

South's Corner.

GLEANSINGS FROM THE POET COWPER'S LETTERS.

COWPER'S DOG.—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 to wards the same place, I observed him plunge into the river, while I was about forty yards 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. [The incident thus related in a letter to Lady Hesketh, is found described in verse among his poems under the title of "The dog and the water-lily."]

COWPER'S KITTEN.—I have a kitten, my dear, the drollest of all creatures that ever wore a cat's skin. Her gambols are not to be described, and would be incredible if they could. In point of size she is likely to be a kitten always, being extremely small of her age; but time, I suppose, that spoils every thing, will make her also a cat. You will see her, I hope, before that melancholy period shall arrive, for no wisdom that she may gain by experience and reflection hereafter, will compensate the loss of her present hilarity. She is dressed in a tortoise-shell suit, and I know that you will delight in her. [It is all very well; but unless she becomes a cat, she will not keep the house clear of rats and mice. The kitten's hilarity is very amusing, but we want the cat to drive away a nuisance.—EDITOR.]

THE USE OF A PATTERN.—I thank you for the snip of cloth, commonly called a pattern. At present I have two coats, and but one back. If at any time hereafter I should find myself possessed of fewer coats, or more backs, it will be of use to me.

COWPER'S ADVICE TO A STUDENT AT CAMBRIDGE.—You could not apply to a worse than I am to advise you concerning your studies. I was never a regular student myself, but lost the most valuable years of my life in an attorney's office, and in the Temple. I will not therefore give myself airs, and affect to know what I know not. The affair is of great importance to you, and you should be directed in it by a wiser than I. To speak however in very general terms of the subject, it seems to me that your chief concern is with history, natural philosophy, logic, and divinity. As to metaphysics, I know little about them. But the very little that I do know has not taught me to admire them. Life is too short to afford time even for serious trifles. Pursue what you know to be attainable, make truth your object, and your studies will make you a wise man! Let your divinity, if I may advise, be the divinity of the glorious Reformation; I mean in contradistinction to Arminianism, and all the isms that were ever broached in this world of error and ignorance. The divinity of the Reformation is called Calvinism, but injuriously. It has been that of the Church of Christ in all ages. It is the divinity of St. Paul, and of St. Paul's master, who met him in the way to Damascus.

THE PLACE WHERE TO STUDY THE CHARACTER OF LADIES.—Your sisters are fitter to judge than I, whether assembly-rooms are the places of all others, in which the ladies may be studied to most advantage. I am an old fellow, but I had once my dancing days, as you have now; yet I could never find that I learned half so much of a woman's real character by dancing with her, as by conversing with her at home, where I could observe her behaviour at the table, at the fireside, and in all the trying circumstances of domestic life. We are all good when we are pleased; but she is the good woman, who wants not a fiddle to sweeten her. If I am wrong, the young ladies will set me right; in the mean time I will not tease you with graver arguments on the subject, especially as I have a hope that years, and the study of the Scripture, and His Spirit, whose word it is, will, in due time, bring you to my way of thinking.

PRAYING IN LATIN.—I happened to say [at Mr. Throckmorton's] that in all professions and trades mankind affected an air of mystery. Physicians, I observed, in particular, were objects of that remark, who persist in prescribing in Latin many times no doubt to the hazard of a patient's life, through the ignorance of an apothecary. Mr. Throckmorton assented to what I said, and turning to his chaplain, to my infinite surprise observed to him, "That is just as absurd as our praying in Latin." I could have hugged him for his liberality, and freedom from bigotry; but thought it rather more decent to let the matter pass without any visible notice. I therefore heard it with pleasure, and kept my pleasure to myself.

COWPER'S ESTIMATE OF HIMSELF, AS "A DABBLER IN RHYZE."—I have been one ever since I was fourteen years of

age, when I began with translating an elegy of Tibullus. I have no more right to the name of a poet, than a maker of mouse-traps has to that of an engineer; but my little exploits in this way have at times amused me so much that I have often wished myself a good one. Such a talent in verse as mine is like a child's rattle, very entertaining to the trifle that uses it, and very disagreeable to all beside. [This is not the estimate which others formed of his poetry.]

THE VALUE OF EARTHLY THINGS.—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!"

AN UNWORTHY AIM.—He who can command admiration, dishonours himself if he aims no higher than to raise a laugh. [Editor suggests the following modification: He who may become useful—and who may not—dishonours himself if he aims no higher than to be amusing.]

HISTORICAL SKETCHES.

JOHN LOCKE was born at Wrington near Bristol in the year 1632. He pursued his studies at the University of Oxford, and became Student of Christ Church. The ordinary course of studies then in repute had no attractions for him; but he fell in with the works of the French Philosopher Des Cartes, and his attention was powerfully directed to the pursuits in which that writer has acquired just celebrity. He spent some time in Germany and France, and acquired the patronage of the Earl of Shaftesbury, whom he followed to Holland in the year 1682. During his absence from England, Charles II. then reigning, Locke was unjustly accused of having published a pamphlet against the government, and was deprived of his place as student of Christ Church. When the King died, the injured man's friends offered to procure a pardon for him; but he forbore their interference, since he was conscious of no offence that could require to be pardoned by the government. During the short reign of King James II, then, a formal demand was addressed to the States General, by the British Ambassador, that Locke, together with eighty-three other individuals, should be delivered up to be conveyed to England; Locke found it necessary to live in concealment, but he was able still to cultivate intercourse with several men of learning, among whom were Limborch and Le Clerc whose names are celebrated in the annals of science: King James having abdicated the throne, and the Prince of Orange being settled as Sovereign of the British dominions, Locke was enabled to return to his native country in safety. He did so in 1689, and the persecution which he had endured gave him a claim to some good appointment. He accepted a place as Commissioner, first of Appeals, and afterwards of Trade and Plantations, but spent most of his time at the country-seat of Sir Francis Masham, twenty-five miles from London, where he could command every comfort that a rich establishment afforded, and had the peculiar satisfaction of seeing his views respecting education carried into practice in the education of the son of his hosts, Sir Francis and Lady Masham.

Locke's most important work is an Essay on the Human Understanding; he wrote on Government and on Toleration, and also Commentaries on some of St. Paul's Epistles, which prove that the uncommon powers of his mind led him to regard the truths of revelation with the highest reverence. To the study of these he seems to have devoted the last years of his life. He resigned his office in 1700, lived altogether at Oates, the seat before mentioned, and died in 1704, aged seventy three years.

ROBERT BOYLE, the seventh son of the Earl of Cork, is an instance similar to that of John Locke, of a man eminent for mind and attainment, and at the same time filled with the highest reverence for the faith revealed in the Scriptures. He received his early education at Eton, but in 1638, being then at the age of eleven, he was sent abroad under the care of an accomplished tutor, and spent several years at Geneva, Florence, Rome, and other cities of Italy; he then travelled into France and returned to Geneva, where he was detained on account of the troubles which had broken out in Ireland. His father held an important post in that country; and when Robert Boyle returned to Ireland in the year 1644, the Earl had just died and left him considerable property, including the manor of Stalbridge in England. At this place, the young man resided five years, devoting his mind with exemplary industry to a variety of studies.

In those days, so troublous on account of the contest between the King and Parliament, Boyle associated himself privately with a small number of learned men for the purpose of investigating subjects of natural science. They held their meetings first in London, afterwards at Oxford, and styled themselves "the Philosophic College." After the Restoration, they were incorporated, and distinguished by the name of the Royal Society. The lovers of R. S. have since that time become a distinction of considerable honour, being ap-

ended to the names of the scientific men who are Fellows of the Royal Society—the word Fellow in this case meaning member. In 1680, Boyle was chosen President of the Society, but he declined the honour. He had, by this time, written a variety of important treatises, and the whole of his works fill five volumes in folio, which have been repeatedly published.

In the midst of his scientific pursuits, he did not omit scriptural and theological studies. Lord Clarendon solicited him to enter into holy orders; but he thought, his writings on the subject of the Christian faith would have greater weight coming from a layman than they would if the author were a member of the clerical body. He remained unmarried to his death, and spent large sums every year for purposes of benevolence; among these he included some which had special reference to the diffusion of Christianity among distant nations, such as the translation, printing, and circulation of the New Testament in the Malay and in the Turkish languages, and of Grotius, on the Truth of the Christian Religion, in Arabic. He promoted, with great liberality, the printing of the Bible in Irish and Welsh; and by his will he founded a lecture to be preached annually "in defence of Christianity, without descending to any controversies among Christians." The endowment has given occasion to the publication of many valuable treatises known by the name of the "Boyle Lectures." This distinguished philosopher and eminent Christian died in the year 1691, and his funeral sermon was preached by the celebrated Bishop Burnet on the text, Eccles. ii. 26: "God giveth to a man that is good in his sight, wisdom, knowledge, and joy."

WILLIAM CAXTON was a native of the county of Kent, and served his apprenticeship with a mercer, in whose employ he seems to have continued to that person's death which took place in 1441, Caxton being then twenty nine years old. He was now appointed agent for the Mercers' Company in the Low Countries, and King Edward IV. also employed him to conclude a commercial treaty with the Duke of Burgundy. His engagements detained him abroad for the space of thirty years; and during this period he contrived to make himself acquainted with the art of printing, then newly invented. He returned to his native country in 1471, and immediately set up a printing establishment, from which, in the same year, proceeded the first book printed in England with metal types. There is an assertion that a book had been printed at Oxford, three years previously, by Corsetell; but that was executed with wooden types, if it was really printed so early.

Caxton was much patronized by the Abbot of Westminster, and his press was set up in the Abbey, or very near it. He thought himself getting old and feeble at the time he published the first book from his press; but he lived twenty three years longer, in very industrious application to the important art which he had introduced into his native country, and which there, even as in Germany, contributed mightily to the success of the endeavours to shake off the trammels of superstition, and bring about the great work of reformation in the Church, about fifty years later.

Caxton died in the year 1494, having attained the good old age of eighty-two.

THE REMAINS OF A RECLUSE IN AN ISLAND NOW UNINHABITED.

When I was latter than half way down the weather side at about four miles inland, I came suddenly on a space of ground which was partially clear, and where a few trees lay that had evidently, a few years ago, been cut down by some one. On further entering this space, there were mustard, pumpkins, melon, Indian-corn, sweet potatoes and tobacco, all growing indiscriminately, and in a very wild state, tall weeds and suckers of young trees starting up here and there from the roots of the old ones. In looking about, I saw what was once a spade, but the blade of which now was only rust, and fell in pieces when I touched it with my foot. Near this, in a hollow, was a well with water enough, but overgrown and covered with weeds. It was regularly built round with stone. I continued my watch over this nice well-ware plantation until I came to the highest, or upper part of the clearing, which was walled along for several hundred yards by solid rock. Upon near this, almost concealed by a clump of trees, and nearly overgrown by wild vine, I discovered a house, or rather hut, on a comfortable scale. There was no sound of human voice here; all was still. I knew, from the indications about that it was long since the place had been attended to. The net-work of vines round it was so thick and close, that I had to make an opening through with my axe. On entering this wild barrier, I came at once on the house, which was built against the rock, with a shed roof, thatched; the sides and front merely, posts of wood, interlaced with vine branches, and covered over with mud. The whole was on a falling state; there was only a doorway to it, but no door. I now with strange feelings, entered the door; there was ample light through this ruin to see all. It was a melancholy sight, and discovery to me. In the centre of the floor, near a rude table, lay the skeleton of a man, only partially concealed; what had once been a covering of skins. On my touching it, it fell to powder: the bones, though in apposition, were separated by the slightest touch.

On one side were an old boiling-pot and frying-pan, wood-axe, &c. all in rust, a tobacco-box, with a rudely manufactured pipe, on the table, an old, worn-out, and rust-eaten carbine and cullass in the corner; there was a shelf which had once served for a bed, with seal-skins on it. I searched minutely, but could not find either paper or anything that could give the least information as to the name, or who this unfortunate recluse was. It was a dismal scene. I came out and gazed on this hut for some time,—a thought struck me, and I proceeded to execute it. All was a ruin and now falling. The only thing I could now do for this remnant of humanity was to bury it. The only way I could even do that was to cover it with the ruins. A few blows of a heavy stone against the posts laid all prostrate, and shut out the sight for ever. Whilst in those sens, I made many inquiries from captains and others frequenting those islands about this solitary man, but no one knew or had heard anything about him. He must have been dead for many years, from the state of the skeleton, the hut, and the long-neglected plantation. I left the grounds, without touching anything, with a heavy heart, and could not eat a bit until I was miles away from it.—Cheever's Adventures.

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