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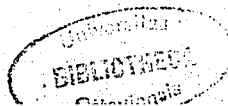
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THE INFLUENCE OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

ON ENGLISH MEN OF LETTERS

M. A. - 4.7.0., 1937

by  
Routley, Clare B.



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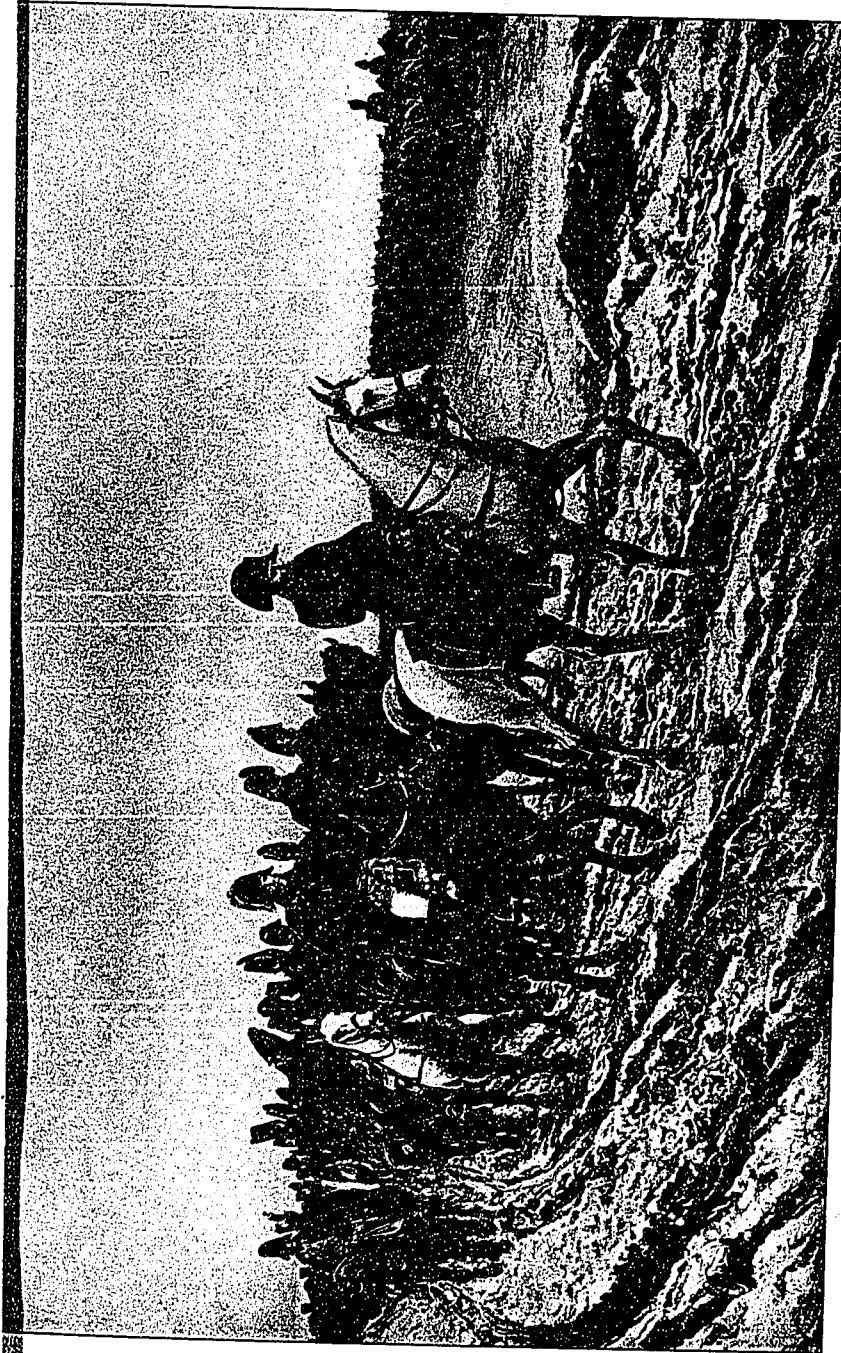
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THE PERRY PICTURES, 528,  
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*The Chauchard Collection, Paris.*

# THE CAMPAIGN OF FRANCE, 1814.

FROM PAINTING BY MEISSOIER, 1815-1891.  
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## ILLUSTRATIONS

	Page
The Campaign of France, 1814	Frontispiece
Alexander Pope	4
Napoleon Bonaparte	15
Marie Antoinette and Her Children	25
Robert Burns	31
William Wordsworth	51
Percy Bysshe Shelley	73
Lord Byron	79
John Keats	84
Sir Walter Scott	88

THE INFLUENCE OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION  
ON ENGLISH MEN OF LETTERS

THESIS FOR MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE

UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

BY

CLARE B. ROUTLEY

OTTAWA, 1937.

During the whole of the period, 1700-1785, no great poet can be said to have appeared. Pope, who stands first, and, it must be added, at an elevation far above that of his contemporaries, has notwithstanding, been denied a place in the highest order of poets. This poetry was "the apotheosis of clearness, point and technical skill; of the ease that comes of practice, not of the fulness of original power". As a metrical artist, Pope stands supreme among his fellows, and his influence over the fashion of verse writing is distinguishable for at least forty years after his death in 1744. Nevertheless, there was not wanting indications of the advent of a truer and more genuine school of poetry.

The closing portion of the 18th century was an age of popular song in England. The literature of these closing years seems to possess mixed characteristics. Partisans of

the Revolution were generous minded enthusiasts, guided by sensibility and swayed by imagination. In these years, we find much self-control, irony and satires in verse cast in a classical mould, indignation in tones of vehemence. Burke quickens the organic doctrine of traditional order through a powerful and intuitive imagination, set off by a language of fiery eloquence. Revolutionary literature reflects the conflicts in the minds of men. The great Revolutionary drama appeals to the whole of human nature and calls all its rival faculties into play. In prose literature, not much that has proved enduring was written in England during the last decade and a half of the 18th century, if we except a few works produced by one or two of the great writers of the preceding age, for instance, as the last three volumes of Gibbon's History, published in 1788, and Burke's "Reflections", and other

writings, chiefly on the subject of the French Revolution, which appeared between 1790 and 1797. The prose of this period was graceful and urbane, plain and vigorous, stately and grandiose, an excellent instrument for all the purposes to which it had been put. But it was characterized by the defects as well as by the qualities of its century. It lacked colour and warmth and while writers imparted what they wished to say with effect, it lacked the medium for strong passion or high imagination. In drama, very little was produced that retains its place in our literature. No great comedy belongs to this time.

In the age of Pope, the only man considered worthy of a place in Literature was the aristocratic, cultured class. The ordinary labourer was an object too contemptible even for satire. But the democratic movement had for some time been gathering force. In 1789, this movement



THE PERRY PICTURES. 78.  
BOSTON EDITION.

ALEXANDER POPE.  
1688-1744.

4.

culminated in the French Revolution against the tyranny of the nobility and to many democratic spirits, the year 1789 dates as the year 1. Before it lies the chaos of the great monarchies of Europe and feudalism. Although the Revolution was, from the first, rich in constructive forces, its earlier work was, in the main, destructive, and many overlooked the constructive elements.

For hundreds of years, the country people in France had been almost slaves to the nobles. They had to work without pay for the great landowners. They were overburdened with taxes. They had no voice, politically. The kings of France had become more and more extravagant and pleasure-loving. The aristocrats were gay courtiers who disregarded the peasants. In the years before 1789, matters had become worse and worse. Thousands of people were starving while the nobles frittered away the tax money in

5.

clothes and amusement. At the doors of the rich, poor parents begged in vain for bread for their children. While the peasants and the poor people were uneducated, they felt that something was wrong in a world where poor people had no rights and they listened eagerly to the teachings of men like Voltaire and Rousseau, who taught the equality of all men. As Louis XVI was lacking in money, he summoned the Assembly of the Three Estates, as the Nobility, the Clergy and the Commons were called. The king's willingness to call the Estates General shows that he was not at first an enemy of the Revolution. He practically surrendered to democracy in an effort to force the privileged nobles to surrender some of their privileges. Each of the Three Estates were to hold elections separately and consequently, they voted separately, yet all agreed that the ills to which France was subjected were arbitrary and unconstitutional government and in order

6.

to correct the situation it was necessary to draw up a constitution which defined the rights of king and people. They advocated: (1) Personal liberty of all. (2) Liberty to speak and write freely without threat of general warrants. (3) Abolition of censorship of the press. (4) The Estates General to meet regularly and share in law making and voting of taxes. (5) No one should be exempt from taxation. One feature in the cahiers of the various Estates was that of goodwill. The nobility showed a willingness to surrender up certain privileges, but the common people did not expect the nobles to surrender a great deal of their power. There was no hint at this time of revolution and all expressed loyalty to the king and throughout all, optimism and enthusiasm prevailed. The tragedy is that the hopes expressed in the cahiers were not realized and through serious blunders on the part of the

7.

king and lack of strong government, the revolution was coming and the real affection for the king was changing to one of fear and suspicion. It was felt that the king was undoing what the Estates General wanted to achieve. He had no definite program as to what should be done. The cost of living had increased and discontent was furthered by educated agitators for political gains. The Third Estate, to which were attracted the parish priests, took the name of the National Assembly, saying that they would meet and vote by themselves. This National Assembly began to exercise formal sovereignty. It declared all existing taxes had been illegally imposed as the whole nation had not been consulted. It did not try to abolish all taxes, but stipulated that they could be collected only while they were in session. The king announced that the action of the Third Estate was illegal and

8.

dismissed the Assembly. The Assembly remained in session and this action and defiance was one of the turning points in the Revolution. They announced that the Third Estate would represent the people--thus, this obligation came before obedience to the King. Louis XVI had no plan to coerce them and did nothing. Many of the nobles realizing that the Third Estate was not to be trifled with went over to the side of the National Assembly which settled down to drawing up a Constitution. The Court Party was determined to retrieve their defeat and to overthrow this movement which had gained considerably momentum. They planned to mass troops in and around Paris and Versailles and to disband the Assembly they hired mercenary troops from Germany. This was an indication that the Court did not intend to give up without a struggle. Popular excitement was at its highest pitch. The whole country

was on the verge of national hysteria. The massing of troops was represented as the beginning of the policy of reaction. A rising spirit of lawlessness began to be felt. There were economic hardships due to the competition of English products. Cost of living had never been higher, and many were on the verge of starvation. Many unemployed were coming into Paris and the authorities were powerless to cope with the situation. A special committee of citizens gathered to see if they couldn't help city authorities to enforce law and order and it was decided to raise a Citizen Militia. This represented the nucleus of National Government. Desmoulins, a popular agitator, advised the people to arm themselves against massacres and violence. An unreasoning fear seized the populace and driven by it they armed themselves and stormed the Bastille. The satiety of the mob and lust for blood was very

unbelievable. The taking of the Bastille was regarded as a symbol of the fall of the ancient regime. Fox hailed the fall of the Bastille as the greatest event which ever happened in the world and the excitement which ensued stirred the nations of Europe with a mighty new hope. That hope was shared by many in England to whom it seemed as if the hour of deliverance and regeneration long foretold by prophets and dreamers, was now actually at hand and humanity freed from the shackles of the past, was about to advance at once into an era of realized democratic ideals of liberty, brotherhood and the rights of man. After the falling of the Bastille, unrest spread over France. Feeling in the Provinces was ripe for armed outbreaks. Agitators, again, urged peasants to take the laws into their own hands and the country was in the throes of revolution and terror.

The youth all over Europe responded to the

cry of the French people for Liberty, Equality and Fraternity and looked forward to the time when mankind should be united under the universal democracy of Man, without regard to nationality, birth or religion. Such feelings completely changed the way of looking at the begrimed, hard-handed labourer. He was no longer simply a burden bearer; no longer part of a machine, but a friend and a brother. Certain ideal relating to mankind, considered as a whole had been growing up in Europe for some centuries. These ideas spoke of a return to nature and of the best life being found in the country rather than in the town, so that the simple life of the poor, the scenery of the country were idealized into subjects for poetry. They spoke also of the natural rights that belonged to each man and which united all men to one another. All men were equal, free and brothers. There was only one class, the class

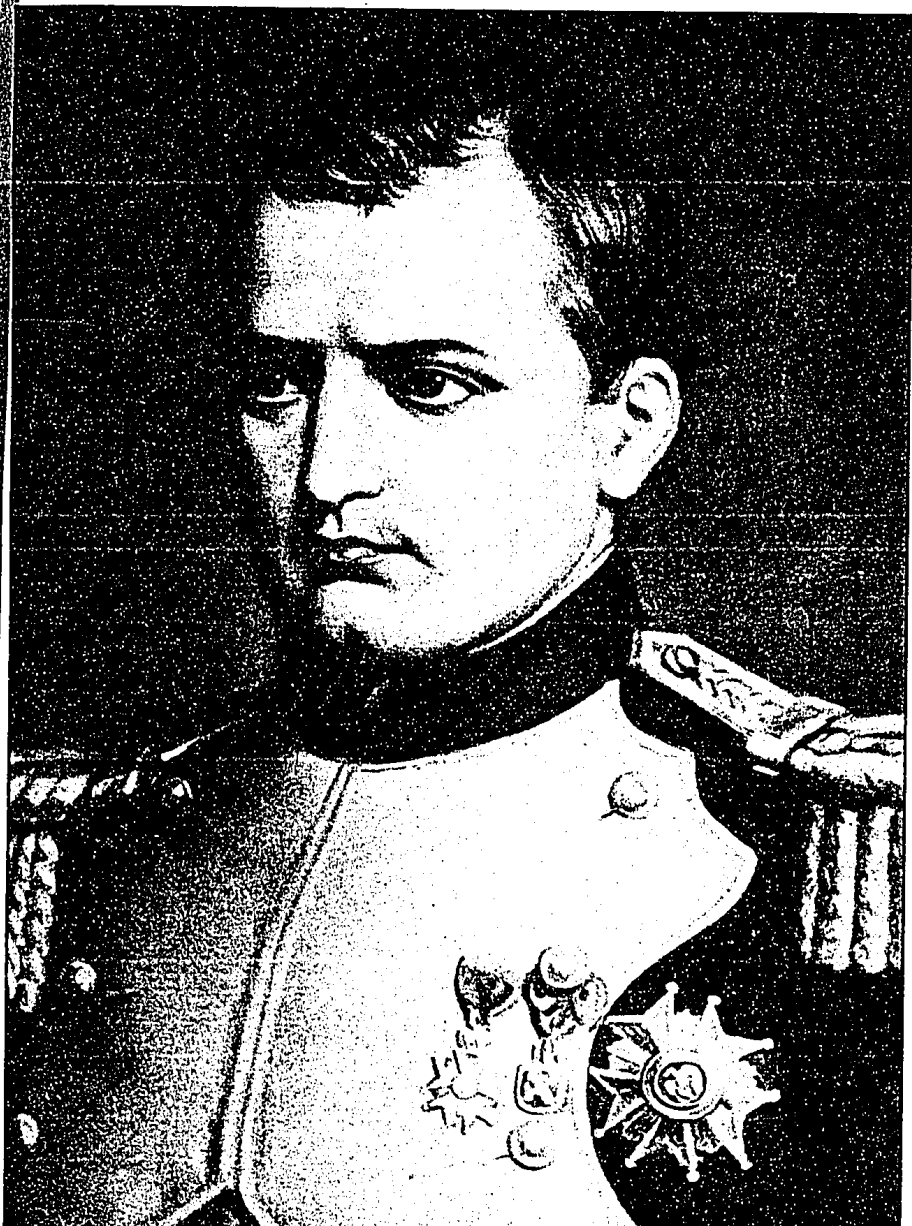
12.

of man and only one nation, the nation of mankind, of which all were citizens. The divisions, therefore, which wealth and rank and caste and national boundaries had made were theoretically put aside as wrong. Such ideas had been growing into the political, moral and religious life of men ever since the Renaissance and they brought with them their own emotions. France had, for some time, expressed them constantly in her literature. She now expressed them in the action which overthrew the Bastille in 1789 and proclaimed the new Constitution in the following year. They passed, then, from an abstract to a concrete form, and became active powers in the world and it is around the excitement they kindled in England that the work of the poets from 1790 to 1832 can be grouped. Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey accepted them at first with joy, but receded from them when they ended in

the violence of the Reign of Terror and in the imperialism of Napoleon. In giving the French Revolution its due weight, we must remember that these ideas existed in England and were expressed by the Poets. The French outbreak precipitated them and started our new poetry with a rush and a surprise. But the new enthusiasm soon suffered a chill, and a great part of our new poetry was impelled, not by the Revolution, but by the indignant revolt against what followed on it.

To the ardent young spirits of the time, the French Revolution meant the downfall of the old dynasty of tyranny and the birth of a new dynasty of worldwide liberty. The English poets struck on their lyres, notes of hope, of promise, of boundless possibilities, not heard since the days of the Elizabethans. Like the Elizabethans, the poets of the Revolution saw the rising of a new sun and dreamed of what

would be when it reached its glorious meridian and liberty was at every hearth. The buoyancy of youth was in the earth and the poets caught the new spirit. A thrill of fresh life was sent through the whole civilized world. There came the prophecy of a new day, and for the moment it seemed as if, leaving behind it all the evils of the past, humanity at large was to pass forward immediately into an era of realized democratic ideals. A wonderful humanitarian enthusiasm and gorgeous dreams of progress and perfection were thus kindled in ardent young souls, and in England, quite as much as in France itself; men of generous natures were ready to catch fire by contact with the passions which the French cause aroused. But as the progress of the French movement soon proved, the glorious promises of 1789 were destined to remain unfulfilled. The excesses of the Reign of Terror, the



sensational rise of Napoleon, the establishment of a military despotism, the long strain of the Napoleonic Wars, the restoration of the Bourbons, the determined attempt made by the crowned heads of Europe after Waterloo to destroy democracy and popular government--all these things were naturally productive of vast disturbances in thought and feeling. Reaction set in; the principles of the Revolution became discredited, and the failure of the great effort which France had made to initiate a new and better order of things resulted in a general collapse of faith and hope. The age of buoyancy and expectation passed away. The age of unrest and disillusion succeeded. Thus, we may expect to find an enormous difference in tone between the poetry of the earlier and that of the later Revolutionary period.

The outbreak of the Revolution was immediately felt throughout the neighbouring

countries. From 1789-1815, the drift of European thought is, in many respects, determined in relation to France. From the time Burke leaped into the arena with his tremendous denunciation of the Revolution and Fox greeted the fall of the Bastille as the greatest event that had ever happened in the history of mankind, the French Revolution became a part of English Literature in the sense that it almost superseded domestic topics as a subject of controversial discussions and gave a new impetus to the group of writers who were destined to occupy the foreground of English poetry during the first half of the 19th century. In literature, the age of the Revolution is often spoken of as the period from 1789-1830.

There were three phases in English opinion concerning the Revolution. First, the phase of general sympathy, which was typified by the outburst of Fox and the enthusiasm of Coleridge and Wordsworth. Secondly, the

indignant protest against the unbridled passions set free by the Revolution, of revolt against its excesses and of despair at the triumph of the military despotism into which it became merged. Thirdly, the opinion of those whose convictions of the ultimate validity of the principles upon which the Revolution was based were too firm to be overthrown, who were sobered yet undaunted by its outcome, and who held fast to the faith which had been rooted in them from the time of its earliest manifestations. They were the ones who

"Never doubted clouds would break  
Never dreaded, though right were  
worsted, wrong would triumph,  
Held we fall to rise, are baffled  
to fight better  
Sleep to wake".

The Revolution promoted amongst writers, therefore, divers reactions of sympathy, fear and hostility. England was torn between a feverish admiration and a hatred mingled with terror and there was a strong spirit of union between

the English people in the national struggle against Napoleon. France is the pole of attraction and repulsion around which English intellectual life, in a large measure, tends to group itself during this period.

Taine, in the opening volume of his book on the "Origins of Contemporary France", resolves the Revolutionary spirit into two chief elements; first, the progress of natural and experimental science, with the application of the methods of science to the study of human society and human history; secondly, the classical tendency, which reduces the particular to general ideas, or substitutes an abstraction for a group of things concrete with all their manifold details. The second of these influences was active in England, but the character of the English mind held it in check. The acquisition and the methods of science deeply affected the temper and habits of thought in

both countries. The 18th century has many famous chemists, astronomers, geologists, mineralogists, botanists, zoologists and physiologists. A new faith in reason gave this powerful impetus to scientific discovery and this faith became an enthusiasm with something of the force of a new religion. This faith in reason tended to produce the assurance of the possibility of boundless advance for the race which formed part of the Revolutionary creed.

In England, in the 18th century, as well as on the Continent, there was a great enfranchisement of the passions. There was a great outbreak of religious emotions in the movement which was represented by Whitefield and Wesley. The sentimental movement in literature which is presented in Sterne's "Tristram Shandy" ran its course and would have perished had it not coalesced with the new philanthropy of the time. To many, the cause of the Revolution was the

cause of humanity. The Penal Code of England was still one of savage severity and little had been done to amend it.

The keynote of the Revolutionary time is expressed in the word "simplification". As early as 1757, Brown in his "Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times", gave his expression to the feeling in favour of simplification. The Revolution aimed at a return to nature, a simplification in social life in contrast with the artificialities and conventions which existed in the cities and courts, the simplicities of rural existence, a fresh delight in the beauty of the mountains and the woods, a discovery of the dignity of human passions in the shepherds or the tillers of the soil; a recognition of the rights of man regardless of his claims of caste or class; an assertion of unbounded freedom for the individual. It was declared that the actual

language of common discourse sufficed for the highest needs of literature and that the best part of our vocabulary is that which can be gathered from the lips of peasants who are accustomed to express their feelings with simplicity and who live in communion with the majestic and ennobling presence of external nature. The type of mind which the English 18th century produced was of the common sense kind, not carried away by extremes of passion or extravagance of imagination. When the Revolutionary ideas struck upon such a mind, the effects were strange. The prose and poetry did not happily blend together.

Cowper was the chief representative of Revolutionary sentiment in the days before the Revolution, at least so far as concerns the humanitarian feeling and tendency towards simplification. His mind was occupied with the Crusade against slavery. In "The Task", he

shows warmth in the praise of freedom. "The Task" marks an epoch in modern English Literature. It came at a time when the public taste was ripe for a reaction from the old models, and it suited and directed the public taste. Its disregard of conventional poetic diction and its consequent gain of a vocabulary of wider range and copiousness, its loving descriptions of nature and domesticity, its genuine emotions and noble indignations, were wholly new to the somewhat unpoetic age which still continued, in the main, to construct its metrical productions upon the traditions of Pope's manner, but without his skill and talent. Cowper declares that liberty is the cause of man. He conceived the poet at his highest as a bard who foresees the future in its moral causes and is deeply moved by his own vision. Cowper perceived that England was ailing at the heart. He saw avarice, luxury and perjury alike in

Church and State. He saw happiness in the poor cottager weaving all day for a scanty pittance. He moans over the growth of luxury and the evils of a spurious civilization and pleads for a return to simplicity and manners, and to the passion of human brotherhood. Politically, he desired not revolution, but temperate reform. With the development of manufacturing by machinery, the domestic industries perished. Small farms were consolidated into larger properties which passed into the hands of the wealthy, the farmer becoming a day labourer. Common lands were enclosed. Prices rose out of proportion to the increase of wages. The transition of industry from the field and cottage to the factory was accompanied by much suffering for the rural population and much demoralization for the artisan. Cowper's clamour for moderate reform bore fruit in later years.

The doctrine of the Revolution was presented to English readers very impressively in Godwin's "Enquiry Concerning Political Justice" in 1793. Godwin viewed the actual events of the Revolution and had much influence on young people. He resembles Bentham in his coldness, in his repugnance to the violent methods of the Revolution to which he objected in principle as well as in method. He propounded a theory of conduct. This theory gave unbounded freedom to individual reason; his law was a proclamation of liberty; moral anarchy was established as the highest moral order. His society founded upon reason would enjoy the full rights of stimulus of the revolutionary spirit on English soil. For a time, Coleridge, Southey and Wordsworth admitted to Godwin's theory, but later they became revolters and certain of Wordsworth's "Lyrical Ballads", in their vindication of the natural affections and the deep

reverence with which they regard the permanent passions of humanity furnish a reply and a rebuke to the doctrines of Godwin. The events of the French Revolution convinced Godwin of the evils of a complicated system of government. His early faith in Providence had faded away. "Political Justice", to Godwin, meant the impartial treatment of every man in matters that relate to his happiness. He railed against the system of inequality with its distinctions of rank, class and wealth. He believed a career should be open to all talent and all should have the same opportunities and encouragements. "Political Justice", with all its fantastic illusions, is in a high degree representative of the time. The three sacred words of the Revolution, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, are written large by Godwin--Liberty, the most absolute; Equality, as complete as can be attained;



THE PERRY PICTURES. 478. D.  
BOSTON EDITION.

FROM PAINTING BY LE BRUN. 1755-1842.

MARIE ANTOINETTE AND HER CHILDREN.

KNOWN AS "THE ROYAL FAMILY." EXHIBITED AT THE PARIS SALON OF 1788.

24.

Fraternity, realized in principles of universal benevolence. No writer expresses more clearly than Godwin the individualism of the opening of the Revolutionary movement of Europe. His "Caleb Williams" is a revolutionary work of art.

Few persons but those who have lived in it can conceive what the memory of the French Revolution was, nor what a visionary world seemed to open upon those who were just entering it. Old things seemed passing away and nothing was dreamed of but the regeneration of the human race. The Revolution professed itself to be an assertion of the reason in opposition to custom, prescription and tradition.

Burke was deeply affected by his meeting with the Queen of France in 1789.

"Men are we, and must grieve when  
even the shade  
Of that which once was great is  
passed away".

Burke's outbreaks of passionate pity for the royal family, for the aristocracy and the clergy of France were met, in his own day, with the cry of sentimentalism. The execution of the French king in 1793, which apparently justified all of Burke's antagonism to the Revolution raised him to the heights of his influence and was followed by an outburst of national passion. He founded a school for the destitute children of those who had perished by the guillotine and the assassin's knife. In his "Reflections on the French Revolution", published in 1790, he threw down a challenge to every defender of the Revolution. His reason at times seems stimulated and illuminated by his own feelings. Burke gave his "Reflections" to the English people as a warning and brought forth a complete change of English national sentiment. With fiery partisanship, he applied the disastrous

consequences of the disorderly movement in which the French pursued freedom, to his own country, and filled his countrymen with panic. But Burke was not thoroughly acquainted with the social state of France and he totally ignored the existence in France of the oppressive abuses that constituted the case of the French people against their government.

In his early denunciations of the French Revolution, Burke stands almost alone. His "Reflections" touch the springs of theology, of the morals, of the history and of the poetry of his age. There is no better book in which the literary expression of the age is better exemplified. Throughout the book, it is evident that his prime concern is for his own country. He says,

"Whenever our neighbour's house is on fire; it cannot be amiss for the engines to play a little on our own".

27.

His "Reflections" provoked a reply, a whole literature of its own. At all times, Burke was a speculator, a reasoner in politics, but he tries to reason and speculate with the facts of the case before him. He believed that there were better ways of amending the condition of the French peasant and artisan than the way of overthrowing existing institutions. His whole life had been devoted to the services of his people. He was opposed to those who tore to pieces the whole framework and contexture of their country. He admitted that the French government, before the Revolution was full of abuses, but he contended that the Revolutionary method of remedying abuses was an unsound method and that it did not lead to happy results.

All through Burke's career, he attacked unsparingly, the assertion of the individual, or as he called it, critical opinion, as

against the permanent conviction of society. This conception is connected with a widespread movement in European thought and literature during the early nineteenth century, a movement partly reactionary as tending to revive mediaeval forms of belief and views of society simply because in the Middle Ages the authority of custom and tradition had been paramount. And not only in thought but in style does Burke serve as a link between the two centuries; he unites the powerful understanding, the clear and luminous construction, the sanity of judgment of the earlier age with the passionate imagination, the fervid eloquence and the glowing colour which we associate with the romantic movement of the early nineteenth century. Only know Burke, and you will find his thoughts and expressions gleaming like golden threads in the pages of distinguished men of the generation which have

succeeded his own. This is the form in which Burke has chiefly received his honours and exercised his authority.

One element, the passionate treatment of love, had been, on the whole, absent from our poetry since the Restoration. It was restored by Burns. In his love songs, we hear again the same natural music which in the age of Elizabeth enchanted the world. It was as a love poet that Burns began to write. The Kilmarnock edition of his poems appeared in 1786. While preeminently he is a national poet, he belonged in a true sense to the European movement of his time. His poetry is more than Scottish. It belongs to Europe and it embodied in local forms much of the prevailing sentiment of the age. Through Burns, the old stream of Scottish song flowed into the new enthusiasm of the Revolution with its aspiration toward equality. The influences

The influences which affected him were as eminently European as they were singularly provincial in appearance. He was deeply affected by the intellectual activity and turmoil which led to the Revolution and his poems and songs which voice the democratic spirit of the Revolution are a programme of social and political reform and progress.

The influence of the French Revolution was to some extent a disturbing influence on the outward life of Burns. As long as the Revolution retained a philosophic and doctrinaire aspect, it left Burns almost untouched. But when it became violent, tragic and essentially a movement of popular masses, it moved Burns deeply. His revolutionary ardour vented itself in hasty escapades of action and eager snatches of song. In his chant "Does Haughty Gaul Invasion Threat", he has a word to say on behalf of popular rights:



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BOSTON EDITION.

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ROBERT BURNS.  
1759-1796

"Who will not sing 'God save the King'  
 Shall hang as high's the steeple;  
 But while we sing 'God save the King'  
 We'll not forget the People".

It is especially as the poet of Equality that Burns belongs to the Revolution. He says:

"The rank is but the guineas' stamp  
 A man's a man for a' that".

Early in life, Burns had felt the hardship of the toilers in the field. He had suffered in health through the severity of labour imposed on him in boyhood. At times, he expresses his sense of the worth of mankind with dignity; at times, a cry of bitter revolt breaks from him. The "Auld Brig of Ayr" shows his indignation against the gentry:

"The herryment and ruin of the country  
 Men, three-parts made by Tailors and  
 by Barbers".

And in one of the "Heron Ballads", he says:

"A lord may be a gouk and creepingly  
 unclean  
 Wi' ribbon, star and a' that".

That the Revolution in France aided Burns

in purifying his private passion from what was merely egoistic and in raising his innate feeling in favour of equality to the dignity of a general principle is shown in the tragic stanzas, "Man Was Made to Mourn":

"See yonder poor o'erlabor'd wight  
 So abject, mean and vile,  
 Who begs a brother of the earth  
 To give him leave to toil;  
 And see his lordly fellow-worm  
 The poor petition spurn,  
 Unmindful, tho' a weeping wife  
 And helpless offspring mourn".

Burns exhibits the worth of humble life and shows that there is much worth and happiness in the humble cottage, in the delights and solaces of a humble life, in the loyalty of a comrade and in the blessedness of love. The honest man though of the poorest may be a king of men:

"What tho' on homely fare we dine,  
 Wear hodden-gray, and a' that,  
 Gie fools their silks and knaves  
 their wine  
 A man's a man for a' that".

Burns represents in himself and in his work the utmost vigour of that revolt of human liberty against human tyranny which was the stimulus of the fierce energy of the French Revolution. But Burns was not a political reformer nor a social theorist; still less was he one of the many who merely caught the infection of a prevailing enthusiasm. In him, the spirit of the times was the natural outcome of a specially clear insight which had never been distorted by the maxims and customs of an artificial life, and this enabled him to see beneath the surface of things, and to detect all that was hollow and unreal; while the intensity of his own sincerity led him to the frank avowal of his own motives and feelings, without any disguise of false sentiment or hypocrisy. It is this strong, clear truthfulness of Burns, which gives such powerful reality to every varied expression of feeling

in his poems, and which carries his lyric into the very hearts of his readers.

The result of the great upheaval in France upon young men of genius who came in contact with it may be said to have been of a twofold aspect; first, emotional and secondly, intellectual. It infused a glow into their feelings and through their feelings into their imagination and it set upon them a courageous inquisition into first principles of politics, of morals and of the individual life as it is connected with the life of society. In its direct and immediate influence, the Revolution tended to convert the poet into a declaimer, a preacher. In its remoter effects, the gains were realistic and great. Audacities of the imagination became easy and natural with twenty years previously had been impossible. "The Recluse" and "The Excursion" would never have been conceived without the generous excitement of the

time.

The emotional excitement of the Revolutionary time entered the spirit of Southey and passed from the sphere of political interests to the region of the imagination. The influence of the Revolution on Southey was, in the main, an affair of the heart, an affair of sentiment. The Revolution reached him early and convinced him of the inequalities of rank and property. Many believe that he was too much swayed by passion to recognize or interpret the complete significance of the great events of his age. Under its influence, however, he wrote the crude drama, "Wat Tyler", 1794. His sympathies were with the Girondist Party. At this time, he wrote "The Fall of Robespierre" and "Joan of Arc". The latter contains the glow and ardour of the time. It is revolutionary. This poem attempts to re-

vive the pomp and splendour of mediaeval times. There are frequent outbursts of emotion over the wrongs and griefs of rural France. Southey's poems, published in 1797, have a humanitarian complexion. Several of his sonnets deal with various aspects of slavery. His revolutionary ardour was more of the heart than of the understanding. He looked upon the Revolution as the armed champion of the suffering, the weak, the poor, the injured and the downtrodden. The Revolution, he believed, did not make for human happiness and he embarked on a career of reform.

Southey's "Life of Nelson" is a miniature prose epic. He says, "The most triumphant death is that of the martyr; the most awful, that of the martyred patriot; the most splendid, that of the hero in the hour of victory". His most impassioned pleading against Napoleon is found in his "Ode Written in 1814", a poem

famous for its grandeur, its power, its art. It is the fiercest lyrical invective in our language. The invective is of a lofty kind, inspired by public passion, by sacred indignation, by a deep loyalty to the human hopes which had been violated in the Revolution.

Wordsworth and Coleridge were thinkers of the emotional and imaginative order. Their inquiries into first principles extended beyond religion, to art and literature. The Revolution came at a time when the Romantic Revival was in full progress, and in Germany, France and England, the Romantic movement was characterized by an immense development in literature of the personal, the individual factor. In the literature of the classical period, there was almost a total absence of the lyrical element, the cry of individual passion. The Romantic Movement was an assertion of the ego. The closing years of the

eighteenth century and the opening years of the nineteenth are pre-eminent for the keenness and the intensity of the lyrical cry in literature. The Revolution added a breadth and volume to the passions of the Romantic Poets. It lifted Byron out of his egoism. It made Shelley look from cloudland to the earth. In an age of tranquillity, the poetry of Byron and Shelley would have lost half its motive power. Without the Revolution, we would not have had "Prometheus Unbound", "Ode to Liberty" and "Childe Harold".

Coleridge was seventeen years of age when the Day of the Republic dawned for France and inaugurated the new era of European thought. At this impressionable age, the stirring events of 1789 made their appeal to his ardent spirit. While he was still at school, he wrote an ode on the "Destruction of the Bastille". While it is a crude boyish ode, it shows the great

influence of the Revolution. He says:

"I see, I see! glad Liberty succeed  
With every patriot virtue in her train!  
And mark you peasants raptured eyes;  
Secure he views his harvest rise;  
No fetter vile the mind shall know,  
And Eloquence shall fearless glow.  
Yes! Liberty, the soul of Life shall  
reign,  
Thro' every vein".

Coleridge's passionate sympathy was given to France and his first volume of verse proclaimed loudly his democratic enthusiasm. Two poems belonging to "The Watchman", a new journal published in 1796, showed his mental strife. He was smitten with shame when England took up arms against the Republic and he became a Conservative, politically. It was Coleridge who first gave trumpet-tongued voice to the anguish with which he and his friends gazed on the incredible spectacle. He writes:

"When France in wrath her giant-limbs up-  
 reared,  
 And with that oath, which smote air, earth  
 and sea,  
 Stamped her strong foot and said she would  
 be free,  
 Bear witness with me how I hoped and feared!  
 With what a joy my loft gratulation  
 Unawed, I sang, amid a slavish band.....  
 For Ne'er, O Liberty! with partial aim  
 I dimmed thy light or damped thy holy flame;  
 But blessed the paens of delivered France,  
 And hung my head and wept at Britain's name.

.....

Forgive me, Freedom! O forgive those dreams!  
 I hear thy voice, I hear thy loud lament,  
 From bleak Helvetia's icy caverns sent--  
 I hear thy groans upon her blood-stained  
 streams".

Coleridge contemplated the Revolution as  
 a thinker. To say that the Revolution is des-  
 cribed as the "Triumph of Infinite Love"  
 which "diffused through all, makes all one  
 whole", sufficiently describes the value of  
 Coleridge's arguments. In "Joan", he says:

"From Avarice thus, from Luxury and War  
 Sprang heavenly Science, and from Science  
 Freedom".

Coleridge in his effort toward a new rendering of things was engaged in a work of revolution, but a revolution which should conserve by renewing rather than merely effect a clearance by the method of destruction. When the Swiss Cantons were attacked by the French Republic, Coleridge wrote his magnificent ode "France", which originally appeared under the title of the "Recantation". It is a poem of disillusion regarding his hopes for society and shows his change of attitude. He says, "Liberty cannot be realized by society under any form of human government--it belongs to the individual man so far as he is pure and inflamed with the love and adoration of God in Nature".

"O Liberty! with profitless endeavor  
Have I pursued thee, many a weary hour;  
But thou nor swell'st the victor's  
strain nor ever  
Didst breathe thy soul in forms of human  
power.

Alike from all, howe'er they praise thee,  
 (Nor prayer, nor boastful name delays thee),  
 Alike from Priestcraft's harpy minions,  
 And factious Blasphemy's obscener slaves,  
 Thou speedest on thy subtle pinions,  
 The guide of homeless winds, and play-  
 mate of the waves!  
 And then I felt thee!--on that sea-cliff's  
 verge,  
 Whose pines, scarce travelled by the breeze  
 above,  
 Has made one murmur with the distant surge!  
 Yes, while I stood and gazed, my temples  
 bare,  
 And shot my being through earth, sea and  
 air,  
 Possessing all things with intensest love,  
 O Liberty! my spirit felt thee there".  
 ....France: An Ode, V.

Coleridge proclaimed a liberty to be reached  
 only through obedience to nature. Though he  
 retained his interest in the general concerns  
 of the nation, he wanted precisely that in-  
 tense sympathy with individual men and women.  
 In his theory of poetry, he emphasized the  
 aesthetic quality as the primary consideration.  
 He turns to nature to find in her an anodyne  
 for grief. The true spirit of freedom is that

of the wind and waves and in communion with them the soul finds the peace which it has sought in vain amid the turmoil of human strife.

Coleridge's poetry represents the culmination of the influence of the Revolution and Romanticism in its purest form. He represents the Romantic movement as Wordsworth represents the Naturalistic. Both were dissatisfied with life as they knew it and each sought for relief in a different way. Coleridge conceived a visionary scheme of an ideal commonwealth to be founded by a company of congenial spirits on the banks of the Susquehanna River in America under the high sounding title of Pantisocracy. He even discussed this scheme with Southey, but practical difficulties soon became manifest and Pantisocracy took its place among the world's unrealized utopias. Wordsworth looked beneath the surface

of daily experiences and discovered an amplitude of hitherto unnoticed thoughts and feelings. Coleridge looked to earlier times and sought to bring back their wonders. Historically, Coleridge belongs to the mediaeval revival, but he is far too original to be classed merely as part of a movement as his works have distinctive qualities all his own. His early poems are transitional, violent and obscure in style. But when he came to live with Wordsworth, he gained simplicity and for a time his poetic spirit was at the height of joy and production. His ode to "Dejection" is instinct with the sorrow of one who had golden ideals and finds them turned to clay. "The Ancient Mariner", published as one of the "Lyrical Ballads" in 1790, belongs to the dim country between earth and heaven, where the fairy music is heard, always lovely. In pictorial

power, felicity of phrasing and word music, he is one of the great masters.

The Revolution has had no more enthusiastic admirer, no more implacable enemy than Wordsworth. The character of his mind fitted him in a positive degree for receiving the full influence of the Revolution. He could hardly have drunk deep of the pre-revolution philosophy and, in its earlier stages, the Revolution involved no revolution in his mental life. He accepted it gladly and expected for its principles a peaceful and beneficial triumph. The circumstances of his early life brought him near the centre of the upheaval. In 1790 when Wordsworth and his friend, Jones, landed in France, they found themselves welcome and understood

"We bore a name  
Honour'd in France, the name of Englishmen,  
And hospitality did they give us, hail  
As their forerunners in a glorious cause."

Many readers err in their judgment when they consider Wordsworth tranquil, mild and gentle, an amiable, pastoral spirit. This is far from being true. As a boy he was violent and moody. He was always a lover of order and freedom. His early ignorance was revealed by his prophecy as to the result of the fall of the Bastille:

"For lo! the dread Bastille  
 Fell to the ground, by violence overthrown  
 Of indignation, and with shouts that drown  
 The crash it made in falling. From the  
 wreck  
 A golden palace rose, or seemed to rise,  
 The appointed seat of equitable law  
 And mild paternal sway. Meanwhile, prophetic harps  
 In every grave were ringing. 'War shall  
 cease'.  
 Did ye not hear that conquest is abjured!  
 Bring garlands, bring forth choicest flowers  
 To deck the Tree of Liberty".

So wrote Wordsworth in 1789. Four years later he fled from Paris to escape a prison and the guillotine.

In 1791, Wordsworth was living at Orleans

in France. He threw himself eagerly into the Revolution, joined the patriot side and readily absorbed the theories of Freedom and Equality. When he saw the armies preparing for war he says:

"I looked upon these things  
As from a distance; heard and saw, and felt,  
Was touched, but with no intimate concern".

The awakening in France seemed to him only like any other process of nature, a renovation, indeed, but one which might be accepted without a shock. He was occupied, at the time, with studious researches into the poetical appearances of external nature and the affairs of men held a secondary place in his thoughts. Wordsworth had always taken democracy for granted. It was the only life he had known.

"For born in a poor District, and which yet  
Retaineth more of ancient homeliness,  
Manners erect, and frank simplicity,  
Than any other nook of English Land.

It was my fortune scarcely to have seen  
 Through the whole tenor of my School-day  
 time  
 The face of one, who, whether Boy or Man,  
 Was vested with attention or respect  
 Through claims of wealth or blood; nor was  
 it least  
 Of many debts which afterwards I owed  
 To Cambridge, and an academic life  
 That something there was holden up to view  
 Of a Republic."

The history of the development of Wordsworth's opinions is of striking interest. This history he has himself consigned in an autobiographic poem, "The Prelude" or "The Growth of a Poet's Mind", composed between 1795-1805, but only given to the world after his death in 1850. He wished to raise a lasting monument to literature and he wished to realize the development of his own powers and the influences which had gone to their shaping. At the back of his mind was the hope that

"I might have  
 Some monument behind me which pure hearts  
 Should reverence".

The French Revolution was one of these forces and the ninth, tenth and eleventh cantos of his poem are concerned with it. These cantos, by their strenuous simplicity, their deep truthfulness, their slow and inexorable transition from ardent hope to dark imagination, sense of woes to come, sorrow for human kind, and pain of heart, breathe the very spirit of the great catastrophe. He related how he had been led through the love of nature to honour man. The shepherds of the Lake hills, the dalesmen, had been seen by him as part of the wild scenery in which he lived and he mixed up their life with the grandeur of nature and came to honour them as part of her being. The love of nature led him to the love of man. Despite the fact that the Prelude was written ten years after the times it describes, it still remains a valuable source document, giving us the impressions made by the Revolution

50.

upon a powerful mind.

Wordsworth first went to France on his way to the Alps. At that time, the States General had been summoned and though the Monarchy had not been abolished, there was belief throughout France that the day of Liberty had come and that the old bad times were past, and the description Wordsworth gives of the rapture manifest in the whole country is very powerful and touching:

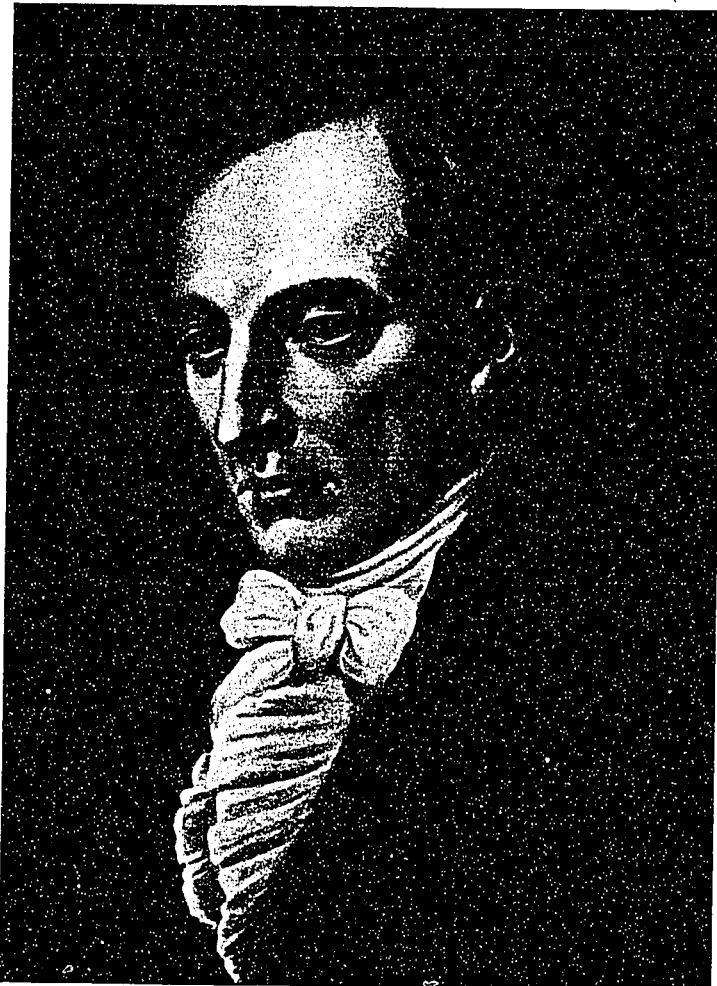
"But Europe at that time was filled with joy,  
France standing on the top of golden hours,  
And human nature seeming born again.  
Lightly equipped, and but a few brief looks  
Cast on the white cliffs of our native shore  
From the receding vessel's deck, we chanced  
To land at Calais on the very eve  
Of that great federal day; and there we saw,  
In a mean city, and among a few  
How bright a face is worn when joy of one  
Is joy for tens of millions. Southward thence  
We held our way, direct through hamlets, towns,  
Gaudy with reliques of that Festival,  
Flowers left to wither on triumphal arcs  
And window garlands. On the public roads,  
And, once, three days successively, through  
paths

51.

By which our toilsome journey was abridged,  
Among sequestered villages we walked  
And found benevolence and blessedness  
Spread like a fragrance everywhere, when  
Spring  
Hath left no corner of the land untouched...".

As we read the description in Wordsworth of the beginning of the Revolution, we realize all that he felt and all that the young literary spirits of the day felt about it. They felt that man was naturally a being intended for good, and of great dignity; that he had been kept back by the barriers of the old system; that the Revolution had swept away these barriers and that man for the first time was going to be free, to advance towards what was his natural heritage to what he deserved and to what was his right.

"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".



THE PERRY PICTURES. 84.  
BOSTON EDITION.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.  
1770-1850.

Then came the beginnings of bloodshed and violence. Wordsworth did not ignore these the incidents he called:

"Ephemeral monsters, to be seen but once!  
Things that could only show themselves and die".

Wordsworth went to Paris after the September Massacres in 1792. He formed an intimate friendship with General Beaupuy, a Republican officer. In this relationship with Beaupuy, we have an example of Wordsworth's curious dependence upon another man to fire his latent enthusiasm. Beaupuy was passionately in love with devotion and sacrifice and in Wordsworth's eyes was the ideal of a warrior and of a citizen and remained for him the type of the soldier-philosopher. The idea that Beaupuy would shed his blood for his ideals of peace and happiness heightened the attraction of his eloquence.

Beaupuy kindled Wordsworth's enthusiasms  
by pointing out

"hunger-bitten Girl  
Who crept along, fitting her languid gait  
Upon a Heifer's motion.....  
.....at the sight my Friend  
In agitation said, "'Tis against that  
Which we are fighting".

Wordsworth was so led away by enthusiasm for the Republic that he offered himself as a leader to the Girondists, a party consisting of the more moderate members of the National Convention, who chiefly came from the Gironde, the estuary of the Garonne. They were men of impracticable ideas though they were not prepared to go to the length of the Jacobins, but when their denunciation was announced by Robespierre, Danton and Marat, the Jacobin leaders, Wordsworth's eyes were opened as to the real results of the Revolution and fortunately, at this time, his relations in England stopped his

allowance and he was forced to return home. Narrowly escaping, he got home to England before the execution of Louis XVI in 1793, and he published his "Descriptive Sketches" and "Evening Walk". If he had not left France, he would doubtless have associated with the Girondists and fallen a victim. He says:

"Doubtless, I should have then made common  
cause  
With some who perished; haply perished too,  
A poor mistaken and bewildered offering,--  
With all my resolutions, all my hopes,  
A Poet only to myself, to men  
Useless".

He dedicated the "Descriptive Sketches" to Robert Jones, his companion in France, and hoped to recall for him, as to record for others, the impressions of their trip in 1790. The stirring events of the time furnish a part of the subject matter of his work. Yet there is about his references to the Revolution a

curious dispassionateness.

"Oh give, great God, to Freedom's waves to ride  
 Sublime o'er Conquest, Avarice and Pride.....  
 Give them beneath their breast while Gladness  
 springs,  
 To brood the Nations o'er with Nile-like wings.

The "Descriptive Sketches", completed on the banks of the Loire afford striking evidence of the metamorphosis which was taking place within him. The tone of this poem which at first represents him as overwhelmed with despair, changes towards its close. The whole face of nature seems to smile. It has been transformed by the advent of Liberty.

After Wordsworth's recall to England, he watched the Revolution with other eyes than those of a partisan. At this time, in the "Borderers", he says:

"Action is transitory--a step, a blow,  
 The motion of a missile--this way or that--  
 'Tis done, and in the after vacancy  
 We wonder at ourselves like men betrayed  
 Suffering is permanent, obscure and dark,  
 And shares the nature of infinity".

When Wordsworth found England going to war with France, he suffered a shock. Pitt's declaration of war against France involved him in a terrible struggle of conflicting emotions, for his sympathies were on one side and his patriotism on the other. While he thought that in France was the fairest hope and the promise of human liberty and happiness, he felt it bitterly. When England gained victories and thanksgivings were offered in the churches, he describes his feeling in a stern passage:

"I only like an uninvited guest  
Whom no one owned save silent, shall I  
add,  
Fed on the day of vengeance yet to come".

Such was his love of liberty; such was his feeling when he saw England in arms against France and when he thought that Liberty was on the side of France. France had not been destined to long retain the sympathies of many

Britons. The September Massacres of 1792 made even Fox recoil. If "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" meant gutters running red with blood, the old order might be better after all. After the execution of Louis XVI and the French invasion of the Netherlands, England was not ready to sit by and see France make herself master of Europe and she was fearful lest her control of the sea be taken from her. But when France became the aggressor, when Wordsworth became convinced later that the cause of Liberty was with his own country and the cause of the aggressor and despotism with France, then he produced that strong, patriotic war poetry which gave to many people through the distress of war, something of that spirit of strength with which Wordsworth himself went through the distress of the Revolutionary Wars. When France aggressed and exhibited the horrors of the Terror, nothing could surpass the bitter

disappointment that he felt. At the beginnings of Napoleon's campaign in Italy in 1796, it proved to Wordsworth beyond all doubt that the Revolution had turned into an aggressive movement against the rights of others:

"Become aggressors in their turn  
 Frenchmen had changed a war of self defence  
 For one of conquest losing sight of all  
 Which they had struggled for; upmounted  
 now  
 Openly in the eye of earth and heaven  
 The scale of liberty!"

And yet Wordsworth's sympathy was not wholly alienated from France. He beheld with admiration the victories of the young Republic which he compares to the infant Hercules strangling the snakes about his cradle. But the murder of the king shook his belief in the moral grandeur and regenerating power of the movement. Lower and lower sank his hopes until at last came the agonizing realization that it

was no reign of Universal Brotherhood that was dawning on the world, but a reign of tyranny and selfish lust of power. However, French in his sympathies he had been, he was backbone English and of the stoutest Cumberland make. He had voted for Liberty, not for Glory; his disappointment at their apostasy united in his heart. Sick to the heart, he turned awhile from the spectacle of politics, buried himself in abstract ideas, in nature, in poetry, in his profound domestic affections; and he did not hesitate to condemn where he had approved. But he did not gain this recovery quickly. He lost heart and hope for a time. He trembled as Hamlet did when he heard the ghosts' story. What was in the world, in religion, in morality, that such things could be? He saw man as a being unable to tell good from evil, loyal to no law that might deliver him from his lower self. His dejection was great in proportion as

his hopes had been high and he gives a powerful description of the distress of his mind and the despair through which he went. At one time, he says he

"Yielded up all moral questions in déspair".

As he slowly recovered from his disappointment, he became more and more conservative in his politics and less in sympathy with any violent reactions. Yet he never doubted what the real cause of the Revolution was; nothing could shake his moral judgment about that. When other people were pointing to all these horrors and saying,

"Behold the harvest that we reap  
From popular government and equality".

Wordsworth, in spite of his distress says,

"I clearly saw that neither these nor aught  
Of wild belief engrafted on their names  
By false philosophy had caused the woe,  
But a terrific reservoir of guilt  
And ignorance filled up from age to age,  
That could no longer hold its loathsome  
charge,  
But burst and spread in deluge through  
the land".

And when Wordsworth saw Europe beginning to attack the French Revolution, and attempting to put it down, and to re-establish the Monarchy, though he was not blind to the violence and bloodshed of those who were then in power in France, he says:

"In France, the men, who for their desperate  
ends,  
Had plucked up mercy by the roots, were glad,  
Of this new enemy. Tyrants, strong before  
In wicked pleas, were strong as demons now".

Thus, he pronounced a wise political judgment upon the unwisdom of interfering with the Revolution from outside. In the whole of Wordsworth's account of the Revolution there is nothing with more insight than this wise political judgment; there is deep political wisdom in it for all similar occurrences, and if these words

"-----the men, who for their desperate  
ends,  
Had plucked up mercy by the roots, were glad,  
Of this new enemy-----",

whenever a great civil war takes place in a foreign country were hung on the walls of rooms where Cabinets meet, we might be saved from the mistake of spending millions of dollars.

Finally, when Wordsworth "yielded up all moral questions in despair", he does not sit down under that despair. Whatever depression he goes through, he never ends the poem until he has found the thought which sets him on his feet, upright, above depression. It is found in poem after poem. However great the depression, and it was at times as great as ever poet had, he never rests until he has found the point of view in which he can be strong again; where, instead of being a pessimist, he can be hopeful, sanguine, certain as regards the future. Thus, in his depression in the Revolution, he finds hope at last and finds it through the help of his sister Dorothy, who leads him back to the influence of nature

wherein he finds comfort.

"Then it was-----  
 Thanks to the bounteous Giver of all good!  
 That the beloved Sister in whose sight  
 Those days were passed-----  
 Maintained for me a saving intercourse  
 With my true self-----  
 She whispered still that brightness could  
     return  
 She, in the midst of all, preserved me still  
 A poet, made me seek beneath that name,  
 And that alone, my office upon earth;  
 -----Nature's self  
 By all varieties of human love  
 Assisted, led me back through opening day  
 To those sweet counsels between head and  
     heart  
 Whence grew that genuine knowledge, fraught  
     with peace  
 Which, through the later sinkings of this  
     cause  
 Hath still upheld me, and upholds me now".

Thus he gets strength again with the help of  
 his sister, by his susceptibility to the in-  
 fluences of nature. It is in that suscepti-  
 bility to the influences of nature that the  
 great strength of his poetry lies. When he  
 gave his message to the world it was a new  
 message:

"One impulse from a vernal wood,  
May teach you more of man,  
Of moral evil and of good,  
Than all the sages can".

The dominant passion of Wordsworth's life owed nothing to books. He had never really deserted nature. The sounding cataract had always haunted him like a passion. The tall rock, the mountain and the deep and gloomy woods were always

"An appetite, a feeling and a love  
That had no need of a remoter charm,  
By thought supplies, nor any interest  
Unborrowed from the eye".

But the horrors of the Revolution cast a doubt on the legitimacy of his youthful joys and discoloured his view of human nature. The noblest products in the field of pure literature which the Napoleonic Wars have left us are Wordsworth's political sonnets, his poem "The Happy Warrior" and his pamphlet on the

"Convention of Cintra". In the latter he says, "There is a spiritual community binding together the living and the dead; the good, the brave, and the wise, of all ages. We would not be rejected from this community; and therefore do we hope". Wordsworth's sonnets are records of the most impassioned movements in the history of the poet's imagination as it deals with the public events from 1802 to the Battle of Waterloo. In these sonnets, he espouses English liberty and English tradition with a literary power which no prior account of the Revolution had evoked from him. They stand alone in the poetry of patriotism and have never been equalled. Many of them are concerned with the affairs in Spain. From the date of the Spanish uprising, Napoleon could no longer stand forth as the representative of democratic ideas. The principle of nationality was manifestly on the side

of his adversaries. The moral force of Europe was arrayed against the material might of its conqueror. Wordsworth was deeply concerned with the Spanish uprising. It called forth his highest ardour. It seemed to him to be a great outbreak of nature in the heart of a people on behalf of freedom. Walter Scott, too, was stirred and he wrote to his friend, Ellis: "Tell Mr. Canning that the old women of Scotland will defend the country with their distaffs rather than that troops enough be not sent to make good so noble a pledge", and Scott wrote his "Vision of Don Roderick", the proceeds of which were to be given to a fund for the relief of the Portuguese.

When Wordsworth visited France in 1802 and Napoleon had been elected Consul for life, he found no joy in France and he himself was sad as he moaned over all the wrongs which Europe had suffered. Yet, he sustained a lofty

67.

hope that the cause of liberty had still its untamable auxiliaries in the powers of nature and in the passions of man:

"Thou has left behind  
Powers that will work for thee, air, earth  
and skies  
There's not a breathing of the common wind  
What will forget thee, thou has great allies;  
Thy friends are exultations; agonies  
And love, and man's unconquerable mind".

Wordsworth trembled lest ease and luxury should sap the hardihood and strength of England and that she might be unequal to her trials. A degenerate England would prove unequal to the stern ordeal with which she was faced. He looked back to the old Republic and sighed for the return of Milton's spirit. Her glorious past seemed to insure a future no less heroic:

"In our halls is hung  
Armour of the invincible knights of old  
We must be free or die, who speak the tongue  
That Shakespeare spoke, the faith and morals  
hold  
That Milton held".

68.

And again he says:

"Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour  
England hath need of thee;  
She is a fen of stagnant waters; altar, sword  
and pen  
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,  
Have forfeited their ancient English dower  
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men,  
Oh! raise us up, return to us again;  
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power".

At length, the great drama reached its triumphant catastrophe at Waterloo and Wordsworth poured forth his solemn hymn which closes his "Poems Dedicated to National Independence and Liberty". He ascribes the victory to magnanimity that wielded the sword with irresistible might. So one great revolutionary idea remained at the core of his teaching-- that of the innate and essential dignity of man. It was no doubt, instinctive sympathy that led him to choose his types of manhood-- his Leech-Gatherer, his Michael, etc., from

the peasantry of his native district. Yet moral purpose too had much to do with such selection for in these humble and obscure characters he saw examples of strong manhood. His stress is thrown upon individual worth, irrespective of all the differences of fashion and the world. His mission was to consecrate the commonplace and to persuade his readers the simplest things are after all the most divine. This is the ethical side of his romanticism. In "Resolution and Independence" he insists upon the power which each man has within himself to lift himself by fortitude and conscious effort above the depressing influence of mere circumstance. He shows that obedience to moral law has its ultimate reward in a peace of soul which the world can neither give nor take away.

Wordsworth's comprehensive sympathies, his insistence upon the primary and essential

qualities of human nature as distinguished from the merely external and factitious, his firm belief in natural manhood, his deliberate selection of homely materials as the best for poetic purposes--all these features connect him with the radical tendencies of the revolutionary age. The whole trend of his writings was, moreover, towards the simplification of life, and in this way again he was in harmony with the revolutionary spirit. Even his theory of poetic diction is only another aspect of his general effort to pierce down through artifice and convention to nature and reality. Thus, as a poet of man and an ethical teacher, Wordsworth reveals everywhere his vital connection with some of the underlying principles of the Revolution. In practical politics, he had become a reactionary. But his work from first to last, with its emphasis upon the simplification of life and the

essential worth of human nature, must still be regarded as part and parcel of the great democratic movement of the time.

The close of the French Revolution did not mean the end of the Revolutionary movement, even in the field of politics. The peoples of Europe had been aroused and were not now to be crushed or pacified. There were repeated disturbances in Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece and much dangerous discontent in England. But meanwhile, a strong conservative reaction had set in. Many of the older generation abandoned their early faith and for a time the principles of progress and popular government suffered eclipse. The complacency of toryism, however, was fretful to many of the more fiery spirits among the younger men. Growing into manhood at the time when they could realize the apparent failure of the democratic cause, they found themselves

in a world which emerged from the long strain of the Revolutionary excitement, exhausted but not satisfied. The old enthusiasm and hope had gone. In their place came apathy, indifference, cynicism, bitter disappointment and aimless unrest. Such were the conditions which naturally weighted heavily upon the English poets who were born into the later revolutionary age: Shelley, Byron and Keats. Though each breathed the same atmosphere and saw the same forces at work about them, nothing could be more striking than the contrast between each in the quality and temper of their poetry.

Shelley was a fiery spirit of the Revolution and his poetry is coloured with the rosy dreams of an enfranchised humanity. He was one of the most ardent, independent and reckless English poets inspired by the Revolution.



THE PERRY PICTURES. 89.  
BOSTON EDITION.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

1792-1822.

The spirit of the Revolution, as it was understood in France and in Europe, had to wait for Shelley for its complete expression. Freedom is the breath of his work; freedom, not only from the tyranny of earthly powers, but from the tyranny of religion, expressing itself in republicanism, in atheism and in complete emancipation from the current moral code, both in conduct and in writing. The reaction which had followed the overthrow of Napoleon at Waterloo sent a wave of absolutism and repression all over Europe. Italy returned under the heel of Austria; the Bourbons were restored in France; in England came the days of Castlereagh and Peterloo. The poetry of Shelley is the expression of what the children of the Revolution--men and women who were brought up in and believed the revolutionary gospel, thought about these things.

While tender, pitying, fearless, full of

a desire to reform the world and of hatred to the customs and laws of his actual surroundings, Shelley is, although born too late to feel the impact of the first waves of the Revolutionary movement, the purest, the most hopeful and the nobles voice of the Revolution. He could not conceive it possible that right should not eventually triumph in a regenerated society. Professor Woodberry says, "When Shelley began to think and feel and became a living soul, the first flush of dawn had gone by; but the same hopefulness sprang up in him, it was invincible, and it made him the poet of the Revolution, of which he was the child. So far as the Revolution was speculative or moral, he reflected it completely. Its commonplaces were burning truths in his heart; its ferment was his own intellectual life; its confusions, its simplicities, its misapprehensions of the laws of

social change, were a part of himself. It would be wrong to ascribe the crudities of Shelley's thought merely to his immature and boyish development. They belonged quite as much to the youth of the cause. He received what he was taught in the form in which his masters held it".

Wordsworth and Coleridge lost their faith and became Tories and Byron was a selfish lawless creature, but Shelley had the martyr spirit of sacrifice and he trusted to the end in the wild hope of the revolutionary enthusiasts. His "Queen Mab", "Revolt of Islam", "Ode to Liberty", "Ode to Naples", and above all his "Prometheus Unbound", which is the fixed example in literature of the working out of the ideal of a regenerated universe and the fourth act is the choral song of its emancipation, are some of the works inspired by a trust in the ideal Democracy which was

to be based on universal love and the brotherhood of man. This faith gives a bounding elasticity and buoyancy to Shelley's thought, but also tinges it with a disgust for the old, that defiance of restraint, and that boyish disregard for experience which mark a time of revolt. All the illusions of the Revolution--perfectibility, disregard of tradition and inheritance, the contrast between a benevolent Nature and the selfishness of Society are to be found in full vigour in Shelley. Also, all that was admirable and noble, all that was of a constructive character in the Revolution is to be found in his works.

Of no poet in English could it be said with more surety that the pursuit of the spirit of beauty dominates all his work. It interfused all nature and to possess it was the goal of all endeavour. The visible world and the world of thought mingle themselves

inextricably in his contemplation of it. For him, there is no boundary line between the two, the one is as real and actual as the other. He does not enforce the creations of his imagination by the analogy of natural appearances; his instinct is just the opposite--to describe and illumine nature by a reference to the creatures of thought. Shelley can write of the west wind as

"Before whose unseen presence the leaves, dead  
Are driven like ghosts from an enchanter  
fleeing".

He can describe a skylark in the heavens as

"Like a poet hidden  
In the light of thought".

Of all English poets, Shelley is the most completely lyrical. Nothing that he wrote but is wrought out of the anguish or joy of his own heart

"Most wretched souls  
Are cradled into poetry by wrong,  
They learn in suffering  
What they teach in song".

Byron, a mere child when Napoleon stilled the last struggles of the Revolution under the sway of military despotism, endured none of the trial and exhaustion which the early enthusiasts on behalf of democracy underwent, but was aware of a great void in the world surrounding him, had a strong feeling for the Revolutionary movement as a destructive force. In him we find the Revolution in the background of nearly all he said and did; we find it in the explanation of nearly all that he was and Byron has been called the voice of the Revolution in its temper of revolt, its blind fury, its reckless destructiveness. He sympathized with its negative tendencies. He is our one great poetic interpreter of the



THE PERRY PICTURES. 88.  
BOSTON EDITION.

LORD BYRON.  
1788-1824.

mood of disillusion, cynicism and unrest which all over Europe accompanied the reaction against the Revolution. His own temperament and stormy life helped him to become its mouthpiece. The dominant note of his poetry is revolt. The Revolution and the Reaction from it helped to spoil him as an English nobleman. In a time of disorder and disintegration, he fell into the coarse ways of the "Jeunesse dorée" of the period of the Regency. He cared little for the principles of the Revolution which were positive and constructive. Of its utopianism, its social ardour, there is no trace in his work. He had lost faith in what was old and had not gained a new faith. However, without the Revolution there could have been no "Childe Harold", written after his return from Greece in 1812. In this he wears a mediaeval masquerade and tries to show that the present is full of the

elements of romance. The desultory wanderings of Childe Harold traversed ground every mile of which was memorable to men who had watched the struggle which had been going on in Europe with scarcely a pause for twenty years. The chief value of the poem lies in the writer's deep interest in the works and ways of humanity united with a revolt against the world, and a scorn for human existence. His heroes and heroines, both, are those of Revolutionary romance, revolters against the social order. Under the veil of superficial cynicism there appears in "Childe Harold", a robust enthusiasm for what is great, beautiful and heroic in European history. With a strong ardour of imagination, the glories of former ages live again in the verses of Byron and connect themselves with the life of his own day. Something of the school of Pope clings to him. Yet no one so completely broke

away from old measures and old manners to make his poetry individual, not imitative. It is chiefly in "Don Juan" that he shows the influence of the Revolutionary spirit. It is written in bold revolt against all the conventionality of social morality, religion and politics. It claimed for himself and others, absolute freedom of individual actions and thought in opposition to that force of society which tends to make all men after one pattern. Liberty, to Byron was synonymous with pure individualism. It meant, at the bottom, the right of each man to live as a law unto himself. In his "Ode to Venice", the temper of the Revolution may be easily discerned. The French Revolution had been, in a great measure, a destruction of the ancient order of society and such poetry as Byron's sympathizing with the Revolution, is too reckless an assertion of individual freedom.

Byron has been spoken of as the representative poet of the Revolution and the fact that in his hands, English poetry became, for the first time, European poetry, interesting in Florence, in Paris, hardly less than in London, is evidence that he possesses more than a national significance. The positive dogmas, however, of the Revolution occupy a small place in Byron's poetry. In its political results, the Revolution seemed to him a failure; yet it impressed his imagination as a wonderful phenomenon and all promises for the future became through it credible. Only ruins remained, ruins wherewith to build anew dungeons and thrones; yet such cannot be the order of things forever:

"But this will not endure, nor be endured!  
Mankind have felt their strength and made  
it felt".

And so Byron, at once, believed and doubted the

gospel of the Revolution. He illustrated through all changes of circumstances and temper, one thing constantly--a disdain of checks, a force of reckless individualism, which formed part of the Revolutionary spirit. Byron expressed constantly the individualism of the earlier Revolutionary epoch, and the emptiness of sterility of the life which is merely individual and not social. It may be said that Byron is the truest representative in our literature of the Revolution as a realized historical series of events. And further, it may be said, that the European poetry of England began and ended with Byron and Shelley.

Keats was essentially a poet of the age over which the storm-cloud of the Revolution had passed. He came to manhood when England was engaged in the last act of the great drama of anti-Napoleonic warfare. England,



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JOHN KEATS.  
1795-1821.

no less than the rest of Europe, had known to the full, the curse of militarism and its burdens weighed heavily upon all classes of society. The Revolution had defeated itself by its own excesses. Keats marks the close of that poetic movement which the ideas of the Revolution had crystallized in England, as Shelley marks the attempt to revive it. He knew nothing of Byron's storm spirit of antagonism to the existing order of things, and he had no sympathy with Shelley's humanitarian zeal and passion for reforming the world. He went back to Spenser and Shakespeare's minor poems for his inspiration. He marks the exhaustion of the impulse which began with Burns and Cowper. There was no longer in England any large wave of public thought and feeling such as could awaken the national emotion and life out of which poetry is naturally born. We have, thus, arising after the deaths of Keats, Shelley and Byron, a number

of poems having no inward fire, no ideas and no marked character.

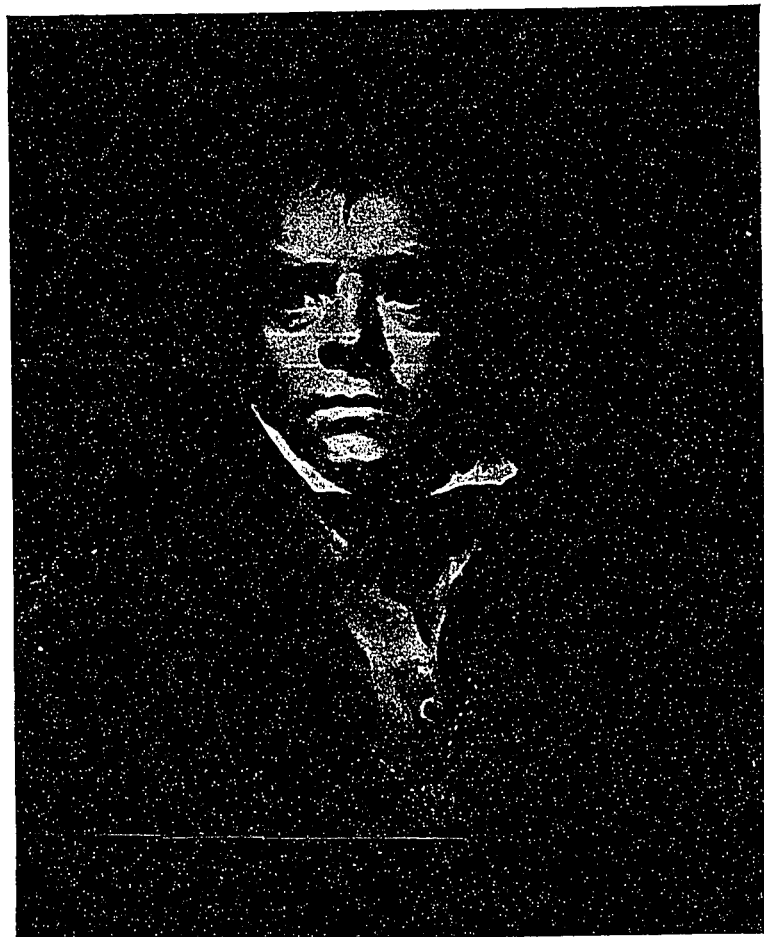
The French Revolution ended and whatever its worse consequences, foreseen so clearly by Burke, it exerted a great influence on literature. The great upheaval was only the chief expression in the field of politics of a vast general movement in every department of life and thought--a movement, the keynote of which was the emancipation or the assertion of individuality against the restraints by which it had long been repressed. This was the keynote also of the contemporary literature in England no less than of that of the Continent. At the bottom, both the political and the literary movements were inspired by the same impatience of formulae, traditions, conventions and the tyranny of the dead hand, by the same insistence on individuality and by the same craving for freedom and the larger

life. The revolt from the school of Pope reached its highest point and the modern school of poetry was established. Poetry of the highest order was produced. In current phraseology, the Age of the Revolution is defined as that of the triumph of Romanticism. But this triumph had been long prepared. The reaction against all the dominant ideals of the so-called Augustan school had begun well back in the 18th century and had grown steadily in strength and volume in the thirty years before the "Lyrical Ballads" appeared. And as modern democracy dates from the fall of the Bastille, so modern poetry dates from these Ballads. Original as they seemed to their first readers, who received them with contempt or neglect, they heralded the great change of which we have in mind when we speak of the fundamental difference between the literature of the Age of the Revolution and that of the

preceding century. The later 18th century was indeed the seed-time of the early 19th century harvest.

While the prose does not take such high rank as the poetry, there are some writers who will not be forgotten. The 18th century tradition of order and regularity were largely abandoned and a new prose arose--a prose of ampler range, richer harmonies, more varied and more intricate effects. This change had to some extent been heralded by the oratorical prose of Burke, but its real beginning coincides with the culmination of the French era in the early years of the 19th century. The change in prose was not in one direction only, but in many directions. In prose, we see, at this time, the repudiation of conventions and rules, the right of the individual to express his own individuality without hindrance. Hence, the personal note is strong in the new prose and variety is one of its most marked traits.

Scott, inspired by his revolt from the Revolution, turned to the regretted past and published his collection of songs and ballads of the Border. On him the influence of the Revolution was slight and purely negative. It aroused him to no humanitarian enthusiasm or prophetic visions of a regenerated society. It only deepened his constitutional hatred of democracy and threw him back with fresh ardour upon the romantic past. Scott was a born Tory and all his sympathies were with the old order which the Revolution threatened at its very foundations. Scott's poems written at this time, too, show him at his best. His "Marmion" in 1808 and "Lady of the Lake" in 1810 brought the narrative poem into a new and delightful excellence. His own inventiveness in story and character is at its height and is matched by the vividness of his natural description. No poet is a finer colourist.



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SIR WALTER SCOTT.  
1771-1832.

Nearly all his natural description is of the wild scenery of the Highlands and Lowland moorland. He touched it with a brush so light, so graceful and so true that the very names are made forever romantic; while his faithful love for the places he describes fill his poetry with the finer spirits of his own tender humanity.

The Revolutionary Era was pre-eminently poetic. The Elizabethan period alone excels it in the glory of its poetry. Cowper, Burns, Shelley, Southey, Wordsworth, Coleridge Byron and Keats, constitute a group of nature poets than cannot be paralleled in English literature. The democratic spirit of the age is shown in the poetry of many. Burns sings of the Scottish peasant; Wordsworth pictures the life of shepherds and dalesmen. Byron's lines ring with a cry of liberty for all and Shelley immortalizes the dreams of a universal

brotherhood of man.

While Magnus in "A History of European Literature" states that the French Revolution brought Romance to European letters, in other words, it gave birth to Romanticism in its definite form, few critics will allow this statement. Hearne in "Life and Literature" states that the poetry of the early part of the 19th century sprang from the ardour aroused in England by the opening promise of the Revolution. It is readily admitted that after 1800, the imaginative stir caused by the great upheaval in France enters into a new literature as one of its elements and combines with the diverse impulses which gave birth to English Romanticism. The influence of the Revolution after 1800 was, therefore, part and parcel of the Romantic Movement. Romanticism was fed by many influences and assumed many forms. Its intense subjectivity and emotionali

its love of nature and the picturesque, its mediaeval leanings, etc., are spoken of elsewhere. Fundamentally, it was as Victor Hugo terms it, "Liberalism in literature". Its impatient rejection of prescribed rules and conventions--its repudiation of the trim correctness of the class schools, its quest for fresh subjects and fresh modes of treatment, its belief in nature, genius and inspiration as opposed to conscious art, its insistences upon spontaneity and the central principle that every man has a right to his own thoughts which is an aspect of the extreme individualism which marked the revolutionary spirit at large, were all aspects of the poetry of the Romantic Age.

The thinking public and the human mind changed, and while these changes took place the new literature sprang up. The preceding age had done its work. Perfect prose and

classical style put within reach of the most backward and dullest minds the notions of literature and the discoveries of science. Moderate monarchies and regular administrations had permitted the middle class to develop itself under the pompous aristocracy of the court. A new world, a world of citizens and plebeians, henceforth occupies the ground, imposes its form and manners, stamps its image on minds. Democracy appears. The Revolution transformed literary ideas changing style and taste. The renovation in the manner of writing is a renovation in the manner of thinking; the one led to the other.

And so the English Romantic School appeared closely resembling the French in its doctrines, origins and alliances, in the truths which it discovered. The followers of this school formed a sect, who spoke out loud and repelled settled minds by the audacity and novelty of

their theories. They had violently broken with tradition and leaped over all classical culture to take their models from the Renaissance and the Middle Ages. They sought in the old national ballads and ancient poetry of foreign lands, the fresh and primitive accent which had been wanting in classical literature, and whose presence seemed to them to be a sign of truth and beauty. They laboured to destroy the grand aristocratical and oratorical style, such as it sprang from methodical analyses and court polish. They proposed to adapt to poetry, the ordinary language of conversation, such as is spoken in the middle and lower classes and to replace studied phrases and a lofty vocabulary by natural tones and plebeian words. They carried to further perfection the later tendencies of the century preceding, in simplicity of narrative, reverence for human passion and character in every

sphere, and impassioned love of nature.

Whilst maintaining, on the whole, the advances in art made since the Restoration, they renewed the half-forgotten melody and depth of tone which marked the best Elizabethan writers and they added a richness of language, a variety of metre, a force and fire in narrative, a tenderness and bloom in feeling, an insight into the finer passages of the Soul, and the inner meanings of the landscape, a larger and wiser humanity, hitherto hardly attained, and perhaps unattainable even by predecessors of not inferior individual genius. In place of the classical mould, they tried stanzas, sonnets, ballads, blank verse, with the roughness and subdivisions of the primitive poets. They adopted and arranged the metres and diction of the 13th and 16th centuries. Coleridge and Southey manufactured totally new rhythms, a verse in which accents

and not syllables were counted. The French Revolution is generally credited, by French writers, at least, with having been the prime factor in this change, the change which affected the very soul of poetry.

The force of romanticism and the especial stimulus of the French Revolution gave direction and meaning to the literary movement up to 1825. But then the romantic battle was won and the Revolution had passed leaving all its promises of social millennium only the memory of ruin. Men who had built their hopes upon the high theories of Rousseau, found his theories come to naught, and for a time there was none to take his place with a new gospel that should appeal and urge onward. The Revolution like a tempest had shattered the old structure of science and as yet there was wanting the courage to attempt its reconstruction. Hence, there is a great lack of good

poetry, and hence the claim of a writer in 1834 that "no man can be a very great poet who is not also a great philosopher". That is, his poetry must have something more than mere superficial beauty, and easy versification; there must be underlying this the thought that makes the poem worth while. It was some little time before the generation succeeding Byron could find the necessary strength of motive to give bone and sinew to its verse.

