In the previous chapter we have seen how the general taste, with regard to the subject-matter of poetry was gradually changing. Nature was coming to the forefront, and she was to be courted, not for lending a heightened tone to the human actions, and occupations only, but for her own sake. Close observation and naturalness in the description of Nature's beauty or human emotions and actions were to be the object rather than the close imitation of the classical poets. Poetry was brought down from the high throne of aristocracy to the level ground of common understanding. It was no more considered an exclusive prerogative of a particular section of society to enjoy poetry, and so the poorer classes figured more prominently in poetry than ever before. Generalisation was no more to be the aim; as a poet's particular experience with regard to his subject-matter was gaining more and more favour. Subsequently the pagan gods and goddesses were vanishing fast from the pages of poetry and natural scenes and human passions were taking their place. The kernel of Romanticism could be discovered in a host of poets in the eighteenth century, the chief among whom are Gray, Collins, Young, Thomson, Blake and Goldsmith. But though the ground for the matter of romantic poetry was thus being prepared by a number of poets, almost nothing was being done to clear the ground of the weeds of the gaudiness and inane phraseology of the eighteenth century tradition of poetic diction, (at least the romantic poets thought so) which choked the free growth and the natural expression...
of any poetic endeavour. This will be clear if we try to understand what poetic diction meant and how it came to be stereotyped.

F.W. Bateson in "Poetry and Language" distinguishes two theories connected with the eighteenth century poetic diction. One he calls the positive theory, adumbrated by Addison and followed by Gray, Collins, Young and others, and the other he calls the negative or more popularly known as the Augustan theory, of which Dryden, Pope, Johnson and Cowper are the representatives. The poetic diction proper of the eighteenth century, he says applies to the positive theory advocating an imitation of the style of Spenser and Milton. According to this theory, poetry should possess in Gray's words, 'a language peculiar to itself', and the functions of poetry and prose are to be regarded as antithetical. The more the language of poetry diverged from that of prose, the better it was thought to be. The Augustan, or rather the negative theory was just the opposite of this. The Augustans no doubt admitted that there was some difference between the language of poetry and prose, but they did not mean to say that all the words used in prose were to be banned in poetry. Only a selection of the language of prose-writings was to be used in poetry, avoiding of course all sorts of archaisms and technical terms. The two theories were thus contradictory, to each other. The positive theory was often attacked by the later Augustans, particularly Johnson and Cowper, but remained for Wordsworth, a poet of an altogether different school to discard and discredit it finally. The preface to the second edition
of the "Lyrical Ballads" exercised a great influence upon the direction of public taste, greater than the poems in "Lyrical Ballads". The impressions of his principles were apparent not only in the verse of those who admired him but even in the works of those who offered hostile or deprecatory criticism of his writings. Batean is of the opinion that Wordsworth succeeded in his endeavour so well because he opposed the positive principle of his own. Johnson was not happy that Gray should consider his language to be more poetical because it was remote from common use. But Johnson could not base his argument in a manner to prove that Gray was wrong. He pointed out the mistakes that Gray should have avoided. He could not provide a new recipe of poetic language to replace that of Gray. Wordsworth not only diagnosed the disease, but suggested a prescription for its cure.

Wordsworth only seconded the opinion of Johnson when he said: "There neither is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition." But this diagnosis was not unaccompanied by a prescription namely that the poet should employ "a language really used by men". Wordsworth's Preface cured the age of the disease of poetic diction but the medicine that he prescribed for the convalescent period did not prove wholesome. The poets of the modern age are indebted to Wordsworth as they do not have to write in the style of Gray or Pope; but certainly they are not going to write like the Cumberland peasant. Even Wordsworth forgot at times to swallow the pills that he had prescribed. In neither his direct and simple nor his eloquent and sublime

1. Preface to the Second edition of "Lyrical Ballads."
2. Ibid
manner do we come across "Language really used by men". None of the contemporary poets write in the manner suggested by him. The language of the romantics was far from colloquial. Wordsworth's conscious use of simple language degenerated very often into a mawkish pseudo simplicity as is evident in "Peter Bell" which has been so well parodied by Shelley, and also some of the pieces in the "Lyrical Ballads". The following lines from "Simon Lee" often described by critics, illustrate very well the simplicity of Wordsworth's language, which instead of exciting pathos has an altogether contrary effect on the reader:

"And he is lean and he is sick,
His body dwindled and awry,
Rests upon ankles swollen and thick;
His legs are thin and dry,
One prop he has and only one,
His wife an aged woman,
Lives with him near the waterfall,
Upon the village common."

Referring to the pathetic element in Wordsworth's poetry, John Jones says: "He enclosed his finest performance in a husk so tough and commonplace as to mislead bad critics and distress good ones. And although there is some sort of anthology agreement as to what is best, the rest is almost silence. Even Coleridge and Arnold could do little more than point, in their different ways, towards his best work, implying that it rises unaccountable from level wastes of mediocrity."

Later on Wordsworth seemed to have become conscious of.

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1 The Egotistical Sublime, 24
the fact that colloquial language cannot be successfully used in poetry; that is why from the time of the publication of the 'Lyrical Ballads', we seldom find him using this kind of language. Helen Darbishire in her book 'The Poet Wordsworth' has taken pains to establish the fact that Wordsworth, conscious of the criticism levelled at his poems, tried to introduce changes which, instead of enhancing the beauty of a poem, rather spoilt it. She refers us to the lines in "The Thorn" which describe the actual surrounding of the thorn tree:

"Not five yards from the mountain path
This thorn you on your left espy;
And to the left three yards beyond,
You see a little maddy pond
Of water never dry;
I've measured it from side to side,
'T is three feet long and two feet wide."

Crabbe Robinson, a great admirer of Wordsworth's poetry told the poet on one occasion when a few friends had met together that he dared not read the last two lines aloud for fear of ridicule to which Wordsworth's reply was that they ought to be liked. For twenty years, the poet stood up to the laughter and in 1820 he substituted the following lines:

"Though but of compass small, and bare
To thirsty suns and parching air."

Helen Darbishire regrets that the poet made the change which takes us she thinks outside naivety and simplicity of the world created by the poet. But all her persuasions fail to awaken in us a genuine appreciation for the lines quoted above.
The poet made similar changes in other poems of this period. Instead of the lines

"She was happy happy still
When else she thought of Stephen Gill,"

we have

"While friends and kindreds all approve
Of him whom tenderly she loved."

Her remark is that the repetition of single words is after the true ballad-style. She quotes examples of such lines:

"And first these crew the red red cock
And they these crew the grey."

But Wordsworth went on changing the lines in the poems of the "Lyrical Ballads" when he found that instead of appealing to readers such lines made him an object of their ridicule. The repetition of word in "Alice Fell" -

"A wretched, wretched rag indeed was in the true ballad style of his, has been so well copied by Keats in

"And I shut her wild wild eyes with kisses four."

was discarded by Wordsworth, and instead, he wrote

"A miserable rag indeed."

For the simplicity of the language of the poems included in the "Lyrical Ballads," Wordsworth was a great deal indebted to Percy's "Reliques." In his essay Supplementary to the Preface of the "Lyrical Ballads," he says,

"I do not think there is any able writer of the present day...

1 La Belle Dame Sans Merci.
who would not be proud to acknowledge his debt to the "Reliques". I am happy to make a public avowal of my own."

A good many poets of Wordsworth's time have drawn our attention to the fact that the simplicity of the ballad is very often likely to expose the writer to ridicule and parody. "The Three Graves" was the single experiment that Coleridge made in the ballad style but he doubted if the readers would take the poem seriously as it was intended by him, and not treat it as a ludicrous poem.

The shift short ballad similarities fitted sometimes very well Wordsworth's ideas and he made good use of these.

"My pretty thing, then shalt thou sing
As merry as the birds in spring"
(The Mad Mother)

"She shall be sportive as the fawn"
(Three Years She grew)

"Her eyes as stars of Twilight fair
Like Twilight too her dusky hair"
(She was a phantom of delight)
(Three Years she grew)

For the simplicity of language, Wordsworth went not only to the popular ballad-form, but attentively heard real speech and incorporated in his poetry spoken phrases that he himself had heard or such as had been reported to him by his friends. The expression "He dearly loved their voices" was borrowed, he says, from the real speech of the old huntsman. This insistence of Wordsworth on language really spoken by men has its roots in the theory of poetic inspiration. Wordsworth turns for his poetic inspiration to vivid sensation and spontaneous feeling. "All good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of
powerful feelings" ¹ and Wordsworth believed that any
language had its vitality to the real use that men in a state of
strong feeling make and he would have his readers believe it also. "There is no doubt," he says, that "the language
of the greatest poet must in loveliness and truth, fall short of
that which is uttered by men in real life under the actual
pressure of those passions, certain shadows of which the poet
produces in himself." ²

We arrive at two fallacies by following his argument,
first, according to his theory the poet's feeling and power of
expression are bound to be weaker and more restricted than
those of the characters he seeks to depict in his poems and
secondly, when people do actually suffer in real life, they
express their misery through a sob, or tears, or a sigh, or
sometimes by the wringing of hands or head. He can give
eloquent expression to his sorrows through words. It is in
this way that he proves the inconsistency of the statements
he makes in his Preface to the "Lyrical Ballads". That Wordsworth
could use simple language (not conversational language)
very effectively, can be proved from the Lucy Poems alone.
The simplicity and the sublimity of language used in the poem
"A Shumber Did My Spirit Seal" is almost unsurpassed. But the
language really used by men. Yet how aptly has the deep
pathos of the poet's heart been expressed in the lines -

"No motion has she now no face; force
She neither hears, nor sees;
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course
With rocks and stones and trees" ³

¹ Preface to the Second Edition of "Lyrical Ballads."
² Ibid.
³ A Shumber Did My Spirit Seal
The "Lucy poems" with a few others like "The Fountain", "The Two Mornings" and "The Poet's Epitaph" and a few episodes of childhood included in "The Prelude" later on belong to the period of German harvest of Wordsworth's life, more popularly known as the Goslar poems. Wordsworth broke away from the old style decisively during this period and it was good that he did so. Out of the manner of 1798 volume he retained only the blank verse in which that great masterpiece of the poet "Tintern Abbey" was written. His strength as an artist lay in the masterly way in which he used it in his later poems as well as the unmatched lyrical quality of the "Lucy" and certain other poems.

A few words need be said about Wordsworth's theory of poetic inspiration. Romantic poets were so much preoccupied with the cult of feeling usually connected with the actual experience of the poet, that they seem to forget at times that the feeling has to be conveyed to the reader through the medium of language. Experience matters a great deal in the life of a poet, but that experience must be communicable, and the medium of communication is language. So language too cannot be neglected. It was always the thing rather than the language that mattered the most with the romantic poets. This is evident from the poems of Wordsworth alone, where "thing" recur so often both in connection with natural objects and human beings.

Language, he said to De Quincey, should not be "The dress of thoughts" but rather the incarnation of thoughts. From this it can be adduced that Wordsworth valued art for the sake of thought or rather experience. There was nothing he prized so
much as the recollections of the happy moments he spent in communion with or in the contemplation of Nature and he wanted his readers too to share his enjoyment of such experiences. But this he cannot do by merely analysing his feelings of the moment. The poet will have to evoke it in others, by placing before their mind's eye the same objects, if possible, in the same light. But such an objective view is not possible for a poet preoccupied with his own feelings. On the other hand, the poet tends to underrate the importance of language. Poetry is a spontaneous utterance no doubt but according to Dante, "poetry and the language proper for it are an elaborate and painful toil". Of all the romantic poets Wordsworth seems to be somewhat nearer this view of Dante. "Poems to which any value can be attached," he says, were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply." Coleridge is also of the same opinion but the defect is that they are too exclusively introspective. They write subjectively rather than objectively which is the charge that Miss Powell in the Crocean argument brings against the romantic poets. A poet should not be passive to impressions, but he should be able to express them; he should not be led away by emotion but he should be able to purge it away with the spiritual energy of intuition.

So far we have been discussing the poetic theory of Wordsworth and we have seen in the course of that discussion how far his theory is applicable to his poems and with what results. We shall now take up the discussion of his poetry particularly the "Lyrical Ballads" and other poems excluding "The Prelude" and "The Excursion". All the poems of the "Lyrical Ballads" that were published in the first edition were composed, as has

1 James Scott, The Making of Literature, 207 1930, 207.
2 Preface to the Second edition of "Lyrical Ballads."
been said before, during the period of his intimacy with Coleridge while residing at Alfoxden. So the "Lyrical Ballads" is the first effective fruit of his poetic endeavour. He had by now regained his mental composure which was greatly disturbed by his bitter experiences in France. To the "Lyrical Ballads" were added a few more poems in subsequent editions. He recovered in the book not only his sense of the beauty of Nature but of the life and joy in her. In the process of this discovery, his mind reverted to an earlier teacher than Godwin, one whose influence had been strong upon him when he wrote his "Descriptive Sketches". It was partly Rousseau's work that he ultimately came to the conclusion that society had grown corrupt through man's abuse of his free will, while Nature remained good as she came from her maker's hand. The real way to happiness lay in a return of Nature, to the life of feeling and instinct. He spoke to us about this seriously in the "Lines written in Early Spring" and half playfully in "Rob Roy's Grave".

"To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man"  

He speaks of the unfettered freedom that every flower in Nature enjoys:

Through primrose wands, in that sweet flower,
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
And every 'flower faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes"  

1 Early Spring, 5-8
2 Ibid, 9-12
The contrast between man and nature was not a persistent element in Wordsworth's attitude, but it left one trace in his mind. He avers his sight from the darker aspects of Nature, though not of human life.

Wordsworth was not able to attain to self expression before he undertook the composition of the "Lyrical Ballads". The reason is that the currents and cross-currents of many different influences played upon his life and prevented him from seeing himself. But the curious fact is that when he dived deep into his own soul, he found an answer to all his questionings and strangely enough he found the whole process and meaning of the Revolution implicit in his own experience. In spite of so many influences which held him fast, his mind was, in the real sense of the term, most truly original. That is why we find a striking resemblance between Rousseau's attitude to nature and society and that of Wordsworth. It may be that Wordsworth did not consciously borrow the thoughts of Rousseau, but he must have arrived at the same conclusion as that French philosopher when he searched his own mind for a solution of the problems that confronted him.

Wordsworth had a consciousness unique in its depth and clearness. From his childhood, he apprehended things in a highly supernormal fashion. Things which other people see rarely and dimly were seen by Wordsworth very frequently and vividly. These experiences came to him (as a result of the penetrating observation of the objects of nature) through his senses and not by mental abstraction. That is to say, that these objects of nature not only evoked in him a sense of beauty of the external world, but they were perceived and
apprehended by that part of faculty which may be called *Nature* as opposed to *Reason*. So it is likely that he deduced quite early, though unconsciously, the theory of the natural goodness of the senses when he could not have possibly come under the influence of Rousseau.

One of the characteristics of this kind of experience is that the familiar puts on the guise of the unfamiliar. This effect is produced in the mind when it comes in contact with some object or situation. It releases the mind from custom and the bond of habit which lie in the lives of most of us "with a weight, heavy as frost and deep almost as life". In children and in men in whom the elemental passions and instincts are strong, these are felt to be less heavy and intense. This is one of the reasons why in Wordsworth's poetry children and people belonging to the rustic life figure so prominently. Almost all the poems he wrote from the "Lyrical Ballads" to "The Excursion", and "The Prelude", are instances to the point. It is when the matter-of-factness and the dead weight of habit drop from us that we have our truest vision of the world. Nature in Wordsworth implied the anti-thesis of custom and also of reason. Reason in most cases, he takes to be implicit in custom.

In his poems entitled "Three Years She Grew", we find how Wordsworth, in the manner of Rousseau, believes in the greater efficacy of Nature in bringing up a child as compared with society on whom the false effect of custom lies with a heavy weight. Speaking about a Three Year old child whom Nature undertook to educate, the poet makes her say:

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

1 Ode on Intimations of Immortality, VIII
Nor shall she fail to see
Even in the motions of the storm
Grace that shall mould the maiden's form
By silent sympathy."

Wordsworth believed that nature will speak remarkable things to us if we open our hearts to her. We should cast aside all our books which store the wisdom of ages and which seek to sharpen our intellectual and reasoning powers. This idea has been expressed in several poems of "The Lyrical Ballads," namely "The Sparrow's Nest," "To My Sister," "Lines written in Early Spring," Expostulation and Reply", "The Tables Turned" and "A Poet's Epitaph". In the poem "To My Sister" Wordsworth is requesting her to come out of doors with another brother of theirs and enjoy the beauty of Nature.

"Edward will come with you; and pray,
Put on with speed your woodland dress;
And bring no book; for this one day
We'll give to idleness.

One moment may now give us more
Than fifty years of reason;
Our minds shall drink at every pore,
The spirit of the Season".

In "The Tables Turned" he speaks in the same strain:

"Enough of silence and of Art,
Close up these barren leaves;
Come forth and bring with you a heart
That watches and receives."
Nature is observed by Wordsworth at this stage to carry on a campaign against the capital of reason. The author is well pleased to recognize

"In Nature and the language of the sense
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being." ¹

It is through the avenues of the senses that Nature pours forth her magic, and as such the "eyes and ears" which are the chief repositories of the senses are to be valued, at least Wordsworth thought so. Referring to the bodily sense organs which receive impressions of the external world, he says:

"Nor less do we deem that there are powers
Which of themselves our minds impress;
That we can feed this mind of ours
In a wise passiveness." ²

These "mighty powers" often speak to us unsought:

"Think you, amid all this mighty sum
Of things for ever speaking,
That nothing of itself will come
But we must still be seeking?" ³

The "mighty sum of things" are definitely operating upon the sensibility, moulding it, making the mind fit the external world. According to the poet, reason and intellectualism obstruct the pure work of the senses. We shall be able to give a true vision of life by following Nature and relying on the report of our senses. The nearer we draw to the artificial mode of living in society, the more we shall be deprived of this vision of life.

¹ Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey
² Expostulation and Reply
³ Expostulation and Reply.
This vision can be gained by our direct contact with nature or with such persons, who by virtue of possessing the qualities of simplicity and artlessness come nearer to Nature. It is this belief that made Wordsworth turn his eye towards the simple rustic folk and children to discover the love of wisdom unattainable among the townbred people. That is why he falls back upon the mad, the crazed, the idiotic on the one hand, and young children and the peasant folk, such as Michael, the Leech gatherer, the highland girl on the other. In the "Lyrical Ballads" where he deals more or less objectively with the matter of his poems, such people as mentioned above usually figure. All the doctrines of the French Revolution are implicit in the theory of life propounded by Wordsworth. Its demand for the free development of the child according to nature as also for political simplification, its hostility to custom, its attack upon class distinctions, its conception of a kingdom here in this world of men who will be able to give up their hardheartedness and grown up ways and for the faith of little children—all these form the nucleus of the "Lyrical Ballads". His aim in this book was to find the best soil for the essential passions. He looked for simplicity. So he made the deliberate choice of subjects from humble and rustic life. His aim was to depict the deep emotions of village girls and peasants. But this attitude of Wordsworth has been criticised by a number of critics. The experience of a village-girl or peasant is bound to be narrow, but that does not necessarily imply that the emotions will be deep. In making a selection of this kind, he lessened the range without deepening the quality of his emotion. This charge appears to be true,
for the end he aimed at could have been better achieved, if, instead of portraying crude, rustic persons, he attempted to draw sharply defined characters in some clear emotional relationship with the external world. Referring to the superconsciousness of Wordsworth, Garrod says, "This insight of which I speak may be characterized at once as possessing depth and not breadth. Here is his limitation in comparison with the supreme poets, the super poets, the men who like Shakespeare 'out-top knowledge', the men whom Coleridge borrowing a phrase from the Neo-Platonists, calls 'myriad-minded'. Wordsworth makes no approach to myriad mindedness." ¹

Sutherland admits that a greater share of the credit goes to Wordsworth and Burns for interesting men in the minds of the poor people, but he cannot help remarking:-
"But it is a common mistake to assume that we are all Wordsworths now, and that the common human attitude to the poor ............. has radically altered since the days of Pope and Swift. We are all Wordsworths now only when Wordsworth has shown us the way. Left to ourselves, most of us still approach a tramp or a charwoman with meagre expectations and with a conscious or unconscious adjustment of our mental attitude." ²

But whatever criticisms may have been levelled at Wordsworth for choosing rustic life as the subject-matter of his poetry, there is no doubt about the fact that he made the choice wisely, and, that in this field, he attained a great measure of success. Wordsworth, in these poems, tried to leave the world of his own mind with its rich store of experience in order to enter into the

¹ H.W. Garrod, Wordsworth: Lectures and Essays, 95-96
² A Preface to Eighteenth Century Poetry, P-102
minds and hearts of simple people so as to lay bare their thoughts and emotions before the readers. In these poems we find how beautifully the fusion of the human passion and the natural scene has been effected so that each is expressive of the other. The poet is looking into the heart of man and into the life of nature and it seemed to him as if he was seeing things for the first time. In these poems the poet turned back upon his personal life intent upon the discovery of a land where life is viewed in its truest aspect and glory shorn of all artificial trappings. Even such a poem as "The Thorn" which has often been criticized for its literalness, crudities and redundancies illustrates this point of view. It is a simple ballad theme which relates the story of a woman. She is betrayed by her lover who leaves her. After his departure a baby is born who mysteriously disappears. No one knows the true history of his death but he is believed to have been buried under a little mound by an ancient thorn-tree. The poem opens with a description of an aged thorn in a background of beautiful mossy hills which surround it. Here an old woman in a scarlet cloak comes daily and sits for hours together by the side of a mound under which people believed her dead child lay buried. In all weathers, in the day as well as at night, this woman goes there, wrings her hands and cries piteously. One stormy day, the narrator of the story, who is a sea-captain wishing to shelter himself from the strong gale that was blowing, approached what he thought to be a jutting crag. On a nearer view he found it to be a woman sitting by the side of a little mound covered beautifully with moss. All the time she was crying

"Oh woe is me! Oh misery!"
The greatness of the poem lies in a sense of balance and harmony between what is said and the manner of saying it. The love of a woman for her lover, her deep misery at her desertion, love of mother for the child, agony of the distracted mother who ultimately seeks relief in the companionship of Nature—all these have been expressed in a way which moves us. We are affected by her misery and love of the woman as well as the desolate tree, the beauty of the mound and surrounding places.

Another good example is afforded by "The Idiot Boy." It is one of the longest poems to be included in "the Lyrical Ballads," which in spite of being ridiculed by Byron as "The idiot mother of an idiot boy" is not without its merit. Wordsworth gets right inside the characters and the ballad contains "a natural delineation of human passions, human characters and human incidents." 1 Be Beathy Foy is a simpleton whose affection and anxieties are centred on her son who is an idiot boy and who is alike devoid of any accomplishment or vice. The other two characters, the Doctor and Susan Gale are also painted with realistic touches. But it is not in the delineation of these characters that the beauty of the poem lies. It lies in the owl and the moonlight in a beautiful natural setting and Johnny in the midst standing alone from eight O'clock in the night till five in the next morning. The poem opens with the lines

'T is eight o'clock, - a clear March night
The moon is up, - the sky is blue,
The owlet in the moonlight air,
Shouts from nobody knows where;

1 Preface to the "Lyrical Ballads" of 1798
He lengthens out his lovely shout,
Halloo! Halloo! a long halloo!

Be^sry Foy sends her idiot boy to a neighbouring town on a
pony to fetch a doctor, as Susan Gale, her neighbour is ill.

"The owlets hoot, the owlets curr
And Johnny's lips they burr, burr, burr,
As he goes beneath the moon."

"The clock is on the stroke of twelve,
And Johnny is not yet in sight;
- The Moon is in heaven, as Be^sry sees."

Poor Be^sry could not wait any longer. She imagined all sorts
of mishaps that might have befalled her son.

"So through the moon light lane she goes
And far into the moonlight dale"

for she dreaded that Johnny must have forsaken his horse,

"To bat the moon within the brook
And never will be heard of more."

Poor Be^sry arrives at the Doctor's house but in her anxiety
for her son forgets to tell him about Susan's illness. The
doctor feels irritated and goes to his bed grumbling. Be^sry
now more anxious than ever retraced her steps towards home.

The owlets through the long blue night
Are shouting to each other still;
Fond lovers: yet not quite hob nob,
They lengthen out the tremulous sob,
That echoes far from hill to hill."

All of a sudden she remembers that the pony might have taken
Johnny to the wood. She directed her step towards it and met her boy after some time in a fit of delirious joy. "By this time" the poet tells us:

"The stars were almost gone,
The moon was setting on the hill,
So pale you scarcely looked at her:
The little birds began to stir,
Though yet their tongues were still".

In reply to his mother's query as to where he had been roaming about all the time, the half-witted boy remarks,

"The cocks did crow to whoo to whoo
And the sun did shine so cold."

The poem opens and ends with a description of owls.

Owls have not been a favourite bird-subject for poets. In the "Lyrical Ballads" Wordsworth has written some of his most beautiful and original poems about birds, but his owls surpass them all in the vividness of representation and the frequency of reference. The skylark, the robin, the nightingale, even the stockdove dwindle into insignificance before the owl. Wordsworth tells us that as a boy, he blew "mimic hootings" to the owl. That may be the reason of his early preference for this particular bird.

'The Leech Gatherer' or 'Resolution and Independence', composed in 1802 and included in the volumes of 1807, tells us the story of a Leech-gatherer, collecting and selling leeches.

By this time Wordsworth has almost given up the simple style of his "Lyrical Ballads". In his Advertisement to the "Lyrical Ballads" of 1798, he said:
"The majority of the following poems are to be considered as experiments. They were written chiefly with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure."

He was already developing a rich and imaginative style which was to be the triumph of his later poetry. "Resolution and Independence" has been ridiculed by Lewis Carroll in his parody. "I saw an aged, aged man, A sitting on a gate" in a brilliant manner, but still the parody could not lower the value of the poem in the estimate of his readers. It opens with a beautiful description of morning after a night-storm over a mountain region.

"There was a roaring in the wind all night;
The rain came heavily and fell in floods;
But now the sun is rising clam and bright;
The birds are signing in the distant woods.

All things that love the sun are out of doors;
The sky rejoices in the morning's birth;
The grass is bright with rain drops; on the doors
The hare is running race in her mirth".

The description breathes the freshness of the mountain air and the whole scene has been made effective by the greatest economy of words. Nature has not been used as a background in the poem. The nobility and dignity of the character of the old man seems to derive its sap from the atmosphere. The thought of "Chatterton, the marvellous boy" suddenly makes the poet sad. From this mood he is released by the sight of a lovely pond by which an old man
stood alone far from the house or home. The old man has become a part of the landscape:

"Beside the little pond or moorish flood
Motionless as a cloud the old Man stood,
That heareth not the wood winds when they call,
And moveth altogether if it moveth at all"

On being questioned by the author

"What kind of work is that which you pursue?" the old man answered feebly that he came to the pond to gather leeches, a poor calling by which with great perseverance he earned an honest living. On listening to this the poet feels depressed again to think about the hard lot of the poets who are dead. But the poet feels amazed to find the leech gatherer talking not about himself only but about other matters quite cheerfully.

"And when he ended, "the poet says,

"I could have laughed myself to scorn, to find
In that decrepit man so firm a mind.

'God', said I, 'be my help and stay secure;
I'll think of the leech gatherer on the lonely moon"

The beauty of the poem is somewhat spoilt by the didactic tone of the concluding lines. "Harb-Leap-Well", a similar landscape poem, beautiful in many respects also suffers from didacticism. The poem describes the death of a hard who threw himself down from a cliff desperately when he had been pursued for thirteen hours. It is a barren and desolate place where he died. But the poet cannot resist the temptation of commenting upon it.

"This beast not unobserved by Nature fell;
His death was mourned by sympathy divine.
The Being that is in the clouds and air,
That is in the green leaves among the groves,
Maintains a deep and reverential care
For the unoffending creatures whom he loves."

Keats justly enough criticizes this tendency of the poet:
"We have poetry that has a palpable design upon us - and if we
do not agree, seems to put its hand in its breeches pocket. Poetry
should be great and unobstrusive, a thing which enters into one's
soul, and does not startle it or amaze it with itself, but with
its subject."

The fusion of the elements of human passion (as observed
among the simple folk) and Nature's beauty are depicted beautifully
in the poem "Michael", written in 1799 and incorporated in the
second edition of the "Lyrical Ballads". The love of the mother
for the child seemed to Wordsworth the strongest of the passions,
but we find that he was equally successful in describing the strength
of love of father for his son or brother for brother as has been
shown in "Michael" and "The Brothers". Michael is an old mountain
shepherd, who has a remarkable nobility of character. He loses
his son in his old age under miserable circumstances. After hear­
ing about his son's disgrace and his consequent failure to perform
his duties, Michael, now very old, returns to his work to tend
his sheep in a steadfast and courageous manner among the rocks
where he listens to the sharp whistling of maids.

"He had been alone

Amid the heart of many thousand mists,
That came to him and left him on the heights."

He is supported in his work by the deep love that he still cherishes
for his son:

"There is a comfort in the strength of love
'I will make a thing endurable, which else
Would overcast the brain, or break the heart."
The poignancy of grief felt by Leonard on hearing the news of his brother's death when he returned home after a long time has been described with no less pathos in a background of beautiful natural surroundings. These poems have no palpable design on us. These stand out in clear contrast to "Hart Leap Well" and "Resolution and Independence". There is no tendency to philosophise or preach. In these poems he has reverted to his old and literal way, that is, an endeavour to look steadily at his subject.

The chief originality of Wordsworth is to be found in his nature poetry. Yet it is not merely as a poet of Nature that he holds a unique place in the history of English literature. There had been many poets before him and there will be many after him also. According to some critics, he has been equalled and sometimes surpassed by other poets of nature. But the special claim of Wordsworth lay in his extraordinary faculty of giving expression to the most elementary and obscure sensations of the human heart when confronted by Nature. These sensations are universal and as old as mankind but probably none before Wordsworth embodied them in words in the way he did.

"There was a Boy" and "Nutting" are striking examples of this. 'The gentle shock of mild surprise' which tickled the boy when he failed to hear the answer of the owls to his own hootings, the beauty of the Landscape suddenly casting his eye as he hung listening, the great joy he experienced at seeing 'the uncertain heaven received into the bosom of the steady lake' - all these seek to enlarge man's field of knowledge and environment. The beauty of the whole scene is brought home to us by a truly analytical process. The emotion is subtle no doubt, but it is universal also. No poet could have
succeeded in conveying to us in a better manner the deep mystery of the boy's soul.

The same kind of sensation finds expression in "Nutting" where, we are told, when, after the boy had torn boughs of a virgin tree, he is justly punished with remorse at the sight of the intruding sky.