

ent "whirlwind of disaster" in the Republic passes away, it is more than likely that such will be the case.

J. CASTELL HOPKINS.

WILLIAM COWPER'S COPY OF ROBERT BURNS' POEMS: 1787.

Dr. Grosart, in drawing the attention of the readers of *The Bookman* to Burns and Cowper, has done a real service to the admirers (and they are an increasing number) of both poets. On this account it is all the more to be regretted that the paper, which is characterised by that easy diction which the doctor has taught his readers to expect of him, is not also marked by the knowledge of Burns that it displays of Cowper. But courteous as the paper undoubtedly is to both poets, it somehow tilts against the grain. That Cowper's copy, with red and blue pencil markings, of the London edition of Burns's poems carries the book-plate of the poet's uncle—William Cowper—clerk of parliaments, and not that of William Cowper, poet, sometime clerk of the journals of the House of Lords, is but a small matter. The mistake was easy and breaks no bones. But why exaggerate the qualities of the third, or London edition, over the earlier Edinburgh edition? Six copies—surely sufficient to enable one to make a correct generalization—are now before us, and we have no hesitation in confirming the received opinion that the Edinburgh book, for which the portrait was engraved, is preferable to the other. Nor was the plate re-engraved till it was required for the two-volume edition of 1793.

But why whine over the scantiness of Burns's resources when no such scant existed? Let us for ever be done with all apologetic cant as to the library of Burns. His library was ample for his purpose, as his art, taking into account the literary horizon of his period, shows. Peter Hill was handy and kind to Burns in the matter of book collecting. Mr. Hill hunted the evening sales in Edinburgh auction-rooms for the books wanted by the poet, who, like most authors, had (in addition to loans) many books given to him by friends, with the result that it would take to-day more (certainly not less) than £200 to replace in perfect state the books known as having belonged to Burns at the time of his death. From this estimate is excluded the five (then existing) editions of the poet's own works.

So much for the library of Burns. A word as to his knowledge of Cowper, which, according to Dr. Grosart, was *nil*. With such statements before him, one is tempted to ask, Is Burns becoming obsolete? and are the outstanding facts of his life of no importance to "present-day" authors? Not long since I had (in reference to the proposed Burns Exhibition in Glasgow to commemorate the Centenary of the poet's death) a letter from Mr. Grant Allen, in which he says that he knows Burns only as a name; and from the venerable St. Andrews divine—A.K.H.B.—I had another, to the effect that should Dr. Boyd happen to be in Glasgow when the exhibition of the Burns relics was open, he would not think it worthy of visit.

The question of the relation of Burns to the litterateurs of the day is a large one—too large for our present purpose—but one who like Dr. Grosart has so confidently ventured on the ground should (at least) have made sure of the road. According to Dr.

Grosart, Burns was entirely ignorant of the existence of his contemporary—Cowper. "I am not aware," says the learned doctor, "that Cowper's name occurs in the correspondence of Burns. The first and early editions of his successive volumes were expensive, and the Scot's resources limited. This perhaps explains how it came about that no knowledge of the 'Task' is shown by Burns."

What are the facts? Burns himself, in a "Christmas Morning" letter to Mrs. Dunlop, published in the first Currie—1800—says, "Now that I talk of authors, how do you like Cowper? Is not the 'Task' a glorious poem? The religion of the 'Task,' bating a few scraps of Calvinistic divinity, is the religion of God and Nature; the religion that exalts, that ennobles man."

Allan Cunningham informs us that Cowper's 'Task' was the pocket companion of Burns; and that when he had on occasion to wait till he could conveniently "gaug" the broust, he would take to reading the poem. In the letter to Mrs. Dunlop (already quoted) Burns says, "I would not give a farthing for any book, unless I were at liberty to blot it with my criticisms." It is to be regretted that Mrs. Dunlop's copy of the 'Task,' with Burns's jottings, which was restored to her after the poet's death, was afterwards destroyed by fire. It is also worthy of note that when the end came, Burns's own copy of the 'Task' remained in the family. But apart from such evidence, it is anything but complimentary to Burns to suppose that he would be ignorant of the existence of a book of the importance of the 'Task,' which was published three years before the London edition of his own poems, which Cowper took so much trouble to understand, and which he says "quite ramfeezled" one of his friends.

A more important question—and one on which I am not inclined to dogmatise—is the authorship of the red and blue pencil marks on the Cowper-Burns. Cowper died in 1800, and the late Mr. Elias Wolfe (founder of the firm of Wolfe & Sons, the celebrated pencil makers,) claimed to have invented the coloured pencil. If this be so, and I have no doubt it is so, red and blue pencils, which formed part of the Creta Levis, came first into use about thirty years after Cowper's death. The probability is that there is some mistake as to the authorship of the pencil markings, on which we have been treated to an eloquently idle homily. I cannot (on the evidence produced) believe that a sensitive and delicate hand, such as Cowper's was, would have disfigured a beautiful book like unto the London Burns, with inartistic strokes, barren of all meaning.

W. CRAIBE ANGUS.

II.

By the courtesy of several correspondents I find that the book-plate reproduced in my paper in last *Bookman* belonged to a William Cowper, uncle of the poet, who was "Clerk of the Parliaments," as the book-plate bears. I must confess that I had forgotten this earlier William Cowper, if ever I knew of him; and hence naturally, inevitably assigned the book-plate to the poet. I was aware, of course, that the unhappy poet had never really entered on the duties of the office to which he had been appointed and I think instituted; but I assumed that the book-plate had been engraved in anticipation, and before the cloud of insanity

darkened down upon him. I further as naturally and inevitably assumed that "Clerk of the Parliaments" designated more accurately "Clerk of the Journals," and that on his recovery the poet utilized the book-plate. That he did so utilize it is certain; for in my copy of his *Thucydides* (described in my paper) not only is the identically same bookplate on the front board of vols. i. and ii. (in one), but on the fly-leaf the poet has written in his well-known form,

W^m Cowper
Nov: 21. 1768

Seeing that the uncle William Cowper of the book-plate died in 1740, it is clear that his *Thucydides* had somehow come into possession of the poet. Further, in his copy of Vaughan's little book, as in his copy of Burns, the uncle's book-plate (as it turns out) is found. The uncle, dead in 1740, could not have placed it in the Burns of 1787. It is noticeable also that the red pencil and blue pencil markings of the poet are common to the Burns, the Vaughan, and the *Thucydides* and others known.

That the poet, beside books that had belonged to his uncle, also came into possession of impressions, at least, of his book-plate, is further verified, in that it continued to appear in his books up to 1790. It is not found, I believe, after that year. But why? The explanation is a simple one, viz., that in 1790 he had procured a book-plate of his own, which I have repeatedly met with, and which, I am informed, was reproduced in the *Ex Libris Journal* so recently as July, 1893.

I must add, that whatever may be the secret of this book-plate of his uncle appearing in many of the poet's books (with dated autograph *ut supra*), there is not the shadow of a doubt that the Burns and Vaughan belonged to the William Cowper. These, together with a copy of John Newton's "Messiah" (2 vols.), containing a long page-full gift inscription to his wife in his own handwriting, I was made a present of more than thirty years ago by a dear old lady friend of our family who knew the poet and John Newton, and had received directly from Mrs. Newton these books and other relics. They never had been out of her possession, as they have never been out of mine. Hence the markings in Burns and Vaughan (and in *Thucydides*) are precious memorials of our great sacred poet of the eighteenth century.

I am indebted to W. Bolton, Esq., Ad-discombe, for the following note, which shows that I had overlooked Burns's possession of Cowper's Poems.

"On a letter to Mrs. Dunlop, written Decr. 25, Xmas, 1793, Allan Cunningham annotates: Burns carried Cowper's Poems in his pocket, and read it in a lonely room or in a brew-house while he waited to gauge. Mrs. Dunlop lent him her copy, and he enriched the margin with notes, criticisms and annotations. The book was destroyed by fire with the Dunlop library."

This is extremely welcome. May there be resurrection of the precious book!

A. B. GROSART, in *The Bookman*.

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