

Contrasted Ideals of Pope and Goldsmith.

To contrast the character of Doctor Primrose, the Vicar of Wakefield with that of Pope's ideal as portrayed in his "Essay on Man" seems a very difficult task. The chief difficulty lies in the fact that Goldsmith has given us a real man in a real setting, such a man as we may have met, while Pope's is an imaginary one whom we are to create from his rather contradictory maxims. One cannot easily get a conception of Pope's ideal.

Johnson in his criticism of Pope's production remarks,-- "This Essay affords an egregious instance of the predominance of genius, the dazzling splendor of imagery and the seductive powers of eloquence. The reader feels the mind full though he learns nothing." It is apparent Pope did not clearly understand what he was writing about, and mixed up incongruous statements. He has many moods but no strong convictions. Goldsmith on the other hand had a definite knowledge of his subject. He is not known to have held strong opinions, being more of an observer than of a doctrinaire, but he had seen much of mankind, and interested himself more in noting characteristic expression and conduct than in gaining adherence to any favorite views.

"The proper study of mankind is man," Pope says at the outset. His ideal seems one who by constant study of himself as an individual and of his relation to society, seeks to improve himself, and by means of a well-understood self-controlling influence of his life which is love of God and submissiveness to his will.

Self-love and reason are to be the guiding principles, "Self-love to urge and reason to restrain." Sedate, quiet and deliberative in mind, by means of attention, habit and experience, he would rise to prominence. Pleasure and pain, the lights and shades on his path, should give strength and color to his life. His very passions would produce virtues; out of obstinacy, fear and avarice, would come zeal, fortitude and prudence. Self love would serve to make his mind virtuous, and happiness would be the natural outcome. He would not feel dishonor or shame if he were not ranked high among his fellows or if he had a scarcity of external goods. His honor would consist in acting "well his part" and his pride, in the knowledge that:

"One self-approving hour whole years outweighs
"Of stupid starers and of loud huzzas."