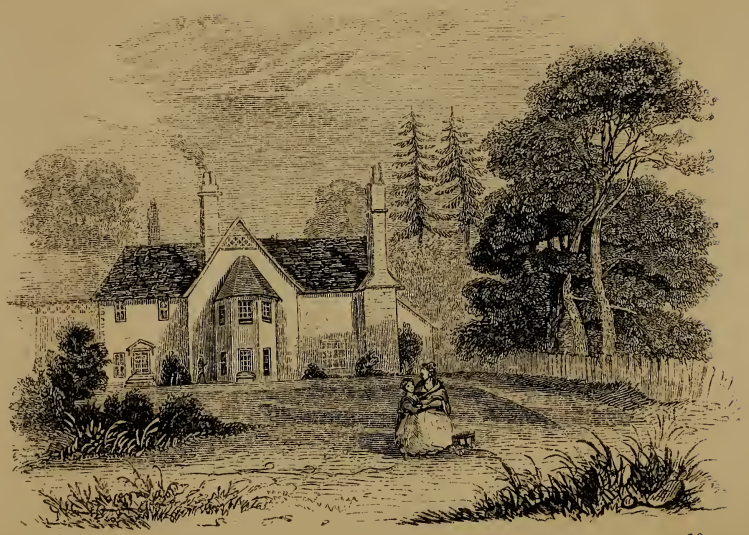
THE

HOME AND HAUNTS

OF

COWPER.



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BIRTHPLACE OF THE POET COWPER.

THE

Home and Haunts

OF

COWPER.

SIXTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS.

PHILADELPHIA:

LINDSAY & BLAKISTON.

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ILLUSTRATIONS.

MEMOIR

OF

WILLIAM COWPER.

Among the literary characters that, in the present age, have attained celebrity by the extent of their genius and excellence of their productions, must be ranked the poet Cowper; who, uniting piety to talent, and devotion to principle, employed the graces of poesy to strengthen the bands of morality, and give energy to the precepts which direct the heart to religion and to virtue. The general tendency of his writings is, undoubtedly, to excite and give permanence to the feelings which promote reflection, and incline the thoughts to another and a better state; yet, though chiefly emanating from this principle, they exhibit a variety seldom the produce of a single mind; and we cannot but admire the versatility of his powers, which, engaged in all the diversity of diction, was in all equally successful.

William Cowper was born on the 15th of November (old style), 1731, in the Rectory of Great Berkhamstead, Hertfordshire. His father, the Rector of the parish, was John Cowper, D.D., son of Spencer Cowper, Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, and next brother to the first Earl Cowper, Lord Chancellor. His mother, the daughter of Roger Donne, Esq., of Norfolk, was of noble, and remotely of royal descent. It is not, however, for her genealogy, but for being the mother of a great poet, that this lady will be remembered. She died at the age of thirty-four, leaving of several children only two sons. "I can truly say," said Cowper, nearly fifty years after her death, "that not a week passes (perhaps I might with equal veracity say a day), in which I do not think of her; such was the impression her tenderness made upon me, though the opportunity she had for showing it was so short." At the time of her death, Cowper was but six years old; but young as he was, he felt his loss most poignantly, and has recorded his feelings on the occasion of her loss, in the most beautiful of his minor poems.

Soon after his mother's death, Cowper was sent to a boarding-school, where he suffered much from the cruelty of one of the elder boys. "Such was his savage treatment of me," says he, "that I well remember being afraid to lift my eyes higher than his knees, and I knew him better by his shoe-buckles than by any other part of his dress." His infancy is said to have been "delicate in no

common degree," and his constitution appears early to have discovered a morbid tendency to despondency. When Cowper was ten years old, he was sent to Westminster School, where he remained eight years. At Westminster he obtained an excellent classical education, and was much beloved by his companions, among whom were Lloyd, Colman, Churchill, and Warren Hastings; but he complains much of his want of religious instruction at this school. "At the age of eighteen," he says, "being tolerably well furnished with grammatical knowledge, but as ignorant of all kinds of religion as the satchel at my back, I was taken from Westminster."

He was now placed with an attorney, and had for his fellow-clerk Thurlow, the after Lord Chancellor. He, however, made but little progress in the study of the law. "I did actually live," he writes his cousin, Lady Hesketh, many years afterwards, "three years with a solicitor; that is to say, I slept three years in his house; but I lived, that is to say, I spent my days, in Southampton Row, as you well remember. There was I, and the future Lord Chancellor, constantly employed from morning to night, in giggling and making giggle, instead of studying the law."

In 1752, at the age of twenty-one, Cowper took chambers in the Temple; and in a Memoir which he wrote some years afterwards, he thus describes the commencement of that malady which embittered so much of his future life. "Not long after my settlement in the Tem-

ple, I was struck with such a dejection of spirits, as none but they who have felt the same, can have any conception of. Day and night I was upon the rack, lying down in horror and rising up in despair. . . . . In this state of mind I continued near a twelvemonth; when having experienced the inefficacy of all human means, I, at length, betook myself to God in prayer." Shortly after this, as he was walking in the country, "I felt," he continues, "the weight of all my misery taken off, and my heart became light and joyful in a moment. . . . . But Satan, and my own wicked heart, soon persuaded me that I was indebted for my deliverance, to nothing but a change of scene, and on this hellish principle I burnt my prayers, and away went all my thoughts of devotion."

For ten years after being called to the bar, Cowper continued to reside in the Temple, amusing himself with literature and society, and making little or no effort to pursue his profession. He belonged to the "Nonsense Club," consisting of seven Westminster men, among whom were Lloyd, Colman, and Bonnell Thornton; assisted the two latter in the "Connoisseur," and "though he wrote and published," says Hayley, "both verse and prose, it was as the concealed assistant of less diffident authors."

Meantime he had fixed his affections on Theodora Jane, the daughter of his uncle, Ashley Cowper; one of those ladies with whom he used to "giggle and make

giggle," in Southampton Row. She is described as a lady of great personal and mental attractions; and their affection was mutual. But her father objected to their union, both on the score of means and consanguinity. When it was found that his decision was final, the lovers never met again. It does not appear that this disappointment had any influence in inducing the return of his malady. In respect to love, as well as friendship and fame, few poets, and perhaps few men, have possessed feelings more sane and healthy than Cowper. In after-life, he said to Lady Hesketh, "I still look back to the memory of your sister and regret her; but how strange it is; if we were to meet now, we should not know each other." It was different with Theodora. She lived unmarried to extreme old age, and carefully preserved the poems which he had given her during their intercourse, to the end of her life.

At the age of thirty-one, the little patrimony which had been left Cowper by his father, was well-nigh spent. At this time, his uncle, who had the place at his disposal, offered him the clerkship of the Journals of the House of Lords. Cowper gladly accepted the offer, as the business being transacted in private, would be especially suited to his disposition, which was shy and reserved to a remarkable degree. But some political opposition arising, it was found necessary that he should prepare himself for an examination at the bar of the House. And

now began a course of mental suffering, such as, perhaps, has never been described, except in his own fearful "Memoir." "I knew," says he, "to demonstration, that on these terms, the clerkship of the Journals was no place for me, to whom a public exhibition of myself on any occasion, was mortal poison." As the time for his examination approached, his distress of mind increased. He even hoped, and expected, that his intellect would fail him, in time to excuse his appearance at the bar. "But the day of decision drew near," he continues, "and I was still in my senses. At last came the grand temptation;—the point, to which Satan had all the time been driving me; the dark and hellish purpose of self-murder." In short, after several irresolute attempts at suicide, by poison and drowning, Cowper actually hanged himself to the door of his chamber; and only escaped death by the breaking of his garter, by which he was suspended. All thoughts of the office were now, of course, given up. His insanity remained, but its form was somewhat modified. He was no longer disposed to suicide, but "conviction of sin, and especially of that just committed," and despair of God's mercy, were now never absent from his thoughts. In every book that he opened he found something which struck him to the heart. He almost believed that the "voice of his conscience was loud enough for any one to hear;" and he thought that "the people in the street stared and laughed" at him. When

he attempted to repeat the creed, which he did, in experiment of his faith, he felt a sensation in his brain, "like a tremulous vibration of all its fibres," and thus lost the words; and he therefore concluded, in unspeakable agony, that he had committed the unpardonable sin. At length, he became a raving madman, and his friends now placed him at St. Albans, under the care of Dr. Cotton, a skilful and humane physician. Sometime previous to his removal to St. Albans, Cowper wrote the following stanzas descriptive of his state of mind:—

Hatred and vengeance—my eternal portion
Scarce can endure delay of execution—
Wait with impatient readiness to seize my
Soul in a moment.

Damned below Judas; more abhorred than he was
Who for a few pence sold his holy Master!
Twice betrayed Jesus me, the last delinquent,
Deems the profanest.

Man disavows, and Deity disowns me.
Hell might afford my miseries a shelter;
Therefore, Hell keeps her ever-hungry mouths all
Bolted against me.

Hard lot! encompassed with a thousand dangers;
Weary, faint, trembling with a thousand terrors,
I'm called in anguish to receive a sentence
Worse than Abiram's.

"This," says Southey, "was the character of his madness—the most dreadful in which madness can present itself. He threw away the Bible, as a book in which he no longer had any interest or portion. A vein of self-loathing and abhorrence ran through all his insanity, and he passed some months in continual expectation that the Divine vengeance would instantly plunge him into the bottomless pit. But horrors in madness are like those in dreams; the maniac and the dreamer seem to undergo what could not possibly be undergone by one awake or in his senses." With Dr. Cotton, Cowper remained five months, without amendment; but after discovering various symptoms of returning reason, during the next three, "my despair," he says, "suddenly took wings, and left me in joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

When his recovery was considered complete, his relatives subscribed an annual allowance, just sufficient, with his own small means, to support him respectably in retirement, and sent him to reside at Huntingdon. Here he soon became greatly attached to the family of Mr. Unwin, a clergyman, in whose house he finally took up his abode. From this excellent family he never separated, until death dissolved their connection. Mrs. Unwin, the "Mary" of one of his most popular minor poems, was his friend in health, and his nurse in sickness, for more than twenty years.

Of his way of life at Huntingdon, he thus writes: "As

to what the world calls amusements, we have none. We refuse to take part in them, and by so doing have acquired the name of Methodists. We breakfast between eight and nine: till eleven we read the Scriptures or the sermons of some faithful preacher, when we attend divine service, which is performed here, twice every day." Walking, gardening, reading, religious conversation, and singing hymns, filled up the interval till evening, when they again had a sermon or hymns, and closed the day with family worship. "I need not say," he continues, "that such a life as this is consistent with the utmost cheerfulness; accordingly we are all happy." At this time Cowper had little communication with his relatives, and none with his former companions.

In July, 1767, Mr. Unwin died; his children had previously settled in life; and Cowper and Mrs. Unwin uniting their means of living, now much reduced, went to reside at Olney. Here they lived many years under the pastoral care of the celebrated Mr. Newton, with whom they were in the strictest habits of personal intimacy.

"Mr. Newton," says Southey, "was a man whom it was impossible not to admire for his strength and sincerity of heart, vigorous intellect, and sterling worth. A sincerer friend Cowper could not have found: he might have found a more discreet one." Cowper's religious duties and exercises were now much more arduous

than at Huntingdon. This "man of trembling sensibilities" attended the sick, and administered consolation to the dying; and so constantly was he employed in offices of this kind, that he was considered as a sort of curate to Mr. Newton. In the prayer-meetings which Mr. Newton established, Cowper, to whom "public exhibition of himself was mortal poison," was expected to take a part. "I have heard him say," says Mr. Greatheed, in Cowper's funeral sermon, "that when he was expected to take the lead in your social worship, his mind was always greatly agitated for some hours preceding."

Cowper's correspondence with his friends was now even more restricted than heretofore. This was partly owing to his engagements with Mr. Newton, from whom he was seldom "seven waking hours apart;" but it was the tendency of those engagements to restrict his sympathies, and render his friendships torpid. "A letter on any other subject than that of religion," he writes at this time, "is more insipid to me than even my task was when a schoolboy." He read little, and had little society except that of Mr. Newton and Mrs. Unwin; and the only really intellectual occupation in which he was engaged for nearly seven years, was the composition of some of the "Olney Hymns." This, Hayley represents as a "perilous employment" for a mind like Cowper's; "and if," says Southey, "Cowper expressed his own state of mind in these hymns (and that he did so, who

can doubt), Hayley has drawn the right conclusion from the fact."

His malady was now about to return. Its recurrence has been referred to various causes;—the death of his brother, and a supposed engagement of marriage with Mrs. Unwin, have both been adduced, as the probable occasions; the latter of which, Southey considers as utterly unfounded.

Cowper's mind was, doubtless, at all times, highly susceptible of derangement from several causes. The disease, which was inherent to his constitution, only required some untoward circumstance to develop it. And the chief disturbing influence at this time, appears to have been religious excitement. His tender, willing, and easily-troubled spirit, had so often thrilled with the ecstasies of devotion, and had so often been agitated and repulsed by those of its duties, which were uncongenial, and to him, even revolting, that it at last became epileptic. He sometimes speaks of his heart as if it was paralyzed; and the moaning burden of his later hymns is that he "cannot feel." According to Mr. Newton's own account of himself, "his name was up through the country, for preaching people mad;" it would therefore seem to follow, that he should have been the last person in the world, to take spiritual charge of one, who had once been a madman. But from whatever cause, in January, 1773, Cowper's case had become one of de-

cided insanity. Medical advice was not sought until eight months after this time; as Mr. Newton, believing his disease to be entirely the work of the Enemy, expected his cure only by the special interposition of Providence. "From what I told Dr. Cotton," Mr. Newton writes in August, "he seemed to think it a difficult case. It may be so according to medical rules; but I still hope the Great Physician will cure him either by giving a blessing to means, or immediately by his own hand." But Cowper still continued to grow worse, and in the following October, he attempted suicide. A remarkable characteristic of his delirium, at this time, and one which shows how strongly, even in insanity, Cowper was influenced by conscience, was his perfect submission to what he believed to be the will of God. "And he believed," says Mr. Newton, "that it was the will of God, he should, after the example of Abraham, perform an expensive act of obedience, and offer not a son, but himself." He again believed, as heretofore, that, by a sort of special act, he had been excluded from salvation, and all the gifts of the Spirit; and with "deplorable consistency," says Mr. Greatheed, "abstained not only from public and domestic worship, but also from private prayer."

In this state of hopeless misery he remained till the ensuing May, when he began to manifest symptoms of amendment. "Yesterday," writes Mr. Newton, May

14th, "as he was feeding chickens,—for he is always busy if he can get out of doors,—some little incident made him smile; I am pretty sure it was the first smile that has been seen upon his face for more than sixteen months." Soon after this he began to pay some attention to gardening: and in gardening, and other light occupations, he continued to employ himself nearly two years, gradually improving in health and spirits, but incapable of being entertained either by books or company. It was at this interval that Cowper amused himself with the far-famed hares, Tiney, Puss, and Bess, which he has immortalized, both in verse and prose.

But in the autumn of 1777, though his fatal delusion respecting his spiritual welfare continued, his intellect and social feelings awoke to activity. He now renewed his correspondence with some of his old friends, his love of reading revived, and he occasionally produced a small poem. Mrs. Unwin, observing the happy effect of composition on his health and spirits, now excited him to more decided literary exertion; and, at her suggestion, he commenced his Moral Satires. So eagerly did he pursue his new employment, that the first of these poems was written in December, 1780, and the last in the following March.

These productions met with the approbation of his friends, and by them,—for Cowper was almost indifferent

on the subject,—it was finally determined to publish them.

Mr. Newton had the year previous, much to Cowper's regret, removed to London. But the loss of his society was for a time more than made up by a new acquaintance. This was Lady Austen, a highly intelligent and agreeable woman, the widow of a baronet, who, while Cowper was preparing his volume for the press, visited Olney; and the acquaintance which was then formed, soon ripened into such warm friendship, between Cowper and Mrs. Unwin and herself, that she ultimately, in consequence, came to Olney to reside. Their kindly intercourse, however, after continuing about two years, was unhappily broken off; and love and jealousy have been mentioned as among the causes of their estrangement. That there may have been jealousy of attention and of influence between "two women constantly in the society of one man," and that man, Cowper, all, who know the female heart, will readily believe. But it does not appear, as has been asserted, that there was any expectation of marriage entertained by either of the parties. Cowper and Mrs. Unwin, who was considerably older than himself, had now lived together some years on joint income; and no pecuniary objection existed to their union. But the only union that either desired, had long since been formed. It was a union purely of the nobler sympathies—of religious and social feelings—

of self-sacrificing devotedness, and of consequent grateful affection;—such as must, almost of necessity, arise between a man and a woman, possessed of the highest moral qualities, and relatively situated as they were to each other, but which the vulgar and censorious (great and small) cannot or will not understand. As to Lady Austen, Cowper's own account of the matter is, that she had too much vivacity for their staid course of life, that the attentions she exacted interfered with his studies, and that she was too easily offended; hence a coldness ensued, and finally a separation. But while the intimacy continued, Lady Austen undoubtedly exercised a highly valuable influence on Cowper's literary efforts. "Had it not been for Mrs. Unwin," says Southey, "Cowper would probably never have appeared in his own person as an author; had it not been for Lady Austen, he would never have been a popular one." His first volume of Poems, which was published in 1782, obtained but little notice, except among his friends; but to please his friends was sufficient for Cowper, and he continued to write, notwithstanding the disregard of the public. Lady Austen, whose conversation, for a time, is said to have had "as happy an effect on his spirits as the harp of David upon Saul," one afternoon, when he was unusually depressed, told him the story of John Gilpin, which she had heard in her childhood. The story amused him greatly, and before the next morning,

he had turned it into a ballad. This soon found its way into the newspapers, and some time afterwards, it was recited, with wonderful effect, by Henderson, the actor, who was then delivering public recitations at Freemason's Hall. The ballad now became suddenly popular, and Gilpin was to be seen in every print-shop, while the author was unknown. Meantime the Task, suggested also by Lady Austen, and far the best and most popular of his longer poems, had been completed; it was published in 1785, and with it, was printed John Gilpin. Cowper was therefore known to be its author; and those who had been amused with the ballad, now read the Task, and inquired for his previous volume, and Cowper became, at once, the most popular poet of the day.

In November, 1784, immediately after the completion of the Task, Cowper began the translation of Homer. He had now found by experience that regular employment was essential to his well-being;—employment too, of a really intellectual nature, such as would call into activity, without too much exciting, the best powers of his mind. "A long and perplexing thought," he said, "buzzed about in his brain, till it seemed to be breaking all the fibres of it." "Plaything-avocations" wearied him, while such as engaged him much, and attached him closely, were rather serviceable than otherwise.

The unfaithfulness of Pope's translation of Homer had long been universally acknowledged by scholars, and

Cowper, who was well qualified for the task, after translating one book, as he says, for want of employment, "became convinced that he could render an acceptable service to the literary world by translating the whole." The undertaking thus commenced, he availed himself of the Gentleman's Magazine, to produce on the public an impression favorable to his design, and issued proposals to publish by subscription. His Poems had been given away, and when published, he had been careless of popular favor in respect to them. But fame, coming, as it did, unexpectedly, was not the less welcome to him; and he was now, not only anxious to sustain it, by the success of his present undertaking, but also to secure a profitable result to himself. "Five hundred names," he writes, "at three guineas, will put about a thousand pounds in my purse; and I am doing my best to obtain them." And again, to Lady Hesketh, "I am not ashamed to confess that having commenced author, I am most abundantly desirous to succeed as such. *I have* (*what perhaps you little suspect me of*) *in my nature, an infinite share of ambition.* But with it, I have at the same time, as you well know, an equal share of diffidence. To this combination of opposite qualities, it has been owing, that till lately, I stole through life without undertaking anything, yet always wishing to distinguish myself."

During this and the following year, Cowper advanced steadily with his translation, receiving much attention

and encouragement from his friends. Through the kindness of Lady Hesketh, and his neighbor, Sir John Throckmorton, he and Mrs. Unwin were enabled to remove to the Lodge, at Weston-Underwood, about a mile from Olney, which was far more commodious and healthful than their habitation at Olney.

Lady Hesketh's occasional visits, at this time, were also a source of much enjoyment to him, and his grateful and affectionate heart was strongly moved and interested by the singular kindness manifested for him by an anonymous correspondent. "Hours and hours and hours," he writes Lady Hesketh, in reference to this subject, "have I spent in endeavors, altogether fruitless, to trace the writer of the letter that I send, by a minute examination of the character, and never did it strike me, till this moment, that your father wrote it." This suspicion, Lady Hesketh, who was apparently in the secret, did not confirm. The letter in question was, evidently, from some one minutely acquainted with the circumstances of Cowper's early life; and after many expressions of kindness and encouragement, the writer concludes by presenting him with an annuity of fifty pounds. After receiving another letter from the same source, Cowper writes, "Anonymous is come again. May God bless him whoever he may be;" and he adds, in a postscript, "I kept my letter unsealed to the last moment, that I might give you an account of the expected parcel. It is, at all points,

worthy of the letter-writer. Snuff-box, purse, notes—Bess, Puss, Tiney,—all safe. Again may God bless him!" On the snuff-box was a view of the "Peasant's Nest," as described in the Task, with the figures of three hares in the foreground. And for these "womanly presents," as Southey calls them, he appoints Lady Hesketh his "receiver general of thanks;" as "it is very pleasant, my dear cousin," he says, "to receive presents, so delicately conveyed, but it is also very painful to have nobody to thank for them." "Alas, the love of woman!" Southey conjectures that Anonymous was no other than Theodora, the object of Cowper's early love, whom he had not seen for five-and-twenty years.

In one of those sincere, affectionate, and inimitably graceful letters, written, about this time, to his favorite cousin Lady Hesketh, which have secured to Cowper the title of "the best of English letter-writers," he gives the following retrospect of his state of mind:—

"You do not ask me, my dear, for an explanation of what I could mean by *anguish of mind.* Because you *do not* ask, and because your reason for not asking consists of a delicacy and tenderness peculiar to yourself; for that very cause I will tell you. A wish suppressed is more irresistible than many wishes plainly uttered. Know then that in the year 1773, the same scene that was acted at St. Albans, opened upon me again at Olney, only covered by a still deeper shade of melancholy; and ordained

to be of much longer duration. I was suddenly reduced from my wonted rate of understanding, to an almost childish imbecility. I did not, indeed, lose my senses, but I lost the power to exercise them. I could return a rational answer, even to a difficult question; but a question was necessary, or I never spoke. I believed that everybody hated me, and that Mrs. Unwin hated me worst of all,—was convinced that all my food was poisoned, together with ten thousand megrims of the same stamp. I would not be more circumstantial than is necessary. Dr. Cotton was consulted. He recommended particular vigilance lest I should attempt my life,—a caution for which there was the greatest occasion. At the same time that I was convinced of Mrs. Unwin's aversion for me, I could endure no other companion. The whole management of me consequently devolved upon her, and a terrible task she had. She performed it, however, with a cheerfulness hardly ever equalled on such an occasion; and I have often heard her say, that if she ever praised God in her life, it was when she found that she was to have all the labor. Methinks I hear you ask—your affection for me, will, I know, make you wish to do so—'Is your malady removed?' I reply in a great measure, but not quite. Occasionally I am much distressed, but that distress becomes continually less frequent and, I think, less violent. I find writing, and especially poetry, my best remedy. Perhaps had I understood music, I had never written verse, but had lived on fiddle-

strings instead. . . . . I have been emerging gradually from this pit. As soon as I became capable of action, I commenced carpenter, made cupboards, boxes and stools. I grew weary of this in a twelvemonth, and addressed myself to the making of bird-cages. To this employment succeeded that of gardening, which I intermingled with that of drawing; but finding that the latter occupation injured my eyes, I renounced it, and commenced poet. I have given you, my dear, a little history in short hand. I know it will touch your feelings; but do not let it interest them too much."

According to Cowper's narrative of his first attack, he believed that his disease was entirely the work of the Enemy, and that his recovery was supernatural. Mr. Newton and Mrs. Unwin were of the same opinion, and many months elapsed, as we have seen, after the commencement of the second attack,—much the most violent and protracted,—before they could bring themselves to seek earthly remedies. But Mr. Newton was now away, and Mrs. Unwin, says Southey, "was governed by her natural good sense;" and the rational view of his condition which Cowper took at the time of writing this letter, was such as to induce the reasonable hope of his perfect restoration. Of the religious impulses by which he had been actuated, while at Olney, he thus speaks: "Good is intended, but harm is done too often, by the zeal with which I was at that time animated."

But despair of salvation never wholly left him after his second attack; and this feeling discovers itself, more or less strongly, in all his letters to Mr. Newton.

From a sincere, but mistaken zeal for Cowper's spiritual welfare, Mr. Newton seems to have interfered at this time rather unwarrantably in his domestic affairs. He objected to their removal to Weston; and because Cowper and Mrs. Unwin had occasionally visited the Throckmortons and other neighboring gentry, accused them of deviating into forbidden paths, and seeking worldly amusement and society. In reply to one of his letters of censure, Cowper says: "You say well that there was a time when I was happy at Olney, and I am as happy now as I expect to be anywhere without the presence of God." And again: "Be assured, that notwithstanding all rumors to the contrary, we are exactly what we were when you saw us last;—I miserable on account of God's departure from me, which I believe to be final; and she seeking his return to me in the path of duty, and by continual prayer." This was his constant and abiding impression;—and so constant was it, that in time, it lost something of its gloomy effect on his spirits. Scott, in his Demonology, narrates the case of a man, who was so constantly attended by a frightful spectral illusion, that from the effect of custom, he came at last to speak of it quietly, and was, at times, almost unconscious of its presence. Cowper's case was, in some re-

spects, similar to this. He sometimes adverts to his despair as a matter of course, and without much emotion. "I would," he writes Mr. Newton, "that I could see some of the mountains that you have seen; especially, because Dr. Johnson has pronounced that no man is qualified to be a poet, who has never seen a mountain. But mountains I shall never see, unless it be in a dream, or unless there are such in heaven; nor then, unless I receive twice as much mercy as ever yet was shown to any man."

His disease had now been dormant for some years; but in January 1787 (a month which he always dreaded), it again became active. He now once more attempted suicide, and would have effected it, but for Mrs. Unwin, who finding him suspended by the neck, possessed presence of mind enough to cut him down. His malady was quite as severe as on former occasions, but of much shorter duration. There is no other account of it than the little which his own letters furnish, after his recovery. "My indisposition could not be of a worse kind. The sight of any face, except Mrs. Unwin's, was an insupportable grievance. From this dreadful condition I emerged suddenly." In about seven months, he appears to have renewed his intercourse with his neighbors, and resumed his correspondence. Writing to Lady Hesketh of his renewed health, he says, "I have but little confidence, in truth none, in so flattering a change, but *ex-*

pect, when I least expect it, to wither again. The past is a pledge for the future." And again, to the same: "I continue to write, though in compassion to my pate, you advised me, for the present, to abstain. In reality, I have no need, at least I believe not, of any such caution. Those jarrings which made my skull feel like a broken egg-shell, and those twirls which I spoke of, have been removed by an infusion of bark." In another letter, he thus playfully speaks of his diseased sensations: "I have a perpetual din in my head, and though I am not deaf, hear nothing aright; neither my own voice, nor that of others. I am under a tub, from which tub, accept my best love. Yours, W. C."

But in the letter with which he renewed his correspondence with Mr. Newton, he still speaks of gloom and despair, and of "the storms of which even the remembrance makes hope impossible." The same letter also exhibits a peculiar and distinct feature in this most remarkable case of insanity. "My dear friend," he begins, "after a long but necessary interruption of our correspondence, I return to it again, in one respect at least, better qualified for it than before; I mean by a belief in your identity, which for thirteen years I did not believe."

Cowper now resumed his translation, which he pursued during the next four years with little interruption. In the circumstances of his life at this time, there was much to cheer him. His abode was comfortable, his

employment satisfactory, his reputation established and increasing, he had renewed his correspondence with his relatives, and some of the companions of his early life, by whom he was occasionally visited; and Lady Hesketh's annual visits, and the society of the Throckmortons, which, notwithstanding Mr. Newton's censure, he and Mrs. Unwin still continued to enjoy, afforded him the relaxation of happy social intercourse. An incident, too, which with its attendant circumstances, added much to Cowper's happiness during the latter portion of this interval, was the receipt of his mother's picture. "It was his lot," to quote Southey's Narrative, "happy indeed in this respect, to form new friendships as he advanced in years, instead of having to mourn for the dissolution of old ones by death. During seven-and-twenty years he had held no intercourse with his maternal relations, and knew not whether they were living or dead; the malady which made him withdraw from the world seems, in its milder consequences, to have withheld him from making any inquiry concerning them; and from their knowledge he had entirely disappeared till he became known to the public. One of a younger generation was the first to seek him out. This was Mr. John Johnson, grandson of his mother's brother. . . . . During his visit he observed with what affection Cowper spoke of his mother; the only portrait of her was in possession of her niece, Mrs. Bodham, who had been a favorite

cousin of Cowper's in her childhood; and upon young Johnson's report of his visit, on his return home, this picture was sent to Weston as a present, with a letter from his kinswoman, written in the fulness of her heart. It was replied to with kindred feeling, thus:"—

"My dear Rose, whom I thought withered and fallen from the stalk, but whom I find still alive: nothing could give me greater pleasure than to know it, and to learn it from yourself. I loved you dearly when you were a child, and love you not a jot the less for having ceased to be so. Every creature that bears any affinity to my mother is dear to me, and you, the daughter of her brother, are but one remove distant from her: I love you, therefore, and love you much, both for her sake and for your own. The world could not have furnished you with a present so acceptable to me as the picture you have so kindly sent me. I received it the night before last, and viewed it with a trepidation of nerves and spirits somewhat akin to what I should have felt, had the dear original presented herself to my embrace. I kissed it and hung it where it is the last object that I see at night, and, of course, the first on which I open my eyes in the morning. She died when I completed my sixth year; yet I remember her well, and am ocular witness of the great fidelity of the copy. I remember, too, a multitude of the maternal tendernesses which I received from her, and which have endeared her memory

to me beyond expression. There is in me, I believe, more of the Donne than of the Cowper; and though I love all of both names, and have a thousand reasons to love those of my own name, yet I feel the bond of nature draw me vehemently to your side. I was thought in the days of my childhood much to resemble my mother; and in my natural temper, of which at the age of fifty-eight I must be supposed to be a competent judge, can trace both her, and my late uncle, your father. Somewhat of his irritability; and a little, I would hope, both of his and her,—I know not what to call it, without seeming to praise myself, which is not my intention,—but speaking to *you*, I will even speak out, and say *good nature*. Add to this, I deal much in poetry, as did our venerable ancestor, the Dean of St. Paul's and I think I have proved myself a Donne at all points. The truth is, that whatever I am, I love you all. I am much obliged to Mr. Bodham for his kindness to my Homer, and with my love to you all, and Mrs. Unwin's kind respects, am

"My dear, dear Rose, ever yours,

"W. C."

About this time, the laureateship became vacant by the death of Warton. Cowper was always ready at occasional verses, and his friends were desirous to procure the office for him; but he declined their services in this matter, in the following letter to Lady Hesketh:—

The Lodge, May 28, 1790.

My dearest Coz,—

I thank thee for the offer of thy best services on this occasion. But Heaven guard my brows from the wreath you mention, whatever wreath beside may hereafter adorn them! It would be a leaden extinguisher clapped on all the fire of my genius, and I would never more produce a line worth reading. To speak seriously, it would make me miserable, and therefore I am sure that thou, of all my friends, would least wish me to wear it.

Adieu, ever thine—in Homer-hurry. W. C.

In the summer of 1791, his Homer was published; and though it does not now hold that rank among the translated classics, which he and his friends expected it would establish for itself, it was, at the time, well received, its merits as a faithful version were allowed; and on settling with his bookseller, Cowper expressed himself satisfied with the pecuniary result of his labor. "Few of my concerns," said he, "have been so happily concluded."

In the following August (1792), Cowper made a three-days' journey into Sussex, to visit, at Eartham, his friend Haley, the poet, who had sought and made his acquaintance the previous year. He was so unaccustomed to travel that the journey was undertaken only at the earnest entreaty of his friend, and not without many

misgivings. "I laugh," he writes Haley, a few days before he set out, "to think what stuff these solicitudes are made of, and what an important thing it is for me to travel, while other men steal from their homes, and make no disturbance." Again:—"Fortunately for my intentions, as the day approaches, my terrors abate, for had they continued what they were a week since, I must, after all, have disappointed you." At Eartham, Cowper met Hurdis, Charlotte Smith, the novelist, and Romney; to the latter of whom he sat for his portrait. During the first part of the six weeks which he spent with Haley and his friends, their society had a beneficial effect on his spirit; but at last, he began to be somewhat dejected, and evidently longed for the repose and seclusion of Weston. New scenes and strange objects, he complained, dissipated his powers of thinking, and composition, and even letter-writing became irksome to him. "I am, in truth," he writes, "so unaccountably local in the use of the pen, that, like the man in the fable, who could only leap well at Rhodes, I seem incapable of writing at all, except at Weston. It has an air of snug concealment, in which a disposition like mine is peculiarly gratified." On his way home, he passed but a single night,—and that a gloomy one,—in London, which he had not visited since he left it, a madman, in 1763. This was the only long journey that Cowper ever made. The year previous he wrote Hurdis, "I have not

been thirteen miles from home these twenty years, and so far but seldom."

The translation of Homer, which occupied him nearly six years, was the last literary undertaking of importance which Cowper lived to finish. At the suggestion of a friend, he commenced a poem on the Four Ages, of which he at first had high hopes, but he was unable to make much progress in it. Previously to his engagement with Homer, he had commenced an original work with a similar result. His Task and other poems had been written with ease and rapidity; but "the mind," he remarked, in reference to this subject, "is not a fountain, but a cistern." The facts, observations, and impressions, which had been accumulating in his mind, during the somewhat long period of his life, before he commenced author, had gradually become, as it were, crystallized into thoughts and images of beautiful clearness and precision; and to polish these and arrange them into verse was a healthful and amusing occupation rather than an irksome labor. But his resources for original composition appear to have been mainly exhausted when he had finished the Task. For a man of literature, his reading was limited; he had seen but little; and though he saw clearly and felt strongly, what he saw and felt at all, and transferred his impressions with admirable distinctness to the minds of others, yet his sympathies were not extensive; and where he was not at-

tracted, he was too often repulsed. At the request of friends, he wrote a few ballads on Slavery, and he was repeatedly urged to make this the subject of an extended poem; but he rejected the theme as "odious and disgusting;" one which he could not bear to contemplate. Poet of nature as he was, his enjoyment, even, of natural scenery was limited; and he complained, on his visit to Haley, that the wilderness of the hills and woods around Eartham oppressed his spirits. "Cowper," says Sir James Mackintosh, "does not describe the most beautiful scenes in nature; he discovers what is most beautiful in ordinary scenes. His poetical eye and his moral heart detected beauty in the sandy flats of Buckinghamshire."

Another design, which he undertook, at the request of Johnson, his bookseller, and which was also left unfinished, was a new edition of Milton, which was intended to rival in splendor, Boydell's Shakspeare. But Cowper was now beginning to feel the effects of age as well as of disease. Not only this, but his old and dear friend, and faithful and affectionate nurse, Mrs. Unwin, "who had known no wish but his for the last twenty years," had now fallen into a state of hopeless imbecility. "Their relative situation to each other," says Southey, "was now reversed. She was the helpless person, and he the attentive nurse. As her reasoning faculties decayed, her character underwent a total change, and she exacted constant attention from him without the slightest

consideration for his health or state of mind. Poor creatures that we are, even the strength of religious principle and virtuous habit fail us if reason fails."

This circumstance sensibly affected his spirits; and though no sudden and striking change henceforth took place in his demeanor, it now became evident that reason was gradually losing its influence over his mind. This was especially shown by a correspondence which he commenced, about this time, with one Teedon, a poor, conceited schoolmaster, of Olney. Cowper had long been troubled, not only with hideous dreams, but with audible illusions. During the night, and on waking in the morning, he frequently heard, as he said, some sentence uttered in a distinct voice, to which he gave implicit credit, as having some relation either to his temporal or spiritual concerns. He had long known Teedon, and understood his character; and in former days, had sometimes been amused with his vanity and conceit. But he had now, by some means, become persuaded that this man was especially favored by Providence; and to him, the sentences which he heard, with an account of his dreams and other nocturnal experiences, were regularly sent off; and the result of these "pitiable consultations," Cowper carefully wrote in a book till he had filled several volumes. The following will serve as specimens of these letters. "Dear Sir—I awake this morning, with these words relating to my work [Milton]

loudly and distinctly spoken—'*Apply assistance in my case indigent and necessitous.*'" Again: "This morning, at my waking, I heard these—'*Fulfil thy promise to me.*'" On another occasion, he writes Teedon as follows: "I have been visited with a horrible dream, in which I seemed to be taking a final leave of my dwelling. I felt the tenderest regret at the separation, and looked about for something durable to carry with me as a memorial. The iron hasp of the garden-door presenting itself, I was on the point of taking that, but recollecting that the heat of the fire, in which I was going to be tormented, would fuse the metal, and that it would only serve to increase my insupportable misery, I left it. I then awoke in all the horror with which the reality of such circumstances would fill me." Thus, "hunted by spiritual hounds in the night season," and by day, "forecasting the fashion of uncertain evils," the gloom of despair was now settling down on Cowper for the last time. His temporal wants were, however, now amply provided for; a pension of three hundred pounds having been granted him by government.

In the summer of 1795, his friends thought it advisable that he and Mrs. Unwin (for it would have been cruel to separate them), should visit the coast for the benefit of the sea air. After a short sojourn at Mundsley, productive of little advantage, they finally went to reside at East Dereham, in Norfolk, at the house of

Cowper's cousin, the Rev. John Johnson, the relative mentioned in a former part of this narrative, who procured for him the portrait of his mother. Here Cowper remained to the end of his life, and here Mrs. Unwin died some time before him. When his health and spirits would permit, Cowper occupied himself at Dereham with the revisal of his Homer, and he sometimes wrote a few verses. The last original piece that he composed was the Castaway; and in the words of Southey, "all circumstances considered, it is one of the most affecting that ever was composed." At length, however, he refused either to read or write, and his only employment afterwards, was in listening to works of fiction—almost the only books that appeared to interest him: and "so happy," says Mr. Johnson, "was the influence of these in riveting his attention, that he discovered peculiar satisfaction when any one of more than ordinary length was introduced." This being perceived by his kinsman, the novels of Richardson were obtained, and they afforded him the more pleasure on account of his former personal acquaintance with the author. "Perhaps too," Southey adds, "there may be more satisfaction in re-perusing a good book after an interval of many years, than is felt in reading it for the first time." These readings did not, however, wholly abstract Cowper's mind from the contemplation of his own wretched state. In one of the few most melancholy letters which

he wrote during these years to Lady Hesketh, he says, "I expect that in six days, at the latest, I shall no longer foresee, but feel the accomplishment of all my fears. O, lot of unexampled misery incurred in a moment! O wretch! to whom death and life are alike impossible! Most miserable at present in this, that being thus miserable I have my senses continued to me, only that I may look forward to the worst. It is certain, at least, that I have them for no other purpose, and but very imperfectly for this. My thoughts are like loose and dry sand, which the closer it is grasped, slips the sooner away. Mr. Johnson reads to me, but I lose every other sentence through the inevitable wanderings of my mind, and experience, as I have these two years, the same shattered mode of thinking on every subject, and on all occasions. If I seem to write with more connection, it is only because the gaps do not appear.

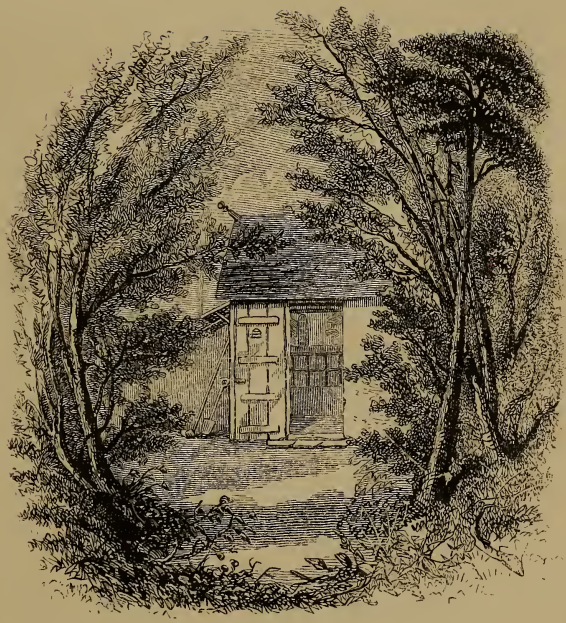
"Adieu.—I shall not be here to receive your answer, neither shall I ever see you more. Such is the expectation of the most desperate, and the most miserable of all beings. W. C."

The last reading which Cowper heard was that of his own Poems. He listened in silence to Mr. Johnson, till they came to John Gilpin, but this he begged his kinsman to omit. In February, 1800, he was taken with dropsy, which in a short time confined him to his chamber. The physician who was called to attend him,

asking him "how he felt?" "Feel!" said Cowper, "I feel unutterable despair!" To the consolations of religion he refused to listen; and when, on one occasion, Mr. Johnson spoke to him of a "merciful Redeemer, who had prepared unspeakable happiness for all his children,—and therefore for him," Cowper, with passionate entreaties, begged him to desist from any further observations of a similar kind. A few days after this sad scene, the attendant offering him a cordial, he rejected it, saying, "What can it signify;" and these were the last words he was heard to utter. He died on the following morning, the 25th of April, 1800.

No one, it would seem, can read Southey's Biography of this blameless and suffering man of genius, without strong feelings of regret that he did not, earlier in life, resort to literature as a serious employment. Full and congenial occupation was absolutely indispensable, not merely, as in ordinary cases, to his enjoyment of life, but to his exemption from the most cruel disease; and to any other pursuits than those of literature, his wretched nervous system rendered him utterly incompetent. What Göethe says of Hamlet, may, with some modification, apply to Cowper. Any of the common avocations, and any of the onerous and vexatious duties of life, were to him as "an oak tree planted in a costly jar, which should have borne only pleasant flowers in its bosom; the roots expand, the jar is shivered." It is

scarcely probable that any combination of circumstances could have availed wholly to avert the malady which poisoned his existence. His whole system, both of mind and body, was so peculiar in its organization,—so admirable in some of its parts, and so feeble and defective in others,—that too much, or too little, or any uncongenial action, was sure to disturb or destroy its balance. But literature, though tried late, proved to be infinitely the best remedy to soothe and regulate this diseased action; and had Cowper found at Huntingdon the employment and the society which he at last, after the departure of Mr. Newton, found at Olney and Weston, he might, perchance, have escaped many years of woe.



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COWPER'S SUMMER HOUSE.

A

PARTICULAR AND AUTHENTIC ACCOUNT

OF

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.

FROM A SERMON

BY

S. GREATHEED,

AN INTIMATE FRIEND OF THE POET.

AN

AUTHENTIC ACCOUNT OF HIS LIFE.

THE entrance of Mr. Cowper upon the transient scenes of this life, led to a kind of eminence very different from that he attained. Born of amiable and respectable parents, of noble affinity, and connected with persons of great worldly influence, his advancement in temporal affluence and honor seemed to demand no extraordinary mental endowments. His opening genius discovered, however, a capacity for elegant literature, and he enjoyed the best advantages for improvement in so pleasing a pursuit.

With uncommon abilities, he possessed a most amiable temper; and he became not only the darling of his relations, but beloved and admired by his associates in education; some of whom with inferior prospects have since risen to distinguished reputation, and even to the highest professional rank. But the towering hopes that were naturally built on so flattering a ground, were un-

dermined at an early period. From childhood (during which our late friend lost a much-loved parent) his spirits were always tender, and often greatly dejected. His natural diffidence and depression of mind were increased to a most distressing degree by the turbulence of his elder comrades, at the most celebrated school in the kingdom: and when at a mature age he was appointed to a lucrative and honorable station in the Law, he shrunk with the greatest terror from the appearance which it required him to make before the House of Lords. Several affecting circumstances concurred to increase the agony of his mind, while revolving the consequences of relinquishing the post to which he had been nominated; and he wished for *madness* as the only apparent means by which his perplexity and distress could be terminated. A desperation of which few among mankind can form a suitable conception, but which it may be hoped many will regard with tender pity, drove him to attempt self-murder; and the manner of his preservation in life, or rather of his restoration to it, indicated an unusual interposition of the providence of God. His friends no longer persisted in urging him to retain his office. It was resigned, and with it his flattering prospects vanished, and his connection with the world dissolved.

At this awful crisis appears to have commenced Mr. Cowper's serious attention to the ways of God. Having

been educated in the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, and estranged from the foolhardy arrogance which urges unhappy youth to infidelity, he had constantly retained a reverence for the word of God. His manners were, in general, decent and amiable, and the course of pleasure in which he indulged himself, being customary with persons in similar circumstances, he remained insensible of his state as a sinner in the sight of God, till he was brought to reflect upon the guilt of that action, by which he had nearly plunged himself into an endless eternity. His mind was then for the first time convinced of the evil of sin, as a transgression of the law of God; and he was terrified by the apprehension that his late offence was unpardonable in its nature. Instead of finding relief in reading, every book he opened, of whatever kind, seemed to him adapted to increase his distress, which became so pungent as to deprive him of his usual rest, and to render his broken slumbers equally miserable with his waking hours. While in this state he was visited by the late Rev. Martin Madan, who was related to him. By explaining from the Scriptures the doctrine of *original sin*, Mr. Madan convinced him that all mankind were on the same level with himself before God; the atonement and righteousness of Christ were set forth to him as the remedy which his case required; and the necessity of faith in Christ, in order to experience the

blessings of salvation, excited his earnest desire for the attainment.

His mind derived present ease from these important truths; but still inclined to the supposition that this faith was in his own power. The following day he again sunk under the horror of *perdition*, and that distraction which he had sought as a refuge from the fear of man, now seized him amidst his terrors of eternal judgment. A vein of self-loathing ran through the whole of his insanity, and his faculties were so completely deranged, that the attempt which he had so lately deplored as an unpardonable transgression, now appeared to him an indispensable work of piety. He therefore repeated the assault upon his own life, under the dreadful delusion that it was right to rid the earth of such a sinner, and that the sooner it was accomplished, his future misery would be the more tolerable. His purpose being again mercifully frustrated, he became at length familiar with despair, and suffered it to be alleviated by conversation with a pious and humane physician at St. Albans, under whose care he had happily been placed. He began to take some pleasure in sharing daily the domestic worship which was laudably practised by Dr. Cotton; and he found relief from his despair by reading in the Scriptures, that "God hath sent forth Christ Jesus to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past,

through the forbearance of God." While meditating upon this passage, he obtained a clear view of the Gospel, which was attended with unspeakable joy. His subsequent days were chiefly occupied with praise and prayer, and his heart overflowed with love to his crucified Redeemer. A hymn which he wrote under these delightful impressions, will best describe the comfort he enjoyed,—

"How blest thy creature is, oh God!" &c.

The first transports of his joy, which almost prevented his necessary sleep, having subsided, were followed by a sweet serenity of spirit, which he was enabled to retain, notwithstanding reviving struggles of the corruptions with which sin has universally infested our nature. The comfort which he enjoyed in the profitable conversation of his beloved physician, induced him to prolong his stay at St. Albans for twelve months after his recovery.

Having determined upon renouncing his profession of the law, he retired first to Huntingdon, and two or three years afterwards to Olney, in order to indulge, amidst rural scenes, those religious pleasures and occupations which experience had taught him to value far above all that the polite and busy world could afford. Another of his hymns expresses what he felt when entering on his retirement:—

"Far from the world, O Lord, I flee."

Those of you, says Mr. Greatheed, who for thirty years have lived in the fear of God, can testify to the truth of the remark last quoted. Often have I heard described the religious condescension with which our deceased friend listened to your religious converse; the sympathy with which he soothed your distresses, and the wisdom with which he imparted needful advice. At your stated meetings for prayer, you have heard him, with benefit and delight, pour forth his heart before God, in earnest intercession, with adoration equally simple, sublime, and fervent, adapted to the unusual combination of elevated genius, exquisite sensibility, and profound piety that distinguished his mind. It was, I believe, only on such occasions as these, that his constitutional diffidence was felt by him as a burden, during this happy period of his life.

I have heard him say that when he expected to take the lead in your united prayers, his mind was greatly agitated for some hours preceding. But he observed that his trepidation wholly subsided as soon as he began to speak in prayer; and that timidity which he invariably felt at every appearance before his fellow-creatures, gave place to an awful, yet delightful consciousness of the presence of his Saviour. His walk with God in private was consistent with the solemnity and fervor of his social engagements. Like the prophet Daniel, and the royal Psalmist, "he kneeled three times a day," and

prayed and gave thanks before his God in retirement, besides the regular practice of domestic worship. His mind was stayed upon God; and for an unusual course of years it was kept in perfect peace.

The corrupt dispositions which have so strong a hold upon the human heart, appeared to be peculiarly suppressed in him; and when in any degree felt, they were lamented and resisted by him. His hymns, mostly written during this part of his life, described both the general tenor of his thoughts, and their occasional wanderings, with a force of expression dictated by the liveliness of his feelings. While his attainments in the love of God were thus eminent, you, my friends, can testify the exemplary love that he practised towards his neighbors. To a conduct void of offence towards every individual, and marked with peculiar kindness to all who feared God, was added a beneficence fully proportioned to his ability, and exercised with the greatest modesty and discretion. The consolation, which, after having endured the severest distress, Mr. Cowper derived at this time from a life of faith in Christ, he thus describes in an affecting allegory:—

"I was a stricken deer that left the herd
Long since; with many an arrow deep infixed
My panting side was charged, when I withdrew,
To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.
There I was found by one who had himself

Been hurt by the archers. In his side he bore,
And in his hands and feet the cruel scars.
With gentle force soliciting the darts,
He drew them forth, and healed, and *bade me live!*"

This testimony to the truth and solidity of that peace with God through Jesus Christ, he published long after he had lost all enjoyment of the blessing, but who would not have hoped to see his path, like that of the sun, shine more and more unto the perfect day? The degree and the duration of his spiritual comforts had perhaps exceeded the usual experience of pious people; and some suspension of them would not have been surprising; but who could have expected their total and final extinction?

Let us now contemplate, continues Mr. G., the dreary path that our deceased neighbor trod so long. He conceived some presentiment of this sad reverse as it drew near; and during a solitary walk in the fields composed the hymn—

"God moves in a mysterious way."

Many have visited its gloomy entrance, and some have been a tedious while bewildered in it; but none within my knowledge have traced as he did, its whole extent. The steps by which he ascended to it were sudden and awfully precipitous. The bright yet serene lustre which had usually marked the road which led him to the Lamb,

was succeeded by impenetrable darkness. After the clearest views of the love of God, and the expansion of heart which he had enjoyed in his ways, his mind became obscured, confused, and dismayed. He concluded, as too many have done under so sensible a change, that the Lord had cast him off, that he would be favorable no more, that His mercy was clean gone forever. That vivid imagination which often attained the utmost limits of the sphere of reason, did but too easily transgress them; and his spirits, no longer sustained upon the wings of Faith and Hope, sunk with their weight of natural depression into the abyss of absolute despair. In this state his mind became immovably fixed. He cherished an unalterable persuasion that the Lord, after having renewed him in holiness, had doomed him to everlasting perdition. The doctrines in which he had been established, directly opposed such a conclusion; and he remained still equally convinced of their general truth; but he supposed himself to be the only person that ever believed with the heart unto righteousness, and was notwithstanding excluded from salvation. In this state of mind, with a deplorable consistency, he ceased not only upon attendance of public and domestic worship, but likewise from every attempt at private prayer; apprehending that for him to implore mercy, would be opposing the determinate counsel of God. Amidst these dreadful tempta-

tions, such was his unshaken submission to what he imagined to be the Divine pleasure, that he was accustomed to say, "If holding up my finger would save me from endless torments, I would not do it against the will of God." He never dared to enter a place of worship when invited to do so; he has said, "Had I the universe, I would give it to go with you; but I dare not do it against the will of God!"

It was only at seasons when, racked by the immediate expectation of being plunged into everlasting misery, his mind became wholly distracted, that he ever uttered a rebellious word against that God of love, whom his lamentable delusion transformed into an implacable oppressor. His efforts at self-destruction were repeatedly renewed, but they were stimulated by a strong impression that God had commanded him to perpetrate this act; and he even supposed that his involuntary failure in the performance had incurred the irrevocable vengeance of the Almighty. To this, and never to any other deficiency of obedience, have I heard him describe his imaginary exclusion from mercy. Habituated to the fearful expectation of judgment, it became, as at the period heretofore described, by degrees less insupportable. He became accessible to a few intimate friends in succession, who labored to divert his thoughts from the dreadful object that engrossed them, and to excite them to activity on different subjects. Thus originated most

of those poems, which, when published, charmed and surprised both the literary and religious world. The attempt was successful in that which interested him much more than poetical fame; his partial relief from self-torment. Sometimes his mind was led so far from the vortex of distress, as to indulge in playful essays; but these intervals were extremely transient. In general, his poems are the evident dictates of that reverence for God, that esteem for the Gospel, and that benevolence towards his fellow-creatures, which characterized his familiar conversation. Sometimes his thoughts in composition glanced upon the subject he designed to avoid, and nothing can afford a more striking picture of himself than some lines in his poems on retirement—

"Look where he comes in this embowered alcove."

The connection of this passage is highly beautiful. It closes with advice to the pitiable sufferer (which, alas! Mr. Cowper could not exemplify), to seek the favor of God, as the only balm for a wounded spirit. At times, indeed, after more than twelve years of uninterrupted despair, some transient changes of his mental sensations admitted a gleam of hope, of which he immediately availed himself for a renewal of intercourse with God. He prayed in private as before his affliction, and even his slumbers were thus delightfully occupied. He has spoken of such nights with those he usually endured, as

passed on a bed of rose-leaves instead of fury tortures, and as a transition from hell to heaven. These lucid intervals were unhappily so short, that he never resumed his attendance on public worship. The most tolerable days that he spent in the customary state of his mind, he has described to me as begun with traces of horror, and left by the most frightful dreams. The forenoon, being employed in composition, became gradually less distressing. Before dinner he usually walked two hours, and the air, the rural prospect, and muscular exercise, contributed to his further relief. If at dinner and during the afternoon he had the company of an intimate friend or two, which was frequently the case during the last ten years that he lived in the neighborhood of Olney, their conversation seemed to afford the principal alleviation to his habitual burden. The evening was commonly employed in reading aloud to some friend who resided with him; for such was the care of God over this amiable sufferer, that he never was left without some companion, whose heart the Lord disposed to sacrifice every comfort for his preservation and relief.

But as night approached, his gloom of mind regularly increased, and when he went to bed it was not to rest, but to be again harassed in slumber with the terrifying images of a bewildered fancy; neither restrained by the control of reason, nor diverted by external objects. Of the general condition of his mind during the last seven

years of his abode in the vicinity of Olney (which certainly were the most tranquil that he passed in the latter part of his life), the best judgment may be formed from his own expressions in a poem written towards the close of that interval. It was occasioned by the unexpected acquisition of a small portrait of his mother, whom he had lost more than half a century before, but had never ceased to remember with the warmest gratitude, and the fondest affection.

Having described hers and his father's passage through this life to a heavenly world, under the figure of a voyage speedily and prosperously terminated, he naturally reverts in the same metaphorical language to the distressing contrast which his own situation and prospects presented.

> "But me, scarce hoping to attain that rest,
> Always from port withheld, always distressed,
> Me howling winds drive devious; tempest tossed,
> Sails ript, seams opening wide, and compass lost;
> And day by day some current's thwarting force
> Sets me more distant from a prosperous course.
> But oh! the thought that thou art safe and he,
> That thought is joy, arrive what may to me."

The principal pleasure that Cowper appeared to be capable of receiving, was indeed that which he derived from the happiness of others. Instead of being provoked to discontent and envy, by contrasting their com-

forts with his own afflictions, there evidently was not a benefit that he knew to be enjoyed by others, which did not afford him sensible satisfaction; not a suffering they endured that did not add to his pain. To the happiness of those who were privileged with opportunities of showing their esteem for him, he was most tenderly alive. The advancement of the knowledge of Christ in the world at large was always near his heart, and whatever concerned the general welfare of mankind was interesting to him,—secluded as he was from the public, and, in common, from religious society. In like manner, from his distant retreat, he viewed with painful sensations the progress of infidelity and of sin in every shape. His love to God, though unassisted by a hope of Divine favor, was invariably manifested by an abhorrence of everything he thought dishonorable to the Most High, and a delight in all that tended to His glory. His sympathizing and admiring friends were fondly cherishing a hope that the diminution of his sufferings, which was apparent for several successive years, would at length result in his restoration to spiritual peace and joy. Although advanced in years, his health, by means of regular exercise and additional society, was not only preserved, but even seemed to improve notwithstanding the root of his bitterness still remained. Amidst flattering expectations, some affecting events revived his dis-

tress in all its force, and plunged him again into distraction and desperation.

He declined all mental and bodily exertion, and rejected all attempts at friendly consolation; he conceived his tenderest friends to be transformed by the powers of darkness into conspirators against his welfare. Expecting every hour to be his last, out of endless torments, nothing short of this horrible prospect could attract his notice for an instant. He refused day after day his necessary food, and imminent danger appeared of his speedy departure out of life in so dreadful a state of mind. But the Almighty, who had dashed the rising hopes of his friends, now mercifully disappointed his fears.

His period of mortality was extended, and means were unexpectedly afforded for his removal from this neighborhood to a distant situation, where he could remain under the continual care of an amiable young kinsman, who, with a tenderness beyond the common limits of filial affection, watched over the precious remnant of his life. Much of it elapsed without a probability of his restoration to that state from which he had last fallen. His intellectual powers were so much affected by this relapse that he was only capable of attending to the most trivial subjects, even when writing, to have his thoughts diverted from despair. Local advantages, the solicitous attention of affectionate friends, and the indefatigable

assiduity of his only remaining companion, were at length rendered so far useful that he was enabled to resume his literary occupations, which were always, when pursued, a considerable though partial alleviation of his distress.

Here let us pause, proceeds Mr. Greatheed, and look back upon the long, long period, during which he may be said to have walked in darkness and seen no light. It is more astonishing that the Lord, whom he had so eminently known, loved, and served, and whose honor he was so admirably qualified to promote, should leave him to sufferings so peculiarly severe; or that, through such an extent of time, he should continually preserve him, though destitute of hope and peace, from natural and violent dissolution! To me the most surprising circumstance is, that without encouragement to seek for Divine protection and help, he should still have been kept from sin, and that although he viewed the Lord, in relation to himself, only as an implacable judge, he yet retained a holy reverence for his name, jealous regard for his glory, and an unlimited submission to his will. In every view, while we contemplate this "bush which burned with fire and was not consumed," we cannot but acknowledge that the judgments of God are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out. The singularity of the Lord's dealings with our deceased neighbor, excited in the minds of all who knew his

situation an anxious inquiry, "What will the end of these things be?" It was universally concluded that some important object would be accomplished by so unusual a train of sufferings. Some of his intimate connections were persuaded that he would be fully restored to health and comfort of mind, and would become instrumental in the Lord's hand "to bind up the broken hearted" by publicly declaring to others what God had done for his soul. There were few who did not confidently expect, perhaps none who did not earnestly hope, that the tedious nights of sorrow would terminate previous to his departure from this life, and that his latter end would be peace and joy. All indeed, I believe without exception, who well knew this excellent man, were so fully convinced of his uprightness of heart before God, that in whatsoever state of mind he could close his eyes on earthly scenes, they could not doubt his entrance into glory through the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ, which had been the only ground of his hope, and was still his desire.

Yet they could not, without some degree of anxiety, look forward to the last scenes of life which his advancing age evinced to be at hand. This issue of his whole warfare has but recently been decided; and the manner of it has not as yet publicly transpired.

During the last year or two of Mr. Cowper's life, his health and state of mind appeared to be as much restored

as for an equal time at any period during his long afflictions.

Toward the close of the last winter he was, however, attacked by a bodily disorder which brought on decay. His young friend and relative, convinced that he would shortly exchange a world of infirmity and sorrow for a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, repeatedly endeavored to cheer him with the prospect, and to assure him of the happiness that awaited him. Still he refused to be comforted. "Oh, spare me! spare me! You know, you know it to be false!" was his only reply, with the same invincible despair to which he had so long been a prey. Early on the 25th of April, he sunk into a state of apparent insensibility, which might have been mistaken for a tranquil slumber, but that his eyes remained half open. His breath was regular though feeble, and his countenance and animal frame were perfectly serene. In this state he continued for twelve hours, and then expired, without heaving his breath, April 25th, 1800.

With anguish of heart he wrote on his window-shutter the day before he quitted Olney—

> "Me miserable! How could I escape
> Infinite wrath, and infinite despair,
> When death, earth, heaven, are all consigned to ruin,
> Whose friend was God, but God was not to aid me!"

HYMN BY WILLIAM COWPER.

How blest thy creature is, O God!
When with a single eye
He views the lustre of thy word,
The dayspring from on high.

Through all the storms that veil the skies,
And frown on earthly things,
The sun of righteousness he eyes
With healing in his wings.

Struck by that light, the human heart
A barren soil no more,
Sends the sweet smell of grace abroad,
Where serpents lurked before.

The soul a dreary province once
Of Satan's dark domain,
Feels a new empire formed within,
And owns a heavenly reign.

The glorious orb, whose golden beams
The fruitful years control
Since first obedient to thy word,
He started from the goal,

Has cheered the nations with the joys
His orient beams impart;
But Jesus, 'tis thy light alone
Can shine upon the heart.

ANOTHER BY THE SAME.

Far from the world, O Lord, I flee,
From strife and tumult far,
From scenes where Satan wages still
His most successful war.

The calm retreat, the silent shade
With prayer and praise agree,
And seen by thy sweet bounty made
For those who follow thee.

There if thy spirit touch the soul,
And grace her mean abode,
Oh! with what peace, and joy, and love,
She communes with her God.

Then like the nightingale she pours
Her solitary lays;—
Nor asks a witness of her song,
Nor thirsts for human praise.

Author and guardian of my life
Sweet source of light divine
And (all harmonious names in one),
My Saviour, thou art mine.

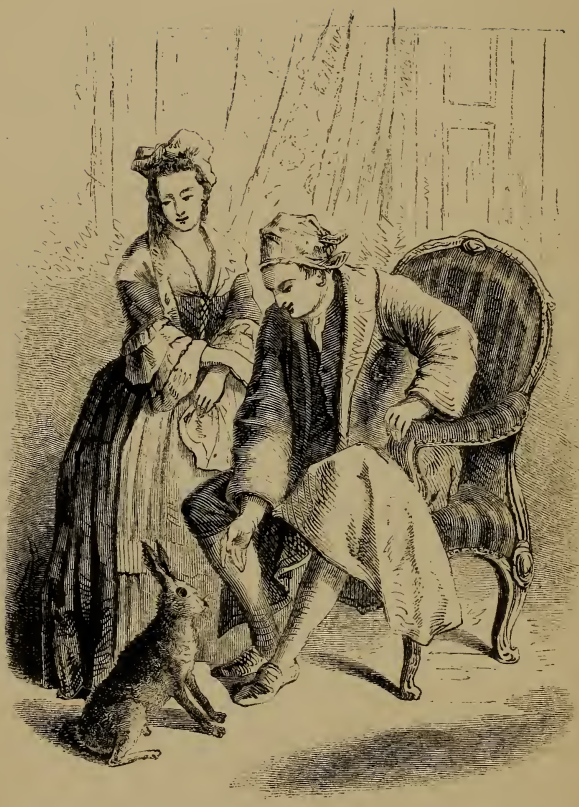
What thanks I owe thee, and what love!
A boundless, endless store,
Shall echo through the realms above,
When time shall be no more.

ACCOUNT

OF THE

TREATMENT OF HIS HARES.

BY WILLIAM COWPER.



p. 79.

THE HARES.

COWPER'S

TREATMENT OF HIS HARES.

[From the Gentleman's Magazine.]

In the year 1774, being much indisposed both in mind and body, incapable of diverting myself either with company or books, and yet in a condition that made some diversion necessary, I was glad of anything that would engage my attention without fatiguing it. The children of a neighbor of mine had a leveret given them for a plaything; it was at that time about three months old. Understanding better how to tease the poor creature than to feed it, and soon becoming weary of their charge, they readily consented that their father, who saw it pining and growing leaner every day, should offer it for my acceptance. I was willing enough to take the prisoner under my protection, perceiving that,

in the management of such an animal, and in the attempt to tame it, I should find just that sort of employment which my case required. It was soon known among the neighbors that I was pleased with the present; and the consequence was, that in a short time I had as many leverets offered to me as would have stocked a paddock. I undertook the care of three, which it is necessary that I should here distinguish by the names I gave them,—Puss, Tiney, and Bess. Notwithstanding the two feminine appellatives, I must inform you that they were all males. Immediately commencing carpenter, I built them houses to sleep in; each had a separate apartment, so contrived that their ordure would pass through the bottom of it; an earthen pan placed under each received whatsoever fell, which being duly emptied and washed, they were thus kept perfectly sweet and clean. In the daytime they had the range of a hall, and at night retired, each to his own bed, never intruding into that of another.

Puss grew presently familiar, would leap into my lap, raise himself upon his hinder feet, and bite the hair from my temples. He would suffer me to take him up, and to carry him about in my arms, and has more than once fallen asleep upon my knee. He was ill three days, during which time I nursed him, kept him apart from his fellows, that they might not molest him (for, like many other wild animals, they persecute one of their own

species that is sick), and by constant care, and trying him with a variety of herbs, restored him to perfect health. No creature could be more grateful than my patient after his recovery; a sentiment which he most significantly expressed by licking my hand, first the back of it, then the palm, then every finger separately, then between all the fingers, as if anxious to leave no part of it unsaluted; a ceremony which he never performed but once again upon a similar occasion. Finding him extremely tractable, I made it my custom to carry him always after breakfast into the garden, where he hid himself generally under the leaves of a cucumber vine, sleeping or chewing the cud till evening: in the leaves also of that vine he found a favorite repast. I had not long habituated him to this taste of liberty, before he began to be impatient for the return of the time when he might enjoy it. He would invite me to the garden by drumming upon my knee, and by a look of such expression as it was not possible to misinterpret. If this rhetoric did not immediately succeed, he would take the skirt of my coat between his teeth, and pull at it with all his force. Thus Puss might be said to be perfectly tamed, the shyness of his nature was done away, and on the whole it was visible by many symptoms, which I have not room to enumerate, that he was happier in human society than when shut up with his natural companions.

Not so Tiney; upon him the kindest treatment had

not the least effect. He, too, was sick, and in his sickness had an equal share of my attention; but if after his recovery I took the liberty to stroke him, he would grunt, strike with his fore feet, spring forward, and bite. He was, however, very entertaining in his way; even his surliness was matter of mirth; and in his play he preserved such an air of gravity, and performed his feats with such a solemnity of manner, that in him, too, I had an agreeable companion.

Bess, who died soon after he was full grown and whose death was occasioned by his being turned into his box, which had been washed, while it was yet damp, was a hare of great humor and drollery. Puss was tamed by gentle usage! Tiney was not to be tamed at all: and Bess had a courage and confidence that made him tame from the beginning. I always admitted them into the parlor after supper, when the carpet affording their feet a firm hold, they would frisk and bound and play a thousand gambols, in which Bess, being remarkably strong and fearless, was always superior to the rest, and proved himself the Vestris of the party. One evening the cat, being in the room, had the hardiness to pat Bess upon the cheek, an indignity which he resented by drumming upon her back with such violence that the cat was happy to escape from under his paws, and hide herself.

I describe these animals as having each a character of his own. Such they were in fact, and their countenances

were so expressive of that character, that, when I looked only on the face of either, I immediately knew which it was. It is said that a shepherd, however numerous his flock, soon becomes so familiar with their features, that he can by that indication only, distinguish each from all the rest; and yet, to a common observer, the difference is hardly perceptible. I doubt not that the same discrimination in the cast of countenances would be discoverable in hares, and am persuaded that among a thousand of them, no two could be found exactly similar; a circumstance little suspected by those who have not had opportunity to observe it. These creatures have a singular sagacity in discovering the minutest alteration that is made in the place to which they are accustomed, and instantly apply their nose to the examination of the new object. A small hole being burnt in the carpet, it was mended with a patch, and that patch in a moment underwent the strictest scrutiny. They seem, too, to be very much directed by the smell in the choice of their favorites; to some persons, though they saw them daily, they could never be reconciled, and would even scream when they attempted to touch them; but a miller coming in engaged their affections at once: his powdered coat had charms that were irresistible. It is no wonder that my intimate acquaintance with these specimens of the kind, has taught me to hold the sportsman's amusement in abhorrence: he little knows what amiable creatures he perse-

cutes, of what gratitude they are capable, how cheerful they are in their spirits, what enjoyment they have of life, and that, impressed as they seem with a peculiar dread of man, it is only because man gives them peculiar cause for it.

That I may not be tedious, I will just give a short summary of those articles of diet that suit them best.

I take it to be a general opinion that they graze, but it is an erroneous one; at least grass is not their staple; they seem rather to use it medicinally, soon quitting it for leaves of almost any kind. Sowthistle, dandelion, and lettuce, are their favorite vegetables, especially the last. I discovered by accident that fine white sand is in great estimation with them; I suppose as a digestive. It happened that I was cleaning a bird cage while the hares were with me: I placed a pot filled with such sand upon the floor, which, being at once directed to by a strong instinct, they devoured voraciously; since that time I have generally taken care to see them well supplied with it. They account green corn a delicacy, both blade and stalk, but the ear they seldom eat; straw of any kind, especially wheat straw, is another of their dainties; they will feed greedily upon oats, but if furnished with clean straw, never want them: it serves them also for a bed, and if shaken up daily, will be kept sweet and dry for a considerable time. They do not indeed require aromatic herbs, but will eat a small quantity of them

with a great relish, and are particularly fond of the plant called musk: they seem to resemble sheep in this, that if their pasture be too succulent, they are very subject to the rot; to prevent which, I always made bread their principal nourishment, and, filling a pan with it cut into small squares, placed it every evening in their chambers, for they feed only at evening, and in the night; during the winter, when vegetables were not to be procured, I mingled this mess of bread with shreds of carrots, adding to it the rind of apples cut extremely thin; for, though they are fond of the paring, the apple itself disgusts them. These, however, not being a sufficient substitute for the juice of summer herbs, they must at this time be supplied with water; but so placed, that they cannot overset it into their beds. I must not omit, that occasionally they are much pleased with twigs of hawthorn and of the common brier, eating even the very wood when it is of considerable thickness.

Bess, I have said, died young; Tiney lived to be nine years old, and died at last, I have reason to think, of some hurt in his loins by a fall: Puss is still living, and has just completed his tenth year, discovering no signs of decay, nor even of age, except that he is grown more discreet and less frolicsome than he was. I cannot conclude without observing, that I have lately introduced a dog to his acquaintance—a spaniel that had never seen a hare, to a hare that had never seen a spaniel. I did it

with great caution, but there was no real need of it. Puss discovered no token of fear, nor Marquis the least symptom of hostility. There is, therefore, it should seem, no natural antipathy between dog and hare, but the pursuit of the one occasions the flight of the other, and the dog pursues because he is trained to it; they eat bread at the same time out of the same hand, and are in all respects sociable and friendly.

I should not do complete justice to my subject, did I not add, that they have no ill scent belonging to them; that they are indefatigably nice in keeping themselves clean, for which purpose nature has furnished them with a brush under each foot; and that they are never infested by any vermin.

May 28, 1784.

MEMORANDUM FOUND AMONG MR. COWPER'S PAPERS.

Tuesday, March 9, 1786.

This day died poor Puss, aged eleven years eleven months. He died between twelve and one at noon, of mere old age, and apparently without pain.

DESCRIPTION

OF

WESTON PARK,

ETC.

WESTON PARK, ETC.

"Scenes must be beautiful which, daily seen,
Please daily, and whose novelty survives
Long knowledge and the scrutiny of years."

A SURVEY, though in miniature, of the scenes that occupied the attention, and gave matter to the pen, of the immortal Cowper, must be gratifying to every lover of his muse. It was cause of considerable pleasure to us, while literally re-treading the footsteps of a character so illustrious, to observe most of the scenery he has described remaining, without material alteration, through the lapse of more than twenty years. But our design, in this undertaking, being to rescue from obscurity, and preserve, from the dilapidating hand of time, resemblances of every favored subject in his rural walks, it was a circumstance of regret to discover in our research, that the places described by Cowper, unconnected with the demesne of George Courtenay, Esq., had, in many instances, suffered considerable change.

The *Mill*, referred to in the fifth book of The Task, is entirely demolished, and, but for a few scattered stones, the place where it stood would be forgotten. It was situated in a meadow at the foot of Clifton Hill, near Olney, and, from the romantic beauty of the surrounding scenery, could not escape the discriminating eye of Cowper.

In the latter editions of Cowper's Poems, a piece is introduced, called *The Poplars*, the destruction of which he deplores. They may still be traced on the ground by remaining shoots; but when we conceive that the vacuum which appears was formerly occupied by a race of noble trees, only two of which remain, we lament, with the poet, the havoc of the axe, and take up his plaint, when he says,

> The poplars are felled . . . adieu to the shade,
> And the whisp'ring sound of the cool colonnade;
> The winds play no longer, nor sing in their leaves;
> Nor Ouse on its surface their image receives.

They stood near Lavendon Mill, about two miles from Olney, on the banks of the Ouse, which, in that place, assumes a majestic breadth, bordered on each side by flags of luxuriant growth, and reflecting, in its meandering course, the various beauties that surround it; among which the poplars were once pre-eminent.

Near Kilnwick Wood, about two miles from Olney, in a northwest direction, mentioned in the Needless Alarm,

> A narrow brook, by rushy banks conceal'd,
> Runs in the bottom, and divides the field;
> Oaks intersperse it, that had once a head,
> But now wear crests of oven-wood instead;
> And where the land slopes to its wat'ry bourn,
> Wide yawns a gulf beside a ragged thorn.

This pit, though still to be seen, is nearly filled up. Our design was to represent it, but, being in the vicinity of trees, so remote from beauty, as those Cowper has noticed, we found it impossible to do it without the accompaniment of objects mutilated and bare.

Thus much we trust will be sufficient to exonerate us from the charge of omissions, and, we embrace, with pleasure, the opportunity remaining, which is still considerable, to illustrate such a poet as Cowper, and, in particular, such a poem as The Task.

When Cowper wrote The Task, he resided at Olney, and it appears by the arrangement of his subjects, his most frequent walk to Weston was through the fields. We propose, therefore, to follow him with as little deviation as possible in his ramble; and, as there are many who may wish to gratify themselves with a sight of the places to which he has given celebrity, who are unac-

quainted with a way so indirect, we shall, for their accommodation, return by the road, and by this proceeding, give a ready clue to every object.

From the town of Olney, westward, over three fields, the ascent is gradual to the eminence referred to by the poet in these lines,

> How oft upon yon eminence our pace
> Has slackened to a pause, and we have borne
> The ruffling wind, scarce conscious that it blew.

From this elevation is seen a prospect extensive in every direction but the north, which is bounded by a quick hedge on rising ground. A little to the eastward may be discovered an elegant mansion, the residence of John Higgins, Esq., near the village of Turvey. In the horizon behind is Steventon, in Bedfordshire; further east stands the "square tower" of Clifton Church, near which is Clifton House, the seat of Alexander Small, Esq., and, ranging still eastward, the prospect is bounded by Clifton Wood; till, due east, is seen the "tall spire" of Olney Church and a considerable part of the town. To the southward is the pleasant village of Emberton, on the right of which appears, when the weather is clear, Bow-brick Hill, and the church on its summit, at the distance of nearly fourteen miles. Due south, in an extensive valley, appear the devious windings of the river Ouse,

whose mazy and deceptive course assumes the semblance of various streams: the meadows are likewise intersected by dykes, cut for the purpose of draining floods, which give the land, even in times of drought, a delightful verdure.

On the banks of the Ouse stand the trees which Cowper mistook for elms. A little to the west, across the valley, on the ascent, appears the magnificent mansion of William Praed, Esq., called Tyringham House; to the southwest is Weston House, the seat of George Courtenay, Esq., embosomed in the trees of the park, which, at this distance, has the appearance of a wood. West-southwest may be seen the *Alcove*, and near it, on a steep declivity, the *Colonnade*, below which is the *Peasant's Nest*. Due west is *Kilnwick Wood*, and behind it, though not seen, the wood of *Dingle-derry*.

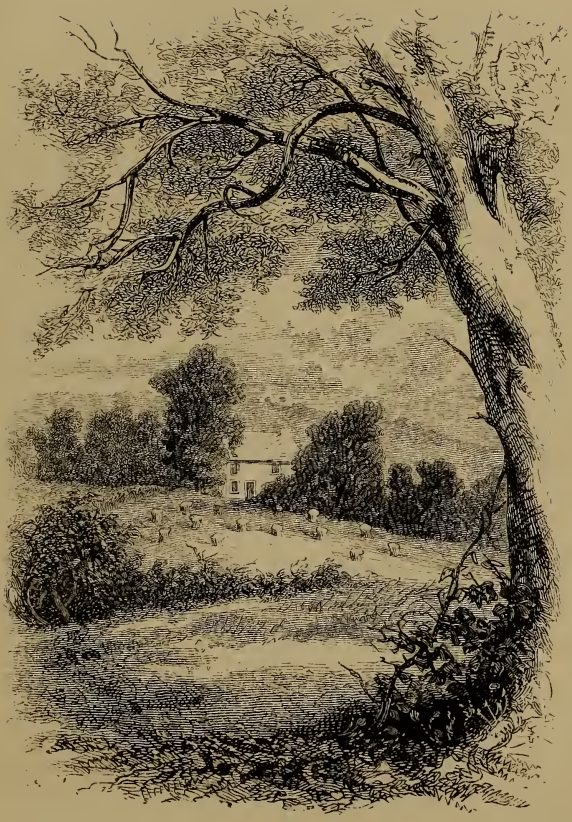
From the eminence, we descend into a valley, and pass the place where the peasant formerly dipped "his bowl into the weedy ditch," and, climbing the ascent, arrive "upon the green-hill top," where is situated

THE PEASANT'S NEST.

This farm-house is on a small estate belonging to a Mr. Chapman; it was completely obscured by the elms that surround it, only three of which now remain, the rest having been felled, about four or five years since, for the purpose of defraying the expense of enclosing certain pastures allotted to Mr. Chapman in the lordship of Emberton. The trees may still be traced on the ground by their remaining stumps and the abundant shoots rising from them. The house, since Cowper wrote, has been altered, by removing the thatch, and covering the roof with tiles; and the inconvenience it was subjected to, from the want of water, has been obviated by sinking a well; the habitation, by this means, has been rendered more desirable than when he first discovered it. This place is admirably calculated for the indulgence of contemplation, being completely secluded

> From such unpleasing sounds as haunt the ear
> In village or in town.

Here may be possessed the "poet's treasure, silence," and here indulged "the dreams of fancy, tranquil and secure." Its nearest neighborhood is Weston House, at the distance of about half a mile, though not within sight—the village of Emberton being the only habitable spot in view: this may be seen from the front of the



p. 95.

THE PEASANT'S NEST.

"Oft have I wished the peaceful covert mine."

Task, Book I.

cottage, through a narrow vale, across Weston Park: the bold swell of sloping hills in the foreground, contrasted with the softened tones of distant landscape, richly variegated, forms an effect, beyond description, pleasing and picturesque. This view is taken from the high walk in the Park, the only place from which it can be seen to advantage. From this point the house is in part obscured by the remaining elms, on the left, which retiring in perspective from the eye, their foliage is united, and they appear like a single tree: the garden, shrubbery, and a spreading walnut tree, enclose it on the right, and backed by a rising woodland scene, delightfully diversified, it still has pretensions to the appellation given it by Cowper.

Rising west, from the Peasant's Nest, we pass through a narrow plantation, under the shade of yews, firs, and pines, from which, entering an avenue, between two rows of well-grown chestnuts, "a length of colonnade invites us;" and, while enjoying its welcome shade, we obtain a view of Weston House; a beautiful, though transient, peep, it being soon obscured by intervening foliage.

The descent, through the Colonnade, is aptly described by Cowper, the fall of the ground being extremely precipitant and abrupt. At the bottom, passing a little gate, we come immediately upon

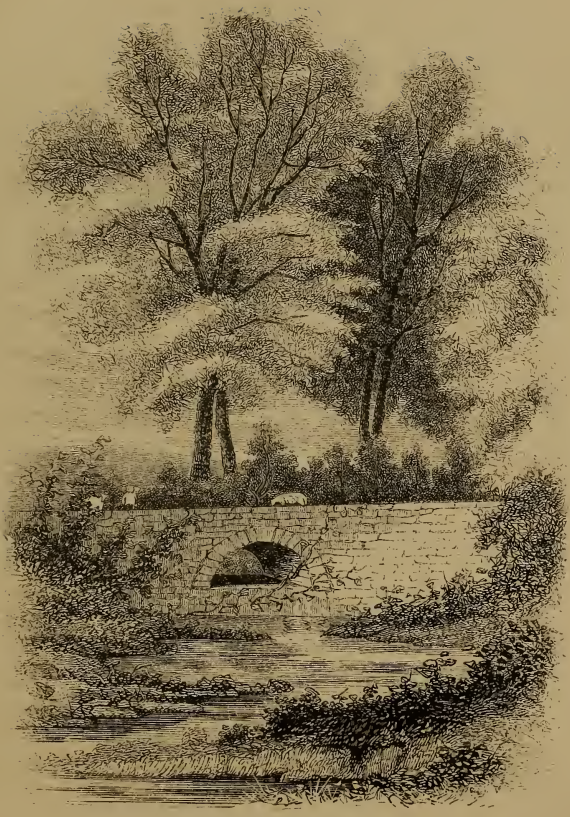
THE RUSTIC BRIDGE.

This bridge was built about sixty years since, by Mr. John Huggins, for Sir Robert Throckmorton, the grandfather of its present possessor, for the purpose of keeping up a piece of water in the Park: it spans a deep brook, forming a scene remarkable for its wild and romantic beauty, which, after winding its latent course along the bottom of a woody vale, meanders through the Park, and crosses the road from Olney to Northampton, at a place called Overs Brook. The willows near the bridge, whose pendent boughs "bathed in the limpid stream," are cut down, but their site is still marked by rising shoots.

The bridge terminates a grove of trees, which fills the valley, bordering the northeastern extremity of the Park: here is seen

> "The ash, far-stretching his umbrageous arm;
> Of deeper green the elm; and deeper still,
> Lord of the woods, the long-surviving oak."

Ascending from the Rustic Bridge, along the northern boundary of the Park, a path, under the canopy of spreading oaks and elms, leads to the Alcove. This walk is alluded to by Cowper in the beginning of the sixth



p. 99.

THE RUSTIC BRIDGE.

. . . . "Upon a rustic bridge,
We pass a gulf."

Task, Book I.

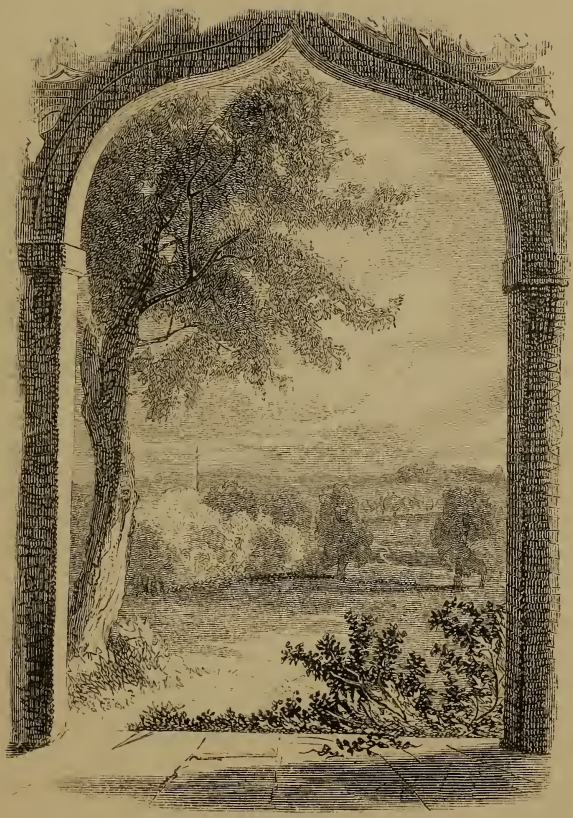
book of the Task: it commanded a view of Emberton Church across the vale, and from hence he heard "the music of the village bells," but from the increased growth of the trees, that stand on the high walk in the Park, the prospect is now nearly excluded. The ascent is difficult, being thickly tufted by mole-hills, incrusted by verdant moss, and mingled with flowery thyme, the scattered sweets of which, regaling the scent, deceive the labor of the stumbling walk; for here the firmest footstep is continually eluded by the yielding earth. On the summit stands

THE ALCOVE.

This structure is a sexagon, of a light and graceful form, composed of wood: it was erected, about fifty years ago, by the same person who built the Rustic Bridge. This pleasant retreat has been deserted by the family, on account of a fatal accident which happened to the builder's son; who, being employed, about twenty years after its erection, in painting the roof, fell from it, and was killed on the spot. The painful reflections which occurred on every visit to the scene of this catastrophe, having induced the family so long to avoid it, it begins to assume evident symptoms of decay,* which is much to be regretted, as it forms a noble ornament to the Park, and affords a resting-place both seasonable and convenient, in the face of a delightful and extensive prospect.

The view we have represented is in a direction south-east from the Alcove: in the centre is seen the termination of the grove, commencing at the Rustic Bridge, and the brook just emerging from the shady vale: over the grove may be discerned the tops of firs and pines, which

* Since the first publication of "Cowper Illustrated," the Alcove has been taken down and rebuilt.

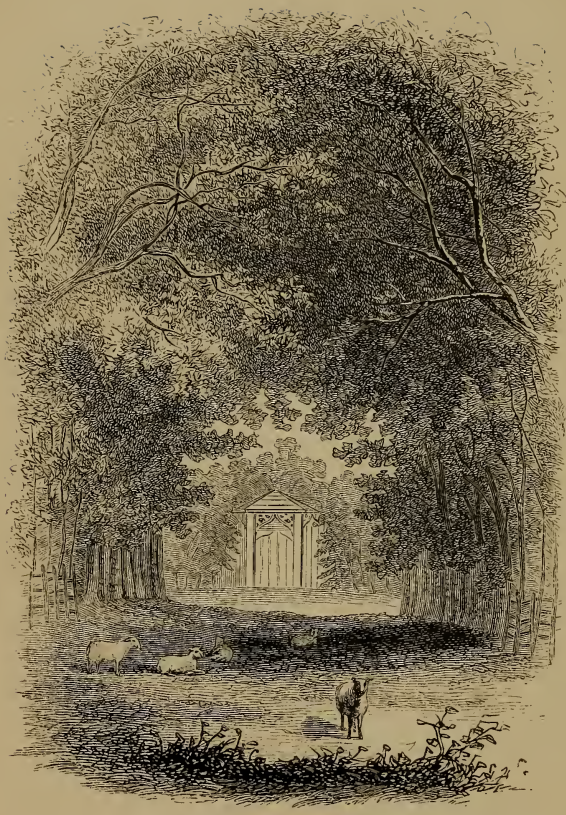


p. 103.

VIEW FROM THE ALCOVE.

. . . . "Now roves the eye,
And posted on this speculative height
Exults in its command."

Task, Book I.



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THE ALCOVE, FROM THE AVENUE.

"How airy and how light the graceful arch."

Task, Book 1

form the plantation between the Colonnade and Peasant's Nest; and rising from the foliage like a lofty obelisk, is Olney spire, beyond which are the hills in the vicinity of Clifton; the row of distant trees, on the eminence, is the high walk, from which is seen the Peasant's Nest.

The Alcove, being open in three divisions, presents as many distinct, though not equally extensive, prospects: through the middle compartment on the left, the Park appears finely adorned with clumps of noble trees, and, among the various foliage, part of Weston House is visible; the Avenue presents itself in front: through the opening, on the right, is seen the western boundary of the Park, the walls of which are judiciously excluded by plantations.

Quitting the Alcove, and proceeding to the Avenue, the declivity is

> . . . . . "Sharp and short,
> And such the re-ascent; between them weeps
> A little Naiad her impoverished urn
> All summer long, which winter fills again."

This little Naiad is nothing more than a narrow channel to drain the hollow; and we cannot repress our admiration of the unbounded powers of figurative poetry, which can raise the minutest trifle to the appearance of dignity and consequence.

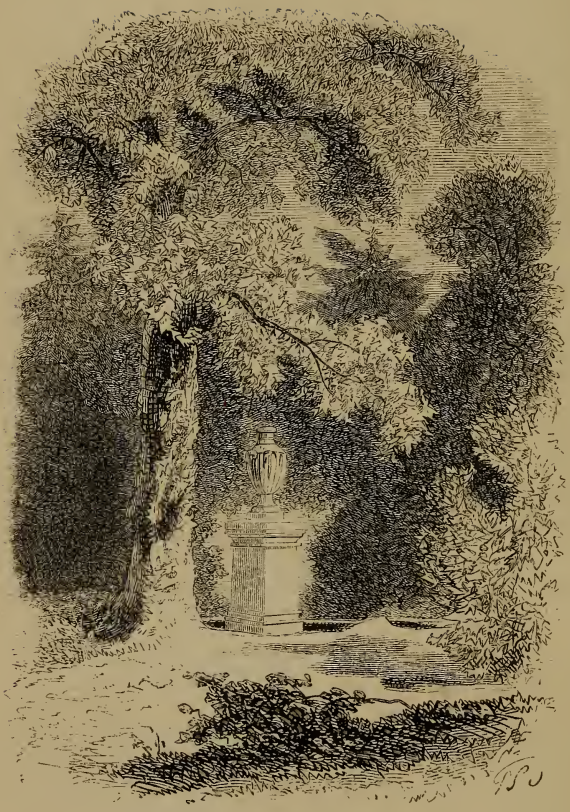
A few paces on the ascent stood a wall, which was continued across the grounds from east to west; the foundations may, in many places, be discovered; it served as an enclosure for cattle on one side, and, on the other, towards the house, for deer, with which the Park was formerly stocked. The entrance from one enclosure to the other, is thus described by the poet, who was favored by Sir John Throckmorton with a key, that he might, at all times, obtain ready access:

> "The folded gates would bar my progress now,
> But that the lord of this enclosed demesne,
> Communicative of the good he owns,
> Admits me to a share."

Having gained the acclivity, we enter the Avenue, under the uniting branches of lofty limes, which form a

> . . . . . "Graceful arch;
> Yet awful as the consecrated roof,
> Re-echoing pious anthems! while, beneath,
> The chequered earth seems restless as a flood
> Brushed by the wind."

In the middle of this Avenue, on turning back, is seen the Alcove, which being painted with a lively white, and enclosed on either side with darksome yews, presents the pleasing and striking effect which we have endeavored to represent.



p. 110.

THE WILDERNESS, FROM THE GROVE.

"Here, unmolested, through whatever sign
The sun proceeds, I wander."

Task, Book VI.

THE WILDERNESS.

From the Avenue we enter the Wilderness by an elegant gate, constructed after the Chinese manner. On the left is the statue of a lion, finely carved, in a recumbent posture: this is placed on a basement, at the end of a grassy walk, which is shaded by yews and elms, mingled with the drooping foliage of the laburnum, and adorned with wreaths of flaunting woodbine; the walk forms a border to the Wilderness on the northern side, and is ornamented with two handsome urns, one of which we have represented. On its base is engraved an epitaph, to Neptune, a favorite dog of Sir John Throckmorton's, written by Cowper, which we have transcribed.

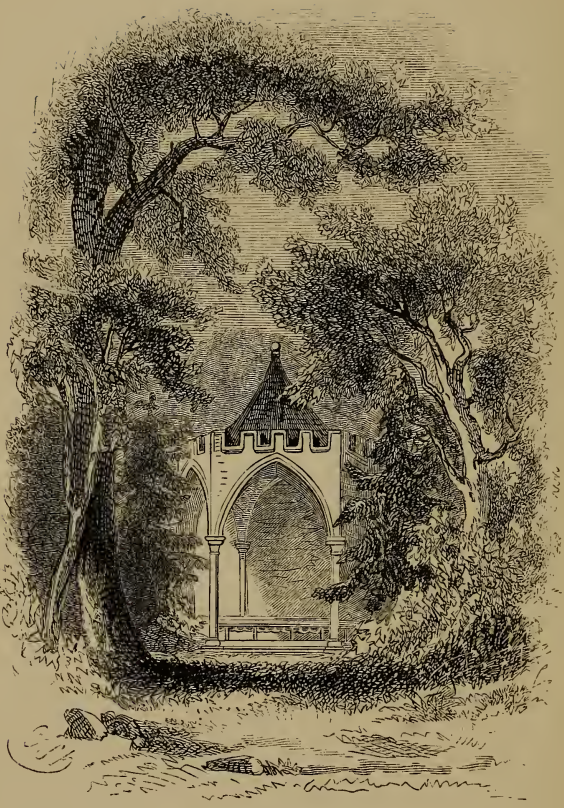
Here lies one, who never drew
Blood himself, yet many slew;
Gave the gun its aim, and figure
Made in field, yet ne'er pulled trigger.
Armèd men have gladly made
Him their guide, and him obeyed;
At his signified desire,
Would advance, present, and fire.
Stout he was, and large of limb,
Scores have fled at sight of him;
And to all this fame he rose,
By only following his nose.

Neptune was he called; not he
Who controls the boist'rous sea:
But of happier command,
Neptune of the furrowed land;
And, your wonder, vain, to shorten,
Pointer to Sir John Throckmorton.

The other is inscribed to a Spaniel, as follows:

Though once a puppy, and though Fop by name,
Here moulders one whose bones some honor claim:
No sycophant, although of spaniel race,
And though no hound, a martyr to the chase.
Ye squirrels, rabbits, leverets, rejoice,
Your haunts no longer echo to his voice.
This record of his fate, exulting view,
He died, worn out with vain pursuit of you.
Yes; the indignant shade of Fop replies,
And, worn with vain pursuits, man also dies.

Opposite to the entrance is a winding path, leading to



p. 114.

THE TEMPLE IN THE WILDERNESS.

. . . . "Whose well-rolled walks,
With curvature of slow and easy sweep,
. . . . . give ample space
To narrow bounds."

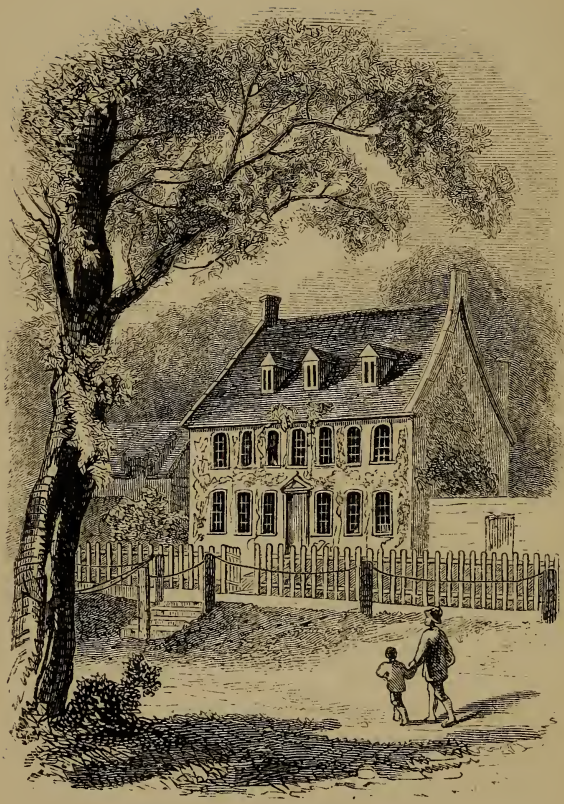
Task, Book I.

THE GOTHIC TEMPLE.

In the front of the Temple is a hexagon plat, surrounded with a beautiful variety of evergreens, flowering shrubs, and elms, whose stems are covered with a mantle of venerable ivy. In the centre of the plat stands a majestic acacia. On the left, a serpentine walk, under a sable canopy of spreading yews, winds to an elegant vista, bordered on either side with laurels, syringas, lilacs, and woodbines, overhung with the golden clusters of the laburnum, interspersed with branching elms, and beeches entwined with circling ivy. At the end of the vista stands a bust of Homer. This bust was in the possession of Cowper, when he resided at Weston, and stood in the shrubbery behind his garden; and, it may be seen, that the bard it represents ranked high in his estimation, by a Greek couplet which he wrote on its base, accompanied with a translation by Mr. Hayley, as follows:

> The sculptor nameless, though once dear to fame;
> But this man bears an everlasting name.

Near the bust is a deeply-shaded, winding path, that leads through the Wilderness, and brings us to the Grove, whence we pass a handsome gate to the village of Weston, about the centre of which on the right, is



p. 118.

WESTON LODGE.

The residence of the late William Cowper Esq.

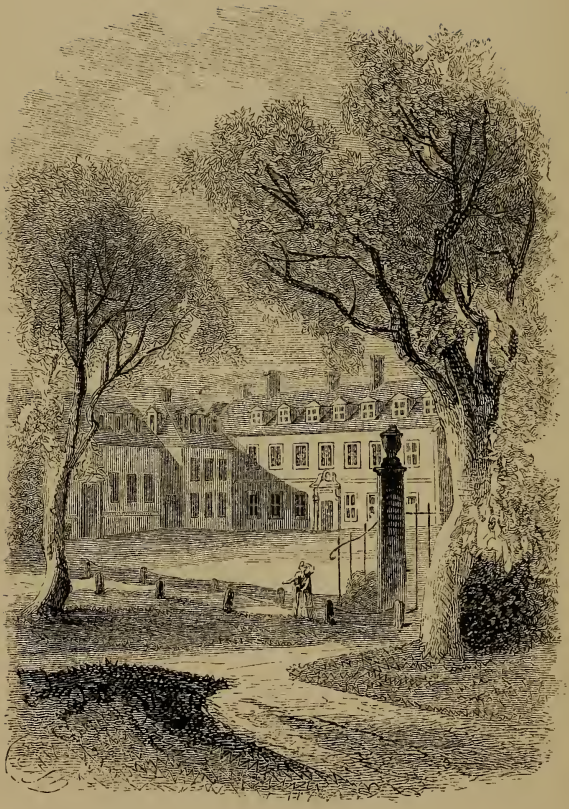
WESTON LODGE.

This house is built of stone, showing a handsome and extensive front, ornamented by vines and jasmines, which entwine their spreading branches, and overhang the windows in verdant wreaths. It commands from the front a prospect into an orchard planted with well-grown trees, and the village, being straight, on either side may be seen its extremities, bounded at one end by the church, and, at the other, by the gate above-mentioned. The inside is roomy and convenient: it has a good kitchen-garden, and an orchard, which was formerly Cowper's Shrubbery; but the pursuits of its present possessor differing, in some degree, from those of the poet, every appearance of this kind is obliterated, except that an officious flower occasionally rears its head, and in tacit terms, upbraids the destroyers of such a scene. This little labyrinth was much admired, being laid out in the most pleasing style and ornamented with several summer seats, placed near the borders of serpentine gravel walks, shaded and adorned by the mingling beauties of various flowering shrubs.

Returning to the Park from Weston, on the left, we enter the Grove,

> Between the upright shafts of whose tall elms
> We may discern the thresher at his task.

And, under the reviving influence of their shades, we view the northwest front of



p. 122.

WESTON HOUSE, FROM THE GROVE.

The seat of George Courtenay, Esq.

WESTON HOUSE.

This house stands on the south side of the Northampton Road, and commands a most extensive prospect. It is extremely irregular in its appearance, having been built at different periods. The front we have represented is the newest part of the edifice, and was erected by Sir Robert Throckmorton about the beginning of the last century. In the windows of the gallery are some coats of arms, in stained glass, with the date 1572; but some parts of the house appear to be of an earlier age, and were probably erected several centuries antecedent to the above period.

This estate came into the possession of the present family, towards the middle of the fifteenth century, by the marriage of Sir Thomas Throckmorton, knight, with the daughter of Robert Olney, of Weston. The Park was considerably improved by the grandfather of the present possessor. It was laid out under the direction of Mr. Brown, then famous as a landscape gardener, who, availing himself of the advantages of nature, by the aid

of art, has produced, in the grounds of Weston Park, a lasting monument of his taste. Continuing our walk to Olney, at a short distance from the house, the view we have given presents itself. In the centre, overhanging a boat-house belonging to Mr. Courtenay, stands a cluster of poplars, which Cowper calls

p. 126.

THE ELMS.

. . . . "There, fast rooted in their bank,
Stand, never overlooked, our favorite elms
That screen the herdsman's solitary hut."

Task, Book I.

THE ELMS

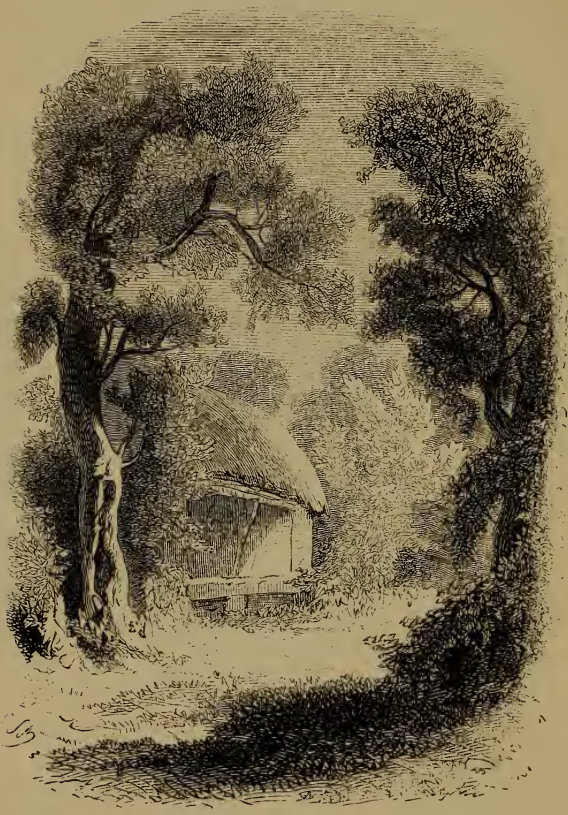
Surrounding "the herdsman's solitary hut." In compliance with our intention to illustrate the poet, we have retained the name he has conferred, though we were convinced, from ocular demonstration, it was erroneous; and have also received a communication from Mr. Courtenay,* who observes, that Cowper wrote the passage in the Task, which refers to these trees, under the influence of a mistake, and he had often told him of the circumstance. The trees stand on a broad level of low land, remote from any object of equal magnitude, and are, in every direction, prominent and conspicuous. The accompanying scenery is charmingly described by the poet in the following lines:—

> Here Ouse, slow winding through a level plain
> Of spacious meads, with cattle sprinkled o'er,
> Conducts the eye along its sinuous course,
> Delighted. . . . . .

* We take this opportunity to acknowledge our obligation to this gentleman, and several others of the town of Olney, who favored us with some important information, and paid a kind and ready attention to our inquiries.

While far beyond, and overthwart the stream,
That, as with molten glass, inlays the vale
The sloping land recedes into the clouds.

Proceeding still towards Olney, we come to the Spinnie, or



p. 130

THE SHRUBBERY.

"The saint or moralist should tread
The moss-grown alley."

COWPER.

SHRUBBERY.

The entrance to this retired spot is by a gate on the left side of the road, whence a path conducts through the windings of a lonely alley, shaded by the stately sycamore and spreading oak, diversified with fir, beech, lime, and elm, to an ampler space, enclosed on either side by the pensive yew. Here stands the Moss House. This delightful retreat Cowper has celebrated in some verses of exquisite pathos, written, as he observes, "in a time of affliction;" and, surely, every reader must feel for the unhappy bard, who, when speaking of the beauties of this spot, says, they are such as

> Might soothe a soul less hurt than mine,
> And please, if anything could please.

And though at this time the peculiar sensations of his mind permitted him no enjoyment whatever, yet, in happier moments, this lowly roof was often honored with his presence; and a few lines of his composition, which he caused to be painted on a board, and placed in the Moss House, may give a full idea of the altered state of his mind.

> Here, free from riot's hated noise,
> Be mine, ye calmer, purer joys,

A book or friend bestows;
Far from the storms that shake the great,
Contentment's gale shall fan my seat,
And sweeten my repose.

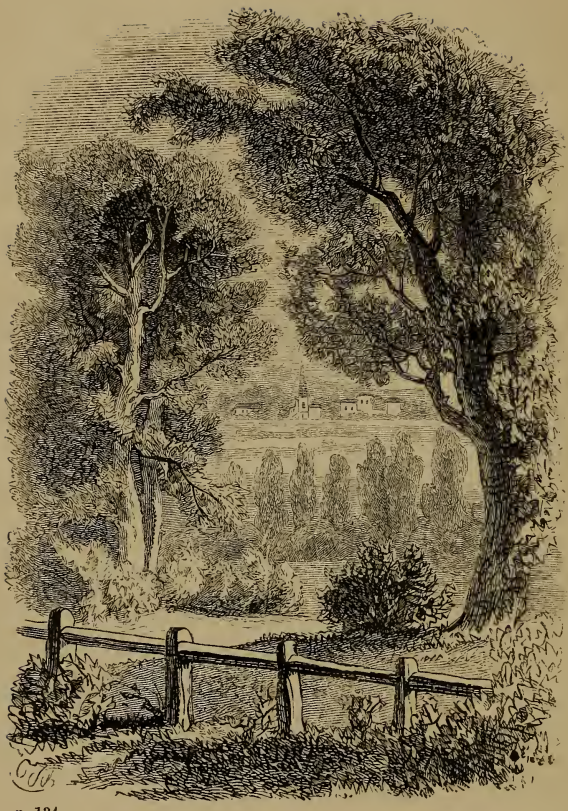
This board being stolen, Cowper substituted another, with the following lines from the sixth book of the Task:—

No noise is here, or none that hinders thought.

Stillness, accompanied with sounds so soft,
Charms more than silence. Meditation here
May think down hours to moments. Here the heart
May give a useful lesson to the head,
And Learning wiser grow without his books.

Pursuing our walk, we proceed through what remains of this sequestered alley, whose devious moss-grown path is bordered by flowering shrubs, which fill the air with their fragrance; while, from the pendent boughs above, the ear is saluted with the melody of warbling birds, producing an effect at once solemn and delightful.

Returning by the way we entered, near the gate is seen



p. 134.

OLNEY CHURCH.

"The tall spire, from which the sound of cheerful bells
Just undulates upon the listening ear."

Task, Book I.

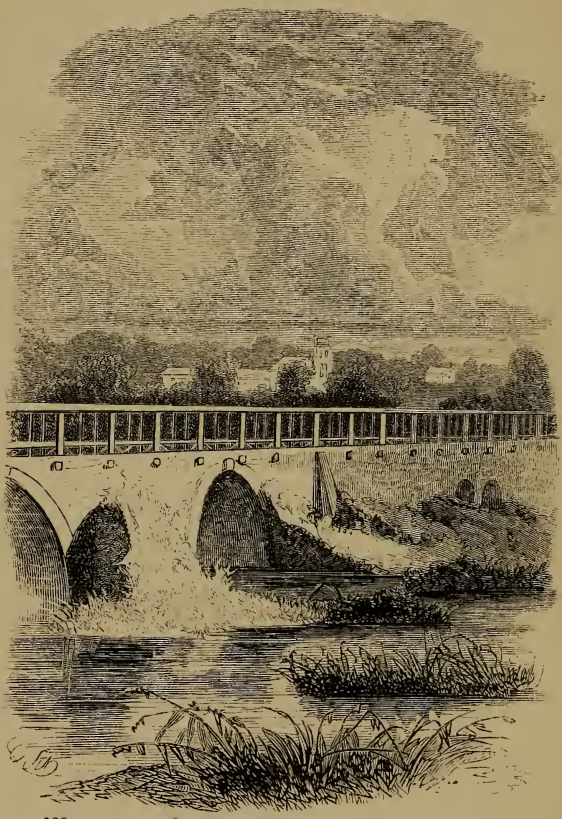
OLNEY CHURCH.

Continuing our walk towards the town of Olney, having the Shrubbery on the left, we arrive at Overs Brook, which crosses the road like a rivulet, but may be passed over by a wooden bridge. The prospect from the road is extensive, commanding a view of the meadows, intersected by the windings of the Ouse, the village of Emberton, and a range of richly-cultivated distant lands divided by "hedge-row beauties numberless." By the best traditionary accounts, Weston was formerly a hamlet belonging to Olney; but Overs Brook being, in times of flood, so swelled as to make it dangerous, and almost impracticable to pass, either to perform worship or to bury the dead, the priests made application and obtained leave of the Pope to build a church at Weston; since which they have been separate parishes.

At what time Olney Church was built is uncertain, none of the church records being dated earlier than 150 or 160 years back; though on repairing the church, about two years ago, on one of the beams of the roof was found the following inscription: "This beam was laid up by Ben Marriot and Michael Hinde, churchwardens, July 17, 1718; and 700 years from its first building." This

date probably alludes to the first erection of a church at Olney; as the style of the present building is that commonly termed Gothic, and must therefore be of modern origin. On entering the town and turning to the left, we come to the market-place: at the lower end is situated the house in which Cowper resided. This is a large, red-brick building, and has not anything, either in its situation or appearance, to recommend it; being on the skirts of a place called *Silver End*, a name as significant in Olney as that of St. Catharine is in London. Indeed, the town of Olney is by no means a desirable spot; lying in a bottom, it is subject to frequent fogs and damps, which are extremely pernicious, and occasion aguish and rheumatic disorders. Cowper rallies his own situation here, at the time of a flood, in a humorous epistle to Lady Austen, then at Clifton, which may be seen in Hayley's Account of his Life.

Having completed our tour, by returning to the town, we proceed to



p. 138.

OLNEY BRIDGE.

"That with its wearisome but needful length
Bestrides the wintry flood."

Task, Book IV.

OLNEY BRIDGE.

This structure is noticed in the opening of the fourth book of the Task:

> "Hark, 'tis the twanging horn o'er yonder bridge."

It consists of twenty-four arches, of various forms, and placed at irregular distances, bestriding the whole width of the valley, which, when completely overflowed, presents an expanse of water grand beyond description. The bridge has been broken down many times by the rushing current, which accidents have occasioned much altercation between the inhabitants of Olney and Emberton: as the bridge, uniting the parishes, was thought to be a joint concern, but it has lately been decided in a court of law, that it belongs exclusively to Olney, and, consequently, all the expense of repairs is thrown upon that parish. This view was taken in the meadows near the town's end, on the side next Weston: in the distance is seen the "*embattled tower*" of Emberton Church, and part of the village emerging from the trees.

> But imitative strokes can do no more
> Than please the eye. Sweet nature, every sense!
> The air salubrious of her lofty hills,
> The cheering fragrance of her dewy vales,
> And music of her woods,—no works of man
> May rival these.

A

SKETCH OF THE CHARACTER

AND AN

ACCOUNT OF THE LAST ILLNESS

OF THE LATE

REV. JOHN COWPER, A.M.,

WHO FINISHED HIS COURSE WITH JOY, MARCH 20, 1770.

WRITTEN BY HIS BROTHER,

THE LATE WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.

FAITHFULLY TRANSCRIBED FROM HIS ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT

BY JOHN NEWTON.

CHARACTER AND LAST ILLNESS

OF THE

REV. JOHN COWPER, A.M.

As soon as it pleased God, after a long and sharp season of conviction, to visit me with the consolations of his grace, it became one of my chief concerns, that my relations might be made partakers of the same mercy. In the first letter I wrote to my brother,* I took occasion to declare what God had done for my soul, and am not conscious that from that period down to his last illness I wilfully neglected an opportunity of engaging him, if it were possible, in conversation of a spiritual kind. When I left St. Albans and went to visit him at Cambridge, my heart being full of the subject, I poured it out before him without reserve; in all my subsequent dealings with him, so far as I was enabled, took care to

* "I had a brother once," &c. The Task, Book II.

show that I had received, not merely a set of notions, but a real impression of the truths of the gospel.

At first I found him ready enough to talk with me upon these subjects; sometimes he would dispute, but always without heat or animosity; and sometimes would endeavor to reconcile the difference of our sentiments, by supposing that, at the bottom, we were both of a mind and meant the same thing.

He was a man of a most candid and ingenuous spirit, his temper remarkably sweet, and in his behavior to me he had always manifested an uncommon affection. His outward conduct, so far as fell under my notice, or I could learn it by the report of others, was perfectly decent and unblamable. There was nothing vicious in any part of his practice, but, being of a studious, thoughtful turn, he placed his chief delight in the acquisition of learning, and made such acquisitions in it that he had but few rivals in that of a classical kind. He was critically skilled in the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages, was beginning to make himself master of the Syriac, and perfectly understood the French and Italian, the latter of which he could speak fluently. These attainments, however, and many others in the literary way, he lived heartily to despise, not as useless when sanctified and employed in the service of God, but when sought after for their own sake, and with a view to the praise of man. Learned however as he was, he

was easy and cheerful in his conversation, and entirely free from the stiffness which is generally contracted by men devoted to such pursuits.

Thus we spent about two years, conversing as occasion offered, and we generally visited each other once or twice a week, as long as I continued at Huntingdon, upon the leading truths of the gospel. By this time, however, he began to be more reserved; he would hear me patiently, but never reply; and this I found, upon his own confession afterward, was the effect of a resolution he had taken in order to avoid disputes, and to secure the continuance of that peace which had always subsisted between us. When our family removed to Olney, our intercourse became less frequent. We exchanged an annual visit, and, whenever he came among us, he observed the same conduct, conforming to all our customs, attending family worship with us, and heard the preaching, received civilly whatever passed in conversation upon the subject, but adhered strictly to the rule he had prescribed to himself, never remarking upon or objecting to anything he heard or saw. This, through the goodness of his natural temper, he was enabled to carry so far, that, though some things unavoidably happened which we feared would give him offence, he never took any; for it was not possible to offer him the pulpit, nor when Mr. Newton was with us once at the time of family prayer, could we ask my brother to officiate, though,

being himself a minister, and one of our own family for the time, the office seemed naturally to fall into his hands.

In September 1769, I learned by letters from Cambridge that he was dangerously ill. I set out for that place the day after I received them, and found him as ill as I expected. He had taken cold on his return from a journey into Wales; and, lest he should be laid up at a distance from home, had pushed forward as far as he could from Bath with a fever upon him.

Soon after his arrival at Cambridge he discharged, unknown to himself, such a prodigious quantity of blood, that the physician ascribed it only to the strength of his constitution that he was still alive; and assured me, that if the discharge should be repeated, he must inevitably die upon the spot. In this state of imminent danger, he seemed to have no more concern about his spiritual interests than when in perfect health. His couch was strewed with volumes of plays, to which he had frequent recourse for amusement. I learned indeed afterwards, that, even at this time, the thoughts of God and eternity would often force themselves upon his mind; but not apprehending his life to be in danger, and trusting in the morality of his past conduct, he found it no difficult matter to thrust them out again.

As it pleased God that he had no relapse, he presently began to recover strength; and in ten days' time I left

him so far restored that he could ride many miles without fatigue, and had every symptom of returning health. It is probable, however, that though his recovery seemed perfect, this illness was the means which God had appointed to bring down his strength in the midst of his journey, and to hasten on the malady which proved his last.

On the 16th of February, 1770, I was again summoned to attend him, by letters which represented him as so ill that the physician entertained but little hopes of his recovery. I found him afflicted with asthma and dropsy, supposed to be the effect of an imposthume in his liver. He was, however, cheerful when I first arrived, expressed great joy at seeing me, thought himself much better than he had been, and seemed to flatter himself with hopes that he should be well again. My situation at this time was truly distressing. I learned from the physician, that, in this instance, as in the last, he was in much greater danger than he suspected. He did not seem to lay his illness at all to heart, nor could I find by his conversation that he had one serious thought. As often as a suitable occasion offered, when we were free from company and interruption, I endeavored to give a spiritual turn to the discourse; and, the day after my arrival, asked his permission to pray with him, to which he readily consented. I renewed my attempts in this way as often as I could, though without any apparent suc-

cess: still he seemed as careless and unconcerned as ever; yet I could not but consider his willingness in this instance as a token for good, and observed with pleasure, that though at other times he discovered no mark of seriousness, yet when I spoke to him of the Lord's dealings with myself, he received what I said with affection, would press my hand, and look kindly at me, and seemed to love me the better for it.

On the 21st of the same month he had a violent fit of the asthma, which seized him when he rose, about an hour before noon, and lasted all the day. His agony was dreadful. Having never seen any person afflicted in the same way, I could not help fearing that he would be suffocated; nor was the physician himself without fears of the same kind. This day the Lord was very present with me and enabled me, as I sat by the poor sufferer's side, to wrestle for a blessing upon him. I observed to him, that though it had pleased God to visit him with great afflictions, yet mercy was mingled with the dispensation. I said, "You have many friends, who love you, and are willing to do all they can to serve you; and so perhaps have others in the like circumstances; but it is not the lot of every sick man, how much soever he may be beloved, to have a friend that can pray for him." He replied, "That is true, and I hope God will have mercy upon me." His love for me from this time became very remarkable; there was a

tenderness in it more than was merely natural; and he generally expressed it by calling for blessings upon me in the most affectionate terms, and with a look and manner not to be described. At night, when he was quite worn out with the fatigue of laboring for breath, and could get no rest, his asthma still continuing, he turned to me and said, with a melancholy air, "Brother, I seem to be marked out for misery; you know some people are so." That moment I felt my heart enlarged, and such a persuasion of the love of God towards him was wrought in my soul, that I replied with confidence, and as if I had authority given me to say it, "But that is not your case; you are marked out for mercy." Through the whole of this most painful dispensation, he was blessed with a degree of patience and resignation to the will of God, not always seen in the behavior of established Christians under sufferings so great as his. I never heard a murmuring word escape him; on the contrary, he would often say, when his pains were most acute, "I only wish it may please God to enable me to suffer without complaining; I have no right to complain." Once he said, with a loud voice, "Let thy rod and thy staff support and comfort me;" and, "Oh that it were with me as in times past, when the candle of the Lord shone upon my tabernacle!" One evening, when I had been expressing my hope that the Lord would show him mercy, he replied, "I hope he will; I am sure

I pretend to nothing." Many times he spoke of himself in terms of the greatest self-abasement, which I cannot now particularly remember. I thought I could discern, in these expressions, the glimpses of approaching day, and have no doubt at present but that the Spirit of God was gradually preparing him, in a way of true humiliation, for that bright display of gospel grace which he was soon after pleased to afford him.*

On Saturday the 10th of March, about three in the afternoon, he suddenly burst into tears, and said, with a loud cry, "Oh, forsake me not!" I went to his bedside, when he grasped my hand, and presently by his eyes and countenance, I found that he was in prayer. Then turning to me, he said, "Oh, brother, I am full of what I could say to you." The nurse asked him if he would have any hartshorn, or lavender. He replied, "None of these things will serve my purpose." I said, "But I know what would, my dear, don't I?" He answered, "You do, brother."

Having continued some time silent, he said, "Behold I create new heavens, and a new earth,"—then, after a pause, "Ay, and he is able to do it too."

I left him for about an hour, fearing lest he should fatigue himself with talking, and because my surprise and joy were so great that I could hardly bear them.

* There is a beautiful illustration of this sudden and happy change in Cowper's poem entitled "Hope."

When I returned, he threw his arms about my neck, and leaning his head against mine, he said, "Brother, if I live, you and I shall be more like one another than we have been. But whether I live, or live not, all is well, and will be so; I know it will; I have felt that which I never felt before; and am sure that God has visited me with this sickness to teach me what I was too proud to learn in health.' I never had satisfaction till now. The doctrines I had been used to referred me to myself for the foundation of my hopes, and there I could find nothing to rest upon. The sheet-anchor of the soul was wanting. I thought you wrong, yet wished to believe as you did. I found myself unable to believe, yet always thought that I should one day be brought to do so. You have suffered more than I have done, before you believed these truths; but our sufferings, though different in their kind and measure, were directed to the same end. I hope he has taught me that which he teaches none but his own. I hope so. These things were foolishness to me once, but now I have a firm foundation, and am satisfied."

In the evening, when I went to bid him good night, he looked steadfastly in my face, and with great solemnity in his air and manner, taking me by the hand, resumed the discourse in these very words: "As empty, and yet full; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things—I see the rock upon which I once split, and I

see the rock of my salvation. I have peace in myself, and if I live, I hope it will be that I may be made a messenger of peace to others. I have heard *that* in a moment, which I could not have learned by reading many books for many years. I have often studied these points, and studied them with great attention, but was blinded by prejudice; and, unless He, who alone is worthy to unloose the seals, had opened the book to me, I had been blinded still. Now they appear so plain, that though I am convinced no comment could ever have made me understand them, I wonder I did not see them before. Yet, great as my doubts and difficulties were, they have only served to pave the way, and being solved, they make it plainer. The light I have received comes late, but it is a comfort to me that I never made the gospel-truths a subject of ridicule. Though I dissented from the persuasion and ways of God's people, I ever thought them respectable, and therefore not proper to be made a jest of. The evil I suffer is the consequence of my descent from the corrupt original stock, and of my own personal transgressions; the good I enjoy comes to me as the overflowing of his bounty; but the crown of all his mercies is this, that he has given me a Saviour, and not only the Saviour of mankind, brother, but *my* Saviour."

"I should delight to see the people at Olney, but am not worthy to appear amongst them." He wept at

speaking these words, and repeated them with emphasis. I should rejoice in an hour's conversation with Mr. Newton, and, if I live, shall have much discourse with him upon these subjects, but am so weak in body, that at present I could not bear it." At the same time he gave me to understand, that he had been five years inquiring after the truth, that is, from the time of my first visit to him after I left St. Albans, and that from the very day of his ordination, which was ten years ago, he had been dissatisfied with his own views of the gospel, and sensible of their defect and obscurity; that he had always had a sense of the importance of the ministerial charge, and had used to consider himself accountable for his doctrine no less than his practice; that he could appeal to the Lord for his sincerity in all that time, and had never wilfully erred, but always been desirous of coming to the knowledge of the truth. He added, that the moment when he sent forth that cry* was the moment when light was darted in his soul; that he had thought much about these things in the course of his illness, but never till that instant was able to understand them.

It was remarkable that, from the very instant when he was first enlightened, he was also wonderfully strengthened in body, so that from the tenth to the four-

* 10th of March.

teenth of March we all entertained hopes of his recovery. He was himself very sanguine in his expectations of it, but frequently said that his desire of recovery extended no farther than his hope of usefulness; adding, "Unless I may live to be an instrument of good to others, it were better for me to die now."

As his assurance was clear and unshaken, so he was very sensible of the goodness of the Lord to him in that respect. On the day when his eyes were opened, he turned to me, and, in a low voice, said, "What a mercy it is to a man in my condition, to *know* his acceptance! I am completely satisfied of mine." On another occasion, speaking to the same purpose, he said, "This bed would be a bed of misery, and it is so—but it is likewise a bed of joy and a bed of discipline. Was I to die this night, I know I should be happy. This assurance I hope is quite consistent with the word of God. It is built upon a sense of my own utter insufficiency and the all-sufficiency of Christ." At the same time he said, "Brother, I have been building my glory upon a sandy foundation; I have labored night and day to perfect myself in things of no profit; I have sacrificed my health to these pursuits, and am now suffering the consequence of my misspent labor. But how contemptible do the writers I once highly valued now appear to me! Yea, doubtless, I count all things loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." I

must now go to a new school. I have many things to learn. I succeeded in my former pursuits. I wanted to be highly applauded, and I was so. I was flattered up to the height of my wishes: now I must learn a new lesson."

On the evening of the thirteenth, he said, "What comfort have I in this bed, miserable as I seem to be! Brother, I love to look at you. I see now who was right, and who was mistaken. But it seems wonderful that such a dispensation should be necessary to enforce what seems so very plain. I wish myself at Olney; you have a good river there, better than all the rivers of Damascus. What a scene is passing before me! Ideas upon these subjects crowd upon me faster than I can give them utterance. How plain do many texts appear, to which, after consulting all the commentators, I could hardly affix a meaning; and now I have their true meaning without any comment at all. There is but one key to the New Testament; there is but one interpreter. I cannot describe to you, nor shall ever be able to describe, what I felt in the moment it was given to me. May I make good use of it! How I shudder when I think of the danger I have just escaped! I had made up my mind upon these subjects, and was determined to hazard all upon the justness of my own opinions."

Speaking of his illness, he said, he had been followed night and day from the very beginning of it with this

text; *I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.* This notice was fulfilled to him, though not in such a sense as my desires of his recovery prompted me to put upon it. His remarkable amendment soon appeared to be no more than a present supply of strength and spirit, that he might be able to speak of the better life which God had given him, which was no sooner done than he relapsed as suddenly as he had revived. About this time he formed a purpose of receiving the sacrament, induced to it principally by a desire of setting his seal to the truth, in presence of those who were strangers to the change which had taken place in his sentiments. It must have been administered to him by the Master of the College, to whom he designed to have made this short declaration, "If I die, I die in the belief of the doctrines of the Reformation, and of the Church of England, as it was at the time of the Reformation." But, his strength declining apace, and his pains becoming more severe, he could never find a proper opportunity of doing it. His experience was rather peace than joy, if a distinction may be made between joy and that heartfelt peace which he often spoke of in the most comfortable terms; and which he expressed by a heavenly smile upon his countenance under the bitterest bodily distress. His words upon this subject once were these, "How wonderful is it that God should look upon man, especially that he should look upon *me!* Yet he sees me, and

takes notice of all that I suffer. I see him too; he is present before me, and I hear him say, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. xi. 28.)

On the fourteenth, in the afternoon, I perceived that the strength and spirits which had been afforded him were suddenly withdrawn, so that by the next day his mind became weak, and his speech roving and faltering. But still, at intervals he was enabled to speak of divine things with great force and clearness. On the evening of the fifteenth, he said, "There is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance. That text has been sadly misunderstood by me as well as by others. Where is that just person to be found? Alas! what must have become of me, if I had died this day, se'nnight? What should I have had to plead? My own righteousness! *That* would have been of great service to me, to be sure! Well, whither next? Why, to the mountains to fall upon us, and to the hills to cover us. I am not duly thankful for the mercy I have received. Perhaps I may ascribe some part of my insensibility to my great weakness of body. I hope at least that if I was better in health, it would be better with me in these respects also."

The next day, perceiving that his understanding began to suffer by the extreme weakness of his body, he said,

"I have been vain of my understanding and of my acquirements in this place; and now God has made me little better than an idiot, as much as to say, Now be proud if you can! Well, while I have any senses left, my thoughts will be poured out in the praise of God. I have an interest in Christ, in his blood and sufferings, and my sins are forgiven me. Have I not cause to praise him? When my understanding fails me quite, as I think it will soon, then he will pity my weakness."

Though the Lord intended that his warfare should be short, yet a warfare he was to have, and to be exposed to a measure of conflict with his own corruptions.

His pain being extreme, his powers of recollection much impaired, and the Comforter withholding for a season his sensible support, he was betrayed into a fretfulness and impatience of spirit which had never been permitted to show itself before. This appearance alarmed me, and, having an opportunity afforded me by everybody's absence, I said to him, "You were happier last Saturday than you are to-day. Are you entirely destitute of the consolations you then spoke of? And do you not sometimes feel comfort flowing into your heart from a sense of your acceptance with God?" He replied, "Sometimes I do, but sometimes I am left to desperation." The same day in the evening, he said, "Brother, I believe you are often uneasy, lest what lately passed should come to nothing." I replied by

asking him, whether, when he found his patience and his temper fail, he endeavored to pray for power against his corruptions? He answered, "Yes, a thousand times in a day. But I see myself odiously vile and wicked. If I die in this illness, I beg you will place no other inscription over me than such as may just mention my name and the parish where I was minister; for that I ever had a being, and what sort of a being I had, cannot be too soon forgotten. I was just beginning to be a deist, and had long desired to be so; and I will own to you what I never confessed before, that my function and the duties of it were a weariness to me which I could not bear. Yet, wretched creature and beast as I was, I was esteemed religious, though I lived without God in the world." About this time, I reminded him of the account of Janeway, which he once read at my desire. He said he had laughed at it in his own mind, and accounted it mere madness and folly. "Yet base as I am," said he, "I have no doubt now but God has accepted me also, and forgiven me all my sins."

I then asked him what he thought of my narrative?* He replied, "I thought it strange, and ascribed much of it to the state in which you had been. When I came to visit you in London, and found you in that deep distress, I would have given the universe to have administered

* Cowper's Memoir of Himself.

some comfort to you. You may remember that I tried every method of doing it. When I found that all my attempts were vain, I was shocked to the greatest degree. I began to consider your sufferings as a judgment upon you; and my inability to alleviate them, as a judgment upon myself. When Mr. M.* came, he succeeded in a moment. This surprised me; but it does not surprise me now. He had the key to your heart, which I had not. That which filled me with disgust against my office as a minister, was the same ill success which attended me in my own parish. There I endeavored to soothe the afflicted, and to reform the unruly by warning and reproof; but all that I could say in either case, was spoken to the wind, and attended with no effect."

There is that in the nature of salvation by grace, when it is truly and experimentally known, which prompts every person to think himself the most extraordinary instance of its power. Accordingly, my brother insisted upon the precedence in this respect; and upon comparing his case with mine, would by no means allow my deliverance to have been so wonderful as his own. He observed that, from the beginning, both his manner of life and his connections had been such as had a natural tendency to blind his eyes, and to confirm and rivet his prejudices against the truth. Blameless in his outward

* The Rev. Martin Madan.

conduct, and having no open immorality to charge himself with, his acquaintance had been with men of the same stamp, who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised the doctrine of the cross. Such were all who, from his earliest days, he had been used to propose to himself as patterns for his imitation. Not to go farther back, such was the clergyman under whom he received the first rudiments of his education; such was the schoolmaster, under whose instruction he was prepared for the university; and such were all the most admired characters, with whom he was most ambitious of being connected. He lamented the dark and Christless condition of the place, where learning and morality were all in all, and where, if a man were possessed of these qualifications, he neither doubted himself, nor did anybody else question the safety of his state. He concluded, therefore, that to show the fallacy of such appearances, and to root out the prejudices which long familiarity with them had fastened upon his mind, required a more than ordinary exertion of divine power, and that the grace of God was more clearly manifested in such a work than in the conversion of one like me, who had no outside righteousness to boast of, and who, if I was ignorant of the truth, was not, however, so desperately prejudiced against it.

His thoughts, I suppose, had been led to this subject, when, one afternoon, while I was writing by the fire-

side, he thus addressed himself to the nurse, who sat at his bolster: "Nurse, I have lived three-and-thirty years, and I will tell you how I have spent them. When I was a boy, they taught me Latin; and because I was the son of a gentleman, they taught me Greek. These I learned under a sort of private tutor; at the age of fourteen, or thereabouts, they sent me to a public school, where I learned more Latin and Greek, and, last of all, to this place, where I have been learning more Latin and Greek still. Now has not this been a blessed life, and much to the glory of God?" Then directing his speech to me, he said, "Brother, I was going to say I was born in such a year; but I correct myself. I would rather say, in such a year I came into the world. You know when I was born."

As long as he expected to recover, the souls committed to his care were much upon his mind. One day, when none was present but myself, he prayed thus: "O Lord, thou art good; goodness is thy very essence, and thou art the fountain of wisdom. I am a poor worm, weak and foolish as a child. Thou hast intrusted many souls unto me; and I have not been able to teach them, because I knew thee not myself. Grant me ability, O Lord, for I can do nothing without thee, and give me grace to be faithful."

In a time of severe and continual pain, he smiled in my face, and said, "Brother, I am as happy as a king."

And the day before he died, when I asked him what sort of a night he had had, he replied, "A sad night, not a wink of sleep." I said, "Perhaps, though, your mind has been composed, and you have been enabled to pray?" "Yes," said he, "I have endeavored to spend the hours in the thoughts of God and prayer; I have been much comforted, and all the comfort I got came to me in this way."

The next morning I was called up to be witness of his last moments. I found him in a deep sleep, lying perfectly still, and seemingly free from pain. I stayed with him till they pressed me to quit his room, and in about five minutes after I had left him he died; sooner, indeed, than I expected, though for some days there had been no hopes of his recovery. His death at that time was rather extraordinary; at least I thought it so; for, when I took leave of him the night before, he did not seem worse or weaker than he had been, and, for aught that appeared, might have lasted many days; but the Lord, in whose sight the death of his saints is precious, cut short his sufferings, and gave him a speedy and peaceful departure.

He died at seven in the morning, on the 20th of March, 1770.

Thou art the source and centre of all minds,
Their only point of rest, eternal Word!

From Thee departing, they are lost and rove
At random, without honor, hope, or peace.
From Thee is all that soothes the life of man,
His high endeavor and his glad success,
His strength to suffer and his will to serve.
But oh! Thou bounteous Giver of all good,
Thou art of all Thy gifts Thyself the crown.
Give what Thou canst, without Thee we are poor,
And with Thee rich, take what Thou wilt away.

The fraternal love and piety of Cowper are beautifully illustrated in this most interesting document. No sooner had he experienced the value of religion, and its inward peace and hope, in his own heart, than he feels solicitous to communicate the blessing to others. True piety is always diffusive. It does not, like the sordid miser, hoard up the treasure for self-enjoyment, but is enriched by giving, and impoverished only by withholding.

Friends, parents, kindred, first it will embrace,
Our country next, and next all human race.

The prejudices of his brother, and yet his mild and amiable spirit of forbearance; the zeal of Cowper, and

its final happy result, impart to this narrative a singular degree of interest. Others would have been deterred by apparent difficulties; but true zeal is full of faith, as well as of love, and does not contemplate man's resistance, but God's mighty power.

The example of John Cowper furnishes also a remarkable evidence that a man may be distinguished by the highest endowments of human learning, and yet be ignorant of that knowledge which is emphatically called life eternal.

The distinction between the knowledge that is derived from books, and the wisdom that cometh from above, is drawn by Cowper with a happy and just discrimination.

> Knowledge and wisdom, far from being one,
> Have ofttimes no connection—knowledge dwells
> In heads replete with thoughts of other men;
> Wisdom in minds attentive to their own.
> Knowledge, a rude, unprofitable mass,
> The mere materials with which wisdom builds,
> Till smoothed, and squared, and fitted to its place,
> Does but encumber whom it seems to enrich.
> Knowledge is proud that he has learned so much;
> Wisdom is humble that he knows no more.

It is important to know how far the powers of human reason extend in matters of religion, and where they fail. Reason can examine the claims of divine revelation,

and determine its authority by the most conclusive arguments. It can expose error, and establish the truth; attack infidelity without its own entrenchments, and carry its victorious arms into the very camp of the enemy. It can defend all the outworks of religion, and vindicate its insulted majesty. But at this point its powers begin to fail. It cannot confer a *spiritual* apprehension of the truth in the understanding, nor a *spiritual* reception of it in the heart. This is the province of grace. "No man knoweth the things of God, but the Spirit of God, *and he to whom the Spirit hath revealed them.*" "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." Men of learning endeavor to attain to the knowledge of divine things, in the same manner as they acquire an insight into human things, that is, by human power and human teaching. "All thy children shall be taught of God." Not that human reason is superseded in its use. Man is always a rational and moral agent. But it is reason, conscious of its own weakness, simple in its views, and humble in its spirit, enlightened, guided and regulated in all its researches by the grace and wisdom that is from above.

John Cowper expresses the substance of this idea in the following emphatic words: "I have learned *that* in a moment, which I could not have learned by reading many books for many years. I have often studied these

points, and studied them with great attention, but was blinded by prejudice; and unless He, who alone is worthy to unloose the seals, had opened the book to me, I had been blinded still."

THE END.