

Walter Savage Landor (1775—1864) is a lyricist whose *To Ianthe*, *William Gifford Dying Speech of an Old Philosopher*, *Ireland* and *Iterlude* express deep feelings, sculptural method and epigrammatic style.

Other poets are T. L. Beddoes (1803—1849), Bryan Waller Procter (1787—1874), George Darley (1795—1846) and Thomas Wade (1805—1875).

#### Prose

The rise of reviews and magazines is the most important feature of literature during this period. *The Edinburgh Review*, established in 1802 by Jeffrey, Sydney Smith and other men of letters associated with the Whig Party, was concerned with literature and politics. *The Quarterly* was started as the mouthpiece of Tory Party. *The Edinburgh Magazine*, launched in 1817 by Wilson, Lockhart and Hoggy, was followed by the distinguished *London Magazine* to which Lamb, Hazlitt, De Quincey and Carlyle contributed. The periodicals exerted great influence on the development to prose literature. It gave encouragement to essay-writing. All great essayists of this period were contributors to magazines. Its offered fresh field for criticism, especially the criticism of contemporary literature.

The prose of the eighteenth century was marked by lucidity, clarity, grace and charm but it lacked in variety, warmth and colour. It was not an apt medium for the expression of deep feelings or strong passions. Hudson writes : "Now the romantic movement brought with it strong and deep feeling, and a love of variety, warmth and colour.....The new movement in prose is like the corresponding movement in verse, was in part connected with the revival of interest in our Pre-Augustan authors."

#### Charles Lamb (1775—1834)

"Of all our English essayists he is the most loveable, partly because of his delicate, old fashioned style and humour, but more because of that cheery and heroic struggle against misfortune which shines like a subdued light in all his writings." So observes W. J. Long about his genius. Born in 1775, Lamb, the son of Barrister's clerk, was educated at Christ's Hospital, where S.T. Coleridge was his class fellow. He himself became a clerk in the South Sea House. In 1796 occurred the terrible family tragedy which influenced the rest of his life. There was a strain of madness in the family which did not leave him untouched. In September 1796, his sister Mary Lamb murdered her mother in a fit of madness and thereafter she had intermittent attacks of madness. Lamb remained a bachelor and he devoted his whole life to the welfare of his sister who often appears in his essays as Bridget Elia. After thirty years' he retired in 1825 and passed away in 1834.

Lamb wrote some poems of a charming nature. In 1807 he and his sister Mary Lamb co-authored *Tales From Shakespeare*. His reputation as a critic rests on *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets, Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare* (1808), which brought to light the contribution of Elizabethan dramatists. His other critical works are *Essays on the Tragedies of Shakespeare* and *On the Genius and Character of Hogarth*. *Rosamund Gray* is Lamb's mild excursion into fiction. His *Adventures of Ulysses* is an Elizabethan version of the Homeric story. *Mrs. Leicester's School* was written jointly with Mary Lamb. His fame rests on his essays which are still unsurpassable in English prose. Lamb's first essay *South Sea House* appeared in 1820 in *The London Magazine* under the name of Elia. The first volume of his essays was published as the *Essays of Elia* in 1823, and the second under the title *The Last Essays of Elia* in 1833. His essays are the finest in English prose.

#### Lamb as an Essayist

Charles Lamb, the prince among essayists, stands unsurpassed due to "the incomparable sweetness of disposition which Lamb not only possessed but had a unique gift of communicating to his writings." His wisdom, his comprehensive humanity, his intimate personal revelations, his love of the past, his sweet-bitter reminiscences, his genial humour, his profound pathos and his incomparable style have endeared Elia to his readers.

Lamb's essays are full of intimate personal and autobiographical touches. Of his relations Lamb gives full and vivid pictures—his brother John is the James Elia of *My Relations*; his sister Mary Lamb is present in many essays as Bridget Elia; his father is the Lovel of *Old Benchers*, his aunt appears in *My Relations*; his sister and his maternal grandmother are portrayed in *Dream Children*. We may learn about the boyish Charles in *Night Fears* and in *Christ's Hospital*. We read about his youthful experiences in *Mockery End in Hertfordshire*; of his official work in *South Sea House*; of his sentimental memories in *Dream Children*; of his prejudices and temptations in *Imperfect Sympathies* and the *Confessions of A Drunkard*. The autobiographical element in the *Essays of Elia* is a strange blend of fact, fiction and mystification.

Humour and pathos are inseparable in *The Essays Elia*. It has rightly been remarked: "There is no humorist more original than Lamb." Humour permeates through *Poor Relations*, *Grace Before Meat*, *Christ's Hospital*, *Dream Children*, *A Chapter on Ears*, *A Quarter's Meeting*, *In Praise of Chimney Sweepers*, *Two Races of Man* and *The Convalescent*.

As a stylist Lamb is matchless. It is the personal and intimate style. As a stylist he absorbed the devices and mannerisms of the past writers.

but he made them all his own by the transforming power of his imagination. He is so thoroughly imbued with spirit of his authors that the idea of imitation is almost done away with.

#### William Hazlitt (1778—1830)

Hazlitt was a versatile writer. His meeting with Coleridge in 1798 was very significant because under his influence he became a great literary critic. From 1814 to 1830 he contributed to *The Edinburgh Review*, *The Examiner*, *The Times* and *The London Magazine*. As a literary critic he is remembered for his lectures on *Characters in Shakespeare's Plays* (1817), *The English Poets* (1818), *The English Comic Writers* (1819) and *The Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*. Hazlitt's best essays are collected in *The Round Table* (1817), *Table Talk or Original Essays on Men and Manners* (1821—22) and *The Spirit of the Age or Contemporary Portraits* (1825).

As an essayist he stands next to Charles Lamb. He lacked the wide humanity, geniality and good humour of Elia. His variety of interests, sincerity, independence, personal revelations and mastery over style impart to his essay a rare charm.

#### Thomas De Quincey (1785—1859)

De Quincey is a voluminous writer of great versatility. His literary career began in 1821 with the publication of the first version of *The Confessions of An English Opium Eater*, which expresses his early experiences and fantastic imagination. *The Dialogue of the Three Templars* he displays that passion of logical analysis which is as distinctive of his genius as his fantasy.

*Literary Reminiscences*, which contains brilliant appreciations of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Lamb, Shelley, Keats, Hazlitt and Landor, is one of De Quincey's most illuminating works. His famous critical works are *On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth* (1823), *Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts* (1827), *Letters to a Young Man* (1823), *Joan of Arc* (1827), *The Revolt of Tartars* (1840) and *The English Mail Coach* (1849).

*Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1827), *Suspiria De Profunds* (1845) and *The Autobiographical Sketches* (1853) contain revelations of the author's own life.

De Quincey's critical work shows great penetration and subtlety. His critical essays appeal directly to understanding. His admirable distinction between the literature of knowledge and literature of power has been widely accepted. He successfully attempted to create a new style which combines the best elements of prose and poetry.

The prose-writers of the Romantic period discarded the eighteenth century tradition and sought richer harmonies and greater complexity of structure. The new prose, like the poetry of the period is connected with the revival of interest in the pre-Augustan authors.

## 2. Give an account of the contributors to magazines in the Romantic period.

### A. The Edinburgh Men : (The writers who contributed to *The Edinburgh Review*)

Francis Jeffrey, who was called by his admirers as the 'archcritic', contributed some 200 articles to the *Edinburgh Review*, may be regarded as the most influential critic of his time. He was neither opposed to the Romantic Movement, nor a blind supporter of the Augustan Movement. Now, his criticism is not valued much.

Sydney Smith, another Edinburgh man, was a clever clergyman. He was known more for his witticisms than for his literature. His satire *Peter, Plymley's Letters* is noteworthy. Though his writings contain good things, they are not read often by the moderners.

### B. The Blackwood's Men :

The most famous "Blackwood" man of the day was *John Wilson* (with the pen name, Christopher North). He was a Professor of Moral Philosophy, while at the same time he was a boxer and wrestler. He wrote much. His best work is to be found in his *Noctes Ambrosianae*, which appeared in Blackwood. They are in the form of dialogues. With regard to his prose style, Wilson was with the Romantics.

**Thomas De Quincey** wrote for both Blackwood and London Magazine; he was an important man for literature. He was essentially a magazinist and 17 volumes of his collected works were published. One can notice some glaring defects in his writings: He had a bad habit of abusing his learning; he was trivial in his argument and indulged in digressions. There are some merits. His style is marvellously rich and rhetorical. De Quincey is the master of romantic prose. He has great powers of narrative and description. He achieved remarkable success in combining grim humour with the horrible. He is remembered for his autobiographical writings. His essay "Confessions of an English Opium Eater" is a classic.

**John Gibson Lockhart** is a connecting link between Edinburgh and London. He was reserved, keen, incisive and caustic. He produced much miscellaneous work, including four novels, a volume of spirited Spanish Ballads and *Life of Burns*. His famous work was *Life of Scott*. He was romantic with Scott and sympathized with Wordsworth but he was critical of the younger Romantics. (He was nicknamed "Scorpion".)

### C. The London Men :

**Charles Lamb** is one of the best beloved of the English authors, whose memory will retain its fragrance. His ever-delightful *Essays of Elia* is an immortal work. Lamb is as much an egotist as Montaigne. The substance of what he writes is almost wholly drawn from himself, his experiences, reminiscences, likes, dislikes, whims and prejudices. The subject matter of all his writings is Lamb himself.

He was master of humour and pathos. He combined them — the finest tenderness with quaintest fancies. This is unique in literature, and can be called "Lambish".

On the critical side, Lamb's influence was strong in the development of romanticism. His sympathies with the Elizabethan literature are seen in his *Tales from Shakespeare* (collaboration with his sister, Mary Lamb).

Lamb's style is absolutely his own. It is flavoured by constant contact with his favourite writers—Burton, Fuller and Sir Thomas Browne. As a familiar, personal essayist, he ranks first. As he himself said, he wrote neither for the present, nor for the future but for antiquity. He is definitely the "prince of personal essayists".

#### William Hazlitt :

Hazlitt is one of the best essayists of the Romantic period and a very well known contemporary of Lamb. He was also a painter. He wrote mainly for magazines, lectured on literary topics and published art and dramatic criticism.

Hazlitt contributed to the magazines — *Morning Chronicle*, *Edinburgh Review*, and *The Examiner*. His best criticism is contained in "Characters of Shakespeare's Plays", "The English Poets", "The English Comic Writers", etc. He has been called "the critic's critic". His insight, discrimination and sureness of taste justify the title.

Hazlitt is a meditative observer of human life. He has a strong passion for analyzing human nature. He is a psychologist.

Another important aspect of his essays is a sense of the enjoyment of life. His essays like "Going on a Journey", "On the Pleasures of Painting", etc are interesting.

Hazlitt is a fine Romantic essayist. He has all the major characteristics of Romanticism—love of beauty, art and life. His contribution to English literature is immense.

#### 3. Write brief notes on the Prose of Cobbett, Landor, Southey and Coleridge.

**William Cobbett** was a political reformer, journalist, pamphleteer and a maker of many books. He was one of the widely influential writers of the age. His *Rural Rides* is his most characteristic book. His *English Grammar* is unique among grammars as it is thoroughly entertaining. His prose reminds us of the prose of Bunyan, Defoe and Swift.

**Landor** is known for the severe, sententious and picturesque style. His major prose work *Imaginary Conversations* are dialogues between great characters of the past. They cover a wide range of subjects in life and literature — some are purely dramatic; others are reflective and philosophical. He was not a great thinker but a man of great thoughts. *The Citation of William Shakespeare*, *Pericles and Aspasia* and *The Pentameron* are other popular works of Landor.

**Southey** was as industrious a prose writer as he was a poet. His masterpiece is the admirable *Life of Nelson*.

**Coleridge's** prose is as fragmentary as his verse. His criticism is suggestive and stimulating. It exercised a tremendous influence on the romantic literature. *Biographia Literaria* is his popular work, which contains fine passages on the theory of Romantic poetry.

## XVI. PROSE IN THE AGE OF WORDSWORTH

### 1. What are the General Characteristics of Prose in the Age of Wordsworth?

The Age of Wordsworth is marked by the rise of the modern review and magazine. *The Edinburgh Review*, (1802) edited by Jeffrey Brougham and Sydney Smith of the Whig party came first. Seven years later, the *Quarterly Review* was started by the Tories. William Gifford was the first editor and was succeeded by Lockhart.

These two magazines were followed by two important magazines, which were broader and more varied — *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, a Tory monthly launched by Wilson, Lockhart and Hogg. *The London Magazine* followed. It included popular contributors like Lamb, Hazlitt, De Quincey and Carlyle.

Another well-known magazine of general type, *Fraser's* was founded in 1830. Most of the prose-writers of the period contributed to this new form of literature. The magazines exercised tremendous influence on the prose literature of the period.

Two points may be emphasized. In the first place, the magazines gave great encouragement to essay writing and hence most of the prose-writers of the period were essayists. Secondly, the magazines offered a fresh field for criticism, a criticism of contemporary literature. Considerable space was devoted to the merits of the old school and the new, the conservative or classical and the radical or romantic.

## II. THE LATER ROMANTICS

The Romantic poets generally fall into two groups — the elder Romantics and the younger Romantics. Wordsworth, Coleridge and Scott are the older poets but Shelley, Keats and Byron are representatives of the younger Romantics. The old enthusiasm and hope had gone. The later Romantics responded to the influences of their time in accordance with his own genius and character. Byron, Shelley and Keats lived in the same atmosphere but their poetry differs in quality and temper.

### 6. Write on the popularity of Byron.

Lord Byron is a representative of the spirit of the Romantic revolt. His own temperament and stormy life helped him to become the mouthpiece of the age. He inherited an irritable temperament from his parents, which brought him into conflict with men and things.

Even as a small boy he published a small volume of poems, which was attacked by the Edinburgh Review. To this he replied in a vigorous satire, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. A tour of the Continent furnished materials for the first two Cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. These two became immense success. Byron said, "I woke up one morning and found myself famous."

He married and was separated the very next year. He spent the rest of his life in the Continent. It was during the years of exile he wrote his greatest works, *Manfred*, *Cain*, the third and the fourth Cantos of *Childe Harold* and the unfinished *Don Juan*. He finally participated in the Greek war of independence, took the field and died in 1824 at the age of 37.

Byron wrote with incredible facility; his work is voluminous. His output is very varied - lyrics, satires, narrative poems, serious and serio-comic, regular tragedies and dramatic poems. Byron was a supreme egotist. As a critic and theorist, he proclaimed himself as a follower of the Augustan school. He admired Pope and cared little for Wordsworth or Coleridge. He compared the poetry of the 18th century with a Greek temple. As a poet of nature, he is most at home with nature's wilder aspects. He loves mountains and storms. As a satirist, he is incomparably the greatest of modern English poets.

Byron is so very popular in literature that the very word 'Byronism' is used to denote the spirit of gloom, satiety and unrest, which is characteristic of most of his writings. As a revolutionary poet he represents the destructive side of the revolutionary movement. He is an apostle of liberty; but he conceives liberty in terms of pure individualism. The heroes of his romances are pirates or outlaws. In his *Childe Harold*, *Manfred*, *Cain*, *Don Juan* he idealises all who are in revolt against society. He is therefore a rebel against the very conditions of human life.

Byron influenced the youth of his day. He was admired by thousands of young men and women.

### 7. Explain the Life and Works of P.B. Shelley.

Shelley is a great idealist. He is a dreamer of unrealizable dreams. Matthew Arnold describes him as "a beautiful and ineffectual angel beating in the void his luminous wings in vain". He represents all the wild fancy, revolutionary zeal and idealism.

Shelley, the son of a Tory squire, was born in 1792. He was sent to Eton school where he was nicknamed "mad Shelley". Later he was sent to Oxford from where he was expelled for

publishing a pamphlet "The Necessity of Atheism". He left England for Italy and was drowned in the Bay of Spezzia.

Two of Shelley's poems stand outside any general classification. One is *Adonais*, a splendid elegy on the death of Keats. The other poem, *The Cenci* is a romantic drama. All other poems fall into two divisions—his personal poems and impersonal poems. Shelley's genius was essentially lyrical; his moods, impressions, thoughts and emotions embodied themselves in verse. As a lyric poet he is the greatest. We have to praise him for the ecstasy of feeling, the lightness and grace, the felicity of phrase and the verbal magic of his poems — "The Skylark", "The Cloud" and "Ode to the West Wind".

His impersonal poems are different. Shelley is seen as an inspirer and guide of men. He has a passion for reforming the world. His *Queen Mab* was a sincere overflowing of heart and mind. In *Prometheus Unbound* Shelley gives an eloquent expression to his political ideals.

Shelley is a mythmaker and displays a wonderful ability to invest natural phenomena with supernatural attributes and to evoke brilliant new pictures.

Shelley has certain obvious defects. He is not precise; he is too vague and abstract to be brought under the power of reasoning. Shelley's poetry rises above being a mere artistic creation and appears something natural and elemental like the fire and the wind.

### 8. Discuss John Keats as a writer of Odes.

Keats is one of the greatest English Romantic poets of the younger generation. He is the most short-lived of them all. He was neither a rebel like Shelley nor a Utopian dreamer like Byron.

He was endowed with a purely artistic nature. Historically, Keats is important for three reasons :

(i) On the side of form and style, he is the most romantic poet, handling even his Greek themes with the luxuriance of language.

(ii) More than any other great poet of his time, he represents the exhaustion of the impulses generated by the social upheaval. With him poetry breaks away from the interests of contemporary life, returns to the past and devotes itself to the service of beauty.

(iii) His influence was very strong upon the succeeding generation.

Keats's life was an unhappy one tortured by thought of mortality and by the distress of an unrequited love affair. Yet, within a short period of creative life Keats achieved a miracle. He died of consumption before he had completed his twenty-sixth year. His genius was ripening steadily at the time of his premature death.

Keats's four long poems, a few miscellaneous lyrics and his magnificent Odes are proof of his poetic excellence. *Endymion*, *Hyperion*, *Lamia*, *The Eve of St. Agnes*, *Isabella*, *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* and the Odes— *Ode to a Nightingale*, *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, *To Autumn*, *On Melancholy*, *To Psyche* — are some of his well-known poems.

Keats is the greatest lover of beauty. "A Thing of beauty is a joy for ever" is Keats's poetic creed. He kept himself detached from all political, religious and social movements and enjoyed nature in all its aspects. According to Keats, poetry should not be the vehicle of philosophy, religious teaching. He has loved the principle of beauty in all things.

Keats is a sensuous poet. 'Sensuousness' means 'enjoyment through senses'. Keats derived utmost pleasure from five senses — sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. His

odes bear evidence to this. "Ode to a Nightingale" is a very good example for this.

He has abundant love of the past. He became familiar with Greek art, paganism and the customs and superstitions of the Middle Ages. His poems *Endymion*, *Hyperion* and *The Eve of St. Agnes* take us to past times and reveal to us the beauties of the past.

The language of Keats is remarkable for its richness of compound adjectives, imagery and other beauties. "Sylvan historian" and "full-throated ease" are good examples.

John Keats is best remembered for his odes. An ode is an address in which the poet expresses his own desires, disappointments, joys, sorrows, hopes, hopelessness and other strong emotions. "Ode to a Nightingale" glorifies the song of the nightingale. The bird is not born for death; it will give pleasure to all humanity. "Ode on a Grecian Urn" glorifies art and its permanence. "Ode to Autumn" brings out the beauties of the autumn season, which is otherwise a dull and uninteresting season.

Keats, thus is a great poet. He died at the age of 26, but he has written so beautifully within such a short life.

#### 9. Write a note on the Minor Poets of the Revolutionary Age.

The later Revolutionary Age was a period of great poetic activity. Many tried their hands at writing poetry. Only a few must be mentioned.

##### James Henry Leigh Hunt:

Leigh Hunt had close associations with Shelley and Keats. He does not rank highly as a poet. Often his poems are trivial and sometimes marred by slipshod workmanship. His best long



## XV. THE AGE OF WORDSWORTH (1798 - 1832) :

### I. POETRY

#### 1. What are the Characteristics of Romantic Poetry?

In the year 1798, with the publication of the epoch-making book, *The Lyrical Ballads*, by Wordsworth and Coleridge, a new taste in literature and art set in. This new taste is called the 'Romanticism' or Liberalism in literature. This new trend started even earlier with Gray and Collins, Blake and Burns. The Romantic Revival in the beginning of the 19th century completely turned overboard the rules and conventions that were held dear by the classicists headed by Alexander Pope.

There are various causes for the new taste of the people. People were tired of the rules and traditions of the neo-classical poetry of the period. No longer could they tolerate the monotonous heroic couplets. The French Revolution had its own influence on the thoughts and literature of the period. The greatest writer of France, Rousseau, inspired the people of England. The catchwords of the French Revolution — Liberty, Equality and Fraternity — also became the basic principles of Romantic literature. The political upheaval in America was also partly responsible for the new taste in literature. The spread of education brought home to the English people, the philosophy of Kant and Hegel in Germany. The progress of science supplied the people with a rational outlook. All these and more made them look for something new in literature. The Romantic literature also, to a certain extent, satisfied their intellectual curiosity.

The Romantic Movement was characterized by a strong protest against the conventions and worn out traditions of the classicists. There was a freedom in the choice of subject and suitable verse-forms. So there was an endless variety in subject and form.

The poetry of the 18th century was mainly concerned with the clubs and coffee houses, drawing rooms and political life of London. It was, in short, poetry of town life. In the poetry of the Romantic Revolt the interest was transferred from town to the country life and to the natural beauty and liveliness of nature.

The Romantic poets sought to escape from the tyranny and materialism of the world. They wanted to recreate the Middle Ages. This craving for the Middle Ages satisfied the emotional sense of wonder on one hand and the intellectual curiosity on the other.

The Romantic poetry was also marked by a strong sense of sympathy and a consequent understanding of the human heart. The poets started taking interest in the common people. A feeling of humanitarianism coloured the poetry of Wordsworth, Shelley and Byron.

The Romantic Movement was the expression of individual genius rather than of established values. The poets of this period were in favour of giving subjective interpretation to the objective realities of life. Poetry became individualistic in outlook.

Ignoring the immediate predecessors Pope and Dryden, the Romantics accepted the early poets, Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton as their models.

In the Romantic poetry, unlike in the classical poetry, reason and intellect were subdued and their place was taken by imagination, emotion and passion. Spontaneity was given first preference. Lyricism predominates and a number of fine lyrics

excelling the heroic couplets were produced. The Romantic poets also brought in the spirit of supernaturalism. Coleridge and Walter Scott specialised in this field.

In the new kind of poetry, greater stress is laid on simplicity. There is no difference between the language of poetry and that of prose. The new kind of poetry was written by Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Byron, Shelley and Scott. Certainly, they have revolutionised the taste.

## 2. Discuss William Wordsworth as a poet.

Wordsworth is considered to be one of the greatest English poets. His contribution to English poetry is unique. He is the only European poet who looked upon Nature as possessing a spirit closely akin to human beings.

Wordsworth was born in 1770 at Cockermouth, Cumberland and spent much of his boyhood among the shepherds of his native country. This influence was profound and lasting. After his education at Cambridge, he visited France twice. He devoted himself to poetry. His friendship with Coleridge stimulated his genius. Together they brought out *The Lyrical Ballads*. He married Mary Hutchinson and with his sister Dorothy as a third member he settled in the Lake District. He became the Poet Laureate and died in 1850.

The literary career of Wordsworth was smooth. His poems marked a clear departure from the conventional ones. He dealt with ordinary men and women and commonplace things. "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality", "Tintern Abbey Lines", "Michael" and "Resolution and Independence" are some of his well-known poems. *The Prelude* is a record of the growth of Wordsworth's mind and soul.

### Wordsworth's Theory of Poetry

*The Lyrical Ballads* by Wordsworth is an epoch-making book. It is universally accepted that a new chapter in the history of English poetry opens with its publication. The collaborators, Wordsworth and Coleridge wanted to include two different kinds of poetry. Coleridge was to choose subjects supernatural and make it appear natural; but Wordsworth chose subjects from natural ordinary life to make it appear extraordinary. Romanticism was represented by Coleridge's "The Ancient Mariner" and naturalism by Wordsworth's "The Thorn", "The Idiot Boy" and other poems.

In his Preface to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth explained the aims and objectives of his poetry. Three important points call for comment. In the first place, there is Wordsworth's choice of subject. He goes straight to common life. His "Michael" may be cited as example. Secondly, in the treatment of such themes, he employs the appropriate language of actual life in place of the pompous language of the 18th century writers. He attacks the gaudiness and inane phraseology of the Augustans. Thirdly, Wordsworth specially guards himself against the accusation of absolute realism by emphasising the use of imagination.

Wordsworth believed that poetry is the result of "emotion recollected in tranquillity". No appreciation of Wordsworth's poetry can be complete without reference to the happy and beneficent influence that Nature had on him. In his poems Wordsworth refers to Nature as the greatest of all teachers.

### Characteristics of Wordsworth's Poetry

(i) Wordsworth is the greatest poet of the country and of natural life. As an interpreter of nature he holds the first place. His love of nature was boundless. Nature was for him the embodiment of the Divine Spirit.

(ii) Wordsworth is also the poet of man. He writes about human life as a moralist. He has a firm hold upon the facts of conduct and duty and his sense of the supremacy of the moral law.

(iii) There are certain limitations of Wordsworth's genius. He had no humour and little passion and was deficient in dramatic power.

Wordsworth has written volumes of poems and much of that is uninteresting. But there are a few poems, which are really the finest treasures in English poetry.

### 3. Explain Coleridge's contribution to English Poetry.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was a unique poet. He was also a critic, theologian, novelist and talker. He collaborated with Wordsworth in the publication of *The Lyrical Ballads*.

Coleridge was born in 1772. His father was a clergyman. Even as a small boy he was interested in poetry. He got the friendship of Southey and Wordsworth and settled down in the Lake District.

"The Ancient Mariner", "Christabel" and "Kublakhan" are the most characteristic poems of Coleridge. "The Ancient Mariner" is the story of a sailor who meets with a number of strange and unnatural experiences on a voyage. Coleridge makes us 'believe' this 'unbelievable' story. "Christabel" may be regarded as the most complete representative of the English Romantic poetry. The theme of the poem is typically medieval. "Kublakhan" is a fragment, which recaptures a series of visions, which the poet saw in a dream. The dream-like quality of the poem is its great virtue.

Coleridge's personal poems, like "Ode to Dejection" and "Work without Hope" have a pathetic interest. Coleridge took the supernatural as his particular province, and he treated the supernatural in a purely poetic way. Only a poet with a mind like Coleridge could capture the dream images in all their strangeness.

The secret of Coleridge's charm lies in the deft handling of metre but its beauty defied explanation. He appeals directly to the reader's imagination. In his well-known work of criticism, *Biographia Literaria*, we find the most enduring exposition of the Romantic theory of literature.

Coleridge was a man of gigantic genius, divinely gifted to write poetry of remarkable beauty.

#### 4. Comment on the poetry of Sir Walter Scott.

Sir Walter Scott is a popular and influential interpreter of Romanticism. He has done a great deal for the revival of the Romantic past.

Scott was born in Edinburgh in 1771. He spent much of his childhood at his grandmother's home, where he loved the wild rough landscape and listened to the stories of border battles. As a boy, he was influenced by Bishop Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, and he developed a passionate interest in the ballads. He was also interested in the German Romantic literature.

"The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border" was Scott's first important publication. "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" is a sort of extended ballad full of border incidents, fighting and enchantments. "The Lady of the Lake" and "Marmion" are other

popular romances. Later he took to novel writing and made a mark as an outstanding historical novelist. Towards the last part of his life, financial ruin overtook him and he died in 1832.

Scott rejected the classic epic as his model. His "romantic tales in verse" (as he called them) represent a development of the medieval ballad and medieval romance. His style is vigorous, free and rapid, but often careless and commonplace. He is also a master of the bold treatment of landscape. But unfortunately he wrote too fast. He has nothing of the mystical quality and the spiritual power of Wordsworth and Coleridge.

#### 5. Who are the Minor Poets of the early Romantic Period? What is their contribution?

The minor poets of the early Romantic period are little known today. But some of them require a kind word of recognition.

1. **William Lisle Bowles** wrote *Sonnets* which helped the growth of love of Nature in poetry. His sonnets were admired by Wordsworth and Coleridge.

2. **Samuel Rogers** was a banker as well as a poet. Throughout his life he was untouched by the Romantic Revolution. His *Pleasures of Memory* is written in the heroic couplet in Augustan style. His next book *Italy* is in blank verse. Rogers belongs to the past.

3. **James Hogg**, nicknamed the *Ettrick Shepherd* had connections with famous literary men of the day, including Sir Walter Scott. Some of his ballads are popular. His longer poems *Kilmenny* and *The Queen's Wake* have a certain amount of fancy and power.