

## Essay on the Lake School.

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An art or science after being brought to an extraordinary height by the common efforts of many, generally afterwards lies prostrate for a considerable time, till it is revived by the exertions of artists or of scholars. English literature having attained in the Old English School to a very high degree of perfection, was, from Dryden to the close of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, followed by an age to which the critics then living pleased to give the name of the Augustan or Classic Era, which, however, later writers on the history of literature designate as a season of poverty, imitation and feebleness in poetry. For if we except Dryden, Pope, Swift, and after them Gray, Collins, Goldsmith, Thomson, it was only by indifferent spirits that poetry at that epoch was cultivated. This fact may be owing partly to the civil wars; but especially fatal was the powerful influence exercised by France which at that period governed the whole world in matters of taste, an influence from which Dryden, Pope and Swift could not escape, whilst Gray, Collins, Goldsmith and Thomson struggled against the unnatural and the affected, and thus became the forerunners of the New School which led English poetry back to truth and nature. Cowper and Burns prepared the way for this school, which was further cultivated by that succession of poets in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to whom also the so called Lake School belongs in which are particularly comprehended Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey. They were called the Lake Poets, Lakers or Lakists, because they took up their residence and wrote on the borders of the lovely lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland. Notwithstanding they would hardly have received the appellation of a particular school, had not Wordsworth, their head, uttered principles upon poetry, to which he did not himself adhere, and which could not fail to appear to good taste most strange and fantastic.

William Wordsworth, born at Cocker-mouth in Cumberland, completed his studies at Cambridge where he especially devoted himself to the belles-lettres. He then travelled through France, Switzerland, Italy, and at a later period through Germany. After his return he received the situation of Distributor of Stamps in the county of Westmoreland and was appointed poet-laureate in 1843. He died in 1850. An Evening Walk and Descriptive Sketches, published in 1793, were his first productions, the former referring to the mountains of Westmoreland, the latter containing a description of a tour made in Switzerland. In 1798 he published his Lyrical Ballads with a preface in which he put forth his opinions on poetry. The greatest and most important of his works, The Excursion, appeared in 1814.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was a native of Devonshire, born in 1772 at Ottery St. Mary. He studied, like Wordsworth, philosophy and the belles-lettres at Cambridge. He was at first an adherent to the French revolution and to Rousseau's doctrines on human life, and, for the purpose of realising those ideas, decided on emigrating to America with his friends Southey and Lovell. But attachments which the three friends had formed for three sisters, to whom they were afterwards married, retained them. In 1798 Coleridge undertook a journey to Germany for the completion of his education. Some time after his return, in 1804, he was sent to the island of Malta as secretary to the governor, Sir Alexander Ball. He returned to England and expired in 1834. His literary efforts were manifold; he appeared as a critic in his periodical *The Watchman*; he gives other

proofs of his talent for criticism in his *Biographia Literaria* or „Biographical Sketches of my literary life and opinions.“ His endowment as a translator manifests itself in the translation of Schiller's *Piccolomini* and *Wallenstein's Death*. His chief poetical works are *Christabel* (1816) and the *Rhyme of the ancient Mariner*. Besides which he wrote lyrical poetry. His dramatic works, *The Fall of Robespierre*, *Zapolya* and *Remorse* are of inconsiderable merit.

Robert Southey was born at Bristol in 1774; he studied theology at Oxford. After a journey made to Spain and Portugal from 1800 to 1801, he accompanied Mr. Forster, chancellor of the Exchequer, to Ireland in the quality of private secretary; having returned from thence he withdrew to his country seat and obtained the office of poet-laureate in 1813. His death took place in 1843. Without mentioning his juvenile poems, his first greater production is *Joan of Arc*, written in 1796, which was followed by *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801), *Metrical Tales* (1804), *Madoc* (1805), *The Curse of Kehama* (1810); *Roderic the Last of the Goths*, his most perfect poetical creation, completed his works. He has also composed lyrical poetry, which, however, is extremely weak.

As regards the works which we have consulted in the interest of our considerations on the *Lakers*, we must mention in the first place the periodicals that treated this subject in single articles; firstly the *Edinburgh Review*. The contributors to this periodical entertained peculiar views; criticism stood higher in their estimation than poetry, they deemed themselves authorised to look down on the poets. From such men we ought not to expect a correct judgement on poetry; however, although their criticisms on the *Lake School* are severe, perhaps too severe and sometimes erroneous, they are truer than those of other English critics on art, who extolled that school beyond its merits. The *Tory Quarterly Review* to which Coleridge was a contributor, warmly defended the *Lake Poets*, partly from partiality, partly in a spirit of opposition to the *Whig Edinburgh Review*; for criticism was made subservient to political party purposes. I have not had an opportunity of looking into the *North American Review* or the *Examiner*. In the „*Magazin für die Literatur des Auslandes*“ of 1843 the well known poetess Louise von Ploennies has contributed some articles on the *Lake Poets*, which, however, are of no particular value. Nor can criticism draw any information on the subject in question from the article contained in the 57<sup>th</sup> volume of the „*Wiener Jahrbücher der Literatur*.“ The English writers on the history of literature are for the most part very favourably disposed towards the *Lake School*; though acknowledging faults to be in it, they point out so many excellencies, that the former are lost sight of. Chambers in his *Cyclopaedia of English Literature* endeavours to give a true criticism. Gilfillan in his *First Gallery of Literary Portraits* is highly prepossessed in favour of the *Lake School*; still more partial is Allan Cunningham in his *History of British Literature since the last fifty years*; he will admit of no imperfections in Wordsworth. Craik in his *Sketches of the History of Literature* proceeds more critically. Among the Germans Jacobsen in his „*Briefe über die neuesten englischen Dichter*“ has given a detailed treatise on the *Lake School*; he confines himself, however, to quotations and expresses scarcely any independent judgement. Then comes Mr. Büchner who, in the XVI volume of the „*Archiv für Neuere Sprachen*“ has written on the *Lake School* and again set forth the results of his researches in his „*Geschichte der englischen Poesie*“, vol. II; his opinions almost always coincide with ours, they only required to be more developed. Lastly Dr. Schoenermark in the „*Programm der Ritter-Academie zu Liegnitz*“ (1857) has presented us with a half finished Essay on the *Lake School* collectively. He has borrowed his esthetic views from English philosophy and English criticism on art; but it is only from German works that he could have drawn the scientific opinions he wanted for his purpose. Therefore his disquisitions on poetry and similar matters have no worth, nor can his subsequent illustrations on the ethical and esthetic principles of the *Lake Poets* claim consideration.

It remains for us to designate the method we have adopted in our following researches. Mr. Visser has pointed out such a method in his *Esthetic*, vol. II. § 401—407; and we are of opinion that we cannot do better than follow it, with a view to gaining a scientific basis for our considerations. Our limits do not allow us to examine into the source of this method in question; it would require nothing less than to expose Mr. Visser's whole system up to this point. Our following explanation, however, although not very profound, may perhaps illustrate that method. Poetry is an art; art is realised, when the natural-beautiful is elevated by fancy to its pure form. Consequently we have to enter first upon the kinds or forms of the beautiful, then upon the spheres of the natural-beautiful, and thirdly upon the quality of fancy. These three points are to be discussed in three separate paragraphs.

## § 1.

The principal forms of the beautiful are the simple-beautiful, the sublime, the comic. The simple-beautiful is the harmonious unity of idea and image; its element is, in opposition to the two other forms, serene repose. In the sublime, the idea passes beyond the image, and apparently into the infinite, so as to draw the mind of the contemplator out of its repose and to raise it to the infinite. In the comic, the image does not reach the idea and thus excites laughter by pretending to have the idea without really having it. Each of these principal forms has its inferior species; as inferior species of the simple-beautiful we alledge: the graceful, the naif, the tender; of the sublime: the gorgeous, the solemn, the majestic, the formidable, the tragic with its various gradations; of the comic: wit, humour, farce etc.

On applying this criterion to the Lake School, it is at once evident that the comic is excluded from it; and the question arises for which of the two remaining forms, or whether for both, the fancy of the Lake Poets was organised. First as concerns Wordsworth, all the critics attribute to him the simple, but some of them consider him not to be incapable of rising to the sublime. The poet himself designates this bent of mind as his own by thus characterising himself in the poem Heart-Leap Well (commencement of part II):

„The moving accident is not my trade,  
To freeze the blood I have no ready arts:  
'Tis my delight, alone in summer shade,  
To pipe a simple song for thinking hearts.“

Hazlitt lays a particular stress upon the simple in Wordsworth's poems; Cunningham calls his style simple, dignified, unaffected and powerful; Chambers considers tranquil, tender beauty, gracefulness and simplicity characteristic of Wordsworth, adding, however, that he has been surpassed in real simplicity by Cowper, Goldsmith, Burns and others, and that several poems, especially some passages in *The Excursion*, exhibit proofs of the sublime style. Craik calls him the most faithful representer of all that is tender and sentimental in English life, whilst he attributes to Burns the quality of depicting the serene gaiety of life. Jacobsen feels himself particularly attracted by his simplicity. Mr. Bächner calls his genius „tender-winged“ (zartbeschwingt). Dr. Schoenermark commends the indescribable tenderness in his sweet pictures of the simple happiness and affections of domestic life.

The agreement of all these critics cannot be accidental; and, indeed, in order to perceive that the simple-beautiful is the distinguishing element of our poet, we need only refer to some of Wordsworth's poems, for instance: *To the Cuckoo* („O blithe New-Comer! I have heard“), *The solitary Reaper*, *A Portrait* („She was a phantom of delight“), *We are Seven*, *To a highland girl*, *Three years she grew in sun and shower*, *Written in March*, — or in the *Excursion*, book VI, to the tale of the seduction and distress of a poor girl, related by the Pastor at her grave, as also to her complaint. Although he sometimes elevates himself to the sublime, he softens it by choosing the forms most allied to the simple-beautiful.

This judgement, however, requires essential modifications. In the above passage the poet himself designates his poems for „the thinking man.“ Blackwood remarks (November 1818) that Wordsworth manifests in his poems the intention of spreading the conviction that moral laws tacitly dominate in the universe; and Cunningham designates his fancy as being purified by reason and faith. Now, that mental activity with which works of art, and therefore poetical productions, are relished, is not thinking; the diffusing of moral convictions lies without the province of the beautiful, nor can fancy, purified by reason and faith, be the pure artistic fancy. Wordsworth and the critics quoted have rightly felt the essence of this kind of poetry; Mr. Bächner has pronounced it more precisely by declaring that Wordsworth is wholly didactic.

In reference to the classification above given, we have now to draw a further conclusion upon the poet's style. Wordsworth's chief poem, *The Excursion*, is didactic; Cunningham calls it truly philosophic. *The Pedlar* and *the Pastor* represent the religious-metaphysical tendency, whilst the *Solitary*, being at variance with God, seeks to combat the validity of universal moral laws. But a

didactic spirit also runs through his lyric poems, his feelings are ruled by the intellectual, meditative element; it is his object everywhere to show the working of the divine spirit in nature: consequently he is thoroughly didactic. Now the didactic, standing on the point where the beautiful borders on the true, is no pure form of poetry. Wordsworth therefore has grasped the beautiful where it passes into the true; hence he has not given the pure realisation of the beautiful, but has alloyed it with elements of material nature. This point of view we must farther support on other grounds. Wordsworth as well as his friends were in their youth ardent admirers of the french revolution; it was not before it proved its pernicious consequences that they were cured of their enthusiasm. Wordsworth has drawn the revolutionary events of his time into *The Excursion*. Now the beautiful demands poetical subjects to be removed from contemporaneous actions, since these always have a pathologic effect.

Under this point of view and in accordance with what we have developed, we must conclude that Wordsworth's style, if we set aside casual flights into the sublime, was organised for the exhibition of the simple-beautiful, not, however, in its purity, but mixed up with the true and sometimes drawn into the turbulence of reality. His language is in perfect conformity with the nature of his style, throughout bearing in itself the character of the simple and being lucid and grammatically correct, but bordering on prose. Thence it comes that Wordsworth in the preface to his *Lyrical Ballads* does not acknowledge the difference between poetic and prosaic diction; both, says he, are identical, if properly managed; good prose does not differ from good poetical diction. We need not prove the erroneousness of such judgement; we only wanted to show the motives which brought Wordsworth to that opinion. —

Coleridge represents the reverse of all we have stated. All the critics agree in saying that his fancy was fitted for the wild, wonderful, awful in its varied gradations. „Lastly“, Gilfillan says, „the reader's brain commences to reel, and he doubts whether he or the poet is mad, and he is only sure that madness is somewhere in play.“ A similar judgement is given by the critic in the *Edinburgh Review* of September 1816: „From the Lake School, he says, so much bad has issued that one might think it could not be carried any further; then forth steps Coleridge, like a giant refreshed with sleep, and breaks out in these precise words“:

„'Tis middle of night by the castle clock,  
And the owls have awakened the crowing cock!  
Tu — whit! — Tu — whoo!  
And hark again! the crowing cock  
How drowsily it crew.“

When Byron was reading the manuscript of *Christabel* to a society in Switzerland, according to Dr. Adrian's account in his preface to the translation of Byron's poems, an auditor was so much affected by the awful nature of the story, that he ran out of the room, overcome with dread; the physician and the Lord followed him and found him in a swoon, covered with sweat. It is clear that this gentleman must have had extremely weak nerves; and Gilfillan as well as the critic of the *Edinburgh Review* which made a point of sneering at the Lake School, wherever it could, evidently exaggerate. On the other hand it is undeniable that, in *Christabel* and *The ancient Mariner*, the wild, the wonderful and the dreadful are sought after with deliberate consciousness and carried beyond measure by means of a powerful imagination. These forms appertain to the domain of the sublime, but being of a material nature, as we shall explain when speaking of Southey, they are no pure forms of the sublime. And as we observed that Wordsworth was organised for the simple-beautiful, without seizing it in its purity, in a similar way we shall, with respect to *Christabel* and *The ancient Mariner*, attribute to Coleridge the sublime in its less mature forms.

Coleridge's language in the two works mentioned corresponds also to this character; the even tranquillity, the measured simplicity, which we found proper to Wordsworth, becomes irregular, exaggerated, interspersed with strange images, sometimes bombastic. His versification is simple, except in *Christabel* where, as he says, he pursues a new principle. Namely, he does not count in each line the number of syllables, but the number of accented words; while the syllables vary from seven to twelve, each verse has but four accents. This principle had already been practised by Chaucer and Shakspeare, and it delighted Scott and Byron so much that they imitated it.

The tendency to the dreadful and wonderful, however, is not referable to all works of Coleridge, but chiefly met with in his two principal productions, *Christabel* and *The ancient Mariner*, and besides in some juvenile poems bearing the same impress: *The Raven*, *The three Graves*, *Fire*, *Famine* and *Slaughter* in the latter of which, in a desolate region of the Vendée, fire, famine and slaughter, as in *Macbeth*, meet and discourse on their merits as regards mankind. But from these poems there are others to be distinguished. Coleridge has written poems, too, which belong to the simple-beautiful; from among these to be discussed afterwards we call attention to: *The Nightingale*, a conversation poem, *The Nightingale*, *Frost at Midnight*, *The Foster-mother's Tale*, *Dejection*, *Lines to a beautiful spring in a village*, *On observing a blossom on the first of February*, *Sonnet to the river Otter*.

In accordance, therefore, with our classification above given, we must pronounce Coleridge to have been endowed with powers for exhibiting the sublime, but in its impure forms: it is only in some few poems that he passes over to the field of the simple-beautiful, which, however, is not his peculiar element. —

Robert Southey, the most fertile of the Lakers, who is said to have burned, between his 20<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> year, more verses than he ever had printed at all, also comprises the most varied forms of the beautiful. Having in his youth, like Coleridge, inclined to the awful and the supernatural, as we see in the ballad of *The old Woman of Berkely*, *Lord William*, *Rudiger*, *Donica*; he abandoned this bent in his subsequent productions and followed a course which, though it has some affinity to his earlier style of conception, still offers points of greatest divergence. — In *Joan of Arc* there are, in consequence of the double character of the *Maid*, two elements combined; she is a shepherdess, and thus the poem contains many passages of pastoral poetry, idyllic cordiality and simplicity by which it aims at the simple-beautiful; but then she is an heroic person believing herself especially favoured by God and called upon to save the French: and thus the poem is impregnated with the sublime, more particularly under the form of the mysterious. Consequently *Joan of Arc* represents a union of the simple-beautiful with the sublime. Southey's following poems: *Thalaba the Destroyer* and *The Curse of Kehama* bear quite another character; both carry us to the East, to Arabia and India, and hereby we can recognise which forms of the beautiful will meet our view; the wonderful, the magic connected with the gorgeous, sometimes with the majestic and the solemn, in turns take possession of the reader's mind, and by means of the interest excited carry it along, in a state of suspense, from stage to stage. In the last of his works acknowledged to be the best, *Roderic the Last of the Goths*, the poet rises to the purer form of the sublime, to the heroic; but also here mixing it with unnatural ingredients.

Thus the principal form of the beautiful to which Southey's fancy was given, is in general, as we perceive, the sublime which, however, he pursued into the most manifold inferior species. But like Wordsworth and Coleridge, Southey, too, has not been able to give the sublime in its pure form; and in the preface to *Joan of Arc* where he expatiates upon the requisites of a good epic poem, he has unconsciously confessed this; only he thinks that the introduction of alien elements constitutes an excellency in his poetry. He particularly blames the other productions of the epic class for not being sufficiently interesting; the renown of Achilles or of Aeneas, says he, may have flattered the national vanity of the Greeks and Romans; but in order to excite the interest of an unprejudiced reader, there must be more of human feelings than is generally to be found in the character of a warrior. From this motive Southey prefers the *Odyssey* to the *Iliad*; the swineherd Eumaeus, in his eyes, is worth a thousand heroes. Although attributing less pure taste to Statius, he sets him above Vergil, as possessing a richer imagination and more powerfully moving the reader's feeling. He finds the *Lusiad* of Camoens excellent in parts, but uninteresting as a whole; it stirs up but in a small degree the reader's mind and is remembered with little pleasure. He, on the contrary, as he goes on to say, by endeavouring to avoid the common fault of epic poems, has rendered the *Maid of Orleans* interesting; herein her history has met him half way, it being as mysterious as it is remarkable.

It is not for us to criticise the particular points of this judgement of Southey's, especially as regards his opinion on the poets quoted; we only have to reject as untenable the principle advanced by him and adopted in all his poems, and must declare as faulty precisely what he considers an excellency of his poetry; we mean the principle of exciting interest, the highest degree of which lies in the wonderful and the magic. In general, every thing is interesting which by leaving the

sphere of every-day life surprises and attracts. The beautiful, too, oversteps the limits of the common, but in such a way as to raise it into its pure form. Therefore, the effect of the beautiful is an harmonious one, while interest, on the contrary, aiming at a partial effect, draws the mind of the contemplator into one single direction; it leaves the domain of the common, because it is abnormal and one-sided, but without elevating it to the pure form, as the beautiful does. Consequently, all interest is excluded from the beautiful, not only the sensuous interest which awakens the feeling of the agreeable in the contemplator, but also the interest of the good and the true, as it has already been justly recognised by Schiller and Goethe.

After these hints, the position which Southey takes is not to be mistaken. Having exerted himself to the utmost to seek for the awful in which we found Coleridge a master, he afterwards took to the wonderful and magical that, of itself, includes the notion of interest; and he confessedly also introduced these elements into Joan of Arc and Roderic which approach to the heroic. — His language, corresponding to the character indicated, is gorgeous, brilliant, abounding in images, exciting, interesting, affected. In Thalaba he has also adapted the metrical arrangement to this general character, and he boasts of it, not without justice, saying that the irregularity of versification may serve as a sort of arabesque to oriental painting.

The result of our disquisitions is, that all the three Lake Poets, not being capable of exhibiting the real-beautiful, alloyed it with elements of material nature, and that therefore their poetical productions are no genuine masterpieces of art.

## § 2.

After having tried generally to determine the forms of the beautiful as represented by the Lakers, our plan requires us to go into the species of the natural-beautiful which they made the subject of their productions. The natural-beautiful is divided into three kinds: the landscape-beautiful, the animal-beautiful and the human-beautiful. The third of these must, with regard to considerations which we shall have to make, be further subdivided: for the human is either human in general, as far as it characterises man as a genus; to this belong human form, degrees of age, differences of sex, love, matrimony, family, occupations etc.; or the human is history, which includes fable.

In his preface to *The Excursion* Wordsworth points out nature and human life as those spheres of the natural-beautiful which chiefly attracted him:

„On man, on nature and on human life  
Musing in solitude I oft perceive  
Fair trains of imagery before me rise,  
Accompanied by feelings of delight.“

And this shows itself so conspicuously as the constituting element of Wordsworth's poetry, that no critic has failed to recognise it as such. „The most striking trait of Wordsworth's character is the powerful and inexhaustible joy which he feels in all forms and appearances of rural and mountain scenery. He is carried away by a truly impassioned rapture when musing on the grandeur and beauty of earth and heaven; his verse dwells with predilection as though unable to relinquish, and dilates with complacent repetition on the fieldflowers, the snowy mist, the sound of the howling storm or the gleam of light, which the sun throws through gullies of hills.“ Spalding.

We shall give in the following lines some particulars of this point of view; we must, however, the matter being so comprehensive, restrict ourselves to brief notices. Our poet delights in depicting natural scenes; particularly rich in instances are his: *Memorials of a Tour in Scotland*, *Descriptive Sketches*, *An Evening Walk*, *The river Duddon*, a series of sonnets; and *Memorials of a tour on the Continent*. As examples from his scattered poems it may suffice to single out the following: *Yarrow visited*, *It was in April morning*, *The idle Shepherd-Boys*, *Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey*, *Vernal Ode*, *Evening Ode*.

Wordsworth likes to commence his poems with delineation of rural scenery; for instance, the beautiful opening of *The Excursion*:

„'Twas summer, and the sun had mounted high:  
Southward the landscape indistinctly glared  
Through a pale steam, but all the northern downs,  
In clearest air ascending, show'd far off  
A surface dappled o'er with shadows flung  
From brooding clouds: shadows that lay in spots  
Determined and unmoved, with steady beams  
Of bright and pleasant sunshine interposed.“

The third book of *The Excursion*, *Despondency*, offers at the commencement descriptions of the vale in which the *Solitary* lives. The following poems, too, begin with landscape pictures; *Michael*, *Written in March*, *Written in very early youth*, *Composed at Cora Linn*, *The Idiot Boy* etc.

Further, Wordsworth is fond of drawing his comparisons from nature, as we find in the beginning of *The white Doe of Rylstone*:

— „Comes gliding in with lovely gleam,  
Comes gliding in serene and slow,  
Soft and silent as a dream,  
A solitary Doe!  
White she is as lily of June,  
And beauteous as the silver moon  
When out of sight the clouds are driven,  
And she is left alone in heaven;  
Or like a ship some gentle day  
In sunshine sailing far away,  
A glittering ship, that hath the plain  
Of ocean for her own domain.“

and soon after in the same poem:

„Besides the ridge of a grassy grave  
In quietness she lays her down;  
Gently as a weary wave  
Sinks, when the summer breeze hath died,  
Against an anchored vessel's side;  
Even so, without distress, doth she  
Lie down in peace, and lovingly.“

In the *Excursion*, book VII, he portrays a handsome youth:

„The mountain Ash  
No eye can overlook, when mid a grove  
Of yet unfaded trees she lifts her head  
Decked with autumnal berries, that outshine  
Spring's richest blossoms; and ye may have marked  
By a brook side or solitary tarn,  
How she her station doth adorn; — the pool  
Glow's at her feet, and all the gloomy rocks  
Are brightened round her. In this native Vale  
Such and so glorious did this Youth appear;  
A sight that kindled pleasure in all hearts  
By his ingenuous beauty, by the gleam  
Of his fair eyes, by his capacious brow,  
By all the graces with which Nature's hand  
Had lavishly arrayed him.“

In the episode of the seduction and distress of a poor girl, related by the Pastor at her grave (Excursion book VI), the poet compares an infant's grave near that of its mother with a tender lamb which shelters itself, behind its dam, against the winds of March:

„As on a sunny bank, a tender Lamb  
Lurks in safe shelter from the winds of March,  
Screened by its Parent, so that little mound  
Lies guarded by its neighbour; the small heap  
Speaks for itself; — an Infant there doth rest,  
The sheltering Hillock is the Mother's grave.“

In the third book of the Excursion a mother who has lost her children is likened to a frozen lake:

„Calm as a frozen Lake when ruthless Winds  
Blow fiercely, agitating earth and sky,  
The Mother now remained.“

Wordsworth brings his lyrical effusions, too, into connection with objects of nature. „A wild rose furnishes him matter to combine with it the pains of life; a daisy induces him to reflect upon the value of temperance; an old shepherd's hut prompts him to connect with it the change of all earthly things.“ Büchner. — Thus the lines To a snowdrop give rise to thoughts on modesty. In the poem:

My heart leaps up when I behold  
A rainbow in the sky,

the impressions made on him by the rainbow move him to muse on the eternal, immutable course of human things; in the poem: Pure element of waters, the murmuring of the water reminds him of the uneasiness and pangs which agitate man when given to passions; in the poem: Brook! whose society the poet seeks, he compares the brook with the life of a happy man, gliding onward undisturbed by cares; the unsteady flowing of the rill puts him in mind of the perpetual and unvarying course of months and years, in the poem: There is a little unpretending Rill; he opposes to both the imperishableness of the memory of a happy day spent with his faithful Emma. — These specimens may be sufficient; similar instances everywhere occur to the attentive reader of Wordsworth's poetry.

But this sphere is not the only one in which our poet moved; the whole range of the general-human forms as well as the forms of life to be designated in our next exposition were made subservient to his purpose. As concerns the former, this domain embraces, as we have seen, every thing which characterises man as a genus: the degrees of age, the differences of sex, the unimpassioned feelings, sleep, family etc. — Wordsworth entitles a section of his poems „Poems referring to the period of childhood,“ from among which we give the preference to: We are Seven. He then entitles a section „Poems referring to the period of old age,“ none of which, however, can pretend to any particular value. — He extols the qualities of a perfect woman in the poem: A portrait „She was a phantom of delight“; he portrays the beauty of an innocent girl in: To a highland girl; the steadfastness of woman in: The seven Sisters; the occupations of three girls of different nationality in: The three cottage Girls.

The poems which treat of the general-human feelings he has partly united in the section: „Poems founded on the affections“, to which, however, belong many others. — Love is the centre in: Laodamia, and Vaudrocour and Julia. He describes his love to a young girl in: To Louisa, She dwelt among untrodden ways, Strange fits of passion have I known, and others. Forsaken love is depicted in: Ruth. He portrays a mother's sorrow at her son's not returning in: The Affliction of Margaret. — The poet has written three sonnets addressed to Sleep, the second of which is decidedly the best, from his having skilfully connected poetical reflections on sleep with the noise of waters and the cry of birds. — In a separate section the poems to Liberty are put together; we content ourselves with directing attention to: Milton! thou shouldst be living, and: O friend! I know not which way I must look for comfort. — He delineates memory in the poem: Memory. Moral musings on duty are made in the Ode to Duty.

From among the general-human forms treated by Wordsworth we have quoted some of the principal ones. It would lead us too far, were we to go into particulars. The hints we have



given must suffice; for we have still to point out a third domain on which our poet likewise dwelt with great fondness: we mean the connection of man with nature. In consequence of this propensity, he likes to choose, as the heroes of his poems, rustics, shepherds, carters, and the like; as in the pastoral poem: Michael, and The Waggoner. He has even gone so far as improperly to make a Pedlar the expounder of metaphysical ideas in The Excursion. As for the remaining persons of The Excursion, they do not belong, it is true, to humble life; this was not in accordance with the design the poet had with them; but they, too, have passed their life in rural scenes: those persons are the Solitary and the Pastor.

In the preface to his works he seeks to derive this inclination of his, founded only in his own disposition, from the intrinsic essence of poetry itself. In people of the humbler class, he holds, the elementary feelings are purer and much more natural than in the higher classes, because they live in immediate connection with the objects of nature, and are remote from the refinements of cultivated life. But he overlooks the circumstance that nature, such as it exists in those people, is wanting in intellect and therefore is unesthetic. He first imbued them with intellect, and thus rendered them fit objects for poetry; by too frequent a use of them, however, his poetry became, in this respect, tinged with mannerism.

The considerations on Coleridge take a more simple form. Since his fancy, as we have learned, was directed to the spectral, awful and ghastly, in short, to the supernatural, he found neither in nature nor in man subjects fit for his bent; he therefore had recourse to the fabulous in which those forms are made use of. „The germ of The Ancient Mariner is, according to De Quincy, contained in a passage of Shelvoeke, one of the classical circumnavigators of the earth, who states that his second captain, being a melancholy man, was possessed by a fancy that some long season of foul weather was owing to an Albatross which had steadily pursued the ship, upon which he shot the bird, but without mending their condition.“ Chambers. This simple tale Coleridge's boundless fancy exaggerated to the highest pitch. On a voyage to the South sea the ship is cast by a storm upon the southern ice-region. The sailors are near despairing, when an Albatross, a bird indigenous to those parts, approaches the ship and finds food. Soon after the ship extricates herself from the ice by means of a warm south wind. The Albatross continually accompanies the ship; the Ancient Mariner shoots him dead with a cross-bow. The fair weather does not last long, the ship gets into a calm under the equator; distress is at its height. Then appears a spectre ship manned by Death and Life-in-Death who beguile the time with casting dice. The spectre ship vanishes; the crew, „four times fifty living men“, die, each of them previously cursing the surviving Ancient Mariner. At length he happens to bless the seasnakes surrounding the ship, and now he can pray and sleep again. The Albatross which the sailors had hanged round his neck, loosens itself and falls down into the sea. Then come rain and wind, and now the dead bodies of the sailors arise and begin working the ship. By degrees the spectres become blessed spirits and perform music. The Ancient Mariner hears two of these spirits relate that he is forgiven for the murder of the Albatross on account of the „penance done“. At last the ship runs into port, the pilot boat comes along side, and the Ancient Mariner has no sooner stepped into it than the ship sinks.

His Christabel in which, according to the opinion of Cunningham, the poet had a romance on Merlin in his mind, is almost equally strange. We dispense with giving the plan of it, that of the Ancient Mariner sufficiently showing Coleridge's turn of fancy. — But, as Coleridge in a number of poems also adopted the simple-beautiful, he, of course, needed for this entirely different subjects, which he especially found in the general-human forms and in simple nature. A whole series of his poems treats of love, among which there are: Love, Recollections of Love, Genevieve, Thou gentle Look, The hour when we shall meet again, The ballad of the Dark Ladie, Lewti etc. — Dejection, remorse, hope, domestic peace are the subjects of poems recognishable by their titles; pity is the centre of the poem: Sweet Mercy! Liberty he celebrates in the Ode on France. From among his portraits of natural scenery, we limit ourselves mentioning the following poems: Hymn before Sunrise in the vale of Chamouni, Lines to a beautiful spring in a village, South-American Scenery, This lime-tree bower my prison, Lines composed while climbing the left ascent of Brockley Comb, Kubla Khan. — He connects lyrical sentiments with the delineation of nature in: To the river Otter, On observing a blossom, The nightingale, a conversation poem, The Picture or the lover's resolution, Fears in solitude, To the autumnal moon etc. etc.

We now proceed to Southey. This poet has this in common with Wordsworth that he is fond of indulging in descriptions of natural scenery. The 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> books of Thalaba abound with such pictures. We content ourselves with selecting one: the description of an immense plain of snow to which Thalaba comes on his wandering to the enchanted cave of Domdaniel (book X,4.):

„The breath of the East is in his face  
And it drives the sleet and the snow.  
The air is keen, the wind is keen,  
His limbs are aching with the cold,  
His eyes are aching with the snow,  
His very heart is cold,  
His spirit chill'd within him. He looks on  
If aught of life be near,  
But all is sky, and the white wilderness  
And here and there a solitary pine,  
Its branches broken by the weight of snow.“ etc.

The delineation of night in the opening of Thalaba is of a great beauty:

„How beautiful is night!  
A dewy freshness fills the silent air,  
No mist obscures nor cloud, nor speck nor stain,  
Breaks the serene of heaven:  
In full orb'd glory yonder Moon divine  
Rolls through the dark blue depths.  
Beneath the steady ray  
The desert-circle spreads,  
Like the round ocean, girdled with the sky.  
How beautiful is night.“

In the Curse of Kehama (book IV and V) an indian morning and evening are thus depicted:

„The boatman, sailing on his easy way  
With envious eye beheld them where they lay;  
For every herb and flower  
Was fresh and fragrant with the early dew,  
Sweet sang the birds in that delicious hour,  
And the cool gale of morning as it blew,  
Not yet subdued by day's increasing power  
Ruffling the surface of the silvery stream,  
Swept o'er the moisten'd sand, and rais'd no shower.“

„Evening comes on: arising from the stream,  
Homeward the tall flamingo wings his flight;  
And where he sails athwart the setting beam,  
His scarlet plumage glows with deeper light.  
The watchman, at the wish'd approach of night,  
Gladly forsakes the field, where he all day  
To scare the winged plunderers from their prey,  
With shout and sling, on yonder clay-built height,  
Hath borne the sultry ray.  
Hark! at the Golden Palaces,  
The Bramin strikes the hour;  
For leagues and leagues around, the brazen sound  
Rolls through the stillness of departing day  
Like thunder far away.“

In the 15<sup>th</sup> book we encounter a gorgeous description of the ruined city of Baly:

„Their golden summits, in the noon-day light,  
Shone o'er the dark, green deep that roll'd between.  
For domes and pinnacles, and spires were seen  
Peering above the sea, . . . a mournful sight!

And on the sandy shore, beside the verge  
Of Ocean, here and there, a rock-hewn fane  
Resisted in its strength the surf and surge  
That on their deep foundation beat in vain.  
In solitude the ancient temples stood;  
Once resonant with instrument and song,  
And solemn dance of festive multitude;  
Now as the weary ages pass along,  
Hearing no voice save of the Ocean flood,  
Which roars for ever on the restless shores;  
Or visiting their solitary caves,  
The lonely sound of Winds, that moan around  
According to the melancholy waves.“ etc.

The poet portrays a Banian tree in the 13<sup>th</sup> book:

„'Twas a fair scene wherein they stood,  
A green and sunny glade amid the wood,  
And in the midst an aged Banian grew  
It was a godly sight to see  
That venerable tree.“ etc. etc.

and in the same book we meet with the description of an elephant slaking his thirst:

„Trampling his path through wood and breake,  
And canes which crackling fall before his way,  
And tassel grass, whose silvery feathers play  
O'ertopping the young trees.  
On comes the elephant, to slake  
His thirst at noon in yon pellucid springs.  
Lo! from his trunk upturn'd, aloft he flings  
The grateful shower; and now  
Plucking the broad-leav'd bough  
Of yonder plane, with waving motion slow  
Fanning the languid air,  
He moves it to and fro.“ etc.

In Madoc in Wales (part I, book 13) the picture of a beautiful summer day at sea is of a great sweetness:

„There was not, on that day, a speck to stain  
The azure heaven; the blessed Sun, alone,  
In unapproachable divinity,  
Carreered, rejoicing in his fields of light.  
How beautiful, beneath the bright blue sky,  
The billows heave! one glowing green expanse,  
Save where along the bending line of shore  
Such hue is thrown, as when the peacock's neck  
Assumes its proudest tint of amethyst,  
Embathed in emerald glory. All the flocks  
Of Ocean are abroad: like floating foam  
The sea-gulls rise and fall upon the waves;

With long protruded neck the cormorants  
Wing their far flight aloft, and round and round  
The plovers wheel, and give their note of joy." etc.

Likewise Roderic the Last of the Goths presents us with many a fine description of nature. Also in his minor, very weak poems Southey likes to address nature, for instance in: To the rainhow, To the evening rainbow, To a spider, To a bee, Autumn, Morning dew; and in the sonnets: Porlock, thy verdant vale so fair to sight; How darkly o'er yon far-off mountain frowns; O thou sweet lark that in the heaven so high; Thou lingerest spring! still wintry is the scene. etc.

In all other points, however, Southey takes a direction quite different to that of Wordsworth. While the latter applies himself to the general-human forms and the sphere of low life, Southey, if we pass over the awful poetry of his youth, partly enters upon the wonderful tales of the Indians and Arabs, partly chooses a more heroic field. — We fully agree with the Edinburg Review when it says that „Thalaba is a tale for good children“. A poem entirely removed from the basis of the human and the esthetic, must necessarily be repulsive to the reader imbued with esthetic feelings. And what we state with respect to Thalaba, also, on the whole, applies to The Curse of Kehama. The subject of Thalaba is the combat of the young Arab Thalaba with a band of wicked magicians whose haunt is the cave of Domdaniel unter the bottom of the sea. These, aware of the intention of the Destroyer, do all in their power to kill him, but in vain; Thalaba, on his side, is only able to destroy them by demolishing the cave over their heads and perishing at the same time with them. Wildly strange appear to us also the Hindoo manners and Hindoo superstition pervading the Curse of Kehama; the principle contents of which are made up of the sufferings which a young girl, Kaylial, and her father Ladurlad have to undergo by the curse and witchcraft of the Indian tyrant Kehama, until they are delivered by the tyrant's death.

Lastly Southey has ventured upon the heroic in Joan of Arc and in Roderic, the Last of the Goths. This poem relates the victorious invasion of the Moors into Spain. Roderic, disguised as a peasant, flees into the desert and afterwards is dispatched by an abbot to the appointed successor to the spanish throne, Pelago, with the summons to head an insurrection against the Moors. After some successful engagements against these, the coronation of Pelago as king of Spain takes place, with Roderic's cooperation. The poem concludes with the total defeat of the Moors; but Roderic, at length recognised by his war-cry „Roderic the Goth“ disappears, unwilling to enjoy the fruits of his victory. — As concerns Southey's lyrical poems, they are too insignificant to be more particularly gone into.

### § 3.

The activity which constitutes the poet is fancy. Wordsworth, too, in the preface to his poems, has set forth his opinions on the requisites for poetical productions. According to him, the powers necessary to the poet are: 1<sup>stly</sup> those of observation and description, i. e. „the ability to observe with accuracy things as they are in themselves, and with fidelity to describe them“; 2<sup>dly</sup> Sensibility, by which we comprehend delicate excitability and keen perception; 3<sup>dly</sup> Reflection; 4<sup>thly</sup> Imagination and Fancy; 5<sup>thly</sup> Invention; 6<sup>thly</sup> Judgement, — that is the faculty to decide which of the powers mentioned is to be made use of.

From these powers we first of all reject the last: the poet's productive act is an immediate one, he reflects not which power he especially wants for the work he is upon; the activity which the poet needs for his creation is, once for all, *Fancy*. Reflection, indeed, is not alien to the poet, but it is not characteristic of him: for which reason, when the powers essential to the poet were enumerated, it ought to have been excluded. Then, as for invention, it is inseparably combined with fancy; it is, therefore, no particular faculty distinctive of the poet. Consequently, of the powers required by Wordsworth there remain as being proper to the poet: observation, sensibility, and thirdly fancy and imagination. If we further assume that the faculty of observation and the easy excitability of the senses by an object are in reciprocal relation, the one necessarily involving the other, we may comprise observation and sensibility under the head of the precursor of fancy, contemplation, or the faculty of seizing, with keen precision, the proportions of the form and

measure of an object, and of simultaneously penetrating into it with an easily excitable, warm feeling. The image thus contemplated is, however, not yet beautiful, since the object limited by contemplation and appropriated by the contemplator, is not yet freed from the imperfections of the natural-beautiful.

Fancy and Imagination are thrown together by Wordsworth, although precisely these two powers, in our opinion, ought above all to have been separated. His illustration of the difference between both is rather obscure; he appears to us to understand by imagination what we in German understand by fancy, and to mean by fancy what we call imagination. — The image seized by contemplation first relapses into oblivion from which it is evoked by remembrance or reflection. This emerging of the image is not affected without disturbance; its single parts undergo innumerable, new, arbitrary combinations, and a jostling play of images is produced, which overturn each other in motly and confused tumult, without law and order. Thus arises a new world of images; the faculty that creates it is imagination. These images again are not beautiful, for they are too subjective, whilst those seized by contemplation were too objective: but in the genuine masterpiece of art subject and object melt together into one another.

Now comes fancy, the activity which elevates the natural-beautiful into pure form, expelling from the idea the inessential, the accidental, — binding and uniting that which, belonging to the idea, is scattered, — concentrating the isolated round the unity of the idea, — raising the individual to the general. Thus fancy creates an image which still bears the vivacity of the natural-beautiful, in which, however, the idea appears in its pure form: in short, she creates pure beauty. It is besides to be remarked that this act of creating commences with a certain frame of mind in which the artist feels himself carried away from this world, but at the same time has a foreboding that what he purposes creating is near: it is an unconscious self-absorption in which subject and object indistinguishably coalesce. This fermentation gives birth to the activity which creates forms, to fancy, that differs from imagination precisely by the circumstance that the latter is incapable of arresting the chaos of images evoked, while the former dominates over them by forcing them into strict forms.

As regards the Lake Poets, we must at once maintain that not one of them was possessed of a full, comprehensive fancy: all are wanting in the creative power that produces the beautiful as form in its purity. Their fancy rather fixes itself to single constituent elements, at the expense of the whole. — Wordsworth, though, in the capacity of a lyric poet, bound to start from especial tones of feeling, has nevertheless chiefly cultivated contemplation and reflection; he habitually seizes his images where contemplation is still too lively in him: hence he is poor in ideality; though by no means a dry copier of nature, he approaches realism. Wordsworth is fertile; he has written a great many poems and some very extensive ones; but he has not been expert in the art of concentrating to unity scattered thoughts. Hence, too, it further follows that in the description of his objects he frequently goes into the minutest details, by which the poetic total effect is disturbed. As an instance we cite the last stanza of the poem highly esteemed by the English: A Portrait (or the perfect Woman „She was a phantom of delight“ etc.):

„And now I see with eyes serene  
The very pulse of the machine;  
A Being breathing thoughtful breath,  
A Traveller betwixt life and death;  
The reason firm, the temperate will,  
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill,  
A perfect Woman, nobly planned,  
To warm, to comfort, and command;  
And yet a spirit still, and bright  
With something of an angel light.“

The enumeration of the single qualities of a good woman is not of a nature to produce a poetical total effect. — Lastly, he often falls into prolixity and diffuseness which all critics blame in him. This reproach more particularly applies to his greater poems; his minor ones, which, upon the whole, we deem to be by far the best, are not open to this censure.

Coleridge, in his principal works, takes his stand entirely on imagination. He is fertile; image

throgs upon image in varying play; but order and unity are wanting to keep his images within bounds: Coleridge's fancy is wild and confuse. It is different with his minor poems which, as we have already observed, are in direct opposition to his two greater productions. These sometimes give evidence of a pleasing lyric feeling, — not reflective as in Wordsworth, but properly emanating from a congenial frame of mind.

Finally, as concerns Southey, his fancy turned to contemplation and imagination. Contemplation preponderates in his descriptions of nature which appear to us to be the best of what he has written. In *Thalaba* and *The Curse of Kehama*, he gives full scope to imagination in the exhibition of the wonderful which, at most, may be an appendage to a mature work of fancy, but dares not be made the centre of an esthetic whole. In his heroic poems: *Joan of Arc* and *Roderic*, the *Last of the Goths*, his imagination is more restrained by the subject.

We have endeavoured briefly to determine the style of the poets usually comprised under the denomination of the Lake School. We have seen that to none of them a full, complete fancy was to be attributed; their poetry, nevertheless, has its worth. They were most successful in their delineations of natural scenery to which Wordsworth and Southey especially devoted themselves, the former being more attracted by the simple-beautiful of nature, the latter by the sublime. Wordsworth, further, exhibited the simple in the general-human and the forms of humble society, yet with varying success; though among the large number of his poems of this class there are several good ones, most of them betray the want of fancy or that activity which creates forms by expelling and uniting. Coleridge we think did not lack talent for representing the general-human forms; but we were compelled to reject his other bent of mind as that of an immature imagination. Southey felt himself quite at his ease in exhibiting forms of historical culture and elaborating the field of the heroic; still his conceptions want depth and originality.

In the preceding sketch, however incomplete, we have endeavoured to give an outline of the characteristics of the Lake Poets; and though the subject is far from being exhausted, we hope to have succeeded in hitting on the more essential points.



# Jahresbericht.

## I. Lehrverfassung.

Uebersicht der in der Realschule abgehandelten Lehrgegenstände.

### SEXTA.

Ordinarius: Hr. Dr. Schnitzler.

**Religion.** a) *Katholischer Religionsunterricht:* Nach dem Diöcesan-Katechismus: der 1. Glaubensartikel (von Gott an), der 2., 3., 4., 5. und 6., memorirt und erklärt. — Biblische Geschichte A. T. bis zu den Königen, nach Schumacher. 3 St. Hr. Religionslehrer Schaeffer. — b) *Evangelischer Religionsunterricht:* Glaubens- und Pflichtenlehre nach Luther's kleinem Katechismus. Biblische Geschichte nach Zahn's Leitf. unter Mitbenutzung der h. Schrift. Kirchenlied (20 Lieder auswendig gelernt). 3 St. Hr. Divisionsprediger Wilhelmi.

**Deutsch.** Uebung im Lesen, verbunden mit den nöthigen Sacherklärungen und grammatischer Zergliederung, wobei das Wichtigste aus der Lehre vom einfachen Satze, den Wortarten, den Silben und Lauten zur Sprache kam und den Schülern durch vielseitige, sowohl schriftliche als mündliche Anwendung zum Verständniss gebracht wurde. Ausserdem in der Regel jede Woche eine schriftliche Arbeit. 4 St. Hr. Dick.

**Latein.** Die Formenlehre, die Deponentia einschliesslich. Der I. Theil von Spiess Uebungsbuch wurde mündlich ganz, schriftlich zum Theil übersetzt und retrovertirt. Die zusammenhängenden Stücke des Anhangs wurden auswendig gelernt. 8 St. Der Ordinarius.

**Geographie und Geschichte.** Gestalt und Grössenverhältnisse der Erde. Das auf ihr gedachte Liniennetz. Länge und Breite. Land- und Meeresräume nach Lage, Gränzen, Grösse und horizontaler Uebungsbuch. Der Unterricht in der Geschichte angemessene Uebung in der griechischen Sagenwelt. 3 St. Hr. Dick. gebrochene Zahlen. Die Aufgaben der 23 Tafeln alle, theils im Kopfe, theils schriftlich

gezeichnet, wobei die Hofmeister'schen Wandtafeln benutzt wurden. Die krumme Linie in ihren verschiedenartigen Uebungen. Hr. Kraus.

Die Uebungen in der lateinischen Currentschrift. 3 St. Hr. Büchel. Der Religionsunterricht wurden die Uebungen des I. Theils der Kirchenlieder von J. B. Hamm gesungen. 2 St.

throngs upon image in varying play; but order and unity are wanting to keep his images within bounds: Coleridge's fancy is wild and confuse. It is different with his minor poems which, as we have already observed, are in direct opposition to his two greater productions. These sometimes give evidence of a pleasing lyric feeling, — not reflective as in Wordsworth, but properly emanating from a congenial frame of mind.

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**Errata.**

page	line	for	read at.
3,	22,	ad	
"	29,	gratest	greatest.
"	17,	surpernatural	supernatural.
"	34,	she	the.