
A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

THE

CHURCHMAN

A Monthly Magazine

CONDUCTED BY CLERGYMEN AND LAYMEN

OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

VOL. XII.

LONDON
ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW
1885

comfort to him."[1] Thus it is evident that Mark was at this time with St. Paul in Rome, and that he had returned to his old office of helping the Apostle, and of being a really useful and serviceable man; and that St. Paul now placed full confidence in him once more. It was one of those cases of recovery over which we always rejoice, because we recognise in them the action of the grace of God.

We must pass over several years again before we come to the next, and the last, information in Scripture concerning St. Mark. The latest letter which St. Paul wrote was the Second to Timothy; and the verse prefixed as a motto to this paper makes known to us what he said of Mark then. He sends for him, with a special desire to have him near himself, because of his great power of being useful. "Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is profitable unto me for ministering."[2] Thus we see that Mark was now consistent; that with the continued supply of God's grace he remained steady in his duty, and was trusted by St. Paul to the very last.

J. S. HOWSON.

ART. IV.—COWPER'S LETTERS.

Letters of William Cowper. Edited with Introduction by the Rev. W. BENHAM, B.D., F.S.A., Rector of Edmund the King, Lombard Street. Macmillan and Co. 1884.

WE have to thank Mr. Benham for this compact edition of Cowper's Letters. He has given us in this little volume all that is best worth preserving in the correspondence of the poet of Ouse and Olney. There is not a letter in this book that is not worth reading, and that will not repay the reader. We are all familiar with Southey's judgment of Cowper as a letter-writer. "He was," he says, "the best of English letter-writers"; and certainly his letters are as charming as they are delightful. They are as artless as they are graceful; as humorous as they are varied in matter, and clear in style. They combine with a keen sense of the ridiculous and with a deep knowledge of human nature, a transparent simplicity which reveals the goodness of the poet's heart, and his singleness of purpose in lashing the vices, and satirizing the follies

[1] Col. iv. 10, 11. In these two passages the original word translated "fellow-worker" and "fellow-labourer" is the same; and it is worth while to observe that it includes the significant word "work" which we find in Acts xv. 38.

[2] 2 Tim. iv. 11.

of mankind. The object of his satire is not to wound or to pain others, but to induce them to amend and reform. He hurts only to heal. He probes the sore, but it is that he may cure. Mr. Benham must have found the task of "collating those letters with the original manuscripts, where they have been within his reach," a pleasant one, and a pleasant duty also it must have been to "restore much which had been suppressed." We all know that "the labour we delight in physics pain;" and Mr. Benham must have found it to be so in his labour of love.

The arrangement he follows in his edition is the simplest, namely, the chronological order; and he has wisely supplied in his introduction all that is needed for the full understanding of the letters, having "for purposes of convenient reference, set down the main heads of the poet's life, and given short notices of the friends to whom letters are addressed."

In a former paper of THE CHURCHMAN, we gave a sketch of his simple yet most pathetic life—a life often shadowed over by dark clouds, but whose very shadows were lighted up by bright gleams of comfort, and by the rays of the "hope that maketh not ashamed." Nothing could be well less romantic than the flow of his everyday life, or less remarkable than the society in which he passed his days; and yet, there is something full of a fascinating interest in a career that presents such a series of sharp contrasts as his. The little child—object of his mother's fondest care; the shy and brilliant schoolboy at Westminster; the attorney's office, where he and the celebrated Thurlow were employed "from morning to night in giggling and making giggle;" his residence and membership at the Nonsense Club; his youthful love which touched another life beside his own; his nervous fever in prospect of an examination for the clerkship of the House of Lords; his madness; his attempt at suicide; his residence at St. Albans under Dr. Cotton; his recovery, and reception of peace through the Gospel of the grace of God—all form the record of a life which combines in a high degree both interest and pathos. And so to the very end of his days—his friendship with Newton, with Mrs. Unwin; the charm brought into his life by Lady Hesketh; his intercourse with the Throgmortons, with Hayley; his latter days clouded over by darkness, by distressing dreams and visions; and yet through all, "the hopeless hand" seen "clinging to the Cross of hope"—is a story that has a romance of its own.

Of the poetical work of the sweet singer of Olney; of its reaction from the artificial and classical school; its love of nature; its purity; its nobleness, and simplicity, and scorn of the mean; its hatred of the wrong, and withal its humour

and tenderness; and of the manliness of tone which characterizes him everywhere; of his power to move to tears and to laughter—of this we have written in THE CHURCHMAN before. It is to his letters that we now desire to direct the reader's attention; and we hope, even before this paper is finished, he will be grateful to us for so doing. But let us carry with us the thought that these letters are the spontaneous outcome of Cowper's feelings; they flow from the heart, and are the direct expression of his mind. They were not written for publication. He never supposed, when his pen traced the characters on the paper, that any other eyes should rest upon them save those of the person whom he addresses. He is beyond all things real and sincere. He puts down on the page whatever is uppermost in his mind—whether grave or gay, whether humorous or sad. There is much in them that throws light upon the incidents of his life; and in this respect they afford ample materials for a biography of the poet; though there is much in them besides this—opinions on men and manners; a real love of fun; sympathy with the joys and sorrows of his friends; outcries of depression at his own miserable state of mind; and references to the origin of his poems, and to the literary pursuits in which he was engaged. And these letters are all written in pure and beautiful English; there is nothing in them affected or rhetorical; the words are "exquisitely sought"—drawn, not from the treasury of classical lore, but from "the well of English undefiled," with all its strong and racy idiom. His thoughts flow from his pen in the easiest, sweetest, simplest manner, and the very act of writing seems to carry him out of himself, and away from himself,—a proof of the pleasure and enjoyment he had in composition.

But the reader will thank us for giving some passages from his letters in proof of the praise we have bestowed on their gracefulness and delicacy of expression.

The following letter (Huntingdon, 1765) is, what many of his letters are, biographical, and refers to the attack of insanity which prevented his going in for examination for the office of Clerkship of the Journals:

DEAR JOE,—The only recompense I can make you for your kind attention to my affairs during my illness is to tell you that, by the mercy of God, I am restored to perfect health, both of mind and body. This, I believe, will give you pleasure, and I would gladly do anything from which you could receive it.

I left St. Albans on the 17th, and arrived that day at Cambridge, spent some time there with my brother, and came hither on the 22nd. I have a lodging that puts me continually in mind of our summer excursions; we have had many worse, and, except the size of it (which, however, is sufficient for a single man), but few better. I am not quite alone, having

brought a servant with me from St. Albans, who is the very mirror of fidelity and affection for his master. . . . The river Ouse—I forget how they spell it—is the most agreeable circumstance in this part of the world: at this town it is, I believe, as wide as the Thames at Windsor; nor does the silver Thames better deserve that epithet, nor has it more flowers upon its banks, these being attributes which in strict truth belong to neither. Fluellen would say they are as like as my fingers to my fingers, and there is salmon in both. It is a noble stream to bathe in, and I shall make that use of it three times a week, having introduced myself to it for the first time this morning.

What delightful humour there is in this letter to the same correspondent (Joseph Hill):

Whatever you may think of the matter, it is no easy thing to keep house for two people. A man cannot always live upon sheep's heads and liver and lights, like the lions in the Tower; and a joint of meat, in so small a family, is an endless encumbrance. My butcher's bill for last week amounted to four shillings and tenpence. I set off with a leg of lamb, and was forced to give part of it away to my washerwoman. Then I made an experience upon a sheep's heart, and that was too little. Next I put three pounds of beef into a pie, and this had like to have been too much, for it lasted three days, though my landlord was admitted to a share of it. Then as to small beer, I am puzzled to pieces about it. I have bought as much for a shilling as will serve us at least a month, and it is grown sour already. In short, I never knew how to pity poor housekeepers before; but now I cease to wonder at the politic cast which their occupation usually gives to their countenance, for it is really a matter full of perplexity.

He had received but one visit, he adds. "I don't mean that I have refused any, but only one has been offered. This was from my woollen-draper—a very healthy, wealthy, sensible, sponsible man, and extremely civil. He has a cold bath, and has promised me a key of it, which I shall probably make use of in the winter. He has undertaken, too, to get me the *St. James's Chronicle* three times a week, and to show me Hinchinbrook House, and to do every service for me in his power."

Here is an interesting account of his daily life with the Unwins (letter to his cousin, Mrs. Cowper, 1766):

As to amusements—I mean what the world calls such—we have none; the place, indeed, swarms with them, and cards and dancing are the professed business of almost all the *gentle* inhabitants of Huntingdon. We refuse to take part in them or to be accessories to this way of murdering our time, and by so doing have acquired the name of Methodists. Having told you how we *do not* spend our time, I will next say how we do. We breakfast commonly between eight and nine; till eleven we read either the Scripture, or the sermons of some faithful preacher of those holy mysteries; at eleven we attend divine service, which is performed here twice every day; and from twelve to three we separate, and amuse ourselves as we please. During that interval I either read in my own apartment, or walk, or ride, or work in the garden. We seldom sit an hour after dinner; but if the weather permits, adjourn to the garden, where, with Mrs. Unwin and her son, I have generally the pleasure of religious conversation till tea-time. If it rains, or is too windy for walking, we either converse within doors, or sing some hymns of Martin's "Collec-

tion :" and by the help of Mrs. Unwin's harpsichord make up a tolerable concert, in which our hearts, I hope, are the best and most musical performers. After tea we sally forth to walk in good earnest. Mrs. Unwin is a good walker, and we have generally travelled about four miles before we see home again. When the days are short, we make this excursion in the former part of the day, between church-time and dinner. At night we read and converse, as before, till supper, and commonly finish the evening either with hymns or a sermon, and last of all the family are called to prayers. I need not tell *you* that such a life as this is consistent with the utmost cheerfulness ; accordingly we are all happy, and dwell together in unity as brethren. Mrs. Unwin has almost a maternal affection for me, and I have something very like a filial one for her ; and her son and I are brothers. Blessed be the God of our salvation for such companions, and for such a life ; above all, for a heart to like it!

In another letter (Olney, 1769) he shows that suffering from mental depression as he often did, and himself in need of consolation, he knew well how to console others, and to point them to the true source of comfort. And surely we must believe that he who could so tenderly point others to the source of Christian hope must have felt, perhaps unconsciously to himself, the sweetness, the consolation he conveyed to them. He was not as the marble fountain that we have all seen, from which flow streams of refreshing water, but which knows nothing itself of the refreshment ; but rather as the living man who holds the sweet cup to the lips of a thirsty friend, having first drunk the cooling beverage himself. Cowper writes :

MY DEAR COUSIN,—A letter from your brother Frederic brought me yesterday the most afflicting intelligence that has reached me these many years. I pray to God to comfort you, and to enable you to sustain this heavy stroke with that resignation to His will which none but Himself can give, and which He gives to none but His own children. How blessed and happy is your lot, my dear friend, beyond the common lot of the greater part of mankind, that you know what it is to draw near to God in prayer, and are acquainted with a throne of grace! You have resources in the infinite love of a dear Redeemer which are withheld from millions ; and the promises of God, which are yea and amen in Jesus, are sufficient to answer all your necessities, and to sweeten the bitterest cup which your heavenly Father will ever put into your hand. May He now give you liberty to drink at these wells of salvation, till you are filled with consolation and peace in the midst of trouble!

Let us now look at our poet as a critic, and see how with unsparing pen he censures Dr. Johnson's treatment of Milton. Johnson had written a biography of the great poet, which Mr. Unwin had sent to Cowper (1779).

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I wrote my last letter merely to inform you that I had nothing to say, in answer to which you have said nothing. I admire the propriety of your conduct, though I am a loser by it. I will endeavour to say something now, and shall hope for something in return.

I have been well entertained with Johnson's biography, for which I thank you : with one exception, and that a swinging one, I think he has acquitted himself with his usual good sense and sufficiency. His treatment of Milton is unmerciful to the last degree. A pensioner is not

likely to spare a Republican, and the Doctor, in order, I suppose, to convince his royal patron of the sincerity of his monarchical principles, has belaboured that great poet's character with the most industrious cruelty. As a man he has hardly left him the shadow of one good quality. Churlishness in his private life, and a rancorous hatred of everything royal in his public, are the two colours with which he has smeared all the canvas. If he had any virtues, they are not to be found in the Doctor's picture of him, and it is well for Milton that some sourness in his temper is the only vice with which his memory has been charged; it is evident enough that if his biographer could have discovered more, he would not have spared him. As a poet he has treated him with severity enough, and has plucked one or two of the most beautiful feathers out of his muse's wing, and trampled them under his great foot. He has passed sentence of condemnation upon "Lycidas," and has taken occasion from that charming poem to expose to ridicule (what is indeed ridiculous enough) the childish prattlement of pastoral compositions, as if "Lycidas" was the prototype and pattern of them all. The liveliness of the description, the sweetness of the numbers, the classical spirit of antiquity that prevails in it, go for nothing. I am convinced, by the way, that he has no ear for poetical numbers, or that it was stopped by prejudice against the harmony of Milton's. Was there ever anything so delightful as the music of the "Paradise Lost"? It is like that of a fine organ; has the fullest and the deepest tones of majesty, with all the softness and elegance of the Dorian flute: variety without end, and never equalled, unless perhaps by Virgil. Yet the Doctor has little or nothing to say upon this copious theme, but talks something about the unfitness of the English language for blank verse, and how apt it is, in the mouth of some readers, to degenerate into declamation. Oh, I could thrash his old jacket till I made his pension jingle in his pockets!

In a letter to the Rev. John Newton (1781) we discover that what looks prose to the eye is rhyme to the ear. The reader will thank us for giving it in full, and will derive from it some amusement if he reads it aloud:

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,—I am going to send what when you have read you may scratch your head, and say, I suppose, there's nobody knows whether what I've got be verse or not: by the tune and the time it ought to be rhyme; but if it be, did you ever see, of late or of yore, such a ditty before?

I have writ *Charity*, not for popularity, but as well as I could, in hopes to do good: and if the reviewer should say, "To be sure, the gentleman's muse wears Methodist shoes; you may know by her pace, and talk about grace, that she and her bard have little regard for the taste and fashions, and ruling passions and hoydening play of the modern day; and though she assume a borrowed plume, and now and then wear a tittering air, 'tis only her plan to catch, if she can, the giddy and gay as they go that way, by a production, on a new construction; she has baited her trap in hopes to snap all that may come with a sugar-plum."—His opinion in this will not be amiss; 'tis what I intend, my principal end; and if I succeed, and folks should read, till a few are brought to a serious thought, I shall think I am paid for all I have said and all I have done, though I have run, many a time, after a rhyme as far as from hence to the end of my sense; and by hook or crook, write another book, if I live and am here another year.

I have heard before of a room with a floor, laid upon springs, and such like things, with so much art in every part, that when you went in you were forced to begin a minuet pace, with an air and a grace, swimming

about, now in and now out, with a deal of state, in a figure of eight, without pipe or string, or any such thing; and now I have writ, in a rhyming fit, what will make you dance, and as you advance, will keep you still, though against your will, dancing away, alert and gay, till you come to an end of what I have penned; which that you may do, ere madam and you are quite worn out with jigging about, I take my leave; and here you receive a bow profound, down to the ground, from your humble me, W. C.

In a letter to the Rev. William Unwin (1783) Cowper gives his friend an account of the Rev. Mr. Bull of Newport, from whose acquaintance he derived much pleasure and profit. The latter paragraph of this letter, in which the writer alludes to Mr. Fytche, contains some sentiments which are not inapplicable to the Church, her ministers, and bishops, at the present time.

. . . You are not acquainted with the Rev. Mr. Bull, of Newport; perhaps it is as well for you that you are not. You would regret still more than you do that there are so many miles interposed between us. He spends part of the day with us to-morrow. A Dissenter, but a liberal one; a man of letters and of genius; master of a fine imagination, or rather not master of it—an imagination which, when he finds himself in the company he loves, and can confide in, runs away with him into such fields of speculation as amuse and enliven every other imagination that has the happiness to be of the party. At other times he has a tender and delicate sort of melancholy in his disposition, not less agreeable in its way. No men are better qualified for companions in such a world as this than men of such a temperament. Every scene of life has two sides, a dark and a bright one, and the mind that has an equal mixture of melancholy and vivacity is best of all qualified for the contemplation of either. He can be lively without levity, and pensive without dejection. Such a man is Mr. Bull. But—he smokes tobacco—nothing is perfect:

Nihil est ab omni
Parte beatum.

I find that your friend Mr. Fytche has lost his cause; and, more mortifying still, has lost it by a single voice. Had I been a peer, he should have been secure of mine; for I am persuaded that if conditional presentations were in fashion, and if every minister held his benefice, as the judges their office, upon the terms of *quamdiu bene se gesserit*, it would be the better for the cause of religion, and more for the honour of the Establishment. There ought to be discipline somewhere; and if the Bishops will not exercise it, I do not see why lay patrons should have their hands tied. If I remember the state of your case (and I never heard it stated), my reflections upon it are pertinent. It is, however, long since we talked about it, and I may possibly misconceive it at present; if so, they go for nothing. I understand that he presented upon condition that if the parson proved immoral or negligent, he should have liberty to call upon him either for his resignation or the penalty. If I am wrong, correct me.—Yours, W. C.

The letter from which I now quote will please all who have the poet's vein, and also every one who loves all things great and small, especially birds, those beautiful creatures which flit among the branches, or soar to the skies, and delight us with their songs:

The ballad is a species of poetry I believe peculiar to this country, equally adapted to the drollest and the most tragical subjects. Simplicity and ease are its proper characteristics. Our forefathers excelled in it; but we moderns have lost the art. It is observed that we have few good English odes. But to make amends, we have many excellent ballads, not inferior perhaps in true poetical merit to some of the very best odes that the Greek or Latin languages have to boast of. It is a sort of composition I was ever fond of, and if graver matters had not called me another way, should have addicted myself to it more than to any other. I inherit a taste for it from my father, who succeeded well in it himself, and who lived at a time when the best pieces in that way were produced. What can be prettier than Gay's ballad, or rather Swift's, Arbuthnot's, Pope's, and Gay's, in the what-do-ye-call-it—"'Twas when the seas were roaring"?

So much for ballads and ballad-writers. "A worthy subject," you will say, "for a man whose head might be filled with better things"—and it is filled with better things, but to so ill a purpose, that I thrust into it all manner of topics that may prove more amusing; as, for instance, I have two goldfinches, which in the summer occupy the greenhouse. A few days since, being employed in cleaning out their cages, I placed that which I had in hand upon the table, while the other hung against the wall; the windows and the doors stood wide open. I went to fill the fountain at the pump, and on my return was not a little surprised to find a goldfinch sitting on the top of the cage I had been cleaning, and singing to and kissing the goldfinch within. I approached him, and he discovered no fear; still nearer, and he discovered none. I advanced my hand towards him, and he took no notice of it. I seized him, and supposed I had caught a new bird, but casting my eye upon the other cage, perceived my mistake. Its inhabitant, during my absence, had contrived to find an opening, where the wire had been a little bent, and made no other use of the escape it afforded him than to salute his friend, and to converse with him more intimately than he had done before. I returned him to his proper mansion, but in vain. In less than a minute he had thrust his little person through the aperture again, and again perched upon his neighbour's cage, kissing him as at the first, and singing, as if transported with the fortunate adventure. I could not but respect such friendship as, for the sake of its gratification, had twice declined an opportunity to be free, and, consenting to their union, resolved that for the future one cage should hold them both. I am glad of such incidents. For at a pinch, and when I need entertainment, the versification of them serves to divert me.—W. C.

In a letter to John Newton there is a thought which must have occurred to many, although they may not have given it expression. There are very few who will not thank God that the years of our life in the present dispensation have been curtailed, and that three score years and ten, or a handbreadth more, is now the limit of existence. In youth, indeed, all things are new and joyful; the world is robed in freshness and beauty, and early delights have a keenness which, we think, will never be dulled. But before the grey hairs appear on our head, the old enthusiasm goes, the early pleasures are staled by custom, the fresh wonders of youth pass, and the sad realities of manhood take their place. So, then, we are thankful that no "life almost millenary" spreads out its long

waste of centuries before us, but that in a few brief years we, having life in Christ, shall be given back that lost gift of youth with more than the old strength and possibilities of delight which can never be ours again here.

Cowper wrote:

. . . I have wondered in former days at the patience of the antediluvian world: that they could endure a life almost millenary with so little variety as seems to have fallen to their share. It is probable that they had much fewer employments than we. Their affairs lay in a narrower compass; their libraries were indifferently furnished; philosophical researches were carried on with much less industry and acuteness of penetration; and fiddles, perhaps, were not even invented. How then could seven or eight hundred years of life be supportable? I have asked this question formerly, and been at a loss to resolve it; but I think I can answer it now. I will suppose myself born a thousand years before Noah was born or thought of. I rise with the sun; I worship; I prepare my breakfast; I swallow a bucket of goats'-milk, and a dozen good-sizeable cakes. I fasten a new string to my bow, and my youngest boy, a lad of about thirty years of age, having played with my arrows till he has stript off all the feathers, I find myself obliged to repair them. The morning is thus spent in preparing for the chase, and it is become necessary that I should dine. I dig up my roots; I wash them; I boil them; I find them not done enough; my wife is angry; we dispute; we settle the point; but in the meantime the fire goes out, and must be kindled again. All this is very amusing. I hunt; I bring home the prey; with the skin of it I mend an old coat, or I make a new one. By this time the day is far spent: I feel myself fatigued, and retire to rest. Thus what with tilling the ground, and eating the fruit of it, hunting, and walking, and running, and mending old clothes, and sleeping and rising again, I can suppose an inhabitant of the primæval world so much occupied as to sigh over the shortness of life, and to find at the end of many centuries that they had all slipped through his fingers, and were passed away like a shadow. What wonder then that I, who live in a day of so much greater refinement, when there is so much more to be wanted and wished and to be enjoyed, should feel myself now and then pinched in point of opportunity, and at some loss for leisure to fill four sides of a sheet like this. Thus, however, it is: and if the ancient gentleman to whom I have referred, and their complaints of the disproportion of time to the occasions they had for it, will not serve me as an excuse, I must even plead guilty, and confess that I am often in haste when I have no good reason for being so.

In the following passage from a letter to Newton the poet gives an account of an electioneering canvas before the days of the ballot. It may be questioned whether the ballot, while it ensures secrecy, secures purity of election. But Cowper's sketch has an interest of its own. He says:

We were sitting yesterday after dinner—the two ladies and myself—very composedly, and without the least apprehension of any such intrusion, in our snug parlour, one lady knitting, the other netting, and the gentleman winding worsted, when, to our unspeakable surprise, a mob appeared before the window, a smart rap was heard at the door, the boys hallooed, and the maid announced Mr. Grenville. Puss[1] was unfortu-

[1] His tame hare.

nately let out of her box, so that the candidate, with all his good friends at his heels, was refused admittance at the grand entrance, and referred to the back door as the only possible way of approach.

Candidates are creatures not very susceptible of affronts, and would rather, I suppose, climb in at a window than be absolutely excluded. In a minute the yard, the kitchen, and the parlour were filled. Mr. Grenville, advancing towards me, shook me by the hand with a degree of cordiality that was extremely seducing. As soon as he and as many more as could find chairs were seated, he began to open the intent of his visit. I told him I had no vote, for which he readily gave me credit. I assured him I had no influence, which he was not equally inclined to believe, and the less, no doubt, because Mr. Ashburner, the drapier, addressing himself to me at that moment, informed me that I had a great deal. Supposing that I could not be possessed of such a treasure without knowing it, I ventured to confirm my first assertion by saying that if I had any, I was utterly at a loss to imagine where it could be, or wherein it consisted. Thus ended the conference. Mr. Grenville squeezed me by the hand again, kissed the ladies, and withdrew. He kissed likewise the maid in the kitchen, and seemed upon the whole a most loving, kissing, kind-hearted gentleman.

This reminds us of the story of the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire, who, in order to secure a vote for her party, did not scruple to purchase one from a butcher at the price of a kiss.

In another letter to the same friend, there is a report of the way in which the election was conducted, and of the violence of the whole proceeding, the candidates themselves taking an active part in the scuffle. As a contrast to the electioneering conflict, how delightful is the following description of the greenhouse, which he calls in another place his "workshop," and where he revelled in the sights and sounds of nature:

. . . . My greenhouse is never so pleasant as when we are just upon the point of being turned out of it. The gentleness of the autumnal suns and the calmness of this latter season make it a much more agreeable retreat than we ever find it in summer: when, the winds being generally brisk, we cannot cool it by admitting a sufficient quantity of air without being at the same time incommoded by it. But now I sit with all the windows and doors open, and am regaled with the scent of every flower in a garden as full of flowers as I have known how to make it. We keep no bees, but if I lived in a hive I should hardly hear more of their music. All the bees in the neighbourhood resort to a bed of mignonette opposite to the window, and pay me for the honey they get out of it by a hum, which, though rather monotonous, is as agreeable to my ear as the whistling of my linnets. All the sounds that Nature utters are delightful, at least in this country. I should not perhaps find the roaring of lions in Africa or of bears in Russia very pleasing; but I know no beast in England whose voice I do not account musical, save and except always the braying of an ass. The notes of all our birds and fowls please me, without one exception. I should not, indeed, think of keeping a goose in a cage, that I might hang him up in the parlour, for the sake of his melody; but a goose upon a common or in a farmyard is no bad performer. And as to insects, if the black beetles—and beetles, indeed, of all hues—will keep out of my way, I have no objection to any of the rest;

on the contrary, in whatever key they sing, from the gnat's fine treble to the bass of the humble bee, I admire them all.

In a letter to Lady Hesketh (Nov. 1785), full of a winsome as well as a happy humour, he writes: "I cannot believe but that I should know you, notwithstanding all that time may have done. There is not a feature of your face, could I meet it upon the road by itself, that I should not instantly recollect. I should say, 'That is my cousin's nose, or those are her lips, and her chin,' and no woman upon earth can claim them but herself."[1]

Cowper owed much to the kindness and sympathy of women, and he delighted in their society; for no doubt there was something in their gentleness, and tenderness, and grace, akin to his own nature, and which soothed while it charmed his heart and imagination. "I have always said, and shall never say otherwise" (he writes), "that if patience under adversity, and submission to the afflicting hand of God, be true fortitude, which no reasonable person can deny, then your sex have ten times more fortitude to boast than ours." "Why is it, since the first offender on earth was a woman, that the women are nevertheless in all the most important points superior to men? That they are so I will not allow to be disputed, having observed it ever since I was capable of making the observation."

I believe, on recollection, [he adds] that when I had the happiness to see you here, we agitated this question a little; but I do not remember that we arrived at any decision of it. The Scripture calls you the *weaker vessels;* and perhaps the best solution of the difficulty, therefore, may be found in those other words of Scripture, *My strength is perfected in weakness.* Unless you can furnish me with a better key than this, I shall be much inclined to believe that I have found the true one.

Changes in the weather—early Spring with

"Daffodils
That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty; violets, dim,
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes
Or Cytherea's breath; pale primroses,
That die unmarried, ere they can behold
Bright Phœbus in his strength,"

[1] The letter proceeds: "As for me, I am a very smart youth of my years. I am not indeed grown grey so much as I am grown bald. No matter. There was more hair in the world than ever had the honour to belong to me. Accordingly, having found just enough to curl a little at my ears, and to intermix with a little of my own that still hangs behind, I appear, if you see me in an afternoon, to have a very decent headdress, not easily distinguished from my natural growth; which, being worn with a small bag and a black ribbon about my neck, continues to me the charms of my youth, even on the verge of age." In a postscript he adds: "That the view I give you of myself may be complete, I add the two following items—that I am in debt to nobody, and that I grow fat."

all these were noted by Cowper, and afford occasion for graceful remark. Thus, for instance, he writes:

. . . You talk of primroses that you pulled on Candlemas Day; but what think you of me who heard a nightingale on New Year's Day? Perhaps I am the only man in England who can boast of such good fortune—good indeed, for if it was at all an omen, it could not be an unfavourable one. The winter, however, is now making himself amends, and seems the more peevish for having been encroached on at so undue a season.

Cowper had his picture painted at the request of some friends, and the likeness, which was lifelike, and which is known to all admirers of the poet through an admirable engraving, gave rise to some "excellent fooling" on his part in a letter to Hayley.

. . . God bless your dear little boy and poet! I thank him for exercising his dawning genius upon me, and shall be still happier to thank him in person.

Abbot is painting me so true,
That, trust me, you would stare,
And hardly know, at the first view,
If I were here or there.

I have sat twice; and the few who have seen his copy of me are much struck with the resemblance. He is a sober, quiet man, which, considering that I must have him at least a week longer for an inmate, is a great comfort to me.

And once more:

. . . Well, this picture is at last finished and well finished, I can assure you. Every creature that has seen it has been astonished at the resemblance. Sam's boy bowed to it, and Beau walked up to it, wagging his tail as he went, and evidently showing that he acknowledged its likeness to his master. It is a half-length, as it is technically but absurdly called—that is to say, it gives all but the foot and ankle. To-morrow it goes to town, and will hang some months at Abbot's, when it will be sent to its due destination in Norfolk.

Cowper's letters, however, are not all humorous and gay: very many are full of the deepest melancholy, as if he wrote with a pen steeped in despair. From these we might imagine that his life had no sunshine, and was all darkness and gloom. His correspondence with Newton is nearly all of a sad character, and from the poet's letters to his friend, it may be gathered that Newton did not sufficiently allow for Cowper's timidity of character, or for the delicate manner in which his nerves were strung. It vexes us that Newton, good and excellent man that he was, instead of applying the healing balm of sympathy to poor Cowper's melancholy, should increase his melancholy by words that sound harsh and unsympathetic. No one can be scolded into peace, though by wise and gentle treatment we may be won to cast our cares upon Him Who careth for us.

Even when writing to Lady Hesketh, in the middle of a letter,

Cowper breaks out into such expressions as these: "Infinite despair is a sad prompter. . . . Oh, wretch! to whom life and death are alike impossible! Most miserable at present in this, that being thus miserable, I have my senses continued to me only that I may look forward to the worst." Again, he calls himself "the most miserable of all beings." Such letters, it must be remembered, were written when the poet's mind was under eclipse—when it was "like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh." Yet never for long did his confidence in the goodness of God fail, and even through his thick spiritual darkness, gleams of light break forth which prove that hope lay at the heart of his despair. Though "cast down, he was not destroyed." Often and often in letters that breathe of spiritual distress, he gives such consolation to others that we feel he must have been a partaker in the comfort he conveys.

But the space at our disposal warns us to bring this paper to a close. To give all the letters we should wish to give would be to transfer the whole of Cowper's correspondence to these pages. We can only refer those who wish for some hours of rational enjoyment to Mr. Benham's portable little volume, and we can promise them, that much as they may admire Cowper's poetry, they will find his prose no less agreeable.

It is positively refreshing in these days of sensational novels and stories, and of trivial gossip published under the title of "Recollections," and "Memorials," and "Diaries," the greater part of which is composed of worse than unprofitable scandal, to turn to a correspondence so delightful, so natural, and so pure. His correspondence overflows now with humour, now with that love of nature, and now with that deeply religious feeling which lay at the very root of his being. We may say of his letters, what he said to Hayley of some verses which his friend and biographer had written to Austen, and sent with a present of honey: "Your verses to Austen are as sweet as the honey that accompanies them—kind, friendly, witty, and elegant."

CHARLES D. BELL, D.D.

ART. V. — SOME ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS UPON "NATURAL LAW IN THE SPIRITUAL WORLD."

CANON HOARE has done well in calling attention to Professor Drummond's fascinating book; for I believe (notwithstanding its singular attractiveness) that there are principles underlying it which ought only to be accepted with very considerable modification and reserve.