
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enjoy the peace. Thus the whole series is a record of Wordsworth's inspired vision, courage, and hope during a great European crisis. Here and there throughout these sonnets are scattered strokes of high poetic admiration or scorn. Here is the praise of the Swiss:

Call not the royal Swede Unfortunate,  
Who never did to Fortune bend the Knee  
(Sonnet xy)

or the stern touch which closes a description of Flamiminus' proclamation of liberty to Greece which is

"A gift of that which is not to be given  
By all the blended powers of Earth and Heaven"  
(Sonnet T)

Wordsworth conceives a notable figure of unselfish valour in the person of Nelson who could serve as the poet's hero and not as Arminius from the age of legend, or as Henri Quatre from the age of Chivalry. There was something common between his and Wordsworth's nature. The obvious limitations of the great Admiral's Culture and Character were likely to be strongly felt by the philosophic poet. Between Nelson and Wordsworth there was a moral likeness so profound that the ideal of The Recluse was realized in the public life of the hero, and on the other hand, the hero himself is only seen as completely heroic when his impetuous life stands out for us from the solemn background of the poet's calm. Certainly these two natures taken together make the perfect Englishman. That is why, though Wordsworth pays generous tributes to
the heroes of the contest, Schill, Hofer, Troussaint, Palafox
none of them is the poet's hero though their instinctive great-
ness shines against Napoleon's lying promises and inhuman pride.
There is one more point in which the character of Nelson repre-
sents one of the lessons which Wordsworth is never tired of enforcing;
that virtue grows by the strenuousness of its exercise, that it
gains its strength as it wrestles with pain and difficulty and
converts the shocks of circumstances into an energy of its proper
glow.

In these sonnets Wordsworth unfolds the true principles
of national greatness in the kingdom of Christendom. The poet
of the peaceful vale has not feared to walk among the moral
earthquakes, Revolution and anarchy have been the food for his
meditation. In such moments he calls carnage 'the Daughter of
the Lord'.

The later series of 14 sonnets grouped under the head
'SONNETS DEDICATED TO LIBERTY AND ORDER' composed between 1831
and 1845 is an offshoot of the former series 'POEMS DEDICATED TO
NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE AND LIBERTY'. It may be treated as indivi-
sible one but with a difference. The former lays emphasis on
personal liberty rather than on national liberty as in the latter
one. It is the liberty of the men of property as desired in a

* Note: See the Chapter "Imagery and Technique" for the natural
objects used as symbols of liberty
society founded by John Reeves in 1792 'The Association of
Preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers'.

He started considering an individual in relation to the state as
a leaf to the tree. He is at this stage against the sweeping
changes about which he writes:

Knowing, things rashly sought are rarely found;
That, for the functions of an ancient State—
Strong by her charters, free because bound,
Servant of Providence, not slave of Fate —
Perilous is sweeping change all chance unsound.

(VI)

Again he writes:

AE leaves are to the tree whereon they grow
And wither, every human generation
Is to the Being of a mighty nation,
Locked in our world's embrace through weal and woe;
Thought that should teach the zealot to forgo
Rash schemes, to abjure all selfish agitation,
And seek through noiseless pains and moderation
The unblemished good they only can bestow.
Alas! with most who weigh futurity
Against time present, passion holds the scales:
Hence equal ignorance of both prevails
And nations sink; or, struggling to be free,
Are doomed to flounder on, like wounded whales
Tossed on the bosom of a stormy sea.

(XII)

Go slow, he warns the advocates of change:

...............Our chains to sever
Let us break forth in tempest now or never —
What, is there then no space for golden mean
And gradual progress? — Twilight leads to day,
And, even within the burning zones of earth,
The hastiest sunrise yields a temperate ray;
The softest breeze to fairest flowers gives birth;
Think not that prudence dwells in dark abodes,
She scans the fuxture with the eye of gods.

(XI)
Wordsworth does not like a volcanic burst, earthquake or hurricane. He is not in favour of revolution or a sudden violent upheaval and has come to believe in conscience. He writes:

```
Is not Conscience ours,  
And Truth, whose eye guilt only can make dim;  
And will, whose office, by divine command,  
Is to control and check disordered Powers?
```

(VI)

That is why, he advises the people of his own country in the following words:

```
Long-favoured England! be not thou misled  
By monstrous theories of alien growth,  
Lest alien frenzy seize thee, waxing wroth,  
Self-smitten till thy garments reek dyed red  
With thy own blood, which tears in torrents shed  
Fail to wash out, tears flowing ere thy troth  
Be plighted, not to ease but sullen sloth,  
Or wan despair -- the ghost of false hope fled  
Into a shameful grave.
```

(VII)

As Wordsworth grew in years, his faith in a just cause also increased. He had at the later stage a sort of religious faith in the triumph of a just cause. He did not now have the republican zeal for revolution which is clear from the sonnets dedicated to liberty and order. It is clear from the sonnets which consider the Italian situation in 1837. In the sonnet 'At Bologne, in Remembrance of the late insurrection, 1837' he writes:

```
Ah why deceive ourselves! by no mere fit  
Of sudden passion roused shall men attain  
True freedom where for ages they have lain  
Bound in a dark abominable pit,  
With life's best sinews more and more unknit.
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(X)
He advises the Italians

...............Let thy scope
Be one fixed mind for all; thy rights approve
To thy own conscience gradually renewed;
Learn to make Time the father of wise Hope;
Then trust thy cause to the arm of Fortitude,
The light of Knowledge, and the warmth of love.

(1)

This is his reasoned policy springing from faith in the cause
and copiousness of the slow processes of life and growth in a
nation. This is what he affirms his answer to the impatient
objectors:

HARD task! exclaim the undisciplined, to lean
On Patience coupled with such slow endeavour,
That long-lived servitude must last for ever,
Perish the grovelling few, who prest between
Wrongs and the terror of redress, would mean
Millions from glorious aims. Our chains to sever
Let us break forth in tempest now or never!—

(XI)

He suggests a golden mean and a way of gradual progress. He
says that between night and day there is twilight leading to
day. Even in the burning zone of earth there is a temperate
ray. The soft breeze gives birth to fairest flowers. In it
lies prudence. Ten years later still the thought of these
sonnets was summed up in the advice given to Thomas Copper:

I have always said the people were right what they
asked; but you went the wrong way to get it. The
people are sure to have the franchise, as knowledge
increases; but you will not get all you seek at
once — and you will never seek it again by physical
force; it will only make you long about it.
Such views in these sonnets are of Wordsworth who was erroneously called an apostate in the cause of liberty. In fact, he never deviated from the ideals of his youth though timidity had crept in which led him to withdraw into a comfortable conservatism. There is slow change from fiery revolution to a thoughtful conservatism. It is very hard to believe with Crabb Robinson that 'Wordsworth lost his love of liberty, not his humanity, but his confidence in mankind'. The fact remains that Wordsworth sympathized intensely with France in its early revolutionary wars and as he afterwards explained in a letter to his friend Losh 'abandoned France, and his rulers, when they abandoned the struggle for liberty, gave themselves up to tyranny, and endeavored to enslave the world'. Wordsworth, in fact, never lost faith in humanity as he is generally accused of. But he did not subscribe to the sentimental creed which takes no account of the actual state of humanity. He believed that unthinking and untrained persons were unfit to rule and that trained ones were capable of. In later life he came to cherish duty, order and restraint and opposed the Reform Bill of 1832 which was passed against his desire. He shunned to plead for revolutionary change. When the news that the chains were severing link by link and the rich people would soon be levelled down and the poor would meet

1. See Sonnets UPON THE PUNISHMENT OF DEATH
them halfway, appeared in the newspapers in 1831, he called it a vain boast but he cautioned the people of England against the ensuing heavier penalty and woe if they did not pay any heed to ameliorate the deteriorating situation at that time. He also opposed the Ballet Box Bill which wanted to bring some change without branding its immoral and anti-social tendency. He called it a clear contrivance full of fraud, cowardice, falsehood and treachery that would upset the faith and honour of England. When he read 'The Bill is carrying out' he wrote:

.................................the Brood of Night
Clapped hands, and shook with glee their matted locks;
All Powers and Places that abhor the light
Joined in the transport, echoed back their shout,
Hurrah for --, hugging his Ballet-box!

(III)

He did not want change born of revolution and called it a foul device born of conceit. He would not extol this audacity. He had come to believe in the conscience of man and righteousness of God. All those who go against it will not get Wordsworth's approval. He warned his countrymen:

Long favoured England! be not thou misled
By monstrous theories of alien growth,
Lost alien frenzy seize thee...........

(VII)

because he thought blood would flow, sloth and despair would follow and 'the ghost of false hope fled/into a shameful grave'.

1. Sonnet 1 (SONNETS DEDICATED TO LIBERTY AND ORDER)
He advised not to destroy but save the people. In sonnet VIII he asked men of the Western World not to indulge in atrocities and advised them to explore the countless springs of silent good and brighten their spirit in faith. At this stage Wordsworth had to rely more on qualities of self-denial and self-sacrifice and on the prayer sincerely offered. In sonnet II of 1832 he joined the masses in invoking God for His aid when cholera had broken out in previous year. One sonnet IX addressed to the Pennsylvanians reminds the people of that country to shun luxury and sloth as their forefathers had done. He exhorts them to obey God's law cheerfully. Then only nature will be bounteous as it was to their ancestors. Sonnet XIV concluding the series suggests:

...feel for all, as brother Men!
Rest not in hope went's icy chain to thaw
By causal boons and formal charities;
Learn to be just, just through impartial law;
Far as ye may, erect and equalize;
And, what ye cannot reach by statute, draw
Each from his fountain of self-sacrifice!

(XIV)

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