

ESSAY III.

In this poem we have an example of Wordsworth's art at its best. Not only does he, as always, clothe his thoughts in the choicest of language, but those thoughts are most characteristic of the poet whom Macaulay has called the "High Priest of Nature." In addition to this, Wordsworth shows a deep knowledge of the effect of sorrow on one's life—a knowledge gained in the hard school of experience.

The circumstances under which he gained this knowledge were most distressful. His favorite brother, John, was captain on board the "Abergavenny," a vessel in the service of the East India Company. While on a home voyage, in 1805, this ship was, through the incompetence of the pilot, wrecked off the Bill of Portland, and nearly all were drowned. Among those lost was Wordsworth's brother, who died, as he had lived, at his post. His death was keenly felt by Wordsworth, who wrote this poem the same year.

Before this, sorrow had been to Wordsworth only as "a still, sad music." Now the hand of affliction fell on him, and he bowed under it. Nature was not now to him the calm, smiling presence she had been; he had learned that she could be stern and cruel. His own soul had undergone a change. He feels this when he says: "A deep distress hath humanized my soul." Sorrow had been necessary to make him realize that life was not all pleasure, but that same sorrow had also given him a greater sympathy with others. He could now feel the truth underlying Beaumont's picture. The power to see only the ideal state of existence was gone from him. His eyes had been opened to the sorrows around him. Yet he did not shrink from either his own sorrow or that of others. Although he knew that the feeling of his loss would ne'er be old, still he determined to bear that loss bravely and cheerfully, and from it to draw fortitude for himself and tenderness for others. This is a sorrow that develops character.

Simcoe Co., Ont. L. E. H.

ESSAY IV.

This poem, like all productions worth study, grows more beautiful with study. One great power of the

descriptive writer is to bring out the details of a pen-picture so that the reader will, of necessity, see the scene. After reading verses 1, 2 and 3, who could fail to see Peele Castle as Wordsworth saw it? And still, is it not easy to see Beaumont's picture after reading 10, 11 and 12?

The figures used are good. The personified apostrophe in verse 1 is remarkable for its tone of "Camaraderie." The euphony of language is also good. So perfect the rhyme, so well chosen the words in their connections and sequence, that harshness or abruptness is almost totally absent. For myself, I would prefer the word "wavered," instead of "trampled," in stanza 2, line 4. I can understand an image or shadow wavering; a man or animal trampling. The transition from nature to man in stanzas 13 and 14, is also characteristic of Wordsworth. It is a poem well worth study.

R. J. MESSENGER.

Annapolis Co., N. S.
How many of our members agree with Mr. Messenger re the word "trampled"?

ESSAY V.

Wordsworth is the poet of nature. He has written many poems, directly on nature, and throughout a great deal of his work there breathes that cordial sympathy for nature he evidently felt at all times. This poem is one that shows he was under the spell of nature when he wrote it. As he tells us in the opening stanza, he was the neighbor of this castle once for "four summer weeks," but, unlike a great many sordid souls who would have scarce noticed the quiet splendor of nature, "so like from day to day," that very quietness and sameness of nature so threw its spell over him that he longed for the power to wield a painter's brush, that he might portray that entrancing scene.

Then, all unconsciously, the living in company with that tranquil scene instilled into his soul something of its own tranquility, and he drew a picture in his mind of a scene of "Elysian quiet, without toil or strife," and we doubt not there came over him a longing to live such a life as was exemplified in the quiet scenes around him, away from the carking cares of this world; then he

was awakened to the fact that he must bear his share of life's burdens, by a great sorrow that overtook him.

This poem, to our mind, bears a lesson for us all, penned in quietly passionate language. It is abstruse. It requires study to comprehend its meaning. In his description of the scene, and the painter's picture of it, he leaves very much for the imagination to fill in; but, for the student who will study it sufficiently to reach its hidden meaning, its very obscurity gives it an added charm, and its lessons probably sink deeper because of the fact that they require effort to find them.

Although we may not be an expert judge of poetry from a literary standpoint, we have enjoyed the reading and study of this poem because of the subtle charm wrapped up in it, and the smooth, flowing language in which it is expressed.

J. D. TAYLOR.

A less frequent repetition of the word "nature" in the first part would have improved the "wording" of this otherwise very good essay.

ESSAY VI.

The poem is a description of a great change in the poet's soul. Some time before he had spent four happy weeks near Peele Castle, and all the time the sea was quiet and the sky so clear that the image of the castle could be seen in the depths below. The poet's life, also, was calm. He had had no bitter grief or sorrow, and the quiet beauty of nature during those four weeks was the reflection of the quiet of his life through the years that he had lived. Nature, to him, was gentle and beautiful, and he could not conceive her acting in a harsh or cruel manner.

If, then, during those days, his "had been the painter's hand," he would have given an altogether different setting from that of the artist Beaumont. He would have painted a far different picture—"no motion," "silent nature's breathing life," "Elysian quiet," etc. But over and above all this, he would have added "the gleam," the light that he saw with his own soul, such a light as never was in nature "on sea or land," but which came forth out of

the depths of his own being and invested what he saw before him with intense and radiant beauty.

This he knows to have been merely a poet's dream, for since then he has learned, through the death of his brother that life has an altogether different content. It is not one even flow of calm. He has submitted to a new control—i. e., nature in her harsher aspect. His soul has been humanized, brought to the level of the real, with its suffering and pain, and no more can he dream of the even calm and beauty.

Beaumont is right in his interpretation. The raging sea, the struggling ship, the threatening clouds and cruel rocks mean death, but death is a part of life. Nature at times is calm, but she is also fickle and harsh.

Then the poet bids farewell to his old self. His heart had lived alone, out of real sympathy with his suffering fellow men. The death of his brother brought him from his selfish life of happiness in his enjoyment of nature—which is to be pitied, because it is narrow and forgetful—to a sense of fortitude and patient cheer in the face of the grief and sorrows which humanity has to bear. He suffers now with his fellow men.

Thus, we see, the poem is an expression of the poet's development from a narrow selfishness, where he was lost in the contemplation of the beauties of nature, till he came to a higher level, and could hear "The still, sad music of humanity."

DONALD MACCALLUM.

Frontenac Co., Ont.

ESSAY VII.

It seems to me that the chief "beauty" of Wordsworth's Elegiac Stanzas, as studied this month, consists, or is accounted for, by the fact that the poet has presented the most sublime and lofty emotions that his soul is capable of in the plain and simple language of everyday life. If this poem were a painting, we would say, "It is true to nature." Summer sunbeams were smiling on the peaceful waters of the sea off the coast of Lancashire, when Wordsworth visited the scene, during his vacation, in 1794. Peele Castle, fortified, stately, threw its calm, strong reflection in peace upon the waters; rest and quiet were characteristic of the scene. So he found it, and so his poetic soul drank in the beauty, and, in after days, from a background of storm and sorrow, reproduced the scene. With characteristic love of detail, he tells us minutely his relationship to the scene described—the length of his vacation, the frequency of his visits. With a master hand, he uses these details in such a way as to make us appreciate the beauty of the scene, and see with him "The light that never was on sea or land." But yet, beautiful as is the scene, and masterful as is the description, we might not be able to see it as Wordsworth saw it were it not for the explanation and the earnest truths expressed in the stanzas which follow this, the most poetical of the stanzas of the poem (4). In these stanzas, in the same simple, powerful way, we are introduced to the poet's change in his view of life, and his reasons for that change. Another scene is presented to us. The sea is tempest-tossed. Danger and death are lurking in the angry though once peaceful sea. Sorrow and trial are near; but the staunch castle is still stately, unyielding, unconquered. Cleverly the poet calls up these details, and then we see the circumstances in full which produced the beauty of the stanza written before, and sympathize with and appreciate the poet's feeling as he says, "the feeling of my loss will ne'er be old," and emphasizes it with the natural, earnest, almost "childlike" statement, "That which I know I speak with mind serene." So, the background of Sorrow makes the foreground of Beauty all the more beautiful, and suggests to us for the trials and sorrows of life a hope not with-



Canadian Scenery: Moonlight, Fort Saskatchewan.