

are few incurable passages in Cowper; Southey, while emending too freely, corrected most of the obvious mistakes in Bull's and Croft's ill-printed volumes; and I have only admitted one emendation of my own into the text (see p. 284 and *note*), where the accepted reading is hardly possible.

The three great didactic poems have in this edition been placed first, a position to which they are I think entitled; then come the Miscellaneous Poems in chronological order; then the Hymns, followed by the Translations. An Appendix—in the same type as the rest of the poems—contains some juvenile, fragmentary, or impromptu verses which on various grounds do not fit well into their chronological order. Doubtless several of the poems included in the body of the book might, with almost equal justice, have been printed in the Appendix; no two critics will agree when the impromptus of an interesting but generally pedestrian poet like Cowper fall markedly below the bulk of his work in merit. But most of the contents of the Appendix are trifles, sometimes hardly intelligible without the context of the letters in which they were written. Mere scraps, however, which are not intelligible at all without their context have been omitted; they can be found in an edition of Cowper's letters. As it is, perhaps too many of such scraps have been inserted.

A few notes, dealing entirely with textual or chronological difficulties, and relieving the footnotes of some lengthy or unimportant variants, follow the Appendix.

A list of editions consulted, and explanations of such abbreviations as do not explain themselves, are given on pp. xx-xxiii.

Biographies or critical appreciations do not form part of the plan of this series; nor is Cowper one of the neglected poets whose lives have still to be written and their position in the poetic hierarchy determined: Southey, Bruce, Mr. Goldwin Smith, Canon Benham, and Mr. Wright supply the necessary facts and critical estimates. But as students have found useful the chronological summary of Wordsworth's life printed in Mr. Hutchinson's Oxford Wordsworth, I hope that the similar summary of Cowper's life printed on pp. xxiv-xxx may be convenient for reference.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the help that I have received from many sources; my thanks are due to Mr. Thomas Wright for permitting the inclusion of several poems hitherto printed by him alone, and for examining on my behalf the MSS. preserved in the museum at Olney;