

the music of the organ, or rather of the harmonium. Not so with Cowper. In his best literary form he is emancipated from the religious teaching in which he at times sought shelter, nay he seems in his brightest and happiest work to be in direct opposition to it. Evangelicalism is strongest in the least poetical of Cowper's lyrics, the hymns, in which he is unlike himself, with a few exceptions, and like Mr. Newton's sermons. It clouds and encumbers the "Task." The gloom of its austere theology finds despairing expression in the "Castaway," that remarkable anticipation of Byron's vigorous pessimistic verse. But the delicate humour which plays over the letters and the minor poems, the love of humanity and nature in the better parts of the "Task," are quite alien elements to the morbid theology which taught, which still teaches, to those who will hear it, that "the world" is the very antithesis to goodness—that "nature" is only so much fuel for judgment fires, and humanity the predestined heir of perdition, all except the favoured minority in "the narrow way." What was best in Cowper's religion, the comfort which its calmer aspect gave, the quietism, "the Divine love and the rapture of the heart that enjoys it"—"the evangelical nirvana"—as Mr. Goldwin Smith so happily calls it—was indeed expressed in Cowper's poetry, but was no factor in its most winning peculiarities. And what is best in the poetry is there in spite of the religion. Like Puritanism, Evangelicalism had had no sense of humour. In the letters and *vers de société* we escape from Mr. Newton's preaching and forget all about election and reprobation, and are with Mrs. Unwin and Lady Austin and Lady Hesketh, by the river, or in the garden, or at the tea table, content to enjoy the Present, and be of the world worldly.

Mr. Goldwin Smith teaches us that Cowper may be numbered among the

precursors of the European Revolution. In this respect he is most felicitously compared to Rousseau. In spontaneity of self revelation "Mes Confessions" have the same charm as the Letters. Cowper's Whiggism was in contrast with the noble aspirations for liberty which appear in his lines on the Bastille, and his favorable estimate of the French Revolution. The Whig is seen in his verses—poor fooling, and feeble doggrel they are—on the American Revolution. This is what Cowper could write of Washington:

"You roaring boys who rave and fight
On the other side of the Atlantic,
I always thought you in the right,
But most so when most frantic."

We feel the force of the estimate given of Cowper's position as the most important, all things considered, in purely English poetry—that of Burns being excepted—between the Augustan poets and the modern. As to the Letters, Mr. Goldwin Smith gives them the highest place. They are certainly the most natural, and have the grace that belongs to an almost lost art. Gray's letters are essays *in petto*; those of Horace Walpole, as is said at page 95, "are Memoirs, the English counterpart of St. Simon." "If the first place is shared with him by any one it is by Byron." May not the letters of Burns, for whom, as Mr. Goldwin Smith says elsewhere, Cowper felt his affinity, be placed in the same high class?

The simple and touching story of Cowper's life is told by Mr. Goldwin Smith with the grace and *curiosa felicitas* which are peculiarly his own, and with a love for his subject which yet does not set aside his rare powers of criticism. The first chapter treats of Cowper's early life, the childhood, schooldays and the Temple with its love idyl of poor Theodora. Mr. Goldwin Smith conclusively proves that the exciting cause of Cowper's madness