Book V

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BOOK V

Comme tout ce qui entre dans l'entendement humain y vient par les sens, la première raison de l'homme est une raison sensitive; c'est elle qui sert de base à la raison intellectuelle: nos premiers maîtres de philosophie sont nos pieds, nos mains, nos yeux. Substituer des livres à tout cela, ce n'est pas nous apprendre à raisonner, c'est nous apprendre à nous servir de la raison d'autrui; c'est nous apprendre à beaucoup croire, et à ne jamais rien savoir.

Rousseau, Emile, livre II

"BOOKS" is the announced subject of v; yet little is said in it of the literature of knowledge as distinguished from the literature of power or, indeed, of the part played by serious reading of any kind in the development of men. On the contrary, a third of the 605 lines treat of education and are in the main an attack on book learning. Except for an impressive general commendation of literature, only children's books are mentioned; the survey of the poet's own reading is carried hardly beyond his thirteenth year and is far from complete up to that point, since all the works singled out for especial mention in Wordsworth's prose account of his early reading are omitted. Nor is the point made clear which is insisted on in the Fenwick note to "The Norman Boy," that children are interested in other things than the doings of children and "will derive most benefit from books which are not unworthy the perusal of persons of any age."

Book v begins, somewhat as xiii does, with a bit of philosophical meditation, although here the personal note is also heard. The first forty-nine lines deal with the perishability of books; these are followed by the dream of the Arab with the stone and shell, which serves as a second and longer introduction (115 lines) to the theme of v. Yet the subject heralded with so much pomp soon gives place to a discussion of the education of children, which extends to 203 lines (223-425) and which is connected with "Books" only as it offers com-
ments on children’s reading and as books are a principal means of education. It would seem as if Wordsworth was reluctant to come to grips with the subject, a great part of which he postponed when he reached the end of v (see A 630-7) and to which, although he returned to it fitfully, the poem confessedly gives no adequate consideration. For it should be observed that in so far as v sticks to its theme it deals almost exclusively with children’s books, whereas the lofty and extended introduction says nothing of these but treats of "immortal verse, Shakespeare, or Milton, labourers divine" (164-5) and of

\[
\text{all the adamantine holds of truth} \\
\text{By reason built, or passion . . .} \\
\text{The consecrated works of Bard and Sage.} \\
\]

A strange preamble, this, to Jack the Giant-killer! A domed and spacious vestibule which leads only to the nursery! Lines 207-18 seem to have suggested to him that he might well make some comment on books less lofty than those of which he had been speaking; this comment may have led him to consider the advantages of giving a child freedom in reading and in other matters; and this in turn naturally drew him on to the subject of children’s books and to education in general (a subject in which he was much interested), until he had either forgotten the splendor of his far beginning or at least had decided that v was long enough and the "adamantine holds of truth" should be treated in a later book. As a result, v is not unified or homogeneous and an important element in the discipline of a poet’s mind is slighted.

Wordsworth’s ideas on elementary education are eminently characteristic of the man: strongly felt, unconventional, one-sided, sane, anti-intellectual, at once liberal and conservative, and marked by emphasis on freedom, simplicity, and close contact with nature. Their most striking characteristic is that (except in 408-10) they ignore schools and the books studied in them, and are concerned solely with what is commonly termed "play." This unusual emphasis arises from what is the chief virtue of Wordsworth’s point of view: the clearness with which he sees that whatever contributes to the child’s development on any side is education, that the acquisition of
book-learning constitutes but a small part of this development, and that an education mainly bookish or intellectual is wrong. Sports, on the other hand, foster the growth of health, vigor, endurance, manliness, independence, and joyousness; they stimulate the love of nature and store the mind with images of beauty; they teach the child to get along with his fellows and to endure what he does not understand. It was the positive and elemental that Wordsworth stressed—qualities, not skills or learning. These last could, if necessary, be acquired later; the main thing was that the child should have his full life as a child, that he should not be "a dwarf Man" (A 295) or "a miracle of scientific lore" (315) but a normal boy. Such a boy, as Wordsworth well knew, was usually too vigorous, independent, and care-free to become the passive "model of a child" whose name "the wandering beggars propagate" (299, 305). Rarely would he be checked "by innocence too delicate" (xiv. 339) or be

Too learned, or too good; but wanton, fresh,
And bandied up and down by love and hate;
Not unresentful where self-justified;
Fierce, moody, patient, venturous, modest, shy;
Mad at . . . sports. (412-16)

Such youth made the best men and it was because the life at Hawkshead bred such youth that Wordsworth praised it, not for the schooling, which was ordinary enough (408-10).

Systematic intellectual training, although he ignored it, he undoubtedly took for granted, just as he assumed that

White Sirius glittering o'er the southern crags,
Orion with his belt, and those fair Seven

would be

Acquaintances of every little child. (iv. 244-6)

Perhaps he also took for granted the study of nature, the close observation of particular plants and animals, the pollination of flowers, the bark, leaves, and shape of trees, the nests, food, and habits of birds. Yet it may be that it was with all these things as with poetry and other imaginative literature, which he valued highly and was much indebted to but which
he does not mention: he may well have felt that books, formal teaching, and organized knowledge had been overemphasized until they played far too large a part in education. "Untaught things, Creative and enduring" (xiii. 310-11) seemed to him much more important than what was learned in schools. Emerson noted in 1833 as "his favorite topic"

. . . that society is being enlightened by a superficial tuition, out of all proportion to its being restrained by moral culture. Schools do no good. Tuition is not education. He thinks more of the education of circumstances than of tuition.8

A few years earlier he had written:

Education, I need not remark to you, is everything that draws out the human being, of which tuition, the teaching of schools especially, however important, is comparatively an insignificant part. Yet the present bent of the public mind is to sacrifice the greater power to the less; all that life and nature teach, to the little that can be learned from books and a master. . . . The wisest of us expect far too much from school teaching.9

Near the end of his life, in commenting on an educational report, he asked if

too little value is not set upon the occupations of Children out of doors . . . comparatively with what they do or acquire in school? Is not the Knowledge inculcated by the Teacher, or derived under his management, from books, too exclusively dwelt upon, so as almost to put out of sight that which comes, without being sought for, from intercourse with nature and from experience in the actual employments and duties which a child's situation in the Country, however unfavorable, will lead him to or impose upon him? 8

One feature of the child's training that he particularly stressed is freedom (see 224-78, 332-6, 355-63). Fortunate were he and Coleridge both as men and as poets in that instead of being "noosed" they were left free to wander

Through heights and hollows, and bye-spots of tales
Rich with indigenous produce, open ground
Of Fancy, happy pastures rang'd at will! (A 235-7)

This is what would be expected of a person so self-willed as Wordsworth (iii. 355 n.) and one who, as his poetry reveals,
gained immeasurably from unusual liberty in unregulated sports and in wandering about at all hours alone or with other boys. Such wandering was not merely physical, for he observed: "my earliest days at school . . . were very happy ones, chiefly because I was left at liberty . . . to read whatever books I liked." Nor was his insistence on freedom merely an expression of personal desires, for in later years he voiced his "utter distrust of all attempts to nurse virtue by an avoidance of temptation."  

Some qualities which receive much attention in other parts of The Prelude and which Wordsworth undoubtedly felt should be nurtured in early years are not mentioned here. These include imaginative and creative power, right feeling, and the sense of mystery (417-19) and of wonder. Presumably he did not believe that a conscious effort should be made to cultivate these capacities but that the child should be given the opportunities to develop them in himself by being placed in an environment favorable to their growth. For education, as Wordsworth conceived it, is a way of life. James Fotheringham, in a small book that unfortunately is as scarce as it is sound and stimulating, calls attention to Wordsworth's insistence on "right, sound, active, vital feeling."

In a phrase [he remarks] . . . that is in true sympathy with the best naturalism of his age, the "vital soul" is the ground of all real education, and the free expansion of the "vital soul" is the true end of education. . . . In . . . the Prelude . . . And in other poems of his great period it is a leading idea. There is no real and right growth for human minds without depth and cordiality of feeling. The culture that does not give this is barren, and in a large degree a failure.  

This, however, is implied rather than said in v, which likewise is silent (except for the satirical picture of an infant prodigy) as to deliberate moral teaching whether direct or carefully planned but indirect. Of this last, contemporary educational theorists had much to say. In xiv. 162-70 the poet attributes much of what is commendable in himself to the development during his boyhood of fear and love; but although fear is referred to in 307, 419, and 451-9 of the present book, nothing is said in it of love. The affections and human sympathies were fostered at Hawkshead by the unusual custom of having
the boys live not in school buildings but with the villagers. They thus entered into the community life and established sound human relationships with families other than their own. The account of the return to Hawkshead during the first long vacation (iv. 27-92, 191-230) suggests that Wordsworth thought highly of the system. But he realized that feeling must not only be cultivated it must be disciplined, and that a public school with its sports and rough-and-tumble companionship with other boys affords an admirable means of acquiring emotional control and emotional stability. He speaks with gratitude and insight of what he himself had gained by being compelled

In hardy independence, to stand up
Amid conflicting interests, and the shock
Of various tempers; to endure and note
What was not understood, though known to be.

This passage recalls Wordsworth’s repeated insistence on the importance of the active, creative powers of the mind (see ii. 245-61 n.). The life at Hawkshead favored the growth of untaught powers “creative and enduring” (xiii. 310-11) whereas the traditional education regarded the child’s mind as, in the main, passive and receptive. Wordsworth would have agreed with Froebel that only by creative activity does mind grow and knowledge become real. Analysis, on the other hand, a favorite method in schools, he distrusted (ii. 203-32 n.), believing, as Fotheringham remarks, “that the right method in knowledge and therefore in education is constructive, not analytic; that the real apprehension of things is a creative and not a mechanical process. Taking things to bits, and regarding them singly, we never know them” (p. 37).

In “arts and letters” Wordsworth’s early training was, as he himself recognized (410), inadequate. Of music, painting, sculpture, and architecture he probably learned nothing; of natural, political, and social science, very little; and of history, not a great deal more. By these limitations he was handicapped throughout life more than he realized; but such subjects received very little attention in the schools of his day.

Since The Prelude is in the main a study of the imagination it is regrettable that it contains no direct comment on the rela-
tion of books and education to the development of this faculty, that it has, for example, nothing like the later criticism of a report dealing with elementary schools for paying "too little attention . . . to books of imagination which are eminently useful in calling forth intellectual power."¹⁶ Nor are we told in it that the description of the Boy of Winander illustrates the planting of "images of sound and sight, in the celestial soil of the Imagination" (de S., 531). To be sure, the education which is here praised is admirably adapted to encouraging the growth of this faculty just as that which is ridiculed is to crushing it. The books, too, that are praised, *Jack the Giant-killer* and the like, are those which Wordsworth felt—although he does not say this in the poem—were bound to stimulate the child's imagination. Indeed it is possible that in writing *v* he consciously or unconsciously had the development of the imagination in mind and that the unusual emphasis and striking omissions were due to his preoccupation with the faculty which is, for the poet at least, of supreme importance.

Professor de Selincourt thinks that *v* was composed between the latter part of February and the 29th of March, 1804. But, as I have pointed out at the beginning of the notes to *III*, what is now *v* may have been the third book composed and if so, some of *v* may have been written between 26 December, 1801, and January 11, 1803, and the remainder between January and the middle of February, 1804. Since lines corresponding to 364-88 are found in MS *JJ*, they were originally composed at Goslar between the middle of September, 1798, and the end of February, 1799; and the same may well be true of 426-50, an early form of which occurs in MS *V*.

To the list of "MSS for Bk. *v*" should now be added: "*for ll. [A] 389-413 JJ.*"

1-11. The six variants of these opening lines show with how much labor the serene beauty of the final version was achieved.

4-11. Just as the perishable nature of most beautiful objects led Keats to see in the very temple of Delight the sovran shrine of veiled Melancholy, so Wordsworth finds a subject for grief in man's very achievements because of the perishable nature of books, in which alone "the consecrated works of Bard and Sage" (42) are preserved.
8-10. Owing to his emphasis on intuition and his distrust of analytical reason Wordsworth seldom expresses his admiration for achievements of this sort.

14. *intercourse*: Continuing the figure of "speaking" (13): earth and heaven constitute a face which speaks, or carries on intercourse, with men.

16. *that bodily image*: "The speaking face of earth and heaven."

A 16. The progress of this line toward orthodoxy may be traced in D and E, which also reveal Wordsworth's uncertainty as to what he meant by "participate." Although A 14-16 suggests that a divine soul is diffused equally through nature and through man—which was the reason for omitting A 16,—"the sovereign Intellect" transcends both so that the passage cannot be called pantheistic. Nor can the soul be the *anima mundi*, since it is divine and since man participates in it. It is like the Holy Spirit conceived as a force rather than as a person. See p. 196 above. Line 17 seems to imply that the immanence of the Divine in the external world is a delusion, but such was certainly not Wordsworth's belief and the line was probably added to placate those who were frightened by the "Spinozistic" tendencies of certain of his poems.

19. As compared with man's intercourse with external nature, referred to in 11-18.

23. *our immortal being*: A has "the," which by completely parallel structure emphasizes the contrast with "the child of earth" (25).

28. For other lines made up entirely of adjectives see vi. 505 n.

31, 45. Monosyllabic; 29, 30, and 33 are nearly so. See ii. 41-5 n.

33. Prolepsis.

34. Cf. A 14-17. The reading of MS W suggests the *anima mundi* and may be pantheistic; see Chapter IX.

40. *reason*: See pp. 138-9, 362-4 above; *passion*: see p. 36 above and cf. xiv. 188-92, where imagination, which is inseparable from spiritual love (a form of passion), is said to be "but another name for . . . Reason in her most exalted mood." "Passion," "Bard," and "sensuous" are connected and "rea-
son," "Sage," and "intellectual"; 44 reinforces 40-1 in pointing out how close may be the connection between the "twin labourers," "Bard and Sage."

47. That is, immaterial and immortal.

50-9. "Rocky" (58), "so it chanced" (59), and all of 51-6 might better have been omitted.

65. For Wordsworth's interest in mathematics see vi. 115-67 n.

71-140. Most of the changes introduced into the later text (of which 71-5, 80-4, 90-1, 100-1, 107-10, 115-19, 127-9, 135-6 are the chief) are improvements; but 82 and 90-1 are dubious additions and in 100-1 the bald Biblical simplicity of A 101-2 has been replaced by colorless prose; "mine eyes" (127) is also much inferior to "I" (A 128). The repetition of "at my side" (74-75) and "looked" (84) is an excellent late addition. "Arabian" (A 71) was unnecessary in view of A 77-8; A 89 and A 91 were wisely dropped. A 109 was rewritten at least five times.

104-5. The substitution of "soul" and "reason" for "man" and "nature" (A 105-6) make for clarity. "Purest bond Of nature" (A 105-6) means the most objective, impersonal, and congenital bond between men, i.e. the reason. "Undisturbed by space or time" is close to xi. 330.

136. This splendid line was not achieved until 1832 or 1839 when "Still in his grasp" (135) was also substituted for the weaker "Beneath his arm" (A 134) and the vivid "over . . . bed of" (128-9) was added. The story of the dream, gaining in power and breadth as it proceeds, reaches a superb climax and then dies down in a quiet, simple close (139-40). Like the vision of the Druids (xiii. 312-49), it illustrates Wordsworth's power in a field which he seldom entered.

141-293. There are few changes from the earliest to the latest texts of these lines.

151-2. Impressive lines which, like those that follow, are illuminating as to Wordsworth's personality.

162. The early form of this line suggests more strongly than does the later those experiences akin to the mystic and usually marked by partial loss of consciousness which Wordsworth treasured in grateful memory as things divine (viii. 559).
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168-9. Did Wordsworth overlook what is gained by association and conversation with man, or did he rate living "guides And . . . helpers" below books? See ix. 288 n. Line 169 is a late addition.
A 182b-4a. Skilfully and, despite the interesting revelation in A 183-4, wisely omitted. "No, no" is close to the ridiculous.
190. insuperable: Incapable of being passed over.
192-222. "What everybody feels I will leave registered in the hearts, tongues, tears, and looks of all; what is peculiar to myself will remain working within myself; I shall merely assert the rights and honors of all books, lofty or humble, that men have loved."
194. The comma after "sown" should be after "pleasure," as in A 195.
195. Peculiar to myself: Many incidents in The Prelude were "peculiar" to Wordsworth in the sense that they were unlike what happens to most poets or other men; but he has in mind matters which were of merely personal interest or which contributed nothing to his development. These he usually passed over or eliminated in revision; see vi. 323-5 n., 420-88 n.; x. A 472-5, A 488-99; xi. 58 n.; xiv. 3 n. and pp. 271-3 above, and contrast Rousseau's Confessions. The avoidance of "transitory themes" mentioned in 223-4 and of local names (see viii. A 228-43 n.) springs from the same desire, that the poem be universal—another instance of Wordsworth's classicism.
196. still it works: An interesting addition.
197. time: Cf. viii. 558 and end of note to viii. 543-59.
213. these: All books, from the loftiest to the humblest, which seize the heart of man (198-200); prose though mentioned in 200, is not included in the enumeration that follows (202-15).
216. rights: Their rights to be recognized as Powers (218-22).
217. once for all: i.e. once for all in this poem.
218. Powers: An approach to the animistic use of "Powers,"
usually connected with nature, which is discussed in xiv. 113 n. and in Chapter v. Cf. also 555-6 and viii. 597-607 n.

222. Or [only less than] the Bible. Observe that A 222 clearly implies the transcendence of the Deity.

223-425. This long discussion of education is not entirely irrelevant since an account of a poet's development may well consider what early training best promotes that development. Indeed the entire Prelude is a study in education. Thanks largely to Rousseau's Émile, to the vogue of primitivism and of liberal thought in all fields, educational theory attracted an unusual amount of attention toward the close of the eighteenth century. It will be remembered that Wordsworth and his sister undertook the education of Basil Montagu's son and hoped for more pupils. Dorothy's letters to Jane Marshall of November 30, 1795, March 7, 1796, and March 19, 1797, speak of reading The Fool of Quality (pedagogical fiction) and suggest that advanced theories were being tried on young Montagu (see also "Anecdote for Fathers" and de S., 528-9). The poet's interest in education is apparent throughout the early books of The Prelude (especially in the comment on universities, iii. 371-505) and in xiii. 168-72; xiv. 329-47. In Excursion, ix. 293-362 (see n.), he urged compulsory elementary education, which he later opposed. These and other utterances show that his interest in the subject continued throughout life.

228-45. Cf. Coleridge's fourth autobiographical letter to Thomas Poole (1797): "I have known some who have been rationally educated, as it is styled. They were marked by a microscopic acuteness . . . and called the want of imagination, judgment, and the never being moved to rapture, philosophy."

230-1. For the education of Nature see "Three years she grew" and xiii. 20-39; it is exemplified in the youth of the Wanderer (Excursion, i. 108-433). "Positive instruction, even of a religious character," Wordsworth wrote to his brother, April 27, 1830, "is much overrated." He disliked being bound to regular times and seasons or set tasks; he rebelled against any regulation of his life by another (see vi. 32-3 n.). He felt that he owed much as a poet to the remarkable freedom he had enjoyed (including the freedom to read what he pleased) and to his association from infancy with beautiful and sublime
natural objects. Such an education is, so far as it goes, excellent and "natural." Its defects are likely to be in the line of book learning (to which, owing to his strong anti-rationalism, Wordsworth often expressed greater indifference than he felt), of excessive individualism, and of lack of self-discipline. Lines 230-1 suggest that Wordsworth regarded his early school-training also as "natural" and therefore excellent. This is the more likely since the general manner of life at Hawkshead was simple and since most persons confuse what they are accustomed to with the dictates of nature. But going to school and studying books is hardly following nature, especially if, as at Hawkshead, the books deal chiefly with Greek, Latin, and mathematics. Furthermore in urging that children should be allowed to follow what appear to be their natural inclinations Wordsworth overlooks the fact that these inclinations are the product of heredity and environment and so differ greatly from child to child. Much that he attributed to nature or to education was really due to the excellent stock from which he came and to the healthy, hardy activity of his early years. Yet in pointing out the good side of his own early training and the priggishness which results from an exclusively intellectual education, he is eminently sane.

232-9. In Rousseau's system the child, though apparently free is "followed, hourly watched, and [Wordsworth may have felt] noosed"; cf. 350-8.

246-93. Wordsworth is here giving a vivid and unqualified expression to his faith in the instincts of the child. This faith—implied in much of his poetry and definitely affirmed in 272-8 (cf. 359-63)—is a part of his general belief in the supreme value of intuitive knowledge (cf. vi. 39-40, Excursion, iv. 631-46, Chapter viii, and pp. 136-7 above), which is responsible for most of his anti-rationalism. It is fundamentally opposed to Godwinism. Presumably he is exaggerating when he suggests that the mother's chief function is to love and to provide a center for her children. Viscount Grey remarks "the mother bird does lead the young where the best food is to be found." 21 This tender and discriminating account of the wisdom with which she brought up her children, and the loving tribute to her in Ecclesiastical Sonnets, iii. xxii are the
only references to his mother that I recall in Wordsworth's poetry. Line 290a seems to refer to the ministry of nature.

260-6. These lines, particularly 262, sound like a thrust at the Cooksons, Wordsworth's mother's family, with whom Dorothy lived until 1789 and with whom William and his brothers spent part of some of their vacations. They antagonized the homeless children by their lack of sympathy and by petty, arbitrary regulations. Lines 263-4 may mean, "I could easily make clear the wisdom of my mother's way by contrasting it with that of the Cooksons, who, believing that children do not know what is good for them, gave us little freedom. But, as it would be an affront to her memory to criticize her mother, father, and brother, I am checked."

284-7. Cf. xii. 156-61; xiii. 61-3. With 279-83 cf. iv. 223. Wordsworth praises his mother because she wished her children to be real children, not imitation men and women like the infant prodigy satirized in 298-336. This point is emphasized in A 294-7, which is not in the final text. Froebel writes:

Das Kind, der Knabe, der Mensch überhaupt soll kein anderes Streben haben, als auf jeder Stufe ganz das zu sein, was die Stufe fordert. Dann wird jede folgende Stufe wie ein neuer Schuss aus einer gesunden Knospe hervorschiesessen, und er wird auch auf jeder folgenden Stufe bei gleichem Streben bis zur Vollendung wieder das werden, was diese Stufe fordert; denn nur die genügende Entwicklung des Menschen in und auf jeder vorhergehenden früheren bewirkt, erzeugt eine genügende vollendete Entwicklung jeder folgenden spätern Stufe. 22

293-346. One of the relatively few satirical passages in the poetry of Wordsworth, who as a rule has too little humor, too little deftness and lightness of touch to do this sort of thing well. (Yet see vii. 486-511 n.) There are satirical touches in iii. 25-9, 35-42, 506-8, 534-49; iv. 216-30; vii. 486-511, 544-72, 675-721. Wordsworth's early imitations of Juvenal will be found in letters to Wrangham of November 20, 1795, and of February 27, 1797 (misdated 1796 in de S. edition).

The success of 326-7 results not only from the vivid concreteness of the figure but from brevity, which in the surrounding lines, except for the amusing A 339, is to seek. Wordsworth was himself aware of these defects for he wrote opposite A 299-328 "this is heavy and must be shortened" (de S., 529)
and ultimately did retrench the description by nearly a third. A 350-4 probably seemed too strong but the figure of the body found by explorers which disintegrates on exposure to the air, though ill-expressed, is excellent. The final version is one of the most elaborately reconstructed passages in *The Prelude*: A 291b-7, A 305-6, A 308b-10a, A 314-15a, A 318b-30, A 338-40, A 350-4a, A 363 are omitted from the final text, which adds only 294b-8a, 299, 303b-4, and 328-9a (suggested by the A^2 addition to A 340); A 315-18 (307-9) is put ahead of A 307-13 (310-14), and A 354b-62 (329b-36) between A 331-45 (316-27) and A 346-9 (337-40). Besides these changes a number of additions and variations were introduced from time to time which were later discarded.

293-4. *My drift . . . obvious*: The leading article in the *Times Literary Supplement* for April 29, 1926, points out that, bad as this line is, it has been worked over: it was dropped from A^2 and C and revised for D^2.

294b-7. Substituted for A 291b-7. The first line and a half is an improvement but the dropping of A 294-7 (see 284-7 n.) is not.

307. *fear*: Contrast 419, 450-3a and see Chapter III.

310. *notices*: This may mean what he observes, his comments on what he observes, or both. One of the meanings given in the *NED* is, "specifically of babies: To show signs of intelligent observation."

341-6. Cf. 460-533, *Excursion*, i. 177-85. In 1806 Wordsworth wrote a long letter to a friend concerning the training of his daughter in the course of which he urged that her defects should be corrected, not

by preaching to her . . . nor by overrunning her infancy with books about good boys and girls, and bad boys and girls, and all that trumpery; but . . . by putting her in the way of acquiring without measure or limit such knowledge as will lead her out of herself, such knowledge as is interesting for its own sake; . . . in a word, by leaving her at liberty to luxuriate in such feelings and images as will feed her mind in silent pleasure. This nourishment is contained in fairy tales, romances, the best biographies and histories, and such parts of natural history . . . as belong to it, not as an art or science, but as a magazine of form and feeling. This kind of knowledge is purely good, a direct
antidote to every evil to be apprehended, and food absolutely necessary to preserve the mind of a child like yours from morbid appetites...

Lastly comes that class of objects which are interesting almost solely because they are known, and the knowledge may be displayed; and this unfortunately comprehends three fourths of what, according to the plan of modern education, children's heads are stuffed with; that is, minute, remote, or trifling facts... things of no value in themselves, but as they show cleverness.23

In a lecture on education delivered at the Royal Institution in May, 1808, Coleridge said:

I infinitely prefer the little books of "The Seven Champions of Christendom," "Jack the Giant Killer," etc., etc.—for at least they make the child forget himself—to your moral tales where a good little boy comes in and says, "Mama, I met a poor beggar man and gave him the sixpence you gave me yesterday. Did I do right?"—"O, yes, my dear; to be sure you did." This is not virtue, but vanity; such books and such lessons do not teach goodness, but—if I might venture such a word—goodness.24

According to Tomalin's report of the fifth of the lectures on Shakespeare and Milton delivered in 1811-12, Coleridge, after referring again to the good little boy and the beggar, exclaimed:

Give me the works which delighted my youth. Give me the History of St. George and the Seven Champions of Christendom, which at every leisure moment I used to hide myself in a corner to read. Give me the Arabian Nights Entertainments... I heard of no little Billies, and sought no praise for giving to beggars.25

This attack on infant prodigies is much like the one before us not only in spirit and in general point of view but in details. Coleridge's story of the model child who gives his sixpence to the beggar is implied in the line, "The wandering beggars propagate his name" (305); both poets mention the adventures of Jack the Giant-Killer and of St. George; Coleridge adds the Arabian Nights, which is praised enthusiastically as a children's book a hundred lines later in Wordsworth's poem; and finally both say that "at least" such tales make "the child forget himself." As the two men had probably discussed the subject more than once it is likely that the ideas belonged as much to the one as to the other. But Coleridge's phrasing of
them, and even the idea of introducing them into a lecture, he probably derived from the fifth book of *The Prelude*, which he first read four years before he made use of them in public. In his fourth autobiographical letter to Poole, written late in 1797, Coleridge remarked:

From my early reading of fairy tales and about genii, and the like, my mind had been habituated to the Vast; and I never regarded my senses in any way as the criteria of my belief. I regulated all my creeds by my conceptions, not by my sight, even at that age. Ought children to be permitted to read romances, and stories of giants, magicians, and genii? I know all that has been said against it; but I have formed my faith in the affirmative. I know no other way of giving the mind a love of the Great and the Whole. Those who have been led to the same truths step by step, through the constant testimony of their senses, seem to me to want a sense which I possess. They contemplate nothing but parts, and all parts are necessarily little, and the universe to them is but a mass of little things.

Presumably it is a mere coincidence that, just about the time Wordsworth was composing v, William Godwin in a private letter expressed much the same opinions on this same subject. Contemporary educators, he declared,

aim at cultivating one faculty, and I another. I hold that a man is not an atom less a man, if he lives and dies without the knowledge they are so desirous of accumulating in the heads of children. Add to which, these things may be learned at any age, while the imagination, the faculty for which I declare, if cultivated at all, must be begun with in youth. Without imagination there can be no genuine ardour in any pursuit, or for any acquisition, and without imagination there can be no genuine morality, no profound feeling of other men’s sorrow, no ardent and persevering anxiety for their interests. This is the faculty which makes the man, and not the miserable minutenesses of detail about which the present age is so uneasy. Nor is it the only misfortune that these minutenesses engross the attention of children: I would proscribe them from any early share, and would maintain that they freeze up the soul, and give a premature taste for clearness and exactness, which is of the most pernicious consequence.28

Among the books he recommends are *Mother Goose, Beauty and the Beast, Fortunatus, The Seven Champions of Christendom, Robinson Crusoe*, and the *Arabian Nights.*
346. _he forgets himself_: In so doing he is fundamentally different from the model child; note especially 322-31. Viscount Grey praises at length the "far-reaching wisdom and interest" of this remark.27

347-50. Although this passage was suggested by _Paradise Lost_, x. 229-305, Wordsworth presumably did not intend to imply that the later bridge-builders were like Sin and Death.

350. _Tamed_: A past participle dependent on "chaos."

353. _keepers of our time_: Those who watch over our [i.e., children's] hours; cf. A 376 and "wardens of our faculties" (354).

356-8. Wordsworth may have heard through Humphrey Davy (who interviewed "the father of the locomotive engine," Richard Trevithick, early in 1802) of the engines with which in December, 1801, early in 1803, and in February, 1804, passengers had been carried along roads.

358-63. Cf. 270-8, 406-25, 491-5 and n.; xiv. 329-41. Anti-intellectual, anti-rational, anti-Godwinian, sane, conservative, and characteristically English. In A 385 and A 516 the S of "Spirit" is capitalized, which would suggest a personal deity (cf. 15-18) or a vague animism were not capital letters used freely and indiscriminately in A (see 491-5 n.).

364-88. In his admirable chapter, "Elements," Professor Garrod writes:

> Wordsworth makes no approach to myriad-mindedness. Not only has he but one mind—I would almost go so far as to say that he has only one idea, and that easily divined. [He then quotes from this passage and proceeds] Wordsworth's starting-point, the well-head of all his thinking, is either that experience or some one or other variation of it. It may be called a perfectly familiar experience. . . . Wordsworth starts always from the fact (guaranteed by at any rate the occasional experience even of the most unimaginative persons), that very often the impression of some natural object or phenomenon, of some familiar incident, an impression simple and purely sensuous, is able to set up a mood of mind or feeling in which the object contemplated is suddenly released from the tie of custom and becomes the source of a mysterious spiritual exaltation. (Wordsworth, pp. 96-7)

The account of this experience, as of many of those Professor Garrod has in mind, was written in Goslar. It is the
only part of Book v that is found in MS JJ, where it comes near the end, immediately after the episode of the borrowed boat (i. 357-400). Why it was not copied into MS V is not clear since it and the brief xiii. 41-7 are the only lines in JJ that are not also in MS V. It is not in W because it still formed a part of Book I, which W omits. It is well to remember that neither this incident, nor that which follows—the sight of the drowned man's body—was originally written for the place it now occupies. The same is certainly true of several other passages in the poem and probably of many more, some of which were presumably composed as isolated bits of verse. See iv. 354-469 n. and pp. 277-8, 331 above. The reason for inserting the present passage here is apparent from 389-425: the boy is a product of that better education, in the main not derived from books, which leads to the formulation of "real feeling and just sense" (xiii. 172). In fact we are allowed to watch the educational process itself: the boy's intercourse with nature and the planting in his imagination for immortality of images of sound and sight. Furthermore, in the reflections called forth by this incident (406-25), we are reminded of what a child may gain from rough-and-tumble play with his fellows.

Professor de Selincourt's illuminating quotation (p. 531) from Wordsworth's Preface should be supplemented by the poet's elaboration of the point to De Quincey:

'I have remarked, from my earliest days, that, if under any circumstances, the attention is energetically braced up to an act of steady observation, or of steady expectation, then, if this intense condition of vigilance should suddenly relax, at that moment any beautiful, any impressive visual object, or collection of objects, falling upon the eye, is carried to the heart with a power not known under other circumstances. Just now, my ear was placed upon the stretch, in order to catch any sound of wheels that might come down upon the lake of Wythburn from the Keswick road: at the very instant when I raised my head from the ground, in final abandonment of hope for this night, at the very instant when the organs of attention were all at once relaxing from their tension, the bright star hanging in the air above those outlines of massy blackness, fell suddenly upon my eye, and penetrated my capacity of apprehension with a pathos and a sense of the Infinite, that would not have arrested me under other circumstances.' He then went
De Quincey adds a comment on line 383: "This very expression, 'far,' by which space and its infinities are attributed to the human heart, and to its capacities of re-echoing the sublimities of nature, has always struck me as with a flash of sublime revelation."

The incident is like that described in ii. 164-74. It was cited by Wordsworth as "one of the earliest processes of Nature in the development of" the imagination (Preface, 1815, quoted de S., 531, see pp. 221-2 above). As to the two Raincock boys see iii. 19-21 n. and Knight, ii, 59-60.

379-88. As early as 1798 Coleridge's critical insight enabled him to realize that the concluding lines of this paragraph were distinctive of their author. It is an impressive tribute to Wordsworth's genius that, after nearly a hundred and fifty years of nature poetry which owes much to him, they are still so. No other verse or prose gives us the haunting sense of the beauty, the mystery, and the awe of mountains, silent, lonely valleys, the sky, and the night as does this passage and many of its fellows. It is usually persons who are not interested in this kind of natural beauty who do not care for Wordsworth's work.

380. silence: See Chapter iv.

386-8. Professor de Selincourt (P. W., Youth, p. 359) compares "Characteristics of a Child," 20-1:

The many-coloured images imprest
Upon the bosom of a placid lake.

389-425. As these lines are not in JJ, V, or W, they represent a notable achievement: the return to a passage of rare beauty written some years earlier, continuing it in a style no less noble and moving, and adapting it with perfect ease to an entirely new setting. Yet there is a difference between the old and the new. The former is more objective, the latter more tender, wistful, personal; in the former there is no comment, in the latter the significance of the incident to the matter in hand is dwelt upon. Furthermore, in JJ the boy is the poet himself; in the later texts he becomes another youth who died in his twelfth year and at whose grave Wordsworth often lingered. Although
379-88 describe the poet's own experience and although the boy who died young seems not to have been distinguished for his "mimic hootings," 364-88 gains clarity and consistency by being in the third person throughout, and objectivity and pathos by being made to refer to another boy who died in childhood. Furthermore, when told of one long since dead the incident is touched with the pathos of the long ago which marks the final stanza of Keats's "Eve of St. Agnes." If these changes represent a simplification and, in unimportant particulars, misrepresentation of what actually occurred, they furnish one more illustration of the truth that The Prelude was by no means intended to be a factual autobiography. See ix. 28 n., 40-1 n., and pp. 270-1, 283 above. A 389-413 shows a number of other improvements over the version in JJ. Still further improvement over the A version is shown in 379-80, 395, 398 (A 404-5, A 420, A 423), which, according to the Errata, first appeared in D\(^5\), were made as late as 1832 or 1839. Line 414 is not in A. 391-7. Cf. vii. 320-8.

400. In iv. 21-3.

401-6. Pathos mingled with the clear-sighted facing of reality.

406-25. Admirably sensible, virile, and realistic (contrast ii. 65-71), tinged with anti-intellectualism, and affording an interesting contrast to the "model of a child" who never quarrels (299-301, cf. 413-14), knows no fear (307-9, cf. 418-19), does not play (303-4, 337-40, cf. 416-20), but is preternaturally wise (315-27, cf. 411-12) and virtuous (301-6, cf. 411-15). Lines 417-9 are close to xiv. 329-41 (A xiv. 313-25 is better), one of Wordsworth's sanest utterances on the subject of education. Unless he thought of men as entirely distinct from boys, it is hard to reconcile the present passage or that in xiv with viii. 301-39, in which he asserts that he came to love men because he first saw them "purified, Removed, and to a distance that was fit: And so we all... Are led to knowledge." On 415 see vi. 505 n.

423. books: Although the present paragraph, like the five that precede it, belittles what may be gained from books, 423-5 and to some extent 408-10 give a certain factitious unity to v by relating the discussion of education to its subject, books.
Similar unifying patchwork is used in 453-9. Furthermore "that sweet Valley" (428) binds the incident of the drowned man to that of the boy of Winander, and 463 (A 485-6 is clearer) connects what is said about the Arabian Nights with 426-30 and so with the drowned man. The drowned man and the Arabian Nights are directly connected through 453-9.

425. As to Wordsworth's preferring power to knowledge see viii. 597-607 n.

426-59. This paragraph begins somewhat abruptly since, as the reader (having forgotten 391-2) is not thinking of any "sweet Valley," the attempt made in the opening lines to connect the episode with that of the boy of Winander is none too successful. The ultimate reason for this abruptness is clear from MS V: the incident originally formed part of Book I and had no connection with the boy (not mentioned in MS V) who "blew mimic hootings to the silent owls." The reason alleged for transferring the story to Book V, that it illustrates the power of literature to decorate a ghastly spectacle with ideal grace, is not convincing; possibly Wordsworth felt that v needed incidents of beauty and impressiveness. He could think of no reason (other than "vulgar fear," which he rejected) for the scene's impressing him as it did and accordingly he evolved one, as he had done in the case of the discharged soldier (see iv. 354-469 n.). Considerable light is thrown on this rationalizing process, and on the more important question of the transformation of reality in the poetic mind, by MS V. In this early form of the story Wordsworth makes clear (1) that he is puzzled as to its significance ("such effects as cannot here be regularly classed," ix-x of V variant of A 450-72), (2) that he contents himself with the vague conclusion that it contributed to "the growth of mental powers And love of nature's works" (ibid., x-xii) and (3) that he was conscious of attaching in his maturity to scenes which had originally impressed on his mind little more than visual imagery "far other feelings" and meanings (V version of A 472). See Part II: Introduction.

It is noteworthy that Wordsworth dwells not upon the sight of the drowned body but upon the suspense during the search for it and especially during the evening before. The mystery, the solitude, the silence, the strangeness of the new locality,
and the growing darkness of this evening must have contributed materially to the impression made upon him (see Chapter IV). Fear likewise played its part (see Chapter III). The vivid memory for details (433-42) and the uncertainty as to his age at so memorable a time as first going away to school (452, and line xiii of V variant of A 450-72) are equally characteristic of Wordsworth.

A 450-72, V variant. In i. 401-98, of which this passage is a continuation, Wordsworth has illustrated the ministry of nature in various autumn and winter sports—skating, fishing, kite-flying—and, judging from i. 475-8, had some thought of continuing through all the seasons and all the major sports of his boyhood. The first ten lines of the variant we are considering are far from clear but they seem to mean: "I have many more such episodes to relate and might be pardoned if I continued to relate them, since I have much to say that does not fit any scheme and since my object would not be accomplished if from too rigid following of a plan I should omit matters not easily classified and on this account not to be fitted into the plan, although contributing quite as vitally as the other episodes to the development which it is the purpose of this poem to trace." "Venial" (iii), allowable, permissible, as in Paradise Lost, ix. 5, where God permits man "venial discourse unblamed." The change from "I" (iv) to "we" (v) is unpleasant. "Unity" (vii) reinforces the impression made by this entire variant: the selection and order of the incidents of The Prelude were more carefully considered than appears to be the case.

433. ears: Fields which would be islands were it not for the isthmus connecting each with the shore, much as the human ear is connected with the head. There are three such in Esthwaite but apparently none in the other lakes—which may be the reason for mentioning this irrelevant detail. The JJ variant of 365 invokes "ye green Peninsulas of Esthwaite" (cf. 434).

436. That is, on the opposite shore of the bay within the peninsula. The garments would hardly have appeared distinctly across the lake at twilight. A 460-2 has "I saw," "I suppos’d," "I watch’d," the first two of which are happily eliminated from 436-7.
439-42. The suspense is heightened by the vivid picture of the growing darkness and the breathless stillness. On Wordsworth's sensitiveness to sound see i. 82-5 n.

442, 444. Wordsworth wisely deleted the unnecessary details ("Soon . . . mention," W variant of A 466, "Of . . . spot," A²C variant of A 467-9) which his matter-of-factness had led him to add (see Chapter i).

A 472, V variant. Cf. i. 597-612; viii. 162-72. That impressed . . . attached (v-vii): See 426-59 n. Forms (vii): Much the same thing as "images" (vi). That yet exist . . . decay (viii-ix): "That yet exist in my mind independent of the physical objects (some of them long since decayed) that gave rise to the impressions." Archetypes (cf. de S., 558, line 186): Suggests the Platonic theory of ideas or forms (note line vii and vi. 298).

457. ideal grace: Cf. vii. 480; xiv. 76; the sonnet, "No mortal object," 8 (the soul seeks "Ideal Form, the universal mould").

460-533. Cf. 341-6 and vii. 77-84 n. Possibly the dream described in 70-138 was influenced by the Arabian Nights.

A 482, A 485-6. Just as 453-9, which deals with the influence of romances, connects 426-53, the finding of the drowned man's body, with 460-80, the reading of the Arabian Nights, so these lines serve to bind the two incidents together chronologically. For, in view of 426-30, A 485-6, 473-5, 477-8, the sight of the drowned man's body must have come at about the same time as the discovery of the extent of the Arabian Nights. This connection is obscured in the final text with the result that 460, though more accurate, is more abrupt (it is likewise more formal) and 463, though less wordy, is less clear than A. See 497 n.

466-7. Prose.

468-76. It seems likely from A that this passage was originally intended to be somewhat humorous: note "a league, a covenant," "monies . . . amass'd . . . hoarded up And hoarded up." See i. 509-35 n.

474-5. A condensation of three lines in A through the omission of the auxiliary "did" and of the repeated "hoarded
up." This last might well have been kept if "hoard up" in 471 could have been eliminated.

477-8. Smoother but, like 460, more formal and accordingly not so well adapted to the subject as A 501-2.

480-2. Much more vivid than the matter-of-fact A 504-7 (A 504 is dropped); yet the lines that follow, pulsating with life and youth, are unchanged from A. There are other references to angling in i. 485-90, viii. 262-3.

481. repites: "The holidays" (478).

484. Derwent: See i. 269-300.

491-605. Except for 566-70 and A 630-7 there is nothing corresponding to these lines in W, the earliest of the MSS of the present book. How 566 is joined to 490 in W is not clear.

491-5. The "gracious spirit" may be "the sovereign Intellect, Who through that bodily image [the external world] hath diffused . . . A deathless spirit" (15-18, cf. 271-8), but in all probability nothing so transcendental was intended. In view of the extensive use of capitals in A (note "Tales," "Ladies," "Love," "Squires," "Warrior," in A 520-5) no weight can be attached to the capitalization of S in "Spirit" (A 516). The passage presumably means much the same thing as 359-63 and xiii. 279-82, "the inner frame is good, And graciously composed." The obvious "invisibly" and the unnecessary "And tendency benign" might well have been spared.

493-5. A general remark although Wordsworth seems to have been thinking chiefly of tellers of tales—or of such of them as, unconscious of the delight and profit they are laying up for future generations, write merely to solace themselves or to entertain their lady-loves. By changing the word-order and by substituting "unreproved . . . benign" for "love," 493-4 is made clearer and pleasanter though more formal than A 518.

495. An effective monosyllabic line. Except for "something," 504-5 are also monosyllabic.

497. The comma after "Araby" should be a semicolon, since "tales," "romances," "legends," "Fictions," and "adventures" are all in apposition with "These" (504). As 496-7 certainly refer to the Arabian Nights, they connect this paragraph directly with 460-76.
spread like day: Go everywhere, bringing joy with them.

Very close in thought to some lines in a rejected passage dealing with the ministry of wonder (de S., 553-9, lines 37-41, 80-4). Note especially "needful food" (39) and the assertion that fables and romances appease "the absolute necessities That struggle in us" (82-4). See also 540-1 n. and concluding paragraph of the note to 507-9.

Like many other passages that are widely known apart from their context, these lines are likely to be misunderstood. Some readers will think they mean merely that childhood has more power than all the elements—is all powerful. But this is not what Wordsworth wrote, nor is it true; childhood, as "simple" implies, is very weak, almost helpless. Others will interpret the lines in a sense that, taken by themselves, they might have, "The child is father of the man"—childhood is all potent because it determines what the future man is to be. But such an interpretation is impossible to any one who considers the lines in connection with the paragraph in which they occur. For they come in the midst of an ardent encomium on "romances; legends... Fictions... adventures endless" and "daring tales," and these are praised solely for the delight they yield. Clearly what is meant is that the child, weak as he is, has the use of a very great power—just as by pressing an electric button he can start a huge dynamo. Neither intuition nor instinct can be meant since these bear no relation to "the elements" and play no part in Arabian tales or "fictions... devised By youthful squires." The reference must be to the imagination, the "moving soul" of The Prelude (xiv. A171), of the power of which in Wordsworth's own simple childhood the present book and its predecessors furnish striking illustrations. Line 509 is explained by 529-33 where the word "elements" is repeated: the child's "heaven-born freedom" from that subjection to "reality" under which most adults labor (xiv. 157-9) enables his imagination to have more power than the physical world, since it transcends time and space and in its hands that world is "potter's clay" to be remoulded as it desires.

The lines immediately following these imply that the child's
ability to wield remarkable powers is due to its having recently come from a world in which it was free of the manacles of space and time (contrast "stinted powers," 517). Yet there is no suggestion in this paragraph that the child is the "best Philosopher," the "Eye... That... read'st the eternal deep," or that its unquestioning acceptance of impossible fictions is one of those gifts "which we are toiling all our lives to find." Indeed (as in de S., 554-5, lines 37-41, 80-4) it seems to be no more than a faculty that keeps the child happy while it is learning to live in reconcilement with the meagre vassalage of earthly existence.

510-22. This thought is more clearly expressed in stanzas v-xi of the Immortality Ode, written at least two years later than these lines; the reference to early infancy as "twilight" (513) suggests "Our birth is but a sleep" in the same Ode (58). Lines 512-22 recall i. 551-8, which (like 535-8 just below) also imply pre-existence. The present passage, however, differs from the others and from xii. 180-3 in that it pictures infancy as a troubled period.

520-2. The figure of the mettlesome young horse not yet broken to the yoke is excellent.

523-9. In the sonnet, "At Rome—Regrets," Wordsworth says of himself and of those who, like him, had been brought up believing in the legendary stories of early Rome:

in our hearts we know
How, for exciting youth's heroic flame,
Assent is power, belief the soul of fact.

525. **ape:** Apparently used in the obsolete adjectival sense, foolish. Wordsworth is here attacking those philosophies which hold that life should be ruled strictly by analytical reason or common sense and which have no place for "daring tales," wonder, and the imagination (see ii. 203-32 n. and pp. 130-41, 145-7 above). Godwin, though Wordsworth probably did not know it, was here in complete agreement with him (see end of note to 341-6).

527. That is, with the imagination. Lines 527-8 are monosyllabic.

531. **elements:** See 507-9 n.
534-45. Childhood and youth form an isthmus which connects the continent of pre-existence (see i. 551-8 n.) with that of maturity. With 535-6 "Mr. Doughty compares Pope, *Essay on Man*, ii. 3, 'Plac'd on this isthmus of a middle state'" (de S., Addenda, p. [608 F]). But Wordsworth's own lines are more apposite:

While on that isthmus which commands  
The councils of both worlds.  ("Presentiments," 70-1)

Wordsworth also has in mind the reconciliation of the child with his earthly lot. After "daring tales" have played their part they are succeeded by a literature "link'd to these" (A 559) in that it helps reconcile us to earthly existence (512-18), a literature which deals with life as it is; then, too, comes delight in "words themselves" (544). These new interests, it should be observed, may have very little in common; the one points towards realism, the other towards art for art's sake. From what follows it seems clear that when he wrote "words themselves" Wordsworth was thinking chiefly of poetry and especially of those features of poetry—poetic diction, rhythm, rime, rhetoric, sonorous or striking phrases—which distinguish it from every-day speech.

534-5. Substituted for A 558-9 because the "later pleasures" though more subtle hardly demanded and certainly did not receive "a more ambitious strain" than that of the brilliant passage which immediately precedes. On the contrary, 535 terms them "humbler ground."

538. *the Song might dwell*: Cf. i. 630; ii. 382. A 562, though awkward, is much better.

540-1. A similar development in the child's attitude towards external nature is pointed out in a rejected passage (de S., 554, lines 37-58, cf. 506-7 n., 507-9 n.), which does not, however, trace the growth of the taste for literature of "sober truth"—the theme of the lines before us.

545-52. These interesting but prosaic lines might much better come after 569-70 (which touch on the same thought) since the passage beginning "Twice five years" (552) develops the idea presented in "words . . . pleasure" (544-5). The connection is emphasized by the repetition of "words"
and "with conscious pleasure" (544-5, 554-5). Cf. ii. 332-8 n. Pope and Dryden were probably among the poets Wordsworth had in mind, see his annotations on Barron Field’s manuscript memoir: "I have ten times more knowledge of Pope’s writings, and of Dryden’s also, than ever this writer [Hazlitt] had. To this day [c. 1836] I believe I could repeat, with a little previous rummaging of my memory, several thousand lines of Pope." 80

556. power: Cf. 218 and see viii. 597-607 n.
558-66. This does not necessarily refer to the time when the young Wordsworth’s mind first opened to the charm of verse (552-8).
573-7. These lines should prevent us from being misled by Peter Bell, 133-45:

The common growth of mother-earth
Suffices me—her tears, her mirth,
Her humblest mirth and tears.

The dragon’s wing, the magic ring,
I shall not covet for my dower,
If I along that lowly way
With sympathetic heart may stray,
And with a soul of power.

These given, what more need I desire
To stir, to soothe, or elevate?
What nobler marvels than the mind
May in life’s daily prospect find,
May find or there create?

Wordsworth was not a realist. In his poetry "the common growth of mother-earth" usually sufficed him for subject matter and materials,81 although his chief concern was not with what the senses presented but with what the imagination creates out of sense-impressions. Yet his spirit craved other food: "tales . . . romances; legends . . . adventures endless" (496-507), and in the present passage he goes so far as to refer to the "wish for something loftier, more adorned" than every-day life as "that most noble attribute of man." See vii. 77-84 n. and pp. 19-21 above, 440 below.
579. For: Since. On "images" see vi. 158-60 n.
580. encountered or pursued: A, "with which we had to
do," is simpler and, in spite of the succession of monosyllables, better.

594-5. *the great Nature . . . Poets*: Contrasted with "glittering verse" (cf. 545-52, 569-70),—external nature as transformed by the imagination and embodied in great poetry. From such poetry "he, who in his youth . . . With living [i.e. external] Nature [which is apparently contrasted with "the great Nature" of 594] hath been intimate . . . doth receive . . . Knowledge and . . . joy" denied to those who have not known such intimacy.

595-605. "For," Wordsworth goes on to say, "visionary power resides in great nature poetry; the deep, mysterious things of life abide in it; and shadowy, unseen forces transform the impression of the external world given to us by our senses. In such poetry natural objects ["forms and substances"] as if in their true home are wrapt about by the transparent veil of verse—made, as it were, of woven light—and then appear not as they do to the senses but 'with decoration of ideal grace' (457) and as we see them in moments of insight." Here again Wordsworth insists on the creative powers of man (ii. 245-61 n.), which give to external nature a glory that it does not in itself possess and which are largely responsible for its ministry to the spirit. For the visionary power which may be derived from poetry comes, not from sense impressions, but from the transformation of those impressions by the imagination. Cf. *Excursion*, iii. 940, "With mind that sheds a light on what he sees."


598. *darkness*: The potentiality of all things, hence "the hiding-places of man's power" (xii. 279). Cf. i. 394; ii. 302-22; vi. 481; xiii. 327; de S. n. to xiv. 63-76 and xiv. A 71; and pp. 39-42, 162 above.

599. The final text eliminates the unnecessary "do" and the unpleasant "their . . . there."

605. Cf. vi. 598-602—in which both "glory" and "flash" reappear.

NOTES

1 Quoted in de S., 527. There is, to be sure, in 59-61 an incidental reference to reading Cervantes, perhaps in later life.

2 See xiv. 312-13. Yet on March 27, 1843, Wordsworth wrote Henry Reed, "In the Mss Poem upon my own Poetic education there is a whole Book of about 600 lines upon my obligations to writers of imagination, and chiefly the Poets"—which doubtless represents what v was intended to be.

3 The Arabian Nights is, to be sure, much more than a children’s book but Wordsworth treats it only as such.

4 It is possible that the book grew in the opposite way, that Wordsworth began with the education and reading of children and then prefixed the long introductory passage. A third possibility is that he wrote the two parts independently and later joined them together. In any case the lack of unity may be due to the wide intervals which perhaps separated the composition of different parts of the book.

5 They are conservative in that for elementary and secondary education Wordsworth favors the old-fashioned training he himself received and opposes the "workmen of our later age" (347) and their "modern system" (295).

6 English Traits, chapter 1. In the Fenwick note to The Excursion Wordsworth refers slightly to "what is called a liberal education."

7 Second letter to H. J. Rose, probably of December, 1828. Wellington remarked that Waterloo was won on the playing field of Eton; and Eric Gill recently asserted that through games, at which he was not particularly good, "we were really and truly and admirably educated at our school" (Autobiography, New York, 1941, p. 16).

8 Letter to Seymour Tremenheere of December 16, 1845.

9 Autobiographical Memoranda, Memoirs, I, 10 (Grosart, III, 220). In a letter to Seymour Tremenheere of December 16, 1845, he referred with satisfaction to his own early education in that he was "one who spent half of his boyhood in running wild among the Mountains."

10 Mrs. Davy's Reminiscences (Grosart, III, 440).


12 Ibid., 51-4.

13 It is characteristic of the unsystematic arrangement of The Prelude that these lines are found, not along with the present discussion of education, but in xiv. 331-6. Similarly the use of emulation as an incentive is criticized, not here, but in ii. 65-72 and, properly enough, in iii. 500-5 (see de S. n.).

14 Fotheringham, pp. 37-43.


16 Letter to Seymour Tremenheere of December 16, 1845.

17 See letter to Mrs. Clarkson of December, 1814, and Crabb Robinson's Diary for January 27, 1811, and January 3, 1815.

18 See his two letters of December, 1828, to H. J. Rose. He discusses education in his letters to Daniel Stuart of September 7, 1817; to Lord Lonsdale of June, 1825; to Christopher Wordsworth of March 15, 1829, and April 27,
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1830; to Basil Montagu of 1831; to Seymour Tremenheere of December 16, 1845; and to Charles Wordsworth of March 12, 1846.

19 See Memoirs, I, 10, quoted p. 379 above.

20 See Chapter VII and 358-63 n.; ii. 203-32 n.; iii. 153-7 n.; viii. 296-301 n.; xii. A 123-57. Wordsworth's anti-rationalism also appears in his faith in the instincts of the mother and the child (see 246-93 n.) and in his distrust of an educational system which disregards these instincts and considers chiefly the acquisition of learning and the training of the intellect.


The child, the boy, man, indeed, should know no other endeavor but to be at every stage of development wholly what this stage calls for. Then will each successive stage spring like a new shoot from a healthy bud; and, at each successive stage, he will with the same endeavor again accomplish the requirements of this stage: for only the adequate development of man at each preceding stage can effect and bring about adequate development at each succeeding later stage.

23 Letter to a Friend, 1806 (Memoirs, II, 168-70; Letters, the Middle Years, ed. de Selincourt, Oxford, 1937, I, 103-4).


25 Raysor, II, 110, cf. also II, 293, the seventh lecture at Bristol, 1813-14.


28 De Quincey, Literary Reminiscences, Boston, 1851, I, 308-9; not in Masson.

29 Immortality Ode, 126.

30 Letters of the Wordsworth Family, ed. Knight, Boston, 1907, III, 122.

31 Yet it should not be forgotten that few of the subjects he considered when planning an important long poem (see i. 166-233) were close to every-day life.