

feeling. Those who raise the question have never considered well his writings ; his "Vicar of Wakefield," and his pictures of "the Village Pastor," present religion under its most endearing forms, and with a feeling that could only flow from the deep convictions of the heart. When his fair travelling companions at Paris urged him to read the Church Service on a Sunday, he replied that "he was not worthy to do it." He had seen in early life the sacred offices performed by his father and his brother, with a solemnity which had sanctified them in his memory ; how could he presume to undertake such functions ? His religion has been called in question by Johnson and by Boswell : he certainly had not the gloomy hypochondriacal piety of the one, nor the babbling mouth-piety of the other, but the spirit of Christian charity breathed forth in his writings, and it illustrated in his conduct, give us reason to believe he had the indwelling religion of the soul.

We have made sufficient comments in the preceding chapters on his conduct in elevated circles of literature and fashion. The fairy gifts which took him there, were not accompanied by the gifts and graces necessary to sustain him in that artificial sphere. He can neither play the learned sage with Johnson, nor the fine gentleman with Beauclerc, though he has a mind replete with wisdom and natural shrewdness, and a spirit free from vulgarity. The blunders of a fertile but hurried intellect, and the awkward display of the student assuming the man of fashion, fix on him a character for absurdity and vanity which, like the charge of lunacy, it is hard to disprove, however weak the grounds of the charge, and strong the facts in opposition to it.

In truth, he is never truly in his place in these learned and fashionable circles, which talk and live for display. It is not the kind of society he craves. His heart yearns for domestic life ; it craves familiar, confiding intercourse, family firesides, the guileless and happy company of children ; these bring out the heartiest and sweetest sympathies of his nature.

"Had it been his fate," says the critic we have already quoted, "to meet a woman who could have loved him, despite his faults, and respected him, despite his foibles, we cannot but think that his life and his genius would have been much more harmonious ; his desultory affections would have been concentrated, his craving self-love appeased, his pursuits more