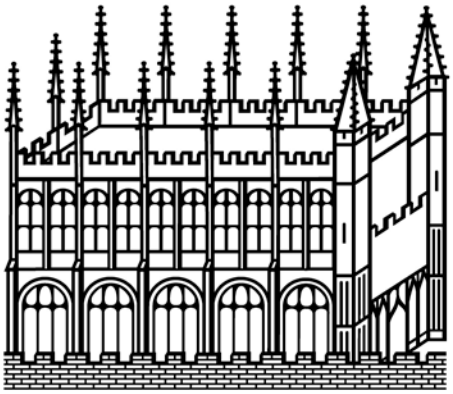

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COWPER'S LETTERS
WITH MEMOIR

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THE SUMMER-HOUSE AT OLNEY.

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COWPER'S LETTERS

A Selection from the Correspondence of the Poet, William Cowper

WITH

BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR

AND NOTICES OF HIS CORRESPONDENTS

EDITED BY

DR. MACAULAY

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY

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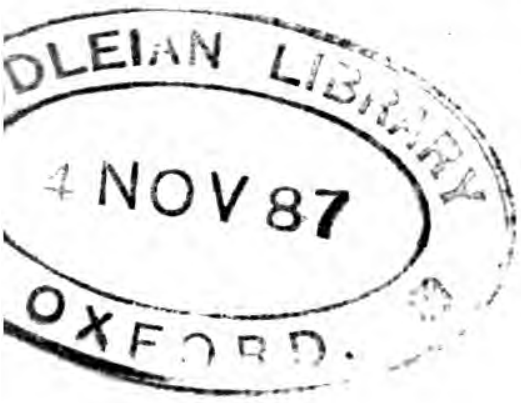

LIFE

OF

WILLIAM COWPER.

WILLIAM COWPER was born in the rectory of Great Berkhampstead, in Hertfordshire, on the 26th of November, 1731. His father, Dr. John Cowper, was chaplain to George II. and rector of Berkhampstead. His mother was Anne, the daughter of Roger Donne, Esq., of Ludham Hall, in Norfolk, a descendant of Dr. Donne, the famous divine, poet, and satirist of the reign of James I. She died in 1737, at the age of thirty-four; leaving, of several children, only two sons surviving. Her death occurred at the birth of John, the younger. William, the eldest, was aged six years. The same year that he lost his mother, he was put under the care of Dr. Pitman, the master of a large boarding-school at Market Street, in Hertfordshire. The poor delicate and timid child had hardships of various kinds to conflict with, the chief of which consisted in being singled out as a victim for the cruelty of a lad of fifteen years of age, whose

savage treatment impressed such a dread of his figure on little Cowper's mind, that he was afraid to lift his eyes upon his persecutor higher than his knees, and he knew him better by his shoebuckles than by any other part of his dress. This tyrant's practices were at length discovered; he was expelled from school, and Cowper was removed from it. It was found about this time that his eyesight was seriously affected, and he was placed under the care of an eminent oculist, in whose house he spent two years. He was then sufficiently recovered to enter Westminster School, at that time under the mastership of Dr. Nicholls. He learned well, was in high favour with his master, and once received a silver groat for his exercise. To this he alludes in his poem entitled *Table Talk.*

> At Westminister, where little poets strive
> To set a distich upon six and five,
> Where Discipline helps opening buds of sense,
> And makes his pupils proud with silver pence,
> I was a poet too.

He excelled also at cricket and football; but what was more uncommon for a boy of his age, he was afflicted with a lowness of spirits. Even when a young child, he had exhibited a constitutional tendency to melancholy; this showed itself when he was at Westminster School; again when he was at the Middle Temple at the age of twenty-one, and at other seasons. We notice at this early part of the narrative the constitutional depression of spirits in Cowper, because some writers have charged religion with unsettling his mind; but it is plain from the comparison of dates that the

deplorable malady was infixed in his frame long before he gave religion even a transient thought.

At Westminster, Cowper was the schoolfellow of several persons who afterwards rose to distinguished eminence. Among these, we may mention Warren Hastings, Lord Dartmouth, Cumberland, the dramatic writer and grandson of Bentley, the critic and scholar, Bonnell Thornton, Lloyd, Colman, and Churchill the poet. Joseph Hill, to whom he addressed some pleasant poems and confidential letters on business, was also one of his school-fellows at Westminster.

At the age of eighteen he left the school, and returned to his father at Berkhampstead, where he remained three-quarters of a year. He was then sent to acquire the practice of law, with Mr. Chapman, an attorney. At this attorney's he had a fellow clerk, Edward Thurlow, afterwards so famous as the Lord Chancellor of England. 'I did actually live,' says Cowper, 'three years with Mr. Chapman, 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. There was I and the future Lord Chancellor constantly employed from morning to night in giggling and making giggle, instead of studying the law.' The house to which he alludes was that of his uncle, Ashley Cowper, his father's brother, who had two daughters. The eldest of them became Lady Hesketh, who many years afterwards ministered to the necessities of her cousin. The youngest, Theodora, was beloved by Cowper, and she returned his attachment; but her father placed an absolute negative on their union.

Three years mis-spent in an attorney's office were almost of course followed by several more equally mis-spent in the Temple, where he took chambers in the year 1752. Not long after his settlement here, he was, as he here relates, struck with such a dejection of spirits, as none but they who have felt the same can have the least conception of. 'Day and night,' says he, 'I was upon the rack, lying down in horror, and rising up in despair.' He needed something more salutary than amusement, but he had no one to direct him where to find light and peace.

In 1754, he went through the ceremony of being called to the bar. Not that he was likely ever to become a laborious lawyer; but his family connexions had patronage at their disposal, and one necessary qualification for his enjoying it was his having the rank of a barrister. He was actually made a Commissioner of Bankrupts, and might have held the lucrative post of Clerk to the House of Lords, had not his malady prevented. In 1756, he lost his father. He was sent for to attend him in his last illness; but just before he arrived his father died.

About this time, his most valued friend, Sir William Russell, was drowned while bathing in the Thames; and being entirely separated from his cousin Theodora, he deemed himself 'cast forth a wanderer on a world unknown.'

> Doomed as I am in solitude to waste
> The present moments, and regret the past;
> Deprived of every joy I valued most,
> My friend torn from me, and my mistress lost;
> See me neglected on the world's rude coast,
> Each dear companion of my voyage lost;

Nor ask why clouds of sorrow shade my brow,
And ready tears wait only leave to flow;
Why all that soothes a heart from anguish free,
All that delights the happy, palls with me.

These lines are from pathetic verses addressed to his elder cousin, Harriet.

But in a few months he found new companions and new pursuits. He joined the Nonsense Club, a small society of Westminster men, who dined together every Thursday. He united with Bonnell Thornton and Colman in publishing a periodical called the *Connoisseur*, in the manner of the *Spectator*. About this time, meeting Thurlow, his fellow-clerk, he said to him, 'Thurlow, I am nobody, and shall always be nobody; and you will be Lord Chancellor. You shall provide for me when you are.' Thurlow smiled and said, 'I surely will.'

In 1763, his relative, Major Cowper, who claimed the appointment to certain offices connected with the House of Lords, informed him that three of them were vacant, and made him an offer of the two most profitable places, intending the other for his friend, Mr. Arnold. Dazzled by so splendid a proposal, he at once accepted it; but at the same time, according to his own expression, seemed to receive a dagger in his heart. Nothing could restore his tranquillity; a deep melancholy seized him; day and night, for a whole week, he was harassed and perplexed between the apparent folly of casting away the only visible chance he had of being well provided for, and the impossibility of retaining it. He begged his cousin to accept the resignation of the two places in favour of Mr.

Arnold, flattering himself that the clerkship of the journals would fall fairly and easily within the scope of his abilities. But the right of his relative to nominate having been called in question, Cowper was informed that he might expect an examination at the bar of the House, as to his sufficiency for the post he had undertaken. He spent several months of unavailing preparation to stand the examination; and then there came upon him a state of horror which lasted several days, and which ended in an attempt at suicide. Conviction of sin, and especially of the atrocity of his late attempt, now came upon him, with a sense of God's wrath, and a deep despair of escaping it. As he says himself, it will be proper to draw a veil over the secrets of his prison-house, and simply to state that his mind became so dreadfully unhinged, that his friends agreed he should be carried to St. Alban's, where Dr. Cotton kept a house for the reception of such patients.

His conviction of sin and expectation of instant judgment never left him from the 7th of December, the day he left London, until the middle of July following. After a series of varying horrors, he one day ventured to open his Bible for comfort and instruction. The first verse he saw was the twenty-fifth of the third chapter of the Epistle to the Romans:—'Whom God hath set forth 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.' In a moment, says Cowper, I believed and received the gospel. He was overwhelmed with love and wonder; he felt joy

unspeakable and full of glory. His physician was afraid lest the sudden transition from despair to joy should terminate in a fatal frenzy. But in a short time Dr. Cotton was satisfied, and acquiesced in the soundness of his recovery. Cowper remained with his physician for several months after his restoration; and providentially he had been placed under the care of one who was able rightly to minister to the mind diseased as well as to the body.

Being determined no more to see London, the scene of his former misery, he resigned his office of Commissioner of Bankrupts, and desired his brother to find lodgings for him near himself in Cambridge or its vicinity. He could not find any place there that would suit, but easily found accommodation at Huntingdon, fourteen miles from Cambridge; and to Huntingdon William Cowper removed on the 22nd of June, 1765, accompanied by his brother, who introduced him to his new abode, and left him. He felt like a traveller in the midst of an inhospitable desert, without a friend to comfort, or a guide to direct him. But by an evening walk, and by pouring out his heart in prayer, the oppression was taken off, and he was enabled to trust in Him who careth for the stranger. He went to church next day, joined in the service with delight; and when the Gospel for the day was read, being the parable of the Prodigal Son, he saw himself in that glass so clearly, and the loving-kindness of his slighted and forgotten Lord so vividly, that the whole scene was realized to him, and acted over in his heart.

It may be easily supposed that Cowper was in no

haste to seek out any new acquaintance; but he soon found all he wanted in the family of the Unwins. The Rev. Morley Unwin had for several years been master of the free school, and lecturer of the two churches in Huntingdon. His son had been pleased with Cowper's countenance, and felt a strong inclination to call upon him; but the father dissuaded him from this, as it was said the stranger rather declined society than courted it. One day, however, young Unwin, seeing him take a solitary walk, joined him; and finding that his advances were gladly received, he engaged himself to tea with him that afternoon. To the inexpressible joy of Cowper, he found in his new companion sentiments of religion, spiritual and lively. They opened their hearts to each other; and a friendship began, which terminated only by the death of young Unwin, nearly twenty years after. The friends were soon drawn closer together.

Cowper's income was narrow, and hardly equal to his wants while living alone. It occurred to him that he might probably find a place in Mr. Unwin's family as a boarder. This was soon arranged, and he went to his new residence with great thankfulness. The family consisted of the father, a son and daughter, and the mother, the daughter of a draper at Ely; and, as Cowper describes her in a letter to his friend Joseph Hill, a woman of a very uncommon understanding, who had read much to excellent purpose, and was more polite than a duchess. This was the MARY, immortalized in prose and verse, who tended Cowper in all his sad vicissitudes of sorrow and suffering for nearly thirty years, and who regarded him with a

friendship so truly Christian, that he could almost fancy his own mother restored to life again. The period of Cowper's sadly chequered life on which the feeling heart can look with pleasure, was certainly the few years from 1765 to 1773. We have records of his mind during those years; we find alternations of hopes and fears, of conflict and of peace; but these were the exercises of a renewed mind; it was like Paul crying out, 'O wretched man that I am,' but soon replacing such groans with the triumphant song, 'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.' Cowper was not seeking peace where it could not be found: the gay and idle world had no charms for him; he wished for solitude and retirement, and gave vent to his feelings in strains like these:

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 seem by Thy sweet bounty made,
For those who follow Thee.

There, if Thy Spirit touch the soul,
And grace her mean abode,
O, with what peace, and joy, and love
She communes with her God!

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

The happy domestic circle of the Unwins at Huntingdon did not long continue unbroken. Mr. Unwin

in going to his church on the morning of Sunday, the 8th of July, 1767, was flung from his horse, receiving injuries which proved fatal on the following Thursday.

The daughter being soon afterwards married to Mr. Powley, a clergyman, at Dewsbury, in Yorkshire, and the son going to Cambridge, the widow and Mr. Cowper resolved to leave a place so utterly changed for them, and to find a new abode in some other spot. An eminent clergyman, Dr. Conyers, had met young Unwin at Cambridge some months before, and had learned his state of mind, and his mother's religious character. He named both to Mr. Newton of Olney, requesting him, when passing through Huntingdon, to call on Mrs. Unwin. That visit took place a few days after Mr. Unwin's death. They determined to fix their future abode at Olney. Mr. Newton engaged a house for them at that place, and there Cowper and Mrs. Unwin arrived on the 14th of October, 1767.

What between Cowper, Newton, and Mrs. Unwin, to whom we may add Moses Browne, the friend of Hervey, and Thomas Scott the Commentator, OLNEY has become a classical and a household word, sacred to friendship, to poetry, and religion; and the very mention of it calls forth our sympathy with some of the finest and saddest feelings of human nature. Many foolish reproaches have been uttered against John Newton, as if he, by a stern theology and harsh temper, had been the cause of Cowper's first mental alienation, or of his subsequent attacks. But such insinuations are utterly groundless. For several years Cowper was truly happy at Olney.

Newton says: 'The Lord evidently sent him to Olney, where he has been a blessing to many, a great blessing to myself.' Cowper at this time says: 'God has given me such a deep, impressed persuasion of the truth, as a thousand worlds would not purchase from me. It gives me a relish to every blessing, and makes every trouble light.' On this question we are quite willing to take the testimony of the two persons most concerned, and who know their own feelings best.

In March, 1770, Cowper's brother, John, died at Cambridge; and he had the unspeakable satisfaction of finding that he died in the same faith and hope which were at that time his own happy possession. To this brother's character, he beautifully alludes in the second book of *The Task*:

> I had a brother once—
> Peace to the memory of a man of worth,
> A man of letters, and of morals too.
> He graced a College, in which order yet
> Was sacred, and was honoured, loved, and wept,
> By more than one, themselves conspicuous there.

At Olney, Cowper's occupations as an unwearied assistant to his friend Newton were abundant. He was an active visitor and reliever of the poor, having the assistance of Mr. Thornton's purse. Newton says of him, 'He loved the poor. He often visited them in their cottages, conversed with them in the most condescending manner, sympathized with them, counselled and comforted them in their distresses; and those who were seriously disposed were often cheered and animated by his prayers.'

Andrew Fuller, a consummate judge of such matters,

thus testifies: 'At Olney he continued for a number of years in the enjoyment of religious pleasures, to a degree seldom known; uniting in social prayer-meetings with Mr. Newton and his friends, to the wonder and admiration of all that heard him. I know a person who heard him pray frequently at these meetings, and have heard him say, "Of all the men that I ever heard pray, no one equalled Mr. Cowper."'

With the desire of promoting the faith and comfort of sincere Christians, and also to form a monument for perpetuating the remembrance of an intimate and endeared friendship, Newton proposed the joint composition of the well-known Olney Hymns. So intimate was the friendship, that for years there was no day in which they did not spend some portion of their time together; and as the parsonage house was close upon Cowper's garden, they had a door struck out, so that they could visit each other without going through the street.

In 1773, this period of sunshine and peace was disastrously overclouded. The same scene that was acted at St. Alban's, opened upon him at Olney, only covered with a deeper shade of melancholy, and ordained to be of longer duration. It is affecting to think, that a good man is no more secured from such attacks of mental disease, than he is from palsy or fever; and he is as blameless in the one case as in the other, except as far as he may have unwisely managed himself in the time of sanity and health. Perhaps Cowper devoted himself too much to Newton's employments, to the neglect of needful open air and exercise. At all events, he was, as he told his cousin, suddenly

reduced from his wonted rate of understanding to an almost childish imbecility. He had also symptoms which we often see in such cases; the belief that every one about him hated him, Mrs. Unwin especially; and that his food was poisoned. It was in January, 1773, when he felt that the dreadful attack was impending, that he composed the ever-memorable Hymn, which begins with, 'God moves in a mysterious way.' Among other doleful fancies which possessed his mind, there was one which we can hardly help ascribing to the direct power of the Tempter, namely, that it was the will of God that he should, after the example of Abraham, perform an expensive act of obedience, and offer, not a son, but himself. He believed that when the will of Heaven was made known to him, power had been given at the same time to accomplish the act of obedience; but having let the opportunity go by, he thought he was doomed to a state of desertion and perpetual misery. He told his friend Mr. Bull, of Newport Pagnell, who had given him friendly advice to join in acts of worship and praise, that there was not a man upon earth that might not be the better for it, himself only excepted. This sad conviction of his being a hopeless outcast from the mercy of God, never wholly left him while life endured. He might recover from the dark cloud of melancholy, so far as to write the noblest and sweetest poetry, to be a delightful companion and correspondent, to have the most exquisite taste for all that was beautiful in nature, ingenious in art, or polished in literature; but amidst all the variations of his mental or bodily health, this awful impression kept its ground. In 1781, he

thus writes: 'My thoughts are clad in a sober livery, for the most part as grave as that of a bishop's servants; they turn too upon spiritual subjects; but the tallest fellow, and the loudest among them all, is he who is continually crying with a loud voice, *Actum est de te; periisti. All is over with thee; thou art lost.*'

The last letter of his printed correspondence is addressed to Newton six-and-twenty years after the catastrophe of 1773, and it contains these words—he is speaking of the hopes he once had of spending an eternity with the spirits of good men—'But I was little aware that a storm was at hand, which in one terrible moment would darken, and in another still more terrible, blot out that prospect for ever.' A few weeks before that last of his letters, he had composed the last also of his original poems, *The Castaway*, exquisite in taste and style, but tinged with the same sad melancholy.

In the early part of his illness, in 1773, he fixed himself in Newton's house, from which nothing but force could have removed him; and after fourteen months he suddenly consented to return home. He amused himself with taming the three hares, who became famous as never hares were before or since; he also engaged in desultory composition: but gardening was his chief employment. In 1780, his history as a poet really commences. Having recovered sufficiently to resume his literary pursuits, Mrs. Unwin encouraged him to try his powers for moral satire in a poem of some length; and the poem entitled the *Progress of Error* was his first production of

that kind. This was rapidly followed by *Truth*, *Table Talk*, *Expostulation*, and afterwards by *Conversation* and *Retirement*; and these, with the addition of a few shorter pieces, made up a very decent volume, which was published under the title of *Poems by William Cowper, Esq., of the Inner Temple.*

Mr. Newton having left Olney for London, Cowper was deprived of the presence of that friend, who had been his greatest attraction to that sequestered town, and with whom he had had the most affectionate intercourse for more than twelve years. He felt the bereavement very deeply; and wrote to Mrs. Newton, 'If I were in a condition to leave Olney too, I certainly would not stay in it.' The monotony of his life was varied for a time by the appearance at Olney of two ladies, Mrs. Jones, the wife of a clergyman at Clifton, in the neighbourhood, and her sister Lady Austen, widow of a baronet, a lady of great liveliness and accomplishment, to whom we are indebted for Cowper's producing some of his most celebrated pieces. One evening, when he was in a gloomy mood, she related to him the story of John Gilpin; and he turned it into verse in the course of the night. The *Rose*, the verses on the Royal George, and greater than all, *The Task*, were the fruits of her suggestion. She pressed him to try his powers in blank verse. He pleaded the want of a subject. 'Oh!' she exclaimed, 'you can never be in want of a subject; you can write upon any—write upon this sofa.' He literally obeyed her injunction, began to write upon *The Sofa*, and expanded his thoughts into the varied and noble poem, known as

The Task. Its popularity from the first was rapid and unbounded; it was read in the parlour, and quoted in the senate; and admired wherever there existed a taste for rural scenery or domestic comfort. It is well known that the country walk described in the first book of *The Task* is the very walk with which the poet was quite familiar; and it is pleasant to know that it subsists at this day in a condition not greatly changed from what he left it, and that his footsteps may be tracked with great ease and certainty.

If the poet has made the outdoor scenery famous, not less does the humble dwelling at Olney demonstrate the power of genius. You enter a very small common-place room, of which you could almost touch the sides with your outstretched arms; yet this is the room where the bard of 'fireside enjoyments, home-born happiness,' bids us—

> Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
> Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
> And while the bubbling and loud hissing urn
> Throws up a steamy column, and the cups,
> That cheer, but not inebriate, wait on each,
> So let us welcome peaceful evening in.

His own account of *The Task* is this: 'Except the fifth book, which is rather of a political aspect, the whole has one tendency—to discountenance the modern enthusiasm after a London life, and to recommend rural ease and leisure, as friendly to the cause of piety and virtue.'

The poets of later times have been so numerous, and the variations of literary art and taste so great,

that we must expect old favourites to be sometimes forgotten or neglected. It may be so to some extent with the poetry of Cowper. But that taste is little to be envied which does not return with pleasure, from the romantic and spasmodic and other schools of modern poetry, to the sweet naturalness, and the descriptive beauty, and the charming geniality of *The Garden* and *The Timepiece*, the *Winter Evening* and the *Winter Morning's Walk*. The genuine love of nature shown in the descriptions of English scenery, the charming pictures of country life and of home happiness, the hearty outbursts of patriotism and the glowing praises of liberty; the polished satire with which follies and vices are attacked, and the manliness with which is given to every public and private virtue; these are among the moral qualities which command respect, even apart from the genius and humour and culture for which his works are conspicuous.

We must not forget, among the other merits of Cowper as an author, his admirable powers of letter-writing. Southey calls him the most popular poet of his generation, and the best of English letter-writers. Francis Jeffrey and Robert Hall have spoken with equal praise. Hall says that 'the letters of Cowper are the finest specimens of epistolary correspondence in the language.' Jeffrey's opinion is remarkable as coming from so severe a critic. He says: 'There is something in the sweetness and facility of the diction, and more, perhaps, in the glimpses they afford of a pure and benevolent mind, that diffuses a charm over the whole collection, and communicates an interest

that cannot always be commanded by performances of greater dignity and pretension. These letters will continue to be read long after the curiosity is gratified to which, perhaps, they owed their first celebrity; for the character with which they make us acquainted will always attract by its rarity, and engage by its elegance.

'The interest of this picture is still further heightened by the recollection of that tremendous malady to the visitations of which he was subject, and by the spectacle of that perpetual conflict which was maintained, through the greater part of his life, between the depression of those constitutional horrors, and the gaiety that resulted from a playful imagination, and a heart animated by the mildest affections.' The reader will judge of the truth of these testimonies by the selections in this little volume. The poems of Cowper are familiar, through countless editions, but the letters deserve to be better know.

But we must hasten to the conclusion of his personal history. *The Task* was begun in the summer of 1783, and published in June, 1785. It is painful to read some of his letters, written while it was in progress. 'Here I can be miserable with most convenience to myself, and with the least disturbance to others.' (To N., July 27, 1783.) 'Nature revives again, but a soul once slain lives no more.' (To N., Jan. 13, 1784.) 'Despair made amusement necessary, and I found poetry the most agreeable amusement.'

He now renewed his correspondence with his family, and was made happy by a letter from his cousin Harriet, now a widow by the title of Lady Hesketh.

She paid him a visit at Olney, in June, 1786. Her arrival, which was ushered in with the ringing of the bells, made him and Mrs. Unwin happier than ever they were before. She soon discovered the faults and discomforts of his abode, surrounded by not very desirable neighbours, and she determined on removing him to a more suitable residence. The vicarage in the village of Weston happened to be vacant. She did not leave them till she had arranged everything for their removal to Weston; and when she returned to London, in November, Cowper and Mrs. Unwin finally quitted Olney as a place of abode. Soon after their removal, they sustained a sad affliction in the death of young Unwin, who died at Winchester, of typhus-fever, leaving a widow and three young children. Cowper now began to translate Homer. Some of his friends would have liked better that he had chosen original composition, or some other employment; but he says, extreme distress of spirit drove him to lay Homer before him, and translate for amusement. In 1787, a nervous fever hung about him for a long time, and his mental state was more dreadful than even in 1773: but, happily, few particulars remain to torture the sensibility of those who love and admire the oft-tried sufferer.

A request personally made by the parish-clerk of All Saints, in Northampton, who walked over to Weston on purpose, for some verses to prefix to the annual bill of mortality of that town, was the occasion of some very beautiful and serious odes by Cowper, for several successive years. 'A fig for poets,' says he, 'who write epitaphs upon indi-

viduals! I have written *one* that serves *two hundred* persons.'

His mother's relations in Norfolk now began to inquire after him; and in one of them, John Johnson, a student at Cambridge, he received a new and younger friend, whose ardent attachment was one main support of the last ten years of his life. Having observed with what affection Cowper spoke of his mother, Johnson persuaded Mrs. Bodham, her niece, to send to Cowper the only portrait in existence of his beloved relative. Who does not know the poem, 'On the receipt of my mother's picture out of Norfolk, the gift of my cousin, Anne Bodham'? Who would not wish to retain every line of it?

It was a kind dispensation of Providence that brought new friends to him; for advancing years, accidents, and infirmities, were making havoc on Mrs. Unwin. In January, 1789, she had a fall on the ice, in the garden walk, which crippled her for a long time; and a succession of headaches ended in a palsy which struck her in December, 1791. She had a second attack in May, 1792; and, mercifully for both, Hayley, a newly-acquired friend, was then on a visit to Weston. Hayley was one of the small poets at the end of the last century; but he was a kind and good-natured man, and, as Cowper says, was all in all to them on this very afflictive occasion. From this period, to the end of Cowper's life, all is unmingled sadness and gloom. In the summer of the same year, he ventured to visit Eartham, the seat of Mr. Hayley, 120 miles from Weston, a tremendous exploit as he calls it, undertaken partly to gratify Hayley, and

chiefly in the hope of Mrs. Unwin's health being improved by the change. The place was almost a paradise, and their reception was the kindest that it was possible for friendship and hospitality to contrive. Little good resulted to either from the visit.

On their return to Weston, John Johnson came from Norfolk, and assisted Lady Hesketh in her arduous task of waiting on the two helpless invalids. After the young man had departed, Cowper was in the most doleful state, and he refused food and medicine, so that his friend, the Rev. Mr. Greathead, of Newport Pagnell, urgently requested Hayley's assistance. He immediately repaired to Weston; and while he was there, an intimation was received from Lord Spencer that a pension of 300*l.* a year was to be granted to Mr. Cowper, payable to Rose as his trustee. But this intelligence, so welcome to his friends, imparted not even a glimmering of joy to the dejected poet.

On July 28, 1795, Mr. Johnson, with the full approval of Lady Hesketh, removed the two invalids to Norfolk, intending their absence to be temporary; but to Weston they never returned. The last original piece composed at that place was the affecting poem, of which the burden in each verse is 'My Mary.'

> Thy spirits have a fainter flow;
> I see thee daily weaker grow—
> 'Twas my distress that brought thee low,
> My Mary!
>
> Thy silver locks once auburn bright,
> Are still more lovely in my sight
> Than golden beams of orient light,
> My Mary!

And still to love though prest with ill,
In wintry age to feel no chill,
With me is to be lovely still,
My Mary!

The third day of their journey brought them to North Tuddenham, in Norfolk. Here they were comfortably accommodated with an untenanted parsonage-house, in which they were received by Miss Johnson and Miss Perowne, one of those excellent beings, says Hayley, whom Nature seems to have formed expressly for the purpose of alleviating the sorrows of the afflicted. His kinsman prevailed on Cowper to make frequent excursions in the vicinity of Tuddenham Parsonage, one of which he extended to the house of his cousin, Mrs. Bodham, at Mattishall. The sight of his own portrait, painted by Abbott, in one of the apartments of that residence, awakening in his mind a recollection of the comparatively happy moments in which he sat for the picture, extorted from him a passionately expressed wish, that similar sensations might yet return.

Mr. Johnson hoping that a removal to the seaside might be of benefit to the two invalids, he conducted them to the village of Mundsley, on the Norfolk coast. But the coldness of the blasts, and the irritation of the salt spray, occasioned an inflammation in his eyelids, which threatened to confine him entirely. The health, if not the spirits of Cowper, were benefited by the residence at Mundsley; but the infirmities of Mrs. Unwin continued the same. In their excursions from Mundsley they had visited Dunham Lodge, a vacant seat on a high ground, in the neighbourhood

of Swaffham. His kinsman, thinking it a more eligible situation for his interesting charge than his own house at Dereham, was induced to become the tenant of it; and in the course of the month of October, 1795, they removed to Dunham Lodge. In the month of April, 1796, Mrs. Unwin received a visit from her daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Powley; and it was a gratifying spectacle to them to see their venerable parent watched over by Cowper, even in his darkest periods of depression. No apparent benefit having resulted from the walks, both marine and inland, which had been fully tried, the invalids and their attendants returned to Dereham. The life of Mrs. Unwin was now drawing to a close. The powers of nature were gradually exhausted, and she expired on the 17th of December, 1796. The precise moment of her departure was so tranquil, that it was only marked by the cessation of her breath, as the clock was striking one in the afternoon. In the morning of that day, Cowper had anxiously inquired of the servant, 'Sally, is there life above stairs?' In the dusk of the evening, when only an indistinct view of the body could be obtained, his kinsman attended him to the chamber of his departed friend. After looking at the corpse for a few moments, he started suddenly away, with a vehement but unfinished sentence of passionate sorrow, and never afterwards spoke of Mrs. Unwin. She was buried on the 23rd of December, in the north aisle of the church of East Dereham.

The extreme dejection of Cowper still continued, mitigated a little by his revising Homer, and by hear-

ing various books read to him. On the 8th of March, 1799, he completed the revisal of his Homer, and next day produced his last original poem, which has all the poetical finish of his best days. It is entitled 'The Castaway.' The subject is a melancholy one; it is an incident narrated in 'Anson's Voyage' of one of their best seamen being washed overboard on a stormy night, and their being unable to render him any assistance. Cowper compares his case to the sailor's, but thinks his own the worst:

> We perished, each alone;
> But I beneath a rougher sea,
> And whelmed in deeper gulfs than he.

In January, 1800, his weakness assumed a dropsical appearance in the ankles and feet, and continued to increase till the 25th of April, on which day he remained insensible for twelve hours; and about five in the afternoon he expired in so mild and gentle a manner, that the precise moment of his departure was unobserved.

On the 2nd of May his funeral was attended by several of his relations, and he was buried in St. Edmund's Chapel, in the church of East Dereham, Norfolk.

His aspiration at one period of his life was to be buried at Weston or Olney:

> At last,
> May some disease not tardy to perform
> Its destined office, yet with gentle stroke,
> Dismiss me weary, to a safe retreat
> Beneath the turf that I have often trode

The wish was congenial to his gentle and retiring

spirit; but his admiring countrymen would desire for him a more magnificent resting-place, even in that temple where England had deposited so many of the noblest of her poets, her warriors, and her statesmen, and where the illustrious dead are honoured by the nations. It was the wish of Dean Stanley that a bust at least might have graced Poet's Corner. The pious purpose was not fulfilled, but a memorial window has, through the generosity of an American citizen, G. W. Childs of Philadelphia, been placed in the Abbey, in joint remembrance of George Herbert and William Cowper, both of them Westminster scholars, and two of the sweetest and best of England's sacred poets.

CORRESPONDENTS OF COWPER.

JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

HILL was a schoolfellow of Cowper at Westminster, and a club-companion in after days; and their friendship was most cordial. Hill did not trifle long, but applied himself diligently and successfully to the profession of the law; and by the assistance and patronage of Thurlow, he attained a position of respectability and competence. At a late period of Cowper's life, he made Thurlow acquainted with the narrowness of the poet's circumstances, previously to which the Chancellor thought that as he was famous as a poet, he must also be rich. Probably in consequence of Hill's information, a pension was granted to Cowper, but unhappily too late for him to enjoy the satisfaction of knowing it had been bestowed, though very useful as enabling his friends to add to his comforts. When Cowper left St. Alban's, Hill took charge of his pecuniary affairs. To Hill, Cowper addressed a very lively poetical epistle, beginning—

> **Dear Joseph—five-and-twenty years ago—**
> **Alas—how time escapes! 'tis even so;**

and it ends by describing him as

> **An honest man, close-buttoned to the chin,**
> **Broadcloth without, and a warm heart within.**

LADY HESKETH.

The wife of Sir Thomas Hesketh was a cousin of Cowper, and the daughter of his uncle, Mr. Ashley Cowper. Her sister Theodora, between whom and Cowper there was a mutual attachment (see the Life), though her father did not deem it prudent for them to marry, remained single to her death, which happened in October, 1824. Her sister Harriet, Lady Hesketh, with the most unfailing kindness, did all in her power to alleviate the sufferings and to increase the comforts of Cowper, of which many proofs will be found in his letters. In one of them he describes her as coming to him at Weston, accompanied with her ever-attendant train, fine sense, good temper, affectionate cordiality, and ever-pleasing vivacity.[1]

GENERAL AND MRS. COWPER.

Major, afterwards General Cowper, was a cousin of

[1] Spencer Cowper, the grandfather of these two ladies, and also of the poet, was Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas. While yet a barrister, he was tried, along with three other persons, on an accusation of murdering a young Quaker lady of Hertford, by drowning her in a mill-dam. The trial is yet remarkable in the history of medical jurisprudence as one of the *causes célèbres* of England. The jury found them Not Guilty, to the general satisfaction of all who heard of the verdict. The whole affair was thought to have been brought forward from factious motives, during the bitter contentions in the elections for a new parliament in the summer of 1699. When on the bench, Judge Cowper distinguished himself by the humanity which he never failed to show to unhappy men who stood, as he had once stood, at the bar.

the poet, and married to the sister of Martin Madan, chaplain to the Lock Hospital. Mrs. Cowper's religious opinions were truly pious and evangelical; and she was fully qualified to enter into the grateful feelings of Cowper, when he related to her the peace and joy he had obtained by cordially believing the gospel. Some of Cowper's most experimental letters soon after his conversion are addressed to Mrs. Cowper.

THE REV. WILLIAM CAWTHORNE UNWIN.

When, after leaving St. Alban's, Cowper was a solitary stranger at Huntingdon, the kind heart of young Unwin was deeply struck with his interesting appearance. In spite of discouragements, he introduced himself to Cowper, who was delighted to find in him a congenial spirit, that could fully enter into all his joyful feelings in the recently found consolations of the gospel. Unwin introduced him to his father's family, of which he soon became an inmate; and with one of whom, the mother of his young friend, his future life was permanently entwined. Mr. Unwin afterwards became the rector of Stock in Essex; and when Cowper first appeared as an author, he concluded his volume by a poetical address to his friend, expressing the warmest feelings of affection.

To Unwin he dedicated his *Tirocinium, or Review of Schools;* and some of the finest of his literary letters are addressed to him, who was fully qualified to appreciate their excellence. This amiable man died of a fever, at Winchester, at the early age of forty-one.

THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Of this eminent minister, and favourite correspondent of Cowper, little needs to be said. His life and character are universally known; his praise is in all the churches; or rather, all Christian men adore that grace which lifted him from the depths of vice and misery to be a conspicuous example of holy living and usefulness, and a preacher of the faith which once he destroyed. For his sake, Cowper fixed his residence at Olney; to him, when removed to London (as Rector of St. Mary Woolnoth), some of the most affectionate of his correspondence is addressed; and the last preserved letter of Cowper, not very long before his death, is one to Newton.

THE REV. WILLIAM BULL, OF NEWPORT PAGNELL.

When Mr. Newton left Olney, he introduced to the poet Mr. Bull, an Independent minister, of Newport Pagnell, a small town about five miles from Olney, who thenceforward became a weekly visitant. Newton doubtless expected that Mr. Bull would be what himself had been to Cowper, his friend and counsellor. He was, indeed, most acceptable to the poet, who thus describes him to Unwin: 'A dissenter, but a liberal one; a man of letters and of genius; a master of a fine imagination, or rather not master of it; an imagination which, when he finds himself in the company he loves and can confide in, runs away with him into such fields of speculation as amuse and enliven every other imagination that has the happiness to be of the

party: at other times, he has a tender and delicate sort of melancholy in his disposition, not less agreeable in its way. No men are better qualified for companions, in such a world as this, than men of such a temperament. Every scene of life has two sides, a dark and a bright one; and the mind that has an equal mixture of melancholy and vivacity is best of all qualified for the contemplation of either: it can be lively without levity, and pensive without dejection. Such a man is Mr. Bull.'

SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Mr. Rose was the son of Dr. William Rose, who kept a school at Chiswick, and was connected with the *Monthly Review.* Young Rose made the acquaintance of Cowper when he was about twenty, having gone out of his way six miles to see the poet, when on a journey to London from Glasgow, having just left the University there. He came partly to satisfy his own curiosity; but chiefly, as it seemed, to bring Cowper the thanks of some of the Scotch professors for his two volumes. The poet warmly accepted the friendship of his young admirer; afterwards wrote him some most judicious letters about his conduct and studies; and, when Cowper's pension was granted, it was made payable to Rose as his trustee.

REV. WALTER BAGOT.

When Cowper began to translate Homer, many literary men, some of them his former acquaintance, became interested in himself and his labours. Among

these was the Rev. Walter Bagot, who called upon him at Olney, and sent him a note from the inn, requesting him to accept an early subscription to his Homer, a draft for twenty pounds. A friendship which had slept for more than thirty years was thus most earnestly revived. 'The brothers,' says Cowper of the Bagots, 'were all five my schoolfellows, and very amiable and valuable boys they were.' One of them, Lewis Bagot, was successively Bishop of Bristol, Norwich, and St. Asaph: another, Walter, was the correspondent of Cowper.

JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

In January, 1790, Mr. Johnson (who afterwards took orders), who had hitherto enjoyed no personal intercourse with his relative, but for whom, ten years after, was reserved the melancholy office of closing his eyes, introduced himself to the poet, as the grandson of his mother's brother, the Rev. Roger Donne, late rector of Catfield, in Norfolk. Cowper's total ignorance of what had befallen that branch of his family during the twenty-seven years of his retirement from the world, would of itself have secured his attention to a visitor so circumstanced; and the reception which his kinsman met with was peculiarly pleasing. The consequence was a repetition of his visit in the same year. At the Lodge of Weston, Mr. Johnson passed the chief of his academical recesses, and his clerical leisure afterwards; until, by the kindest of arrangements, he in the year 1795, transplanted the helpless sufferer, with his enfeebled companion, Mrs. Unwin, into Norfolk.

Other friends and correspondents, such as Johnson the publisher; Hurdis, Professor of Poetry, are sufficiently indicated in the Memoir and the Letters. He was a busy letter-writer in his years of health. In the collected edition of his works the letters occupy six volumes, while the original poems (excluding Homer and other translations) fill the space of two. We can give but a few characteristic specimens.

SELECTION

FROM THE

LETTERS OF WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.

COWPER'S LETTERS.

To LADY HESKETH.

ON HIS OWN ILLNESS AND RECOVERY.

MY DEAR LADY HESKETH, Huntingdon, July 1, 1765.

SINCE the visit you were so kind as to pay me in the Temple (the only time I ever saw you without pleasure), what have I not suffered! And since it has pleased God to restore me to the use of my reason, what have I not enjoyed! You know, by experience, how pleasant it is to feel the first approaches of health after a fever; but, oh, the fever of the brain! To feel the quenching of that fire is indeed a blessing, which I think it impossible to receive without the most consummate gratitude. Terrible as this chastisement is, I acknowledge in it the hand of an infinite justice; nor is it at all more difficult for me to perceive in it the hand of an infinite mercy likewise: when I consider the effect it has had upon me, I am exceedingly thankful for it; and, without hyprocrisy, esteem it the greatest blessing, next to life itself, I ever received from the Divine bounty. I pray God that I may

ever retain this sense of it, and then I am sure I shall continue to be, as I am at present, really happy.

I write thus to you that you may not think me a forlorn and wretched creature; which you might be apt to do, considering my very distant removal from every friend I have in the world; a circumstance which, before this event befell me, would undoubtedly have made me so: but my affliction has taught me a road to happiness which without it I should never have found; and I know, and have experience of it every day, that the mercy of God, to him who believes himself the object of it, is more than sufficient to compensate for the loss of every other blessing.

You may now inform all those whom you think really interested in my welfare, that they have no need to be apprehensive on the score of my happiness at present. And you yourself will believe that my happiness is no dream, because I have told you the foundation on which it is bullt. What I have written would appear like enthusiasm to many, for we are apt to give that name to every warm affection of the mind in others which we have not experienced in ourselves; but to you, who have so much to be thankful for, and a temper inclined to gratitude, it will not appear so.

I beg you will give my love to Sir Thomas, and believe that I am obliged to you both for inquiring after me, at St. Alban's.

Yours ever,

W. C.

To LADY HESKETH.

BISHOP NEWTON ON THE PROPHECIES—ANECDOTE OF DR. YOUNG, AUTHOR OF THE 'NIGHT THOUGHTS.'

MY DEAR COUSIN, | Huntingdon, July 12, 1765.

YOU are very good to me, and if you will only continue to write at such intervals as you find convenient, I shall receive all that pleasure which I proposed to myself from our correspondence. I desire no more than that you would never drop me for any great length of time together, for I shall then think you only write because something happened to put you in mind of me, or for some reason equally mortifying. I am not, however, so unreasonable as to expect you should perform this act of friendship so frequently as myself, for you live in a world swarming with engagements, and my hours are almost all my own. You must every day be employed in doing what is expected from you by a thousand others, and I have nothing to do but what is most agreeable to myself.

Our mentioning Newton's treatise on the Prophecies brings to my mind an anecdote of Dr. Young (of the Night Thoughts) who, you know, died lately at Welwyn. Dr. Cotton, who was intimate with him, paid him a visit about a fortnight before he was seized with his last illness. The old man was then in perfect health; the antiquity of his person, the gravity of his utterance, and the earnestness with which he discoursed about religion, gave him, in the doctor's eye, the appearance of a prophet. They had been delivering their sentiments upon this book of Newton, when

Young closed the conference thus:—'My friend, there are two considerations upon which my faith in Christ is built as upon a rock; the fall of man, the redemption of man, and the resurrection of man, the three cardinal articles of our religion, are such as human ingenuity could never have invented; therefore they must be Divine. The other argument is this: If the prophecies have been fulfilled (of which there is abundant demonstration), the Scripture must be the word of God, and if the Scripture is the word of God, Christianity must be true.'

This treatise on the Prophecies serves a double purpose: it not only proves the truth of religion, in a manner that never has been nor ever can be controverted; but it proves likewise, that the Roman Catholic is the apostate and antichristian church, so frequently foretold both in the Old and New Testaments. Indeed, so fatally connected is the refutation of Popery with the truth of Christianity, when the latter is evinced by the completion of the prophecies, that in proportion as light is thrown upon the one, the deformities and errors of the other are more plainly exhibited. But I leave you to the book itself: there are parts of it which may possibly afford you less entertainment than the rest, because you have never been a schoolboy: but in the main it is so interesting, and you are so fond of that which is so, that I am sure you will like it.

My dear cousin, how happy I am in having a friend to whom I can open my heart upon these subjects! I have many intimates in the world, and have had many more than I shall have hereafter, to whom a

long letter upon these most important articles would appear tiresome, at least, if not impertinent. But I am not afraid of meeting with that reception from you, who have never yet made it your interest that there should be no truth in the word of God. May this everlasting truth be your comfort while you live, and attend you with peace and joy in your last moments! I love you too well not to make this a part of my prayers; and when I remember my friends on these occasions, there is no likelihood that you can be forgotten.

Yours ever,

W. C.

To LADY HESKETH.

THE UNWIN FAMILY—ACQUAINTANCE AT HUNTINGDON.

MY DEAR COUSIN, Huntingdon, Sept. 14, 1765.

THE longer I live here, the better I like the place, and the people who belong to it. I am upon very good terms with no less than five families, besides two or three odd scrambling fellows like myself. The last acquaintance I made here is with the race of the Unwins, consisting of father and mother, son and daughter, the most comfortable social folks you ever knew. The son is about twenty-one years of age, one of the most unreserved and amiable young men I ever conversed with. He is not yet arrived at that time of life, when suspicion recommends itself to us in the the form of wisdom, and sets everything but our own dear selves at an immeasurable distance from our

esteem and confidence. Consequently he is known almost as soon as seen; and having nothing in his heart that makes it necessary for him to keep it barred and bolted, opens it to the perusal even of a stranger. The father is a clergyman, and the son is designed for orders. The design, however, is quite his own, proceeding merely from his being, and having always been, sincere in his belief and love of the gospel. Another acquaintance I have lately made is with a Mr. Nicholson, a north country divine, very poor, but very good, and very happy. He reads prayers here twice a-day, all the year round; and travels on foot to serve two churches every Sunday through the year, his journey out and home again being sixteen miles. I supped with him last night. He gave me bread and cheese, and a black jug of ale of his own brewing, and doubtless brewed by his own hands. Another of my acquaintance is Mr. ——, a thin, tall, old man, and as good as he is thin. He drinks nothing but water, and eats no flesh; partly (I believe) from a religious scruple (for he is very religious), and partly in the spirit of a valetudinarian. He is to be met with every morning of his life, at about six o'clock, at a fountain of very fine water, about a mile from the town, which is reckoned extremely like the Bristol spring. Being both early risers, and the only early walkers in the place, we soon became acquainted. His great piety can be equalled by nothing but his great regularity, for he is the most perfect time-piece in the world. I have received a visit likewise from Mr. ——. He is very much a gentleman, well read, and sensible. I am persuaded, in short, that if I had the choice of all

England, where to fix my abode, I could not have chosen better for myself; and most likely I should not have chosen so well.

You say, you hope it is not necessary for salvation to undergo the same afflictions that I have undergone. No! my dear cousin. God deals with his children as a merciful Father; He does not, as He Himself tells us, afflict willingly the sons of men. Doubtless there are many, who, having been placed by His good providence out of the reach of any great evil and the influence of bad example, have from their very infancy been partakers of the grace of His Holy Spirit, in such a manner as never to have allowed themselves in any grievous offence against Him. May you love Him more and more day by day; as every day, while you think upon Him, you will find Him more worthy of your love: and may you be finally accepted with Him for His sake, whose intercession for all His faithful servants cannot but prevail!

Yours ever,

W. C.

To JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

THE UNWINS—MEN ARE PRONE TO OVERVALUE THEIR OWN CIRCLE.

DEAR JOE, Oct. 25, 1765.

I AM afraid the month of October has proved rather unfavourable to the *belle assemblée* at Southampton; high winds and continual rains being bitter enemies to that agreeable lounge, which you and I are equally fond of. I have very cordially betaken myself to my

books, and my fireside; and seldom leave them unless for exercise. I have added another family to the number of those I was acquainted with when you were here. Their name is Unwin—the most agreeable people imaginable; quite sociable, and as free from the ceremonious civility of country gentlefolks as any I ever met with. They treat me more like a near relation than a stranger, and their house is always open to me. The old gentleman carries me to Cambridge in his chaise. He is a man of learning and good sense, and as simple as Parson Adams. His wife has a very uncommon understanding, has read much to excellent purpose, and is more polite than a duchess. The son, who belongs to Cambridge, is a most amiable young man; and the daughter quite of a piece with the rest of the family. They see but little company, which suits me exactly: go when I will, I find a house full of peace and cordiality in all its parts, and I am sure to hear no scandal, but such discourse instead of it as we are all better for. You remember Rousseau's description of an English morning; such are the mornings I spend with these good people; and the evenings differ from them in nothing, except that they are still more snug and quieter. Now I know them, I wonder that I liked Huntingdon so well before I knew them, and am apt to think I should find every place disagreeable that had not an Unwin belonging to it.

This incident convinces me of the truth of an observation I have often made, that when we circumscribe our estimate of all that is clever within the limits of our own acquaintance (which I at least have been

always apt to do), we are guilty of a very uncharitable censure upon the rest of the world, and of a narrowness of thinking disgraceful to ourselves. Wapping and Redriff may contain some of the most amiable persons living, and such as one would go to Wapping and Redriff to make acquaintance with. You remember Mr. Gray's Stanza—

> Full many a gem of purest ray serene
> The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear;
> Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
> And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Yours, dear Joe,

W. C.

To MRS. COWPER, *at the Park House, Hartford.*

MANNER OF LIFE WITH THE UNWINS—REASONS FOR NOT TAKING ORDERS.

MY DEAR COUSIN, Huntingdon, Oct. 20, 1766.

I AM obliged to you for the interest you take in my welfare, and for your inquiring so particularly after the manner in which my time passes here. As to amusements—I mean what the world calls such—we have none; the place, indeed, swarms with them, and cards and dancing are the professed business of almost all the *gentle* inhabitants of Huntingdon. We refuse to take part in them, or to be accessories to this way of murdering our time, and by so doing have acquired the name of Methodists. Having told you how we *do not* spend our time, I will next say how we do. We breakfast commonly between eight and nine: till eleven,

we read either the Scripture, or the sermons of some faithful preacher; at eleven, we attend divine service, which is performed here twice every day; and from twelve to three we separate, and amuse ourselves as we please. During that interval I either read in my own apartment, or walk, or ride, or work in the garden. We seldom sit an hour after dinner; but, if the weather permits, adjourn to the garden, where with Mrs. Unwin and her son, I have generally the pleasure of religious conversation till tea-time. If it rains, or is too windy for walking, we either converse within doors, or sing some hymns of Martin's collection, and by the help of Mrs. Unwin's harpsichord make up a tolerable concert, in which our hearts, I hope, are the best and most musical performers. After tea, we sally forth to walk in good earnest. Mrs. Unwin is a good walker, and we have generally travelled about four miles before we see home again. When the days are short, we make this excursion in the former part of the day, between church-time and dinner. At night, we read and converse, as before, till supper, and commonly finish the evening either with hymns or a sermon; and last of all the family are called to prayers. I need not tell *you* that such a life as this is consistent with the utmost cheerfulness; accordingly, we are all happy, and dwell together in unity as brethren. Mrs. Unwin has almost a maternal affection for me, and I have something very like a filial one for her; and her son and I are brothers. Blessed be the God of our salvation for such companions, and for such a life; above all, for a heart to like it!

I have had many anxious thoughts about taking orders, and I believe every new convert is apt to think himself called upon for that purpose; but it has pleased God, by means which there is no need to particularize, to give me full satisfaction as to the propriety of declining it; indeed, they who have the least idea of what I have suffered from the dread of public exhibitions, will readily excuse my never attempting them hereafter. In the meantime, if it please the Almighty, I may be an instrument of turning many to the truth in a private way; and I hope that my endeavours in this way have not been entirely unsuccessful. Had I the zeal of Moses, I should want an Aaron to be my spokesman.

Yours ever, my dear cousin,

W. C.

To MRS. COWPER.

INTRODUCING MR. UNWIN, JUN.—GARDENING—REMARKS ON MARSHALL.

MY DEAR COUSIN, Huntingdon, March 14, 1767.

I WRITE a line to apprise you of the arrival of a very dear friend of mine at the Park, on Friday next, the son of Mr. Unwin, whom I have desired to call on you, in his way from London to Huntingdon. If you knew him as well as I do, you would love him as much. But I leave the young man to speak for himself, which he is very able to do. He is ready possessed of an answer to every question you can possibly ask concerning me, and knows my *whole*

story from first to last. I give you this previous notice, because I know you are not fond of strange faces, and because I thought it would in some degree save him the pain of announcing himself.

I am become a great florist and shrub-doctor. If the Major can make up a small packet of seeds, that will make a figure in a garden, where we have little else besides jessamine and honeysuckle—such a packet, I mean, as may be put in one's fob—I will promise to take great care of them, as I ought to value natives of the Park. They must not be such, however, as require great skill in the management, for at present I have no skill to spare.

I think Marshall one of the best writers, and the most spiritual expositor of Scripture, I ever read. I admire the strength of his argument, and the clearness of his reasonings, upon those parts of our most holy religion which are generally least understood (even by real Christians), as masterpieces of the kind. His section upon the union of the soul with Christ is an instance of what I mean, in which he has spoken of a most mysterious truth with admirable perspicuity, and with great good sense, making it all the while subservient to his main purport of proving holiness to be the fruit and effect of faith.

I subjoin thus much upon that author, because, though you desired my opinion of him, I remember that in my last I rather left you to find it out by inference, than expressed it as I ought to have done. I never met a man who understood the plan of salvation better, or was more happy in explaining it.

W. C.

To MRS. COWPER, *at the Park House, Hartford.*

CONDEMNS HIMSELF FOR HIS MOTIVE IN INTRODUCING HIS YOUNG FRIEND.

MY DEAR COUSIN, Huntingdon, April 3, 1767.

YOU sent my friend Unwin home to us charmed with your kind reception of him, and with everything he saw at the Park. Shall I once more give you a peep into my vile and deceitful heart? What motive do you think lay at the bottom of my conduct when I desired him to call upon you? I did not suspect, at first, that pride and vain-glory had any share in it; but quickly after I had recommended the visit to him, I discovered in that fruitful soil the very root of the matter. You know that I am a stranger here; all such are suspected characters, unless they bring their credentials with them. To this moment, I believe, it is a matter of speculation in the place, whence I came, and to whom I belong.

Though my friend, you may suppose, before I was admitted an inmate here, was satisfied that I was not a mere vagabond, and has since that time received more convincing proofs of my *sponsibility*, yet I could not resist the opportunity of furnishing him with ocular demonstration of it by introducing him to one of my most splendid connexions; that when he hears me called *That fellow Cowper*, which has happened heretofore, he may be able, upon unquestionable evidence, to assert my gentlemanhood, and relieve me from the weight of that opprobrious appellation. Oh pride! pride! it deceives me with the subtlety of

a serpent, and seems to walk erect, though it crawls upon the earth. How will it twist and twine itself about to get from under the cross, which it is the glory of our Christian calling to be able to bear with patience and good-will. They who can guess at the heart of a stranger, and you especially, who are of a compassionate temper, will be more ready, perhaps, to excuse me, in this instance, than I can be to excuse myself. But in good truth, it was abominable pride of heart, indignation, and vanity, and deserves no better name. How should such a creature be admitted into those pure and sinless mansions, where nothing shall enter that defileth, did not the blood of Christ, applied by the hand of faith, take away the guilt of sin, and leave no spot or stain behind it? Oh, what continual need have I of an Almighty, All-sufficient Saviour!

I thank you for the seeds: I have committed some of each sort to the ground, whence they will soon spring up like so many mementos to remind me of my friends at the Park.

W. C.

To MRS. COWPER, *at the Park House, Hartford.*

MR. UNWIN'S DEATH—UNCERTAINTY WHERE TO SETTLE.

MY DEAR COUSIN, Huntingdon, July 13, 1767.

THE newspaper has told you the truth. Poor Mr. Unwin being flung from his horse, as he was going to the church on Sunday morning, received a dreadful

fracture on the back part of the skull, under which he languished till Thursday evening, and then died. This awful dispensation has left an impression upon our spirits, which will not presently be worn off. He died in a poor cottage, to which he was carried immediately after his fall, about a mile from home; and his body could not be brought to his own house till the spirit was gone to Him who gave it. May it be a lesson to us to watch, since we know not the day nor the hour when our Lord cometh!

The effect of it upon my circumstances will only be a change of the place of my abode. For I shall still, by God's leave, continue with Mrs. Unwin, whose behaviour to me has always been that of a mother to a son. We know not yet where we shall settle, but we trust that the Lord, whom we seek, will go before us, and prepare a rest for us. We have employed our friend Haweis, Dr. Conyers of Helmsley in Yorkshire, and Mr. Newton of Olney, to look out a place for us; but at present are entirely ignorant under which of the three we shall settle, or whether under either. I have written to my Aunt Madan, to desire Martin to assist us with his inquiries. It is probable we shall stay here till Michaelmas.

W. C.

To JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

SOME PEOPLE TRAVEL, BUT COWPER PREFERS RETIREMENT.

DEAR JOE, Olney, 1769.

SIR THOMAS crosses the Alps, and Sir Cowper, for that is his title at Olney, prefers his home to any other spot of earth in the world. Horace observing this difference of temper in different persons, cried out a good many years ago, in the true spirit of poetry, 'How much one man differs from another!' This does not seem a very sublime exclamation in English, but I remember we were taught to admire it in the original.

My dear friend, I am obliged to you for your invitation, but being long accustomed to retirement, which I was always fond of, I am now more than ever unwilling to revisit those noisy and crowded scenes, which I never loved, and which I now abhor. I remember you with all the friendship I ever professed, which is as much as I ever entertained for any man. But the strange and uncommon incidents of my life have given an entire new turn to my whole character and conduct, and rendered me incapable of receiving pleasure from the same employments and amusements of which I could readily partake in former days.

I love you and yours; I thank you for your continued remembrance of me, and shall not cease to be their and your

Affectionate friend and servant,

W. C.

OLNEY CHURCH.

To Joseph Hill, Esq.

HIS OWN PECUNIARY CONCERNS—HIS BROTHER'S DEATH, AND STATE OF MIND PREVIOUSLY.

Dear Joe, Olney, May 8, 1770.

Your letter did not reach me till the last post, when I had not time to answer it. I left Cambridge immediately after my brother's death.

It pleased God to cut short my brother's connexions and expectations here, yet not without giving him lively and glorious views of a better happiness than any he could propose to himself in such a world as this. Notwithstanding his great learning (for he was one of the chief men in the university in that respect), he was candid and sincere in his inquiries after truth. Though he could not come into my sentiments when I first acquainted him with them, nor, in the many conversations which I afterwards had with him upon the subject, could he be brought to acquiesce in them as Scriptural and true, yet I had no sooner left St. Alban's than he began to study with the deepest attention those points on which we differed, and to furnish himself with the best writers upon them. His mind was kept open to conviction for five years, during all which time he laboured in this pursuit with unwearied diligence, as leisure and opportunity were afforded. Amongst his dying words were these, 'Brother, I thought you wrong, yet wanted to believe as you did. I found myself not able to believe, yet always thought I should be one day to do so.' From the study of books, he was

brought upon his death-bed to the study of himself, and there learned to renounce his righteousness, and his own most amiable character, and to submit himself to the righteousness which is of God by faith. With these views he was desirous of death. Satisfied of his interest in the blessing purchased by the blood of Christ, he prayed for death with earnestness, felt the approaches of it with joy, and died in peace.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

To JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

AFFECTIONATE NOTICE OF HILL, AND THANKS FOR HIS REPEATED INVITATION.

DEAR JOE, Olney, September 25, 1770.

I HAVE not done conversing with terrestrial objects, though I should be happy were I able to hold more continual converse with a Friend above the skies. He has my heart, but He allows a corner in it for all who show me kindness, and therefore one for you. The storm of sixty-three made a wreck of the friendships I had contracted in the course of many years, yours excepted, which has survived the tempest.

I thank you for your repeated invitation. Singular thanks are due to you for so *singular* an instance of your regard. I could not leave Olney, unless in a case of absolute necessity, without much inconvenience to myself and others.

W. C.

To the Rev. William Unwin.

ON THE NEW EDITION OF THE ENGLISH POETS, FOR WHICH JOHNSON WROTE THE LIVES.

My dear Friend, Olney, May 26, 1779.[1]

I am obliged to you for the Poets; and though I little thought that I was translating so much money out of your pocket into the bookseller's, when I turned Prior's poem into Latin, yet I must needs say that, if you think it worth while to purchase the English Classics at all, you cannot possess yourself of them upon better terms. I have looked into some of the volumes, but not having yet finished the Register have merely looked into them. A few things I have met with, which if they had been burned the moment they were written, it would have been better for the author, and at least as well for his readers. There is not much of this, but a little is

[1] By comparing the date of this letter with that of the preceding one, it will be seen that there is an interval of eight years between them. During this period, Cowper had been attacked in January, 1773, with a severe visitation of his constitutional melancholy, from which he slowly recovered; but there remained one terrible hallucination which never left him all the rest of his life, namely, that God had shut him out from His mercy for ever. Thenceforward, we find in his letters very little comfortable reference to his own personal religion; but we find the same benevolent zeal for the salvation and happiness of his fellow-creatures, the same patriotic feelings of an English gentleman, the same just and delicate observations on men and manners, taste and literature, as he used to express in his happier days.

too much. I think it a pity the editor admitted any; the English Muse would have lost no credit by the omission of such trash. Some of them again seem to me to have but a very disputable right to a place among the classics; and I am quite at a loss, when I see them in such company, to conjecture what is Dr. Johnson's idea or definition of classical merit. But if he inserts the poems of some who can hardly be said to deserve such an honour, the purchaser may comfort himself with the hope that he will exclude none that do.

W. C.

To the Rev. William Unwin.

IS GOING TO TURN GLAZIER—HIS AMUSEMENTS—A VISIT TO GAYHURST, A NEIGHBOURING GENTLEMAN'S SEAT.

Olney, September 21, 1779.

Amico mio, be pleased to buy me a glazier's diamond pencil. I have glazed the two frames designed to receive my pine plants.[1] But I cannot mend the kitchen windows till, by the help of that implement, I can reduce the glass to its proper dimensions. If I were a plumber I should be a complete glazier, and possibly the happy time may come when I shall be seen trudging away to the neighbouring towns with a shelf of glass hanging at my back. If Government should impose another tax upon that commodity, I

[1] He had exchanged with the gardens at Gayhurst some of the plants sent by Samuel Cowper for pines which he wished to cultivate.

hardly know a business in which a gentleman might more successfully employ himself. A Chinese of ten times my fortune would avail himself of such an opportunity without scruple; and why should not I, who want money as much as any mandarin in China? Rousseau would have been charmed to have seen me so occupied, and would have exclaimed with rapture, 'that he had found the Emilius, who (he supposed) had subsisted only in his own idea.' I would recommend it to you to follow my example. You will presently qualify yourself for the task, and may not only amuse yourself at home, but may even exercise your skill in mending the church windows; which, as it would save money to the parish, would conduce, together with your other ministerial accomplishments, to make you extremely popular in the place.

I have eight pair of tame pigeons. When I first enter the garden in the morning, I find them perched upon the wall, waiting for their breakfast, for I feed them always upon the gravel-walk. If your wish should be accomplished, and you should find yourself furnished with the wings of a dove, I shall undoubtedly find you amongst them. Only be so good, if that should be the case, to announce yourself by some means or other, for I imagine your crop will require something better than tares to fill it.

Your mother and I, last week, made a trip in a post-chaise to Gayhurst,[1] the seat of Mr. Wrighte,

[1] Gayhurst, once the home of the Digbys, is now the seat of J. W. Carlisle, Esq., to whom Mr. Thomas Wright, schoolmaster at Olney, has dedicated a charming volume, *The Town of Cowper*.

about four miles off. He understood that I did not much affect strange faces, and sent over his servant on purpose to inform me that he was going into Leicestershire, and that, if I chose to see the gardens, I might gratify myself, without danger of seeing the proprietor. I accepted the invitation, and was delighted with all I found there. The situation is happy, the gardens elegantly disposed, the hothouse in the most flourishing state, and the orange trees the most captivating creatures of the kind I ever saw. A man, in short, had need have the talents of Cox or Langford, the auctioneers, to do the whole scene justice.

Our love attends you all.

Yours,

W. C.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

HIS OPINIONS OF JOHNSON'S BIOGRAPHIES—THINKS HIM UNJUST TO MILTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Olney, October 31, 1779.

I WROTE my last letter merely to inform you that I had nothing to say; in answer to which you have said nothing. I admire the propriety of your conduct, though I am a loser by it. I will endeavour to say something now, and shall hope for something in return.

I have been well entertained with Johnson's *Lives of the Poets,* for which I thank you; with one

exception, and that a swingeing one, I think he has acquitted himself with his usual good sense and sufficiency. His treatment of Milton is unmerciful to the last degree. He has belaboured that great poet's character with the most industrious cruelty. As a man, he hardly left him the shadow of one good quality. Churlishness in his private life, and a rancorous hatred of everything royal in his public, are the two colours with which he has smeared all the canvas. If he had any virtues, they are not to be found in the Doctor's picture of him; and it is well for Milton that some sourness in his temper is the only vice with which his memory has been charged; it is evident enough, that, if his biographer could have discovered more, he would not have spared him. As a poet, he has treated him with severity enough, and has plucked one or two of the most beautiful feathers out of his Muse's wing, and trampled them under his great foot. He has passed sentence of condemnation upon Lycidas, and has taken occasion, from that charming poem, to expose to ridicule (what is, indeed, ridiculous enough), the childish prattlement of pastoral compositions, as if Lycidas was the prototype and pattern of them all. The liveliness of the description, the sweetness of the numbers, the classical spirit of antiquity that prevails in it, go for nothing. I am convinced, by the way, that he has no ear for poetical numbers, or that it was stopped by prejudice against the harmony of Milton's. Was there ever anything so delightful as the music of the *Paradise Lost?* It is like that of a fine organ; has the fullest and the deepest tones of majesty, with all the softness

and elegance of the Dorian flute. Variety without end, and never equalled, unless, perhaps, by Virgil. Yet the Doctor has little or nothing to say upon this copious theme, but talks something about the unfitness of the English language for blank verse, and how apt it is, in the mouth of some readers, to degenerate into declamation.

I could talk a good while longer, but I have no room; our love attends you.

Yours affectionately,

W. C.

To the Rev. John Newton.

VARIETY OF HIS TOPICS—RURAL SCENERY—AMUSEMENT IN TRIFLES.

Dear Sir, Olney, May 3, 1780.

You indulge me in such a variety of subjects, and allow me such a latitude of excursion in this scribbling employment, that I have no excuse for silence. I am much obliged to you for swallowing such boluses as I send you, for the sake of my gilding, and verily believe I am the only man alive from whom they would be welcome to a palate like yours. I wish I could make them more splendid than they are, more alluring to the eye, at least, if not more pleasing to the taste; but my leaf gold is tarnished, and has received such a tinge from the vapours that are ever brooding over my mind, that I think it no small proof of your partiality to me, that you will read my letters. I am not fond of long-winded metaphors; I

have always observed that they halt at the latter end of their progress, and so do mine. I deal much in ink indeed, but not such ink as is employed by poets and writers of essays. Mine is a harmless fluid, and guilty of no deceptions but such as may prevail without the least injury to the person imposed on. I draw mountains, valleys, woods, and streams, and ducks and dab-chicks. I admire them myself, and Mrs. Unwin admires them; and her praise, and my praise put together, are fame enough for me. Oh! I could spend whole days and moonlight nights in feeding upon a lovely prospect. My eyes drink the rivers as they flow. If every human being upon earth could think for one quarter of an hour as I have done for many years, there might perhaps be many miserable men among them, but not an unawakened one would be found from the arctic to the antarctic circle. At present, the difference between them and me is greatly to their advantage. I delight in baubles, and know them to be so; for rested in, and viewed without a reference to their Author, what is the earth, what are the planets, what is the sun itself but a bauble? Better for a man never to have seen them, or to see them with the eyes of a brute, stupid and unconscious of what he beholds, than not to be able to say, 'The Maker of all these wonders is my Friend!' Their eyes have never been opened to see that they are trifles; mine have been, and will be till they are closed for ever. They think a fine estate, a large conservatory, a hothouse rich as a West Indian garden, things of consequence; visit them with pleasure, and muse upon them with ten times more.

I am pleased with a frame of four lights, doubtful whether the few pines it contains will ever be worth a farthing; amuse myself with a greenhouse which Lord Bute's gardener could take upon his back and walk away; and when I have paid it the accustomed visit, and watered it, and given it air, I say to myself —'This is not mine, it is a plaything lent me for the present; I must leave it soon.'

W. C.

To the REV. JOHN NEWTON.

THE GORDON RIOTS IN LONDON—THE PROTESTANT ASSOCIATION.

DEAR SIR, Olney, June 12, 1780.

WE accept it as an effort of your friendship, that you could prevail with yourself, in a time of such terror and distress, to send us repeated accounts of yours and Mrs. Newton's welfare; you supposed, with reason enough, that we should be apprehensive for your safety, situated as you were, apparently, within the reach of so much danger. We rejoice that you have escaped it all, and that, except the anxiety which you must have felt, both for yourselves and others, you have suffered nothing upon this dreadful occasion. A metropolis in flames, and a nation in ruins, are subjects of contemplation for such a mind as yours that will leave a lasting impression behind them. It is well that the design died in the execution, and will be buried, I hope never to rise again, in the ashes of its own combustion. There is a melancholy pleasure

in looking back upon such a scene, arising from a comparison of possibilities with facts; the enormous bulk of the intended mischief with the abortive and partial accomplishment of it. Much was done, more indeed than could have been supposed practicable in a well-regulated city, not unfurnished with a military force for its protection. But surprise and astonishment seem at first to have struck every nerve of the police with a palsy, and to have disarmed government of all its powers.

I congratulate you upon the wisdom that withheld you from entering yourself a member of the Protestant Association. Your friends who did so have reason enough to regret their doing it. Innocent as they are, and they who know them cannot doubt of their being perfectly so, it is likely to bring an odium on the profession they make, that will not soon be forgotten. Neither is it possible for a quiet, inoffensive man, to discover, on a sudden, that his zeal has carried him into such company, without being to the last degree shocked at his imprudence. *Their* religion was an honourable mantle, like that of Elijah; but the majority wore cloaks of Guy Fawkes' time, and meant nothing so little as what they pretended.

W. C.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

DRYDEN'S EPIGRAM ON MILTON.

Olney, July 11, 1780.

I HAVE often wondered that Dryden's illustrious epigram on Milton (in my mind the second-best that ever was made) has never been translated into Latin for the admiration of the learned in other countries. I have at last presumed to venture upon the task myself. The great closeness of the original, which is equal in that respect to the most compact Latin I ever saw, made it extremely difficult.[1]

Tres, tria sed longè distantia sæcula, vates
Ostentant tribus è gentibus eximios.
Græcia sublimem, cum majestate disertum
Roma tulit, felix Anglia utrique parem.
Partubus ex binis Natura exhausta, coacta est,
Tertius ut fieret, consociare duos.

I have not one bright thought upon the Chancellor's recovery; nor can I strike off so much as one sparkling atom from that brilliant subject. It is not when I will, nor upon what I will, but as a thought happens to occur to me; and then I versify, whether I will or not. I never write but for my amusement; and what I write is sure to answer that end, if it answers no

[1] DRYDEN'S EPIGRAM.

Three poets, in three distant ages born,
Greece, Italy, and England did adorn:
The first in loftiness of thought surpassed;
The next in majesty; in both the last.
The force of Nature could no further go;
To make a third, she joined the former two.

other. If, besides this purpose, the more desirable one of entertaining you be effected, I then receive double fruit of my labour, and consider this produce of it as a second crop, the more valuable because less expected. But when I have once remitted a composition to you, I have done with it. It is pretty certain that I shall never read it, or think of it again. From that moment I have constituted you sole judge of its accomplishments, if it has any, and of its defects, which it is sure to have.

W. C.

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the REV. JOHN NEWTON.

WHY HE SENDS HIS TRIFLES IN VERSE TO UNWIN RATHER THAN TO HIM—A RIDDLE.

MY DEAR SIR, Olney, July 30, 1780.

YOU may think perhaps that I deal more liberally with Mr. Unwin, in the way of poetical export, than I do with you, and I believe you have reason; the truth is this: if I walked the streets with a fiddle under my arm, I should never think of performing under the window of a Privy Councillor or a Chief Justice, but should rather make free with ears more likely to be open to such amusement. The trifles I produce in this way are indeed such trifles, that I cannot think them seasonable presents for you. Mr. Unwin himself would not be offended if I was to tell him that there is this difference between him and Mr. Newton: that the latter is already an apostle, while

he himself is only undergoing the business of incubation, with a hope that he may be hatched in time. When my Muse comes forth arrayed in sables, at least in a robe of graver cast, I make no scruple to direct her to my friend at Hoxton. This has been one reason why I have so long delayed the riddle. But lest I should seem to set a value upon it that I do not, by making it an object of still further inquiry, here it comes.

I am just two and two, I am warm, I am cold,
And the parent of numbers that cannot be told;
I am lawful, unlawful—a duty, a fault,
I am often sold dear, good for nothing when bought;
An extraordinary boon, and a matter of course,
And yielded with pleasure—when taken by force.

W. C.

To the Rev. William Unwin.

A LETTER MAY BE WRITTEN UPON ANYTHING OR NOTHING —HUMAN NATURE CONTINUES THE SAME, THOUGH FASHIONS CHANGE.

My dear Friend, Olney, August 6, 1780.

You like to hear from me: this is a very good reason why I should write. But I have nothing to say: this seems equally a good reason why I should not. Yet if you had alighted from your horse at our door this morning, and at this present writing, being five o'clock in the afternoon, had found occasion to say to me—'Mr. Cowper, you have not spoken since I came in; have you resolved never to speak again?' it would be but a poor reply, if in answer to the summons I should

plead inability as my best and only excuse. And this, by the way, suggests to me a seasonable piece of instruction, and reminds me of what I am very apt to forget, when I have any epistolary business in hand, that a letter may be written upon anything or nothing, just as that anything or nothing happens to occur. A man that has a journey before him, twenty miles in length, which he is to perform on foot, will not hesitate and doubt whether he shall set out or not, because he does not readily conceive how he shall ever reach the end of it: for he knows, that by the simple operation of moving one foot forward first, and then the other, he shall be sure to accomplish it. So it is in the present case, and so it is in every similar case. A letter is written as a conversation is maintained, or a journey performed; not by preconcerted or premeditated means, a new contrivance, or an invention never heard of before, but merely by maintaining a progress, and resolving, as a postillion does, having once set out, never to stop till we reach the appointed end. If a man may talk without thinking, why may he not write upon the same terms? A grave gentleman of the last century, a tie-wig, square-toe, Steinkirk figure, would say—'My good sir, a man has no right to do either.' But it is to be hoped that the present century has nothing to do with the mouldy opinions of the last; and so good Sir Launcelot, or Sir Paul, or whatever be your name, step into your picture-frame again, and look as if you thought for another century, and leave us moderns in the meantime to think when we can, and to write whether we can or not, else we might as well be dead as you are.

When we look back upon our forefathers, we seem to look back upon the people of another nation, almost upon creatures of another species. Their vast rambling mansions, spacious halls, and painted casements, the Gothic porch smothered with honeysuckles, their little gardens and high walls, their box-edgings, balls of holly, and yew-tree statues, are become so entirely unfashionable now, that we can hardly believe it possible, that a people who resembled us so little in their taste should resemble us in anything else. But in everything else, I suppose, they were our counterparts exactly; and time, that has sewed up the slashed sleeve, and reduced the large trunk hose to a neat pair of silk stockings, has left human nature just where it found it. The inside of man at least has undergone no change. His passions, appetites, and aims are just what they ever were. They wear, perhaps, a handsomer disguise than they did in days of yore; for philosophy and literature will have their effect upon the exterior; but, in every other respect, a modern is only an ancient in a different dress.

W. C.

To the Rev. William Unwin.

BIOGRAPHIA BRITANNICA—COMMISSION FOR A HOMER AND CLAVIS.

My dear Friend, Olney, Sept. 3, 1780.

I am glad you are so provident, and that, while you are young, you have furnished yourself with the means of comfort in old age. Your crutch and your pipe may be of use to you (and may they be so!)

should your years be extended to an antediluvian date; and for your perfect accommodation, you seem to want nothing but a clerk called Snuffle, and a sexton of the name of Skeleton, to make your ministerial equipage complete.

I think I have read as much of the first volume of the Biography as I shall ever read. I find it very amusing; more so perhaps than it would have been had they sifted their characters with more exactness, and admitted none but those who had in some way or other entitled themselves to immortality, by deserving well of the public. Such a compilation would perhaps have been more judicious, though I confess it would have afforded less variety. The priests and the monks of earlier, and the doctors of later days, who have signalized themselves by nothing but a controversial pamphlet, long since thrown by, and never to be perused again, might have been forgotten, without injury or loss to the national character for learning or genius. This observation suggested to me the following lines, which may serve to illustrate my meaning, and at the same time to give my criticism a sprightlier air:

Oh! fond attempt, to give a deathless lot
To names ignoble, born to be forgot!
In vain, recorded in historic page,
They court the notice of a future age;
Those twinkling, tiny lustres of the land
Drop one by one, from Fame's neglecting hand;
Lethean gulfs receive them as they fall,
And dark oblivion soon absorbs them all.
So when a child (as playful children use)
Has burned to cinder a stale last-year's news,

The flame extinct, he views the roving fire,
There goes my lady, and there goes the squire,
There goes the parson—O illustrious spark!
And there—scarce less illustrious—goes the clerk.

Virgil admits none but worthies into the Elysian fields. I cannot recollect the lines in which he describes them all, but these in particular I well remember:

Quique sui memores alios fecere merendo,
Inventas aut qui vitam excoluere per artes.

A chaste and scrupulous conduct like this would well become the writer of national biography. But enough of this.

Our respects attend Miss Shuttleworth, with many thanks for her intended present. Some purses derive all their value from their contents, but these will have an intrinsic value of their own; and though mine should be often empty, which is not an improbable supposition, I shall still esteem it highly on its own account.

If you could meet with a second-hand Virgil, ditto Homer, both Iliad and Odyssey, together with a Clavis, for I have no Lexicon, and all tolerably cheap, I shall be obliged to you if you will make the purchase.

Yours,
W. C.

To the Rev. William Unwin.

POETICAL REPORTS OF LAW CASES—SENDS HIS CASE OF NOSE *v.* EYES.

My dear Friend, Olney, December 1780.

Poetical reports of law cases are not very common, yet it seems to me desirable that they should be so. Many advantages would accrue from such a measure. They would, in the first place, be more commonly deposited in the memory, just as linen, grocery, or other such matters, when neatly packed, are known to occupy less room, and to lie more conveniently in any trunk, chest, or box, to which they may be committed. In the next place, being divested of that infinite circumlocution, and the endless embarrassment in which they are involved by it, they would become surprisingly intelligible in comparison with their present obscurity. And lastly, they would by this means be rendered susceptible of musical embellishment; and, instead of being quoted in the country with that dull monotony which is so wearisome to bystanders, and frequently lulls even the judges themselves to sleep, might be rehearsed in recitation; which would have an admirable effect in keeping the attention fixed and lively, and could not fail to disperse that heavy atmosphere of sadness and gravity which hangs over the jurisprudence of our country. I remember many years ago being informed by a relation of mine, who in his youth had applied himself to the study of the law, that one of his fellow-students, a gentleman of sprightly parts, and very respectable talents of the

poetical kind, did actually engage in the prosecution of such a design; for reasons, I suppose, somewhat similar to, if not the same with, those I have now suggested. He began with Coke's Institutes; a book so rugged in its style, that an attempt to polish it seemed a Herculean labour, and not less arduous and difficult than it would be to give the smoothness of the rabbit's fur to the prickly back of a hedge-hog. But he succeeded to admiration, as you will perceive by the following specimen, which is all that my said relation could recollect of the performance.

Tenant in fee
Simple, is he,
And need neither quake nor quiver,
Who hath his lands
Free from demands,
To him and his heirs for ever.

You have an ear for music, and a taste for verse, which saves me the trouble of pointing out, with a critical nicety, the advantages of such a version. I proceed, therefore, to what I at first intended, and to transcribe the record of an adjudged case thus managed, to which indeed what I premised was intended merely as an introduction.[1]

W. C.

[1] This letter concluded with the poetical law case of Nose, plaintiff,—Eyes, defendants.

To the Rev. William Unwin.

FINE WEATHER HINDERS HIM FROM WRITING—MEN OF ASPERITY DO NOT CONSULT THE FINE FEELINGS OF OTHERS.

My dear Friend, Olney, April 2, 1781.

Fine weather, and a variety of *extraforaneous* occupations (search Johnson's dictionary for the word, and if not found there, insert it; for it saves a deal of circumlocution, and is very lawfully compounded), make it difficult (excuse the length of a parenthesis, which I did not foresee the length of when I began it, and which may perhaps a little perplex the sense of what I am writing; though, as I seldom deal in that figure of speech, I have the less need to make an apology for doing it at present), make it difficult (I say) for me to find opportunities for writing. My morning is engrossed by the garden; and in the afternoon, till I have drunk tea, I am fit for nothing. At five o'clock we walk; and when the walk is over, lassitude recommends rest, and again I become fit for nothing. The current hour, therefore, which (I need not tell you) is comprised in the interval between four and five, is devoted to your service, as the only one in the twenty-four which is not otherwise engaged.

I do not wonder that you have felt a great deal upon the occasion you mention in your last, especially on account of the asperity you have met with in the behaviour of your friend. Reflect, however, that, as it is natural to you to have very fine feelings, it is equally natural to some other tempers to leave those feelings entirely out of the question, and to speak to

you, and to act towards you, just as they do towards the rest of mankind, without the least attention to the irritability of your system. In this instance I think you a sufferer under the weight of an animadversion not founded in truth, and which, consequently, you did not deserve. I account him faithful in the pulpit who dissembles nothing that he believes, for fear of giving offence. To accommodate a discourse to the judgment and opinion of others for the sake of pleasing them, though by doing so we are obliged to depart widely from our own, is to be unfaithful to ourselves at least, and cannot be accounted fidelity to Him whom we profess to serve. But there are few men who do not stand in need of the exercise of charity and forbearance; and the gentleman in question has afforded you an ample opportunity in this respect to show how readily, though differing in your views, you can practise all that he could possibly expect from you, if your persuasion corresponded exactly with his own.

Yours,

W. C.

To the Rev. William Unwin.

A WOMAN'S "MUST"—INTIMATION THAT HE HAS A VOLUME IN THE PRESS.

May 1, 1781.

Your mother says I *must* write, and *must* admits of no apology; I might otherwise plead, that I have nothing to say, that I am weary, that I am dull, that it would be more convenient, therefore, for you, as well as for

myself, that I should let it alone; but all these pleas, and whatever pleas besides, either disinclination, indolence, or necessity might suggest, are overruled, as they ought to be, the moment a lady adduces her irrefragable argument, *you must.* You have still, however, one comfort left, that what I must write, you may, or may not read, just as it shall please you; unless Lady Anne at your elbow should say, you *must* read it, and then, like a true knight, you will obey, without looking for a remedy.

In the press, and speedily will be published, in one volume, octavo, price three shillings, 'Poems, by William Cowper, of the Inner Temple, Esq.' You may suppose, by the size of the publication, that the greatest part of them have been long kept secret, because you yourself have never seen them; but the truth is, that they are most of them, except what you have in your possession, the produce of the last winter. Two-thirds of the compilation will be occupied by four pieces, the first of which sprang up in the month of December, and the last of them in the month of March. They contain, I suppose, in all, about two thousand and five hundred lines; are known, or to be known in due time, by the names of 'Table Talk;' 'The Progress of Error;' 'Truth;' 'Expostulation.' Mr. Newton writes a preface, and Johnson is the publisher. The principal, I may say the only reason why I never mentioned to you, till now, an affair which I am just going to make known to all the world (if *that* Mr. All-the-world should think it worth his knowing), has been this—that till within these few days I had not the honour to know it myself. This may seem strange, but

it is true; for not knowing where to find underwriters who would choose to insure them; and not finding it convenient to a purse like mine to run any hazard, even upon the credit of my own ingenuity, I was very much in doubt for some weeks, whether any bookseller would be willing to subject himself to an ambiguity, that might prove very expensive in case of a bad market. But Johnson has heroically set all peradventures at defiance, and takes the whole charge upon himself. So out I come. I shall be glad of my Translations from Vincent Bourne in your next frank. My Muse will lay herself at your feet immediately on her first public appearance.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

To the Rev. John Newton.

'SLIDES INTO VERSE, AND HITCHES IN A RHYME.'

My very dear Friend, Olney, July 12, 1781.

I am going to send, what when you have read, you may scratch your head, and say, 'I suppose, there's nobody knows, whether what I have got be verse or not: by the tune and the time, it ought to be rhyme; but if it be, did you ever see, of late or of yore, such a ditty before?'

I have writ 'Charity,' not for popularity, but as well as I could, in hopes to do good; and if the reviewer should say 'to be sure, the gentleman's Muse wears Methodist shoes; you may know by her pace, and talk

about grace, that she and her bard have little regard for the taste and fashions, and ruling passions, and hoidening play, of the modern day; and though she assume a borrowed plume, and now and then wear a tittering air, 'tis only her plan, to catch, if she can, the giddy and gay, as they go that way, by a production on a new construction. She has baited her trap, in hopes to snap all that may come, with a sugar-plum.' His opinion in this, will not be amiss; 'tis what I intend, my principal end; and if I succeed, and folks should read, till a few are brought to a serious thought, I shall think I am paid, for all I have said, and all I have done, though I have run, many a time, after a rhyme, as far as from hence, to the end of my sense, and by hook or crook, write another book, if I live and am here another year.

I have heard before, of a room with a floor, laid upon springs, and such-like things, with so much art, in every part, that when you went in, you were forced to begin a minuet pace, with an air and a grace, swimming about, now in and now out, with a deal of state, in a figure of eight, without pipe or string, or any such thing: and now I have writ, in a rhyming fit, what will make you dance, and as you advance, will keep you still, though against your will, dancing away, alert and gay, till you come to an end of what I have penned; which that you may do, ere Madam and you are quite worn out with jigging about, I take my leave, and here you receive a bow profound, down to the ground, from your humble me,

W. C.

To the Rev. William Unwin.

THERE IS A LIMIT TO FORBEARANCE—FIRST MENTION OF LADY AUSTEN—A PIC-NIC, AT THE SPINNIE.

My dear Friend, Olney, July 29, 1781.

Nothing is so contrary to the genius of the gospel as the gratification of resentment and revenge; but I cannot easily persuade myself to think, that the Author of that dispensation could possibly advise His followers to consult their own peace at the expense of the peace of society, or inculcate a universal abstinence from the use of lawful remedies, to the encouragement of injury and oppression.

By this time you are sufficiently aware that I think you have an indisputable right to recover at law, what is so dishonestly withheld from you. The fellow, I suppose, has discernment enough to see a difference between you and the generality of the clergy; and cunning enough to conceive the purpose of turning your meekness and forbearance to good account, and of coining them into hard cash, which he means to put in his pocket. But I would disappoint him, and show him that though a Christian is not to be quarrelsome, he is not to be crushed; and that, though he is but a worm before God, he is not such a worm as every selfish, unprincipled wretch may tread upon at his pleasure.

I lately heard a story, from a lady who spent many years of her life in France, somewhat to the present purpose. An abbé, universally esteemed for his piety, and especially for the meekness of his manners, had yet undesignedly given some offence to a shabby

fellow in his parish. The man, concluding he might do as he pleased with so forgiving and gentle a character, struck him on one cheek, and bade him turn the other. The good man did so, and when he had received the two slaps, which he thought himself obliged to submit to, turned again and beat him soundly. I do not wish to see you follow the French gentleman's example, but I believe nobody that has heard the story condemns him much for the spirit he showed upon the occasion.

I had the relation from Lady Austen, sister to Mrs. Jones, wife of the minister at Clifton. She is a most agreeable woman, and has fallen in love with your mother and me; insomuch, that I do not know but she may settle at Olney. Yesterday se'nnight we all dined together in the *Spinnie*, a most delightful retirement, belonging to Mrs. Throckmorton of Weston. Lady Austen's lackey, and a lad that waits on me in the garden, drove a wheelbarrow full of eatables and drinkables to the scene of our *fête champêtre*. A board, laid over the top of the wheelbarrow, served us for a table; our dining-room was a root-house, lined with moss and ivy. At six o'clock, the servants, who had dined under the great elm upon the ground, at a little distance, boiled the kettle, and the said wheelbarrow served us for a tea-table. We then took a walk into the wilderness, about half a mile off, and were at home again a little after eight, having spent the day together from noon till evening, without one cross occurrence, or the least weariness of each other; a happiness few parties of pleasure can boast of.

Yours, with our joint love, W. C.

To the Rev. William Unwin.

HIS POEM ON 'RETIREMENT'—LADY AUSTEN ABOUT TO OCCUPY PART OF THE HOUSE AT OLNEY.

My dear Friend, Olney, August 25, 1781.

I have a subject in hand, which promises me a great abundance of poetical matter, but which, for want of a something I am not able to describe, I cannot at present proceed with. The name of it is '*Retirement*,' and my purpose, to recommend the proper improvement of it, to set forth the requisites for that end, and to enlarge upon the happiness of that state of life, when managed as it ought to be. In the course of my journey through this ample theme, I should wish to touch upon the characters, the deficiencies, and the mistakes of thousands, who enter on a scene of retirement, unqualified for it in every respect, and with such designs as have no tendency to promote either their own happiness or that of others. But, as I have told you before, there are times when I am no more a poet than I am a mathematician; and when such a time occurs, I always think it better to give up the point, than to labour it in vain. I shall yet again be obliged to trouble you for franks; the addition of three thousand lines, or near that number, having occasioned a demand which I did not always foresee; but your obliging friend, and your obliging self, having allowed me the liberty of application, I make it without apology.

The solitude, or rather the duality of our condition, at Olney, seems drawing to a conclusion. You have

THE HOUSE AT OLNEY.

not forgot, perhaps, that the building we inhabit consists of two mansions. And because you have only seen the inside of that part of it which is in our occupation, I therefore inform you that the other end of it is by far the most superb as well as the most commodious. Lady Austen has seen it, has set her heart upon it, is going to fit it up and furnish it, and, if she can get rid of the remaining two years of the lease of her London house, will probably enter upon it in a twelvemonth. You will be pleased with this intelligence, because I have already told you that she is a woman perfectly well-bred, sensible, and in every respect agreeable; and above all, because she loves your mother dearly. It has in my eyes (and I doubt not it will have the same in yours) strong marks of providential interposition. A female friend, and one who bids fair to prove herself worthy of the appellation, comes, recommended by a variety of considerations, to such a place as Olney. Since Mr. Newton went, and till this lady came, there was not in the kingdom a retirement more absolutely such than ours. We did not want company, but when it came we found it agreeable. A person that has seen much of the world, and understands it well, has high spirits, a lively fancy, and great readiness of conversation, introduces a sprightliness into such a scene as this, which, if it was peaceful before, is not the worse for being a little enlivened. In case of illness, too, to which all are liable, it was rather a gloomy prospect, if we allowed ourselves to advert to it, that there was hardly a woman in the place from whom it would have been reasonable to have expected either comfort or assis-

tance. The present curate's wife is a valuable person, but has a family of her own; and though a neighbour, is not a very near one. But if this plan is effected, we shall be, in a manner, one family; and, I suppose, never pass a day without some intercourse with each other.[1]

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

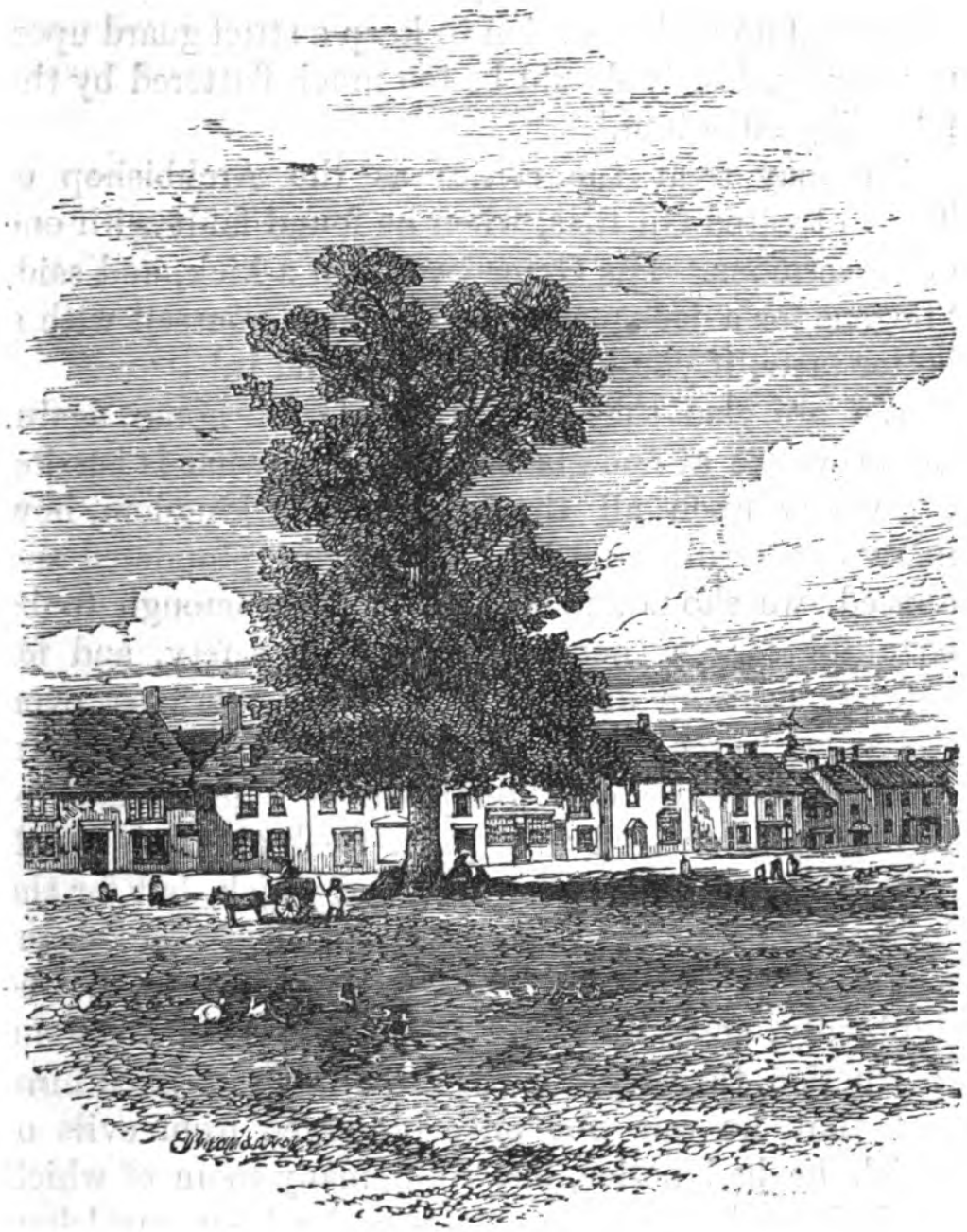
To the Rev. William Unwin.

THE CRITICAL REVIEWERS—PRAISE FROM FRANKLIN—A PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE—RODNEY'S VICTORY IN THE WEST INDIES.

My dear Friend, Olney, May 27, 1782.

Rather ashamed of having been at all dejected by the censure of the Critical Reviewers, who certainly could

[1] This intimacy took place, and was productive of some of the finest poems of Cowper; but it did not last long, and the house soon returned to the duality of Cowper and Mrs. Unwin. In the warmth of his admiration of Lady Austen, he had called her 'Sister Anna,' and had addressed some tender and elegant verses to her; but Mrs. Unwin, with more sense and coolness, could not help feeling apprehensive that his intimacy with a lady of such extraordinary talents, might lead him into perplexities of which he was by no means aware. Mrs. Unwin's feelings will be better understood by those who know that by this time her friendship had ripened into a nearer relation to Cowper. They were engaged to be married, but his illness prevented the union. In the 'Life of Newton' by the Rev. Josiah Bull, the engagement is referred to as being well known at the time.



MARKET HILL TREE.

not read without prejudice a book replete with opinions and doctrines to which they cannot subscribe, I have at present no little occasion to keep a strict guard upon my vanity, lest it should be too much flattered by the following eulogium.[1]

We may treat the critics as the Archbishop of Toledo treated Gil Blas, when he found fault with one of his sermons. His Grace gave him a kick, and said, 'Begone for a jackanapes, and furnish yourself with a better taste, if you know where to find it.'

We are glad that you are safe at home again. Could we see at one glance of the eye what is passing every day upon all the roads in the kingdom, how many are terrified and hurt, how many plundered and abused, we should, indeed, find reason enough to be thankful for journeys performed in safety, and for deliverance from dangers we are not, perhaps, even permitted to see. When in some of the high southern latitudes, and in a dark tempestuous night, a flash of lightning discovered to Captain Cook a vessel, which glanced along close by his side, and which, but for the lightning, he must have run foul of, both the danger and the transient light that showed it were, undoubtedly, designed to convey to him this wholesome instruction, that a particular Providence attended him, and that he was not only preserved from evils of which he had notice, but from many more of which he had no information, or even the least suspicion. What unlikely contingencies may, nevertheless, take

[1] Here Cowper transcribed the letter written from Passy, by Franklin, in praise of his book. It is quoted in a subsequent letter.

place! How improbable that two ships should dash against each other, in the midst of the vast Pacific Ocean, and that steering contrary courses, from parts of the world so immensely distant from each other, they should yet move so exactly in a line as to clash, fill, and go to the bottom, in a sea where all the ships in the world might be so dispersed as that none should see another! Yet this must have happened, but for the remarkable interference which he has recorded. The same Providence, indeed, might as easily have conducted them so wide of each other that they should never have met at all; but then this lesson would have been lost; at least, the heroic voyager would have encompassed the globe without having had occasion to relate an incident that so naturally suggests it.

The blow we have struck in the West Indies will, I suppose, be decisive at least for the present year, and, so far as that part of our possessions is concerned, in the present conflict. But the news-writers, and their correspondents, disgust me, and make me sick. One victory, after such a long series of adverse occurrences, has filled them with self-conceit and impertinent boasting; and while Rodney is almost accounted a Methodist, for ascribing his success to Providence, men who have renounced all dependence upon such a Friend, without whose assistance nothing can be done, threaten to drive the French out of the sea, laugh at the Spaniards, sneer at the Dutch, and are to carry the world before them. Our enemies are apt to brag, and we deride them for it; but we can sing as loud as they can, in the same key; and, nc

doubt, wherever our papers go, shall be derided in our turn. An Englishman's true glory should be, to do his business well, and say little about it; but he disgraces himself when he puffs his prowess as if he had finished his task, when he has but just begun it.

Yours,

W. C.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

ADVENTURE OF A KITTEN AND A VIPER—MR. BULL, MINISTER AT NEWPORT PAGNELL—HIS ADMIRATION OF MADAME GUION.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Olney, August 3, 1782.

IT is a sort of paradox, but it is true: we are never more in danger than when we think ourselves most secure; nor in reality more secure than when we seem to be most in danger. Both sides of this apparent contradiction were lately verified in my experience. Passing from the greenhouse to the barn, I saw three kittens (for we have so many in our retinue) looking with fixed attention on something which lay on the threshold of a door nailed up. I took but little notice of them at first, but a loud hiss engaged me to attend more closely, when, behold—a viper! the largest that I remember to have seen, rearing itself, darting its forked tongue, and ejaculating the aforesaid hiss at the nose of a kitten, almost in contact with his lips. I ran into the hall for a hoe with a long handle, with which I intended to assail him, and returning in a few seconds missed him: he was gone, and I feared

had escaped me. Still, however, the kitten sat watching immovably on the same spot. I concluded, therefore, that, sliding between the door and the threshold, he had found his way out of the garden into the yard. I went round immediately, and there found him in close conversation with the old cat, whose curiosity being excited by so novel an appearance, inclined her to pat his head repeatedly with her fore foot, with her claws, however, sheathed, and not in anger, but in the way of philosophic inquiry and examination. To prevent her falling a victim to so laudable an exercise of her talents, I interposed in a moment with the hoe, and performed upon him an act of decapitation, which, though not immediately mortal, proved so in the end. Had he slid into the passages where it is dark, or had he, when in the yard, met with no interruption from the cat, and secreted himself in any of the outhouses, it is hardly possible but that some of the family must have been bitten; he might have been trodden upon without being perceived, and have slipped away before the sufferer could have distinguished what foe had wounded him. Three years ago we discovered one in the same place, which the barber slew with a trowel.

Mr. Bull, a dissenting minister of Newport, a learned, ingenious, good-natured, pious friend of ours, who sometimes visits us, and whom we visited last week, has put into my hands three volumes of French poetry, composed by Madame Guion. 'A quietist,' say you, 'and a fanatic; I will have nothing to do with her.' 'Tis very well—you are welcome to have

nothing to do with her; but in the meantime her verse is the only French verse I ever read that I found agreeable: there is a neatness in it equal to that which we applaud with so much reason in the compositions of Prior. I have translated several of them, and shall proceed in my translations, till I have filled a Lilliputian paper-book I happen to have by me, which, when filled, I shall present to Mr. Bull. He is her passionate admirer; rode twenty miles to see her picture in the house of a stranger, which stranger politely insisted on his acceptance of it, and it now hangs over his chimney. It is a striking portrait, too characteristic not to be a strong resemblance, and, were it encompassed with a glory, instead of being dressed in a nun's hood, might pass for the face of an angel.

Yours,

W. C.

To the Rev. William Unwin.

THE POOR OF OLNEY—JOHN GILPIN.

My dear William, Olney, November 18, 1782.

On the part of the poor, and on our part, be pleased to make acknowledgments, such as the occasion calls for, to our beneficent friend Mr. Smith.[1] I call him ours, because having experienced his kindness to myself in a former instance, and in the present his dis-

[1] Banker, Nottingham; founder of the banking firm of Smith, Payne, and Smiths.

interested readiness to succour the distressed, my ambition will be satisfied with nothing less. He may depend upon the strictest secrecy; no creature shall hear him mentioned, either now or hereafter, as the person from whom we have received this bounty. But when I speak of him, or hear him spoken of by others, which sometimes happens, I shall not forget what is due to so rare a character. I wish, and your mother wishes it too, that he could sometimes take us in his way to Nottingham; he will find us happy to receive a person whom we must needs account it an honour to know. We shall exercise our best discretion in the disposal of the money; but in this town, where the gospel has been preached so many years, where the people have been favoured so long with laborious and conscientious ministers, it is not an easy thing to find those who make no profession of religion at all, and are yet proper objects of charity. The profane are so profane, so drunken, dissolute, and in every respect worthless, that to make them partakers of his bounty would be to abuse it. We promise, however, that none shall touch it but such as are miserably poor, yet at the same time industrious and honest, two characters frequently united here, where the most watchful and unremitting labour will hardly procure them bread. We make none but the cheapest laces, and the price of them is fallen almost to nothing.

I little thought when I was writing the history of John Gilpin, that he would appear in print. I intended to laugh, and to make two or three others laugh, of whom you were one. But now all the

world laugh, at least if they have the same relish for a tale ridiculous in itself, and quaintly told, as we have. Well, they do not always laugh so innocently, and at so small an expense; for in a world like this, abounding with subjects for satire, and with satirical wits to mark them, a laugh that hurts nobody has at least the grace of novelty to recommend it. Swift's darling motto was, *Vive la bagatelle;* a good wish for a philosopher of his complexion, the greater part of whose wisdom, whencesoever it came, most certainly came not from above. *La bagatelle* has no enemy in me, though it has neither so warm a friend, nor so able a one, as it had in him. If I trifle, and merely trifle, it is because I am reduced to it by necessity: a melancholy, that nothing else so effectually disperses, engages me sometimes in the arduous task of being merry by force. And strange as it may seem, the most ludicrous lines I ever wrote have been written in the saddest mood, and but for that saddest mood, perhaps had never been written at all.

I hear from Mrs. Newton, that some great persons have spoke with great approbation of a certain book. Who they are, and what they have said, I am to be told in a future letter. The Monthly Reviewers in the meantime have satisfied me well enough.

Yours, my dear William,

W. C.

To the Rev. William Unwin.

HE WINDS THREAD FOR THE LADIES—MR. SMITH'S GENEROSITY TO THE POOR OF OLNEY.

My dear William, Olney, January 19, 1783.

Not to retaliate, but for want of opportunity, I have delayed writing. From a scene of most uninterrupted retirement, we have passed at once into a state of constant engagement; not that our society is much multiplied—the addition of an individual has made all this difference. Lady Austen and we pass our days alternately at each other's *château.* In the morning, I walk with one or other of the ladies; and in the afternoon, wind thread. Thus did Hercules and Samson, and thus do I; and were both those heroes living, I should not fear to challenge them to a trial of skill in that business, or doubt to beat them both. As to killing lions, and other amusements of that kind, with which they were so delighted, I should be their humble servant, and beg to be excused.

Mr. Smith found time to do much good, and to employ us as his agents in doing it, and that might have satisfied me. Though laid under the strictest injunctions of secrecy, both by him and by you on his behalf, I consider myself as under no obligation to conceal from you the remittances he made. Only, in my turn, I beg leave to request secrecy on your part, because intimate as you are with him, and highly as he values you, I cannot yet be sure that the communication would please him, his delicacies

on this subject being as singular as his benevolence. He sent forty pounds, twenty at a time. Olney has not had such a friend as this many a day; nor has there been an instance at any time of a few families so effectually relieved, or so completely encouraged to the pursuit of that honest industry by which, their debts being paid, and the parents and children comfortably clothed, they are now enabled to maintain themselves. Their labour was almost in vain before; but now it answers; it earns them bread, and all their other wants are plentifully supplied.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

To JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

TELLS HIM WHO WROTE 'JOHN GILPIN,' AND MENTIONS FRANKLIN'S LETTER.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Olney, February 13, 1783.

IN writing to you, I never want a subject. Self is always at hand; and self, with its concerns, is always interesting to a friend.

You may think, perhaps, that having commenced poet by profession, I am always writing verses. Not so: I have written nothing, at least finished nothing, since I published—except a certain facetious history of John Gilpin, which Mrs. Unwin would send to the *Public Advertiser*. Perhaps you might read it without suspecting the author.

My book procures me favours which my modesty

will not permit me to specify; except one, which, modest as I am, I cannot suppress—a very handsome letter from Dr. Franklin, at Passy. These fruits it has brought me.

I have been refreshing myself with a walk in the garden, where I find that January (who, according to Chaucer, was the husband of May) being dead, February has married the widow.

Yours, &c.

W. C.

To JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

ENCLOSES FRANKLIN'S LETTER.

Olney, February 20, 1783.

SUSPECTING that I should not have hinted at Dr. Franklin's encomium under any other influence than that of vanity, I was several times on the point of burning my letter for that very reason. But not having time to write another by the same post, and believing that you would have the grace to pardon a little self-complacency in an author on so trying an occasion, I let it pass. One sin naturally leads to another and a greater; and thus it happens now, for I have no way to gratify your curiosity but by transcribing the letter in question. It is addressed, by the way, not to me, but to a friend (John Thornton) who had transmitted the volume to him without my knowledge.

'SIR, Passy, May 8, 1782.

'I received the letter you did me the honour of writing to me, and am much obliged by your kind present of a book. The relish for reading of poetry has long since left me; but there is something so new in the manner, so easy and yet so correct in the language, so clear in the expression, yet concise, and so just in the sentiments, that I have read the whole with great pleasure, and some of the pieces more than once. I beg you to accept my thankful acknowledgments, and to present my respects to the author.

'Your most obedient, humble servant,

'B. FRANKLIN.'

To JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

POLITICS—THE COALITION—LORD THURLOW.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

GREAT revolutions happen in this ant's nest of ours. One emmet of illustrious character and great abilities pushes out another: parties are formed, they range themselves in formidable opposition, they threaten each other's ruin, they cross over and are mingled together, and, like the coruscations of the northern aurora, amuse the spectator, at the same time that by some they are supposed to be forerunners of a general dissolution.

There are political earthquakes as well as natural ones, the former less shocking to the eye, but not

always less fatal in their influence than the latter. The image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream was made up of heterogeneous and incompatible materials, and accordingly broken. Whatever is so formed must expect a like catastrophe.

I have an etching of the late Chancellor hanging over the parlour chimney. I often contemplate it, and call to mind the day when I was intimate with the original. It is very like him, but he is disguised by his hat, which, though fashionable, is awkward; by his great wig, the tie of which is hardly discernible in profile; and by his band and gown, which give him an appearance clumsily sacerdotal. Our friendship is dead and buried; yours is the only surviving one of all with which I was once honoured.

Adieu,

W. C.

To the Rev. William Unwin.

HIS GREENHOUSE—MR. BULL—DESCRIPTION OF HIM.

My dear William, Olney, June 8, 1783.

Our severest winter, commonly called the spring, is now over, and I find myself seated in my favourite recess, the greenhouse. In such a situation, so silent, so shady, where no human foot is heard, and where only my myrtles presume to peep in at the window, you may suppose I have no interruption to complain of, and that my thoughts are perfectly at my command. But the beauties of the spot are themselves an

interruption; my attention being called upon by those very myrtles, by a double row of grass pinks just beginning to blossom, and by a bed of beans already in bloom; and you are to consider it, if you please, as no small proof of my regard, that though you have so many powerful rivals, I disengage myself from them all, and devote this hour entirely to you.

You are not acquainted with the Rev. Mr. Bull, of Newport; perhaps it is as well for you that you are not. You would regret still more than you do that there are so many miles interposed between us. He spends part of the day with us to-morrow. A dissenter, but a liberal one; a man of letters and of genius. (Then follows the description already quoted in notices of Cowper's correspondents.) Such a man is Mr. Bull. But—he smokes tobacco. Nothing is perfect:

Nihil est ab omni
Parte beatum.

Yours,

W. C.

To the Rev. John Newton.

HIS PASSION FOR RETIREMENT—HIS OPINION OF ROBERTSON AND GIBBON.

My dear Friend, Olney, July 27, 1783.

You cannot have more pleasure in receiving a letter from me, than I should find in writing it, were it not almost impossible in such a place to find a subject.

I live in a world abounding with incidents, upon

which many grave, and perhaps some profitable observations might be made; but those incidents never reaching my unfortunate ears, both the entertaining narrative and the reflection it might suggest are to me annihilated and lost. I look back to the past week, and say, what did it produce? I ask the same question of the week preceding, and duly receive the same answer from both—nothing!—A situation like this, in which I am as unknown to the world, as I am ignorant of all that passes in it, in which I have nothing to do but to think, would exactly suit me, were my subjects of meditation as agreeable as my leisure is uninterrupted. My passion for retirement is not at all abated, after so many years spent in the most sequestrated state, but rather increased; a circumstance I should esteem wonderful to a degree not to be accounted for, considering the condition of my mind, did I not know, that we think as we are made to think; and of course approve and prefer, as Providence, who appoints the bounds of our habitation, chooses for us. Thus I am both free and a prisoner at the same time. The world is before me; I am not shut up in the Bastille; there are no moats about my castle, no locks upon my gates, of which I have not the key: but an invisible, uncontrollable agency, a local attachment, an inclination more forcible than I ever felt, even to the place of my birth, serves me for prison-walls, and for bounds which I cannot pass. In former years I have known sorrow, and before I had ever tasted of spiritual trouble. The effect was an abhorrence of the scene in which I had suffered so much, and a weariness of those objects

which I had so long looked at with an eye of despondency and dejection. But it is otherwise with me now. The same cause subsisting, and in a much more powerful degree, fails to produce its natural effect. The very stones in the garden-walls are my intimate acquaintance. I should miss almost the minutest object, and be disagreeably affected by its removal, and am persuaded that were it possible I could leave this incommodious nook for a twelvemonth, I should return to it again with rapture, and be transported with the sight of objects which to all the world besides would be at least indifferent; some of them perhaps, such as the ragged thatch and the tottering walls of the neighbouring cottages, disgusting. But so it is, and it is so, because here is to be my abode, and because such is the appointment of *Him* that placed me in it.

Iste terrarum mihi præter omnes
Angulus ridet.

It is the place of all the world I love the most, not for any happiness it affords me, but because here I can be miserable with most convenience to myself and with the least disturbance to others.

You wonder, and (I dare say) unfeignedly, because you do not think yourself entitled to such praise, that I prefer your style, as an historian, to that of the two most renowned writers of history the present day has seen. That you may not suspect me of having said more than my real opinion will warrant, I will tell you why. In your style I see no affectation. In every line of theirs I see nothing else. They disgust me

always; Robertson with his pomp and his strut, and Gibbon with his finical and French manner. You are as correct as they. You express yourself with as much precision. Your words are ranged with as much propriety, but you do not set your periods to a tune. They discover a perpetual desire to exhibit themselves to advantage, whereas your subject engrosses you. They sing, and you say; which, as history is a thing to be said and not sung, is, in my judgment, very much to your advantage. You have my reasons. I honour a manly character, in which good sense, and a desire of doing good, are the predominant features; but affectation is an emetic.

W. C.

To the Rev. William Bull.

HIS GREENHOUSE—'THE SOFA.'

Olney, August 3, 1783.

Your sea-side situation, your beautiful prospects, your fine rides, and the sight of the palaces which you have seen, we have not envied you; but are glad that you have enjoyed them. Why should we envy any man? Is not our greenhouse a cabinet of perfumes? It is at this moment fronted with carnations and balsams, with mignonette and roses, with jessamine and woodbine, and wants nothing but your pipe to make it truly Arabian—a wilderness of sweets. 'The Sofa' is ended, but not finished; a paradox, which your natural acumen, sharpened by habits of logical attention, will

enable you to reconcile in a moment. Do not imagine, however, that I lounge over it; on the contrary I find it severe exercise, to mould and fashion it to my mind.

To the Rev. William Unwin.

A BALLOON—INTRODUCTION TO THE THROCKMORTONS.

My dear Friend, Olney, December, 1783.

Balloons are so much the mode, that even in this country we have attempted a balloon. You may possibly remember that at a place called Weston, little more than a mile from Olney, there lives a family whose name is Throckmorton. The present possessor is a young man whom I remember a boy. He has a wife, who is young, genteel, and handsome. They are Papists, but much more amiable than many Protestants. We never had any intercourse with the family, though ever since we lived here we have enjoyed the range of their pleasure-grounds, having been favoured with a key, which admits us into all. When this man succeeded to the estate, on the death of his elder brother, and came to settle at Weston, I sent him a complimentary card, requesting the continuance of that privilege, having till then enjoyed it by the favour of his mother, who on that occasion went to finish her days at Bath. You may conclude that he granted it, and for about two years nothing more passed between us. A fortnight ago, I received an invitation in the civillest terms, in which he told me that the next day

he should attempt to fill a balloon, and, if it would be any pleasure to me to be present, should be happy to see me. Your mother and I went. The whole country were there, but the balloon could not be filled. The endeavour was, I believe, very philosophically made, but such a process depends for its success upon such niceties as make it very precarious. Our reception was, however, flattering to a great degree, insomuch that more notice seemed to be taken of us than we could possibly have expected; indeed rather more than any of his other guests. They even seemed anxious to recommend themselves to our regards. We drank chocolate, and were asked to dine, but were engaged. A day or two afterwards, Mrs. Unwin and I walked that way, and were overtaken in a shower. I found a tree that I thought would shelter us both—a large elm, in a grove that fronts the mansion. Mrs. T. observed us, and running towards us in the rain insisted on our walking in. He was gone out. We sat chatting with her till the weather cleared up, and then at her instance took a walk with her in the garden. The garden is almost their only walk, and is certainly their only retreat in which they are not liable to interruption. She offered us a key of it in a manner that made it impossible not to accept it, and said she would send us one. A few days afterwards, in the cool of the evening, we walked that way again. We saw them going towards the house, and exchanged bows and curtseys at a little distance, but did not join them. In a few minutes, when we had passed the house, and had almost reached the gate that opens out of the park into the adjoining field, I heard the iron gate belonging to the courtyard ring, and

saw Mr. T. advancing hastily toward us; we made equal haste to meet him. He presented to us the key, which I told him I esteemed a singular favour, and after a few such speeches as are made on such occasions, we parted. This happened about a week ago. I concluded nothing less, than that all this civility and attention was designed, on their part, as a prelude to a nearer acquaintance; but here at present the matter rests. I should like exceedingly to be on an easy footing there, to give a morning call now and then, and to receive one, but nothing more. For though he is one of the most agreeable men I ever saw, I could not wish to visit him in any other way, neither our house, furniture, servants, or income, being such as qualify us to make entertainments; neither would I on any account be introduced to the neighbouring gentry. Mr. T. is altogether a man of fashion, and respectable on every account.

I have told you a long story. Farewell. We number the days as they pass, and are glad that we shall see you and your sister soon.

Yours, &c.

W. C.

To the Rev. John Newton.

MISERIES OF NERVOUS PEOPLE—HOW UNLIKE THEY ARE TO THE PICTS—HIS DREAM THAT HE SAW ADAM.

My dear Friend, Olney, February 10, 1784.

The morning is my writing time, and in the morning I have no spirits: so much the worse for my correspondents. Sleep, that refreshes my body, seems to cripple me in every other respect. As the evening approaches, I grow more alert; and when I am retiring to bed, am more fit for mental occupation than at any other time. So it fares with us whom they call *nervous.* By a strange inversion of the animal economy, we are ready to sleep when we have most need to be awake, and go to bed just when we might sit up to some purpose. The watch is regularly wound up; it goes in the night when it is not wanted, and in the day stands still. In many respects we have the advantage of our forefathers the Picts. We sleep in a whole skin, and are not obliged to submit to the painful operation of punctuating ourselves from head to foot, in order that we may be decently dressed, and fit to appear abroad. But, on the other hand, we have reason enough to envy them their tone of nerves, and that flow of spirits which effectually secured them from all uncomfortable impressions of a gloomy atmosphere, and from every shade of melancholy from every other cause. They understood, I suppose, the use of vulnerary herbs, having frequent occasion for some skill in surgery; but physicians, I presume, they had none, having no need of any. Is it possible that

a creature like myself can be descended from such progenitors, in whom there appears not a single trace of family resemblance? What an alteration have a few ages made! They, without clothing, would defy the severest season; and I, with all the accommodations that art has since invented, am hardly secure even in the mildest. If the wind blows upon me when my pores are open, I catch cold: a cough is the consequence. I suppose if such a disorder could have seized a Pict, his friends would have concluded that a bone had stuck in his throat, and that he was in some danger of choking. They would, perhaps, have addressed themselves to the cure of his cough by thrusting their fingers into his gullet, which would only have exasperated the case; but they would never have thought of administering laudanum, my only remedy. For this difference, however, that has obtained between me and my ancestors, I am indebted to the luxurious practices and enfeebling self-indulgencies of a long line of grandsires, who from generation to generation have been employed in deteriorating the breed, till at last the collected effects of all their follies have centred in my puny self. A man, indeed, but not in the image of those who went before me—a man who sighs and groans, who wears out life in dejection and oppression of spirits, and who never thinks of the aborigines of the country to which I belong, without wishing that I had been born among them. The evil is without a remedy, unless the ages that are passed could be recalled, my whole pedigree be permitted to live again, and being properly admonished to beware of enervating sloth and refine-

ment, would preserve their hardiness of nature unimpaired, and transmit the desirable quality to their posterity. I once saw Adam in a dream. We sometimes say of a picture, that we doubt not its likeness to the original, though we never saw him; a judgment we have some reason to form, when the face is strongly characterized, and the features full of expression. So I think of my visionary Adam, and for a similar reason. His figure was awkward, indeed, in the extreme. It was evident that he had never been taught by a Frenchman to hold his head erect or to turn out his toes, to dispose gracefully of his arms, or to simper without a meaning; but if Mr. Bacon was called upon to produce a statue of Hercules, he need not wish for a juster pattern. He stood like a rock; the size of his limbs, the prominence of his muscles, and the height of his stature, all conspired to bespeak him a creature whose strength had suffered no diminution; and who, being the first of his race, did not come into the world under a necessity of sustaining a load of infirmities derived to him from the intemperance of others. He was as much stouter than a Pict, as I suppose a Pict to have been than I. Upon my hypothesis, therefore, there has been a gradual declension in point of bodily vigour, from Adam down to me; at least if my dream were a just representation of that gentleman, and deserve the credit I cannot help giving it, such must have been the case.

Yours, my dears friend,

W. C.

To the Rev. John Newton.

AN ELECTIONEERING VISIT—BEHAVIOUR OF THE CANDIDATE—MR. SCOTT'S PREACHING.

My dear Friend, Olney, March 29, 1784.

It being his Majesty's pleasure that I should yet have another opportunity to write before he dissolves the parliament, I avail myself of it with all possible alacrity. I thank you for your last, which was not the less welcome for coming, like an extraordinary gazette, at a time when it was not expected.

As when the sea is uncommonly agitated, the water finds its way into creeks and holes of rocks, which in its calmer state it never reaches, in like manner the effect of these turbulent times is felt even at Orchard-side, where in general we live as undisturbed by the political elements, as shrimps or cockles that have been accidentally deposited in some hollow beyond the water mark, by the usual dashing of the waves. We were sitting yesterday after dinner, the two ladies and myself, very composedly, and without the least apprehension of any such intrusion in our snug parlour, one lady knitting, the other netting, and the gentleman winding worsted, when to our unspeakable surprise a mob appeared before the window; a smart rap was heard at the door, the boys hallooed, and the maid announced Mr. Grenville. Puss[1] was unfortunately let out of her box, so that the candidate, with all his good friends at his heels, was refused admittance at the

[1] His tame hare.

grand entry, and referred to the back door, as the only possible way of approach.

Candidates are creatures not very susceptible of affronts, and would rather, I suppose, climb in at a window than be absolutely excluded. In a minute, the yard, the kitchen, and the parlour were filled. Mr. Grenville, advancing towards me, shook me by the hand, with a degree of cordiality that was extremely seducing. As soon as he and as many more as could find chairs were seated, he began to open the intent of his visit. I told him I had no vote, for which he readily gave me credit. I assured him I had no influence, which he was not equally inclined to believe; and the less, no doubt, because Mr. Ashburner,[1] addressing himself to me at this moment, informed me that I had a great deal. Supposing that I could not be possessed of such a treasure without knowing it, I ventured to confirm my assertion, by saying, that if I had any I was utterly at a loss to imagine where it could be, or wherein it consisted. Thus ended the conference. Mr. Grenville squeezed me by the hand again, kissed the ladies and withdrew. He kissed likewise the maid in the kitchen, and seemed upon the whole a most loving, kissing, kind-hearted gentleman. He is very young, genteel, and handsome. He has a pair of very good eyes in his head, which not being sufficient as it should seem for the many nice and difficult purposes of a senator, he has a third also, which he wore suspended by a riband from his buttonhole. The boys hallooed, the dogs barked, Puss scampered, the

[1] A shopkeeper at Olney.

hero, with his long train of obsequious followers, withdrew. We made ourselves very merry with the adventure, and in a short time settled into our former tranquillity, never, probably, to be thus interrupted more. I thought myself, however, happy in being able to affirm truly that I had not that influence for which he sued; and which, had I been possessed of it, with my present views of the dispute between the Crown and the Commons, I must have refused him, for he is on the side of the former. It is comfortable to be of no consequence in the world where one cannot exercise any without disobliging somebody. The town, however, seems to be much at his service; and if he be equally successful throughout the country, he will undoubtedly gain his election. Mr. Ashburner perhaps was a little mortified, because it was evident that I owed the honour of this visit to his misrepresentation of my importance. But had he thought proper to assure Mr. Grenville that I had three heads, I should not, I suppose, have been bound to produce them.

Mr. Scott, who you say was so much admired in your pulpit, would be equally admired in his own, at least by all capable judges, were he not so apt to be angry with his congregation. This hurts him, and had he the understanding and eloquence of Paul himself, would still hurt him. He seldom, hardly ever, indeed, preaches a gentle, well-tempered sermon, but I hear it highly commended: but warmth of temper, indulged to a degree that may be called scolding, defeats the end of preaching. It is a misapplication of his powers, which it also cripples, and teases away his

hearers. But he is a good man, and may perhaps outgrow it.

W. C.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

BEATTIE AND BLAIR.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, Olney, April 5, 1784.

I THANKED you in my last for Johnson; I now thank you, with more emphasis, for Beattie, the most agreeable and amiable writer I ever met with; the only author I have seen whose critical and philosophical researches are diversified and embellished by a poetical imagination, that makes even the driest subjects, and the leanest, a feast for an epicure in books. He is so much at his ease, too, that his own character appears in every page; and, which is very rare, we see not only the writer, but the man; and that man so gentle, so well tempered, so happy in his religion, and so humane in his philosophy, that it is necessary to love him, if one has the least sense of what is lovely. If you have not his poem called the 'Minstrel,' and cannot borrow it, I must beg you to buy it for me; for though I cannot afford to deal largely in so expensive a commodity as books, I must afford to purchase at least the poetical works of Beattie.

I have read six of Blair's Lectures, and what do I say of Blair? That he is a sensible man, master of his subject, and, excepting here and there a Scotticism,

a good writer, so far at least as perspicuity of expression, and method, contribute to make one. But oh the sterility of that man's fancy! if indeed he has any such faculty belonging to him. Perhaps philosophers, or men designed for such, are sometimes born without one; or perhaps it withers for want of exercise. However that may be, Doctor Blair has such a brain as Shakespeare somewhere describes, as 'dry as the remainder biscuit after a voyage.'

Yours, my dear friend

W. C.

To the REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

ON FACE-PAINTING.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Olney, May 3, 1784.

THE subject of face-painting may be considered (I think) in two points of view. First, there is room for dispute with respect to the consistency of the practice with good morals; and, secondly, whether it be on the whole convenient or not may be a matter worthy of agitation. I set out with all the formality of logical disquisition, but do not promise to observe the same regularity any farther than it may comport with my purpose of writing as fast as I can.

As to the immorality of the custom, were I in France I should see none. On the contrary, it seems in that country to be a symptom of modest consciousness, and a tacit confession, of what all know to be true, that French faces have in fact neither red nor white of their own. This humble acknowledgment of

a defect looks the more like a virtue, being found among a people not remarkable for humility. Again, before we can prove the practice to be immoral, we must prove immorality in the design of those who use it; either that they intend a deception, or to kindle unlawful desires in the beholders. But the French ladies, so far as their purpose comes in question, must be acquitted of both these charges. Nobody supposes their colour to be natural for a moment, any more than if it were blue or green; and this unambiguous judgment of the matter is owing to two causes: first, to the universal knowledge we have, that French women are naturally brown or yellow, with very few exceptions; and, secondly, to the inartificial manner in which they paint: for they do not, as I am satisfactorily informed, even attempt an imitation of nature, but besmear themselves hastily and at a venture, anxious only to lay on enough. Where therefore there is no wanton intention, nor a wish to deceive, I can discover no immorality. But in England (I am afraid) our painted ladies are not clearly entitled to the same apology. They even imitate nature with such exactness, that the whole public is sometimes divided into parties who litigate with great warmth the question, whether painted or not? This was remarkably the case with a Miss B——, whom I well remember. Her roses and lilies were never discovered to be spurious till she attained an age that made the supposition of their being natural impossible. This anxiety to be not merely red and white, which is all they aim at in France, but to be thought very beautiful, and much more beautiful than nature has

made them, is a symptom not very favourable to the idea we would wish to entertain of the chastity, purity, and modesty of our countrywomen. That they are guilty of a design to deceive is certain; otherwise why so much art? and if to deceive, wherefore and with that purpose? Certainly either to gratify vanity of the silliest kind; or, which is still more criminal, to decoy and inveigle, and carry on more successfully the business of temptation. Here, therefore, my opinion splits itself into two opposite sides upon the same question. I can suppose a French woman, though painted an inch deep, to be a virtuous, discreet, excellent character; and in no instance should I think the worse of one because she was painted. But an English belle must pardon me if I have not the same charity for her. She is at least an impostor, whether she cheats me or not, because she means to do so; and it is well if that be all the censure she deserves.

This brings me to my second class of ideas upon this topic; and here I feel that I should be fearfully puzzled, were I called upon to recommend the practice on the score of convenience. If a husband chose that his wife should paint, perhaps it might be her duty, as well as her interest to comply. But I think he would not much consult his own, for reasons that will follow. In the first place, she would admire herself the more; and in the next, if she managed the matter well, she might be more admired by others; an acquisition that might bring her virtue under trials to which otherwise it might never have been exposed. In no other case, however, can I imagine the practice in

this country to be either expedient or convenient. As a general one, it certainly is not expedient, because in general English women have no occasion for it. A swarthy complexion is a rarity here; and the sex, especially since inoculation has been so much in use, have very little cause to complain that nature has not been kind to them in the article of complexion. They may hide and spoil a good one, but they cannot (at least they hardly can) give themselves a better. But even if they could, there is yet a tragedy in the sequel which should make them tremble. I understand that in France, though the use of rouge be general, the use of white paint is far from being so. In England, she that uses one commonly uses both. Now, all white paints, or lotions, or whatever they may be called, are poisonous, consequently ruinous in time to the constitution. The Miss B—— above mentioned was a miserable witness of the truth, it being certain that her flesh fell from her bones before she died. Lady Coventry was hardly a less melancholy proof of it; and a London physician perhaps, were he at liberty to blab, could publish a bill of female mortality of a length that would astonish us.

For these reasons I utterly condemn the practice as it obtains in England; and for a reason superior to all these, I must disapprove it. I cannot indeed discover that Scripture forbids it in so many words; but that anxious solicitude about the person which such an artifice evidently betrays, is, I am sure, contrary to the tenor and spirit of it throughout. Show me a woman with a painted face, and I will show you a woman whose heart is set on things of the earth and not on

things above. But this observation of mine applies to it only when it is an imitative art; for in the use of French women I think it is as innocent as in the use of the wild Indian, who draws a circle round her face, and makes two spots, perhaps blue, perhaps white, in the middle of it. Such are my thoughts upon the matter.

Vive valeque.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

To the Rev. William Unwin.

'JOHN GILPIN' NOT TO BE A PART OF THE VOLUME CONTAINING 'THE TASK' — THE EVILS OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS—'TIROCINIUM' MEANT TO EXPOSE THEM.

My dear Friend, Olney, May 8, 1784.

You do well to make your letters merry ones, though not very merry yourself, and that both for my sake and your own: for your own sake, because it sometimes happens, that by assuming an air of cheerfulness we become cheerful in reality; and for mine, because I have always more need of a laugh than a cry, being somewhat disposed to melancholy by natural temperament as well as by other causes.

It was long since, and even in the infancy of 'John Gilpin,' recommended to me, by a lady now at Bristol, to write a sequel; but having always observed that authors, elated with the success of a first part, have fallen below themselves when they have attempted a second, I had more prudence than to take her counsel.

But a fear has suggested itself to me, that I might expose myself to a charge of vanity by admitting him into my book, and that some people would impute it to me as a crime. Consider what the world is made of, and you will not find my suspicions chimerical. Add to this, that when, on correcting the latter part of the fifth book of 'The Task,' I came to consider the solemnity and sacred nature of the subjects there handled, it seemed to me an incongruity at least, not to call it by a harsher name, to follow up such premises with such a conclusion. I am well content, therefore, with having laughed and made others laugh, and will build my hopes of success as a poet upon more important matter.

In our printing business we now jog on merrily enough. The coming week will I hope bring me to an end of 'The Task,' and the next fortnight to an end of the whole. I am glad to have Paley on my side in the affair of education. He is certainly on all subjects a sensible man; and, on such, a wise one. But I am mistaken if 'Tirocinium' do not make some of my friends angry, and procure me enemies not a few. There is a sting in verse, that prose neither has nor can have; and I do not know that schools in the gross, and especially public schools, have ever been so pointedly condemned before. But they are become a nuisance, a pest, an abomination; and it is fit that the eyes and noses of mankind should, if possible, be opened to perceive it.

This is indeed an author's letter; but it is an author's letter to his friend. If you will be the friend of an author, you must expect such letters. Come

July, and come yourself, with as many of your exterior selves as can possibly come with you.

Yours, my dear William, affectionately, and with your mother's remembrances,

W. C.

To the Rev. William Unwin.

SENDS HIM 'THE TASK'—VARIOUS PARTICULARS ABOUT IT.

My dear William, October 10, 1784.

I send you four quires of verse, which having sent I shall dismiss from my thoughts, and think no more of till I see them in print. I have not, after all, found time or industry enough to give the last hand to the points. I believe, however, they are not very erroneous: though in so long a work, and in a work that requires nicety in this particular, some inaccuracies will escape; where you find any, you will oblige me by correcting them.

In some passages, especially in the second book, you will observe me very satirical. Writing on such subjects I could not be otherwise. I can write nothing without aiming at least at usefulness. It were beneath my years to do it, and still more dishonourable to my religion. I know that a reformation of such abuses as I have censured is not to be expected from the efforts of a poet; but to contemplate the world, its follies, its vices, its indifference to duty, and its strenuous attachment to what is evil, and not to reprehend, were to

approve it. From this charge, at least, I shall be clear; for I have neither tacitly nor expressly flattered either its characters or its customs.

What there is of a religious cast in the volume I have thrown towards the end of it, for two reasons; first, that I might not revolt the reader at his entrance; and, secondly, that my best impressions might be made last. Were I to write as many volumes as Lope de Vega, or Voltaire, not one of them would be without this tincture. If the world like it not, so much the worse for them. I make all the concessions I can, that I may please them; but I will not please them at the expense of my conscience.

My descriptions are all from nature; not one of them second-handed. My delineations of the heart are from my own experience: not one of them borrowed from books, or in the least degree conjectural. In my numbers, which I varied as much as I could (for blank verse without variety of numbers is no better than bladder and string), I have imitated nobody, though sometimes perhaps there may be an apparent resemblance; because at the same time that I would not imitate, I have not affectedly differed.

If the work cannot boast a regular plan (in which respect, however, I do not think it altogether indefensible), it may yet boast that the reflections are naturally suggested always by the preceding passage, and that, except the fifth book, which is rather of a political aspect, the whole has one tendency; to discountenance the modern enthusiasm after a London life, and to recommend rural ease and leisure, as friendly to the cause of piety and virtue.

If it pleases you I shall be happy, and collect from your pleasure in it an omen of its general acceptance.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

To the Rev. William Unwin.

HOW HE STANDS WITH MR. NEWTON—EPITAPH ON DR. JOHNSON — LUNARDI AND BLANCHARD, OF BALLOON CELEBRITY.

My dear William, Olney, January 15, 1785.

Your letters are always welcome. You can always either find something to say, or can amuse me and yourself with a sociable and friendly way of saying nothing. I never found that a letter was the more easily written because the writing of it had been long delayed. On the contrary, experience has taught me to answer soon, that I may do it without difficulty. It is in vain to wait for an accumulation of materials in a situation such as yours and mine, productive of few events. At the end of our expectations, we shall find ourselves as poor as at the beginning.

I can hardly tell you, with any certainty of information, upon what terms Mr. Newton and I may be supposed to stand at present. A month, I believe, has passed since I heard from him; but my *friseur* having been in London in the course of this week, whence he returned last night, and, having called at Hoxton, brought me his love, and an excuse for his silence, which (he said) had been occasioned by the frequency of his preachings at this season. He was not

pleased that my manuscript was not first transmitted to him, and I have cause to suspect that he was even mortified at being informed that a certain inscribed poem was not inscribed to himself. But we shall jumble together again, as people that have an affection for each other at bottom, notwithstanding now and then a slight disagreement, always do.

The death of Dr. Johnson has set a thousand scribblers to work, and me among the rest. While I lay in bed, waiting till I could reasonably hope that the parlour might be ready for me, I invoked the Muse, and composed the following

EPITAPH.

Here Johnson lies, a sage, by all allow'd,
Whom to have bred may well make England proud;
Whose prose was eloquence, by Wisdom taught,
The graceful vehicle of virtuous thought;
Whose verse may claim, grave, masculine and strong
Superior praise to the mere poet's song:
Who many a noble gift from Heav'n possess'd,
And faith at last, alone worth all the rest.
O man, immortal by a double prize,
By fame on earth, by glory in the skies!

You and your family have our sincere love. Forget not to present my respectful compliments to Miss Unwin; and, if you have not done it already, thank her on my part for the very agreeeble narrative of Lunardi. He is a young man, I presume, of great good sense and spirit (his letters, at least, and his enterprising turn bespeak him such); a man qualified to shine, not only among the stars, but in the more useful though humbler sphere of terrestrial occupation.

I have been crossing the Channel in a balloon ever since I read of that achievement by Blanchard. I have an insatiable thirst to know the philosophical reason why this vehicle had like to have fallen into the sea, when, for aught that appears, the gas was not at all exhausted. Did not the extreme cold condense the inflammable air, and cause the globe to collapse? Tell me, and be my Apollo for ever.

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

To JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

COWPER'S SUMMER-HOUSE, OR BOUDOIR—SENDS HILL HIS NEW VOLUME.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Olney, June 25, 1785.

I WRITE in a nook that I call my *boudoir*. It is a summer-house, not much bigger than a sedan-chair, the door of which opens into the garden, that is now crowded with pinks, roses, and honeysuckles; and the window into my neighbour's orchard. It formerly served an apothecary, now dead, as a smoking-room; and under my feet is a trap door, which once covered a hole in the ground, where he kept his bottles. At present, however, it is dedicated to sublimer uses. Having lined it with garden-mats, and furnished it with a table and two chairs, here I write all that I write in summer-time, whether to my friends or to the public. It is secure from all noise, and a refuge from all intrusion; for intruders sometimes trouble me in the winter evenings at Olney. But (thanks to

my *boudoir* !) I can now hide myself from them. A poet's retreat is sacred. They acknowledge the truth of that proposition and never presume to violate it.

The last sentence puts me in mind to tell you that I have ordered my volume to your door. My bookseller is the most dilatory of all his fraternity, or you would have received it long since. It is more than a month since I returned him the last proof, and consequently since the printing was finished. I sent him the manuscript at the beginning of November, that he might publish while the town was full, and he will hit the exact moment when it is entirely empty. Patience, you will perceive, is in no situation exempted from the severest trials; a remark that may serve to comfort you under the numberless trials of your own.

W. C.

To Lady Hesketh.

SOME ACCOUNT OF HIS FINANCES—IS TRANSLATING HOMER.

My dearest Cousin, Olney, November 9, 1785.

Whose last most affectionate letter has run in my head ever since I received it, and which I now sit down to answer two days sooner than the post will serve me. I thank you for it, and with a warmth for which I am sure you will give me credit, though I do not spend many words in describing it. I do not seek *new* friends, not being altogether sure that I should find them, but have unspeakable pleasure in being

still beloved by an *old* one. I hope that now our correspondence has suffered its last interruption, and that we shall go down together to the grave, chatting and chirping as merrily as such a scene of things as this will permit.

I am happy that my poems have pleased you. My volume has afforded me no such pleasure at any time, either while I was writing it, or since its publication, as I have derived from yours and my uncle's opinion of it. I make certain allowances for partiality, and for that peculiar quickness of taste with which you both relish what you like; and after all drawbacks upon those accounts duly made, find myself rich in the measure of your approbation that still remains. But, above all, I honour 'John Gilpin,' since it was he who first encouraged you to write. I made him on purpose to laugh at, and he served his purpose well; but I am now in debt to him for a more valuable acquisition than all the laughter in the world amounts to, the recovery of my intercourse with you, which is to me inestimable. My benevolent and generous cousin, when I was once asked if I wanted anything, and given delicately to understand that the inquirer was ready to supply all my occasions, I thankfully and civilly, but positively, declined the favour. I neither suffer, nor have suffered, any such inconveniences as I had not much rather endure than come under obligations of that sort to a person comparatively with yourself a stranger to me. But to you I answer otherwise. I know you thoroughly, and the liberality of your disposition, and have that consummate confidence in the sincerity of your wish to serve me, that delivers me

YARDLEY OAK.

from all awkward constraint, and from all fear of trespassing by acceptance. To you, therefore, I reply yes. Whensoever, and whatsoever, and in what manner soever you please; and add moreover, that my affection for the giver is such as will increase to me tenfold the satisfaction that I shall have in receiving. It is necessary, however, that I should let you a little into the state of my finances, that you may not suppose them more narrowly circumscribed than they are. Since Mrs. Unwin and I have lived at Olney, we have had but one purse; although during the whole of that time, till lately, her income was nearly double mine. Her revenues indeed are now in some measure reduced, and do not much exceed my own; the worst consequence of this is, that we are forced to deny ourselves some things which hitherto we have been better able to afford, but they are such things as neither life, nor the well-being of life, depend upon. My own income has been better than it is; but when it was best, it would not have enabled me to live as my connections demanded that I should, had it not been combined with a better than itself, at least at this end of the kingdom. Of this I had full proof during three months that I spent in lodgings at Huntingdon, in which time, by the help of good management, and a clear notion of economical matters, I contrived to spend the income of a twelvemonth. Now, my beloved cousin, you are in possesssion of the whole case as it stands. Strain no points to your own inconvenience or hurt, for there is no need of it; but indulge yourself in communicating (no matter what) that you can spare without missing

it, since by so doing you will be sure to add to the comforts of my life one of the sweetest that I can enjoy, a token and proof of your affection.

In the affair of my next publication, toward which you also offer me so kindly your assistance, there will be no need that you should help me in the manner that you propose. It will be a large work, consisting, I should imagine, of six volumes at least. The twelfth of this month I shall have spent a year upon it, and it will cost me more than another. I do not love the booksellers well enough to make them a present of such a labour, but intend to publish by subscription. Your vote and interest, my dear cousin, upon the occasion, if you please, but nothing more. I will trouble you with some papers of proposals when the time shall come, and am sure that you will circulate as many for me as you can. Now, my dear, I am going to tell you a secret: it is a great secret, that you must not whisper even to your cat. No creature is at this moment apprised of it but Mrs. Unwin and her son. I am making a new translation of Homer, and am on the point of finishing the twenty-first book of Iliad. The reasons upon which I undertake this Herculean labour, and by which I justify an enterprise in which I seem so effectually anticipated by Pope, although in fact he has not anticipated me at all, I may possibly give you, if you wish for them, when I can find nothing more interesting to say; a period which I do not conceive to be very near. I have not answered many things in your letter, nor can do it at present for want of room. I cannot believe but that I should know you, notwithstanding all that time may have done; there

is not a feature of your face, could I meet it upon the road by itself, that I should not instantly recollect. I should say, that is my cousin's nose, or those are her lips and her chin, and no woman upon earth can claim them but herself. As for me, I am a very smart youth of my years; I am not indeed grown grey so much as I am grown bald. No matter; there was more hair in the world than ever had the honour to belong to me. Accordingly, having found just enough to curl a little at my ears, and to intermix with a little of my own that still hangs behind, I appear, if you see me in an afternoon, to have a very decent head-dress, not easily distinguished from my natural growth, which being worn with a small bag, and a black ribbon about my neck, continues to me the charms of my youth, even on the verge of age. Away with the fear of writing too often.

W. C.

P.S. That the view I give you of myself may be complete, I add the two following items: That I am in debt to nobody, and that I grow fat.

To the REV. WALTER BAGOT.

HOMER—HIS BROTHER THE BISHOP.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Olney, January 15, 1786.

I HAVE just time to give you a hasty line to explain to you the delay that the publication of my proposals has unexpectedly encountered, and at which I suppose that you have been somewhat surprised.

I have a near relation in London, and a warm friend in General Cowper; he is also a person as able as willing to render me material service. I lately made him acquainted with my design of sending into the world a new translation of Homer, and told him that my papers would soon attend him. He soon after desired that I would annex to them a specimen of the work. To this I at first objected, for reasons that need not be enumerated here, but at last acceded to his advice; and accordingly, the day before yesterday, I sent him a specimen. It consists of one hundred and seven lines, and is taken from the interview between Priam and Achilles in the last book. I chose to extract from the latter end of the poem, and as near to the close of it as possible, that I might encourage a hope in the readers of it, that if they found it in some degree worthy of their approbation, they would find the former parts of the work not less so; for if a writer flags anywhere, it must be when he is near the end.

My subscribers will have an option given them in the proposals respecting the price. My predecessor in the same business was not quite so moderate. . . . You may say, perhaps (at least if your kindness for me did not prevent it, you would be ready to say), 'It is well; but do you place yourself on a level with Pope?' I answer, or rather *should* answer, 'By no means—not as a poet; but as a translator of Homer, if I did not expect and believe that I should even surpass him, why have I meddled with this matter at all? If I confess inferiority, I reprobate my own undertaking.'

When I can hear of the rest of the bishops, that they preach and live as your brother does, I will think more respectfully of them than I feel inclined to do at present. They may be learned, and I know that some of them are; but your brother, learned as he is, has other more powerful recommendations. Persuade him to publish his poetry, and I promise you that he shall find as warm and sincere an admirer in me as in any man that lives.

Yours, my dear friend, very affectionately,

W. C.

To Lady Hesketh.

IN GREAT HOPES OF A VISIT FROM HER.

My dearest Cousin, Olney, February 9, 1786.

I have been impatient to tell you that I am impatient to see you again. Mrs. Unwin partakes with me in all my feelings upon this subject, and longs also to see you. I should have told you so by the last post, but have been so completely occupied by this tormenting specimen that it was impossible to do it. I sent the General a letter on Monday, that would distress and alarm him; I sent him another yesterday that will, I hope, quiet him again. Johnson has apologized very civilly for the multitude of his friend's strictures; and his friend has promised to confine himself in future to a comparison of me with the original, so that I doubt not we shall jog on merrily together. And now, my dear, let me tell you

once more that your kindness in promising us a visit has charmed us both. I shall see you again; I shall hear your voice; we shall take walks together; I will show you my prospects, the hovel, the alcove, the Ouse and its banks, everything that I have described. I anticipate the pleasure of those days not very far distant, and feel a part of it at this moment. Talk not of an inn! Mention it not for your life! We have never had so many visitors but we could easily accommodate them all; though we have received Unwin, and his wife, and his sister, and his son all at once. My dear, I will not let you come till the end of May or beginning of June; because, before that time my greenhouse will not be ready to receive us, and it is the only pleasant room belonging to us. When the plants go out, we go in. I line it with mats, and spread the floor with mats; and there you shall sit with a bed of mignonette at your side, and a hedge of honeysuckles, roses, and jasmine; and I will make you a bouquet of myrtle every day. Sooner than the time I mention, the country will not be in complete beauty. And I will tell you what you shall find at your first entrance. Imprimis, as soon as you have entered the vestibule, if you cast a look on either side of you, you shall see on the right hand a box of my making. It is the box in which have been lodged all my hares, and in which lodges Puss at present; but he, poor fellow, is worn out with age, and promises to die before you can see him. On the right hand stands a cupboard, the work of the same author; it was once a dove-cage, but I transformed it. Opposite to you stands a table, which I

also made; but a merciless servant having scrubbed it until it became paralytic, it serves no purpose now but of ornament; and all my clean shoes stand under it. On the left hand, at the farther end of this superb vestibule, you will find the door of the parlour into which I will conduct you, and where I will introduce you to Mrs. Unwin, unless we should meet her before, and where we will be as happy as the day is long. Order yourself, my cousin, to the Swan at Newport, and there you shall find me ready to conduct you to Olney.

My dear, I have told Homer what you say about casks and urns, and have asked him whether he is sure that it is a cask in which Jupiter keeps his wine. He swears that it is a cask, and that it will never be anything better than a cask to eternity. So if the god is content with it, we must even wonder at his taste, and be so too.

Adieu! my dearest, dearest cousin,

W. C.

To Lady Hesketh.

IMPATIENT TO SEE HER—DOES NOT WANT TO SUBMIT HIS HOMER TO CRITICS BEFORE PUBLICATION—THURLOW'S FORMER PROMISE TO PROVIDE FOR HIM.

My dearest Cousin, Olney, February 11, 1786.

It must be (I suppose) a fortnight or thereabout since I wrote last, I feel myself so alert and so ready to write again. Be that as it may, here I come. We

talk of nobody but you; what we will do with you when we get you, where you shall walk, where you shall sleep; in short, everything that bears the remotest relation to your well-being at Olney occupies all our talking time, which is all that I do not spend at Troy.

I have every reason for writing to you as often as I can, but I have a particular reason for doing it now. I want to tell you, that by the diligence on Wednesday next I mean to send you a quire of my Homer for Maty's perusal. It will contain the first book, and as much of the second as brings us to the catalogue of the ships, and is every morsel of the revised copy that I have transcribed. My dearest cousin, read it yourself, let the General read it, do what you please with it, so that it reach Johnson in due time. But let Maty be the only *critic* that has anything to do with it. The vexation, the perplexity that attends a multiplicity of criticisms by various hands, many of which are sure to be futile, many of them ill-founded, and some of them contradictory to others, is inconceivable, except by the author whose ill-fated work happens to be the subject of them. This also appears to me self-evident, that if a work have passed under the review of one man of taste and learning, and have had the good fortune to please him, his approbation gives security for that of all others qualified like himself.

A letter to Mr. Urban, in the last Gentleman's Magazine, of which I's book is the subject, pleases me more than anything I have seen in the way of eulogium yet. I have no guess of the author.

I do not wish to remind the Chancellor of his promise. Ask you why, my cousin? Because I suppose it would be impossible. He has, no doubt, forgotten it entirely; and would be obliged to take my word for the truth of it, which I could not bear. We drank tea together with Mrs. C——e and her sister, in King-street, Bloomsbury, and there was the promise made. I said, 'Thurlow, I am nobody, and shall be always nobody, and you will be Chancellor. You shall provide for me when you are.' He smiled, and replied, 'I surely will.' 'These ladies,' said I, 'are witnesses.' He still smiled, and said, 'Let them be so, for I will certainly do it.' But alas! twenty-four years have passed since the day of the date thereof; and to mention it now would be to upbraid him with inattention to his plighted troth. Neither do I suppose that he could easily serve such a creature as I am, if he would.

Adieu, whom I love entirely,

W. C.

To LADY HESKETH.

SHE IS TO LIVE IN THE VICARAGE AT OLNEY—IDLE YOUTHFUL DAYS OF HIM AND THURLOW.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, Olney, April 17, 1786.

IF you will not quote Solomon, my dearest cousin, I will. He says, and as beautifully as truly, 'Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, but when the desire cometh it is a tree of life!' I feel how much reason

he had on his side when he made this observation, and am myself sick of your fortnight's delay.

* * * * *

The vicarage was built by Lord Dartmouth, and was not finished till some time after we arrived at Olney, consequently it is new. It is a smart stone building, well sashed, by much too good for the living, but just what I should wish for you. It has, as you justly concluded from my premises, a garden, but rather calculated for use than ornament. It is square, and well walled, but has neither arbour nor alcove, nor other shade except the shadow of the house; but we have two gardens, which are yours. Between your mansion and ours is interposed nothing but an orchard, into which a door opening out of our garden affords us the easiest communication imaginable, will save the roundabout by the town, and make both houses one. Your chamber-windows look over the river and over the meadows to a village called Emberton; and command the whole length of a long bridge, described by a certain poet, together with a view of the road at a distance. Should you wish for books at Olney, you must bring them with you, or you will wish in vain, for I have none but the works of a certain poet, Cowper, of whom perhaps you have heard, and they are as yet but two volumes. They may multiply hereafter, but at present they are no more.

I did actually live three years with Mr. Chapman, 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 very well remember. There was I, and the future Lord Chancellor, constantly

employed from morning till night in giggling and making giggle, instead of studying the law. O fie, cousin, how could you do so? I am pleased with Lord Thurlow's inquiries about me. If he takes it into that inimitable head of his, he may make a man of me yet. I could love him heartily if he would deserve it at my hands: that I did so once is certain. The Duchess of ——, who in the world sets her agoing? But if all the duchesses in the world were spinning like so many whirligigs for my benefit, I would not stop them. It is a noble thing to be a poet, it makes all the world so lively. I might have preached more sermons than even Tillotson did, and better, and the world would have been still fast asleep; but a volume of verse is a fiddle that puts the universe in motion.

Yours, my dear friend and cousin,

W. C.

To Lady Hesketh.

THE THROCKMORTONS—DELICIOUS PRAISE—HE WILL TRY NOT TO BE TOO MUCH AGITATED.

Olney, May 25, 1786.

We have been industriously cultivating our acquaintance with our Weston neighbours since I wrote last; and they on their part have been equally diligent in the same cause. I have a notion that we shall all suit well. I see much in them both that I admire. You know, perhaps, that they are Catholics.

It is a delightful bundle of praise, my cousin, that

you have sent me; all jasmine and lavender. Whoever the lady is, she has evidently an admirable pen and a cultivated mind. If a person reads, it is no matter in what language; and if the mind be informed, it is no matter whether that mind belongs to a man or a woman: the taste and the judgment will receive the benefit alike in both. Long before 'The Task' was published, I made an experiment one day, being in a frolicsome mood, upon my friend. We were walking in the garden, and conversing on a subject similar to these lines—

> The few that pray at all, pray oft amiss;
> And seeking grace to improve the present good,
> Would urge a wiser suit than asking more.

I repeated them, and said to him with an air of *nonchalance*, 'Do you recollect those lines? I have seen them somewhere; where are they?' He put on a considering face, and after some deliberation—'Oh, I will tell you where they must be—in the "Night Thoughts."' I was glad my trial turned out so well, and did not undeceive him. I mention this occurrence only in confirmation of the letter-writer's opinion; but at the same time I do assure you, on the faith of an honest man, that I never in my life designed an imitation of Young, or of any other writer; for mimicry is my abhorrence, at least in poetry.

Assure yourself, my dearest cousin, that both for your sake, since you make a point of it, and for my own, I will be as philosophically careful as possible, that these fine nerves of mine shall not be beyond measure agitated when you arrive. In truth, there is

much greater probability that they will be benefited, and greatly too. Joy of heart, from whatever occasion it may arise, is the best of all nervous medicines; and I should not wonder if such a turn given to my spirits should have even a lasting effect of the most advantageous kind upon them. When I am in the best health, my tide of animal sprightliness flows with great equality, so that I am never, at any time, exalted in proportion as I am sometimes depressed. My depression has a cause, and if that cause were to cease, I should be as cheerful thenceforth, and perhaps for ever, as any man need be. But, as I have often said, Mrs. Unwin shall be my expositor.

Adieu, my beloved cousin! God grant that our friendship, which, while we could see each other, never suffered a moment's interruption, and which so long a separation has not in the least abated, may glow in us to our last hour, and be renewed in a better world, there to be perpetuated for ever.

Therefore I am, and must, and will be,

Yours, for ever,

W. C.

To JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

ABOUT TO LEAVE OLNEY.

Olney, June 19, 1786.

MY dear cousin's [Lady Hesketh] arrival has, as it could not fail to do, made us happier than we ever were at Olney. Her great kindness in giving us her

company is a cordial that I shall feel the effect of, not only while she is here, but while I live.

Olney will not be much longer the place of our habitation. At a village, two miles distant, we have hired a house of Mr. Throckmorton; a much better than we occupy at present, and yet not more expensive. It is situated very near to our most agreeable landlord, and his agreeable pleasure-grounds. In him, and in his wife, we shall find such companions as will always make the time pass pleasantly while they are in the country, and his grounds will afford us good air and good walking-room in the winter; two advantages which we have not enjoyed at Olney, where I have no neighbour with whom I can converse, and where seven months in the year I have been imprisoned by dirty and impassable ways, till both my health and Mrs. Unwin's have suffered materially.

Homer is ever importunate, and will not suffer me to spend half the time with my distant friends that I would gladly give them.

W. C.

To the Rev. William Unwin.

LADY HESKETH HAS COME—DELIGHT IN THE PROSPECT OF GOING TO LIVE AT WESTON.

My dear William, Olney, July 3, 1786.

After a long silence I begin again. Lady Hesketh is, as you observe, arrived, and has been with us near a fortnight. She pleases everybody, and is pleased in

her turn with everything she finds at Olney ; is always cheerful and sweet-tempered, and knows no pleasure equal to that of communicating pleasure to us, and to all around her.

And now I shall communicate news that will give you pleasure. When you first contemplated the front of our abode, you were shocked. In your eyes it had the appearance of a prison, and you sighed at the thought that your mother lived in it. Your view of it was not only just but prophetic. It had not only the aspect of a place built for the purposes of incarceration, but has actually served that purpose through a long, long period, and we have been the prisoners. But a gaol-delivery is at hand : the bolts and bars are to be loosed, and we shall escape. A very different mansion, both in point of appearance and accommodation, expects us ; and the expense of living in it not greater than we are subjected to in this. It is situated at Weston, one of the prettiest villages in England, and belongs to Mr. Throckmorton. We all three dine with him to-day by invitation, and shall survey it in the afternoon, point out the necessary repairs, and finally adjust the treaty. I have my cousin's promise that she will never let another year pass without a visit to us ; and the house is large enough to take us and our suite, and her also, with as many of hers as she shall choose to bring. The change will, I hope, prove advantageous both to your mother and me in all respects. Here we have no neighbourhood ; there we shall have most agreeable neighbours in the Throckmortons. Here we have a bad air in winter, impregnated with the fishy-smelling fumes of the marsh

miasma; there we shall breathe in an atmosphere untainted. Here we are confined from September to March, and sometimes longer; there we shall be upon the very verge of pleasure-grounds, in which we can always ramble, and shall not wade through almost impassable dirt to get at them. Both your mother's constitution and mine have suffered materially by such close and long confinement; and it is high time, unless we intend to retreat into the grave, that we should seek out a more wholesome residence. So far is well: the rest is left to Heaven.

Yours ever,

W. C.

To the REV. WALTER BAGOT.

ABOUT TO MIGRATE TO WESTON—PRAISE OF FUSELI, WHO REVISED COWPER'S HOMER.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Olney, August 31, 1786.

I BEGAN to fear for your health, and every day said to myself, I must write to Bagot soon, if it be only to ask him how he does—a measure that I should certainly have pursued long since, had I been less absorbed in Homer than I am. But such are my engagements in that quarter, that they make me, I think good for little else.

After having lived twenty years at Olney, we are on the point of leaving it, but shall not migrate far. We have taken a house in the village of Weston. Lady Hesketh is our good angel, by whose aid we are enabled to pass into a better air, and a more walkable country.

The imprisonment that we have suffered here for so many winters has hurt us both. That we may suffer it no longer, she stoops to Olney, lifts us from our swamp, and sets us down on the elevated grounds of Weston Underwood. There, my dear friend, I shall be happy to see you, and to thank you in person for all your kindness.

I do not wonder at the judgment that you form of Fuseli, a foreigner; but you may assure youself that, foreigner as he is, he has an exquisite taste in English verse. The man is all fire, and an enthusiast in the highest degree on the subject of Homer, and has given me more than once a jog, when I have been inclined to nap with my author. No cold water is to be feared from him that might abate my own fire; rather perhaps too much combustible.

Adieu! mon ami, yours faithfully,

W. C.

To Lady Hesketh.

HAPPY IN HIS NEW HOUSE.

Weston Lodge, November 26, 1786.

It is my birthday, my beloved cousin, and I determine to employ a part of it, that it may not be destitute of festivity, in writing to you. The dark thick fog that has obscured it, would have been a burden to me at Olney, but here I have hardly attended to it. The neatness and snugness of our abode compensate all the dreariness of the season, and whether the ways are wet or dry, our house at least is always warm and com-

modious. Oh! for you, my cousin, to partake these comforts with us! I will not begin already to tease you upon that subject, but Mrs. Unwin remembers to have heard from your own lips, that you hate London in the spring. Perhaps, therefore, by that time you may be glad to escape from a scene which will be every day growing more disagreeable, that you may enjoy the comforts of the lodge. You well know that the best house has a desolate appearance unfurnished. This house, accordingly, since it has been occupied by us and our *meubles*, is as much superior to what it was when you saw it, as you can imagine. The parlour is even elegant. When I say that the parlour is elegant, I do not mean to insinuate that the study is not so. It is neat, warm, and silent, and a much better study than I deserve, if I do not produce in it an incomparable translation of Homer. I think every day of those lines of Milton, and congratulate myself on having obtained, before I am quite superannuated, what he seems not to have hoped for sooner:

> 'And may at length my weary age
> Find out the peaceful hermitage!'

For if it is not a hermitage, at least it is a much better thing; and you must always understand, my dear, that when poets talk of cottages, hermitages, and such like things, they mean a house with six sashes in front, two comfortable parlours, a smart staircase, and three bed-chambers of convenient dimensions; in short, such a house as this.

Good night, and may God bless thee.

W. C.

WESTON LODGE.

To Samuel Rose, Esq.

BURNS' POEMS, THEN NEW.

Dear Sir, Weston, July 24, 1787.

This is the first time I have written these six months,[1] and nothing but the constraint of obligation could induce me to write now. I cannot be so wanting to myself as not to endeavour at least to thank you, both for the visits with which you have favoured me, and the poems that you sent me. In my present state of mind, I taste nothing; nevertheless, I read, partly from habit, and partly because it is the only thing that I am capable of.

I have therefore read Burns' poems, and have read them twice; and though they be written in a language that is new to me, and many of them on subjects much inferior to the author's ability, I think them, on the whole, a very extraordinary production. He is, I believe, the only poet these kingdoms have produced in the lower rank of life, since Shakspeare (I should rather say since Prior), who need not be indebted for any part of his praise to a charitable consideration of his origin, and the disadvantages under which he has laboured. It will be a pity if he should not hereafter divest himself of barbarism, and content himself with writing pure English, in which he appears perfectly qualified to excel. He who can command admiration, dishonours himself if he aims no higher than to raise a laugh.

[1] Being hindered by a very severe attack of his malady, which took place in his fatal month of January.

Poor Burns loses much of his deserved praise in this country through our ignorance of his language. I despair of meeting with any Englishman who will take the pains that I have taken to understand him. His candle is bright, but shut up in a dark-lantern. I lent him to a very sensible neighbour of mine, but his uncouth dialect spoiled all; and before he had half read him through, he was quite *ram-feezled.*

Your obliged and affectionate humble servant,

W. C.

To Lady Hesketh.

REQUEST BY THE NORTHAMPTON PARISH CLERK FOR VERSES TO PREFIX TO THE BILLS OF MORTALITY—MR. MACKENZIE, AUTHOR OF THE 'MAN OF FEELING.'

The Lodge, November 27, 1787.

It is the part of wisdom, my dearest cousin, to sit down contented under the demands of necessity because they are such. I am sensible that you cannot, in my uncle's present infirm state, and of which it is not possible to expect any considerable amendment, indulge either us or yourself with a journey to Weston.

On Monday morning last, Sam brought me word that there was a man in the kitchen who desired to speak with me. I ordered him in. A plain, decent, elderly figure made its appearance, and, being desired to sit, spoke as follows: 'Sir, I am clerk of the parish of All Saints, in Northampton; brother of Mr. Cox, the upholsterer. It is customary for the person in my office to annex to a bill of mortality, which he publishes at Christmas, a copy of verses. You will do me

a great favour, Sir, if you would furnish me with one.' To this I replied: 'Mr. Cox, you have several men of genius in your town, why have you not applied to some of them? There is a namesake of yours in particular, Cox the statuary, who, everybody knows, is a first-rate maker of verses. He surely is the man of all the world for your purpose.'—'Alas! Sir, I have heretofore borrowed help from him; but he is a gentleman of so much reading, that the people of our town cannot understand him.' I confess to you, my dear, I felt all the force of the compliment implied in this speech, and was almost ready to answer, 'Perhaps, my good friend, they may find me unintelligible too, for the same reason.' But on asking him whether he had walked over to Weston on purpose to implore the assistance of my Muse, and on his replying in the affirmative, I felt my mortified vanity a little consoled, and pitying the poor man's distress, which appeared to be considerable, promised to supply him. The wagon has accordingly gone this day to Northampton, loaded in part with my effusions in the mortuary style. A fig for poets who write epitaphs upon individuals! I have written *one* that serves *two hundred* persons.

A few days since I received a second very obliging letter from Mr. Mackenzie. He tells me that his own papers, which are by far, he is sorry to say it, the most numerous, are marked V. I. Z. Accordingly, my dear, I am happy to find that I am engaged in a correspondence with Mr. Viz, a gentleman for whom I have always entertained the profoundest veneration. But the serious fact is, that the papers distinguished by those signatures have ever pleased me most, and struck

me as the work of a sensible man, who knows the world well, and has more of Addison's delicate humour than anybody.

A poor man begged food at the Hall lately. The cook gave him some vermicelli soup. He ladled it about some time with the spoon, and then he returned it to her, saying, 'I am a poor man, it is true, and I am very hungry, but yet I cannot eat broth with maggots in it.'

Once more, my dear, a thousand thanks for your box full of good things, useful things, and beautiful things.

Yours ever,

W. C.

To LADY HESKETH.

HANNAH MORE—TRIAL OF WARREN HASTINGS, HIS SCHOOLFELLOW.

The Lodge, February 16, 1788.

I SHALL be glad to see Hannah More's poem; she is a favourite writer with me, and has more nerve and energy, both in her thoughts and language, than half the he rhymers in the kingdom. The Thoughts on the Manners of the Great will likewise be most acceptable. I want to learn as much of the world as I can, but to acquire that learning at a distance; and a book with such a title promises fair to serve the purpose effectually.

I recommend to you, my dear, by all means to embrace the fair occasion, and to put yourself in the way of being squeezed and incommoded a few hours, for

the sake of hearing and seeing—what you will never have an opportunity to see and hear hereafter—the trial of a man who has been greater and more feared than the Great Mogul himself. Whatever we are at home, we certainly have been tyrants in the East; and if these men have, as they are charged, rioted in the miseries of the innocent, and dealt death to the guiltless with an unsparing hand, may they receive a retribution that shall in future make all governors and judges of ours, in those distant regions, tremble! While I speak thus, I equally wish them acquitted. They were both my schoolfellows, and for Hastings I had a particular value.

Farewell.

W. C.

To Lady Hesketh.

BURKE'S SPEECH ON THE IMPEACHMENT—INVECTIVE IS THE CUSTOMARY STYLE ON SUCH OCCASIONS.

The Lodge, February 22, 1788.

I do not wonder that your ears and feelings were hurt by Mr. Burke's severe invective; but you are to know, my dear, or probably you know it already, that the prosecution of public delinquents has always, and in all countries, been thus conducted. The style of a criminal charge of this kind has been an affair settled among orators from the days of Tully to the present; and like all other practices that have obtained for ages, this in particular seems to have been founded originally in reason, and in the necessity of the case.

He who accuses another to the state, must not appear himself unmoved by the view of crimes with which he charges him, lest he should be suspected of fiction, or of precipitancy, or of a consciousness that, after all, he shall not be able to prove his allegations. On the contrary, in order to impress the minds of his hearers with a persuasion that he himself at least is convinced of the criminality of the prisoner, he must be vehement, energetic, rapid; must call him tyrant, and traitor, and everything else that is odious, and all this to his face, because all this, bad as it is, is no more than he undertakes to prove in the sequel; and if he cannot prove it, he must himself appear in a light very little more desirable, and, at the best, to have trifled with the tribunal to which he has summoned him.

I was glad to learn from the papers, that our cousin Henry shone as he did in reading the charge. This must have given much pleasure to the General.

Thy ever affectionate,

W. C.

To Lady Hesketh.

A FOXHUNT—COWPER IN AT THE DEATH.

The Lodge, March 3, 1788.

One day last week, Mrs. Unwin and I, having taken our morning walk, and returning homeward through the Wilderness, met the Throckmortons. A minute after we met them, we heard the cry of hounds at no

great distance, and mounting the broad stump of an elm which had been felled, and by the aid of which we were enabled to look over the wall, we saw them. They were all that time in our orchard: presently we heard a terrier belonging to Mrs. Throckmorton, which you may remember by the name of Fury, yelping with much vehemence, and saw her running through the thickets within a few yards of us at her utmost speed, as if in pursuit of something which we doubted not was the fox. Before we could reach the other end of the Wilderness, the hounds entered also; and when we arrived at the gate which opens into the Grove, there we found the old weary cavalcade assembled. The huntsman, dismounting, begged leave to follow his hounds on foot, for he was sure, he said, that they had killed him—a conclusion which, I suppose, he drew from their profound silence. He was accordingly admitted, and with a sagacity that would not have dishonoured the best hound in the world, pursuing precisely the same track which the fox and the dogs had taken, though he had never had a glimpse either after their first entrance through the rails, arrived where he found the slaughtered prey. He soon produced dead Reynard, and rejoined us in the Grove with all his dogs about him. Having an opportunity to see a ceremony which I was pretty sure would never fall in my way again, I determined to stay, and to notice all that passed with the most minute attention. The huntsman having by the aid of a pitchfork lodged Reynard on the arm of an elm, at the height of about nine feet from the ground, there left him for a considerable time. The gentlemen sat on

their horses, contemplating the fox, for which they had toiled so hard: and the hounds assembled at the foot of the tree, with faces not less expressive of the most rational delight, contemplated the same object. The huntsman remounted; cut off a foot, and threw it to the hounds; one of them swallowed it whole like a bolus. He then once more alighted, and drawing down the fox by the hinder legs, desired the people, who were by this time rather numerous, to open a lane for him to the right and left. He was instantly obeyed, when throwing the fox for some distance of some yards, and screaming like a fiend, 'tear him to pieces!' at least six times repeatedly, he consigned him over absolutely to the pack, who in a few minutes devoured him completely. Thus, my dear, as Virgil says, what none of the gods could have ventured to promise me, time itself, pursuing its accustomed course, has of its own accord presented me with. I have been in at the death of a fox, and you now know as much of the matter as I, who am as well informed as any sportsman in England.

Yours,

W. C.

To SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

RAIN AFTER LONG DROUGHT—SUMMER RAPIDLY LEAVING, AND LIFE ITSELF TOO.

Weston, June 23, 1788.

IT has pleased God to give us rain, without which this part of our country at least must soon have become a desert. The meadows have been parched to

a January brown, and we have foddered our cattle for some time as in the winter. The goodness and power of God are never, I believe, so universally acknowledged as at the end of a long drought. Man is naturally a self-sufficient animal; and in all concerns that seem to lie within the sphere of his own ability, thinks little or not at all of the need he always has of protection and furtherance from above. But he is sensible that the clouds will not assemble at his bidding; and that though the clouds assemble, they will not fall in showers because he commands them. When therefore at last the blessing descends, you shall hear even in the streets the most irreligious and thoughtless with one voice exclaim, 'Thank God!'—confessing themselves indebted to His favour, and willing, at least so far as words go, to give Him the glory. I can hardly doubt, therefore, that the earth is sometimes parched, and the crops endangered, in order that the multitude may not want a memento to whom they owe them, nor absolutely forget the Power on which all depend for all things.

Our solitary part of the year is over. Mrs. Unwin's daughter and son-in-law have lately spent some time with us. We shall shortly receive from London our old friends the Newtons (he was once minister of Olney); and when they leave us, we expect that Lady Hesketh will succeed them, perhaps to spend the summer here, and possibly the winter also. The summer indeed is leaving us at a rapid rate, as do all the seasons; and though I have marked their flight so often, I know not which is the swiftest. Man is never so deluded as when he dreams of his own duration.

The answer of the old patriarch to Pharaoh may be adopted by every man at the close of the longest life: 'Few and evil have been the days of the years of my pilgrimage.' Whether we look back from fifty or from twice fifty, the past appears equally a dream; and we can only be said truly to have lived while we have been profitably employed. Alas! then, making the necessary deductions, how short is life! Were men in general to save themselves all the steps they take to no purpose, or to a bad one, what numbers, who are now active, would become sedentary!

Thus I have sermonized through my paper. Living where you live, you can bear with me the better. I always follow the leading of my unconstrained thoughts when I write to a friend, be they grave or otherwise.

Homer reminds me of you every day. I am now in the twenty-first Iliad.

Adieu,

W. C.

To Lady Hesketh.

HOPES TO HAVE HER IN HIS PLEASANT ORCHARD—HIS DOG AND THE WATER-LILY—HIS BALLADS ON THE SLAVE-TRADE.

The Lodge, June 27, 1788.

For the sake of a longer visit, my dearest coz, I can be well content to wait. The country, this country at least, is pleasant at all times, and when winter is come, or near at hand, we shall have the better chance for being snug. I have made in the orchard the best winter-walk in all the parish, sheltered from the east

and from the north-east, and open to the sun, except at his rising, all the day. Then we will have Homer and Don Quixote; and then we will have saunter and chat, and one laugh more before we die. Our orchard is alive with creatures of all kinds; poultry of every denomination swarms in it, and pigs, the drollest in the world.

I must tell you a feat of my dog Beau. Walking by the river-side, I observed some water-lilies, floating at a little distance from the bank. They are a large white flower, with an orange-coloured eye, very beautiful. I had a desire to gather one, and having your long cane in my hand, by the help of it endeavoured to bring one of them within my reach. But the attempt proved vain, and I walked forward. Beau had all the while observed me very attentively. Returning soon after toward the same place, I observed him plunge into the river, while I was about forty yards distant from him, and when I had nearly reached the spot, he swam to land with a lily in his mouth, which he came and laid at my foot.

Mr. Rose, whom I have mentioned to you as a visitor of mine for the first time soon after you left us, writes me word that he has seen my ballads against the slave-mongers, but not in print. Where he met with them, I know not. Mr. Bull begged hard for leave to print them at Newport-Pagnel, and I refused, thinking that it would be wrong to anticipate the nobility, gentry, and others, at whose pressing instance I composed them, in their designs to print them. But perhaps I need not have been so squeamish; for the opportunity to publish them in

London seems now not only ripe but rotten. I am well content. There is but one of them with which I am myself satisfied, though I have heard them all well spoken of. But there are very few things of my own composition that I can endure to read when they have been written a month, though at first they seem to me to be all perfection.

Mrs. Unwin, who has been much the happier since the time of your return hither has been in some sort settled, begs me to make her kindest remembrance.

Yours, my dear, most truly,

W. C.

To SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

YARDLEY OAK.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, September 11, 1788.

SINCE your departure I have twice visited the oak, and with an intention to push my inquiries a mile beyond it, where it seems I should have found another oak much larger and much more respectable than the former; but once I was hindered by the rain, and once by the sultriness of the day. This latter oak has been known by the name of Judith many ages, and is said to have been an oak at the time of the Conquest. If I have not an opportunity to reach it before your arrival here, we will attempt that exploit together, and even if I should have been able to visit it ere you come, I shall yet be glad to do so; for the pleasure of extraordinary sights, like all

other pleasures, is doubled by the participation of a friend.

You wish for a copy of my little dog's eulogium, which I will therefore transcribe, but by so doing I shall leave myself but scanty room for prose.

W. C.

To SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

WANTS A CUCKOO CLOCK—JOHNSON, BOSWELL, AND HAWKINS.

MY DEAR FRIEND, The Lodge, June 5, 1789.

I AM going to give you a deal of trouble, but London folks must be content to be troubled by country folks; for in London only can our strange necessities be supplied. You must buy for me, if you please, a cuckoo clock; and now I will tell you where they are sold, which, Londoner as you are, it is possible you may not know. They are sold, I am informed, at more houses than one, in that narrow part of Holborn which leads into Broad St. Giles'. The shop is now in High Holborn, northside. It seems they are well-going clocks, and cheap, which are the two best recommendations of any clock. They are made in Germany, and such numbers of them are annually imported that they are become even a considerable article of commerce.

I return you many thanks for Boswell's Tour. I read it to Mrs. Unwin after supper, and we find it amusing. There is much trash in it, as there must always be in every narrative that relates indiscrimi-

nately all that passed. But now and then the Doctor speaks like an oracle, and that makes amends for all. Sir John was a coxcomb, and Boswell is not less a coxcomb, though of another kind. I fancy Johnson made coxcombs of all his friends, and they in return made him a coxcomb; for, with reverence be it spoken, such he certainly was, and, flattered as he was, sure to be so.

Thanks for your invitation to London, but unless London can come to me, I fear we shall never meet. I was sure that you would love my friend, when you should once be well acquainted with him, and equally sure that he would take kindly to you.

W. C.

To SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

THE SAME SUBJECTS.

AMICO MIO, The Lodge, June 20, 1789.

I AM truly sorry that it must be so long before we can have an opportunity to meet. My cousin, in her last letter but one, inspired me with other expectations, expressing a purpose, if the matter could be so contrived, of bringing you with her; I was willing to believe that you had consulted together on the subject, and found it feasible. A month was formerly a trifle in my account; but at my present age I give it all its importance, and grudge that so many months should yet pass in which I have not even a glimpse of those I love, and of whom, the course of nature

considered, I must ere long take leave for ever; but I shall live till August.

Many thanks for the cuckoo, which arrived perfectly safe and goes well, to the amusement and amazement of all who hear it. Hannah lies awake to hear it, and I am not sure that we have not others in the house that admire his music as much as she.

Having read both Hawkins and Boswell, I now think myself almost as much a master of Johnson's character as if I had known him personally, and cannot but regret that our bards of other times found no such biographers as these. They have both been ridiculed, and the wits have had their laugh; but such a history of Milton or Shakspeare as they have given of Johnson—oh how desirable!

W. C.

To SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

MRS. PIOZZI'S TRAVELS—POPE'S SEVERITY IN THE DUNCIAD.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, August 8, 1789.

COME when you will, or when you can, you cannot come at a wrong time; but we shall expect you on the day mentioned.

If you have any book that you think will make pleasant evening reading, bring it with you. I now read Mrs. Piozzi's Travels to the ladies after supper, and shall probably have finished them before we shall have the pleasure of seeing you. It is the fashion, I understand, to condemn them. But we

who make books ourselves, are more merciful to book-makers. I would that every fastidious judge of authors were himself obliged to write; there goes more to the composition of a volume than many critics imagine. I have often wondered, that the same poet who wrote the Dunciad should have written these lines:

'The mercy I to others show,
That mercy show to me.'

Alas! for Pope, if the mercy he showed to others was the measure of the mercy he received! He was the less pardonable too, because experienced in all the difficulties of composition.

I scratch this between dinner and tea, a time I cannot write much without disordering my noddle, and bringing a flush into my face. You will excuse me, therefore, if, through respect for the two important considerations of health and beauty, I conclude myself,

Ever yours, W. C.

To LADY HESKETH.

ANXIETY ABOUT HER HEALTH—DELIGHTED TO RECEIVE HIS MOTHER'S PICTURE.

The Lodge, February 26, 1790.

YOU have set my heart at ease, my cousin, so far as you were yourself the object of its anxieties. What other trouble it feels can be cured by God alone.

But you are never silent a week longer than usual, without giving an opportunity to my imagination (ever fruitful in flowers of a sable hue) to tease me with them day and night. London is indeed a pestilent place, as you call it, and I would, with all my heart, that thou hadst less to do with it: were you under the same roof with me, I should know you to be safe, and should never distress you with melancholy letters.

I am delighted with Mrs. Bodham's kindness in giving me the only picture of my mother that is to be found, I suppose, in all the world. I had rather possess it than the richest jewel in the British Crown, for I loved her with an affection that her death, fifty-two years since, has not in the least abated. I remember her, too, young as I was when she died, well enough to know that it is a very exact resemblance of her, and as such it is to me invaluable. Everybody loved her, and, with an amiable character so impressed upon all her features, everybody was sure to do so.

I have a very affectionate and a very clever letter from Johnson, who promises me the transcript of the books intrusted to him in a few days. I have a great love for that young man: he has some drops of the same stream in his veins that once animated the original of that dear picture.

W. C.

To Mrs. Bodham.

THANKS HER FOR SENDING HIS MOTHER'S PICTURE—HIS RELATIONS BY THE MOTHER'S SIDE.

My dearest Rose, Weston, February 27, 1790.

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 which 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 embraces. 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 an 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 of 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 all this, I deal much in poetry, as did our venerable ancestor, the Dean of St. Paul's, and I think I shall have proved myself a Donne at all points. The truth is that, whatever I am, I love you all.

I account it a happy event that brought the dear boy, your nephew, to my knowledge, and that, breaking through all the restraints which his natural bashfulness imposed on him, he determined to find me out. He is amiable to a degree that I have seldom seen, and I often long with impatience to see him again.

I am much obliged to Mr. Bodham for his kindness to my Homer, and with my love to you all, and with Mrs. Unwin's kind respects, am,

My dear, dear Rose, ever yours,

W. C.

P.S.—Your nephew tells me that his sister, in the qualities of the mind, resembles you: that is enough to make her dear to me, and I beg you will assure her that she is so. Let it not be long before I hear from you.

To Samuel Rose, Esq.

ON ROSE'S APPROACHING MARRIAGE—A RIDDLE FOR THE OCCASION.

My dear Friend, The Lodge, June 8, 1790.

Among the many who love and esteem you, there is none who rejoices more in your felicity than myself. Far from blaming, I commend you much for connecting yourself, young as you are, with a well-chosen companion for life. Entering on the state with uncontaminated morals, you have the best possible prospect of happiness, and will be secure against a thousand and ten thousand temptations, to which, at an early period of life, in such a Babylon as you must necessarily inhabit, you would otherwise have been exposed. I see it too in the light you do, as likely to be advantageous to you in your profession. Men of business have a better opinion of a candidate for employment who is married, because he has given bond to the world, as you observe, and to himself, for diligence, industry, and attention. It is altogether, therefore, a subject of much congratulation; and mine, to which I add Mrs. Unwin's, is very sincere. Samson, at his marriage, proposed a riddle to the Philistines. I am no Samson, neither are you a Philistine. Yet expound me the following if you can:

What are they, which stand at a distance from each other and meet without ever moving?

Should you be so fortunate as to guess it, you may propose it to the company when you celebrate your nuptials; and if you can win thirty changes of raiment

by it, as Samson did by his, let me tell you they will be no contemptible acquisition to a young beginner.

You will not, I hope, forget your way to Weston in consequence of your marriage, where you and yours will be always welcome.

W. C.

To JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

TELLS JOHN HE IS A SCATTERBRAIN—LONGS TO SEE HIM AGAIN.

Weston, July 31, 1790.

You have by this time, I presume, answered Lady Hesketh's letter? If not, answer it without delay; and this injunction I give you, judging that it may not be entirely unnecessary; for though I have seen you but once, and only for two or three days, I have found out that you are a scatterbrain. I made the discovery, perhaps, the sooner, because in this you very much resemble myself, who in the course of my life have, through mere carelessness and inattention, lost many advantages; an insuperable shyness has also deprived me of many. And here again there is a resemblance between us. You will do well to guard against both, for of both I believe you have a considerable share as well as myself.

We long to see you again, and are only concerned at the short stay you propose to make with us. If time should seem to you as short at Weston as it seems to us, your visit here will be gone 'as a dream when one awaketh, or as a watch in the night.'

It is a life of dreams; but the pleasantest, one naturally wishes longest.

If you have Donne's Poems, bring them with you; for I have not seen them for many years, and should like to look them over.

You may treat us too, if you please, to a little of your music, for I seldom hear any, and delight much in it. You need not fear a rival, for we have but two fiddles in the neighbourhood, one a gardener's, the other a tailor's—terrible performers both!

W. C.

To JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

A VISIT FROM THE DOWAGER LADY SPENCER.

(My Birthday.)

MY DEAREST JOHNNY, Weston, Friday, Nov. 26, 1790.

I AM happy that you have escaped from the claws of Euclid into the bosom of Justinian. It is useful, I suppose, to *every* man to be well-grounded in the principles of jurisprudence; and I take it to be a branch of science that bids much fairer to enlarge the mind, and give an accuracy of reasoning, than all the mathematics in the world. Mind your studies, and you will soon be wiser than I can hope to be.

We had a visit on Monday from one of the first women in the world, in point of character, I mean, and accomplishments, the Dowager Lady Spencer. I may receive, perhaps, some honours hereafter, should

my translation speed according to my wishes, and the pains I have taken with it; but shall never receive any that I shall esteem so highly. She is indeed worthy to whom I should dedicate; and may but my Odyssey prove as worthy of her, I shall have nothing to fear from the critics.

Yours, my dear Johnny, with much affection,

W. C.

To the Rev. Walter Bagot.

ON BLANK VERSE, AND JOHNSON'S DISLIKE OF IT.

My dear Friend, Weston Underwood, Feb. 26, 1791.

You delight me when you call *blank* verse the English *heroic*; for I have always thought, and often said, that we have no other verse worthy to be so entitled. When you read my preface you will be made acquainted with my sentiments on this subject pretty much at large, for which reason I will curb my zeal, and say the less about it at present. That Johnson, who wrote harmoniously in rhyme, should have had so defective an ear as never to have discovered any music at all in blank verse, till he heard a particular friend of his reading it, is a wonder never sufficiently to be wondered at. Yet this is true on his own acknowledgment, and amounts to a plain confession (of which, perhaps, he was not aware when he made it) that he did not know how to read blank verse himself. In short, he either suffered prejudice to lead him in a string whithersoever it would, or his taste in poetry

was worth little. I don't believe he ever read anything of that kind with enthusiasm in his life; and as good poetry cannot be composed without a considerable share of that quality in the mind of the author, so neither can it be read or tasted as it ought to be without it. I have said all this in the morning fasting, but am soon going to my tea. When, therefore, I shall have told you, that we are now in the course of our printing in the Second Book of the Odyssey, I shall only have time to add that

I am, my dear friend, most truly yours,

W. C.

I think your Latin quotations very applicable to the present state of France. But France is in a situation new and untried before.

To JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

HE HAS HONOURS FROM CAMBRIDGE, NONE FROM OXFORD.

Weston, February 27, 1791.

Now, my dearest Johnny, I must tell thee in a few words how much I love and am obliged to thee for thy affectionate services.

My Cambridge honours are all to be ascribed to you, and to you only. Yet you are but a little man; and a little man, into the bargain, who have kicked the mathematics, their idol, out of your study. So important are the endings which Providence frequently

connects with small beginnings. Had you been here, I could have furnished you with much employment; for I have so dealt with your fair MS. in the course of my polishing and improving, that I have almost blotted out the whole. Such, however, as it is, I must now send it to the printer, and he must be content with it, for there is not time to make a fresh copy. We are now printing the Second Book of the Odyssey.

Should the Oxonians bestow none of their notice on me on this occasion, it will happen, singularly enough, that as Pope received all his University honours in the subscription way from Oxford, and none at all from Cambridge, so I shall have received all mine from Cambridge, and none from Oxford. This is the more likely to be the case, because I understand, that on whatsoever occasion either of those learned bodies think fit to move, the other always makes it a point to sit still; thus proving its superiority.

I shall send up your letter to Lady Hesketh in a day or two, knowing that the intelligence contained in it will afford her the greatest pleasure. Know, likewise, for your own gratification, that all the Scotch Universities have subscribed, none excepted.

We are all as well as usual; that is to say, as well as reasonable folks expect to be on the crazy side of this frail existence.

I rejoice that we shall so soon have you again at our fireside.

W. C.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

HOPES MUCH FROM THEIR FRIENDSHIP, JUST COMMENCED —PRAISES OF MRS. UNWIN—COWPER HAS NOT MANY BOOKS.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Weston, April 6, 1792.

GOD grant that this friendship of ours may be a comfort to us all the rest of our days, in a world where true friendships are rarities, and especially where, suddenly formed, they are apt soon to terminate! But, as I said before, I feel a disposition of heart toward you, that I never felt for one whom I had never seen; and that shall prove itself, I trust, in the event a propitious omen.

It gives me the sincerest pleasure, that I may hope to see you at Weston; for as to any migrations of mine, they must, I fear, notwithstanding the joy I should feel in being a guest of yours, be still considered in the light of impossibilities. Come then, my friend, and be as welcome, as the country people say here, as the flowers in May. I am happy, as I say, in the expectation; but the fear, or rather the consciousness, that I shall not answer on a nearer view, makes it a trembling kind of happiness, and a doubtful.

After the privacy which I have mentioned above, I went to Huntingdon; soon after my arrival there, I took up my quarters at the house of the Rev. Mr. Unwin; I lived with him while he lived, and ever since his death have lived with his widow. Her, therefore, you will find mistress of the house; and I

judge of you amiss, or you will find her just such as you would wish. To me she has been often a nurse, and invariably the kindest friend, through a thousand adversities that I have had to grapple with in the course of almost thirty years. I thought it better to introduce her to you thus, than to present her to you, at your coming, quite a stranger.

Bring with you any books that you think may be useful to my commentatorship, for, with you for an interpreter, I shall be afraid of none of them. And in truth, if you think that you shall want them, you must bring books for your own use also, for they are an article with which I am *heinously unprovided*; being much in the condition of the man whose library Pope describes as—

'No mighty store:
His own works neatly bound, and little more.'

You shall know how this has come to pass hereafter.

W. C.

To Lady Hesketh.

ALTERNATIONS OF JOY AND SORROW—VERSES TO WARREN HASTINGS.

My dearest Coz, Weston, May 20, 1792.

I have often observed that there is a regular alternation of good and evil in the lot of men, so that a favourable incident may be considered as the harbinger of an unfavourable one, and *vice versâ*. Dr. Madan's experience witnesses to the truth of this observation.

One day he gets a broken head, and the next a mitre to heal it. I rejoice that he has met with so effectual a cure, though my joy is not unmingled with concern; for till now I had some hope of seeing him, but since I live in the north, and his episcopal call is in the west, that is a gratification, I suppose, which I must no longer look for.

My sonnet,[1] which I sent you, was printed in the Northampton paper last week, and this week it produced me a complimentary one in the same paper, which served to convince me at least, by the matter of it, that my own was not published without occasion, and that it had answered its purpose.

My correspondence with Hayley proceeds briskly, and is very affectionate on both sides. I expect him here in about a fortnight; and wish heartily, with Mrs. Unwin, that you would give him a meeting. I have promised him, indeed, that he shall find us alone, but you are one of the family.

I wish much to print the following lines in one of the daily papers. Lord S.'s vindication of the poor culprit in the affair of Cheit Sing has confirmed me in the belief that he has been injuriously treated, and I think it an act merely of justice to take a little notice of him:

TO WARREN HASTINGS, Esq.

BY AN OLD SCHOOLFELLOW OF HIS AT WESTMINSTER.

Hastings! I knew thee young, and of a mind
While young, humane, conversable, and kind!

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[1] To Mr. Wilberforce.

Nor can I well believe thee—gentle THEN—
Now grown a villain and the WORST of men;
But rather some suspect, who have oppress'd
And worried thee, as not themselves the BEST.

If thou wilt take the pains to send them to thy newsmonger, I hope thou wilt do well.

Adieu!

W. C.

To JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

NOT SORRY HIS ORDINATION IS POSTPONED—HAYLEY AT WESTON ON A VISIT.

Weston,
May 20, 1792.

MY DEAREST OF ALL JOHNNIES,

I AM not sorry that your ordination is postponed. A year's learning and wisdom added to your present stock, will not be more than enough to satisfy the demands of your function. Neither am I sorry that you find it difficult to fix your thoughts to the serious point at all times: it proves, at least, that you attempt and wish to do it, and these are good symptoms. Woe to those who enter on the ministry of the gospel without having previously asked at least from God a mind and spirit suited to their occupation, and whose experience never differs from itself, because they are always alike vain, light, and inconsiderate! It is, therefore, matter of great joy to me to hear you complain of levity, and such it is to Mrs. Unwin. She is, I thank God, tolerably well, and loves you. As to the time of your journey hither, the sooner after June the better: till then we shall have company.

I forgot not my debts to your dear sister, and your aunt Balls. Greet them both with a brother's kiss, and place it to my account. I will write to them when Milton and a thousand other engagements will give me leave. Mr. Hayley is here on a visit. We have formed a friendship that I trust will last for life, and render us an edifying example to all future poets.

Adieu! Lose no time in coming after the time mentioned.

W. C.

To Lady Hesketh.

MRS. UNWIN STRUCK WITH PALSY—THANKFUL THAT HAYLEY WAS WITH THEM.

Weston, May 24, 1792.

I WISH with all my heart, my dearest coz, that I had not ill news for the subject of the present letter. My friend, my Mary, has again been attacked by the same disorder that threatened me last year with the loss of her, and of which you were yourself a witness. Gregson would not allow that first stroke to be paralytic, but this he acknowledges to be so; and with respect to the former, I never had myself any doubt that it was; but this has been much the severest. Her speech has been almost unintelligible from the moment that she was struck; it is with difficulty that she opens her eyes, and she cannot keep them open; the muscles necessary to the purpose being contracted; and as to self-moving powers from place to place, and the use of her right hand and arm, she has entirely lost them.

It has happened well, that of all men living the man most qualified to assist and comfort me is here, though till within these few days I never saw him, and a few weeks since had no expectation that I ever should. You have already guessed that I mean Hayley—Hayley, who loves me as if he had known me from my cradle. When he returns to town, as he must, alas! too soon, he will pay his respects to you.

W. C.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

THE JOURNEY TO EARTHAM DECIDED UPON—PROPOSED ROUTE—HOW STRANGE TRAVEL IS TO HIM.

Weston, July 22, 1792.

THIS important affair, my dear brother, is at last decided, and we are coming. Wednesday se'nnight, if nothing occur to make a later day necessary, is the day fixed for our journey. Our rate of travelling must depend on Mary's ability to bear it. Our mode of travelling will occupy three days unavoidably, for we shall come in a coach. Abbot finishes my picture to-morrow; on Wednesday he returns to town, and is commissioned to order one down for us, with four steeds to draw it:

'Hollow pamper'd jades of Asia,
That cannot go but forty miles a day.'

Send us our route, for I am as ignorant of it almost as if I were in a strange country. We shall reach St. Alban's, I suppose, the first day; say where we must

finish our second day's journey, and at what inn we may repose? As to the end of the third day, we know where that will find us, viz. in the arms, and under the roof, of our beloved Hayley.

General Cowper having heard a rumour of this intended migration, desires to meet me on the road, that we may once more see each other. He lives at Ham, near Kingston. Shall we go through Kingston, or near it? for I would give him as little trouble as possible, though he offers very kindly to come as far as Barnet for that purpose. Nor must I forget Carwardine, who so kindly desired to be informed what way we should go. On what point of the road will it be easiest for him to find us? On all these points you must be my oracle. My friend and brother, we shall overwhelm you with our numbers; this is all the trouble that I have left. My Johnny of Norfolk, happy in the thought of accompanying us, would be brokenhearted to be left behind.

In the midst of all these solicitudes, I laugh to think what they are made of, and what an important thing it is for me to travel. Other men steal away from their homes silently, and make no disturbance; but when I move, houses are turned upside down, maids are turned out of their beds, all the counties through which I pass appear to be in an uproar: Surrey greets me by the mouth of the General, and Essex by that of Carwardine. How strange does all this seem, to a man who has seen no bustle, and made none, for twenty years together!

Adieu!

W. C.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

DOUBTS AND FEARS ABOUT HIS JOURNEY—HIS PICTURE FINISHED, AND A GOOD LIKENESS.

Weston, July 29, 1792.

PRAYER has opened my passage at last, and obtained for me a degree of confidence that, I trust, will prove a comfortable viaticum to me all the way. On Wednesday, therefore, we set forth.

The terrors that I have spoken of would appear ridiculous to most, but to you they will not; for you are a reasonable creature, and know well that, to whatever cause it be owing (whether to constitution, or to God's express appointment), I am hunted by spiritual hounds in the night-season. I cannot help it. You will pity me, and wish it were otherwise; and though you may think there is much of the imaginary in it, will not deem it for that reason an evil less to be lamented. So much for fears and distresses. Soon, I hope, they shall all have a joyful termination, and I, my Mary, my Johnny, and my dog, be skipping with delight at Eartham.

Well! this picture is at last finished, and well finished I can assure you. Every creature that has seen it has been astonished at the resemblance. Sam's boy bowed to it, and Beau walked up to it, wagging his tail as he went, and evidently showing that he acknowledged its likeness to his master. It is a half-length, as it is technically but absurdly called; that is to say, it gives all but the foot and ankle. To-morrow it goes to town, and will hang some months

at Abbot's, when it will be sent to its due destination in Norfolk.

I hope, or rather wish, that at Eartham I may recover that habit of study which, inveterate as it once seemed, I now seem to have lost—lost to such a degree, that it is even painful to me to think of what it will cost me to acquire it again.

Adieu! my dear, dear Hayley; God give us a happy meeting! Mary sends her love. She is in pretty good plight this morning, having slept well, and, for her part, has no fears at all about the journey.

Ever yours,

W. C.

To MRS. COURTENAY.

SOME ACCOUNT OF HIS JOURNEY—BEAUTIES OF EARTHAM.

MY DEAREST CATHARINA, Eastham, Sussex, August 12, 1792.

THOUGH I have travelled far, nothing did I see in my travels that surprised me half so agreeably as your kind letter; for, high as my opinion of your good nature is, I had no hopes of hearing from you till I should have written first; a pleasure which I intended to allow myself the first opportunity.

After three days' confinement in a coach and suffering, as we went, all that could be suffered from excessive heat and dust, we found ourselves, late in the evening, at the door of our friend Hayley. In every other respect, the journey was extremely pleasant. At the Mitre in Barnet, where we lodged the first evening, we found our friend Rose, who had walked

thither, from his house in Chancery Lane, to meet us; and at Kingston, where we dined the second day, I found my old and much-valued friend, General Cowper, whom I had not seen in thirty years, and but for this journey should never have seen again. Mrs. Unwin, on whose account I had a thousand fears before we set out, suffered as little from fatigue as myself, and begins, I hope, already to feel some beneficial effects from the air of Eartham, and the exercises that she takes in one of the most delightful pleasure-grounds in the world. They occupy three sides of a hill, lofty enough to command a view of the sea, which skirts the horizon to a length of many miles, with the Isle of Wight at the end of it. The inland scene is equally beautiful, consisting of a large and deep valley, well cultivated, and enclosed by magnificent hills, all crowned with wood. I had, for my part, no conception that a poet could be the owner of such a paradise; and his house is as elegant as his scenes are charming.

Adieu!

W. C.

To Lady Hesketh.

DEATH OF HURDIS' SISTER—ABOUT COWPER HIMSELF AND MRS. UNWIN.

Eartham, August 26, 1792.

Poor Hurdis is broken-hearted for the loss of his favourite sister; and my only comfort respecting even yourself is, that you write in good spirits, and assure

me that you are in a state of recovery: otherwise I should mourn not only for Hurdis, but for myself, lest a certain event should reduce me, and in a short time too, to a situation as distressing as his; for though nature designed you only for my cousin, you have had a sister's place in my affections ever since I knew you. The reason is, I suppose, that having no sister the daughter of my own mother, I thought it proper to have one the daughter of yours. Certain it is that I can by no means afford to lose you, and that unless you will be upon honour with me, to give me always a true account of yourself, at least when we are not together, I shall always be unhappy, because always suspicious that you deceive me.

Now for ourselves. I am, without the least dissimulation, in good health; my spirits are about as good as you have ever seen them; and if increase of appetite and a double portion of sleep be advantageous, such are the advantages that I have received from this migration. As to that gloominess of mind which I have had these twenty years, it cleaves to me even here; and could I be translated to Paradise, unless I left my body behind me, would cleave to me even there also. It is my companion for life, and nothing will ever divorce us. So much for myself. Mrs. Unwin is evidently better for her jaunt, though by no means as she was before this last attack, still wanting help when she would rise from her seat, and a support in walking; but she is able to use more exercise than she could at home, and moves with rather a less tottering step. God knows what He designs for me; but when I see those who are dearer to me than my-

self distempered and enfeebled, and myself as strong as in the days of my youth, I tremble for the solitude in which a few years may place me. I wish her and you to die before me, but not till I am more likely to follow immediately. Enough of this.

Romney has drawn me in crayons, and in the opinion of all here, with his best hand, and with the most exact resemblance possible.

W. C.

To Lady Hesketh.

ABOUT TO RETURN HOME TO WESTON—HURDIS AT EARTHAM.

My dearest Cousin, Eartham, September 9, 1792.

I determine, if possible, to send you one more letter, or at least, if possible, once more to send you something like one, before we leave Eartham. But I am in truth so unaccountably local in the use of my pen, that like the man in the fable, who could leap well nowhere but at Rhodes, I seem incapable of writing at all, except at Weston. This is, as I have already told you, a delightful place; more beautiful scenery I have never beheld, nor expect to behold; but the charms of it, uncommon as they are, have not in the least alienated my affections from Weston. The genius of that place suits me better; it has an air of snug concealment, in which a disposition like mine feels peculiarly gratified; whereas here, I see from every window woods like forests, and hills like moun-

tains—a wildness, in short, that rather increases my natural melancholy, and which, were it not for the agreeables I find within, would soon convince me that mere change of place could avail me little. Accordingly, I have not looked out for a house in Sussex, nor shall.

The intended day of our departure continues to be the seventeenth. I hope to reconduct Mrs. Unwin to The Lodge with her health considerably mended; but it is in the article of speech chiefly, and in her powers of walking, that she is sensible of much improvement. Her sight and her hand still fail her, so that she can neither read nor work; mortifying circumstances both to her, who is never willingly idle.

On the eighteenth, I purpose to dine with the General, and to rest that night at Kingston; but the pleasure I shall have in the interview will hardly be greater than the pain I shall feel at the end of it, for we shall part, probably, to meet no more.

Johnny, I know, has told you that Mr. Hurdis is here. Distressed by the loss of his sister, he has renounced the place where she died for ever, and is about to enter on a new course of life at Oxford. You would admire him much. He is gentle in his manners, and delicate in his person, resembling our poor friend Unwin, both in face and figure, more than any one I have ever seen. But he has not, at least he has not at present, his vivacity.

W. C.

To JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

ON PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

MY DEAR SIR, Weston, December 16, 1792.

WE differ so little, that it is a pity we should not agree. The possibility of restoring our deceased Government is, I think, the only point on which we are not of one mind. If you are right, and it cannot be touched in the medical way without danger of absolute ruin to the constitution, keep the doctors at a distance, say I, and let us live as long as we can. But perhaps physicians might be found, of skill sufficient for the purpose, were they but as willing as able. Who are they? Not those honest blunderers the mob, but our governors themselves. As it is in the power of any individual to be honest if he will, any body of men are, as it seems to me, equally possessed of the same option. For I can never persuade myself to think the world so constituted by the Author of it, and human society, which is his ordinance, so shabby a business, that the buying and selling of votes and consciences should be essential to its existence. As to multiplied representation, I know not that I foresee any great advantage likely to arise from that. Provided there be but a reasonable number of reasonable heads laid together for the good of the nation, the end may as well be answered by five hundred as it would be by a thousand, and perhaps better. But, then, they should be honest as well as wise; and in order that they may be so, they should put it out of their own power to be otherwise. This they might certainly do

if they would; and would they do it, I am not convinced that any great mischief would ensue. You say, 'somebody must have influence,' but I see no necessity for it. Let integrity of intention, and a due share of ability, be supposed, and the influence will be in the right place—it will all centre in the zeal and good of the nation. That will influence their debates and decisions, and nothing else ought to do it. You will say, perhaps, that, wise men and honest men as they are supposed, they are yet liable to be split into almost as many differences of opinion as there are individuals; but I rather think not. It is observed of Prince Eugene and the Duke of Marlborough, that each always approved and seconded the plans and views of the other; and the reason given for it is, that they were men of equal ability. The same cause that could make two unanimous would make twenty so, and would, at least, secure a majority among as many hundreds.

As to the reformation of the Church, I want none, unless by a better provision for the inferior clergy; and if that could be brought about by emaciating a little some of our too corpulent dignitaries, I should be well contented.

The Dissenters, I think, Catholics and others, have all a right to the privilege of all other Englishmen, because to deprive them is persecution; and persecution on any account, but especially on a religious one, is an abomination. But, after all, *valeat respublica.* I love my country, I love my king, and I wish peace and prosperity to Old England.

Adieu! W. C.

To the Rev. Walter Bagot.

HURDIS APPOINTED PROFESSOR OF POETRY AT OXFORD—THOUGHTS ON THE COALITION AGAINST FRANCE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE REVOLUTION.

My dear Friend, Weston, November 10, 1793.

You are very kind to consider my literary engagements, and to make them a reason for not interrupting me more frequently with a letter; but though I am indeed as busy as an author or an editor can well be, and am not apt to be overjoyed at the arrival of letters from uninteresting quarters, I shall always, I hope, have leisure both to peruse and to answer those of my real friends, and to do both with pleasure.

I have to thank you much for your benevolent aid in the affair of my friend Hurdis. You have doubtless learned ere now that he has succeeded, and carried the prize by a majority of twenty. He is well qualified for the post he has gained. So much the better for the honour of the Oxonian laurel, and so much the more for the credit of those who have favoured him with their suffrages.

I am entirely of your mind respecting this conflagration, by which all Europe suffers at present, and is likely to suffer for a long time to come. The same mistake seems to have prevailed as in the American business. We then flattered ourselves that the Colonies would prove an easy conquest; and when all the neighbour nations armed themselves against France, we imagined, I believe, that she, too, would be presently vanquished. But we begin already to be undeceived, and God only knows to what a degree we

may find we have erred at the conclusion. Such, however, is the state of things all around us, as reminds me continually of the Psalmist's expression, 'He shall break them in pieces like a potter's vessel.' And I rather wish than hope, in some of my melancholy moods, that England herself may escape a fracture.

I remain, truly yours,

W. C.

To the REV. MR. BUCHANAN, *Curate of Ravenstone, near Weston.*

BEGS HIS FRIEND TO GIVE HIM NEWS OF WESTON.

Mundesley, Norfolk, September 5, 1795.

To interpose a little ease,
Let my frail thoughts dally with false surmise.

I WILL forget, for a moment, that to whomsoever I may address myself, a letter from me can not otherwise be welcome than as a curiosity. To you, sir, I address this, urged to it by extreme penury of employment, and the desire I feel to learn something of what is doing, and has been done at Weston (my beloved Weston!) since I left it.

The coldness of these blasts, even in the hottest days, has been such, that, added to the irritation of the salt spray with which they are always charged, they have occasioned me an inflammation in the eyelids, which threatened a few days since to confine me entirely; but by absenting myself as much as possible from the beach, and guarding my face with an um-

brella, that inconvenience is in some degree abated. My chamber commands a very near view of the ocean, and the ships at high-water approach the coast so closely, that a man furnished with better eyes than mine might, I doubt not, discern the sailors from the window. No situation, at least when the weather is clear and bright, can be pleasanter: which you will easily credit, when I add that it imparts something a little resembling pleasure even to me. Gratify me with news from Weston. If Mr. Gregson and your neighbours the Courtenays are there, mention me to them in such terms as you see good. Tell me if my poor birds are living. I never see the herbs I used to give them without a recollection of them, and sometimes am ready to gather them, forgetting that I am not at home. Pardon this intrusion.

Mrs. Unwin continues much as usual.

W. C.

To Weston—his beloved Weston!—after which the poet so pathetically inquires, he never returned. Bodily weakness and mental gloom gathered heavily upon him; and correspondence with his friends by letters almost entirely ceased after the year 1795. Mrs. Unwin died in December, 1796; and his affectionate kinsman Johnson tried every method to relieve his complicated afflictions, by frequent change of residence, and varieties of reading and literary employment. In 1798, without solicitation, he wrote the following letter to his affectionate cousin:—

To Lady Hesketh.

HE CAN TAKE NO PLEASURE IN THE MOST DELIGHTFUL SCENES—'WE SHALL MEET NO MORE.'

Dear Cousin, Mundesley, October 13, 1798.

You describe delightful scenes, but you describe them to one who, if he even saw them, could receive no delight from them; who has a faint recollection, and so faint as to be like an almost forgotten dream, that once he was susceptible of pleasure from such causes. The country that you have had in prospect has been always famed for its beauties; but the wretch who can derive no gratification from a view of nature, even under the disadvantage of her most ordinary dress, will have no eyes to admire her in any.

In one day, in one *minute* I should rather have said, she became a universal blank to me; and though from a different cause, yet with an effect as difficult to remove as blindness itself. In this country, if there are not mountains, there are hills; if not broad and deep rivers, yet such as are sufficient to embellish a prospect; and an object still more magnificent than any river, the ocean itself, is almost immediately under the window. Why is scenery like this—I had almost said, why is the very scene, which many years since I could not contemplate without rapture, now become, at the best, an insipid wilderness to me? It neighbours nearly and as nearly resembles the scenery of Catfield, but with what different perceptions does it present me! The reason is obvious. My state of mind is a medium through which the beauties of

Paradise itself could not be communicated with any effect but a painful one.

There is a wide interval between us, which it would be far easier for you than for me to pass. Yet I should in vain invite you. We shall meet no more. I know not what Mr. Johnson said of me in the long letter he addressed to you yesterday; but nothing, I am sure, that could make such an event seem probable.

I remain, as usual, dear cousin, yours,

W. C.

From the date of this letter to Lady Hesketh, his mind seems to have gradually settled into deepening gloom. His last recorded letter, to his old and valued friend Mr. Newton, dated Dereham, April 11, 1799, is in the same sad strain as his last original poem, 'The Castaway.' Newton had sent him the Biography of some good man, with whose life and prospects Cowper sorrowfully contrasts his own. 'If,' he writes, 'it afforded me any amusement, or suggested to me any reflections, they were only such as served to embitter, if possible, still more the present moment, by a sad retrospect of those days when I thought myself secure of an eternity to be spent with the spirits of such men as he whose life afforded the subject of it But I was little aware of what I had to expect; and that a storm was at hand, which in one terrible moment would darken, and in another, still more terrible, blot out that prospect for ever.'

In the following year, 1800, on the 25th day of the same month of April, in which he thus wrote to his early and well-beloved friend, the long-tried sufferer expired.

We have now brought to a conclusion our Selection from the Letters of Cowper. The closing notes are of a deeply tragic tone; but by the sadness of our feelings, the heart may be made better. When we take a survey of the whole of his Life and Writings, we cannot doubt of his being one of those who, through much tribulation, have entered into the kingdom of God; and that, however mournful his strains were sometimes here below, his 'golden harp' (to use his own words) is now employed in 'a nobler, sweeter song.'

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