

statesmanship of Wordsworth must constantly bear in mind two considerations.¹

The first consideration is that Wordsworth occupied a special and peculiar political position. He was in reality, in regard at any rate to foreign policy, neither a Whig nor a Tory. The dawn of liberty in France had in his early youth enlisted his fervent sympathy.

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very Heaven!

These words recall the early enthusiasm of the French Revolution; they sum up indeed the noble aspirations, in 1789 or 1790, of every man throughout Europe who valued the blessings of freedom and believed that the people of France were entering on the path of human progress. These men of hope all felt with Cowper:

'Tis liberty alone that gives the flower
Of fleeting life its lustre and perfume;
And we are weeds without it.²

In welcoming the earlier stages of the French revolt against despotism all the Whigs, with the one exception of Burke, went together.³ They thought that the political heirs of the statesmen who, in 1688, opposed the tyranny of James the Second, must of necessity applaud Frenchmen who, in 1789, resisted the despotism of the Bourbons. Wordsworth, however, went further than any Whig. He never mistook a movement, which

¹ The first of these considerations is treated of in this chapter; the second is, though referred to in this chapter, treated of in detail in ch. ii, p. 18, *post*.

² Cowper, *Poetical Works*, ii, 142.

³ Of Cowper it has been said with truth, but with a certain quaint inappropriateness, that he was born a Whig, and remained a Whig to the day of his death.