

of the Task this inborn quality, in the enthusiasm of which "philosophy becomes poetry and science imagination," must be assigned in no small degree.

The subjects treated of are such as cannot fail to prove interesting and instructive, while at the same time, they mirror the life of happiness and tranquillity enjoyed by our amiable and unpretending author.

His language, though occasionally vulgar, is always smooth and simple, and directly opposed to the elaborate diction which so strongly characterized the writings of his contemporaries.

His works are essentially subjective. We see Cowper in every line.

The thoughts of his meditative mind, the feelings of his devout heart are known by us as thoroughly as if we had shared with him the labors of his well-tilled garden, or enjoyed with him the quiet seclusion of Olney.

The careful and realistic pictures he has given us of rural life and rural scenery, of his happy home and devoted friends, of his varied occupations and amusements, together with grave reflections on the social and political questions of his day, are such as produce a lasting impression, and give rise to hopes and aspirations common to all human hearts.

Virtue, "ever meek and constant," he regards as the true offspring of domestic happiness, which cannot be obtained where pleasure "the reclining goddess with the zoneless waist and wandering eyes" is adored.

Cowper is neither an historian nor a scientist, but when he tells us that "some write a narrative of wars and feats of heroes little known, and call the rant a history," we feel that there is considerable truth in what he says. The antagonism, which is claimed by some so-called scientist even in our day, to exist between revelation and the facts as shown by geology was much greater in the time of Cowper, and hence we are not greatly surprised to read "Some drill and bore the solid earth, and from the strata there, extract a register by which we learn, that He who made it and revealed its date to Moses, was mistaken in its age."

Of that science, whose domain extends so many millions of miles beyond our little planet, and which explains the various motions of the heavenly bodies and

the laws that govern them, Cowper was almost entirely ignorant. Nor was he desirous of becoming acquainted with it, since he regarded the astronomer as "spending the little wick of life's poor shallow lamp in playing tricks with nature, giving laws to distant worlds and trifling with his own."

But, aside from the utter inutility of such a study, he considers it as opposed to the wish of the divine creator, because "God never meant that man should scale the heavens by strides of human wisdom, for never yet did philosophic tribe, that brings the planets home into the eye of the observer, discover Him that rules them."

However erroneous his idea, that "our wayward intellect, the more we learn of nature, overlooks her author more," however irregular may be the plan he follows through the various subjects of his work, still we experience an indescribable pleasure in noting the inimitable ease and rapidity with which he passes from the gay to the solemn, from advice to reproof, and from ridicule to pathos. The continual praise of country life as most friendly to piety and virtue has largely contributed to render many passages of *The Task* very popular. Recreat from the bustle and turmoil of a jarring world, though it cannot "restore to man lost innocence, still it has peace, and much secures the mind from all assaults of evil, when fierce temptation, seconded within by traitor appetite, and armed with darts tempered in hell, invades the throbbing breast."

Goldsmith, in his *Deserted Village*, has given expression to similar ideas :

O blest retirement, friend to life's decline,
Retreats from care that never must be mine ;
How blest is he who crowns, in shades like
these,
A youth of labor, with an age of ease,
Who quits a world where strong temptations try,
And since 'tis hard to combat, learns to fly ?

But we should remember that Cowper was constitutionally too weak to engage in active public life, while Goldsmith gave ample proof that he was but poorly fitted to resist temptations. To labor for the public good, as well as for our own private ends, and to resist the temptations which necessarily beset us in every part of life, is more in keeping with true Christian principles. Again, we see that these same