WORDSWORTH ANATOMIZED.*

The Concordance Society, which was organized at Yale University in 1906, and which in 1908 issued Dr. A. S. Cook's concordance to the poems of Thomas Gray, has now to its credit a second and much more imposing volume. With a concordance to Wordsworth to set by the side of those to the Bible, Shakespeare, Kyd, Milton, Pope, Gray, Burns, and Shelley, and with the knowledge that Dr. Flügel's great Chaucer Dictionary is going steadily forward, our equipment in this kind is beginning to assume quite respectable proportions. The experience of the society has shown that there is no serious obstacle to getting concordances made, but the expense of printing remains a real deterrent. The society is not rich enough to furnish more than a portion of the necessary guarantee; and the

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present volume owes its publication in part to the generosity of the mother and brothers of the editor. Cannot some patron of learning be found who will at one stroke make it possible to round out our collection with concordances, let us say, to Spenser, Bacon, Jonson, Dryden, Browning, and Tennyson?

This latest addition is an ample quarto of 1136 double-column pages, a hundred lines to the column, comprising about 211,000 quotations. It is pleasingly printed, and very similar in general appearance to the Bartlett Concordance to Shakespeare. It differs somewhat from the liberal plan of the latter in quoting, not rhetorically complete clauses, but simply the line of verse in which each word occurs. The result is sometimes unsatisfactory; but when one considers the initial ease of mechanically excerpting such lines for the printer, making transcription unnecessary, and the very great difficulty of abridging Wordsworth's involved periods, the plan will probably be approved. Moreover, reference to the poems themselves is much facilitated by giving not only the title and line-number of each, but also the page-number of the Oxford Wordsworth, the basic text. All unlisted and partly listed words are entered in their places, duly labelled. One is pleased to note, too, a sign of scholarly thoroughness in the presence of cross-references, as from *stone* to *corner-stone*, *milestone*, etc. The absence of these is a serious defect in the Bartlett Shakespeare Concordance, where, for example, one gets no clue from *knotted* to *curiously-knotted*, nor from *flouting* to *flouting-stog*. Unfortunately there is a defect of another kind in Bartlett that reappears here. Homographs are seldom separated. The *rose* that is merely a preterit of *rise*, and the *rose* that by no other name may smell as sweet, are almost inextricably intertwined—quite so when the line of verse does not positively tell which rose it is. One must scan scores of quotations to discover whether the poet has ever used *keep* as a noun or *brook* as a verb. Uncertainty is added to vexation when sacred *Art* is found elbowed at intervals by a little copulative verb and the whole labelled "partial list." The editor pleads that his function is not a lexical one. But to have made these obvious distinctions in a few homographs of frequent occurrence, as Reid did in his concordance to Burns, would have been no trespass upon lexicography. In some instances there appears to have been an undue concern for completeness. Is anything gained by citing, from such a poem as "The Idiot Boy," every line containing the frequently recurring names of *Susan Gale* and *Betty Foy*? The monotonous iteration of the name of *Peter Bell* occupies fully a column, much to the disparagement of both Peter the saint and Adam Bell the archer. The first personal pronoun being made an exception to the general omission of pronouns, *I*, with a "partial list," occupies six pages (1200 quotations), while *me*, *my*, and *mine* take six more. The reason assigned for the inclusion is that these pronouns "are of unusual interest in a subjective poet." On the contrary, these inevitable pronouns are in themselves of no interest in a subjective poet — of no more interest than the name of *Peter Bell* in the poem of "Peter Bell" — though in an essentially narrative or dramatic poet they might have great interest. But this is not a vital matter. Apart from the treatment of homographs, it is impossible to find serious fault with the volume, and Professor Cooper and his collaborators deserve the warmest praise.

Such a compilation naturally invites calculations and comparisons. A rough estimate of Wordsworth's poetical vocabulary, omitting proper names and inflectional forms, shows it to comprise upwards of 10,000 words. The following comparative table, of root-words only, may be instructive.

SHAKESPEARE	MILTON	WORDSWORTH
gabble	gabble	gabble
gaberdine		
gad (noun)		
gadding	gadding	gadding
gag		
gage		gage
(gay)	(gay)	gaily
gain	gain	gain
gainsay	gainsay	gainsay
gait	gait	gait
	galaxy	galaxy
gale	gale	gale
gall		gall
gallant		gallant
gallery		gallery
galley		galley
galliard		
galliases		
gallimaufry		
gallon		
gallop		*gallop*
gallowglasses		
gallows		gallows

Here, quite apart from differences in bulk of writing, is interesting testimony to the comparatively unlimited scope enjoyed by a great dramatist, which is such that even an eclectic poet like Wordsworth cannot approach it. If we take Wordsworth's words in the order of their frequency, we find *love* leading with some 1200 instances; but the word chances to be both noun

and verb, and the plan of the concordance does not enable us to separate the two functions. *See* and *sight* together yield 1400; *think* and *thought* 1000. Of substantives, *heart* stands first, with about 1150 occurrences; *man* (with *men*) gives about 1100; *day*, 900; *life*, 700; *eye*, 700 (there is but one *nose*, and that belongs to a hound); *heaven*, 650; *nature*, 600. All of which, perhaps, is sufficiently obvious. A poet, like other men, is most indebted to his eyes, and still more than other men speaks from and to the heart. And the most superficial acquaintance with Wordsworth suffices to show that intense delight in all that meets the eye, sympathy with nature, and love in the heart of man, are the axes upon which his poetry revolves. It is not easy to classify natural objects in the order of his interest, but the earth appears to come first, with its hills and valleys; next, the sky, with its varying phenomena; while flowers, trees, and birds follow. Perhaps this placing before animate nature that which is ordinarily regarded as inanimate is not without significance. In particular, Wordsworth's eye for the larger features of landscape is well attested by some of the finest passages in "The Prelude" and "The Excursion." Herein he differs considerably from Keats and Tennyson, who took delight in detail and are rich in "botanical circumstance." Tennyson's flora contains 220 names from the plant-world (Shakespeare has 150). Wordsworth cannot have more than half this number. For example, while both have *barley*, *bay*, *beech*, etc., Tennyson alone has *bamboo*, *bean*, *blackthorn*, *bluebell*, *bluebottle*, *bracken*, *briony*, *bulrush*, *burdock*. The only plant found in Wordsworth from *a* to *d* which is not in Tennyson is the *buttercup*. He has no *anemone*, no *clematis*, no *mistletoe;* even the *daffodil*, so memorably associated with his name, occurs but three times (in two poems), as against seven times in the later poet. There are no *rose-leaves*, no unmetaphorical *rose-buds*, and but a single glimpse of *petals*. For gleanings of this sort, his sister Dorothy's journal affords a much richer field.

Books, we know, held but a secondary place in Wordsworth's scheme of human education. Yet he read much, and it would be difficult to find a more generous tribute to the "consecrated works of Bard and Sage" than the benediction pronounced upon them in the fifth book of "The Prelude." Enshrined in his poems are the names of Homer, Plato, Horace, Virgil, Dante, Petrarch, Tasso, Camoens, and Cervantes. Except Voltaire, there seems to be no French or German name. He was familiar with the doctrines of Rousseau, but much further from agreeing with them than might be supposed; with Goethe he was quite out of sympathy. He had early come to the conviction that he should keep the four major English poets continually before him as examples, and we find them all mentioned, with a frequency in the inverse order of their time—Milton fifteen, Shakespeare ten, Spenser six, Chaucer four times. Burns, whom he placed second to Chaucer in "the natural and sensual school," is found five times. Pope is not mentioned, though Gray, Goldsmith, and Chatterton are. His own name occurs twice, and Coleridge's three times, but the latter was very often addressed simply as "Friend." Scott, Southey, Lamb, and Crabbe are also named. Byron, who ridiculed him, Shelley, who burlesqued his poetry and reproached him for his social apostasy, and Keats, who paid him a youthful but sincere tribute, are passed over in silence.

Naturally, the vocabulary of one who held a pronounced theory of poetic diction is invested with exceptional interest. We have come now to a better understanding of that theory than when we accepted Coleridge's too narrow view of it. We know that when Wordsworth contended for "language really used by men" he was only revolting from poetic artificiality, and had no intention of descending always to the level of rustic speech. That might be done, or it might not be done; only let the language remain the natural expression of the thought behind it. This view is fully borne out by the concordance. From merely glancing through it, one gains the general impression that, for the particular (undramatic) range of Wordsworth's verse, his vocabulary is extremely apt—natural, rational, broadly eclectic, and satisfying. Exclusive of specialized activities, and of some of the more comic or vulgar aspects of life, he covered pretty much the whole human field. We are too prone to think of him as exclusively the poet of his rustic environment. His youth was rich in human experience; and never, even in his retirement, did he cease to survey mankind from China to Peru, or to draw into his world of nature the world of books and men. On the same pages that glow with hosts of clouds or of golden daffodils, are echoes of the trampling hosts of the French Revolution. Empires and republics, lawyers and judges, arguments and appeals, churches, theatres, factories, merchants, mountebanks, "chattering monkeys dangling from their poles, and children whirling in their roundabouts," enter with freedom into

the verse. And each of these things is unobtrusively designated by its rightful name. The language never descends quite as low as Burns's, nor rises quite as high as Shelley's; but it approaches both, and its range is greater than that of either. We may look in vain for "Auld Clootie" and the "whisky gills" and "swaggering blades" that belonged to what Matthew Arnold characterized as the "sordid world of Scotch drink, Scotch religion, and Scotch manners." But, what with horn tobacco-boxes, and flannels, and cloaks of duffle grey, we are introduced into a world as humble, if not as coarse. Indeed, we narrowly escape the coarseness. "But I will *bang* your bones!" says Peter Bell to the Ass, in the first edition of that poem (compare Burns: "An' I shall bang your hide, guidman"); but the phrase was, however reluctantly, excised, and this concordance is innocent of it, — as it is likewise innocent of that ghastly punch-sipping, tea-sipping "party in a parlour, Crammed just as they on earth were crammed." On the other hand, the full radiance and resonance of Shelley's vocabulary are beyond Wordsworth's reach. This should go without saying: *shepherded, legioned, hyaline, enanguished, rose-ensanguined, star-inwoven, whirlwind-peopled, lightning-braided*, — these are native to but one poet in the language. But though this diction was not native to Wordsworth's genius, and though he would never have deliberately sought for intrinsically "poetic" words, — as Rossetti for instance is known to have done, — he was manifestly neither insensible nor hostile to them. He would not go out of his way for such words as *argent, aureate, damask, madrigal, nectar*, and, as a matter of fact, he has none of these; yet he has words of the same class — *orient, aërial, diadem, amaranthine, sylvan* — together with now and then such arresting vocables as *diaphanous, prelibations, lacrymals, barricadoed*. The presence of these, in however small numbers, proves the point for his eclectic vocabulary, and confirms, moreover, his statement that he had from a very early age found words "sweet for their own *sakes*, a passion, and a power."

It is true, the eighteenth century diction still lingered with him, contributing some stiffness to the general texture. The century itself he quite left behind, and one who desires an object-lesson need but place the concordances to Pope and Wordsworth side by side. Pope's two columns of "wit" shrink to only a fifth of a column in the four times more bulky volume, while his single "cottage" is multiplied by a hundred. Critics, courtiers, and Cupids almost disappear. Doris and Chloe give way to Mary and Lucy. Sympathy finds a place among human affections, and tranquillity among human blessings. At the same time, old traces persist, and not altogether in the early poems. We still hear much of Fancy, and more of Poesy than poetry. The air is still sometimes the æther, and the ocean the brine. There are occasional ambient streams and glassy floods, scaly tribes and feathered kinds, and the sportsman's gun has only partly displaced the thundering tube. Yet in the main this element is negligible, or abundantly compensated for by such happier reminiscences as Spenser's "budded brooms" and Milton's "gadding vine." More often still, Wordsworth is entirely true to himself; and when the spirit at its divinest descends upon him, he is unexcelled by any poet in his power to blend words, thought, and imagery into one perfect music:

"A thought is with me sometimes, and I say, —
Should the whole frame of earth by inward throes
Be wrenched, or fire come down from far to scorch
Her pleasant habitations, and dry up
Old Ocean, in his bed left singed and bare,
Yet would the living Presence still subsist
Victorious, and composure would ensue,
And kindlings like the morning — presage sure
Of day returning and of life revived."

The quotation brings with it a kind of rebuke for the triviality of the divagations into which we have been led — a rebuke that seems to go back to the concordance itself, prompting the old question, *Cui bono?* Was it really worth the labor to tear asunder this living tissue, and reassemble, in alphabetical unreason, the dead remains? "A subterraneous magazine of bones"! With what emotions would Wordsworth himself have contemplated these *disjecta membra* of what is perhaps the most indissolubly organic body of verse the language possesses? We cannot answer. But there is reassurance in the thought that the very organic quality of his work gives the concordance one of its best excuses for being. Now, thanks to the unselfish zeal of the compilers, we shall be able to read more clearly than heretofore the message which that great and "dedicated Spirit" labored so unremittingly to leave.

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