

WORDSWORTH.

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AN article on Wordsworth is rather historical than literary. He is one of the poets of a past generation. Booksellers say that the demand for his works is now comparatively small. He, Shelley, and Byron—perhaps we may add Coleridge and Keats—were the great political poets produced in England by the European movement which in France, to her misfortune and that of the world at large, took the violent form of the Revolution. That age, in England at least, has passed away, with the interests, aspirations and tastes which belonged to it. Its political and social enthusiasm has given place to the mood of those who think that “nothing is new, nothing is true, and nothing is of any importance.” Tennyson, an artist pure and simple, has succeeded to the political poets; and Tennyson himself, as English character more and more feels the influence of wealth, skepticism and political lassitude, appears to be yielding his throne in many hearts to poetry which is little more than an intellectual cigar.

Wordsworth, like Coleridge and Southey, fully shared the rapturous hopes of the Revolution :

“Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven ! Oh ! times
In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
Of custom, law and statute took at once
The attraction of a country in romance !
When reason seemed the most to assert her rights,
When most intent on making of herself
A prime enchanter to assist the work
Which then was going forward in her name.”

The passage from which these lines are taken is perhaps as good an apology as can be found for the enthusiasts of the day, because it shows that the visions—in their frantic endeavour to realize which, some of them deluged the world with blood—were intensely shared by a man, young indeed, but with a mind naturally well-balanced, as well as a thoroughly pure and benevolent heart. Wordsworth, who was in France at the commencement of the Revolution, and saw life in the Provinces, is also a