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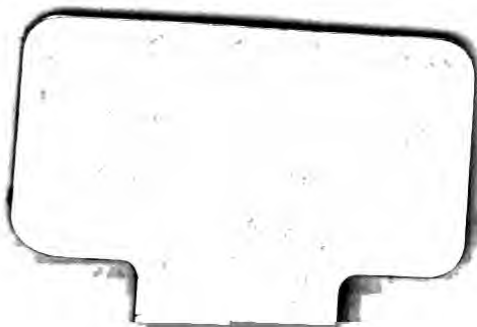
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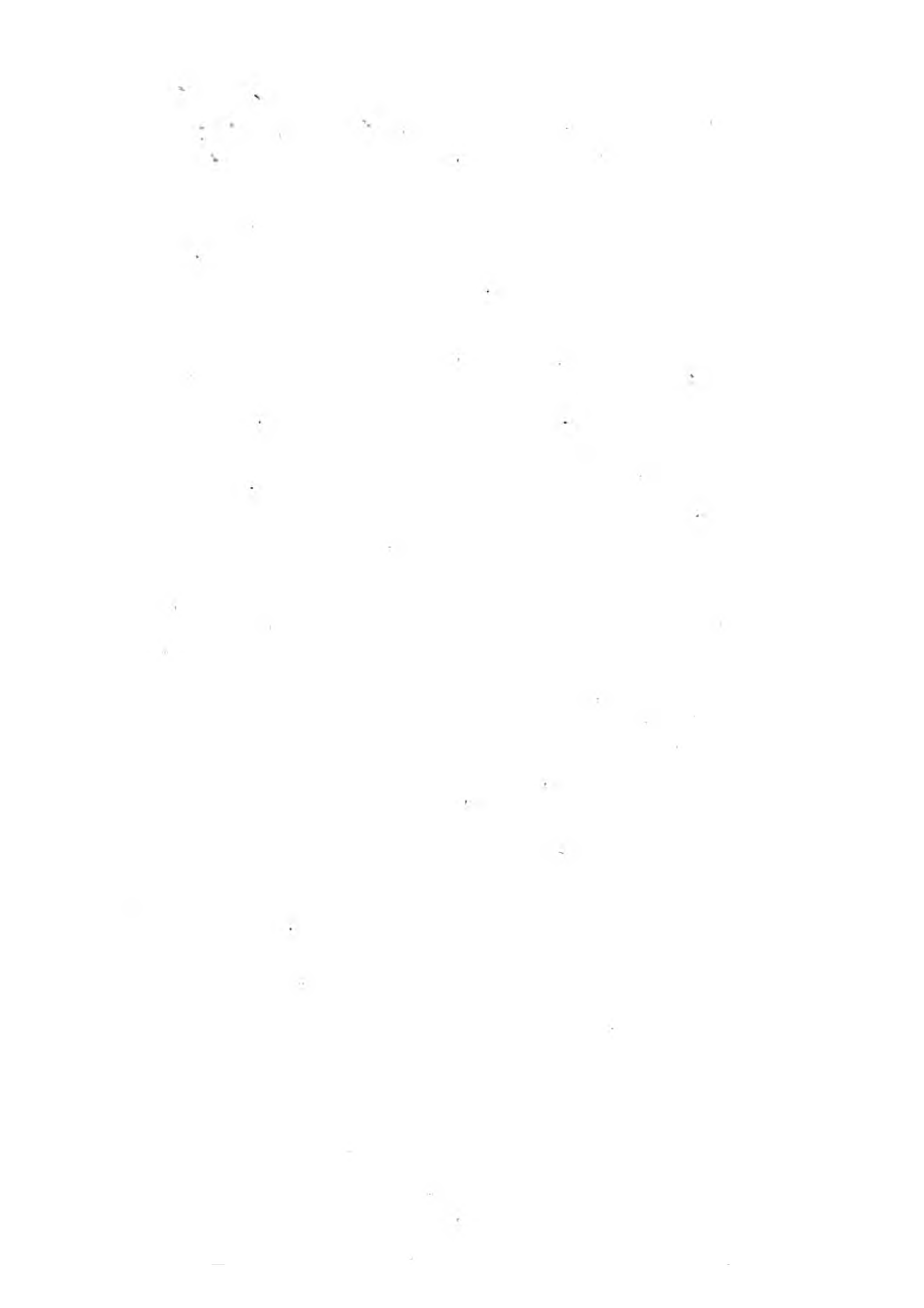
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From the collection of Richard Henry Bath.
Given by his executors, May 1934



M. Hey¹⁸²⁵

Ras. E 4056a



POEMS,
THE EARLY PRODUCTIONS
OF
WILLIAM COWPER;

NOW FIRST PUBLISHED FROM THE ORIGINALS IN THE
POSSESSION OF JAMES CROFT.

WITH
ANECDOTES OF THE POET.

COLLECTED FROM
LETTERS OF LADY HESKETH,
WRITTEN DURING HER RESIDENCE AT OLNEY.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR BALDWIN, CRADOCK, AND JOY.

1825.

**C. Baldwin, Printer,
New Bridge-Street, London.**

TO THE
RIGHT HON. COUNTESS COWPER.

MADAM,

WHEN I determined on publishing the following Poems, it was my wish to dedicate them to a lady of taste, and of elegant and amiable manners. With that impression, it was impossible to find any one who had a better claim to that character than Lady Cowper. I need not say, that I feel highly gratified in the opportunity of offering this my tribute of respect to one possessing these qualities in so eminent a degree; the more so, as I am persuaded, had the Poet

DEDICATION.

been living, it would have been done by himself, with greater abilities, but not with more sincerity, than by him, who has the honour of subscribing himself, with the greatest esteem,

Your Ladyship's

Most obliged,

And sincere friend,

JAMES CROFT.

PREFACE.

As it may be expected to mention the lady to whom the following Poems are addressed, it may not be deemed improper, at the same time, to notice the circumstances which occasioned them. The Life of Cowper having been already written, it is not necessary to repeat what his biographers have so ably done ; but if there is any thing relative to this great genius, which could not be known at the time when his Life was published, it will not be amiss to mention the same, as every act of Cowper cannot but be interesting. The lady to whom these Poems are addressed, under the name of Delia, was the second daughter of Ashley Cowper, son of the Judge, and nephew of Lord Chancellor Cowper. This lady (Miss Theodora Jane Cowper) was first cousin to the Poet, the son of the Reverend Doctor Cowper, Rector of Great Berkhamstead, and brother to Ashley

Cowper. The poet formed an early attachment for his cousin Theodora, an accomplished woman, with an elegant person, and possessing a superior understanding.

With such qualities, it is no wonder that he conceived a strong affection for her ; and the lady, sensible of her cousin's amiable disposition, regarded him with equal affection. But, unfortunately, her father, from an idea that the union of persons so nearly related was improper, refused to accede to the wishes of his daughter and nephew ; and as the former, from a strong sense of filial duty, would not consent to unite herself to her cousin without the approbation of her father, the happiness they had promised to themselves was altogether prevented.

But, though frustrated in their wishes, they did not cease to love, nor occasionally to meet. At this time these Poems were addressed to her on whose affections the Poet had placed all his happiness, still indulging the hope of possessing the object of his love. But it proved, alas ! otherwise, as appears by the poem in which he speaks so feelingly of his separation from her : after which, it was their fate never to meet again.

In consequence of this disappointment, and other circumstances, he gave up his professional pursuits, and retired into the country, with a depression of spirits which continued at times to affect this amiable person to the end of his life.

To the credit of the lady, she remained constant to him on whom she had placed her affections. Neither time nor absence could diminish her attachment. She preserved with the greatest care, for many years, these pleasing memorials of the beloved author ; when, for reasons known only to herself, she sent them in a sealed packet to a lady (her particular friend), with directions not to be opened till after her decease. This took place on the 22d of last October, and her friend having died a short time previous to that event, her executors sent the packet to me with other articles, according to the direction of that lady.

The Poems, though not equal to his later productions, yet appeared to me to possess the sweet muse of this delightful Poet, in no small degree. Nevertheless, on first reading them, much as I know any productions of Cowper would gratify his many admirers, yet I did not

feel disposed to make them public, fearing that my partiality might lead me to set a value upon them beyond their merit; and, knowing they could not add to his reputation, I was fearful of doing any thing to diminish the high character his poetry had so justly acquired. Not wishing, however, to deprive the public of any thing so interesting, and yet dreading to do any thing to lessen the fame of this admired Poet, I resolved to take the opinion of those whose judgment was superior to mine, and so necessary to guide me in a point of this delicate nature. Under this impression, I placed them in the hands of some friends highly distinguished for talents and judgment.

Sanctioned by such authority, I shall feel most happy in having it in my power to gratify the admirers of Cowper with these his early productions, trusting they will afford as much delight to their readers, as they have to

Your obedient servant,

J. C.

EARLY POEMS.

OF HIMSELF.

WILLIAM was once a bashful youth,
His modesty was such,
That one might say (to say the truth)
He rather had too much.

Some said that it was want of sense,
And others, want of spirit,
(So blest a thing is impudence)
While others could not bear it.

But some a different notion had,
And at each other winking,
Observed that though he little said,
He paid it off with thinking.

Howe'er, it happen'd, by degrees,
He mended and grew perter,
In company was more at ease,
And dress'd a little smarter.

Nay now and then would look quite gay,
As other people do ;
And sometimes said, or try'd to say
A witty thing or so.

He eyed the women, and made free
To comment on their shapes,
So that there was, or seem'd to be,
No fear of a relapse.

The women said, who thought him rough,
But now no longer foolish,
The creature may do well enough,
But wants a deal of polish.

At length improved from head to heel,
'Twere scarce too much to say,
No dancing bear was so genteel,
Or half so dégagé.

Now that a miracle so strange
May not in vain be shown,
Let the dear maid who wrought the change
E'er claim him for her own.

IN A LETTER TO C. P. ESQ.

ILL WITH THE RHEUMATISM.

GRANT me the muse, ye Gods ! whose humble flight
Seeks not the mountain-top's pernicious heights ;
Who can the tall Parnassian cliff forsake,
To visit oft the still Lethean lake ;
Now her slow pinions brush the silent shore,
Now gently skim the unwrinkled waters o'er,
There dips her downy plumes, there upward flies,
And sheds soft slumbers in her votary's eyes.

IN A LETTER TO THE SAME.

IN IMITATION OF SHAKSPEARE.

TRUST me the meed of praise, dealt thriftily
From the nice scale of judgment, honours more
Than does the lavish and o'erbearing tide
Of profuse courtesy: not all the gems
Of India's richest soil at random spread
O'er the gay vesture of some glittering dame
Give such alluring vantage to the person,
As the scant lustre of a few, with choice
And comely guise of ornament disposed.

PSALM CXXXVII.

To Babylon's proud waters brought,
In bondage where we lay,
With tears on Sion's Hill we thought,
And sigh'd our hours away ;
Neglected on the willows hung
Our useless harps, while ev'ry tongue
Bewail'd the fatal day.

Then did the base insulting foe
Some joyous notes demand,
Such as in Sion used to flow
From Judah's happy band—
Alas! what joyous notes have we
Our country spoil'd, no longer free,
And in a foreign land ?

Oh! Solyma! if e'er thy praise
Be silent in my song,
Rude and unpleasing be the lays,
And artless be my tongue!
Thy name my fancy still employs;
To thee, great fountain of my joys,
My sweetest airs belong.

Remember, Lord! that hostile sound,
When Edom's children cry'd,
Razed be her turrets to the ground,
And humbled be her pride;
Remember, Lord! and let the foe
The terror of thy vengeance know—
The vengeance they defied.

Thou too, great Babylon, shall fall
A victim to our God;
Thy monstrous crimes already call
For Heaven's chastising rod.

Happy who shall thy little ones
Relentless dash against the stones,
And spread their limbs abroad.

SONG.

No more shall hapless Celia's ears
Be flatter'd with the cries
And lovers drown'd in floods of tears,
Or murder'd by her eyes ;
No serenades to break her rest,
Nor songs her slumbers to molest,
With my fa, la, la.

The fragrant flowers that once would bloom
And flourish in her hair,
Since she no longer breathes perfume
Their odours to repair,

Must fade, alas! and wither now,
As placed on any common brow,
 With my fa, la, la.

Her lip, so winning and so meek,
 No longer has its charms;
As well she might by whistling seek
 To lure us to her arms;
Affected once, 'tis real now,
As her forsaken gums may show,
 With my fa, la, la.

The down that on her chin so smooth
 So lovely once appear'd,
That, too, has left her with her youth,
 Or sprouts into a beard;
As fields, so green when newly sown,
With stubble stiff are overgrown,
 With my fa, la, la.

Then, Celia, leave your apish tricks,
And change your girlish airs,
For ombre, snuff, and politics,
Those joys that suit your years;
No patches can lost youth recal,
Nor whitewash prop a tumbling wall.
With my fa, la, la.

WRITTEN IN A QUARREL,

*THE DELIVERY OF IT PREVENTED BY A
RECONCILIATION.*

THINK, Delia, with what cruel haste
Our fleeting pleasures move,
Nor heedless thus in sorrow waste
The moments due to love.

Be wise, my fair, and gently treat,
These few that are our friends ;
Think thus abused, what sad regret
Their speedy flight attends !

Sure in those eyes I loved so well,
And wish'd so long to see,
Anger I thought could never dwell,
Or anger aim'd at me.

No bold offence of mine I knew
Should e'er provoke your hate ;
And early taught to think you true,
Still hoped a gentler fate.

With kindness bless the present hour,
Or oh ! we meet in vain !
What can we do in absence more
Than suffer and complain ?

Fated to ills beyond redress,
We must endure our woe ;
The days allow'd us to possess,
'Tis madness to forego.

Cutfield, July, 1752.

AN APOLOGY

FOR NOT SHOWING HER WHAT I HAD WROTE.

DID not my muse (what can she less)
Perceive her own unworthiness,
Could she by some well chosen theme,
But hope to merit your esteem,
She would not thus conceal her lays,
Ambitious to deserve your praise.
But should my Delia take offence,
And frown on her impertinence,

In silence, sorrowing and forlorn,
Would the despairing trifler mourn ;
Curse her ill-tuned, unpleasing lute,
Then sigh and sit for ever mute.
In secret, therefore, let her play,
Squand'ring her idle notes away ;
In secret as she chants along,
Cheerful and careless in her song ;
Nor heed she whether harsh or clear,
Free from each terror, ev'ry fear,
From that, of all most dreaded, free,
The terror of offending *Thee*.

At the same place.

DELIA, th' unkindest girl on earth,
When I besought the fair,
That favour of intrinsic worth,
A ringlet of her hair,—

Refused that instant to comply
With my absurd request,
For reasons she could specify,
Some twenty score at least.

Trust me, my dear, however odd
It may appear to say,
I sought it merely to defraud
Thy spoiler of his prey.

Yet when its sister locks shall fade,
As quickly fade they must,
When all their beauties are decay'd,
Their gloss, their colour, lost,—

Ah then! if haply to my share
Some slender pittance fall,
If I but gain one single hair,
Nor age usurp them all ;—

When you behold it still as sleek,
As lovely to the view,
As when it left thy snowy neck—
That Eden where it grew—

Then shall my Delia's self declare,
That I profess'd the truth,
And have preserved my little share
In everlasting youth.

At the same place.

THIS evening, Delia, you and I
Have managed most delightfully,
For with a frown we parted ;
Having contrived some trifle that
We both may be much troubled at,
And sadly disconcerted.

Yet well as each perform'd their part,
We might perceive it was but art ;
And that we both intended
To sacrifice a little ease ;
For all such petty flaws as these
Are made but to be mended.

You knew, Dissembler ! all the while,
How sweet it was to reconcile

After this heavy pelt ;
That we should gain by this allay
When next we met, and laugh away
The care we never felt.

Happy ! when we but seek t'endure
A little pain, then find a cure
By double joy requited ;
For friendship, like a sever'd bone,
Improves and joins a stronger tone
When aptly reunited.

Berkhamstead.

BID adieu, my sad heart, bid adieu to thy peace,
Thy pleasure is past, and thy sorrows increase ;
See the shadows of evening how far they extend,
And a long night is coming, that never may end ;

For the sun is now set that enliven'd the scene,
And an age must be past e'er it rises again.

Already deprived of its splendour and heat,
I feel thee more slowly, more heavily beat ;
Perhaps overstrain'd with the quick pulse of pleasure,
Thou art glad of this respite to beat at thy leisure ;
But the sigh of distress shall now weary thee more
Than the flutter and tumult of passion before.

The heart of a lover is never at rest,
With joy overwhelm'd, or with sorrow oppress'd :
When Delia is near, all is ecstasy then,
And I even forget I must lose her again :
When absent, as wretched, as happy before,
Despairing I cry, I shall see her no more.

At Berkhamstead.

WRITTEN AFTER LEAVING HER AT
NEW BURNS.

How quick the change from joy to woe,
How chequer'd is our lot below !
Seldom we view the prospect fair,
Dark clouds of sorrow, pain, and care,
(Some pleasing intervals between)
Scowl over more than half the scene.
Last week with Delia, gentle maid !
Far hence in happier fields I stray'd,
While on her dear enchanting tongue
Soft sounds of grateful welcome hung,
For absence had withheld it long. }
Welcome my long-lost love, she said,
E'er since our adverse fates decreed
That we must part, and I must mourn
'Till once more blest by thy return,

Love, on whose influence I relied
For all the transports I enjoy'd,
Has play'd the cruel tyrant's part,
And turn'd tormentor to my heart ;
But let me hold thee to my breast,
Dear partner of my joy and rest,
And not a pain, and not a fear,
Or anxious doubt, shall enter there.—
Happy thought I, the favour'd youth,
Blest with such undissembled truth !—
Five suns successive rose and sat,
And saw no monarch in his state,
Wrapt in the blaze of majesty,
So free from every care as I.—
Next day the scene was overcast,
Such day till then I never pass'd,—
For on that day, relentless fate !
Delia and I must separate

Yet e'er we look'd our last farewell,
From her dear lips this comfort fell:—
“ Fear not that time, where'er we rove,
“ Or absence, shall abate my love.”
And can I doubt, my charming maid !
As unsincere what you have said ?
Banish'd from thee to what I hate,
Dull neighbours and insipid chat,
No joy to cheer me, none in view,
But the dear hope of meeting you ;—
And that through passion's optic seen,
With ages interposed between,—
Blest with the kind support you give,
'Tis by your promised truth I live ;
How deep my woes, how fierce my flame,
You best may tell, who feel the same.

ON HER ENDEAVOURING TO CONCEAL
HER GRIEF AT PARTING.

AH ! wherefore should my weeping maid suppress
Those gentle signs of undissembled woe ?
When from soft love proceeds the deep distress,
Ah ! why forbid the willing tears to flow ?

Since for my sake each dear translucent drop
Breaks forth, best witness of thy truth sincere,
My lips should drink the precious mixture up,
And, e'er it falls, receive the trembling tear.

Trust me, these symptoms of thy faithful heart,
In absence, shall my dearest hope sustain,
Delia ! since such thy sorrow that we part,
Such when we meet thy joy shall be again.

Hard is that heart and unsubdued by love
That feels no pain, nor ever heaves a sigh,
Such hearts the fiercest passions only prove,
Or freeze in cold insensibility.

Oh ! then indulge thy grief, nor fear to tell
The gentle source from whence thy sorrows flow !
Nor think it weakness when we love to feel,
Nor think it weakness what we feel to show.

THE SYMPTOMS OF LOVE.

WOULD my Delia know if I love, let her take
My last thought at night, and the first when I wake ;
With my prayers and best wishes preferr'd for her sake.

Let her guess what I muse on, when rambling alone
I stride o'er the stubble each day with my gun,
Never ready to shoot till the covey is flown.

Let her think what odd whimsies I have in my brain,
When I read one page over and over again
And discover at last that I read it in vain.

Let her say why so fix'd and so steady my look,
Without ever regarding the person who spoke,
Still affecting to laugh, without hearing the joke.

Or why when with pleasure her praises I hear,
(That sweetest of melody sure to my ear,)
I attend, and at once inattentive appear.

And lastly, when summon'd to drink to my flame,
Let her guess why I never once mention her name,
Though herself and the woman I love are *the same*.

Drayton, March, 1753.

AN ATTEMPT AT THE MANNER OF
WALLER.

DID not thy reason and thy sense,
With most persuasive eloquence,
Convince me that obedience due
None may so justly claim as you,
By right of beauty you would be
Mistress o'er my heart and me.

Then fear not I should e'er rebel,
My gentle love! I might as well
A forward peevishness put on,
And quarrel with the mid-day sun;
Or question who gave him a right
To be so fiery and so bright.

Nay, this were less absurd and vain
Than disobedience to thy reign :
His beams are often too severe ;
But thou art mild, as thou art fair ;
First from necessity we own your sway,
Then scorn our freedom, and by choice obey.

HOPE, like the short-lived ray, that gleams awhile
Through wintry skies, upon the frozen waste,
Cheers e'en the face of misery to a smile ;
But soon the momentary pleasure's past !

How oft, my Delia ! since our last farewell,
(Years that have roll'd since that distressful hour,)
Grieved I have said, when most our hopes prevail,
Our promised happiness is least secure.

Oft I have thought the scene of troubles closed,
And hoped once more to gaze upon your charms ;
As oft some dire mischance has interposed,
And snatch'd th' expected blessing from my arms.

The seaman thus, his shatter'd vessel lost,
Still vainly strives to shun the threat'ning death ;
And while he thinks to gain the friendly coast,
And drops his feet, and feels the sands beneath :

Borne by the wave, steep-sloping from the shore,
Back to th' inclement deep again he beats
The surge aside, and seems to tread secure ;
And now the reflux wave his baffled toil defeats.

Had you, my love, forbade me to pursue
My fond attempt, disdainfully retired,
And with proud scorn compell'd me to subdue
Th' ill-fated passion by yourself inspired ;

Then haply to some distant spot removed,
 Hopeless to gain, unwilling to molest
With fond entreaties whom I dearly loved,
 Despair or absence had redeem'd my rest.

But now, sole partner in my Delia's heart,
 Yet doom'd far off in exile to complain,
Eternal absence cannot ease my smart,
 And hope subsists but to prolong my pain.

Oh then ! kind heaven, be this my latest breath ;
 Here end my life, or make it worth my care ;
Absence from whom we love is worse than death,
 And frustrate hope severer than despair.

ON THE PICTURE OF A SLEEPING CHILD.

FROM THE LATIN OF VINCENT BOURNE.

SWEET babe ! whose image here express'd
Does thy peaceful slumbers show ;
Guilt or fear, to break thy rest,
Never did thy spirit know.

Soothing slumbers ! soft repose !
Such as mock the painter's skill,
Such as innocence bestows,
Harmless infant ! lull thee still !

R. S. S.

ALL-WORSHIPP'D gold ! thou mighty mystery !
Say by what name shall I address thee rather,
Our blessing, or our bane ? without thy aid,
The gen'rous pangs of pity but distress
The human heart, that fain would feel the bliss
Of blessing others ; and, enslaved by thee,
Far from relieving woes which others feel,
Misers oppress themselves. Our blessing then
With virtue when possess'd ; without, our bane !
If in my bosom unperceived there lurk
The deep-sown seeds of av'rice or ambition,
Blame me, ye great ones, (for I scorn your censure)
But let the gen'rous and the good commend me ;
That to my Delia I direct them all,
The worthiest object of a virtuous love.
Oh ! to some distant scene, a willing exile
From the wild uproar of this busy world,

Were it my fate with Delia to retire ;
With her to wander through the sylvan shade ;
Each morn, or o'er the moss-imbrowned turf,
Where, blest as the prime parents of mankind
In their own Eden, we would envy none ;
But, greatly pitying whom the world calls happy,
Gently spin out the silken thread of life ;
While from her lips attentive I receive
The tend'rest dictates of the purest flame,
And from her eyes (where soft complacence sits
Illumined with the radiant beams of sense)
Tranquillity beyond a monarch's reach !
Forgive me, heaven ! this only av'rice
My soul indulges ; I confess the crime,
(If to esteem, to covet such perfection
Be criminal,) Oh grant me, Delia ! grant me wealth !
Wealth to alleviate, not increase my wants,
And grant me virtue, without which nor wealth
Nor Delia can avail to make me blest.

WRITTEN IN A FIT OF ILLNESS.

R. S. S.

IN these sad hours, a prey to ceaseless pain,
While feverish pulses leap in ev'ry vein,
When each faint breath the last short effort seems
Of life just parting from my feeble limbs ;
How wild soe'er my wand'ring thoughts may be,
Still, gentle Delia ! still they turn on thee !
At length if, slumbering to a short repose,
A sweet oblivion frees me from my woes,
Thy form appears, thy footsteps I pursue,
Through springy vales, and meadows wash'd in dew ;
Thy arm supports me to the fountain's brink,
Where, by some secret pow'r forbid to drink,
Gasping with thirst, I view the tempting flood
That flies my touch, or thickens into mud,
Till thine own hand immersed the goblet dips,

And bears it streaming to my burning lips ;
There borne aloft on fancy's wing we fly,
Like souls embodied to their native sky ;
Now ev'ry rock, each mountain, disappears ;
And the round earth an even surface wears ;
When lo ! the force of some resistless weight
Bears me straight down from that pernicious height ;
Parting, in vain our struggling arms we close ;
Abhorred forms, dire phantoms interpose ;
With trembling voice on thy loved name I call,
And gulphs yawn ready to receive my fall ;
From these fallacious visions of distress
I wake ; nor are my real sorrows less.
Thy absence, Delia ! heightens every ill,
And gives e'en trivial pains the power to kill.
Oh ! wert thou near me ; yet that wish forbear !
'Twere vain, my love—'twere vain to wish thee near,
Thy tender heart would heave with anguish too ;
And by partaking, but increase my woe.

Alone I'll grieve, till, gloomy sorrow past,
Health, like the cheerful day-spring, comes at last—
Comes fraught with bliss to banish ev'ry pain,
Hope, joy, and peace, and Delia in her train !

MORTALS ! around your destined heads,
Which fly the shafts of death,
And lo ! the savage spoiler spreads
A thousand toils beneath.

In vain we trifle with our fate,
Try every art in vain ;
At best we but prolong the date,
And lengthen out our pain.

Fondly we think all danger fled,
For death is ever nigh ;
Outstrips our unavailing speed,
Or meets us as we fly.

Thus the wreck'd mariner may strive
Some desert shore to gain,
Secure of life, if he survive
The fury of the main.

But there, to famine doom'd a prey,
Finds, the mistaken wretch !
He but escaped the troubled sea,
To perish on the beach.

Since then in vain we strive to guard
Our frailty from the foe ;
Lord, let me live not unprepared
To meet the fatal blow !

SEE where the Thames, the purest stream
That wavers to the noon-day beam,
Divides the vale below :
While like a vein of liquid ore
His waves enrich the happy shore,
Still shining as they flow.

Nor yet, my Delia ! to the main
Runs the sweet tide without a stain,
Unsullied as it seems :
The nymphs of many a sable flood
Deform'd with streaks of oozy mud
The bosom of the Thames.

Some idle rivulets, that feed
And suckle ev'ry noisome weed,
A sandy bottom boast :
For ever bright, for ever clear,
The trifling shallow rills appear
In their own channel lost.

Thus fares it with the human soul,
Where copious floods of passion roll,
 By genuine love supply'd :
Fair in itself the current shows,
But ah ! a thousand anxious woes
 Pollute the noble tide.

These are emotions known to few ;
For where at most a vap'ry dew
 Surrounds the tranquil heart,
Then as the triflers never prove
The glad excess of real love,
 They never prove the smart.

Oh ! then my life, at last relent,
Though cruel the reproach I sent,
 My sorrow was unfeign'd :
Your passion, had I loved you not,
You might have scorn'd, renounced, forgot,
 And I had ne'er complain'd.

While you indulge a groundless fear,
Th' imaginary woes you bear
 Are real woes to me :
But thou art kind, and good thou art,
Nor wilt, by wronging thine own heart,
 Unjustly punish me.

How blest the youth whom Fate ordains
A kind relief from all his pains,
 In some admired fair ;
Whose tend'rest wishes finds express'd
Their own resemblance in her breast
 Exactly copied there.

What good soe'er the Gods dispense,
Th' enjoyment of its influence
Still on her love depends ;
Her love the shield that guards his heart,
Or wards the blow, or blunts the dart,
That peevish Fortune sends.

Thus, Delia, while thy love endures
The flame my happy breast secures
From Fortune's fickle pow'r ;
Change as she list, she may increase,
But not abate my happiness,
Confirm'd by thee before.

Thus while I share her smiles with thee,
Welcome, my love, shall ever be
The favours she bestows ;
Yet not on those I found my bliss,
But in the noble ecstacies
The faithful bosom knows.

And when she prunes her wings for flight,
And flutters nimbly from my sight,
Contented I resign
Whate'er she gave ; thy love alone
I can securely call my own,
Happy while that is mine.

UPON A VENERABLE RIVAL.

FULL thirty frosts since thou wert young
Have chill'd the wither'd grove,
Thou wretch ! and hast thou lived so long,
Nor yet forgot to love ?

Ye Sages ! spite of your pretences
To wisdom, you must own
Your folly frequently commences
When you acknowledge none.

Not that I deem it weak to love,
Or folly to admire,
But ah ! the pangs we lovers prove
Far other years require.

Unheeded on the youthful brow
The beams of Phœbus play,
But unsupported Age stoops low
Beneath the sultry ray.

For once, then, if untutor'd youth,
Youth unapproved by years,
May chance to deviate into truth,
When your experience errs ;

For once attempt not to despise
What I esteem a rule :
Who early loves, though young, is wise—
Who old, though grey, a fool.

AN ODE,

ON READING MR. RICHARDSON'S HISTORY OF
SIR CHARLES GRANDISON.

SAY, ye apostate and profane
Wretches who blush not to disdain
Allegiance to your God,—
Did e'er your idly-wasted love
Of virtue for her sake remove
And lift you from the crowd ?

Would you the race of glory run,
Know, the devout, and they alone,
Are equal to the task :
The labours of th' illustrious course
Far other than th' unaided force
Of human vigour ask.

To arm against repeated ill
The patient heart too brave to feel
 The tortures of despair :
Nor safer yet high-crested Pride,
When wealth flows in with ev'ry tide
 To gain admittance there.

To rescue from the tyrant's sword
Th' oppress'd ; unseen, and unimplored,
 To cheer the face of woe ;
From lawless insult to defend
An orphan's right, a fallen friend,
 And a forgiven foe ;

These, these distinguish from the crowd,
And these alone, the great and good,
 The guardians of mankind :
Whose bosoms with these virtues heave,
Oh with what matchless speed they leave
 The multitude behind !

Then ask ye from what source on earth
Virtues like these derived their birth ?

Derived from Heaven alone :
Full on that favour'd breast they shine
Where *faith* and *resignation* join
To call the blessing down.

Such is that heart—but while the muse
Thy theme, O Richardson, pursues,
Her feebler spirits faint,
She cannot reach, and shall not wrong
That subject for an angel's song,
The hero and the saint.

A SONG.

THE sparkling eye, the mantling cheek,

The polish'd front, the snowy neck,

How seldom we behold in one !

Glassy locks, and brow serene,

Venus' smiles, Diana's mien,

All meet in you, and you alone.

Beauty, like other pow'rs, maintains

Her empire, and by *union* reigns ;

Each single feature faintly warms :

But where at once we view display'd

Unblemish'd grace, the perfect maid

Our eyes, our ears, our heart alarms.

So when on earth the God of day
Obliquely sheds his temper'd ray,
 Through convex orbs the beams transmit,
The beams that gently warm'd before,
Collected, gently warm no more,
 But glow with more prevailing heat.

A SONG.

ON the green margin of the brook
 Despairing Phyllida reclined,
Whilst ev'ry sigh, and ev'ry look,
 Declared the anguish of her mind.

Am I less lovely then (she cries) ?
 And in the waves her form survey'd ;
Oh yes, I see my languid eyes,
 My faded cheek, my colour fled :

These eyes no more like light'ning pierced,
These cheeks grew pale when Damon first
His Phyllida betray'd.

The rose he in his bosom wore,
How oft upon my breast was seen !
And when I kiss'd the drooping flow'r,
Behold, he cried, it blooms again !
The wreaths that bound my braided hair,
Himself next day was proud to wear
At church or on the green.

While thus sad Phyllida lamented,
Chance brought unlucky *Thyrsis* on,
Unwillingly the nymph consented,
But Damon first the cheat begun.
He wiped the fallen tears away,
Then sigh'd and blush'd, as who should say
Ah ! *Thyrsis*, I am won.

TO DELIA.

1755.

ME to whatever state the Gods assign,
Believe, my love, whatever state be mine,
Ne'er shall my breast one anxious sorrow know,
Ne'er shall my heart confess a real woe ;
If to thy share heaven's choicest blessings fall,
As thou hast virtue to deserve them all :
Yet vain, alas ! that idle hope would be
That builds on happiness remote from thee.
Oh ! may thy charms, whate'er our fate decrees,
Please, as they must, but let them only please—
Not like the sun with equal influence shine,
Nor warm with transport any heart but mine.
Ye who from wealth th' ill-grounded title boast
To claim whatever beauty charms you most ;

Ye sons of fortune, who consult alone
Her parents' will, regardless of her own,
Know that a love like ours, a gen'rous flame,
No wealth can purchase, and no pow'r reclaim.
The soul's affection can be only given
Free, unextorted, as the grace of heaven.

Is there whose faithful bosom can endure
Pangs fierce as mine, nor ever hope a cure ?
Who sighs in absence of the dear-loved maid,
Nor summons once indiff'rence to his aid ?
Who can, like me, the nice resentment prove,
The thousand soft disquietudes of love ;
The trivial strifes that cause a real pain ;
The real bliss when reconciled again.
Let him alone dispute the real prize,
And read his sentence in my Delia's eyes ;
There shall he read all gentleness and truth,
But not himself, the dear distinguish'd youth ;

Pity for him perhaps they may express—
Pity, that will but heighten his distress.
But, wretched rival ! he must sigh to see
The sprightlier rays of love directed all to me.
 And thou, dear antidote of ev'ry pain
Which fortune can inflict, or love ordain
Since early love has taught thee to despise
What the world's worthless vot'ry's only prize,
Believe, my love ! no less the gen'rous God
Rules in my breast, his ever blest abode ;
There has he driven each gross desire away,
Directing ev'ry wish and ev'ry thought to thee !
Then can I ever leave my Delia's arms,
A slave, devoted to inferior charms ?
Can e'er my soul her reason so disgrace ?
For what blest minister of heavenly race
Would quit that heaven to find a happier place.

ODE.

SUPPOSED TO BE WRITTEN ON THE MARRIAGE

OF A FRIEND.

THE magic lyre, whose fascinating sound
Seduced the savage monsters from their cave ;
Drew rocks and trees, and forms uncouth around,
And bade wild Hebrus hush his list'ning wave ;
No more thy undulating waters flow
O'er Thracian wilds of everlasting snow !

Awake to sweeter sounds, thou magic lyre,
And paint a lover's bliss—a lover's pain—
Far nobler triumphs now thy notes inspire,—
For see, Euridice attends thy strain ;
Her smile, a prize beyond the conjuror's aim—
Superior to the cancell'd breath of fame.

From her sweet brow to chase the gloom of care,
To check that tear that dims the beaming eye,
To bid her heart the rising sigh forbear,
And flush her orient cheek with brighter joy,
In that dear breast soft sympathy to move,
And touch the springs of rapture and of love.

Ah me ! how long bewilder'd and astray,
Lost and benighted, did my footsteps rove,
Till, sent by heaven to cheer my pathless ray,
A star arose—the radiant star of love.
The God propitious join'd our willing hands,
And Hymen wreathed us in his rosy bands.

Yet not the beaming eye, or placid brow,
Or golden tresses, hid the subtle dart ;
To charms superior far than those I bow,
And nobler worth enslaves my vanquish'd heart ;
The beauty, elegance, and grace combined,
Which beam transcendant from that angel mind ;

While vulgar passions—meteors of a day,
 Expire before the chilling blasts of age,
Our holy flame, with pure and steady ray,
 Its glooms shall brighten, and its pangs assuage ;
By Virtue (sacred vestal) fed, shall shine,
And warm our fainting souls with energy divine.



ANECDOTES.

THE following anecdotes were collected from letters of Lady Hesketh, written from Olney to her sister, Miss Theodora Jane Cowper, the lady mentioned in the Preface to these Poems. Lady Hesketh was the eldest daughter of Ashley Cowper, the Lady to whom so many letters are addressed in Hayley's Life of the Poet, and possessing the most amiable manners, as well as great good sense, and a cultivated mind.

During the early part of her life, she saw much of her near relation ; and, after her marriage with Sir Thomas Hesketh, lived in habits of the greatest intimacy and friendship with him, till unfortunate circumstances obliged him to separate himself from his family and friends.

At the time Lady Hesketh went to Olney, Cowper was busily employed in translating Homer ; and it appears that she assisted him in copying that work, and he was no doubt much delighted in having so fair a copyist.

ANECDOTES, &c.

LADY HESKETH, in speaking of Mrs. Unwin, says, "She is very far from grave; on the contrary she is cheerful and gay, and laughs *de bon cœur* upon the smallest provocation. Amidst all the little puritanical words, which fall from her *de tems en tems*, she seems to have by nature a great fund of gaiety—great indeed must it have been, not to have been totally overcome by the close confinement in which she has lived, and the anxiety she must have undergone for one whom she certainly loves as well as one human being can love another. I will not say she

idolizes him, because that she would think wrong but she certainly seems to possess the truest regard and affection for this excellent creature, and, as I before said, has, in the most literal sense of those words, no will, or shadow of inclination, but what is *his*. My account of Mrs. Unwin may seem, perhaps, to you, on comparing my letters, contradictory; but when you consider that I began to write at the moment, and at the first moment that I saw her, you will not wonder. Her character develops itself by degrees; and though I might lead you to suppose her grave and melancholy, she is not so by any means. When she speaks upon grave subjects, she does express herself with a puritanical tone, and in puritanical expressions, but on all other subjects she seems to have a great disposition to cheerfulness and mirth; and indeed, had she not, she could not have gone through all she has. I

must say, too, that she seems to be very well read in the English poets, as appears by several little quotations, which she makes from time to time, and has a true taste for what is excellent in that way. There is something truly affectionate and sincere in her manner. No one can express more heartily than she does, her joy to have me at Olney ; and as this must be for his sake, it is an additional proof of her regard and esteem for him."

Lady Hesketh having lived much in the world, and amongst the highest circles, was fully competent to discover the character of others ; and it may, therefore, be concluded, that the pleasing description she gave of Mrs. Unwin was a true one ; and that her faults would not have escaped the notice of one so well acquainted with human nature. Mrs. Unwin certainly merited the approbation of Lady Hesketh, as appears from her

whole conduct; and if she had not conducted herself with propriety in every respect, it is very clear that it would have been impossible for Lady Hesketh (though from esteem and affection for her cousin, she had been anxious to be of use to him, and to visit him at Olney) to have remained there.

But in this retired spot she resides some time; and instead of finding it the abode of gloom, it is that of a most amiable, cheerful woman, contributing to the happiness and comfort of others. Mrs. Unwin was particular in attending to religious duties; and what a pleasing reflection is it to perceive, that, so far from being incompatible with a cheerful disposition, they contribute to it.

Lady Hesketh, in reply to a lady's remark, that the full moon was a charming sight, says, "But I could not enjoy it, as our good friend is always low at that time, and quite different to

what he is at any other ; yet with his wit, pierces even the gloom which this planet occasions ; for as we returned last night in the coach from an airing, and after he had talked much of the causes and effects of this wonderful planet, he at last, after fixing his eyes steadfastly upon it, said laughingly,

“ I'll instant write a most severe lampoon,
Of which the subject shall be yonder moon.”

“ He is now, I must say, quite freed from the lowering effects of this said moon : but told me this morning, that he was persuaded that there was no human creature who did not experience more or less its effects ; and added, that if I had any *crabs* amongst my acquaintance, he was sure, that, if I attended to them, I should find them always much more peevish and ill-tempered at the new and full moon, than at any other time ; for he was sure it influenced the temper as well as the

brain, when either was at all disordered. I told him my observations had not extended so far, but I should remember his advice, and take care not to irritate my cross friends at the full of the moon. I must add, it has no effect upon *his* temper, which appears equally sweet at all times."

Lady Hesketh, speaking of Cowper's removal to Weston, says, "He delights in the place, and likes the inhabitants much; and as they would greatly relieve the cruel solitude he lives in, I wish he could, with ease to himself, see as much of them as possible; for I am sure a little variety of company, and a little cheerful society, is necessary to him. Mrs. Unwin seems quite to think so, and expresses the greatest satisfaction that he has within the last year consented to mix a little more with human creatures. As to her, she does seem, in *real truth*, to have

no will left on earth but for his good, and literally no will but *his*. How she has supported herself, as she has done! the constant attendance, day and night, which she has gone through for the last thirteen years, is to me, I confess, incredible! And in justice to her, I must say, she does it all with an ease that relieves you from any idea of its being a state of sufferance. She speaks of him in the highest terms, and, by her astonishing management, he is never mentioned in Olney but with the highest respect and veneration."

But although he was so much respected at Olney, Lady Hesketh and Mrs. Unwin were anxious to remove him to Weston (a little distance from Olney), where a most amiable family was residing, who had naturally conceived a most favourable idea of this delightful being, from his poetical works and character, and Cowper had equally taken a liking to Mr. and Mrs. Throck-

morton, being encouraged by their pleasing and elegant manners to visit them, and by degrees to resume with them those sociable habits to which he had been so long a stranger. Lady H. says, "After supper the other night, we were talking of his shyness and dislike to strangers; and they both mentioned, as a singular circumstance, that when on young Unwin's first acquaintance with Cowper at Huntingdon, contrary to the inclination of his parents, who told him it was wrong to intrude on a gentleman who came there professedly to retire, they did at last, at their son's request, invite him to dine,—he said, that the moment he sat down to the table, he felt himself quite at home, and perfectly at ease. This certainly showed great sympathy between him and the family, which, though their subsequent kindness to him might occasion, one wonders should have taken place so immediately in a person so reserved by nature as our cousin."

Lady Hesketh, Mrs. Unwin, and the Poet, seem to have passed their time most happily, and at all times to have employed it well. Lady H. says, “ It proving a wet evening, we had no temptation to walk, but continued sitting comfortably round one dining-table without stirring till after supper. Our friend delights in a large table and a large chair : there are two of the latter comforts in my parlour. I am sorry to say, that he and I always spread ourselves out in them, leaving poor Mrs. Unwin to find all the comfort she can in a small one, half as high again as ours, and considerably harder than marble. However, she protests it is what she likes, that she prefers a high chair to a low one, and a hard to a soft one ; and I hope she is sincere ; indeed, I am persuaded she is. Her constant employment is knitting stockings, which she does with the finest needles I ever saw, and very nice they are (the stockings I mean). Our

cousin has not for many years worn any other than those of her manufacture. She knits silk, cotton, and worsted. She sits knitting on one side of the table in her spectacles, and he on the other reading to her (when he is not employed in writing) in *his*. In winter, his morning studies are always carried on in a room by himself; but as his evenings are spent in the winter in transcribing, he usually, I find, does this *vis-a-vis* Mrs. Unwin. At this time of the year he writes always in the morning, in what he calls his *boudoir*; this is in the garden; it has a door and a window; just holds a small table with a desk and two chairs; but though there are two chairs, and two persons *might* be contained therein, it would be with a degree of difficulty, for this cause—as I make a point of not disturbing a poet in his retreat, I go not there.”

That a person of his great genius, and so highly

connected, should have lived many years so ill provided with the comforts, and almost the necessaries of life, must be a matter of astonishment. He complained he had hardly any books till very lately, ever since he had resided at Olney. This must have been a sad deprivation to Cowper; and the want of them must have contributed to his natural depression of spirits; for he was always much delighted with any piece of humour, or a droll story; and Lady H. says, she had the satisfaction of making him laugh many a time since her arrival at Olney, and particularly when she related to him Mr. Jekyll's story of the Gloucestershire Attorneys. Another cause of the depression of his spirits was owing to the state of his mind in regard to religion, which, instead of affording him that consolation which it would most certainly have done, had it been directed properly, unfortunately, by a mistaken zeal of his

friend, worked so powerfully on the nice feelings of his refined intellects, as to occasion him perpetual misery, melancholy, and despondency ; that such was the case, the following remarks will clearly evince. In answer to Mrs. T. Cowper saying, in a letter to her sister, that she concluded her poor friend had been much more dull since Mr. Newton left Olney, Lady Hesketh replies :

“ I own I do not think so ; and could Mr. N. have been succeeded by some cheerful person, I should be certain he would not have lost by the change. Mr. Newton is an excellent man, I make no doubt ; and, to a strong minded man like himself, might have been of great use ; but to such a mind, such a tender mind, and to such a wounded, yet lively imagination as our cousin's, I am persuaded that eternal praying and preaching was too much ; nor could it, I think, be otherwise. One only proof of this I will give you,

which our cousin mentioned a few days ago, in casual conversation. The case was this:—he was mentioning that for one or two summers he had found himself under the necessity of taking his walk in the middle of the day, which, he thought, had hurt him a good deal: but, continued he, I could not help it, for it was when Mr. Newton was here, and we made it a rule to pass four days in the week together. We dined at one; and it was Mr. N.'s rule for tea to be on table at four o'clock, for at six we broke up. Well then, said I, if you had your time to yourself after six, you would have good time for an evening's walk, I should have thought. No, said he, after six we had service or lectures, or something of that kind, which lasted till supper. I made no reply, but could not, and cannot help thinking, they might have made a better use of a fine summer's evening, than by shutting them-

selves up to make long prayers." Lady H. proceeds :—

“ I hope I honour religion, and feel a reverence for religious persons ; but still (though I own the generality of the world are too careless, and devote too little time to these exercises), yet I do think there is something too puritanical in all this ; our Saviour, I am sure, constantly speaks against it, and blames the Pharisees in more places than one, who dealt in vain repetitions, and who think they shall be heard for their much speaking. But I do not mean to give you my sentiments upon this conduct *generally*, but only as it might affect our cousin ; and indeed for him, I think it could not be either proper, or wholesome.”

One cannot but agree in the sentiments of Lady Hesketh, and lament, that the mistaken zeal of Mr. Newton should have been exerted so much to the injury of this excellent being, who really does

not appear by any part of his habits and conduct to have committed such sins, as to have required such *severe discipline*, which not only injured his health, but affected his mind to that degree, that he actually considered himself in a state of sin beyond redemption; and expressed himself to that effect to Lady H., who, knowing the innocence and purity of his character, with great good sense represented to him that there was no reason for his thinking himself to be in such an unfortunate state; and the good sense of her conversation was productive of consolation to his mind, and of health to his body, both of which had been injured by the mistaken zeal of his well-intentioned friend.

It happened, a short time after this conversation, that he said grace at dinner, which he had long omitted to do, no doubt from an idea that he was in such a state of sin, as not to be worthy of exer-

cising that proper address of thanks to the Deity. The doctrine of unworthiness, when extended to such a degree as to make a person believe it is criminal in him to perform religious duties, being in a state of sin, whether real or imaginary, appears both erroneous and dangerous; tending to sink the weak-minded into despair, and to make the hardened sinner more profligate.

We may suppose how much Lady Hesketh must have congratulated herself on her cousin's *renewed grace*, it being a proof of his mind being restored to that rational state to which she had certainly much contributed.

He was then able to proceed in his great undertaking—the translation of Homer, Lady H. copying as he translated, and Mrs. Unwin sitting by in silence, knitting her stockings, with her usual tranquillity of spirit.

To have had a view of this *trio* would have been a gratifying sight!

How Cowper, with such little assistance, could have executed so great a work, must ever be a matter of the greatest astonishment; and that, under all circumstances, he should have retained such a perfect and intimate knowledge of the Greek language, as to have produced a translation of the immortal bard, which has received the approbation of all literary men, and is now equally esteemed for its utility by the professors of classical education. It appears, however, that this labour of translating, great as it must have been, afforded him pleasure, being no doubt a relief to his mind, so subject to melancholy ideas.

When this great genius was not employed in sublime works, he endeavoured to amuse himself with those of a more trivial nature.

He was very fond of all animals, and had at one

time, five rabbits, three hares, two guinea pigs, a magpie, a jay, and a starling; besides two goldfinches, two canary birds, and two dogs. Lady H. says: "It is to me amazing how the three hares can find room to gambol and frolic (as they certainly do) in his small parlour." She adds: "I forgot to enumerate a squirrel, which he had at the same time, and which used to play with one of the hares continually. One evening the cat giving one of the hares a sound box on the ear, the hare ran after her, and having caught her, punished her by drumming on her back with her two feet, as hard as drumsticks, 'till the creature would have actually been killed, had not Mrs. Unwin rescued her."—*This cat I suppose was a kitten.*

It appears that Lady Hesketh's visit to Olney was a most happy event for the Poet. She found him in a low and depressed state, but, by her ra-

tional conversation and cheerful manners, afforded comfort to him in every way; and as Mrs. Unwin saved pussy from the fury of the hare, so Lady H. rescued her cousin from the destructive effects of the severe discipline he had experienced previous to her arrival. When this lady arrives, this excellent creature recovers his health and spirits, and is again induced to mix in society, which for many years he had constantly avoided.

