



***DOROTHY
WORDSWORTH***

***RECOLLECTIONS
OF A TOUR MADE
IN SCOTLAND
A.D. 1803***

Dorothy Wordsworth

Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland A.D. 1803

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PREFACE.

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Those who have long known the poetry of Wordsworth will be no strangers to the existence of this Journal of his sister, which is now for the first time published entire. They will have by heart those few wonderful sentences from it which here and there stand at the head of the Poet's 'Memorials of a Tour in Scotland in 1803.' Especially they will remember that 'Extract from the Journal of my Companion' which preludes the 'Address to Kilchurn Castle upon Loch Awe,' and they may sometimes have asked themselves whether the prose of the sister is not as truly poetic and as memorable as her brother's verse. If they have read the Memoirs of the Poet published by his nephew the Bishop of Lincoln, they will have found there fuller extracts from the Journal, which quite maintain the impression made by the first brief sentences. All true Wordsworthians then will welcome, I believe, the present publication. They will find in it not only new and illustrative light on those Scottish poems which they have so long known, but a faithful commentary on the character of the poet, his mode of life, and the manner of his poetry. Those who from close study of Wordsworth's poetry know both the poet and his sister, and what they were to each other, will need nothing more than the Journal itself. If it were likely to fall only into their hands, it might be left without one word of comment or illustration. But as it may reach some who have never read Wordsworth, and others who having read do not relish him, for the information of these something

more must be said. The Journal now published does not borrow all its worth from its bearing on the great poet. It has merit and value of its own, which may commend it to some who have no heart for Wordsworth's poetry. For the writer of it was in herself no common woman, and might have secured for herself an independent reputation, had she not chosen rather that other part, to forget and merge herself entirely in the work and reputation of her brother.

DOROTHY WORDSWORTH was the only sister of the poet, a year and a half younger, having been born on Christmas Day 1771. The five children who composed the family, four sons and one daughter, lost their mother in 1778, when William was eight, and Dorothy six years old. The father died five years afterwards, at the close of 1783, and the family home at Cockermouth was broken up and the children scattered. Before his father's death, William, in his ninth year, had gone with his elder brother to school at Hawkshead, by the lake of Esthwaite, and after the father died Dorothy was brought up by a cousin on her mother's side, Miss Threlkeld, afterwards Mrs. Rawson, who lived in Halifax. During the eight years which Wordsworth spent at school, or, at any rate, from the time of his father's death, he and his sister seem seldom, if ever, to have met.

The first college vacation in the summer of 1788 brought him back to his old school in the vale of Esthwaite, and either this or the next of his undergraduate summers restored him to the society of his sister at Penrith. This meeting is thus described in the 'Prelude:'—

'In summer, making quest for works of art,
Or scenes renowned for beauty, I explored
That streamlet whose blue current works its way
Between romantic Dovedale's spiry rocks;
Pried into Yorkshire dales, or hidden tracts
Of my own native region, and was blest
Between these sundry wanderings with a joy
Above all joys, that seemed another morn
Risen on mid-noon; blest with the presence, Friend!
Of that sole sister, her who hath been long

Dear to thee also, thy true friend and mine,
Now, after separation desolate
Restored to me—such absence that she seemed
A gift then first bestowed.'

They then together wandered by the banks of Emont, among the woods of Lowther, and 'climbing the Border Beacon looked wistfully towards the dim regions of Scotland.' Then and there too Wordsworth first met that young kinswoman who was his wife to be.

During the following summers the Poet was busy with walking tours in Switzerland and North Italy, his residence in France, his absorption in the French Revolution, which kept him some years longer apart from his sister. During those years Miss Wordsworth lived much with her uncle Dr. Cookson, who was a canon of Windsor and a favourite with the Court, and there met with people of more learning and refinement, but not of greater worth, than those she had left in her northern home.

In the beginning of 1794 Wordsworth, returned from his wanderings, came to visit his sister at Halifax, his head still in a whirl with revolutionary fervours. He was wandering about among his friends with no certain dwelling-place, no fixed plan of life, his practical purposes and his opinions, political, philosophical, and religious, all alike at sea. But whatever else might remain unsettled, the bread-and-butter question, as Coleridge calls it, could not. The thought of orders, for which his friends intended him, had been abandoned; law he abominated; writing for the newspaper press seemed the only resource. In this seething state of mind he sought once more his sister's calming society, and

the two travelled together on foot from Kendal to Grasmere, from Grasmere to Keswick, 'through the most delightful country that was ever seen.'

Towards the close of this year (1794) Wordsworth would probably have gone to London to take up the trade of a writer for the newspapers. From this however he was held back for a time by the duty of nursing his friend Raisley Calvert, who lay dying at Penrith. Early in 1795 the young man died, leaving to his friend, the young Poet, a legacy of £900. The world did not then hold Wordsworth for a poet, and had received with coldness his first attempt, 'Descriptive Sketches and an Evening Walk,' published two years before. But the dying youth had seen further than the world, and felt convinced that his friend, if he had leisure given him to put forth his powers, would do something which would make the world his debtor. With this view he bequeathed him the small sum above named. And seldom has such a bequest borne ampler fruit. 'Upon the interest of the £900, £400 being laid out in annuity, with £200 deducted from the principal, and £100 a legacy to my sister, and £100 more which "The Lyrical Ballads" have brought me, my sister and I have contrived to live seven years, nearly eight.' So wrote Wordsworth in 1805 to his friend Sir George Beaumont. Thus at this juncture of the Poet's fate, when to onlookers he must have seemed both outwardly and inwardly well-nigh bankrupt, Raisley Calvert's bequest came to supply his material needs, and to his inward needs his sister became the best earthly minister. For his mind was ill at ease. The high hopes awakened in him by the French Revolution had been dashed, and his spirit, darkened and

depressed, was on the verge of despair. He might have become such a man as he has pictured in the character of 'The Solitary.' But a good Providence brought his sister to his side and saved him. She discerned his real need and divined the remedy. By her cheerful society, fine tact, and vivid love for nature she turned him, depressed and bewildered, alike from the abstract speculations and the contemporary politics in which he had got immersed, and directed his thoughts towards truth of poetry, and the face of nature, and the healing that for him lay in these.

'Then it was
That the beloved sister in whose sight
Those days were passed—
Maintained for me a saving intercourse
With my true self; for though bedimmed and changed
Much, as it seemed, I was no further changed
Than as a clouded or a waning moon:
She whispered still that brightness would return,
She, in the midst of all, preserved me still
A Poet, made me seek beneath that name,
And that alone, my office upon earth.

By intercourse with her and wanderings together in delightful places of his native country, he was gradually led back

'To those sweet counsels between head and heart
Whence genuine knowledge grew.'

The brother and sister, having thus cast in their lots together, settled at Racedown Lodge in Dorsetshire in the autumn of 1795. They had there a pleasant house, with a good garden, and around them charming walks and a

delightful country looking out on the distant sea. The place was very retired, with little or no society, and the post only once a week. But of employment there was no lack. The brother now settled steadily to poetic work; the sister engaged in household duties and reading, and then when work was over, there were endless walks and wanderings. Long years afterwards Miss Wordsworth spoke of Racedown as the place she looked back to with most affection. 'It was,' she said, 'the first home I had.'

The poems which Wordsworth there composed were not among his best,—'The Borderers,' 'Guilt or Sorrow,' and others. He was yet only groping to find his true subjects and his own proper manner. But there was one piece there composed which will stand comparison with any tale he ever wrote. It was 'The Ruined Cottage,' which, under the title of the 'Story of Margaret,' he afterwards incorporated in the first Book of 'The Excursion.' It was when they had been nearly two years at Racedown that they received a guest who was destined to exercise more influence on the self-contained Wordsworth than any other man ever did. This was S. T. Coleridge. One can imagine how he would talk, interrupted only by their mutually reading aloud their respective Tragedies, both of which are now well-nigh forgotten, and by Wordsworth reading his 'Ruined Cottage,' which is not forgotten. Miss Wordsworth describes S. T. C., as he then was, in words that are well known. And he describes her thus, in words less known,—'She is a woman indeed, in mind I mean, and in heart; for her person is such that if you expected to see a pretty woman, you would think her ordinary; if you expected to see an ordinary woman, you

would think her pretty, but her manners are simple, ardent, impressive. In every motion her innocent soul out-beams so brightly, that who saw her would say, "Guilt was a thing impossible with her." Her information various, her eye watchful in minutest observation of nature, and her taste a perfect electrometer.'

The result of this meeting of the two poets was that the Wordsworths shifted their abode from Racedown to Alfoxden, near Nether Stowey, in Somersetshire, to be near Coleridge. Alfoxden was a large furnished mansion, which the brother and sister had to themselves. 'We are three miles from Stowey, the then abode of Coleridge,' writes the sister, 'and two miles from the sea. Wherever we turn we have woods, smooth downs, and valleys, with small brooks running down them, through green meadows, hardly ever intersected with hedgerows, but scattered over with trees. The hills that cradle these valleys are either covered with fern and bilberries, or oak woods, which are cut for charcoal. Walks extend for miles over the hill-tops, the great beauty of which is their wild simplicity—they are perfectly smooth, without rocks.' It was in this neighbourhood, as the two poets loitered in the silvan combs or walked along the smooth Quantock hill-tops, looking seaward, with the 'sole sister,' the companion of their walks, that they struck each from the other his finest tones. It was with both of them the heyday of poetic creation. In these walks it was that Coleridge, with slight hints from Wordsworth, first chaunted the vision of the Ancient Mariner, and then alone, 'The rueful woes of Lady Christabel.' This, too, was the birthday of some of the finest of the Lyrical Ballads, of 'We are

seven,' 'Simon Lee,' 'Expostulation and Reply,' and 'The Tables Turned,' 'It is the first mild day in March,' and 'I heard a thousand blended notes.' Coleridge never knew again such a season of poetic creation, and Wordsworth's tardier, if stronger, nature, received from contact with Coleridge that quickening impulse which it needed, and which it retained during all its most creative years.

But if Coleridge, with his occasional intercourse and wonderful talk, did much for Wordsworth, his sister, by her continual companionship, did far more. After the great revulsion from the excesses of the French Revolution, she was with him a continually sanative influence. That whole period, which ranged from 1795 till his settling at Grasmere at the opening of the next century, and of which the residence at Racedown and Alfoxden formed a large part, was the healing time of his spirit. And in that healing time she was the chief human minister. Somewhere in the 'Prelude' he tells that in early youth there was a too great sternness of spirit about him, a high but too severe moral ideal by which he judged men and things, insensible to gentler and humbler influences. He compares his soul to a high, bare craig, without any crannies in which flowers may lurk, untouched by the mellowing influences of sun and shower. His sister came with her softening influence, and sowed in it the needed flowers, and touched it with mellowing colours:

'She gave me eyes, she gave me ears,
And humble cares and delicate fears,
A heart, the fountain of sweet tears
And love, and thought and joy.'

Elsewhere in the 'Prelude' he describes how at one time his soul had got too much under the dominion of the eye, so that he kept comparing scene with scene, instead of enjoying each for itself—craving new forms, novelties of colour or proportion, and insensible to the spirit of each place and the affections which each awakens. In contrast with this temporary mood of his own he turns to one of another temper:—

'I knew a maid,
A young enthusiast who escaped these bonds,
Her eye was not the mistress of her heart,
She welcomed what was given, and craved no more;
Whate'er the scene presented to her view,
That was the best, to that she was attuned
By her benign simplicity of life.
Birds in the bower, and lambs in the green field,
Could they have known her, would have loved; methought
Her very presence such a sweetness breathed,
That flowers, and trees, and even the silent hills,
And everything she looked on, should have had
An intimation how she bore herself
Towards them and to all creatures. God delights
In such a being; for her common thoughts
Are piety, her life is gratitude.'

But it was not his sister the Poet speaks of here, but of his first meeting with her who afterwards became his wife.

The results of the residence at Racedown, but especially at Alfoxden, appeared in the shape of the first volume of the 'Lyrical Ballads,' which were published in the autumn of 1798 by Mr. Cottle at Bristol. This small volume opens with

Coleridge's 'Rime of the Ancyent Marinere,' and is followed by Wordsworth's short but exquisite poems of the Alfoxden time, and is closed by the well-known lines on Tintern Abbey. Wordsworth reaches about the highest pitch of his inspiration in this latter poem, which contains more rememberable lines than any other of his, of equal length, save perhaps the Immortality Ode. It was the result of a ramble of four or five days made by him and his sister from Alfoxden in July 1798, and was composed under circumstances 'most pleasant,' he says, 'for me to remember.' He began it upon leaving Tintern, after crossing the Wye, and concluded it as he was entering Bristol in the evening.

Every one will recollect how, after its high reflections he turns at the close to her, 'his dearest Friend,' 'his dear, dear Friend,' and speaks of his delight to have her by his side, and of the former pleasures which he read in 'the shooting lights of her wild eyes,' and then the almost prophetic words with which he forebodes, too surely, that time when 'solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief should be her portion.'

That September (1798) saw the break-up of the brief, bright companionship near Nether Stowey. Coleridge went with Wordsworth and his sister to Germany, but soon parted from them and passed on alone to Göttingen, there to study German, and lose himself in the labyrinth of German metaphysics. Wordsworth and Dorothy remained at Goslar, and, making no acquaintances, spent the winter—said to have been the coldest of the century—by the German stoves, Wordsworth writing more lyrical poems in the same vein which had been opened so happily at Alfoxden. There is

in these poems no tincture of their German surroundings; they deal entirely with those which they had left on English ground. Early in spring they returned to England, to spend the summer with their friends the Hutchinsons at Sockburn-upon-Tees. There Dorothy remained, while in September Wordsworth made with Coleridge the walking tour through the lakes of Westmoreland and Cumberland, which issued in his choice of a home at Grasmere for himself and his sister.

At the close of the year Wordsworth and his sister set off and walked, driven forward by the cold, frosty winds blowing from behind, from Wensleydale over Sedbergh's naked heights and the high range that divides the Yorkshire dales from the lake country. On the shortest day of the year (St. Thomas's Day) they reached the small two-story cottage at the Townend of Grasmere, which, for the next eight years, was to be the poet's home, immortalised by the work he did in it. That cottage has behind it a small orchard-plot or garden ground shelving upwards toward the woody mountains above, and in front it looks across the peaceful lake with its one green island, to the steeps of Silver-how on the farther side. Westward it looks on Helm Craig, and up the long folds of Easedale towards the range that divides Easedale from Borrowdale. In this cottage they two lived on their income of a hundred pounds a year, Dorothy doing all the household work, for they had then, it has been said, no servant. Besides this, she had time to write out all his poems—for Wordsworth himself could never bear the strain of transcribing—to read aloud to him of an afternoon or evening—at one such reading by her of Milton's Sonnets it was that his soul took fire and rolled off his first sonnets—

and to accompany him on his endless walks. Nor these alone—her eye and imagination fed him, not only with subjects for his poetry, but even with images and thoughts. What we are told of the poem of the ‘Beggars’ might be said of I know not how many more. ‘The sister’s eye was ever on the watch to provide for the poet’s pen.’ He had a most observant eye, and she also for him; and his poems are sometimes little more than poetic versions of her descriptions of the objects which she had seen; and which he treated as seen by himself. Look at the poem on the ‘Daffodils’ and compare with it these words taken from the sister’s Journal. ‘When we were in the woods below Gowbarrow Park, we saw a few daffodils close by the water-side. As we went along there were more and yet more; and at last, under the boughs of the trees, we saw there were a long belt of them along the shore. I never saw daffodils so beautiful. They grew among the mossy stones about them. Some rested their heads on the stones, as on a pillow; the rest tossed, and reeled, and danced, and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind, they looked so gay and glancing.’ It may also be noted that the Poet’s future wife contributed to this poem these two best lines—

‘They flash upon that inward eye,
Which is the bliss of solitude.’

Or take another description from Miss Wordsworth’s Journal of a birch-tree, ‘the lady of the woods,’ which her brother has not versified:—‘As we were going along we were stopped at once, at the distance, perhaps, of fifty yards from our favourite birch-tree: it was yielding to the gust of the wind, with all its tender twigs; the sun shone upon it, and it

glanced in the wind like a flying sunshiny shower. It was a tree in shape, with stem and branches, but it was like a spirit of water.'

The life which the Poet and his sister lived during the eight years at the Townend of Grasmere stands out with a marked individuality which it is delightful ever so often to recur to. It was as unlike the lives of most literary or other men, as the most original of his poems are unlike the ordinary run of even good poetry. Their outward life was exactly like that of the dalesmen or 'statesmen'—for so the native yeomen proprietors are called—with whom they lived on the most friendly footing, and among whom they found their chief society. Outwardly their life was so, but inwardly it was cheered by imaginative visitings to which these were strangers. Sheltered as they then were from the agitations of the world, the severe frugality of the life they led ministered in more than one way to feed that poetry which introduced a new element into English thought. It kept the mind cool, and the eye clear, to feel once more that kinship between the outward world and the soul of man, to perceive that impassioned expression in the countenance of all nature, which, if felt by primeval men, ages of cultivation have long forgotten. It also made them wise to practise the same frugality in emotional enjoyment which they exercised in household economy. It has been well noted [0a] that this is one of Wordsworth's chief characteristics. It is the temptation of the poetic temperament to be prodigal of passion, to demand a life always strung to the highest pitch of emotional excitement, to be never content unless when passing from fervour to fervour. No life can long endure this

strain. This is specially seen in such poets as Byron and Shelley, who speedily fell from the heights of passion to the depths of languor and despondency. The same quick using up of the power of enjoyment produces the too common product of the *blasé* man and the cynic. Wordsworth early perceived that all, even the richest, natures have but a very limited capacity of uninterrupted enjoyment, and that nothing is easier than to exhaust this capacity. Hence he set himself to husband it, to draw upon it sparingly, to employ it only on the purest, most natural, and most enduring objects, and not to speedily dismiss or throw them by and demand more, but to detain them till they had yielded him their utmost. From this in part it came that the commonest sights of earth and sky—a fine spring day, a sunset, even a chance traveller met on a moor, any ordinary sorrow of man's life—yielded to him an amount of imaginative interest inconceivable to more mundane spirits. The simple healthiness and strict frugality of his household life suited well, and must have greatly assisted, that wholesome frugality of emotion which he exercised.

During those seven or eight Grasmere years, the spring of poetry which burst forth at Alfoxden, and produced the first volume of 'Lyrical Ballads,' flowed steadily on and found expression in other poems of like quality and spirit,—'Hartleap Well,' 'The Brothers,' 'Michael,' which, with others of the same order, written in Germany, appeared in the second volume of 'Lyrical Ballads.' And after these two volumes had gone forth, Grasmere still gave more of the same high order,—'The Daffodils,' 'The Leech-Gatherer,' and above all the 'Ode on Immortality.' It was too the conclusion

of the 'Prelude,' and the beginning of the 'Excursion.' So that it may be said that those Grasmere years, from 1800 to 1807, mark the period when Wordsworth's genius was in its zenith. During all this time, sister Dorothy was by his side, ministering to him, equally in body and in mind—doing the part of household servant, and not less that of prompter and inspirer of his highest songs.

But this life of theirs, retired and uneventful as it seems, was not without its own incidents. Such was the homecoming of their younger sailor-brother John, who, in the first year of their residence at Grasmere—

'Under their cottage roof, had gladly come
From the wild sea a cherished visitant.'

He was, what his brother calls him, 'a silent poet,' and had the heart and sense to feel the sterling quality of his brother's poems, and to foretell with perfect confidence their ultimate acceptance, at the time when the critic wits who ruled the hour treated them with contempt. The two brothers were congenial spirits, and William's poetry has many affecting allusions to his brother John, whose intention it was, when his last voyage was over, to settle in 'Grasmere's happy vale,' and to devote the surplus of his fortune to his brother's use. On his last voyage he sailed as captain of the 'Earl of Abergavenny' East-Indiaman, at the opening of February 1805; and on the 5th of that month, the ill-fated ship struck on the Shambles of the Bill of Portland, and the captain and most of the crew went down with her. To the brother and sister this became a permanent household sorrow. But in time they found comfort in that thought with which the Poet closes a remarkable letter on

his brother's loss,—‘So good must be better; so high must be destined to be higher.’

Another lesser incident was a short tour to the Continent, in which, as the brother and sister crossed Westminster Bridge, outside the Dover coach, both witnessed that sunrise which remains fixed for ever in the famous sonnet. Another incident, and more important, was Wordsworth's marriage in October 1802, when he brought home his young wife, Mary Hutchinson, his sister's long-time friend, to their cottage at Townend. This is she whom he has sung in the lines—‘She was a phantom of delight;’ of whom he said in plain prose, ‘She has a sweetness all but angelic, simplicity the most entire, womanly self-respect and purity of heart speaking through all her looks, acts, and movements.’ The advent of Mrs. Wordsworth brought no change to Dorothy. She still continued to fill to her brother and his wife the same place which she had filled when her brother was alone, sharing in all the household duties and family interests, and still accompanying him in his rambles when Mrs. Wordsworth was detained at home. The year after the marriage, that is, in the fourth year of the Grasmere residence, after the first son was born, the brother and sister, accompanied by Coleridge, set out on that tour the Journal of which is here published. Portions of it have already appeared in the ‘Memoirs’ of Wordsworth, but it is now for the first time given in full, just as it came from the pen of Miss Wordsworth seventy years ago. As I shall have to speak of it again, I may now pass on and note the few facts that still remain to be told in illustration of the writer's character.

In the years which followed the tour in Scotland, other children were added to Wordsworth's family, till the small cottage at the Townend could no longer accommodate the household. The second child was the poet's only daughter, whom after his sister he called Dorothy, generally known as Dora, for, as he tells Lady Beaumont, he could not find it in his heart to call her by another name. This second Dora occupies in Wordsworth's later poetry the same place which the first Dorothy held in his earlier. Aunt Dorothy's love, as it expanded to take in each newcomer, did not lose any of its intensity towards her brother. While the uneasiness which the act of writing had always occasioned him was not diminished, weakness of eyesight increased. Then she had to write for him, she read to him, she walked with him as of old, besides sharing in all household cares. In November 1806, Wordsworth removed with his family to Coleorton, in Leicestershire, to spend the winter there in a house of Sir George Beaumont's; 'Our own cottage,' he writes, 'being far too small for our family to winter in, though we manage well enough in it during the summer.' In the spring of 1807, Wordsworth and his wife visited London. Dorothy, who was left with the children, wrote the poem called 'The Mother's Return,' as a welcome to Mrs. Wordsworth when she came back. This with two other poems, written by her for the children, one on 'The Wind,' the other called 'The Cottager to her Infant,' afterwards appeared in an edition of her brother's poems.

This seems the proper place to give the account of Miss Wordsworth, as she appeared to De Quincey, when in 1807 he first made the acquaintance of Wordsworth, just before

the Poet and his family quitted their old home in the cottage at Grasmere Townend. After speaking of Mrs. Wordsworth, he continues:—

‘Immediately behind her moved a lady, shorter, slighter, and perhaps, in all other respects, as different from her in personal characteristics as could have been wished for the most effective contrast. “Her face was of Egyptian brown;” rarely, in a woman of English birth, had I seen a more determinate gipsy tan. Her eyes were not soft as Mrs. Wordsworth’s, nor were they fierce or bold; but they were wild and startling, and hurried in their motion. Her manner was warm, and even ardent; her sensibility seemed constitutionally deep; and some subtle fire of impassioned intellect apparently burned within her, which—being alternately pushed forward into a conspicuous expression by the irresistible instincts of her temperament, and then immediately checked in obedience to the decorum of her sex and age and her maidenly condition—gave to her whole demeanour, and to her conversation, an air of embarrassment, and even of self-conflict, that was almost distressing to witness. Even her very utterance and enunciation often suffered in point of clearness and steadiness, from the agitation of her excessive organic sensibility. At times the self-counteraction and self-baffling of her feelings caused her even to stammer. But the greatest deductions from Miss Wordsworth’s attractions, and from the exceeding interest which surrounded her, in right of her character, of her history, and of the relation which she fulfilled towards her brother, were the glancing quickness of her motions, and other circumstances in her

deportment (such as her stooping attitude when walking), which gave an ungraceful character to her appearance when out of doors

‘Her knowledge of literature was irregular and thoroughly unsystematic. She was content to be ignorant of many things; but what she knew, and had really mastered, lay where it could not be disturbed—in the temple of her own most fervid heart.’

It may not be amiss here to add from the same gossipy but graphic pen, a description of the Townend home, and of the way of life there, which has often before been quoted:—

‘A little semi-vestibule between two doors prefaced the entrance into what might be considered the principal room of the cottage. It was an oblong square, not above eight and a half feet high, sixteen feet long, and twelve broad, very prettily wainscoted from the floor to the ceiling with dark polished oak, slightly embellished with carving. One window there was—a perfect and unpretending cottage window—with little diamond panes, embowered at almost every season of the year with roses, and, in the summer and autumn, with a profusion of jasmine and other fragrant shrubs. From the exuberant luxuriance of the vegetation around it, this window, though tolerably large, did not furnish a very powerful light to one who entered from the open air I was ushered up a little flight of stairs, fourteen in all, to a little drawing-room, or whatever the reader chooses to call it. Wordsworth himself has described the fireplace of this room as his

“Half kitchen, and half parlour fire.”

It was not fully seven feet six inches high, and in other respects pretty nearly of the same dimensions as the rustic hall below. There was, however, in a small recess, a library of perhaps three hundred volumes, which seemed to consecrate this room as the poet's study and composing-room, and such occasionally it was.

'About four o'clock it might be when we arrived. At that hour in November the daylight soon declined, and in an hour and a half we were all collected about the tea-table.

'This with the Wordsworths, under the simple rustic system of habits which they cherished then and for twenty years after, was the most delightful meal of the day, just as dinner is in great cities, and for the same reason, because it was prolonged into a meal of leisure and conversation. That night I found myself, about eleven at night, in a pretty bedroom, about fourteen feet by twelve. Much I feared that this might turn out the best room in the house; and it illustrates the hospitality of my new friends to mention that it was

'Next morning Miss Wordsworth I found making breakfast in the little sitting-room. No one was there, no glittering breakfast service; a kettle boiled upon the fire; and everything was in harmony with these unpretending arrangements.

'I rarely had seen so humble a *ménage*; and, contrasting the dignity of the man with this honourable poverty, and this courageous avowal of it, his utter absence of all effort to disguise the simple truth of the case, I felt my admiration increased.

'Throughout the day, which was rainy, the same style of modest hospitality prevailed. Wordsworth and his sister, myself being of the party, walked out in spite of the rain, and made the circuit of the two lakes, Grasmere and its dependency Rydal, a walk of about six miles.

'On the third morning after my arrival in Grasmere, I found the whole family, except the two children, prepared for the expedition across the mountains. I had heard of no horses, and took it for granted that we were to walk; however, at the moment of starting, a cart, the common farmer's cart of the country, made its appearance, and the driver was a bonny young woman of the vale. Accordingly we were all carted along to the little town or large village of Ambleside, three and a half miles distant. Our style of travelling occasioned no astonishment; on the contrary, we met a smiling salutation wherever we appeared; Miss Wordsworth being, as I observed, the person most familiarly known of our party, and the one who took upon herself the whole expenses of the flying colloquies exchanged with stragglers on the road.'

When the family had to leave this cottage home at Townend, they migrated to Allan Bank in 1808, and there remained for three years. In the spring of 1811 they moved to the Parsonage of Grasmere, and thence, in the spring of 1813, to Rydal Mount, their final abode. Their sojourn in the Parsonage was saddened by the loss of two children, who died within six months of each other, and were laid side by side in the churchyard of Grasmere. The Parsonage looks right across the road on that burial-place, and the continual sight of this was more than they could bear. They were glad

therefore to withdraw from it, and to exchange the vale of Grasmere, now filled for them with too mournful recollections, for the sweet retirement of Rydal.

Through all these changes sister Dorothy went of course with them, and shared the affliction of the bereaved parents, as she had formerly shared their happiness. In 1814, the year of the publication of the 'Excursion,' all of which Miss Wordsworth had transcribed, her brother made another tour in Scotland, and this time Yarrow was not unvisited. His wife and her sister went with him, but Dorothy, having stayed at home probably to tend the children, did not form one of the party, a circumstance which her brother always remembered with regret.

In the summer of 1820, however, she visited the Continent with her brother and Mrs. Wordsworth, but of this tour no record remains. Another visit, the last but one, Wordsworth made to Scotland in 1831, accompanied by his daughter Dora. This time Yarrow was revisited in company with Sir Walter Scott, just before his last going from Tweedside. Wordsworth has chronicled his parting with Scott in two affecting poems, which if any reader does not know by heart, I would recommend him to read them in the Appendix to this Journal. [0b]

But by the time this expedition was made, Dorothy was an invalid confined to a sick-room. In the year 1829 she was seized by a severe illness, which so prostrated her, body and mind, that she never recovered from it. The unceasing strain of years had at last worn out that buoyant frame and fervid spirit. She had given herself to one work, and that work was done. To some it may seem a commonplace one,

—to live in and for her brother, to do by him a sister's duty. With original powers which, had she chosen to set up on her own account, might have won for her high literary fame, she was content to forget herself, to merge all her gifts and all her interests in those of her brother. She thus made him other and higher than he could have been had he stood alone, and enabled him to render better service to the world than without her ministry he could have done. With this she was well content. It is sad to think that when the world at last knew him for what he was, the great original poet of this century, she who had helped to make him so was almost past rejoicing in it. It is said that during those latter years he never spoke of her without his voice being sensibly softened and saddened. The return of the day when they two first came to Grasmere was to him a solemn anniversary. But though so enfeebled, she still lived on, and survived her brother by nearly five years. Her death took place at Rydal Mount in January 1855, at the age of eighty-three. And now, beside her brother and his wife and others of that household, she rests in the green Grasmere churchyard, with the clear waters of Rotha murmuring by.

To return to the Journal. As we read it, let us bear always in mind that it was not meant for us, for the world, or 'the general reader,' but to be listened to by a small family circle, gathered round the winter fire. We should therefore remember that in reading it we are, as it were, allowed, after seventy years, to overhear what was not primarily meant for our ears at all. This will account for a fulness and minuteness of detail which to unsympathetic persons may perhaps appear tedious. But the writer was telling her story,

not for unsympathetic persons, not for 'general readers,' much less for literary critics, but for 'the household hearts that were her own,' on whose sympathy she could reckon, even down to the minutest circumstances of this journey. And so there is no attempt at fine or sensational writing, as we now call it, no attempt at that modern artifice which they call word-painting. But there is the most absolute sincerity, the most perfect fidelity to her own experience, the most single-minded endeavour to set down precisely the things they saw and heard and felt, just as they saw and felt and heard them, while moving on their quiet way. And hence perhaps the observant reader who submits himself to the spirit that pervades this Journal may find in its effortless narrative a truthfulness, a tenderness of observation, a 'vivid exactness,' a far-reaching and suggestive insight, for which he might look in vain in more studied productions.

Another thing to note is the historic value that now attaches to this Journal. It marks the state of Scotland, and the feeling with which the most finely gifted Englishmen came to it seventy years since, at a time before the flood of English interest and 'tourism' had set in across the Border. The Wordsworths were of course not average English people. They came with an eye awake and trained for nature, and a heart in sympathy with nature and with man in a degree not common either in that or in any other age. They were north-country English too, and between these and the Lowland Scots there was less difference of fibre and of feeling than there generally is between Cumbrians and Londoners. All their lives they had been wont to gaze across the Solway on the dimly-outlined mountains of the Scottish

Border. This alone and their love of scenery and of wandering were enough, apart from other inducement, to have lured them northward. But that tide of sentiment, which in our day has culminated in our annual tourist inundation, was already setting in. It had been growing ever since 'The Forty-five,' when the sudden descent of the Highland host on England, arrested only by the disastrous pause at Derby, had frightened the Londoners from their propriety, and all but scared the Second George beyond seas. This terror in time subsided, but the interest in the northern savages still survived, and was further stimulated when, about fifteen years after, the portent of Macpherson's Ossian burst on the astonished world of literature. Then about eleven years later, in 1773, the burly and bigoted English Lexicographer buttoned his great-coat up to the throat and set out on a Highland sheltie from Inverness, on that wonderful 'Tour to the Hebrides,' by which he determined to extinguish for ever Macpherson and his impudent forgeries. Such a tour seemed at that day as adventurous as would now be a journey to the heart of Africa, and the stories which Johnson told of the Hebrideans and their lives let in on his Cockney readers the impression of a world as strange as any which Livingstone could now report of. Then, in 1786, came Burns, whose poetry, if it did not reach the ordinary Englishman of the literary class, at least thrilled the hearts of English poets. That Wordsworth had felt his power we know, for, independent as he stood, and little wont to acknowledge his indebtedness to any, he yet confesses in one place that it was Burns who first set him on the right track. This series of surprises coming from