A biography may not always be a key to the understanding of every poet, but in the case of Wordsworth, it is so. It has often been said that poetry is its own interpretation. But poetry, as we know, is only a part of man, much more so in the case of Wordsworth who is essentially a subjective poet. There can be no appreciation without understanding and Wordsworth is one of those poets who are difficult to understand. This is so because he is not only essentially subjective, but also because whatever he wrote was based upon a theory of poetry and a theory of the relation of the life of Nature and the life of Man. He wished to be regarded as a teacher or as nothing, and, his teaching, as is well known consisted in a conception of the human mind and its relation to the external world.

To read Wordsworth with a proper understanding, we of the twentieth century have to grope our way through a half-blinding mist - a mist arising from certain conflicting views on Wordsworth as poet and man held by various critics and biographers. So it is difficult for a student of Wordsworth to rely with confidence on the accounts given by his critics and biographers, most of whom fail to describe truly his poetic life. So his biographers and critics also should be read with caution. Two opposite views about the poet we get - one, the opinion of the radicals, who take him to be a lost leader, and the other, that of the official biographers crystallized in the phrase "Daddy Wordsworth" coined by Fitzgerald. There are critics who find a clue to his life in the Annette-Vallon episode, and there are others who like Dr. Edith Batho plead his cause in their attempts to answer the...
adverse criticisms.

It has become a fashion of late to distinguish two Wordsworths - the early Wordsworth and the elderly; "the revolutionary, radical and semi-atheist, and the conservative orthodox, the defender of Church and State". This is of course a natural distinction and may be accepted as valid. However, the critics may differ in their opinions about the various aspects of Wordsworth's life and works, they are unanimous on one point. They think that he changed from a revolutionary, radical and a semi-atheist to a conservative and orthodox Christian. Sir Herbert Read has also distinguished two Wordsworths - "not Youth and Age, not Energy and Decay, but rather Reality and Myth," "Man and Mask," or "A real Wordsworth and a legendary Wordsworth". Helen Darbishire too speaks of two Wordsworths. "They meet," she writes, they often join forces, but they are not, alas! One: Wordsworth the man of genius who had inspiration if ever a poet had it, and Wordsworth the man of strong will ....... who laboured in his poetic vacation - laboured the more assiduously the less the inspiration came." Some critics again like Coleridge and Leslie Stephen held him in great esteem as a philosopher-poet. Others denounced Wordsworth the philosopher but admired Wordsworth the poet, giving him a place in the history of English Literature next only to Shakespeare and Milton. "We must be on our guard," Matthew Arnold writes, "against the Wordsworthians if we want to secure for Wordsworth his due rank as a poet. The Wordsworthians

1 Helen Darbishire; The Poet Wordsworth, 1949, P-1
2 Herbert Read, Wordsworth; 1948, P.23
3 Helen Darbishire, the Poet Wordsworth, 1949, P-5
are apt to praise him for the wrong things, and lay for too much stress upon what they call his philosophy.  

From the foregoing account it will appear how difficult it is to make a right estimate of Wordsworth as a poet and as a man. My humble attempt in this section of my Thesis will be to confine myself to such reports of the poet's personality and early life, given by himself and by others as will bear upon his poetry, specially, his nature poetry. It is doubtful if we can rely upon the information supplied by the poet himself as several critics have questioned its truth. Their argument is that "self-visualisation is nearly always self-aggrandisement," and that when a fully developed man of thirty-five is recollecting his early life as a child of seven or eight, as Wordsworth does in the first few books of "The Prelude," his recollections are likely to be considerably guided and influenced by his present ideals.  

But with due respect for the profound scholarship of Sir Herbert Read, I disagree with him. For I believe poetry to be a record of the inner experiences of a man. If this is a just view, there is no ground for disbelieving what the poets tell us about their inner lives. I agree with Dr. Garrod who says, "not only are poets commonly a more truthful race than other men, but that they frequently understand themselves better than other people understand them." Moreover, what Wordsworth tells us about his life, habits and temperament in general have been corroborated by his friends and contemporaries. So in the course of this chapter which will deal with the nature and nurture of the poet, I shall have occasion to refer to his own account. 

1 Poems of Wordsworth, 1947; Preface, PP XVIII-XIX
2 Herbert Read, Wordsworth, 1948, p.42
3 Ibid, P-41.  
A face is an index to the mind, and much truth about the temperament, mood and inclination of a man can be gathered from the way in which he impresses us in our first encounter with him. Quite a number of persons who were acquainted with the poet have left elaborate records of their impressions about him. One such record comes from De Quincey:

"He was upon the whole not a well made man. The total effect of his person was always worst in a state of motion. Meantime his face that was one which would have made amends for greater defects of figure. It was a face of the long order, The head was filled out. The forehead not remarkably lofty, but it is perhaps, remarkable for its breadth and expansive development. Neither are the eyes of Wordsworth 'large' on the contrary, they are (I think) rather small, but that does not interfere with their effect, which at all times is fine, and suitable to his intellectual character. The light which resides in them is of no time a superficial light; but under favourable accidents it is a light which seems to come from unfathomed depths; in fact, it is more truly entitled to be held 'the light that never was on land or sea,' a light radiating from some far spiritual world than any of the most idealising that ever a painter's hand created. The nose, a little arched is large; which by the

---

1 Wordsworth: Lectures and Essays, 1951, p.72.
way has always been accounted an unequivocal expression of animal appetites organically strong. And that expresses the simple truth: Wordsworth's intellectual passions were fervent and strong; but they rested upon the basis of preternatural animal sensibility. This description of the poet was written in 1834 but it was based on the recollections of De Quincey's first visit to Wordsworth in 1807. This account of the poet has been confirmed by other contemporaries. Now let us see him through Hazlitt's eyes, who saw him for the first time in 1798.

"There was something of a roll, a lounge in his gait not unlike his own Peter Bell. There was a severe, worn expression of thought about his temples, a fire in his eye (as if he saw something in objects more than outward appearance), an intense high narrow forehead, here he differs from De Quincey who seems to be right as is evident from the life-mask of the poet taken by Haydon and preserved in the National Library, cheeks ferroned by strong purpose and feeling, a convulsive inclination to laughter about the mouth, a good deal at variance, with the solemn stately expression of the rest of his face. He sat down and talked very naturally and freely with clear gushing accents in his voice, a deep guttural intonation and a strong tincture of the Northern burr, like the crust of wine."

For Hazlitt, we know Wordsworth did not have any love and so he could not have been intimate with the poet. But this picture is as fresh and telling as that by De Quincey. With a true insight he interprets Wordsworth's appearance which other

1 Reminiscences of the Lake Poets, ed. E. Sackville West, P. 122
people also have observed. The description of the poet's eyes by De Quincey is not unlike this description. "The light that never was on land or sea", was De Quincey's remark, and Hazlitt speaks here of the 'fire in his eye'. Another contemporary of Wordsworth wrote:

"Walter Scott said, that The eyes of Burns were the finest he ever saw. I cannot say the same of Wordsworth's; that is not in the sense of the beautiful, or even of the profound. But certainly I never beheld eyes that looked so inspired or supernatural. They were like fires half-burning, half-smouldering, with a sort of acrid mixture of regard and seated at the further end of two caverns. One might imagine Ezekiel or Isaiah to have had such eyes."

Carlyle's pen-picture of the poet is of no less importance to us:

A deep earnest man, who had thought silently and painfully about many things . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . essentially a cold, hard, silent, practical man, who, if he had not fallen into poetry would have done effectual work of some sort in the world . . . . . . a man of an immense jaw of a crocodile's cast in a mould designed for prodigious work."

These word-pictures can be supplemented by a great number of actual portraits of Wordsworth made during his life-time. Sir Herbert Read tells us of four such portraits, two made by W. Shunter and R. Hancock in 1798, and two by Benjamin Robert Haydon, one painted in 1815, the other in 1842. Of the drawings of Shunter and Hancock he says: "One is a profile portrait, the other almost..."
full-face, so they supplement one another. It is not a beautiful face........... like Shelley's or Byron's. One is struck immediately by the harsh prominence of the nose, and the loose brutality of the mouth, and in Hancock's portrait at least the features express no higher emotion than sulky obstinacy and fierce self-determination .... In Haydon's portraits, Wordsworth is dominated by a brooding meditative brow,

as one inclined,

Before the sovran thought of his own mind,

And very meek with inspirations proud?

From all the above descriptions it will appear that Wordsworth was a person endowed with high intellectual and spiritual powers, as his high forehead and eye indicated), that he was equally endowed with a high organic sensibility, (as described by De Quincey, and as his large arched nose indicated), that he was destined to become prominent in some way (as remarked by Carlyle and as indicated by the large head and jaws). On one occasion the poet was told by an intimate friend of his mother that he was the only one of the five children about whose future life she was anxious and that she thought that he would be remarkable either for good or for evil. This portrait of the poet compares favourably with that provided by Hancock and described by Sir Herbert Read.

Wordsworth had a sort of violence of affection, if I may so term it," says Dorothy, "which demonstrates itself every moment of the day when the objects of his affection are present with him, in a thousand almost imperceptible attentions to their wishes, in a

---

1 (p.6) Carlyle C.G. Duffy, Conversations with Carlyle (1892)
sort of restless watchfulness which I know not how to describe." This description shows that Wordsworth had a deeply emotional nature capable of taking infinite pains for the people he loved. But we get a somewhat different, if not opposite, picture of the poet from the pen of Oliver Elton:

"The tributes to his sister and many other things show that Wordsworth was not soft though he wrote of kittens and the little Celandine and that he was not naturally peaceful." All these show that he was affectionate but not soft by nature, though not cold, having an iron will, determined to wrestle and overcome the difficulties of life singlehanded and carry out his own programme in the teeth of all oppositions. This idea we get of Wordsworth as a man from the statements made by his friends and relations, presumably gives us a fairly true picture of the poet.

Now let me dwell, at some length, upon the traits of character that the poet might have acquired by way of inheritance or as a part of his nature endowment. Wordsworth was born on April 17th, 1770 at Cockermouth in Cumberland. He was a sturdy North Countryman sprung from a North of England stock settled in Yorkshire for generations. It was notable for its hardihood, tenacity of purpose and seriousness of mood. These northeners were an imaginative people; side by side with this, there was another quality in them, that is, a practical sense, joined with a keen faculty for visualisation. "But their most extraordinary characteristic," writes Sir Herbert Read, is their capacity for masking their emotions." And then he adds, "In all this, Wordsworth

---

was a true Northerner.* 1 This account of the poet's life as given by Sir Herbert Read tracing his mental traits to racial characteristics provides a key to the understanding of the real character and personality of the poet. It may favourably compare with that provided by Helen Darbishire and John Jones. "The love of freedom was in his blood: he had driving power and a stubborn energy. There was a quality of sternness, toughness and austerity in his character which yet kept company with a passionate tenderness for friends and family. Both qualities seem a part of the characteristic rootedness of North countrymen. He was indeed rooted in his native country, the mountain district of Cumberland and Westmorland." 2

In this connection she draws the attention of the reader to the peculiar way in which Wordsworth used to pronounce vowels after the manner of a Northerner. By way of illustration she quotes the following -

"I heard a thousand, blended notes" and shows that "notes" is pronounced here as "noughts".

John Jones writing about the instinct of Wordsworth "to copy closely," 3 which evinces the poet's great practical sense, remarks - "Literateness is the necessary preface to his genius. Everything, for him, was what it was, and it was not anything else: The thing done or suffered, the thing seen or heard or read, touched him because it was so." 4

Here we find the author is speaking about the matter-of-factness, the practical sense of Wordsworth. He does not say here anything

---

1 H Read, Wordsworth pp. 37-38
2 Helen Darbishire, Wordsworth, 1953, p. 10
3 John Jones, The Egotistical Sublime, pp. 15
4 Ibid, 15-16,
about his high, imaginative quality. He says further - "Literalness is responsible for his profundity and narrowness alike. His obstinacy, his very limited powers of self-criticism, his feeble sense of humour, his plain dullness are all attributed to it." Coleridge calls him a "Spectator ab extra" whose sympathy "with man as man" has been said to be the sympathy of "a contemplator rather than a fellow sufferer," who feels "for never with" his subject. The presence in his poems of a highly imaginative quality side by side with a matter-of-factness perplexes the critics, has been delightfully parodied by J.K. Stephen in his *Lapsus Calami and Other Verses.*

"There are two voices: one is of the deep;
It learns the stormcloud's thundrous melody,
Now roars, now murmurs with the changing sea,
Now bird-like pipes, now closes soft in sleep.
And one is of the old half-witted sheep
Which bleats articulate monotony,
And indicates that two and one are three,
That grass is green, lakes damp and mountains steep.
And Wordsworth, both are thine."

All the above descriptions confirm the fact that Wordsworth had a highly imaginative quality combined with supreme visual and aural powers, but these qualities often lapsed into matter-of-factness.

A poet, says Wordsworth, must be a man possessed of more than the organic sensibility. "Infant sensibility" is the "great birth right of our being." By "organic

---

2. Table Talk, July 31, 1832.
sensibility Wordsworth meant the capacity to receive impressions through the senses. Wordsworth deals with impressions common to all but felt by him in a way quite abnormal as regards their quality. With his keen power of observation he visualises the natural objects in their concreteness, but in the act of contemplating them he releases them from an air of commonness and familiarity. It is through this process that the familiar assumes an air of freshness. The natural world appeals not to the intellect but to the senses. He has a contempt for the intellect.

"Sweet is the love which nature brings
Our meddling intellect
Misshapes the beauteous forms of things,
We murder to dissect." 

Reason or intellect should not be allowed to meddle with the senses, for then we shall lose the power of seeing visions. The eyes and the ears are of great importance to us, because these make us wise. The Moralist has been described by Wordsworth as one in whom self-feeling has overpowered the senses. He is a person who "hath neither eyes nor ears". On the other hand, the rich possession of a poet is

"The harvest of a quiet eye
That broods and sleeps on his own heart"

This gospel of eyes and ears has been preached in many poems of "The Lyrical Ballads."

"The eye -it cannot choose but see;
We cannot bid the ear be still;
Our bodies feel, where'er they be,
Against, or with our will" 

1 The Tables Turned Ll 25-28
2 A Poet's Epitaph l.27 3 Ibid Ll 49-50.
4 Expostulation and Reply Ll 17-20
He speaks "of the mighty world of eye and ear" in his famous "Tintern Abbey." Elsewhere he tells us about his sister:

"She gave me eyes, she gave me ears." Eyes and ears are the means through which truth can be apprehended. But senses do not stop working after a wholesome impression of an external object has been made upon the mind of the poet. It leads us forward to a region lying beyond sense.

"The light of sense goes out, but with a flash that has revealed the invisible world." In the great Ode, he calls the light of sense "a visionary gleam." This speaks of the other great quality of his character, that is, an imaginative apprehension of experience which is the core of Romanticism. That Wordsworth was a realist in art, and not an idle dreamer, who considered the natural world to be a fragment of the Supernatural world, has been widely recognised by all.

There was another predominant quality in his character which deserves mention. Sir Herbert Read speaks of this quality as the capacity for masking emotion, which has already been referred to in the previous section of this chapter. This is the natural inclination of his mind for control and not for indulgence of feeling. He hated the display of strong and sudden emotions, though he had a sort of violence of affection. It was most probably this quality in Wordsworth's character that gave him strength to be a poet. He could live patiently without giving immediate expression to his feelings. "His normal practice," says

1. Ll 105-106
2. The Sparrow's Nest L.17
3. The Prelude, VI, Ll 534-536
Frederick A. Pottle, "was to paint without the model. He very seldom made a present joy the matter of his song, but rather turned habitually for the matter of poems to joys that spring from leading places ten years deep." That is what the poet means when he describes poetry having its origin in "emotion recollected in tranquillity." A majority of his poems expounds this theory.

"Outwardly he was cold," writes Sir Herbert Read, even hard. Inwardly he was all fire. But true of his type he was not going to give himself away not even in his poetry, not even in the most inspired moments of his creative activity. Passion of course does blaze from many a poem of Wordsworth's, but not the direct passion of sacred love, but passion transmuted into impersonal things, rocks and stones and trees.

With the help of "The Prelude" which is an autobiographical poem and biographical sketches, we have been able to trace out some of the prominent qualities in the poet's character which bear upon his poetry. We shall now discuss the effect of environment upon the early life of the poet, that is, upto the time when he left the school at Hawkshed for Cambridge. For this we shall have to turn to various sources, particularly books written by various authors dealing with this period of the poet's life. Besides these, our main source of information will be the poet himself. In the autobiographical Memoranda dictated by him at Rydal Mount in 1847 and the first few books of "The Prelude", the poet has given us an interesting (and I believe it to be an authentic) account of his childhood days. We

1 Wordsworth Centenary Studies ed. G.T. Dunklin P-24
2 H Read, Wordsworth P-38
shall have occasion to refer to these books too. The authenticity of "The Prelude" has been questioned by a few critics. Among others, the names of George McLean Harper and Sir Herbert Read deserve mention. "Mr. Harper", writes Garrod, "finds in 'The Prelude' a considerable degree of confusion and contradiction - in particular he feels that Wordsworth reads back into his early period some of the opinions and sentiments of his later years". His opinion about "The Prelude" has been given by Sir Herbert Read in the following words:

"All autobiography is disguised fiction. 'The Prelude' is no exception; it is the story of the growth of the poet's mind, and the poet is conceived, not merely as William Wordsworth, but as an ideal character progressing towards a state of blessedness in which he shall be fit to write that great philosophical poem conceived by Coleridge in the early years of their poetic faith".

After these remarks he adds a qualifying note:

"It is not Wordsworth's sincerity that is in question; a great poem like 'The Prelude' could never have been written without the deepest sense of sincerity. But sincerity is not truth; it is only conviction - a state of belief directed towards some arbitrary end." 3

This qualifying note which Sir Herbert has taken pains to add fails of its purpose, for ultimately he says "sincerity is not truth" implying that "The Prelude" is not a truthful account of the poet's life. I believe, on the other hand, that it gives a more truthful account of the poet's life than any that has been written so far by any critic. Wordsworth, as we all know, had a wonderful

1 Wordsworth: Lectures & Essays, p.23
2 H. Read, Wordsworth, p.42
3 Ibid, p.42.
memory which, by a sifting process, could separate the grain from the chaff. In his autobiographical poem he has dealt with such events as mattered to him and matter to us, especially to those who have a genuine desire to understand and appreciate his poetry. It is not to be taken as a day to day record of his life.

Our knowledge about the lives or the personalities of the poet's parents is rather scanty. All that we know is that he lost his mother at the age of eight and his father at the age of fourteen. Before his mother's death the poet developed peculiar traits of character causing his mother some concern. "The cause of this was," continues Wordsworth, "that I was of a stiff, moody and violent temper; so much so that I remember once going into the attic of my grandfather's house at Penrith, upon some indignity having been put upon me, with an intention of destroying myself with one of the foils which I knew was kept there. I took the foil in my hand but my heart failed." Wordsworth pays a glowing tribute to his mother in the fifth book of "The Prelude", mother, who seemed to have realized that rebellious natures like William's cannot be brought under control by repression. So she allowed her children to be brought up in an atmosphere of freedom.

"She not falsely taught
Had no presumption, no such jealousy,
Nor did by habit of her thoughts mistrust
Our nature, but had virtual faith that He
Who fills the mother's breast with innocent milk
Doth also for our nobler part provide,

1 Grosart, Prose Works, Vol.III, pp.219-224
Under his great correction and control,
As innocent instincts, and as innocent food."\(^1\)

It was with his elder brother Richard that he was sent to
the Grammar School at Hawkshed in 1778, after the death of his
mother. The first eight years of his life were spent in Cockermouth
situated by the blue Derwent which has been described by the poet
as the fairest of all rivers which made

"Ceaseless music that composed my thoughts
To more than infant softness, giving me
Among the fretful dwellings of mankind
A foretaste, a dim earnest, of the calm
That Nature breathes among the hills and groves."\(^2\)

Referring to his happy childhood days he tells us

"Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
Fostered alike by beauty and by fear.
Much favour'd in my birthplace, and no less
In that beloved vale to which, ere long,
I was transplanted."\(^3\)

He describes these happy days in his autobiographical Memoranda:
"Of my earliest days at school I have little to say, but that they
were very happy ones, chiefly because I was left at liberty".\(^4\)

As a schoolboy of the Hawkshed Grammar School he participated
actively in all the delightful sports and pastimes of that wild
mountain region extending from Windermere to Coniston. The school-\(^5\)

\(^{1}\) The Prelude, V, 266-275
\(^{2}\) ibid, I, 279-285
\(^{3}\) Ibid, I, 305-309
\(^{4}\) H. Reed, Wordsworth, P. 43.
hours were fairly long but outside these hours boys were free to roam about in the country full of beautiful rivers and lakes, woods and fields, and wide spaces of the hills. Wordsworth who enjoyed a robust health delighted in all forms of outdoor exercise, such as skating, snaring, nutting, rambling, bird's nesting, rowing boats and climbing rocks. It was now that the poet's later feeling for nature, which "could chasten and subdue" as well as exalt found its root. Surely few respectable schools give so much freedom to young boys. Before he was ten years old he tells us, he spent half the night snaring wood-ooocks in the hills. The habit of walking by night persisted throughout his life.

Though we get this interesting account of his childhood in the first two books of "The Prelude", showing the influence of Nature on the formative period of his life, which we shall analyse in full in the later chapters, he tells us but very little of his lessons at school. His sole remark with regard to the school curriculum is that he easily enough might have fed upon a father soil of Arts and Letters.

From this we should not suppose that education was neglected at Hawkshead. The poet is not grateful for the instruction he received but for the freedom he enjoyed in roaming about in all the beauty-spots of Nature in the countryside. He failed to realize how much he owed to a sound early training in the classics. E.de Selincourt remarks:

"If he was never a scholar in the technical sense, it is clear that even at school he acquired enough knowledge to make the literature ..."
literature of the poet a reality to him, and that all through the years of his apprenticeship he kept up the practice of translation and imitation, thereby advancing in the mastery of his own individual art."

He speaks slightingly of his trade with classic niceties with its dangerous craft of picking phrases out that want the living voice. But this is only one sided view. For these classics may at times teach a conventional diction and an artificial attitude to the subject but they also teach neatness and precision and clarity in matters of language and style. There is also reason to believe that his readings of Virgil helped him to acquire a taste for the majestically plain and touching. Besides these authors, Wordsworth read and imitated quite a number of others as his schoolboy verses show. His ballad on a Maid of Esthwaite deserted by her lover shows his acquaintance with the recent ballad revival. E. de Selincourt in his learned essay on "Wordsworth" has named a number of such authors, chief among them being Chatterton, Elizabeth Carter, Charlotte Smith and Helen Maria Williams.

At the age of fourteen when his poetic career began, he was considerably under the influence of Pope which is evident in the poem he wrote in celebration of his School's Second Centenary. He slightingly refers to the poem as a tame imitation of Pope's versification. But this is too severe. His reading of Pope and his followers was palpably a gain to him and it was the success of this poem, he tells us, that led him to make up his mind to compose other verses. Later on in 1787 he published a poem.

---

1 Wordworth and Other studies, p. 5
2 Ibid, p. 7
"On seeing Miss Helen Maria Williams weep at a tale of distress," 
"This is also an imitation but an imitation of the sentimental 
manner of Miss Williams. About her he writes:

She wept - Life's purple tide began to flow.
In languid streams through every thrilling vein;
Dim were my swimming eyes - my pulse beat slow,
And my full heart was swelled to delicious pain.

At probably the same age he wrote a poem bewailing the drowning 
of his dog. For this, most probably he is indebted to Milton's 
Lycidas. The poem opens thus:

"Where were ye nymphs, when the remorseless deep
Closed o'er your little favourite's helpless head?
For neither did ye mark with solemn dread
In Derwent's rocky woods the white moonbeam
Pace like Druid o'er the haunted steep;
Nor in Winander's stream."

E. de Selincourt is of opinion that the "Druid" of Wordsworth 
doubtlessly owes his presence to Milton's

"Steep
Where your old birds, the famous Druids lie."

I have dwelt long enough on Wordsworth's indebtedness 
to authors during his school days which has been acknowledged by him, 
in "The Prelude" and his "autobiographical Memoranda," however, he tells us that as a schoolboy

1 Poetical Works (ed de Selincourt) Vol.I, P.266
2.8. Wordsworth and other studies, de Selincourt P.8
4.8. Wordsworth and other studies, de Selincourt P.8.
he delighted in reading Fairy Tales, Arabian Nights and Fielding's novels and Swift's books on travel. He tells us that he owed the development of his intellectual powers to private reading and not to the school curriculum. On this point he differs from Rousseau, who condemns all the works that a young boy reads as unintelligible or immoral. Consequently a new literature sprang up to cater to the needs of the children - literature which combined amusement with moral teaching. Wordsworth had no regard for this new literature. He rejoiced that he had the good fortune to escape from its unwholesome influence. He says that he "must speak out."

Thanksgiving from my heart, that I was rear'd Safe from an evil which these days have laid Upon the children of the Land, a pest That might have dried me up body and soul.

This account of Wordsworth's boyhood days is incomplete without the mention of Taylor, the Headmaster of the Hawkshed Grammar School, who figures somewhat in the character of Matthew. Wordsworth pays a glowing tribute to him in the Twelfth book of "The Prelude". He remembers eight years later when he visited his Master's grave, how his death made a great impression upon the poet's mind, who was sixteen years old, and the passage ends -

"He loved the Poets, and if now alive, Would have loved me, as one not destitute Of promise, nor belying the kind hope That he had form'd when I at his command Began to spin, at first, my toilsome songs."

1 The Prelude, V, 225-229. 2. The Prelude, VIII, 511-515.
Himself being a lover of Nature, Taylor was the first to detect and inspire the love of Nature in Wordsworth. Like Beaupre and Coleridge, he was one of the decisive influences on Wordsworth's intellectual life. It cannot be claimed, of course, that Taylor made Wordsworth a poet, but he taught him no doubt a contempt for poetic slovenliness. According to Bateson, the scrupulous attention to the details of poetic craftsmanship that kept the poet busy in his mature years, very often revising and re-writing his poems was due to the influence of Taylor. By way of illustration he draws our attention to his literary preferences which are expressed in his last wish that the last verse of Gray's elegy should be written on his tombstone. Wordsworth freed himself from Gray's influence later on, but he retained some concern up to the end for the poet of Gray's school, such as Collins, Ainside and Beattie.

One or two more incidents of Wordsworth's early life deserve mention before we close this chapter. As a child, Wordsworth spent a considerable time with his grandparents at Penrith. He was admitted in a school in Penrith being admitted at Cockermouth where he made acquaintance with Mary Hutchinson whom he was to marry later on. It is significant however that though there are several references to Cockermouth in "The Prelude", there is no mention of his childhood days at Penrith. The omission can only be explained by assuming that his life at Penrith was not happy and so he did not care to write about it. One of the Penrith incidents mentioned earlier in this Chapter, will show how the poet was ready to put an end to his life with the foil he had found in the attic of his grandfather's house. F.W. Bateson.
thinks that these 'early miseries at Penrith made a deep impression upon his mind and account for Wordsworth being different from other men. He says that this lack of affection in his grandfather's house may have engendered in him at a very early age an intense wander-lust which lasted throughout life. But this does not seem to me to be the appropriate reason of his wander-lust. Had it been so, the other brothers of Wordsworth would have also shared the disposition. We have not at least come across any such record as he tells us about this. Moreover many children are brought up in an atmosphere of tyranny and repression. They do not all develop this propensity. Wordsworth's time was spent in an atmosphere of freedom. It was only for short periods that he lived with his grandparents at Penrith.

This wander-lust was a passion with him. He refers to this in one of the most eloquent passages in the Twelfth Book of "The Prelude:

"Oh! next to such enjoyment of our youth
In my esteem, next to such dear delight
Was that of wandering on from day to day" 1

Even falling in love is possible while taking walks through the country. He tells us that

"The bliss of walking daily in life's prime
Through field or forest with the Maid we love" 2

"Vouchsafed
Alas! to few in the untoward world" 3

"Nine-tenths of my verses," he tells us, "have been murmured in the open-air" 4

1 The Prelude, XII, 135-137
2 Ibid, 129-130, 3 Ibid 127-128
4 I.F. Note to Lycoris
The mystical experiences described in "The Prelude" - to name a few only - the ascent to the reven's nest, crossing the Alps, losing way where the murderer had been hanged - all these came to him when walking, running or climbing. It may be that his wander-lust drew him to books of travel more than to any other kind of books in his early years. Some critics are of opinion that as Wordsworth did not love any body at Penrith (except his mother of course) and no body loved him, his love-instinct did not find a healthy outlet for its manifestation in his childhood days as it does in the case of all normal children. This starving of the love-instinct may partly account for the passionate attachment he formed later in his life, for his sister Dorothy, or his brother John, to whose death he has so pathetically referred in a letter to Richard dated the 11th February 1805. "God keep the rest of us together", he says, "the set is now broken".

One negative consequence of the sort of life he and his brothers led at Penrith may be the poet's unawareness of the popular poetic tradition. His grandmother was eager to instil in the minds of the young children the grandeur and the magnificence of the Crackenthoops of New Biggen Hall, while the grandmother of Scott was relating to her grandchild at her knee, the old Border ballads, songs and legends.

It is interesting to note that some critics of Wordsworth think his nature-worship to have a basis in an escapist's mentality, connected with the harsh treatment he had received at home in Penrith. In "Trintern Abbey" he speaks of himself as

"More like a man
Flying from something that he dreads than one
Who sought the thing he loved."
So according to these critics his love for Nature may have been simply the outcome of a fear of man. This fear of man may partially account for the dread he felt at times when confronted by certain mysterious aspects of Nature. The dread he thus felt may be due to the tendency of the poet to identify certain fearful objects of Nature with his grandparents. Several illuminating incidents have been recorded by the poet in the first book of "The Prelude" expressing the fear that he felt in the presence of Nature. I shall give here only one such example. While he was enjoying a boating excursion, after having stolen a boat belonging to some other person, "a rocky steep up rose," he says, and

"from behind that craggy steep, till then
The bound of the horizon, a huge cliff,
As if with voluntary power instinct,
Upreared its head .......... And growing still in stature, the huge cliff
Rose up between me and the stars, and still,
With measur'd motion, like a living thing
Strode after me"\(^1\)
For many days, he says,
"huge and mighty Forms that do not live
like living men mov'd slowly through the mind
By day and were the trouble of my dreams."\(^2\)

---

\(^1\) The Prelude, I, 405-412
\(^2\) Ibid, 425-427