

Of act and circumstance, and visible form,
 Is mainly to the pleasure of the mind
 What passion makes them ; that meanwhile the forms
 Of Nature have a passion in themselves,
 That intermingles with those works of man
 To which she summons him ; although the works
 Be mean, have nothing lofty of their own ;
*And that the Genius of the Poet hence
 May boldly take his way among mankind
 Wherever Nature leads ; that he hath stood
 By Nature's side among the men of old,
 And so shall stand for ever.*

As I am talking about Wordsworth, there are two matters I feel it in my heart to mention, although they do not bear with their whole weight on the criticism of the verse about Lucy. We are frequently reminded that Wordsworth is the poet of Nature. The man who is content with this idea alone has scarcely planted his foot on the first round of the Wordsworthian ladder. Wordsworth's contemporaries wrote about Nature also, and faithfully ; yet, in surveying the landscapes of Thomson or of Cowper, there is a kind of aloofness on our part, unfelt when reading Wordsworth. Their colours are skilfully laid on, albeit cold in tone, and there is a just idea of perspective : still the general effect works its way to one pole of thought, and our critical faculties to the other. Wordsworth's poetry, however, has a quiet, subtle, penetrative force which refuses the criticism of minutiae. His music is pitched in Nature's key, but it is blended with melody deeper far : Nature leads up to man, especially to the best part of him, his moral side, for there, hidden within accretions, fair and foul, rest the seeds of progress. Nature is not, in the eyes of Wordsworth, an elaborate picture gallery. A fox-glove, for example, is not a poetical prize, every tinct and turn whereof is to be set before a background chosen with care, that the stately stem and head may be thrown forward into just relief. Its bells are made to fall on the highway, and are brought into connection with humanity, when they amuse the children of a vagrant mother. "A smooth rock wet with constant springs" lies bathed in the rays of the declining sun, and its brilliancy is as the lustre of a knight's shield awakening ideas of chivalry, or as an entrance into a fairy-haunted cave. (Prelude, Book III.) Here again we have the