

French agriculture before and in 1789, he apparently saw nothing of France after that year.¹ But Wordsworth studied France during the very height of the revolutionary conflict.

His observations of revolutionary life have, by a rare piece of good fortune, been recorded by him in *The Prelude*.² This work is on the face of it an autobiographical poem written to describe the growth of the poet's mind. It presents, however, two features of marked interest which are quite independent of any question of poetical interest. It is, in the first place, in so far as it refers to the Revolution, an historical document, for it gives an invaluable record of first-hand reflection by a keen observer, endowed at once with sympathetic imagination and with profound thoughtfulness, on some of the leading

¹ Wordsworth's first-hand knowledge of the people of France contrasts curiously with the very slight degree of acquaintance with the common people of any foreign country which could be gained by a diplomatist such as the first Earl Granville. He was a charming fellow. He was the delight of Society. He was the best whist-player of his day, though he lost a good deal more than he gained by this accomplishment. He was a confirmed gambler, and he spent a great part of his time in elaborate flirtations, which might perhaps be described as intrigues, with women. He was, however, an accomplished diplomatist, and we may believe that his labours in the service of his country were not altogether fruitless. But a gentleman of this type cannot have gained much knowledge of the people inhabiting the several countries where he represented the British Crown.

² *The Prelude* was begun in 1799; it was finished in 1805. It was not published till after Wordsworth's death. The parts of *The Prelude* bearing on Wordsworth's residence in France are mainly contained in Books IX, X, and XI. These books are said to have been written in 1804. But it is apparently not known how far Wordsworth during his later life may have altered expressions therein used. *The Prelude* was revised by Wordsworth in 1839. See Harper's *Wordsworth*, ii. 407.