

events of the Revolution. And apparently these notes on the Revolution were written within about twelve years of the latest of the events witnessed in France by Wordsworth. The value of this historical document to historians of the Revolution has hardly as yet received adequate acknowledgement.¹ In the second place, *The Prelude* is a picture of the convictions which, obtained by Wordsworth in his youth, coloured the whole of his statesmanship from 1802 to 1815. My hope has been to exhibit the twofold value of *The Prelude* by setting forth some of Wordsworth's compressed thoughts on the Revolution in his own words, accompanied by such comment as may explain or emphasize to readers acquainted with the outline of revolutionary history the purport and effect of his language.

(A) *The Joy of the Revolutionary Dawn.*

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very Heaven! O times,
In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
Of custom, law, and statute, took at once
The attraction of a country in romance!²

But Europe at that time was thrilled with joy,
France standing on the top of golden hours,
And human nature seeming born again.³

¹ The importance of *The Prelude*, as an historical record of opinion and feeling during the Revolution, would probably have been more highly appreciated had the work been published, as it might well have been, before the appearance of Carlyle's *French Revolution*. Intelligent readers would then have felt that some of the ideas which were first conveyed to the English public by Carlyle had been anticipated by Wordsworth.

² Hutchinson, pp. 728, 729.

³ Hutchinson, p. 680. Compare Coleridge's

When France in wrath her giant-limbs upreared,
And with that oath, which smote air, earth, and sea,
Stamped her strong foot and said she would be free.

See Coleridge's 'France—An Ode', *Poetical Works*, i. 128.