Critical Opinion in the Eighteenth Century

English Personal Letter

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CHAPTER I.

THE LETTER AS A MEDIUM OF LITERARY CRITICISM.

That the letter of the eighteenth century contains much material that has value for a critical study of the period no student will deny. Since, in our estimate of the importance of the letter as a vehicle of criticism, we desire to be impartial, we shall first present what the letter cannot contribute.

The very nature of the personal letter, the fact that its contents will not be seen by anyone but the recipient, encourages the writer to flatter the author in commenting on his work, which necessarily diminishes the worth of the criticism. On the other hand the criticism of one's contemporaries to each other would not be subject to such a weakness.

Letters, of friendship, written for the pleasure of intercourse, are not usually of great length, and are therefore too short to permit one to go into a minute analysis of the purpose of a work, or into the definition of its style, or into an enumeration of its qualities. Where we have found such letters in this century, they have certainly presupposed on the part of the recipient a patient interest in literature. Such correspondents are not numerous.

On account of the brevity of letters, the lack of time, and the press of matters of more immediate importance, we rarely find in the personal letter a complete criticism, that discusses and evaluates a production, with the fullness that we find in a review written for a periodical.

If one goes to the personal letter with the expectation that he will find developed there a number of distinct and clear cut principles, by which the letter writers judged the literary productions of their time he will be disappointed. The views expressed will be found to be either the result of personal feelings, or they will represent the general ideas of a group, of which the individual was a member. The comments are expressed off hand without the letter writer outlining any principles for his guidance or for our information. To Walpole, the romanticists, with the one exception of Gray, were not worth considering when one had lived during the eminence of Pope and Swift. To Johnson, Swift and Gray were anathema.

The critical comments in letters up to and including the time of Johnson seem to have been mostly concerned with manner and form, or the diction and style of a work. Appreciative and interpretive criticism was unknown to the personal letter writer of the eighteenth century before Cowper.

What then can we find in the letter of the eighteenth century to justify us in calling it a medium of criticism?

The first virtue of the letter, in the realm of criticism, is that letters, written with no idea of publication, are a most excellent source for securing the true opinion of a writer. The fact that he knows, that the reader is a friend, one in whom he has confidence, allows him to present his thoughts, in a sort of undress, informal fashion, not found in any other critical medium.

Such frankness, and honesty, is certainly a gain in criticism, especailly when we consider that a review may be written to please the public, or the owners of the magazine, or may be written to ingratiate the writer with a certain literary coterie.

Let us think of the value of the comments that an author makes to his friends on his own work. Here he may, with much of the danger of misinterpretation removed, express his ambition for his work, he may speak of the purpose he may explain the qualities of his performance, to a sympathetic ear, all of which is of inestimable value for us in forming an estimate of the production.

The obvious weakness of the personal letter as a medium of criticism is that it lends itself to the expression of strong likes and dislikes, and therefore degenerates from the field of criticism into that of personal opinion.

That the letter was used in this way in the eighteenth century is true, but we must not forget that there are those who insist that the application of critical principles is very uncertain, that they maintain that in the final analysis a work of art is not judged by any fixed standard, but comes to the judgment of the individual and therefore such criticism is but the expression of a personal preference. Furthermore are not critical reviews subject to the same weakness? Certainly reviewers, have expressed their likes and dislikes, and therefore is not their work open to much the same accusation of unreliability? Johnson's critical estimates in his Lives of the Poets, are striking examples of the truth of this contention;

Had some lover of great men had the forethought to preserve the opinions that were expressed by the habituees of the Coffee Houses from Dryden to Johnson we would have a veritable store house of contemporary criticism. The Queen Anne group did their best work before the time of the critical review, and as a result our sources for contemporary opinion are few. The personal letter is the principal source from which we get the comments made upon each others attainments by the men of the first third of the eighteenth century.

In attempting to understand and appreciate the critical opinions found in the personal letter, the reader must know the individual whose letters he is studying. For the value of the correspondence varies greatly with the individual. In Pope's hands, for he wrote at all times with the idea of publishing his letters, the letter loses its virtues; the openness and frankness that I stressed in the beginning of the chapter do not exist for him. He said frequently

not what was necessarily true or untrue, or what was his real opinion, but what he thought would redown to his own fame in after years.

With Burns the situation was quite different, the letter to him was a means of self revelation, a means by which he presented his understanding and estimate of his poetic qualities. The information relating to his material and manner of composition, found in his correspondence, is the most reliable that we have. Without the personal letters of Burns the world would lack many of the facts that are necessary to a complete understanding of Robert Burns. He used the letter as the only available means of communication with the people most interested in his work, and the opinions expressed concerning his own work and the work of others are his real opinions, and for that reason they have value and the criticism in his letters makes that part of them rank high in the realm of critical opinion.

The letters of the majority of the men studied, are given to praising or to condemning a literary production in general terms. If we were to commend the method of criticism that most effectively carried out the possibilities of the personal letter we would certainly select the method presented in the letters of Cowper.

His critical statements are not the expression of mere personal feeling. He states his conclusion, and then proceeds to give examples to prove and substantiate his contention. His observations are stated without heat; his language is that of a calm and judicial mind that has deliberately worked out its deductions. Criticism in the personal letter of Cowper approaches the fullness and completeness of an article in a Review.

What the public of an author's day thought of his work, and how they received it has always interested students of literature. The personal letter is our richest source of information for giving the contemporary opinion held by the leading men and women of the eighteenth century. Sometimes the information is mere gossip, but much of it has real worth and can in my judgment be called critical opinion.

By reading the personal letters covering the period from Addison to Burns and Cowper, one can trace the development and change in literary taste. To state the matter in other words, by the reading of selected personal letters a student could trace the history of critical opinion as found in the eighteenth century.

In conclusion, the personal letter of the eighteenth century contributed much to the critical opinion as expressed in that century: it had widely different uses: it gave us critical opinion from different angles: it rarely gave us a detailed and complete critical estimate of a man's work, yet through its variety, frankness, and trueness, it contributed elements, that even exceeded the possibilities of the Review.

CHAPTER II.

JONATHAN SWIFT.

Swift began his correspondence while he served as secretary to Sir William Temple about the years 1791-92. As his acquaintanceship increased and as his interests became broader and more varied his list of correspondents grew. During the Tory ascendancy under Harley and Bolingbroke, when he reached the period of his greatest political influence, his letters were mostly addressed to Hester Johnson and are known today as his Journal to Stella. From the time of his taking Holy Orders and serving his charge of Laracor in Ireland, he began writing to his friends in England, but it was after his retirement, from active political life in London to the deanery of St. Patrick's at Dublin, that most of his correspondence with his literary, political, and religious friends, was written.

He may not be said to have had any purpose in his letter writing, except to carry on his personal intercourse with his friends. As we know, the circumstances of the time did not permit frequent meetings for conversation. To journey, in the winter, from Dublin to London was considered most dangerous, and at any time the trip was tedious and tiresome and could not be attempted without many hardships. Travel was also expensive and Swift was frugal in his monetary affairs. Then, too, his health was not of the best, for already, when his power in London was at its height, he had begun to have those attacks of giddiness, which throughout the remainder of his life increasingly destroyed the vitality of his body and mind.

At no place in his writing does he suggest that he had a definite conception of the letter as a specific literary form. In the letters there are no signs of any consciousness that he was trying to compose according to rules, neither is there any indication that he felt that there were any subjects to be excluded from discussion with his correspondents. His business letters are short, concise, and direct, much in the style of the business letter of today that displays a simple statement of fact; they deal with business but we are always aware that they are the business letters of a literary man. Of all of his letters, one may say that their contents, whether of business, of politics, of religion, of gossip, of literary or personal affairs, are but in the main the unmeditated, unpolished outpourings of his mind and heart. It is evident that he wrote for the eyes of his correspondents and not with any secret plan that they would some day be the public property of every one. This fact then makes his correspondence, the sincere and unpolitic expression of the real Swift, of the man as he was, not as he wished to be thought of by the public. This result of my investigation is important for our special study, since it will give us an opportunity to record in this chapter what he thought of his own work and in the other chapters what he thought of the literary attainments of his contemporaries.

1

In bulk Swift's correspondence was large: as edited by J. Ellington Ball, it, with the index, comprises six volumes. A complete list of his correspondents, important and unimportant, would embrace over one hundred names. For the student, who wishes to read Swift's most valuable letters, the following list, arranged according to their importance, would include all that is most noteworthy: Esther Johnson (Journal to Stella), Alexander Pope, Lord Bolingbroke, Vanessa (Hester Vanhomrig), John Gay, Matthew Prior, Dr. Arbuthnot, Earl of Oxford, Archbishop King, Dr. Sheridan, Joseph Addison, and Richard Steele.

Explanations and criticisms of his own literary attempts appeared early in Swift's letters. His earliest efforts at writing were largely in poetry; in 1692 while he was secretary to Sir William Temple, he wrote, concerning his own composition, to Thomas Swift. His frankness in regard to himself and his sincere admiration for his patron Sir William Temple is very plainly expressed in the long letter just referred to, dated 1692.

"It makes me mad to hear you making a copy of verses next morning, which though indeed they are not correct as your others are, what I could not do under two or three days, nor does it enter into my head to make anything of a sudden but what I find to be exceeding silly stuff except by great chance. I esteem the time of studying poetry to be two hours in a morning, and that only when the humour sits, which I esteem for the flower of the whole day, and truly I make bold to employ them that way, and yet I seldom write above two stanzas in a week- - -I mean such as are in my Pindaric ode- - - and yet I have known myself in so good a humour as to make two in a day, but it may be no more in a week after, and when all is done I alter them a hundred times, and yet I do not believe myself to be a laborious dry writer, because if the fit comes on immediately I never heed it, but write of something else. And besides the poem I wrote to the Anthenian Society was all rough drawn in a week, and finished in two days after and yet it consists of twelve stanzas, and some of them above thirty lines, all above twenty, and yet it is so well thought of that the unknown gentlemen, have printed it before one of their books, and the bookseller writes me word that another gentleman has in a book called the "History of the Anthenian Society" quoted my poem very honourably---as the fellow called it--- so that I was perhaps in a good humour all the week, or at least Sir William Temple speaking to me so much in their praise, makes me zealous for their cause, for really I take that to be a part of the honesty of poets that they cannot write well except they think the subject deserves it.

"But that itself will not always hold, for I have had an ode in hand these five months inscribed to my late Lord of Canterbury Dr. Sancroft, a gentleman I admire at a degree more than I can express, put into me partly by some experience of him, but more by

an unhappy reverend gentleman my Lord the Bishop of Ely with whom I used to converse about two or three years ago, and very much upon that subject, but I see I cannot finish it for my life, and I have done nine stanzas and do not like half of them, nor nigh finished, but there it lies and I sometimes add to it, and would wish it were done to my desire, I would send it to my bookseller and make him print it with my name and all; to show my respect and gratitude to that excellent person, and to perform half a promise I made his Lordship of Ely upon it.

"I am not mistaken in my critic, for it is written "To the all conquering etc." in that poem, nor do I like your mending it any better, therefore give it another wipe, and then it will be one of my favourites. I have a sort of vanity or foiblesse, I do not know what to call it, and which I would fain know if you partake of it, it is not to be circumstantial---that I am overfond of my own writings; I would not have the world think so for a million, but it so, and I find when I write what pleases me I am Cowley to myself and can read it a hundred times over. I know it is a desperate weakness, and has nothing to defend it but its secrecy, and I know farther, that I am wholly in the wrong, but have the same pretence, the baboon had to praise her children, and indeed I think the love in both is much alike, and their being our own offspring is what makes me such a blockhead. I am just the same way to yours, and though I resolve to be a severe critic yet I cannot but think I see a thousand beauties, and no faults in what you take any pains about, for as to the rest I can easily distinguish when either of us has been idle. I am just so to all acquaintance; I mean in proportion to my love of them, and particularly to Sir William Temple. I never read his writings but. I prefer him to all others at present in England, which I suppose is all but a piece of self love, and the likeness of humours makes one fond of them as if they were one's own."

The "Tale of a Tub" was written in 1696 but was not published until 1704. This brilliant prose satire was composed before Swift was well known and before he had any reputation as an author and before he had a circle of prominent personages for correspondents; consequently you will find no mention of the inception or purpose of this work in his letters. I have found no criticisms in the letters of his contemporaries concerning this distinguished work.

One of the unique and clever pieces of Swift's miscellaneous prose is his "Prediction for the Year 1708". His assumption of the name of Isaac Bickerstaff and the success of this keen baffling satire on Partridge, the almanack maker, probably contributed to the growth of Swift's bigotry but you find no references to its success; and it is only three years later that he mentions it at all and then in the Journal to Stella: "I have sent a long letter to Bickerstaff: let the Bishop of Clogher smoke it if he can."

When Steele, impressed by the success of Swift's satire, decided to use Isaac Bickerstaff as the assumed name of the author

of the Tatler, even this brought no comment from the originator of the pseudonym: but Prior, realizing Steele's indebtedness to Swift, gives credit to the originator of Bickerstaff in the following letter: "I do not know why you have not buried me as you did Partridge, and give the wits of the age, the Steeles and Addisons, a new occasion of living seven years upon one of your thoughts. When you have finished the copy of verses which you began in England our writers may have another hint, upon which they may dwell seven years longer." The suggestion here is plainly that Prior thinks that not only the Tatler, but all the serials for which Steele and Addison were responsible owed their origin to the Bickerstaff pamphlets.

Swift at this time was completely within the counsels of the Tories and wrote most effective pamphlets in their behalf. Swift, now and through all the rest of his life, seemed to have a true liking for Harley; an attempted assassination of this minister alarmed Swift greatly and aroused his loyalty to a high pitch. The Tories were anxious for peace with France, Swift came to their aid and defence with four pamphlets:, The Conduct of the Allies and of the late Ministry in beginning and carrying on the present war, Some Remarks on the Barrier Treaty, The W-ds-r Prophecy, (in which he attacked the Duchess of Somerset), and A Letter to the October Club, The effectiveness and popularity of these political pamphlets is discussed in the following comments by Swift in his Journal to Stella. "I have finished my pamphlet today, which has cost me so much time and trouble: it will be published in three or four days, when the Parliament begins sitting." (Conduct of the Allies) "My printer came this morning to tell me he must immediately print a second edition, and Lord Treasurer made one or two small additions; they must work day and night to have it out on Saturday; they sold a thousand in two days." "I dined with the printer: the pamphlet makes a world of noise, and will do a great deal of good." "I was this morning with the Lord Treasurer, about something he would have altered in the pamphlet, but it can't be until the fourth edition, which I believe will be soon for I dined with the printer, and he tells me that they have sold off half the third." "They are now printing the fourth edition, which is reckoned very extraordinary, considering 'tis a dear twelve-penny book, and not bought up in numbers by the party to give away, as the Whigs do, but purely upon its own strength." "I dined in the city, and was with the printer, who has now a fifth edition of the Conduct, etc., it is in small and sold for sixpence; they have printed as many as three editions, because they are to be sent in numbers into the country by great men, etc., who subscribe for hundreds. It has been sent a fortnight ago to Ireland, I suppose you will print it there. The Tory Lords and Commons in Parliament argue all from it: and all agree that never anything of that kind was of so great consequence, or made so many converts."

"My Prophecy is printed, and will be published after Christmas Day; I like it mightily: I don't know how it will pass. You will

never understand it at your great distance without help. I believe everybody will guess it to be mine, because it is somewhat in the same manner with that of "Merlin" in the Miscellanies." "I called at Mrs. Masham's, who desired me not to let the Prophecy be published, for fear of angering the Queen about the Duchess of Somerset; so I wrote to the printer to stop them. They have been printed and given about, but not sold."

"The sixth edition of three thousand of the Conduct of the Allies is sold, the printer talks of a seventh: eleven thousand of them have been sold, which is a most prodigious run. The little two-penny Letter of Advice to the October Club does not sell: I know not the reason, for it is finely written, I assure you; and like a true author, I grow fond of it, because it does not sell: you know that is usual to writers to condemn the judgment of the world: if I had hinted it to be mine, everybody would have bought it, but it is a great secret."

"I here take leave to tell politic Dingley that the passage in the Conduct of the Allies is so far from being blamable that Secretary designs to insist upon it in the House of Commons, when the Treaty of Barrier is debated there, as it now shortly will, for they have ordered it to be laid before them. The Pamphlet of Advice to the October Club begins now to sell; but I believe its fame will hardly reach Ireland: 'tis finely written I assure you."

During these years Swift unquestionably had great power, and he used it to help his humble friends as well as those of more importance. He says. "This, I think, I am bound to do, in honour to my conscience to use of my little credit toward helping forward men of worth in the world." To see this quality further exemplified we need only read in his Journal where he opens to Stella, in a most intimate way, all of his life. Here we find frequent mention, of men of whom we have scarcely heard, that he has befriended. A young poet Harrison was his special protege, yet Swift did not overestimate his ability because of his friendship for him. The following selection from the Journal indicates that Swift dispensed his favors in a kindly and not always in an overbearing manner.

"I dined with Mr. Secretary St. John; and at six went to Darteneuf's house to drink punch with him and Mr. Addison, and little Harrison, a young poet, whose fortune I am making."

"I am setting up a new Tatler, little Harrison, whom I have mentioned to you. Others have put him on it, and I encourage him and he was with me this morning and evening, showing me his first, which comes out on Saturday, I doubt he will not succeed, for I do not much approve his manner; but the scheme is Mr. Secretary, St. John's and mine, and would have done well enough in good hands. I recommended him to a printer, whom I sent for, and settled the matter before them this evening. Harrison has just left me, and I am tired with correcting this trash."

"And today little Harrison's new Tatler came out: there is not much in it, but I hope he will end. You must understand that, upon Steele's leaving off, there are two or three scrub Tatlers come out, and one of them holds on still, and today it advertised against Harrison's; and so there must be disputes which are genuine, like the strops for razors. I am afraid the little toad has not the true vein for it."

The collected poems of Swift make up over two hundred large pages. This work was written throughout the years of his life, and therefore represents no short period of time. His best known and most discussed poem is Cadenus to Vanessa, written to Hester Vanhomrig to explain the intimate relations between them. Because of the volume and on account of the intimacy as well as the satirical element in the various poems, we would expect Swift to make references to this considerable part of his literary labors. However, we can find but two comments. In a letter, written on February 16, 1691, to introduce his Ode to the Athenian Society to that organization, we find the following:

"As I have been somewhat inclined to this folly, so I have seldom wanted somebody to flatter me in it. And for the ode enclosed, I have sent it to a person of very great learning and honour, and since to some others, the best of my acquaintance (to which I thought very proper to inure it for a greater light); and they have all been pleased to tell me that they are sure it will not be unwelcome and that I should beg the honour of you to let it be printed before your next volume, (which I think is soon to be published), it being so usual before most books of any great value among poets: and before its seeing the world. I submit it wholly to the correction of your pens.

I entreat, therefore, one of you would descend so far as to write two or three lines to me of your pleasure upon it; which, as I cannot but expect from gentlemen who have so well shown upon so many occassions, that greatest character of scholars in being favourable to the ignorant, so, I am sure, nothing at present can more highly oblige me, or make me happier."

The second reference is in a letter to Thomas Swift concerning his tribute to William Congreve, which was written in 1693 and is entitled "To William Congreve."

"I desire you would inform yourself what you mean by bidding me keep my verses for Will Congreve's next play, for I tell you they were calculated for any of this and if it were but acted when you say, it is as early as ever I intended, since I only design they should be printed before it, so I desire you should send me word immediately how it succeeded, whether well, ill or indifferently, because my sending them to Mr. Congreve depends upon knowing the issue. There are almost two hundred and fifty lines not Pindaric, and if I could tell what is become of Mr. Thomas Swift whom I formerly knew, I would send them to him."

Swift's contemporaries, at no time, say anything that indicates that his poetry was ever well known or widely discussed among the literary or social circles of London. He only refers to three other poems and these observations are made in his intimate personal disclosures to Stella.

"Mr. Rowe the poet desired me to dine with him today. I went to his office (he is under-secretary in Mr. Addison's place that he had in England), and there was Mr. Prior; and they both fell commending my "Shower" since Danaes, etc. You must tell me how it is liked among you.

Mr. Dopping I have seen; and he tells me coldly, my "Shower" is liked well enough; there's your Irish Judgment!

Why, I wrote a pamphlet when I was in London, that you and a thousand have seen, and never guessed it to be mine. Could you have guessed the "Shower in Town" to be mine? how chance you did not see that before your last letter went? But I suppose you in Ireland did not think it worth mentioning. Nor am I suspected for the lampoon; only Harley said he smoked me; (have I told you so before?) and some others knew it. 'Tis called "The Rod of Sid Hamet". And I have written several other things that I hear commended, and nobody suspects me for them; nor you shall not know till I see you again.

I dine today at Lady Lucy's, where they ran down my "Shower"; and said, "Sid Hamet" was the silliest poem they ever read; and told Prior so, whom they thought to be the author of it.

Prior came in after dinner; and, upon an occasion, he (the secretary) said, "The best thing I ever read is not yours, but Dr. Swift's on Vanbrugh"; which I do not recon so very good either.

I suppose you think it a piece of affectation in me to wish your Irish folks would not like my "Shower"; but you are mistaken. I should be glad to have the general applause there as I have here (though I say it); but I have only that of one or two, and therefore I would have none at all, but let you all be in the wrong. I don't know, this is not what I would say but I am so tosticated with supper and stuff, that I can't express myself. What you say of "Sid Hamet" is well enough; that an enemy should like it, and a

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(1) "A Description of a City Shower", is the full title. It was written in 1710 and first appeared in the Tatler.

(2) "The Virtues of Sid Hamet", or "The Magician's Rod" which appeared anonymously in 1710, is a lampoon on Earl Godolphin. Its success was prodigious.

(3) There are two poems on Vanbrugh; "Vanbrugh House" and "The History of Vanbrugh House". Sir John Vanbrugh then Clarencieux of Arms is the man referred to.

friend not; and that telling the author would make both change their opinions. Why did you not tell Griffyth that you fancied there was something in it of my manner; but first spur up his commendation to the height, as we served my poor uncle about the sconce that I mended."

2

After our exhaustive search through all the available correspondence of Swift we have found that there is but one of his works left, on which he, in his correspondence, comments critically, and but one left that his friends pass judgment on namely, Gulliver's Travels. Some such imaginary story, though in a hazy form, seems to have been in his consciousness for many years prior to the publication of his great masterpiece. Robinson Crusoe was published in 1719 and the following suggestion in a letter from a Mr. Henley in 1710 would indicate that at that time such fictitious stories were more or less commonly discussed in England.

"Therefore let us return to the use which may be made of modern travels, and apply Mr. Morrison's to your condition.

You are now cast on an inhospitable island; no mathematical figures on the sand, no vestigia hominum to be seen; perhaps at this very time reduced to one single barrel of damaged biscuit, and short allowance even of salt water. What's to be done? Another in your condition would look about; perhaps he might find some potatoes; or get an old piece of iron, and make a harpoon, and if he found Higgon sleeping near the shore, strike him and eat him. The western islanders of Scotland say 'tis good meat; and his train oil, bottled till it mantles, is a delicious beverage, ff the inhabitants of Lapland are to be credited."

In the Cambridge History of English Literature Mr. George Aitken says, "Before the Drapier's Letters appeared, Swift was engaged on his most famous work, Gulliver's Travels". These letters were written between April and December 1724. Mr. Aitken does not give his authority for the statement, and furnishes no references to verify his conclusion. In Swift's correspondence we find Bolingbroke, writing from France, on September 12, 1724, "You desire me to return home, and you promise me, in that case, to come to London loaden with your travels". On September 14, 1725, Pope replies to Swift,,"Your travels (Gulliver's) I hear much of; my own I promise you shall never more be in a strange land, but a diligent, I hope useful investigation of my own territories." From these two citations it seems logical to deduce that Swift had not only been turning over in his own mind the material for his travels, but that he had been discussing this most important venture with his two most intimate literary friends. Pope clearly understood somewhat the scope of Swift's plan; let us read Swift's reply written within two weeks of the receipt of the above letter from Pope.

"I have employed my time, besides ditching, in finishing, amending, correcting, and transcribing my Travels, in four parts complete, newly augmented, and intended for the press when the world shall deserve them, or rather when a printer shall be found brave enough to venture his ears. I like the scheme of our meeting after distresses and dispersions; but the chief end I propose to myself in all my labors is to vex the world rather than divert it; and if I could compass that design without hurting my own person or fortune, I would be the most indefatigable writer you have ever seen, without reading. I am exceedingly pleased that you have done with translations. Lord Treasurer Oxford often lamented that a rascally world should lay you under a necessity of misemploying your genius for so long a time. But since you will now be so much better employed, when you think of the world give it one lash the more at my request. I have ever hated all nations, professions, and communities, and all my love is toward individuals: for instance I hate the tribe of lawyers, but I love Counsellor Such-a-one, and Judge Such-a-one: it is so with physicians, (I will not speak of my own trade,) soldiers, English, Scotch, French, and the rest. But principally I hate and detest that animal called man; although I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas, and so forth. This is the system upon which I have governed myself many years, but do not tell and so I shall go on till I have done with them. I have got materials toward a treatise proving the falsity of that definition animal rationale, and to show it should be only rationis capax. Upon this great foundation of misanthropy (though not in Timon's manner) the whole building of my travels is erected; and I never will have peace of mind till all honest men are of my opinion: by consequence you are to embrace it immediately, and procure that all who deserve my esteem may do so too. The matter is so clear that it will admit of no dispute; nay, I will hold a hundred pounds that you and I agree in the point."

At this time Swift, after repeated urgings by Arbuthnot, Bolingbroke, and Pope, was considering a visit to England. Pope comments upon the purpose of the travels as declared by his friend as follows.

"I have fancied, I say, that we should meet like the righteous in the millennium, quite in peace, divested of all our former passions, smiling at our past follies, and content to enjoy the kingdom of the just in tranquility. But I find you would rather be employed as an avenging angel of wrath, to break your vial of indignation over the heads of the wretched creatures of this world; nay, would make them eat your book, which you have made (I doubt not) as bitter a pill for them as possible."

Dr. Arbuthnot, having been ill, and having been shown a very solicitous paragraph from the letter of September 29 from Swift, writes to him and tries to tempt him into a trip to England.

"For God's sake do not tantalize your friends any more. I can prove, by twenty unanswerable arguments, that it is absolutely necessary that you should come over to England; that it would be committing the greatest absurdity that ever was not to do it the next approaching winter, I believe indeed it is just possible to save your soul without it, and that is all. As for your book, "Gulliver's Travels" (of which I have framed to myself such an idea that I am persuaded there is no doing any good upon mankind without it), I will set the letters myself rather than that it should not be published. But before you put the finishing hand to it, it is really necessary to be acquainted with some new improvements of mankind that have appeared of late, and are daily appearing. Mankind has an inexhaustible source of invention in the way of folly and madness."

A letter from Richard Sympson to Benjamin Motte adds more weight to the conclusion that Swift, during his visit to Twickenham, where he met Pope, Bolingbroke, Gay, Congreve, and Arbuthnot, from April to August 1726, discussed his proposed work in much detail with his friends.

Gulliver's Travels were, as Lord Bolingbroke's letter shows, a chief topic that summer at Twickenham, but owing to Swift's apprehension that this satire would provoke ministerial displeasure, and his innate love of mystery, all knowledge of their authorship was confined to the charmed circle at Pope's villa. To such an extent were precautions to preserve anonymity carried that it was not until he was on the point of leaving London that Swift took a definite step towards their publication, and sent under an assumed name this letter to Benjamin Motte who had succeeded to the publishing business of his old friend Benjamin Tooke. It has been hitherto thought that arrangements for the publication of the Travels were even postponed until after Swift had left England, but such a conclusion is in my opinion not well founded. The grounds for it are a statement in one of Pope's letters to Swift that Motte said the copy had not reached him until a date subsequent to that of Swift's departure, and the fact that Swift attributed the profit which he received from the Travels to Pope's prudent management. But there is nothing in the statement to deny that previous negotiations had taken place, and it is evident from this letter, which no one can doubt was Swift's own composition, that Pope's part in them was that of an adviser.

However, it would seem that during his visit, he formed no definite plans as to the time he would publish his travels, for as late as July 7, 1726, in reply to a Mr. Tickell, he says. "As to what you mention of an imaginary treatise, I can only answer that I have a great quantity of papers somewhere or other, of which none would please you, partly because they are very incorrect, but chiefly because they wholly disagree with your notions of persons and things; neither do I believe it would be possible for you to find out my treasury of waste papers without searching nine houses and then sending to me for the key."

It is true that this reply sounds somewhat like a mere excuse, but the fact remains that the work appeared anonymously on October 29, 1726, after Swift had returned to Ireland. It is true also that the negotiations with the printer were carried on by Charles Ford and Erasmus Lewis.

The interesting question why he published Gulliver's Travels anonymously, and was unwilling to acknowledge the famous satire even after it had become tremendously popular, cannot be solved from a study of his correspondence, for neither he nor his friends at any time refer to any reason for pursuing such a course.

On November 16, eighteen days after the first public appearance of Gulliver's Travels, Pope wrote to Swift.

"I congratulate you first upon what you call your cousin's wonderful book which is publica trita manu at present, and I prophesy will be hereafter the admiration of all men. That countenance with which it is received by some statesmen is delightful. I wish I could tell you how every single man looks upon it, to observe which has been my whole diversion this fortnight. I have never been a night in London since you left me, till now for this very end, and indeed it has fully answered my expectations. I find no considerable man very angry at the book. Some, indeed, think it rather too bold, and too general a satire: but none, that I hear of, accuse it of particular reflections (I mean no persons of consequence, or good judgment; the mob of critics, you know, always are desirous to apply satire to those they envy for being above them); so that you needed not to have been so secret upon this head. Motte received the copy, he tells me, he knew not from whence, nor from whom, dropped at his house in the dark, from a hackney coach. By computing the time, I found it was after you left England, so, for my part, I suspend my judgment."

On the day after Pope's letter Gay wrote to Swift in terms of the highest praise.

"About ten days ago a book was published here of the Travels of one Gulliver, which has been the conversation of the whole town ever since. The whole impression sold in a week; and nothing is more diverting than to hear the different opinions people give of it: though all agree in liking it extremely. It is generally said that you are the author; but I am told the bookseller declares he knows not from what hands it came. From the highest to the lowest it is universally read, from the cabinet-council to the nursery. The politicians to a man agree that it is free from particular reflections, but that the satire in general societies of men is too severe. Not but what we now and then meet with people of greater prespicuity, who are in search for particular applications in every leaf; and it is highly probable we shall have keys published to give light into Gulliver's design. Lord Bolingbroke is the person who least approves it, blaming it as a design of evil consequence to depreciate

human nature, at which it cannot be wondered that he takes offence, being himself the most accomplished of his species, and so losing more than any other of that praise which is due both to the dignity and virtue of a man. Your friend Lord Harcourt, commends it very much, though he thinks in some places the matter too far carried. The Duchess Dowager of Marlborough is in raptures at it; she says she can dream of nothing else since she read it. She declares that she has not found out that her whole life had been lost in caressing the worst part of mankind, and treating the best as her foes; and that if she knew Gulliver, though he had been the worst enemy she had ever had, she would give up her present acquaintance for his friendship. You may see by this, you are not much injured by being supposed the author of this piece. You have disobliged us, and two or three of your best friends, in not giving us the least hint of it while you were with us; and in particular Dr. Arbuthnot, who says it is ten thousand pities he had not known it, he could have added such abundance of things upon every subject. Among lady critics, some have found out that Mr. Gulliver had a particular malice to maids of honour. Those of them who frequent the church say his design is impious, and that it is an insult on Providence, by depreciating the works of the Creator. Notwithstanding, I am told the Princess has read it with great pleasure. As to other critics, they think the flying island is the least entertaining; and so great an opinion the town have of the impossibility of Gulliver's writing at all below himself, that it is agreed that part was not writ by the same hand, though this has its defenders too. It has passed Lords and Commons, nemine contradicente; and the whole town, men, women, and children, are quite full of it. Perhaps I may all this time be talking to you of a book you have never seen, and which has not yet reached Ireland. If it has not, I believe what we have said will be sufficient to recommend it to your reading and that you will order me to send it to you. But it will be much better to come over yourself and read it here, where you will have the pleasure of variety of commentators, to explain the difficult passages to you."

The first impression received from these comments leads one to believe that not even Gay was completely in the secret as to the author of the new literary sensation, but this quotation from the same letter rather indicates that Gay knew that Swift was the author but preferred not to say so in a letter.

"I hope you do not write the thing that is not. We are afraid that B- hath been guilty of that crime, that you (like a houyhnhnm) have treated him as a yahoo, and discarded him your service. I fear you do not understand these modish terms, which every creature now understands but yourself."

The Princess, who later became Queen Caroline, through reading the Travels of Gulliver became much interested in Swift. Mrs. Howard, first lady of the bedchamber and the high favourite of the Princess, through the intimacy brought about by the frequent audiences between Swift and the Princess, developed a true admiration for the noted author and later became an enthusiastic

correspondent of his. She writes very familiarly and shows in the following letter that she was thoroughly acquainted with Gulliver.

"I did not expect that the sight of my ring would produce the effect it has. I was in such a hurry to show your plaid to the Princess that I could not stay to put it into the shape you desired. It pleased extremely, and I have orders to fit it up according to the first design; but as this is not proper for the public, you are desired to send over, for the same princess's use, the height of the Brobdingnag dwarf multiplied by two and one half. The young princesses must be taken care of; theirs must be in three shares; for a short method, you may draw a line of twenty feet, and upon that upon two circles form an equilateral triangle; then measuring each side, you will find the proper quantity and proper division. If you want a more particular and better rule, I refer you to the academy of Lagado. I am of opinion many in this kingdom will soon appear in your plaid. To this end it will be highly necessary that care be taken of disposing of the purple, the yellow, and the white silks; and though the gowns are for princesses the officers are very vigilant; so take care they are not seized. Do not forget to be observant how you dispose the colours. I shall take all the particular precautions to have the money ready, and to return it the way you judge safest. I think it would be worth your reflecting in what manner the checker might be best managed.

The princess will take care that you shall have pumps sufficient to serve you till you return to England, but thinks you cannot, in common decency, appear in heels, and therefore advises your keeping close till they arrive. Here are several Lilliputian mathematicians, so that the length of your head or of your foot is a sufficient measure. Send it by the first opportunity. Do not forget our good friends the 500 weavers. You may omit the gold thread. . .Many disputes have arisen here whether the bigendians and lesser-endians ever differed in opinion about the breaking of eggs, whether they were to be either buttered or poached? or whether this part of cookery was ever known in Lilliput?

I cannot conclude without telling you that our island is in great joy; one of our yahoos having been delivered of a creature, half ram and half yahoo; and another has brought forth four perfect black rabbits. May we not hope, and with some probability expect, that in time our female yahoos will produce a race of Houyhnhnms? I am, sir, your most humble servant,

----SIEVE YAHOO."

In reply Swift carries on the impression that he was not yet acquainted with this new book to which she refers in such detailed references.

"But I continued four days at a loss for your meaning, till a bookseller sent me the Travels of one captain Gulliver, who proved

a very good explainer, although at the same time I thought it hard to be forced to read a book of seven hundred pages in order to understand a letter of fifty lines; especially as those of our faculty are already but too much pestered with commentators. The stuffs you require are making, because the weaver piques himself upon having them in perfection. But he has read Gulliver's book, and has no conception what you mean by returning money; for he has become a proselyte of the Houyhnhnms, whose great principle, if I rightly remember, is benevolence; and as to myself, I am so highly offended with such a base proposal, that I am determined to complain of you to her royal highness that you are a mercenary yahoo, fond of shining pebbles. What have I to do with you or your court further than to show the esteem I have for your person, because you happen to deserve it; and my gratitude to her royal highness who was pleased a little to distinguish me? which, by the way, is the greatest compliment I was ever paid, and may probably be the last; for I am not such a prostitute flatterer as Gulliver, whose chief study is to extenuate the vices and magnify the virtues of mankind, and perpetually dins our ears with the praises of his country in the midst of corruption, and for that reason alone has found so many readers, and probably will have a pension, which I suppose was his chief design in writing. As for his compliments to the ladies, I can easily forgive him, as a natural effect of the devotion which our sex ought always to pay yours."

In response to Pope's congratulatory letter Swift shows his pleasure at the favourable reception given to his work, but even to Pope, who knew from the beginning that Swift was the author, he still keeps up the fiction that he did not write it.

"I am just come from answering a letter of Mrs. Howard's, writ in such mystical terms, that I should never have found out the meaning, if a book had not been sent me called Gulliver's Travels, of which you say so much in yours. I read the book over, and in the second volume observed several passages which appear to be patched and altered, and the style of a different sort unless I am mistaken. Dr. Arbuthnot likes the projectors least; others, you tell me, the flying island. Some think it wrong to be so hard upon whole bodies or corporations, yet the general opinion is, that reflections on particular persons are most to be blamed: so that in these cases, I think the best method is to let censure and opinion take their course. A Bishop here said that book was full of improbable lies, and for his part, he hardly believed a word of it; and so much for Gulliver. Let me add, that if I were Gulliver's friend I would desire all my acquaintance to give out that his copy was basely mangled, and abused, and added to and blotted out by the printer; for so to me it seems, in the second volume particularly."

As Robinson Crusoe and Defoe's Journal of the Plague Year were accepted as stories of fact in their day, so there were some, though not so many, that accepted Lemuel Gulliver, as a real traveler and

his travels as true accounts of his journeys. Dr. John Arbuthnot writes on November 17 of this year.

"Gulliver is in everybody's hands. Lord Scarborough, who is no inventor of stories, told me, that he fell in company with a master of a ship, who told him, that he was very well acquainted with Gulliver, but that that printer had mistaken, that he lived in Wappind, and not in Rotherhithe. I lent the book to an old gentleman, who went immediately to his map to search for Lilliput." Swift also refers, in a letter previously quoted, to a Bishop who said, "The book was full of improbable lies, and for his part he hardly believed a word of it."

The Earl of Peterborough on November 29 writes to Swift.

"Strange distempers rage in the nation, which your friend the doctor takes no care of. In some, the imagination is struck with the apprehension of swelling to a giant or dwindling to a pigmy. Others expect an oration equal to any of Cicero's, from an eloquent bard, and some take the braying of an ass for the emperor's speech in favor of the Vienna alliance. The knowledge of the ancient world is of no use; men have lost their titles; continents and islands have got new names just upon the appearance of a certain book. Women bring forth rabbits; and every man whose wife has conceived expects an heir with four legs. It was concluded not long ago, that such confusion could be only brought about by the black art, and by the spells of a notorious scribbling magician, who was generally suspected and was to be recommended to the mercy of the inquisition. Indictments were upon the anvil, a charge of sorcery preparing, and Merlin's friends were afraid that the exasperated pettifoggers would persuade the jury to bring in billa vera. For they pretended to bring in certain proofs of his appearance in several shapes: at one time a drapier; at another a Wapping surgeon; sometimes a nardac, sometimes a reverend divine. Nay, more,- that he could raise the dead; that he had brought philosophers, heroes, and poets, in the same caravan from the other world; and after a few questions, and sent them all to play at quadrille in a flying island of his own.

This was the scene not many days ago, and burning was too good for the wizard. But what mutations among the Lilliputians! The greatest lady in the nation resolves to send a pair of shoes without heels to captain Gulliver; she takes vi et armis the plaid from the lady it was sent to, which is soon to appear on her royal person; and now who but captain Gulliver? The captain indeed has nothing more to do but to chalk his pumps, learn to dance upon the rope, and I may yet live to see him a bishop. Verily, verily, I believe he never was in such imminent danger of preferment."

These strange happenings in London, referred to as the result of the new book, together with the Earl's knowledge, of the likely preferment in store for Swift on account of his favour with the

Princess of Wales and with Mrs. Howard, adds additional evidence to the conclusion that the popularity of Gulliver's Travels was instantaneous and widespread.

On account of the illness of Stella, Swift left England hurriedly in August, 1726. She rallied and was so much improved that Swift returned to England in the following May. That Gulliver was still a much talked of book is shown by the author's own testimony in writing to Dr. Sheridan on May 13, 1727.

"I have at last seen the Princess twice this week by her own commands; she retains her old civility, and I my old freedom; she charges me without ceremony to be the author of a bad book, though I told her how angry the ministry were; but she assures me, that both she and the prince were very well pleased with every particular; but I disown the whole affair, as you know I very well might, only gave her leave, since she liked the book, to suppose what author she pleased."

This product of Swift's original genius, within eight months, had become known on the continent. Abbe Des Fontaine planned to make a translation into French and his discussion of Gulliver in a a letter to Swift gives us an interesting contemporary French criticism.

"I have the honour to send to you the second edition of your work, which I have translated into French. I should have sent you the first, had I not been obliged, for reasons which I am not at liberty to tell you, to insert a passage in the preface, which you would not have been pleased with, and which indeed I inserted much against my inclinations. As the book has made its way without opposition, these reasons no longer subsist,and I have expunged this passage in the second edition, as you will find. I have likewise altered the passage relating to my lord Carteret, concerning which I had received false intelligence. In many parts you will easily see that my translation is not exact; but what pleases in England has not always the same effect in France; either because our manners are different, or because the allusions and allegories that strike people in one country do not make the same impression in another; or, in fine, because the two nations do not always agree in taste. My intention was to present my countrymen with a book which might be of use to them; and this has made me take some liberties in varying from the original. I have been even so free as to make some additions, according as I found my own imagination raised by yours. To you only I am indebted for the honour this translation does me; a translation that has been sold with amazing rapidity, for there have been already three editions of it. I have conceived so high an esteem for you, and so greatly am I obliged to you, that if you are not entirely satisfied with the suppression I made in this edition. I am still ready to go any further length in order to cancel the memory of that part of the preface; as for the rest, I beg you will pay due attention to the justice I have done you in that very preface.

We flatter ourselves that we shall soon have the honour of seeing you in this capital. All your friends are impatient for your arrival: nothing else is talked of; and all Paris eagerly expects this agreeable event. Do not defer giving us this pleasure; you will see a nation that holds you in the highest esteem. In the meantime I claim the honour of your friendship, and beg you will be persuaded that no one repsects you more than myself; being with the profoundest regard and esteem, sir, your most humble and obedient servant."

The strictures made by Fontaine nettled Swift, and he replied in a straight forward and caustic manner.

"It is above a month since I received your letter of the 4th of July;. but the copy of the second edition of your translation is not yet come to hand. I have read the preface to the first; and give me leave to tell you that I was very much surprised to find that, at the same time you mentioned the country in which I was born, you also took notice of me by name as the author of that book though I have the misfortune of incurring the displeasure of some of our ministers by it, and never acknowledged it as mine. Your behaviour however in this respect, though somewhat exceptional shall not prevent me from doing you justice. The generality of translators are very lavish of their praises on such works as they undertake to render into their own language imagining perhaps that their reputation depends in some measure on that of the authors whom they have thought proper to translate. But you were sensible of your own abilities, which rendered all such precautions needless. Capable of mending a bad book,- an enterprise more difficult than to write a good one,- you have ventured to publish the translation of a work which you affirm to abound with nonsense, puerilities, &c. We think with you that nations do not always agree in taste, but are inclined to believe that good taste is the same wherever there are men of wit, judgment, and learning.

This Gulliver's adherents, who are very numerous here, maintain that this book will last as long as our language, because he does not derive his merit from certain modes of expression or thought but from a series of observations on the imperfections, follies and vices of mankind.

You may very well judge that the people I have been speaking of do not approve of your criticisms; and you will doubtless be surprised when I inform you that they regard this sea-surgeon as a grave author who never departs from his character, and who uses no foreign embellishment, - never pretends to set up for a wit,- but is satisfied with giving the public a plain and simple narrative of the adventures that befell him, and of things he saw and heard in the course of his voyages."

Benjamin Motte, the publisher, wrote to Swift concerning an illustrated edition of Gulliver. The author's selection, of the

most striking scenes that would be best for pictures, shows that he had a clear idea of what was most vivid in the book.

"As to having cuts in Gulliver's Travels, you will consider how much it will raise the price of the book. The world glutted itself with that book at first, and now it will go off but soberly; but I suppose will not be soon worn out. The part of the little men will bear cuts much better than that of the great. I have not the book by me, but will speak by memory. Gulliver in his carriage to the metropolis, his extinguishing the fire, the ladies in their coaches driving about his table, his rising up out of his carriage when he is fastened to his horse, his drawing the fleet, the troop upon his handkerchief, the army marching between his legs, his hat drawn by eight horses, seem the fittest to be represented, and perhaps two adventures may be sometimes put in one print.

It is difficult to do anything in the great men, because Gulliver makes so diminutive a figure, and he is but one in the whole kingdom. Among some cuts I bought in London, he is shown taken out of the bowl of cream; but the hand that holds him hides the whole body. He would appear best wedged in the marrow-bone up to the middle, or in the monkey's arms upon the roof, or left upon the ridge, and the footman on the ladder going to relieve him, or fighting with the rats on the farmers bed, or in the spaniel's mouth, which being described as a small dog, he might look as large as a duck in one of ours. One of the best would be, I think, to see his chest just falling into the sea, while three eagles are quarreling with one another; or the monkey hauling him out of his box. Mr. Wootton, the painter who draws landscapes and horses, told Mr. Pope and me that the graver did wrong in not making the big folks bear something (large), and enormous in their shapes, for, as drawn by those gravers, they look only like common human creatures. Gulliver being alone, and so little, cannot make the contrast appear.

The Flying Island might be drawn as large as described in the book, and Gulliver drawing up into it, and some fellows with flappers. I know not what to do with the Projectors. Nor what figure the Island of Ghosts would make, or any passage related in it, because I do not well remember it.

The Country of Horses, I think would furnish many. Gulliver brought to be compared with the Yahoos; the family at dinner and he waiting; the grand council of horses, assembled, sitting, one of them standing with a hoof extended, as if he were speaking; the she-Yahoos embracing Gulliver in the river, who turns away his head in disgust; the Yahoos got into a tree, to infest him under it; the Yahoos drawing carriages, and driven by a horse with a whip in his hoof. I can think of no more, but Mr. Gay will advise you, and carry you, to Mr. Wotton and some other skillful people."

In the correspondence of Swift, we have the English personal letter used to fulfill its simplest and best function, that of conveying in a free and easy manner, the personal opinions and ideas of one individual to another. Swift intended that his letters should be read by the recipient; the expectation that they would become public property, to be perused by any and every one never occurred to him. The idea that his reputation as a writer might be judged in part by them was totally foreign to him.

Swift, unlike Johnson, had the capacity and the desire to talk to his friends about his work and about himself. Consequently we expect to find him discussing freely, his ambitions, his success, his object in a particular work his pleasure at its favourable reception, and we are not disappointed.

The above facts are important when we consider his opinion of his own work; for his strictures can be accpted as the sincere expression of his private judgment.

Students of English Literature are chiefly interested in Swift as an essayist and as the writer of Gulliver, yet we must not forget that he wrote a considerable amount of poetry.

Swift himself as we find in his correspondence thought his poetry had merit. He confessed that the inspiration came to him slowly, and that the best time of the day for it, was in the morning and then not for more than two hours. His frankness in acknowledging that, in spite of the public's refusal to accept some of his pieces, he still thinks them worthwhile, is in contradiction to the bitterness expressed in his later life.

What his object was in writing verse is no where stated, nor does he say what poetic qualities grace his lines.

That Swift was not recognized as a great poet we know from the facts of literary history. However, his friends praised his efforts. Swift says that a man of great learning spoke highly of them, and that, Bolingbroke, Prior, and the poet Rowe, commended his poem The Shower, while some critics thought it not worth much.

This much we can say in concluding the discussion of the poetry, his letters and those of his contemporaries show that Swift liked to write verse, that he continued to write it throughout his life and that many of his literary friends thought that it was good poetry, above the average run of verse, but that none of his contemporaries thought his poetry the work of a genius.

We have learned from our study of his correspondence many important facts. From his own clear statements, we know that he received money from only one work, Gulliver's Travels, and that he did not write anything for the purpose of making, or obtaining money.

He wrote for several motives; his correspondence with Stella proves that he used the power of his learning and of his pen to write pamphlets, that he might win the approval of his Tory friends and thereby gain position and power, in London.

Another motive that drove him on was his desire to make a lasting reputation as a literary figure and to improve the public taste in language and literature.

His confessed reason for writing Gulliver's Travels was that he hated the race of man, but loved the individual, and therefore he wished, "to lash the vices and follies of the time." Some histories of literature insist that in the latter parts of his famous work, he is giving vent to a bitter misanthrophy, others think that the individual hope of his satire was the reformation of man. His letters will not settle this matter beyond question but their tone indicates that he did not intend just to give vent to purposeless personal bitterness.

This forceful writer does not discuss his own style and diction, in his letters. His only comment is in one pamphlet where he says, "it is finely written". Indirectly he gives his ideas of the correct use of language and the means of improving the English tongue but that is in a pamphlet.

Unfortunately the contemporary correspondence does not particularize when Swift's praises are sung. Only the most general terms are used in their compliments. His style was recognized as distinctive, for when a pamphlet or essay was published anonymously they very soon told him that it was his production.

As our final glimpse of Swift as seen in his own correspondence and in that of his contemporaries we shall summarize their opinions of Gulliver's Travels.

The public of London received the work most favorably. The Princess, the Duchess of Marlborough, Bolingbroke, Prior, Gay, Pope, and Arbuthnot, to mention only the most prominent personages, wrote to him of the virtues of his performance and of the popular delight in it, and of the entertainment they personally received from it.

Unquestionably Swift thought of Gulliver's Travels as his masterpiece, and expected by it to establish a permanent literary reputation. His own words, taken from a letter of his, best expresses his hopes.

"If the Travels of Gulliver are calculated only for the British islands, that voyager must certainly be reckoned a paltry writer. The same vices and follies prevail in all countries, at least in all the civilized parts of Europe; and an author, who would sit down to write only for a single town, a province, a kingdom, or even a century, so far from deserving to be translated does not deserve to be read."

That his desire was to gain the appreciation of the intelligent reader, wherever found, would seem self-evident.

He said further that, "many think the book will last as long as our language." This must have been, in part at least, his own opinion.

The qualities of his great work are also pointed out when he says, speaking of the author of Gulliver, "he does not derive his merit from certain modes of expression or thought, but from a series of observations on the imperfections, follies, and vices of mankind."

CHAPTER III.

ALEXANDER POPE

The method by which Pope received his education handicapped him in two ways: by the lack of a thorough classical training he was shut off from an intimate appreciation of the delicate and distinctive beauties of the ancients, and further he missed the friends and associates that a complete university course would have given to him. His chief reason for choosing Binfield as his early residence, was that a number of Roman Catholics lived there. A most fortunate circumstance for the young man was that Sir William Trumbull, a retired diplomatist, at this time also settled at Binfield. He was a man, with a deep love for the classics, who had a real taste for letters. Pope corresponded with him, sought his advice and submitted his verses to him. As early as 1705 Trumbull writes to Pope.

"I expected to find, what I have met with, an admirable genius in those poems[1], not only because they are Milton's or were approved by Sir Henry Wotton, but because you had commended them; and give me leave to tell you that I know nobody so like to equal him, even at the age he wrote most of them, as yourself. Only do not afford more cause of complaints against you, that you suffer nothing of yours to come abroad, which in this age, wherein wit and true sense is more scarce than money, is a piece of such cruelty as your best friends can hardly pardon. I hope you will repent and amend. I could offer many reasons to this purpose, and such as you cannot answer with any sincerity, but that I dare not enlarge, for fear of engaging in a style of compliment, which has been so abused by fools and knaves, that it is become almost scandalous."

Pope asserts that he composed his Pastorals in 1704 or at the tender age of sixteen. There is some doubt of the authenticity of this date, Mr. Courthope says of him, he "systematically antedated his compositions in order to obtain credit for precocity." If he did not antedate his letters as well, they indicate conclusively that he was discussing the Pastorals with Wycherley as early as 1704.

Pope writes, "It was certainly a great satisfaction to me to see and converse with a man, whom in his writings I had so long known with pleasure; but it was a high addition to it, to hear you at our very first meeting, doing justice to your dead friend Mr. Dryden. I was not so happy as to know him: Virgilium tantum vidi. Had I been born early enough, I must have known and loved him; for I have been assured, not only by yourself, but by Mr. Congreve and Sir Thomas Trumbull, that his personal qualities were as amiable as

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[1]Note-L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Lycidas, This letter is among the Homer and the Masque of Comus.

his poetical, notwithstanding the many libellous misrepresentations of them, against which the former of these gentlemen has told me he will one day vindicate him. I suppose those injuries were begun by the violence of party, but it is no doubt they were continued by envy at his success and fame, and those scribblers who attacked him in his latter times were only like gnats in a summer evening, which are never very troublesome but in the finest and most glorious season; for his fire, like the sun's shined clearest towards its setting.

You must not therefore imagine, that, when you told me my own performances were above those critics, I was so vain as to believe it; and yet I may not be so humble as to think myself quite below their notice. For critics as they are birds of prey have even a natural inclination to carrion: and though such poor writers as I are but beggars, no beggar is so poor but he can keep a cur (and no author is so beggarly but he can keep a cur) and no author is so beggarly but he can keep a critic. So I am far from thinking the attacks of such people either an honour or dishonour even to me, much less to Mr. Dryden. I agree with you, that whatever lesser wits have risen since his death, are but like stars appearing when the sun is set, that twinkle only in his absence, and with the rays they have borrowed from him. Our wit as you call it, is but reflection of imitation, therefore scarce to be called ours. True wit, I believe, may be defined a justness of thought, and a facility of expression; or, in the midwives' phrase, a perfect conception, with an easy delivery."

At this time he had certainly not written anything else of poetic merit so Wycherley must have been referring to the Pastorals. Wycherley replies to this letter, still in the language of praise but he does not particularize as to the beauties of the poems.

"I have received yours of the fifth, wherein your modesty refuses the just praises I give you, by which you lay claim to more, as a bishop gains his bishopric by saying he will not episcopate; but I must confess, whilst I displease you by commending you, I please myself, just as incense is sweeter to the offerer than the deity to whom it is offered, by his being so much above it: for indeed every man partakes of the praise he gives, when it is so justly given.

As to my inquiry after your intrigues with the Muses, you may allow me to make it, since no man can give so young, so great and able a favourite of theirs, jealousy. I am, in my inquiry, like Sir Bernard Gascoign, who used to say, that when he was grown too old to have his visits admitted alone by the ladies he always took along with him a young man to ensure his welcome to them! For had he come alone he would have been rejected, only because his visits were not scandalous to them. So I am (like an old rook, who was ruined by gaming) forced to live on the good fortune of the pushing young man, whose fancies are so vigorous that they ensure

their success in their adventures with the Muses, by their strength of imagination."

The continued protests of Pope disclaiming the praises that Wycherley was heaping upon him, rather surprise one, and do not fit in with our ideas in undergraduate days of Pope's tremendous pride and conceit. The following protest would pass current as being nearly genuine.

"I should believe myself happy in your good opinion, but that you treat me so much in a style of compliment. It has been observed of women that they are more subject in their youth to be touched with vanity than men, on account of them being generally treated this way; but the weakest women are not more weak than that class of men, who are thought to pique themselves upon their wit. The world is never wanting, when a coxcomb is accomplishing himself, to help to give him the finishing stroke.

Every man is apt to think his neighbor overstocked with vanity; yet I cannot but fancy there are certain times when most people are in a disposition of being informed, and it is incredible what a vast good a little truth might do, spoken in such seasons. A very small alms will do a great kindness to people in extreme necessity. I could name an acquaintance of yours, who would at this time think himself more obliged to you for the information of his faults, than the conformation of his follies. If you would make those the subject of a letter, it might be as long as I would wish your letters always were. I do not wonder that you have hitherto found some difficulty, as you are pleased to say in writing to me, since you have always chosen the task of commending me: take but the other way, and, I dare engage, you will find none at all.

As for my verses, which you praise so much, I may truly say they have never been the cause of any vanity in me, except that they gave me when they first occasioned my acquaintance with you. But I have several times since been in danger of this vice; as often, I mean, as I received any letters from you. It is certain the greatest magnifying glasses in the world are a man's own eyes, when they look upon his own person; yet even in those I cannot fancy myself so extremely like Alexander the Great, as you would persuade me. If I must be like him, it is you will make me so, by complimenting me into a better opinion of myself than I deserve. They made him think he was the son of Jupiter, and you assure me I am a man of parts. But is this all you can say of my honour? You said ten times as much before, when you called me your friend."

Regardless of how we interpret Pope's sincerity in the above at least he had to be urged, somewhat, by his friends to publish his Pastorals.

"I have received yours of the first of May. Your pastoral Muse outshines in her modest and natural dress all Apollo's

court-ladies, in their more artful, laboured, and costly finery. Therefore I am glad to find by your letter you design your country-beauty of a Muse shall appear at court and in public to outshine all the faded, lewd, confident, affected towndowdies, who aim at being honoured only to their shame: but your artful innocence, on the contrary, will gain more honour as she becomes public, and, in spite of custom, will bring modesty again into fashion, or at least make her sister-rivals of this age blush for spite, if not for shame. As for my stale, antiquated, poetical puss, whom you would keep in countenance by saying she has once been tolerable and would yet pass muster by a little licking over, it is true, that, like most vain antiquated jades which have once been passable, she yet affects youthfulness in her age, and would still gain a few admirers, who the more she seeks or labours for their liking, are but more her contemners. Nevertheless, she is resolved henceforth to be so cautious as to appear very little more in the world, except it be as an attendant on your Muse, or as a foil, not a rival to her wit, or fame: so that let your country-gentlewoman appear when she will in the world, my old worn-out jade of a lost reputation shall be her attendant into it, to procure her admirers; as an old whore, who can get no more friends of her own, bawds for others, to make sport or pleasure yet, one way or other, for mankind. I approve of your making Tonson your Muse's introductor into the world, or master of the ceremonies, who has been so long a pimp or gentleman-usher to the Muses.

I wish you good fortune; since a man with store of wit, as store of money, without the help of good fortune, will never be popular; but I wish you a great many admirers, which will be some credit to my judgment as well as your wit, who always thought you had a great deal, etc. I have made a d--d Compliment in Verse, upon the printing of your Pastorals, which you shall see when you see me. If you suffer my old dowdy of a Muse to wait upon your sprightly lass of the plains, into the company of the town, it will be but like an old city-bawd's attending a young country-beauty to town, to gain her admirers when past the hopes of pleasing the world herself."

They (the Pastorals) finally appeared in Tonson's sixth Miscellany in 1709. The immediate success of Pope's part of the Miscellany is made clear in a letter of Wycherley to Pope.

"I must thank you for a book of your Miscellanies, which Tonson sent me, I suppose, by your order; and all that I can tell you of it is, that nothing has been better received by the public than your part of it. You have only displeased the critics by pleasing them too well, having not left them a word to say for themselves, against you and your performances; so that now your hand is in, you must persevere, till my prophecies of you are fulfilled. In earnest, all the best judges of good sense or poetry are admirers of yours, and like your part of the book so well, that the rest is liked the worse. This is true upon my word without

compliment: so that your first success will make you for all your life a poet, in spite of your wit; for a poet's success at first, like a gamester's fortune at first, is like to make him a loser at last, and to be undone by his good fortune and merit.

But hitherto your Miscellanies have safely run the gauntlet through all the coffee-houses, which are now entertained with a whimsical new newspaper called the Tatler, which I suppose you have seen. This is the newest thing I can tell you of, except it be of the peace, which now most people say, is drawing to such a conclusion, as all Europe is, or must be satisfied with; so poverty you see, which makes peace in Westminster Hall, makes it likewise in the camp or field, throughout the world."

In the Biographical sketch prefaced to the Cambridge edition of Pope, the statement is found, "Through Walsh," "(William Walsh the famous critic of Dryden's Day) "Pope became acquainted with Wycherley, who introduced the young poet to literary society in London, that is to the society of the London Coffee houses." From the following letter of Walsh to Wycherley the conclusion was not justified and just the opposite happened.

"I return you the papers you favored me with, and had sent them to you yesterday morning, but that I thought to have brought them to you last night myself. I have read them several times with great satisfaction. The preface is very judicious and very learned; and the verses very tender and easy. The author seems to have a particular genius for that kind of poetry, and a judgment that much exceeds the years you told me he was of. He has taken very freely from the ancients, but what he has mixed of his own with theirs is no way inferior to what he has taken from them. It is no flattery at all to say that Virgil had written nothing so good at his age. I shall take it as a favour if you will bring me acquainted with him: and if he will give himself the trouble any morning to call at my house. I shall be very glad to read the verses over with him and give him my opinion of the particulars more largely than I can well do in this letter."

I cannot see how to interpret the line "I shall take it as a favour if you will bring me acquainted with him", otherwise than that Walsh wished to meet Pope through the instrumentality of Wycherley. Walsh's praise is of the highest and we should remember that Walsh was styled by Dryden "the best critic of our nation."

Walsh put a high estimate upon Pope's ability as a writer of pastorals, so much so that he tries earnestly to persuade him to write a pastoral comedy.

"I hope when I have the happiness of seeing you in London, not only to read over the verses I have now of yours, but more that you have written since; for I make no doubt that anyone who writes so well, must write more. Not that I think the most voluminous poets always the best; I believe the contrary is rather true. I mentioned

somewhat to you in London of a pastoral comedy which I should be glad to think you had thought on since."

However Pope knew his own genius and the temper of the age better and explained his reasons clearly in his reply.

"I have not attempted anything of a Pastoral comedy, because I think the taste of our age will not relish a poem of that sort. People seek for what they call wit, on all subjects, and in all places; but considering that nature loves truth so well, that it hardly ever admits of flourishing. Conceit is to nature what paint is to beauty; it is not only needless, but impairs what it would improve. There is a certain majesty in simplicity, which is far above the quaintness of wit; in so much that the critics have excluded wit from the loftiest poetry, as well as the lowest, and forbid it to be the epic no less than the pastoral. I should certainly displease all those who are charmed with Guarini and Bonarelli, and imitate Tasso not only in the simplicity of his thoughts, but in that of the fable too. If surprising discoveries should have place in the story of a pastorial comedy, I believe it would be more agreeable to probability to make them the effects of chance than of design-intrigue not being very consistent with that innocence which ought to constitute a shepherd's character. There is nothing in all the Aminta as I remember, but happens by mere accident unless it be the meeting of Aminta with Sylvia at the fountain which is the contrivance of Daphne; and even that is the most simple in the world. The contrary is observable in Pastor Fido, where Corisca is so perfect a mistress of intrigue, that the thought would not have been brought to pass without her. I am inclined to think that the pastoral comedy has another disadvantage as to the manners: its general design is to make us in love with the innocence of rural life, so that to introduce shepherds of a vicious character must in some measure debase it; and hence it must come to pass, that even the virtuous characters will not shine so much, for want of being opposed to their contraries. These thoughts are purely my own, and therefore I have reason to doubt them; but I hope your judgment will set me right."

One today, might think that Walsh through his closeness to Pope had made his judgment hurriedly and therefore inaccurately but the following letter would indicate that he was of the same high opinion after sober thought and other readings of the pastorals.

"Having been absent about six weeks, I read over your Pastorals again, with a great deal of pleasure, and to judge the better, read Virgil's Eclogues, and Spencer's Calendar, at the same time; and I assure you, I continue the same opinion I had always of them. By the little hints you take up all occasions to improve them, it is probable you will take them up better against winter; though there is a mean to be kept even in that too, and a man may correct his verses till he takes away the true spirit of them, especially if he submits to the correction of some who pass for great critics, by

mechanical rules, and never enter into the true design and genius of an author, I have seen some of these that would hardly allow anyone good ode in Horace, who cry Virgil wants fancy, and that Homer is very incorrect. While they talk at this rate, one would think them above the common rate of mortals; but generally they are great admirers of Ovid and Lucan, and when they write themselves, we find out all the mystery. They scan their verses upon their fingers; run after conceits and glaring thoughts-- their poems are all made up of couplets, of which the first may be last, or the last first, without any sign of prejudice to their works, in which there is no design, or method, or anything natural or just. For you are certainly in the right, that in all writings whatsoever (not poetry only) nature is to be followed; and we should be jealous of ourselves for being fond of similes, conceits, and what they call saying fine things."

Pope in a letter to Spencer says of Walsh, "He used to encourage me much and used to tell me there was one way left of excelling: for though we had several great poets, we never had one great poet who was correct; and he desired me to make that my study and aim." Walsh and Pope must have discussed this correctness and the form of poetry in much detail, for in reply to an inquiry from Walsh, Pope goes into detail concerning English versification. While this letter is not critical of a man or of a poem yet because it is so closely related to Pope's literary work it seemed proper to include it in my study.

"After the thoughts I have already sent you on the subject of English versification, you desire my opinion as to some farther particulars. There are indeed certain niceties, which, though not much observed even by correct versifiers, I cannot but think deserve to be better regarded.

1. It is not enough that nothing offends the ear, but a good poet will adapt the very sounds, as well as words to the things he treats of. So that there is, if one may express it so, a style of sound-as in describing a gliding stream, the numbers should run easy and flowing--in describing a rough torrent or deluge, sonorous and swelling, and so of the rest. This is evident everywhere in Homer and Virgil, and nowhere else, that I know of, to any observable degree. The following examples will make this plain, which I have taken from Vida:

> Molle viam tacito lapsu per levia radit
> Incedit tardo molimine subsidendo.
> Luctantes ventos, tempestatesque sonoras.
> Immenso cum praecipitans ruit Oceano Nox.
> Telum imbelle sine ictu, conjecit.
> Tolle moras, cape saxa manu, cape robora, Pastor.
> Ferte citi flammas, date tela, repellite pestem.

This I think, is what very few observe in practice, and is undoubtedly of wonderful force in imprinting the image on the

reader. We have one excellent example of it in our language, Mr. Dryden's Ode on St. Cecelia's Day, entitled Alexander's Feast.

2. Every nice ear must, I believe, have observed that, in any smooth English verse of ten syllables, there is naturally a pause at the fourth, fifth, or sixth syllable. It is upon these the ear rests, and upon the judicious change and management of which depends the variety of versification for example,

At the fifth:
Where'er thy navy spreads her canvas wings.

At the fourth:
Homage to thee, and peace to all she brings.

At the sixth:
Like tracks of leverets in morning snow.

Now I fancy, that to preserve an exact harmony and variety, the pause at the fourth or sixth should not be continued above three lines together, without the interposition of another; else it will be apt to weary the ear with one continued tone; at least it does mine. That at the fifth runs quicker, and carries not so dead a weight, so tires not so much, though it be continued longer.

3. Another nicety is in relation to expletives, whether words or syllables, which are made use of merely to supply a vacancy. Do before verbs plural is absolutely such; and it is not improbable but future refiners may explode did and does in the same manner, which are almost always used for the sake of rhyme. The same cause has occasioned the promiscuous use of you and thou to the same person, which can never sound so graceful as either one or the other.

4. I would also object to the irruption of Alexandrine verses, of twelve syllables, which I think, should never be allowed but when some remarkable beauty or propriety in them atones for the liberty. Mr. Dryden has been too free of these, especially in his latter works. I am of the same opinion as to triple rhymes.

5. I would equally object to the repetition of the same rhymes within four or six lines of each other, as tiresome to the ear through their monotony.

6. Monosyllable lines, unless very artfully managed, are stiff or languishing: but may be beautiful to express melancholy, slowness, or labour.

7. To come to the hiatus, or gap between two words, which is caused by two vowels opening on each other, upon which you desire me to be particular; I think the rule in this case is either to use the caesura, or admit the hiatus, just as the ear is least shocked by either; for the caesura sometimes offends the ear more

than the hiatus itself, or our language is naturally overcharged with consonants: as for example, if in this verse,

The old have interest ever in their eye;

we should say, to avoid the hiatus,

But th' old have interest.

The hiatus which has the worst effect is when one word ends with the same vowel that begins the following; and next to this, those vowels whose sound comes nearest to each other are most to be avoided. O.A. or U, will bear a more full and graceful sound than E, I, or Y. To conclude I believe the hiatus should be avoided with more care in poetry than in oratory, and I would constantly try to prevent it, unless where the cutting it off is more prejudicial to the sound than the hiatus itself. I am, &c."

We are more curious about the public reception given to Pope's Rape of the Lock than about the attitude of the London folk towards all the rest of his poetry, but this curiosity can find no satisfaction from the letters of Pope. He refers only to its publication in a letter to Swift.

"I have finished the Rape of the Lock; but I believe I may stay here till, Christmas, without hindrance of business."

Swift's reply is equally brief, and gives no clue as to his opinion of it.

"I saw the Key to the Lock but yesterday: I think you have changed it a good deal, to adapt it to the present times."

In a letter to Caryll, Pope discovered the difficulties of the dedication.

"As to the Rape of the Lock, I believe I have managed the dedication so nicely that it can neither hurt the lady nor the author, I writ it very lately and upon great deliberation, The young lady approves it, and the best advice in the kingdom, of men of sense, has been made use of in it, even to the Treasurer's. A preface which salved the lady's honour, without affixing her name, was also prepared, but by herself superseded in favour of the dedication. Not but that, after all, fools will talk, and fools will hear them."

The letters therefore give us no material from which we can judge the author's own opinion or the opinions held by his friends of this most characteristic work of his genius.

The only comment upon Windsor Forest came from its most ardent admirer, Swift, who wrote to Stella concerning it.

"You never saw a town so full of ferment and expectation. Mr. Pope has published a fine poem, called Windsor Forest. Read it."

This poem is Pope's attempt to combine the literary and historical associations of that section of England with a description of the field sports and the countryside. It was through Swift's admiration for the poem that their life long friendship was begun. However there is no mention of this poem by Swift in his correspondence with Pope, probably because it was published in 1713 at at that time Swift was still in England immersed in politics and therefore expressed his admiration in person before their correspondence began which was late in December of that year. No estimate of the general popularity of the work can be made from Pope's letters, for none of his friends in their letters refer to it, and he only casually mentions it in two letters to Caryll.

"The poem Windsor Forest has undergone many alterations, and received many additions since you saw it, but it has not yet been out of my hands to any man, so was not what Mr. Steele mentioned."

Caryll's praise of the poem evidently pleased the poet considerably.

"I have just sent the poem Windsor Forest to the press, which I will take care to order some copies of to Lady Holt. I was at the same time both glad and ashamed to find, when we were at Old Windsor, that you had more lines than one of that poem by heart. But I must own your partiality to me makes me love myself the better."

Pope's love of the classics early evidenced itself; when in school at the age of ten he wrote a tragedy built on Ogelvy's translation of Homer, and at twelve years of age he had learned the rudiments of Greek and read Latin fluently. It is evident that, while he did not have a scholarly knowledge of the Greek language, he read widely in the literature of the Greeks. He says in a letter to Spence "When I had done with my Pastorals I took to reading by myself, for which I had a very great eagerness and enthusiasm, especially for poetry; and in a few years I had dipped into a great number of English, French, Italian, Latin and Greek poets. This I did without any design but that of pleasing myself and got the language by hunting after the stories in the several authors I read: rather than read the books to get the language."

Some of these early translations from Homer were shown to Trumbull about 1708; he encouraged in these earnest sentences the young man to translate the whole of Homer.

"Besides my want of skill, I have another reason why I ought to suspect myself, by reason of the great affection I have for you, which might give too much bias to be kind to everything that comes from you. But, after all, I must say, and I do it with an old-fashioned sincerity, that I entirely approve of your translation of

those pieces of Homer, both as to the versification and the true sense that shines through the whole: nay, I confirmed in my former application to you, and give me leave to renew it upon this occasion that you would proceed in translating that incomparable poet, to make him speak good English, to dress his admirable characters in your proper, significant, and expressive conceptions, and to make his works as useful and instructive to this degenerate age, as he was to our friend Horace."

As early as 1708 Pope had pretty well defined ideas of the chief qualities of a good translation. Another friend to whom he showed these early attempts at translation was Rev. Ralph Bridges. In the following letter Pope discusses Bridges' commendation of his verses and gives his own ideas of what a good rendition of Homer should be.

"I must own you have pleased me very much by the commendations so ill bestowed upon me; but, I assure you, much more by the frankness of your censure, which I ought to take the more kindly of the two, as it is more advantageous to a scribbler to be improved in his judgment than to be soothed in his vanity. The greater part of those deviations from the Greek, which you have observed, I was led into by Chapman and Hobbes, who are, it seems, as much celebrated for their knowledge of the original, as they are decried for the badness of their translations. Champman pretends to have restored the genuine sense of the author, from the mistakes of all former explainers, in several hundred places; and the Cambridge editors of the large Homer, in Greek and Latin attributed so much to Hobbes, that they confess they have corrected the old Latin interpretation very often by this version. For my part, I generally took the author's meaning to be as you have explained it; yet their authority, joined to the knowledge of my own inperfectness in the language, overruled me. However, sir, you may be confident I think you in the right, because you happen to be of my opinion; for men let them say what they will never approve any other's sense but as it squares with their own. But you have made me much more proud of and positive in my judgment, since it is strengthened by yours. I think your criticisms, which regard the expression, very just, and shall make my profit of them. To give you some proof that I am in earnest, I will alter three verses on your bare objection, though I have Mr. Dryden's example for each of them. And this, I hope, you will account no small piece of obedience, from one who values the authority of one true poet above that of twenty critics or commentators. But though I speak thus of commentators, I will continue to read carefully all I can procure, to make up that way, for my want of critical understanding in the original beauties of Homer, though the greatest of them are certainly those of invention and design, which are not all confined to the language for the distinguishing excellencies of Homer are, by the consent of the best critics of all nations, first in the manners (which include all the speeches, as being no other than the representations of each person's manners by his words), and then in the rapture and fire

which carries you away with him with the wonderful force that no man who has a true poetical spirit is master of himself while he reads him. Homer makes you interested and concerned before you are aware, all at once, whereas Virgil does it by soft degrees. This, I believe is what a translator of Homer ought principally to imitate; and it is very hard for any translator to come up to it, because the chief reason why all translations fall short of their originals is, that the very constraint they are obliged to renders them heavy and dispirited.

The great beauty of Homer's language, as I take it, consists in the noble simplicity which is at the same time very copious."

The Iliad occupied Pope's complete poetic labors from early in 1714 until the last volume was published in 1720. The task was undertaken more for financial reasons than from a desire to add to his poetic triumphs. The list of subscribers was completed before the accession of George I, and Pope then set out on his most arduous literary work.

Swift was the first of his close friends to comment on the merit of the initial volume.

"I borrowed your Homer from the Bishop--mine is not yet landed--and read it out in two evenings. If it pleases others as well as me, you have got your end in profit and reputation: yet I am angry at some bad rhymes and triplets, and pray in your next do not let me see so many unjustifiable rhymes to war and gods, I tell you all the faults I know, only in one or two places you are a little obscure: but I expected you to be so in one or two or twenty. I have heard no soul talk of it here, for indeed it is not made over nor did we very much abound in judges--at least I have not the honour to be acquainted with them. Your notes are perfectly good, and so are your preface and essay."

John Gay too informs Pope of the reception accorded his venture into Homerland.

"I have just set down Sir Samuel Garth at the opera. He bids me tell you that everybody is pleased with your translation, but a few at Button's; and that Sir Richard Steele told him that Mr. Addison said Tickell's translation was the best that ever was in any language. He treated me with extreme civility, and out of kindness gave me a squeeze by the forefinger, I am informed that at Button's your character is made very free with, as to morals, &c. and Mr. Addison says, that your translation and Tickell's are both very well done, but that the latter has more of Homer."

The success of the Iliad led Pope to try his hand at Homer again. This time he was to translate the Odyssey. No doubt, as Gay suggests in these lines to Swift, that Pope was induced to

assume the task chiefly because of the prospect of large financial returns.

"He has engaged to translate the Odyssey in three years, I believe more out of a prospect of gain than inclination; for I am persuaded he bore his part in the loss of the South Sea."

Swift in writing to the Earl of Oxford also comments upon the proposed translation.

"I doubt Mr. Pope's voyage into Homerland will bring more profit than reputation, and I wish his fortunes could afford him to employ his own genius. I have been told this voyage is to supply what he lost by a former into the South Sea."

Two Cambridge men William Broome and Elijah Fenton shared in the work on Homer. Of the proposed scheme Broome himself gives the particulars in a letter to Fenton.

"I am glad that you have translated the first book of the Odyssey. You stand in the front of the battle, and the array of critics will naturally fall first upon you. I have translated the second, and therefore, like Teucer will be sheltered behind the shield of Ajax. I am pretty much unconcerned about the issue of the war. We are but auxiliaries, I hope we shall behave so valiantly as to secure Mr. Pope on his throne on Parnassus. The weapons of most critics are weak; they may scratch but seldom wound.

Pray consider what a weight lies upon my shoulders who, besides eight books of translation, am to write twenty-four of the annotations. You only travel hand in hand with old Homer through flowery walks; I labour in dirt and rubbish with dull commentators. It is almost impossible for you to conceive how tiresome the task is of consulting fifty annotators every day, and finding them generally saying everything but just the thing they ought to say. It was happy for me that I had translated the eleventh and twelfth books some years ago for my diversion, otherwise I must have been too hasty either in the notes or in the verse; but now I hope to execute both with some degree of reputation. I have finished three books--2, 11, 12 - and if either you or Mr. Pope presume to touch 16, 18 and 20 I will punish you, and desire you to write your own notes upon them. Take notice, I give you fair warning, and as soon as I have fixed upon two more to complete my dividend, I expect to be humoured with full resignation."

What success the Odyssey met with does not come out in the letters of the time. Swift alone refers to its publication.

"I did not know your Odyssey was finished, being yet in the country, which I shall leave in three days. I 'shall' thank you kindly for the present but I shall like it three fourths the less from the mixture you mention of another."

The correspondence between Broome, Fenton and Pope covers one of the severely criticised incidents of Pope's life. Since this exchange of letters gives only the arrangements that Pope made with these men and the censure that these collaborators heaped upon Pope and at no place gives anything that can be taken as a critical opinion of the work, I shall not give these letters. All the essential details of the heated controversy can be found in the Cambridge History of English Literature.

While the Dunciad did not appear until 1728, Pope had been contemplating the writing of a satire on his contemporaries as early as 1720. Sometime after this date he broached to Swift the matter of his plan, for a poem by which he was to obtain wholesale revenge on his enemies in the critical and literary circle of England. He, at this time dissuaded him, writing that you had better, "Take care the bad poets do not outwit you as they have the good ones in every age, whom they have provoked to transmit their names to posterity." Apparently Pope assents, "I am much happier for finding our judgments jump in the notion that all scribblers should be passed in silence."

Yet later on Swift encouraged Pope to fulfill his design. Pope acknowledges his debt to Swift in a letter to Dr. Sheridan and later in a letter to Swift, written on November 14, 1728.

"I am much pleased with most of the "Intelligencers", but I am a little piqued at the author of them for not once doing me the honour of a mention upon so honourable an occasion as being slandered by the dunces, together with my friend the dean, who is properly the author of the "Dunciad": it had never been written but his request, and for his deafness; for, had he been able to converse with me, do you think I had amused my time so ill? I will not trouble you with amendments to so imperfect an edition as is now published; you will soon see a better, with a full and true commentary, setting all mistakes right, and branding none but our own cattle. Some very good epigrams on the gentlemen of the "Dunciad" have been sent me from Oxford, and others of the London authors."

"The inscription to the "Dunciad" is now printed and inserted in the poem. Do you care I should say anything further how much that poem is yours? since certainly without you it had never been. Would to God we were together the rest of our lives! the whole weight of scribblers would just serve to find us amusement, and not more. I hope you are too well employed to mind them; every stick you plant, and every stone you lay, is to some purpose; but the business of such lives as theirs is but to die daily, to labour and raise nothing."

Pope was very much afraid that in some way the secret of the authorship of the Dunciad would be discovered. On October 22, 1727, in writing to Swift he was even worried about sending a copy to Ireland for fear that in some manner the secret would out.

"My poem (The Dunciad), which it grieves me I dare not send you a copy of, for fear of the Curlls and Dennises of Ireland, and still more for fear of the worst of traitors our friends and admirers, my poem, I say, will show you what a distinguished age we have. Your name is in it, with some others, under a mask of such ignominy as you will not much grieve to wear in that company."

Over a month later, Swift in writing, wonders why the Dunciad has not appeared.

"Now why does not Mr. Pope publish his Dullness? The rogues he mawls will die of themsleves in peace, and so will his friends and so there will be neither punishment nor reward."

In the interim between this letter and the publication of the satire, Bolingbroke wrote to Swift.

"In the meantime his Dullness grows and flourishes as he was there already. It will indeed be a noble work; the many will stare at it, the few will smile, and all his patrons, from Bickerstaff to Gulliver, will rejoice to see themselves adorned in that immortal piece."

Pope had been making progress toward a definite date of publication, it was during this interval that he secured the protection of Lords Oxford, Burlington, and Bathurst who consented to be the sponsors for this abusive mass of personalities. It would seem that the actual publication was postponed, for Pope wrote to Swift apparently desiring to get his opinion of it.

"The Dunciad is going to be printed in all pomp, with the inscription, which makes me proudest. It will be attended with Proem, Prologomena, Testimonia, Scriptorum, Index Authorum, and notes Variorum. As to the latter, I desire you to read over the text, and make a few suggestions in any way you like best; whether dry raillery, upon the style and way of commenting of trivial critics; or humorous, upon the authors in the poem; or historical of persons, places, times; or explanatory; or collecting the parrallel passages of the ancients."

Swift replies in some detail and refers to the above letter.

"I have often run over the Dunciad, in an Irish edition---I suppose full of faults---which a gentleman sent me. The notes I could wish to be very large in what relates to the persons concerned; for I have long observed that twenty miles from London nobody understands hints, initial letters, or town facts, and passages, and in a few years not even those who live in London. I would have the names of those scribblers printed indexically at the beginning or end of the poem, with an account of their works, for the reader to refer to. I would have all the parodies as they are called, referred to the author they imitate. When I began

this long paper, I thought I should have filled it with setting down the several passages I had marked in the edition I had, but I find it unnecessary, so many of them, falling under the same rule. After twenty times reading the whole, I never in my opinion saw so much good satire, or more good sense, in so many lines. How it passes in Dublin I know not yet, but I am sure it will be a great disadvantage to the poem, that the persons and facts will not be understood till an explanation comes out, and a very full one. I imagined it would not be published till towards winter, when folks begin to gather in town. Again I insist you must have your asterisks filled up with some real names of real dunces.

I am now reading your preceding letter of June 28th, and find that all that I had advised above is mentioned there. I would be glad to know whether the quarto edition is to come out anonymously as published by the commentator with all his pomp prefaces etc., and among many complaints of spurious editions? I am thinking whether the editor should not follow the old style of "this excellent author", etc., and refine in many places when you meant no refinement; and into the bargain, take all the load of naming the dunces, their qualities, histories, and performances."

On the appearance of the Dunciad in print, Pope's friends were outspoken in their praise. The following extract is taken from a letter written by Dr. Arbuthnot to Swift.

"As to the condition of your little club, it is not quite so desperate as you might imagine, for Mr. Pope is as high in favour,[1] as I am afraid the rest are out of it. The King upon the perusal of the last edition of his Dunciad, declared he was an honest man."

Swift also speaks of the work in terms of highest praise:

"You were so careful in sending me the Dunciad, that I have received five of them, and have pleased four friends. I am one of everybody who approve every part of it, text and comment; but am one abstracted from everybody, in the happiness of being recorded your friend, while wit and humor, and politeness, shall have any memorial among us."

Swift in reply to Gay refers to a contradictory report:

"The doctor has ill-informed me, who says that Mr. Pope is at present the chief poetical[2] favourite; yet Mr. Pope himself tal- like a philosopher, and one wholly retired. But the vogue of our few honest folks here is, that between Concanen or Theobald, or some other hero of the Dunciad.

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1. Note, he refers to the Poet Laureatship.

2. Note, Arbuthnot had said in a letter, which Swift received November thirteenth: "Pope is now the great reigning poetical favourite". He meant at court where, according to Gay, the reigning favourite was Duck.

The success of this revengeful satire induced Pope to bring out a more elaborate edition in the following year (1729) the editor added notes and printed the names in full, while the first edition had only given the initials of the authors discussed.

In spite of the enmity aroused by the personal abuse in the Dunciad, Swift continues to express his approval of it, and seems to think that this work might even assist in elevating the taste of the age.

"At the same time you judge very truly, that the taste of England is infamously corrupted by shoals of wretches who write for their bread; and therefore, I had reason to put Mr. Pope on writing the poem called the "Dunciad;" and to hale those scoundrels out of their obscurity by telling their names at length, their works, their adventures, sometimes their lodgings and their lineage; not with A's and B's according to the old way, which would be unknown in a few years."

The new Dunciad, (the fourth book of the poem), appeared in 1742, Horace Walpole refers to the addition in one of his letters.

"The Dunciad is blemished by the offensive images of the games, but the poetry appears to be admirable, and though the fourth book has obscurities, I prefer it to the three others. It has descriptions not surpassed by any poet that ever existed, and which surely a writer merely ingenious will never equal. The lines on Italy, on Venice, on convents, have all the grace for which I contend as distinct from poetry, though united with the most beautiful."

The following year because of his intense personal feeling Pope changed the hero of the last book; installing Cibber in Theobald's place, Mrs. E. Montagu refers to the change and to the new edition.

"We got Mr. Pope's new Dunciad print, but I think it differs little from the old one: the new hero is certainly worthy to have the precedency over all foolish Poets. I like the last Dunciad for exposing more sorts of follies than the first did, which was merely upon poets and bad critics. I am always glad when I see those fops who have translated their manners and language into French foppery well ridiculed for the absurd metamorphosis, to ridicule wrong laced pride is of great service for if it was not done this land would be over-run with conceit, for here people are proud of their vices and follies and iniquity, and as long as pride arises from such Stocks we shall never want an increase of it. Milton says, 'Nought profits more than self-esteem right placed', and surely it is true of that pride that makes us disdain vice, but that which makes people glory in it as pernicious. The British vice of gluttony is openly professed so much, one can hardly dine at a fashionable table where it is not the discourse the whole time, and treated of as an affair of the utmost consequence."

Before starting on the Essay on Man, Pope had had some experience in writing moral essays; one to Addison in 1715, and one to the Earl of Burlington in 1731. The first we hear of a new work is from a letter to Swift, dated March 29th, 1731.

"Yet am I just now writing(or rather planning) a book to make mankind look upon this life with comfort and pleasure, and put morality in a good humour."

This would also indicate that Pope was contemplating a more serious purpose than in his satires. James Russell Lowell says, "But the supposition is that in the Essay on Man Pope did not himself know what he was writing. He was only the condenser and epigrammatizer of Bolingbroke - a very fitting St. John for such a gospel." 'However much he used outlines gotten from Bolingbroke, and we cannot be sure just what Pope's debt is, Bolingbroke certainly suggested the scheme to Pope, and before it was completed he certainly knew the contents remarkably well. St. John sometime early in the summer of 1731 wrote to Swift.

"Pope is now in my library with me, and writes to the world, to the future ages while I begin this letter which he is to finish to you. What good he will do to mankind I know not; this comfort he may be sure of, he can not do less than you have done before him. I have sometimes thought, that if preachers, hangmen, and moral writers, keep vice at a stand, or so much as retard the progress of it, they do as much as human nature admits. A real reformation is not to be brought about by ordinary means. It requires these extraordinary means which become punishments as well as lessons. National corruption must be purged by national calamities. Let us hear from you. We deserve this attention, because we desire it, and because we believe that you desire to hear from us."

He even outlines in some detail the plan that the author expects to follow.

"Does Pope talk to you of the noble work, which, at my instigation, he has begun in such a manner, that he must be convinced, by this time, I judged better of his talents than he did? The first epistle, which considers man, and the habitation of man, relatively to the whole system of universal being; the second which considers him in his own habitation, in himself, and relatively to his particular system; and the third, which shows how, a universal cause works to one end, but works by various laws; how man, and beast, and vegetable are linked in a mutual dependency, parts necessary to each other and necessary to the whole, how human societies were formed, from what spring true religion and true policy are derived, how God has made our greatest interest and our plainest duty indivisibly the same---these three epistles, I say, are finished. The fourth he is now intent upon. It is a whole subject; he pleads the cause of God, I use Seneca's expression, against that famous charge which

atheists in all ages have brought, the supposed unequal dispensations of Providence -- a charge which I cannot heartily forgive your divines for admitting. You admit it indeed for an extreme good purpose, and you build on this admission the necessity of a future state of rewards and punishments. But what if you should find, that this future state will not account, in opposition to the atheist, for God's justice in the present state, which you give up? Would it not have been better to defend God's justice in this world against these daring men, by irrefragable reasons, and to have rested the proof of the other point on revelation? I do not like concessions made against demonstration, repair or supply them as you will."

Most of Pope's contemporaries considered the Essay on Man his greatest literary accomplishment, yet on searching through the correspondence of the chief men and women of the age, I find only Bolingbroke and Swift commenting upon it. He did not acknowledge the authorship until 1734. He explains his motives somewhat elaborately in a letter to Swift.

"I say once more, that I know your hand, though you did not mine in the Essay on Man. I beg your pardon for not telling you as I should, had you been in England; but no secret can cross your Irish sea, and every clerk in the post office had known it. I fancy, though you lost sight of me in the first of those Essays, you saw me in the second. The design of concealing myself was good, and had its dull effect. I was thought a divine, a philosopher, and what not; and my doctrine had a sanction I could not have given to it. Whether I can proceed in the same grave march like Lucretius or must descend to the gaieties of Horace, I know not, or whether I can do either. But be the future as it will, I shall collect all the past in one fair quarto this winter, and send it to you; where you will find frequent mention of yourself. I was glad you suffered your writings to be collected more completely than hitherto, in the volumes I daily expect from Ireland, I wished it had been in more pomp, but that will be done by others. Yours are beauties, that can never be too finely dressed, for they will ever be young. I have only one piece of mercy to beg of you; do not laugh at my gravity, but permit me to wear the beard of a philosopher, till I pull it off, and make a jest of it myself."

In the reply to the above, Swift expresses his opinion and through his reference we can also conclude what the Duke of Dorset thought of the work.

"Surely I never doubted about your Essay on Man; and I would lay any odds that I would never fail to discover you in six lines, unless you had a mind to write below or beside yourself on purpose. I confess I did never imagine you were so deep in morals, or that so many new and excellent rules could be produced so advantageously and agreeably in that science from any one head. I confess in some few places I was forced to read twice. I believe I told you before

what the Duke of Dorset said to me on that occasion, how a judge here who knows you, told the Duke, that on the first reading of those Essays, he was much pleased, but found some lines a little dark; on the second, most of them cleared up, and his pleasure increased; on the third he had no doubt remaining, and then he admired the whole."

The three selections that follow are taken from Pope's letters to Caryll and indicate that he was still keeping up the fiction that he was not the author of the Essay on Man and it also shows us what the general feeling towards the poem was then in England.

"The town is now full of a new poem entitled an Essay on Man, attributed, I think with reason to a divine. It has merit in my opinion, but not so much as they give it. At least it is incorrect, and has some inaccuracies in the expressions, one or two of an unhappy kind, for they may cause the author's sense to be turned, contrary to what I think his intention, a little unorthodoxically. Nothing is so plain as that he quits his proper subject, this present world, to assert his belief of a future state, and yet there is an if instead of a since that would overthrow his meaning; and at the end he uses the words "God the soul of the world" which at the first glance may be taken for heathenism, while his whole paragraph proves him quite christian in his system, from man up to seraphim. I want to know your opinion of it after twice or thrice reading. I give you my thought very candidly of it, though I find there is a sort of fashion to set up the author and his piece in opposition to me and my little things, which I confess are not of so much importance as to the subject, but I hope they conduce to morality in their way, which way is at least more generally understood, and the seasoning of satire renders it more palatable to the generality."

"I must tell you that the hints you gave me are not lost upon me; for I have left out the character of the Duke of Wharton, which I showed you, those lines you thought too hard; and I believe the author of the Essay on Man will end his poem in such a manner as will satisfy your scruple. I think it impossible for him, with any congruity to his confined and strictly philosophical subject, to mention our Savior directly; but we may magnify the christian doctrine, as the perfection of all moral; nay, and even, I fancy, quote the very words of the gospel precept, that includes all the law and the precepts, thou shall love God above all things, &c, and I conclude that will remove all possible occasion of scandal."

"The Essay upon Man is a more serious thing, therefore it will be sent to you. To the best of my judgment the author shows himself a christian at last in the assertion,,that all earthly happiness as well as future felicity, depends upon the doctrine of the gospel,- love of God and man,- and that the whole aim of our being is to attain happiness here and hereafter by the practice of universal charity to man, and entire resignation to God. More particular than

this he could not be with any regard to the subject, or manner in which he treated it. I shall be glad to know your opinion of his winding up."

That Swift and Pope were soon ranked among the great authors of the past, of both Europe and England, is well illustrated by the comment made by Lord Chesterfield to his son.

"A gentleman should know those which I call classical works, in every language - such as Boileau, Corneille, Racine, Moliere, in French, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Swift, etc. in English; and the three authors above-mentioned in Italian. Whether you have any such in German, I am not quite sure, nor, indeed, am I inquisitive. These sort of books adorn the mind, improve the fancy, are frequently alluded to by, and are often the subjects of conversations of the best companies. As you have languages to read, and memory to retain them, the knowledge of them is very well worth the pains it will cost you, and will enable you to shine in company. It is not pedantic to quote and allude to them, which it would be in regard to the ancients."

For convenience in summarizing the criticism of Pope's work found in the letters, of the eighteenth century, we shall arrange our discussion in the following division:- His own poetry, Versification, and Classic Translations.

Pope says nothing direct that can be taken as either praise or censure of his Pastorals. In replying to letters of praise, he assumes a modesty that might be interpreted as indicating that he thought his early poetry was rather poor stuff, but knowing Pope we feel the insincerity of his pretensions and realize that his purpose was to give the impression that he was properly modest.

It is certainly true that the commendation, he received on his Pastorals, in personal letters, from Trumbull, Wycherley, and William Walsh, was so bountiful and in such high terms, that it should have fully satisfied his desire for approval. When such critics tell him repeatedly that he equals Milton and Virgil in pastoral composition, and in addition testify to the popular approval and reception of The Pastorals in Tonson's Miscellany, then we know that this early verse was indeed thought to be poetry of high rank. To one familiar with the true nature poetry of the Romanticists of the two last centuries such judgments, even when made by Walsh the great critic of Dryden's day, are scarcely understandable.

Concerning Windsor Forest its author, in his correspondence, mentions only the details of its publication. Of Pope's contemporaries Swift alone refers to the poem. This comment which expresses much admiration for the poem is in a letter to Stella.

In the opinion of modern students, The Rape of the Lock is by far the best of Pope's Satires. To us it seems odd that the merits of this poem were not discussed by the contemporary writers in their correspondence, yet that they did not is true without an exception.

The Dunciad has lost its pertinency for us; we neither know, nor desire to take the trouble to know, the figures ridiculed within its biting and bitter lines.

Judging from the comments in the personal letters, the popularity of this mass of personalities, was instantaneous and lasted beyond that generation. Swift helped plan this work and was lavish in his praise. Pope's friends received the Dunciad with delight. At a later time Mrs. Montagu praised the fourth book and a few years later Walpole in a letter pointed out the specific beauties of this satire.

The Essay on Man, the last of Pope's original productions, he called a "serious thing" and spoke of himself as a philosopher. He also said, "the town is full of a new poem entitled an Essay on Man." This is the most direct praise that he gave to any of his compositions. From his later correspondence it is evident that Pope carried on his letter writing with the leading literary men, from the beginning with the idea of collecting and publishing his letters. His desire to pose as an unassuming genius whose merit alone brought the acclaim of the public, probably accounts for the absence of estimates of his own work.

The letter, to William Walsh the critic, that gives in detail Pope's ideas on the niceties of English versification, should occupy an important place in the critical opinion as expressed in the personal letter.

The beauties of versification as presented here are parallel to those presented in his Essay on Criticism. In the latter, he states his idea concerning poetry and then proceeds to illustrate with lines of verse the fault or excellency that he has discussed.

In this letter he insists that verse must not only be pleasing to the ear but, "the very sounds, as well as words", should be adapted to the thing or subject he treats. If one describes a gliding stream, "the numbers should run easy and flowing", while if it is a rough and tumbling torrent, the words should be, "sonorous and swelling", etc., He then gives examples from the Latin of Virgil, and says that both Virgil and Homer knew well how to secure such subtle effects. He says that the best example of this adaptation in English is Dryden's poem, Alexander's Feast.

He elaborates on the necessity and naturalness of pauses in lines of ten syllables, and while he maintains that the pause may come after the fourth or sixth syllable, he insists that the most

natural and least monotonous place in the line is after the fifth. Thus we have the explanation and defense of the rocking-horse effect in the couplet as used by Pope.

Pope maintained that the use of expletives to complete a rhyme, or to add a necessary syllable was injurious to the harmony of poetry.

We see stated here his prejudice against Alexandrines, but he allows their use when they contain some "rare beauty".

The repetition of rhymes, within four or six lines, and the use of monosyllables are equally objectionable to his trained ear.

The use of the hiatus, must have been particularly hateful to him for he goes into its use, most carefully.

Such a presentation, in a letter, of his rules for versification illustrates clearly the emphasis put upon the perfectness of form in verse in the reign of Queen Anne.

Both Robert Bridges and Trumbull urged Pope to translate Homer. Pope gives his ideas of what a translation should be, but these ideas are most general. He says, "the speeches have a rapture and fire", which carry one away with their force, and that he believes that is what a translator of Homer, "should principally imitate." In planning his translation he expected to use the rhyming couplet as the most fit instrument, but he neither advocates nor defends this verse form. His letters make it clear that his chief motive was to make money, though in the end it did add greatly to his reputation as a poet. He was jealous of the praise bestowed by Addison upon Tickell's translation, which showed his anxiety to be the first poet of the age even in translation.

The Odyssey was undertaken purely in the spirit of money making, and to relieve himself of much of the drudgery of translation, he employed two assistants, Broome and Fenton. As a result they translated twelve of the books, and all of the notes were supplied by Broome. The Odyssey received praise but added nothing to his fame.

The letters show beyond question the principal criticisms of that time, and substantiate many of the opinions held now that have been developed from other sources. In general, our study has borne out the accepted judgment that Pope was the reigning poetical favorite of the first half of the eighteenth century.

CHAPTER IV.

ADDISON-STEELE-RICHARDSON-FIELDING-SMOLLETT-STERNE.

Joseph Addison

The correspondence of Addison yields practically nothing for our purpose. He neither discusses his own work nor the achievements of his friends. He died in 1719 and therefore to his work belongs the first part of the age of Pope.

Swift knew Addison well, and they were friends for awhile, but the party spirit of the time was too strong for their friendship. Consequently Swift, in his letters refers to Addison only to criticise him and no where in his personal letters does he attempt to make an estimate of Addison's literary attainments.

Pope for the sake of his own advancement, cultivated Addison and ostensibly remained his friend, until, he praised Tickell's translation of Homer to the detraction of Pope's and then their friendship ceased.

The tragedy, Cato, was most successful when first played in London. That histories of literature, have emphasized this same fact, has seemed strange to the reader of the play today, yet the letters of Pope bear out the truth of this statement.

From the following it will be seen that Pope admired the play extravagantly, just as a work of art.

"I have had lately the entertainment of reading Mr. Addison's tragedy of Cato. The scene is in Utica, and the time the last night of his life. It drew tears from me in several parts of the fourth and fifth acts, where the beauty of virtue appears so charming that I believe if it comes upon the theatre we shall enjoy that which Plato thought the greatest pleasure an exalted soul could be capable of, a view of virtue itself drest in person, colour, and action. The emotion which the mind will feel from this character, and the sentiments of humanity which the distress of such a person as Cato will stir up in us, must necessarily fill an audience with so glorious a disposition, and sovereign a love of virtue, that I question if any play has ever conduced so immediately to morals as this."

Later Pope writes to Caryll of the performance of Cato on the stage. The enthusiasm of the public must have been tremendous.

"Cato was not so much the wonder of Rome itself in his days, as he is in Britain of ours: and though all the foolish industry possible has been used to make it a party-play, yet what the author

once said of another may be most properly in the world applied to him on this occasion:-

> Envy itself is dumb, in wonder lost,
> And factions strive who shall applaud him most,

The numerous and violent claps of the whig party on the one side of the theatre were echoed back by the tories on the other, while the author sweated behind the scenes with concern to find their applause proceeded more from the hand than the head.

The play was published but this Monday, and Mr. Lewis tells me it is not possible to convey it to you before Friday next. The town is so fond of it, that the orange wenches and fruit-women in the park offer the books at the side of the coaches, and the prologue and epilogue are cried about the streets by the common hawkers. But of all the world none have been in so peculiar a manner enamoured with Cato as young gentleman of Oxford, who makes it the sole guide of all his actions, and subject of all his discourse. He dates everything from the first or third night, etc., of Cato: he goes out of town every day it is not played, and fell in love with Mrs. Oldfield for no other reason than because she acted Cato's daughter."

Addison's position in the government and as a literary man was attained before Pope rose to prominence. The latter was careful to have influential friends ready to advance anything he was about to present for the public's approbation.

This letter to Addison illustrates Pope's method, and indicates that Addison had some standing as a critic.

"As to what you said of me, I shall never believe that the author of Cato can speak one thing and think another. As of proof that I count you sincere, I beg a favour of you,-it is that you would look over the two first books of my translation of Homer, which are in the hands of my Lord Halifax. I am sensible how much the reputation of any poetical work will depend upon the character you give it. It is therefore some evidence of the trust I repose in your good will, when I give you this opportunity of speaking ill of me with justice, and yet expect you will tell me your truest thoughts, at the same time that you tell others your most favourable ones. I have a farther request, which I must press with earnestness My bookseller is printing the Essay on Criticism, to which you have done too much honour in your Spectator of No. 253. The period in that paper where you say, "I have admitted some strokes of ill-nature into that Essay," is the only one I could wish omitted of all you have written; but I would not desire it should be so unless I had the merit of removing your objection. I beg you but to point out those strokes to me, and you may be assured, they will be treate without mercy."

Burns compliments the Spectator highly when he tells us of its effect upon him.

"I believe I owe this to the glorious paper in the Spectator, "The Vision of Mirza", a piece that struck my young fancy before I was capable of fixing an idea to a word of three syllables."

The clearness and ease of Addison's style also appealed to Cowper.

"The latter Roman writers are remarkable for false ornament, they were yet no doubt admired by the readers of their own day; and with respect to authors of the present era, the most popular among them appear to me equally censurable on the same account. Swift and Addison were simple; Pope knew how to be so, but was frequently tinged with affectation; since their day I hardly know a celebrated writer who deserves the character."

Richard Steele

The letters of Steele in content and in length are in strong contrast to the letters of other literary men of his generation. They are usually short and contain mostly matters relating to his own fortunes and to politics. He had no friends to whom he wrote consistently, and with whom he discussed all matters of importance relating to himself.

The first announcement of the existence of the Tatler, in the personal correspondence of this time, is in a letter written by Wycherley to Pope, May 19th 1709, about five weeks after the appearance of the first number.

"But hitherto your Miscellanies have safely run the gauntlet, through all the coffee-houses; which are now entertained with a whimsical new newspaper, called the Tatler, which I suppose you have seen. This is the newest thing I can tell you of."

Swift was much interested in the Tatler, and in his Journal to Stella referred to it in a complimentary manner until he became too engrossed in the affairs of the Tories, and began to contribute to the Examiner, then he criticised Steele's paper harshly. The quoted extract from the Journal would seem to indicate that Swift announced the fact with pleasure that the last number of the Tatler had appeared.

"Steele's last Tatler came out today. You will see it before this comes to you, and how he takes leave of the world. He never told so much as Mr. Addison of it, who was surprised as much as I; but to say the truth, it was time, for he grew cruel, dull and dry. To my knowledge, he had several good hints to go upon, but he was so lazy and weary of the work that he would not improve them."

The end of the Tatler was on Jan. 2nd, 1711. The Spectator appeared on March 1st, 1711. Shortly after the following appeared in Swift's letters to Stella.

"Have you seen the Spectator yet, a paper that comes out every day? 'Tis written by Mr. Steele, who seems to have gathered new life, and have a new fund of wit; it is in the same nature as his Tatlers, and they have all of them had something pretty. I believe Addison and he, club. I never see them; and I plainly told Mr. Harley and Mr. St. John, ten days ago, before my Lord Keeper and Lord Rivers, that I had been foolish enough to spend my credit with them in favor of Addison and Steele; but that I would engage and promise never to say one word in their behalf, having been used so ill for what I had already done.

The Spectator is written by Steele, with Addison's help: it is often very pretty. Yesterday it was made of a noble hint I gave him long ago for his Tatlers, about an Indian supposed to write his travels into England. I repent he ever had it. I intended to have written a book on that subject. I believe he has spent it all in one paper, and all the under-hints there are mine too; but I never see him or Addison."

The Spectator continued through six hundred and thirty four numbers before coming to its end on Dec. 6, 1712.

Swift in writing to Stella on April 3rd refers to the beginning of Steele's new paper the Guardian.

"Did I tell you that Steele has begun a new daily paper called the Guardian? They say good for nothing. I have not seen it."

Pope also comments upon this paper in a letter to Caryll.

"I wholly agree with you in your opinion of the Guardian in general, only I must do Mr. Steele the justice to assure you those he writes himself are equal to any he has wrote. The grand difference is caused by the want of Mr. Addison's assistance, who writes as seldom as I do,- one a month or so. By the way, that on Tom Dunfey was his, as the receipt for an epic poem was your servant's. Your judgment on the three copies of verse I sent you is what you need not doubt I think good, because the last of them was my own."

Steele also established the Englishman, The Lover, The Reader, The Theatre and Town-Talk but they are not mentioned in the correspondence of the day.

The plays of Steele are not referred to in any letters that I have read, although The Conscious Lovers, had quite a run at the Drury Lane Theatre. Our results only give the opinions of other men concerning Steele's work, and these men only discuss his work as publisher and contributor to the Tatler, Spectator and Guardian.

Samuel Richardson

The published correspondence of Richardson gives us interesting and important information for our purpose. In a study of the early novel one of the first questions that arises, is what caused Richardson to write novels? His letters not only explain the reason but give us the true story on which the adventures of Pamela were founded. According to this story a girl, when quite young, was taken by a lady of station as a sort of companion. The young lady grew in beauty and attractiveness, until the lady's son became enamoured with her and tried all kinds of stratagems in order to seduce her; she escaped all of his plots and schemes, but not without going through many and dangerous experiences.

The immediate cause of the writing of Pamela was the request of two gentlemen, to write for them, "a little book of familiar letters on the useful concerns in common life."

"A little book (which, they said, they were often asked after) of familiar letters on the useful concerns in common life; and, at last, I yielded to their importunity, and began to recollect such subjects as I thought would be useful in such a design, and formed several letters accordingly. And, among the rest, I thought of gving one or two as cautions to young folks circumstanced as Pamela was. Little did I think, at first of making one, much less two volumes of it. But, when I began to recollect what had, so many years before, been told me by my friend, I thought the story, if written in an easy and natural manner, suitably to the simplicity of it, might possibly introduce a new species of writing, that might possibly turn young people into a course of reading different from the pomp and parade of romance-writing, and dismissing the improbable and marvellous, with which novels generally abound, might tend to promote the cause of religion and virtue. I therefore gave way to enlargement; and so Pamela became as you see her."

This explanation presents the occasion for the composition of our first novel and in addition states Richardson's purpose. Another significant fact is found in this selection; the author thought he was inaugurating, "a new species of writing that would turn the young people from romance reading." This is the first time that an author states in his letters that he expected the young people to form his audience. According to his letters it took him from Nov.10, 1739 to Jan. 10, 1740, to write Pamela. The shortness of this time is nothing less than remarkable.

The correspondence of Richardson, which was with numerous men and women, representative of all classes of society, gives abundant evidence of the tremendous popularity of Pamela. This popularity aroused his ambition to try another story. Clarissa Harlowe was published in 1747, and made Richardson's position as a novelist secure. Letters poured in to him: some correspondents objected to

Clarissa's death, some thought that Lovelace was entirely too attractive for a scoundrel, while still others wished that Clarissa, by her virtue, had reformed Lovelace and made him equally noble as herself. Richardson defends himself against his admirers. At one place he maintains, and rightly I think, that by such a happy ending he would have repeated the essentials of Pamela. In letters to Mrs. Belfour he goes into minute details in his defence of his characters in Clarissa. This analysis is the most thorough of any contemporary criticism but these letters are too long and to numerous to permit a complete summary.

The plan of creating a man of noble character, who could be taken as a pattern of masculine virtue, was probably suggested to Richardson by the letters that requested him to develop Lovelace into a virtuous gentleman.

"And I have the pleasure of telling you, without any mixture of vanity, that it (Clarissa) rises in reputation. But I am drawn into acquaintance, and into correspondencies upon it, so numerous, and that with and from people of condition, that what time I have to spare from my troublesome and necessary business, is wholly taken up. But I am teased by a dozen ladies of note and of virtue, to give them a good man, as they say I have been partial to their sex, and unkind to my own."

The evolution of Sir Charles Grandison, who was to be the male paragon, of the third novel is presented in the correspondence of Miss Mulso with the novelist. Richardson wished Sir Charles to have a few weaknesses else he might be a "faultless monster." Miss Mulso suggested certain faults. She says, "Does not Sir Charles love teasing a little"? This suggestion is thrown out as being, "too ungenerous". The author continues, "I would draw him as a mortal. He should have all the human passions to struggle with, and if he cannot conquer them he must force them to be subservient to virtue". Of Harriet he says, "She is humbled by her love to think herself inferior to his sisters, but I intend to raise her above them, even in her own just opinion; and when she shines out the girl worthy of the man, not exalt, but reward her, and at the same time make him think himself highly rewarded by the love of so frank and so right an heart."

He apparently started to write this third novel sometime in the year 1751 and published the first of it in 1753 completing the work in 1755. Richardson's reputation was now at its height, and Sir Charles was in great demand. Some Irish booksellers stole some sheets from the press room and put out an edition before the English books could arrive in Dublin. Money-making was of course the object and this argues that Richardson's work must have been in demand to cause such efforts on the part of publishers.

We know from contemporary evidence that Pamela literally took England by storm; a fourth edition came out in less than six months. The following selection from Shenstone's letters illustrates how intimate a place Pamela took in the lives of the people. The largest part of the letter is taken up with an imitation of the language and manner of Pamela in her letters.

"Well! and so I sat me down in my room, and was reading Pamela----one might furnish this book with several pretty decorations, thought I to myself; and then I began to design cuts for it, in particular places. For instance, one, where Pamela is forced to fall upon her knees in the arbour: a second, where she is in bed, and Mrs. Jewkes holds one hand, and Mr. B. the other: a third, where Pamela sits sewing in the summer-house, &c. So I just sketched them out, and sent my little hints, such as they were to Mr. R---n."

The same author later objects to the length of Pamela, and says that it would have made one good volume and that it was a wonder that the author did not have sense enough to see that.

While Dr. Johnson very decidedly outlawed the novels of Fielding from respectable society, he admired Richardson's works extravagantly, as this letter to the novelist indicates.

"Though Clarissa wants no help from external splendour, I was glad to see her improved in her appearance, but more glad to find that she was now got above all fears of prolixity, and confident enough of success to supply whatever had hitherto been suppressed. I never indeed found a hint of any such defalcation, but I regretted it; for though the story is long, every letter is short.

I wish you would add an index rerum, that when the reader recollects any incident, he may easily find it, which at present he cannot do, unless he knows in which volume it is told; for Clarissa is not a performance to be read with eagerness, and laid aside forever; but will be occasionally consulted by the busy, the aged, and the studious; and therefore I beg that this edition, by which I suppose posterity is to abide, may want nothing that can facilitate its use."

Horace Walpole complained to Lady Hervey that Richardson's characters were not true to life; the sentimentalism of the novelist did not harmonize with the autocratic notions of the author of the romantic, Castle of Otranto.

"If the worst comes to the worst, I will admire Clarissa and Sir Charles Grandison; and declare I have not a friend in the world that is not like my Lord Edward Bomston, though I never knew a character like it in my days, and I hope I never shall nor do I think Rousseau need to have gone so far our of his way to paint a disagreeable Englishman."

Richardson sent to Dr. Johnson the first volumes of his third and last novel Sir Charles Grandison; the latter praised it and gave suggestions for its improvement.

"I return you my sincerest thanks for the volumes of your new work; but it is a kind of tyrannical kindness to give only so much at a time, as makes more longed for; but will probably be thought, even of the whole, when you have given it.

I have no objection but to the preface, in which you first mention the letters as fallen by some chance into your hands, and afterwards mention your health as such, that you almost despaired of going through your plan. If you were to require my opinion which part should be changed, I should be inclined to the suppression of that part which seems to disclaim the composition, What is modesty, if it deserts from truth? Of what use is the disguise by which nothing is concealed?

You must forgive this, because it is meant well.

I thank you once more, dear sir, for your books; but cannot I prevail this time for an index?-such I wished, and shall wish, to Clarissa. Suppose that in one volume an accurate index was made to the three works-but while I am writing an objection arises-such an index to the three would look like the preclusion of a fourth, to which I will never contribute; for if I cannot benefit mankind, I hope never to injure them."

The following strictures by Lady Montagu show that the third novel was recognized as inferior to Pamela and Clarissa.

"I have now read over Richardson - he sinks horribly in his third volume (he does so in his history of Clarissa). When he talks of Italy, it is plain he is no better acquainted with it than he is with the kingdom of Mancomingo. He might have made his Sir Charles amour with Clementina begin in a convent, where the pensioners sometimes take great liberties; but that such familiarity should be permitted in her father's house, is as repugnant to custom, as it would be in London for a young lady of quality to dance on the ropes at Bartholomew fair: neither does his hero behave to her in a manner suitable to his nice notions. It was impossible a discerning man should not see her passion early enough to check it, if he had really designed it. His conduct puts me in mind of some ladies I have known, who could never find out a man to be in love with them, let him do or say what he would, till he made a direct attempt, and then they were so surprised, I warrant you! nor do I approve Sir Charles's offered compromise as he calls it.)

There must be a great indifference as to religion on both sides to make so strict a union as marriage tolerable between people of such distinct persuasions. He seems to think women have no soul by agreeing so easily that his daughters should be educated in bigotry and idolatry."

The modern reader certainly appreciates the feelings of Shenstone when he asserts that Richardson needed the art of abridgment in all of his works. We can agree entirely with the sentiment of the following selection.

"I am now like the rest of the world, perusing Sir Charles Grandison - I know not whether that world joins me, in preferring Clarissa. The author wants the art of abridgment in every thing that he has written, yet I am much his admirer."

From a study of the works, poems and letters, of Burns, one would conclude that he knew the heart of the common people thoroughly and also knew the universal elements in people of what ever rank. His comment upon the reality of Richardson's characters is well worth while.

"Original strokes that strongly depict the human heart is your, (Dr. Moore) and Fielding's province, beyond any other novelist I have ever perused. (Richardson, indeed, might perhaps be excepted; but, unhappily, his dramatis personae are beings of another world; and however they may captivate the unexperienced, romantic fancy of a boy or a girl, they will ever,,in proportion as we have made human nature our study, dissatisfy our riper years.")

Of all the unfavorable criticisms of Richardson the following specific weaknesses as pointed out by Lady Montagu are the most severe to be found in the correspondence of that period.

"Richardson is so eager for the multiplication of them, I suppose he is some parish curate, whose chief profit depends on weddings and christenings. He is not a man-midwife; for he would be better skilled in physic than to think fits and madness any ornament to the characters of his heroines: though this Sir Charles had no thoughts of marrying Clementain till she had lost her wits, and the divine Clarissa never acted prudently till she was in the same condition, and then very wisely desired to be carried to Bedlam, which is really all that is to be done in that case. Madness is as much a corporal distemper as the gout or asthma, never occasioned by affliction, or to be cured by the enjoyment of extravagant wishes. Passion may indeed bring on a fit, but the disease is lodged in the blood, and it is not more ridiculous to attempt to relieve the gout by an embroidered slipper, than to restore reason by the gratification of wild desires."

While the critic just referred to, found many things to object to in Pamela, Clarissa, and Sir Charles Grandison, yet the following comment speaks of the power that Richardson had over his readers, even when they were his critics.

"This Richardson is a strange fellow. I heartily despise him, and eagerly read him, nay, sob over his works, in a most scandalous manner. The two first tomes of Clarissa touched me, as being very

resembling to my maiden days; and I find in the pictures of Sir Thomas Grandison and his lady, what I have heard of my mother, and seen of my father."

Henry Fielding.

After hunting through many bibliographies, I have come to the conclusion that if Henry Fielding wrote many letters they have not been preserved, and that the few that have been are not collected in a single edition.

We are therefore forced to present the opinions of Fielding's work as held by others and not as commented upon by himself. However, he does mention his play, The Modern Husband, in a letter to Mary Wortley Montagu.

"Madam,

"I have presumed to send your ladyship a copy of the play which you did me the honor of reading three acts of last spring, and hope it may meet as light a censure from your ladyship's judgment as then; for while your goodness permits me (what I esteem the greatest, and indeed only happiness of my life), to offer my unworthy performances to your perusal, it will be entirely from your sentence that they will be regarded or disesteemed by me. I shall do myself the honor of calling at your ladyship's door tomorrow at eleven, which, if it be an improper hour, I beg to know from your servant what other time will be more convenient. (I am, with the greatest respect and gratitude, madam,

"Your ladyship's most obediant,
"Most devoted humble servant,
"Henry Fielding.")

"I hope your ladyship will honor the scenes, which I presume to lay before you, with your perusal. As they are written on a model I never yet attempted, I am exceedingly anxious lest they should find less mercy from you than my lighter productions. It will be a slight compensation to "The Modern Husband", that your ladyship's censure of him will defend him from the possibility of any other reproof, since your least approbation, will always give me pleasure, infinitely superior to the loudest applauses of a theatre. For what ever has passed your judgment may, I think, without any imputation of immodesty, refer want of success to want of judgment in an audience."

The only reference in the personal correspondence of his prominent contemporaries to one of his plays is made by Horace Walpole while writing to Horace Mann.

"There has been a new comedy, called The Foundling far from good but it took; Lord Hobert and some more young men made a party to damn it, merely for the love of damnation. The Templars espoused

the play, and went armed with syringes charged with stinking oil, and with sticking plasters for Buddy's fair hair; but it did not come to action. Garrick was impertinent, and the pretty men gave over their plot the moment they grew to be in the right."

We have only one statement from which to conclude what Fielding thought of his first novel and that is found in a letter from Joseph Warton to his brother Tom in 1746.

"I find he values, as he justly may, his Joseph Andrews above all his writings: he was extremely civil to me, I fancy, on my father's account."

One might interpret this to mean that the author thought Joseph Andrews superior to his masterpiece Tom Jones, but we must remember that the latter was not yet published, and we cannot even assume that the MS. was in orderly shape.

The most detailed analysis of Joseph Andrews is found in Thomas Gray's letter to Richard West written in less than two months after the appearance of this novel. "I have myself, upon your recommendation, been reading Joseph Andrews. The incidents are ill laid and without invention; but the characters have a great deal of nature, which always pleases even in our lowest shapes. Parson Adams is perfectly well; so is Mrs. Slipslop, and the story of Wilson; and throughout he the (the author) shews himself well read in Stage-Coaches, Country Squires, Inns, and Inns of Court. His reflections upon high people and low people, and misses and masters, are very good. However the exaltedness of some minds (or rather as I shrewdly suspect their insipidity and want of feeling or observation) may make them insensible to these light things, (I mean such as characterise and paint nature) yet surely they are as weighty and much more useful than your grave discourses upon the mind, the passions, and what not."

Lady Mary Montagu admired the works of Fielding and in writing from Venice to the Countess of Bute paid a high tribute to his genius as a writer of a story that held her attention under not very favorable circumstances.

"I have at length received the box, with the books enclosed, for which I give you many thanks, as they amused me very much. I gave a very ridiculous proof of it, fitter indeed for granddaughter than myself. I returned from a party on horseback; and having rode twenty miles, part of it by moonshine, it was ten at night when I found the box. I could not deny myself the pleasure of opening it; and falling upon Fielding's works, was fool enough to sit up all night reading. I think Joseph Andrews better than his Foundling."

Dr. Johnson had decided opinions about most individuals. In the next quotation we have the opinion of Joseph Andrews held by

Hannah More, and we get also Johnson's measure of the novelist's merits.

"Of Joseph Andrews I declared my decided abhorrence. He, (Johnson) went so far as to refuse to Fielding the great talents which are ascribed to him, and broke out into a noble panegyric on his competitor Richardson; who, he said, was as superior to him in talents as in virtue, and whom he pronounced to be the greatest genius that had shed its lustre on this path of literature."

The three volumes of Miscellanies of Fielding were published in 1743; the third volume is wholly devoted to the History of the Life of the late Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great. William Cowper in a letter to Samuel Rose speaks of the book as being most entertaining.

"We have read, that is to say my cousin has, who reads to us in the evening, the history of Jonathan Wild; and found it highly entertaining. The satire on great men is witty, and I believe perfectly just: we have no censure to pass on it, unless that we think the character of Mrs. Heartfree not well sustained, - not quite delicate in the latter part of it-and that the constant effect of her charms upon every man who sees her has a sameness in it that is tiresome, and betrays either much carelessness, or idleness, or lack of invention. It is possible indeed that the author might intend by this circumstance a satirical glance at novelists, whose heroines are generally all bewitching; but it is a fault that he had better noticed in another manner, and not have exemplified in his own."

The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling, was published in 1749 seven years after the publication of Fielding's first novel. Instead of reading Tom Jones, Richardson asked two young ladies Miss Astraea and Minerva Hill to read it and give him their opinions of it. This is part of their reply.

"Meanwhile, it is an honest pleasure, which we take in adding, that (exclusive of one wild, detach'd and independent Story of a Man of the Hill, that neither brings on anything, nor rose from Anything that went before it) All the changeful windings of the Author's Fancy carry on a course of regular Design; and end in an extremely moving Close, where lives that seem'd to wander and run different ways, meet, All, in an instructive Center.

"The whole Piece consists of an inventive Race of Disappointments and Recoveries. It excites Curiosity, and holds it watchful. It has just and pointed Satire; but it is a partial Satire, and confin'd, too narrowly: It sacrifices to Authority, and Interest. Its Events reward Sincerity, and punish and expose Hypocrisy; shew Pity and Benevolence in amiable Lights, and Avarice and Brutality in very despicable ones. In every Part It has Humanity for its

Intention: In too many, it seems wantoner than it was meant to be: It has bold shocking pictures; and (I fear) not unresembling ones, in high life, and in low. And (to conclude this too adventurous Guess-work, from a Pair of forward Baggages) would, every where, (we think), deserve to please,- if stript of what the Author thought himself most sure to please by.

"And thus, Sir, we have told you our sincere opinion of Tom Jones."

Richardson in this extract from his reply makes known his own point of view and from his remarks we can judge of his motives.

"I must confess, that I have been prejudiced by the Opinion of several judicious friends against the truly coarse-titled Tom Jones; and so have been discouraged from reading it.- I was told, that it was a rambling Collection of Waking Dreams, in which Probability was not observed: And that it had a very bad Tendency. And I had Reason to think that the Author intended for his Second View (his first, to fill his Pocket, by accommodating it to the reigning Taste) in writing it, to whiten a vicious Character, and make Morality bend to his Practices. What reason had he to make his Tom illegitimate, in an age where keeping is become the fashion? And a Kept fellow, the lowest of all fellows, yet in love with a young Creature who was traping (trapesing?) after him, a Fugitive from her Father's house?- Why did he draw his heroine so fond, so foolish, and so insipid?- Indeed he has one excuse - He knows not how to draw a delicate woman- He has not been accustomed to such Company,- And is too prescribing, too impetuous, too immoral, I will venture to say, to take any other Byass than that a perverse and crooked nature has given him; of Evil Habits, at last, have confirm'd in him. Do men expect Grapes or Thorns, or Figs of Thistles? But, perhaps, I think the worse of the piece because I know the writer, and dislike his Principles both Public and Private, tho 'I wish well to the man, and love four worthy sisters of his, with whom I am well acquainted, And indeed should admire him, did he make the use of his Talents which I wish him to make, For the Vein of Humour, and Ridicule, which he is master of, might, if properly turned, do great Service to ye Cause of Virtue.

But no more of this Gentleman's Work, after I have said, That the favourable Things, you say of the Piece, will tempt me, if I can find Leisure, to give it a Perusal."

The criticism of Lady Wortley Montagu is in detail and is not all together unfair, though it seems much worrying over little things to us when she laments his emphasis, (in common with all such books) upon extravagant passion and the harm that may result to the young readers.

"Fielding has given a true picture of himself and his first wife, in the characters of Mr. and Mrs. Booth. I wonder he does not perceive Tom Jones and Mr. Booth are sorry scoundrels. All this sort of books have the same fault, which I cannot easily pardon being very mischievous. They place a merit in extravagant passions, and encourage young people to hope for impossible events to draw them out of the misery they choose to plunge themselves into, expecting legacies from unknown relatives, and generous benefactors to distressed virtue, as much out of nature as fairy treasures. Fielding has really a fund of true humour, and was to be pitied at his first entrance into the world, having no choice, as he said himself, but to be a hackney writer, or a hackney coachman. His genius deserved a better fate; but I cannot help blaming that continued indiscretion, to give it the softest name, that has run through his life and I am afraid still remains. I guessed R. Random to be his, though without his name. I cannot think Ferdinand Fathom wrote by the same hand, it is every way so much below it."

Tom Jones must have aroused violent criticism. Miss Hannah More in a letter reports her conversation with Dr. Johnson. She had referred to several passages as being clever and witty. The Doctor was outraged, and indicated by his remarks that he thought no respectable person should read "such a vile immoral book".

The humor of Fielding impressed his generation. Walpole who did not care for his novels, pays tribute to this quality in them. "

"Fielding had as much humour, perhaps, as Addison; but, having no idea of grace, is perpetually disgusting. His innkeepers and parsons are the grossest of their profession; and his gentlemen are awkard when they should be at their ease."

I shall conclude our study of Fielding by quoting from the Letters of Burns. He compares the merits of Mr. Moore, author of Zeluco, and Fielding with Richardson.

"I have just read over, once more of many times, your "Zeluco". I marked with my pencil, as I went along, every passage that pleased me particularly above the rest; and one or two, I think, which, with humble deference, I am disposed to think unequal to the merits of the book. Original strokes that strongly depict the human heart is your and Fielding's province, beyond any other novelist I have ever perused. Richardson, indeed, might perhaps be excepted; but, unhappily his dramatis personae are beings of another world; and however they may captivate the unexperienced, romantic fancy of a boy or a girl they will ever, in proportion as we have made human nature our study, dissatisfy our riper years."

Tobias Smollett.

A search through all the bibliographies available, such as those in the Cambridge History of English Literature, has disclosed no personal letters of Smollett. The biographies and brief sketches of his life have been equally fruitless. The almost total absence of Smollett's name and works from the correspondence of the day covering the years from 1740 to his death in 1771, would incline one to believe that his novels were not popular, yet we know such a conclusion is not in accordance with the facts.

That Tobias Smollett's work in Roderick Random was well done, and at least as good as Fielding's in the opinion of Mary Wortley Montagu, is shown in her letter to the Countess of Bute.

"There is something humorous in R. Random, that makes me believe that the author is H. Fielding. I am horribly afraid, I guess too well the writer of those abominable insipidities of Cornelia, Leonora and the Ladies' Drawing Room. I fancy you are now saying, 'tis a sad thing to grow old; what does my poor mama mean by troubling me with criticisms on books, that nobody but herself will ever read? You must allow something to my solitude. I have a pleasure in writing to my dear child, and not many subjects to write upon."

Lady Montagu in a letter written in 1755 compliments the inventiveness of Smollett in his first works, Roderick Random, and Peregrine Pickle, and comments on the weakness of Ferdinand Fathom. The three mentioned are the ones referred to for his first two books; were published by 1751, and the third; in 1753. The translation of Don Quixote appeared in 1754.

"I am sorry my friend Smollett loses his time in translations: he has certainly a talent for invention though I think it flags a little in his last work. Don Quixote is a difficult undertaking: I shall never desire to read any attempt to new-dress him. Though I am a mere piddler in the Spanish language, I had rather take pains to understand him in the original, than sleep over a stupid translation."

Mrs. Montagu in a letter to the same person expresses her dissatisfaction with Smollett's History of England.

"The story deserves the pen of my dear Smollett, who, I am sorry, disgraces his talent by writing those stupid romances, commonly called history."

By some means Burns had secured a copy of Smollett's posthumous poem Ode to Independence; the spirit of the poem fitted the mood of the poet and he wrote to Mr. Cunningham in its praise.

"Thy spirit, Independence, let me share;
Lord of the lion-heart and eagle-eye!
Thy steps I follow with my bosom bare,
Nor heed the storm that howls along the sky!"

Are not these noble verses? They are the introduction of Smollett's Ode to Independence: if you have not seen the poem, I will send it to you."

Lawrence Sterne.

Lawrence Sterne was not a man of many intimate friends with whom he corresponded. His letters are mostly to his family or to friends of the family. He carried on no consistent intercourse, by means of the personal letter, with any literary man of note in England; though he was acquainted and associated with the leaders of the social and literary circles of London. His comments on his work are usually in letters to his publisher or are in response to a favourable criticism from some person of influence.

Sterne had confidence in the merits of Tristram Shandy, his letters to Dodsley, outlining the terms on which he wished the book published, are quite unusual, and give the impression that Sterne, even at this time before he had tried the taste of the public, had confidence in his powers that verged on conceit.

"What you wrote to me in June last, in answer to my demand of fifty pounds for the "Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy" - That was too much risk on a single volume, which, if it happened not to sell, would be hard on your brother" - I think a most reasonable objection in him against giving me the price I thought my work deserved. You need not tell how much authors are inclined to overrate their productions:- for my part, I hope I am an exception; for if I could find out by any arcanum, the precise value of mine, I declare Mr. Dodsley should have it 20 per cent below its value.

I propose, therefore, to print a lean edition, in two small volumes, of the size of "Rasselas", and on the same paper and type, at my own expense, merely to feel the pulse of the world, and that I may know what price to set upon the remaining volumes, from the reception of these. If my book sells, and has the run our critics expect, I propose to free myself of all future troubles of this kind, and bargain with you, if possible, as they come out, which will be every six months."

A Mrs. Furguson had written to Sterne that she had heard that he was "Writing an extraordinary book". In reply he answers the question, of why he turned author, in a whimsical fashion. This letter is dated Nov. 19, 1759, which was before the publication of the novel Tristram Shandy though it refers to it.

"Now for your desire of knowing the reason of my turning author? Why truly I am tired of employing my brains for other people's advantage.--'Tis a foolish sacrifice I have made for some years to an ungrateful person. I depend upon the candour of the public, but I shall not pick out a jury to try the merit of my book amongst ----, and till you read my "Tristram," do not, like some people condemn it.----Laugh I am sure you will at some of its passages."

The earliest report of the success of the new novel is found in a letter from Sterne to Richard Beringer in which the author, playfully assumes that the book was written by a dear friend of his. This account, which was early in 1760, presents the most common adverse criticism of the day, that its emphasis upon the pruriency of humanity tended to incite and arouse the lower passions of society.

"There are two Volumes just published here, which have made a great noise and have had a prodigious run; for, in two days after they came out, the Bookseller sold two hundred, and continues selling them very fast. It is the "Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy", which the author told me last night at our concert he had sent up to London, so perhaps you have seen it; if you have not seen it pray get it and read it, because it has a great character as a witty smart Book, and if you think so, your good word in town will do the author, I am sure, great service. You must understand he is a kind and generous friend of mine, whom Providence has attach'd to me in this part of the world, where I came a stranger--and I could not think how I could make a better return, than by endeavouring to make you a friend to him and his performance; this is all my excuse for this liberty, which I hope you will excuse. His name is Sterne, a gentleman of great Preferment, and a Prebenary of the church of York, and has a great character, in these parts, as a man of Learning and Wit; the grever people, however, say 'tis not fit for a young lady to recommend it; however the Nobility and Great Folks stand up mightily for it, and say 'tis a good Book, tho' a little tawdry in some places."

David Garrick had commented favorably upon Tristram Shandy to a friend of the author. This was sufficient encouragment, so Sterne writes him a letter, in which he gives one interesting fact about the writing of the book and also tells us that it is a revelation of himself.

"But my first impulse was to send it to you, to have had your critique upon it, before it went to the press---it fell out otherwise and has therefore gone forth into the world, not as it came from my brain, without one correction:- 'tis however a picture of myself, and so far may bid the fairer for being an original."

If one wishes to find adverse criticism of the authors, who wrote after Pope and Swift (with the exception of Gray) let him go

to the letters of Horace Walpole. In Walpole's attack on the genius of Sterne, he tells us also of the success of the novelist.

"At present, nothing is talked of, nothing admired, but what I cannot help calling a very insipid and tedious performance: it is a kind of novel, called The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy; the great humor of which consists in the whole narration always going backwards. I can conceive a man saying that it would be droll to write a book in that manner, but have no notion of his persevering in executing it. It makes me smile two or three times at the beginning, but in recompense makes me yawn for two hours. The characters are tolerably kept up, but the humour is forever attempted and missed. The best thing in it is a sermon, oddly coupled with a good deal of bawdy, and both the composition of a clergyman. The man's head, indeed, was a little turned before, now topsy turvy with his success and fame. Dodsley has given him six hundred and fifty pounds for the second edition and two more Volumes (which I suppose will reach backwards to his great-great-grand-father); Lord Fauconberg, a donation of one hundred and sixty pounds a year; and Bishop Warburton gave him a purse of gold and this compliment (which happened to be a contradiction), 'that it was quite an original composition, and in true Cervantic vein: the only copy that ever was original, except in painting, where they all pretend to be so. Warburton, however, not content with this, recommended the book to the bench of bishops, and told them Mr. Sterne, the author, was the English Rabelais. They had never heard of such a writer."

That Thomas Gray, read Tristram Shandy with pleasure and looked forward to the coming of additional volumes, is evident from this letter to Thomas Wharton.

"If I did not mention Tristram to you, it was because I thought I had done so before. There is much good fun in it, and humour sometimes hit and sometimes missed. I agree with your opinion of it, and shall see the two future volumes with pleasure. Have you read his sermons (with his own comic figure at the head of them)? they are in the style, I think, most proper for the pulpit, and shew a very strong imagination and a sensible heart; but you see him often tottering on the verge of laughter, and ready to throw his periwig in the face of his audience."

In the month preceding his death Sterne, in a letter to Dr. Eustace who lived in America, writes very sensibly of the various criticisms that had been showered upon Tristram.

"In Tristram Shandy, the handle is taken which suits the passions, their ignorance or their sensibility. There is so little true feeling in the herd of the world, that I wish I could have got an act of parliament, when the books first appeared, that none but wise men should look into them. It is too much to write books, and find heads to understand them: the world, however, seems to come

into a better temper about them; the people of genius here being to a man on its side; and the reception it has met with in France, Italy, and Germany, has engaged one part of the world to give it a second reading.

I am very proud, Sir, to have had a man like you on my side from the beginning; but it is not in the power of every one to taste humour, however he may wish it; it is the gift of God; and, besides, a true feeler always brings half the entertainment along with him; his own ideas are only called forth by what he reads; and the vibrations within him entirely correspond with those excited. 'Tis like reading himself, and not the book."

It was not the novelty of Sterne's method or of his material that caught the people's fancy. Sterne in 1765, refers to the popularity of the latter volumes.

To Garrick he writes, "I have had a lucrative winter's campaign here----Shandy sells well." Again to Mr. Hesselridge, "Have you seen my 7 and 8 graceless children? (Vols. 7 and 8 of "Tristram Shandy") He also comments on the reception of the Last volumes, "Have you got the last volume of Shandy? 'tis liked the best of all here."

In a letter to some friends he announces the beginnings of his Sentimental Journey.

"But I have something else for you which I am fabricating at a great rate, and that is my "Sentimental Journey", which will make you cry as much as it has affected me---or I will give up the business of sentimental writing-and write to the body- that is, H., what I am doing in writing to you- but you are a good body, which is worth half a score of mean souls.--"

He tells Lydia Sterne, of his plan to write, "I shall not begin my 'Sentimental Journey' till I get to Coxwould, I have laid a plan for something new, quite out of the beaten track."

We find the following in his correspondence with Mrs. Montagu. "My 'Sentimental Journey' goes on well---and some Geniuses in the North declare it is an original work, and likely to take in all kinds of readers."

The reception given the second production in his home city is referred to in this letter to his daughter.

"My "Sentimental Journey", you say, is admired in York by everyone---but what is the gratification of my feelings on this occasion?----The want of health bows me down, and vanity harbours not in thy father's breast---this vile influenza---be not alarmed, I think I shall get the better of it---and shall be with you both the first of May; and if I escape, 'twill not be for a long period my child---unless a quiet retreat and peace of mind can restore me."

The favorable mention of "A Sentimental Journey", by Walpole comes as a pleasant surprise, though his reason is not quite clear, when one knows both productions.

"Sterne has published two little volumes, called Sentimental Travels. They are very pleasing, though too much dilated, and infinitely preferable to his tiresome Tristram Shandy, of which I never could get through three volumes. In these there is a great good nature and strokes of delicacy."

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The results of my examination of the personal letters that relate to the prose writers will be summarized briefly in the order of our discussion.

Politics with party spirit running high was the absorbing game of the 18th century. To the people of his own day Addison doubtless was as much or more of a political figure than a man of letters. From his letters politics was the more absorbing interst. Our study of his correspondence was fruitless in producing information that could be used in giving his opinion of his own work, or in giving any facts related to the purpose, or composition of his literary work.

Swift too is silent in his letters concerning the productions of his erstwhile associate and friend.

However, we do find brief comments in Letters from many sources that indicate that Addison's style in the Spectator was recognized as excellent; and it was frequently characterized, as simple and pure. Johnson according to Boswell, discussed Addison at length many times, but these discussions do not get into the letters. Burn also praised the qualities of the Spectator.

It is from the letters of Pope that we get the most favorable criticism (of the merits) of the Drama Cato; from the same authority come the reports of the tremendous success of the play on the stage. From his language we get the impression that Cato was the outstanding play of the Reign of Queen Anne.

Cowper's comment upon Addison in the fourth quarter of the century causes us to conclude that the volumes of the Spectator were still being read at that time.

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The uncertainty and impulsiveness of Steele's life are reflected in his letters, they deal mostly with business and politics

and furnish us with no facts about his writing. He carried on no correspondence for a long period with anyone, and as a result we do not have his opinion of his contemporaries.

Swift commended the Tatler and contributed to it. Wycherley, comments upon the origin of this "whimiscal newspaper" but says nothing further.

In his Journal to Stella, Swift commends the Spectator highly, but thinks Steele's Guardian worth very little.

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As one would expect, the advent of a writer, whose subject and method were novel, caused much comment. By 1740 the Queen Anne group were gone with the exception of Pope who is quoted as having said, "it (Pamela) will do more good than many volumes of sermons." The criticisms we find must come from the writers who lived near the middle of the century. Richardson himself carried on an extensive correspondence with many people. He gives in detail the origin of the first novel of English domestic life, but for that letter our information would be imperfect. The reality with which the life of Pamela was accepted is illustrated throughout in the letters he received from numerous friends. These letters which he received concerning all three novels, discuss the characterization of his stories in minutest detail and many suggestions for improvment are offered by his correspondents. He usually answered these friends with an explanation or defense, and it is from these replies that we get valuable information.

It is quite clear from the letters that Richardson had something of the reformer in him, and hoped his characters would instruct his readers in the art of right and proper living. His good characters were to be patterns of virtue and his evil men were to serve as warnings of what to avoid. Richardson acknowledged the pleasure that the popular reception of his works gave him. His jealousy of Fielding's success becomes all too evident, this feeling did not permit him to see any virtue in his rival's performance. His comments on Sterne indicate his disapproval of that novelist's work as well.

Our study brings out clearly the fact that no author of the 18th century had the approbation of so many people representing such different groups. Of course Walpole could see little merit in so plebeian a performance, but when Dr. Johnson, Robert Burns, Elizabeth Montagu, and Alexander Pope, to mention only the most prominent, agree to Richardson's power and art then that author had accomplished the exceptional.

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Some friends of Richardson insist that Fielding got his inspiration and some of his characters from Pamela. According to this view Parson Adams is a portrait of Parson Young. However this may be, if we could have Fielding's account of the origin of his first work, it would certainly be valuable, but I could find no such information in the personal letters. Fielding is mentioned only once in the personal letter as commenting upon his novels, and then he states that Joseph Andrews pleased him more than any of his works written up to that time.

The situation as regards the two great novelists is changed, Walpole is the admirer of Fielding and Dr. Johnson is his severe judge. Elizabeth Montagu specifically states Fielding's qualities as they appeal to her. Cowper and Burns both commend the ability of the author of Tom Jones. From the letters it would seem that the moralists, who wanted the right to triumph and evil to receive its proper reward, admired Richardson, but that those who knew the world appreciated the more life like characters of Fielding. One, even among the readers of that day, might have divided the judicious readers into sentimentalists and realists.

The letter of the 18th century demonstrates that Fielding was less popular than Richardson, that this preference was made on the basis of what the readers thought should be represented for everyone to read rather than on the art of the novelist in representing characters from life.

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The personal letters of the 18th century afford so little information about Smollett, that it is scarcely necessary to summarize our results. The absence of critical comments, on this novelist from the correspondence of all the prominent literary people of the day is a striking discovery. Even Dr. Johnson fails to mention him in his letters and Boswell refers to him only twice and at these times nothing is said of him as a novelist. The Cambridge History of English Literature says; "The publication of Roderick Random brought Smollett immediately into fame," perhaps so, but the almost entire lack of comment in the personal letters would indicate that he was but a minor figure in comparison with Richardson and Fielding.

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The use of the personal letter by Sterne was not that of a form of literature, neither was it a means of carrying on pleasant intercourse with friends and acquaintances, to him the letter was chiefly a matter of business and convenience.

Sterne, from his letters was noticeably different from Richardson, for this later novelist had confidence in the popularity of his novel long before it was published. He returns a whimsical answer to the question of why he turned author, and assures the inquirer that people will enjoy the humor of his novel.

His presentation of vulgarity and low humour are the common criticisms found in the contemporary correspondence. The laughter that his characters provoked is the quality most often commended. Walpole censures Tristram, complaining that while he laughed at the beginning of the story that it made him yawn for two hours after, and that often the author's attempt at humour failed completely. To our surprise this critic does admit that he had read the Sentimental Journey with pleasure.

Gray was struck with the humor of Tristram and comments on that quality without any mention of Sterne's ability to draw life-like characters. It is evident from the letters that Sterne, on the publication of Tristram, met with popularity at once. We would expect the critics to divide themselves into two groups for much the same reasons that caused their widely different opinions of Fielding, but we do not find this to be strictly true. Dr. Johnson does not even refer to Sterne in his correspondence and Walpole gives him more censure than praise.

Beyond doubt a careful analysis of the personal correspondence of the 18th century, indicates that of the four novelists discussed Richardson had by far the largest reading public, Fielding came next in the popular estimation, Sterne was a poor third, and Smollett appealed to a very small group.

CHAPTER V.

THOMSON-COLLINS-GRAY-GOLDSMITH-COWPER

James Thomson.

In this chapter I shall consider the critical opinion in the person letter as related to some of the forerunners of the romantic movement: Thomson, Collins, Gray, Goldsmith, and Cowper.

Since we have been unable to find any personal letters of James Thomson the results of our study show only what was said about the poet, in the correspondence of the day.

While we know that Pope and Thomson were friends, their intimacy going so far that Pope suggested corrections in the Seasons, yet of the Queen Anne group only Swift comments upon the merit of Thomson's work.

"As to your blank verse, it has too often fallen into the same vile hands of late. One Thomson, a Scotchman, has succeeded the best in that way, in four poems he has writ on the four seasons, yet I am not overfond of them because they are all description, and nothing is doing, whereas Milton engages me in actions of the highest importance, modo me Romae modo ponit Athenis, and yours on the seven Psalms, etc. have some advantages that way."

That this favourable opinion was not universal is abundantly illustrated in this prejudiced statement from a letter written by Horace Walpole to Horace Mann.

"The town flocks to a new play of Thomson's called Tancred and Sigismunda: it is very dull; I have read it. I cannot bear modern poetry; these refiners of the purity of the stage, and of the incorrectness of English verse, are most woefully insipid. I had rather have written the most absurd lines in Lee, than Leonidas or The Seasons; as I had rather be put into the round-house for a wrong-headed quarrel, than sup quietly at eight o'clock with my grandmother."

Miss Hannah More, one of Thomson's admirers had a large acquaintance with the literary folk of her time. Her coming to the defense of Thomson is referred to in this letter to her sister Martha.

"I passed the whole evening at the Bishop of St. Asaph's in a very pleasant wrangle with Mr. Walpole about poets: he abusing all my favourites, and I all his; he reprobating Akenside, Thomson, and all my bards of the blank song; and I all his odes and lyrics. I told him (rather lightly, I fear) that David had expressed my notion of the obscurity of lyric poetry, when he said, "I will utter my dark speech upon the harp."

Thomson with his collaborator Mallet wrote a number of dramas. Elizabeth Montagu refers, in an uncomplimentary manner, to the masque Alfred.

"A mask at Cliefden, on Princess Augusta's birthday; 'The Story of Alfred, 'wrote by Thomson and Mallet, Mr. Grenville commends it and says it will be published. I own I cannot give much credit to it, for I rather imagine he commends as a patriot than a judge. I never knew anything of Thomson's that seemed to be wrote, or could be read, without great labor of the brain."

Strictly speaking neither the poets of the Queen Anne group nor those of the age of Johnson comment in their letters upon Thomson's two chief poems, The Seasons, and The Castle of Indolence.

The personal letters of Burns abound with quotations from and references to the works of Thomson, especially to The Seasons. At times he even quotes the Dramas. Burns evidently knew Thomson's work thoroughly and loved him.

In the following letter to Mrs. Dunlop, one of Burns's ardent patrons he quotes Thomson with facility, and shows us the important place that this minor Scotch poet held in his heart.

"There is a charming passage in Thomson's "Edward and Eleanora":-

"The valient, in himself, what can he suffer?
Or what need he regard his single woes?"-&c.

As I am got in the way of quotations, I shall give you another from the same piece, peculiarly-alas! too peculiarly - opposite, my dear Madam, to your present frame of mind:-

"Who so unworthy but may proudly deck him
With his fair-weather virtue, that exults
Glad o'er the summer main? the tempest comes;
The rough winds rage aloud; when from the helm
This virtue shrinks, and in a corner lies
Lamenting.-Heavens!if privileged from trial
How cheap a thing were virtue!"

I do not remember to have heard you mention Thomson's dramas. I pick up favourite quotations and store them in my mind as ready armour, offensive or defensive, amid the struggle of this turbulent existence. Of these in one, a very favourite one, from his "Alfred".

"Attach thee firmly to the virtuous deeds
And offices of life; to life itself,
With all its vain and transient joys, sit loose."

The Earl of Buchan wrote to Burns asking him to be present at the coronation of a bust of Thomson and at the opening of a temple

to his memory at Ednam Hill. He also requested him to compose an Ode for the occasion. This is Burns's reply.

"Your lordship hints at an ode for the occasion. I got indeed to the length of three or four stanzas in the way of address to the shade of the bard, on crowning his bust. I shall trouble your lordship with the subjoined copy of them, which, I am afraid, will be but too convincing a proof how unequal I am to the task."

Burns's enthusiasm for Thomson did not abate in his latter years. In the following selection, Burns (in a letter to Mr. Cunningham) is speaking of his hopes for his own son. From this short quotation we catch the throbbing feeling of Burns, and also of Thomson as interpreted by the emotion of his fellow poet.

"Let me flatter myself that this sweet little fellow, who is just now running about my desk, will be a man of a melting, ardent, glowing heart, and an imagination delighted with the painter and rapt with the poet. Let me figure him wandering out in a sweet evening, to inhale the balmy gales, and enjoy the growing luxuriance of the spring; himself the while in the blooming youth of life. He looks abroad on all nature, and through nature up to nature's God. His soul, by swift delighting degrees, is rapt above this sublunary sphere, until he can be silent no longer, and bursts out into the glorious enthusiasm of Thomson:-

> "These, as they change, Almighty Father, these
> Are but the varied God.- The rolling year
> Is full of Thee:"

and so on in all the spirit and ardour of that charming hymn."

William Cowper also appreciated the genius of Thomson. He, in a letter to Rev. William Unwin, recommends Thomson's Seasons as proper reading for a young man.

"The sooner the ear is formed, and the organs of speech are accustomed to the various inflections of the voice, which the rehearsal of those passages demands, the better. I should think, too, that Thomson's Seasons might afford him some useful lessons. At least they would have a tendency to give his mind an observing and a philosophical turn."

Samuel Rose wrote to Cowper asking for his opinion of Thomson as a poet. Cowper gives us a summary, admirable in its clearness, of Thomson's qualities (as a poet).

"Thomson was admirable in description; but it always seemed to me that there was somewhat of affectation in his style, and that his numbers are sometimes not well harmonized. I could wish too, with Dr. Johnson, that he had confined himself to this country; for when he describes what he never saw, one is forced to read him with some allowance for possible misrepresentation. He was, however, a true poet, and his lasting fame has proved it."

William Collins.

William Collins, the author of the Ode to Evening, the Liberty Ode, and other odes of more or less note with some Eclogues, was not widely received as a poet, by people of his age. The personal correspondence of the eighteenth century bears out this conclusion, for it is only in the letters of Burns, Cowper, Samuel Johnson, and Thomas Gray, that we find the name of Collins referred to.

Burns, in discussing his lack of ability to write an ode to Thomson compliments Collins.

"Your lordship hints at an ode for the occasion: but who would write after Collins? I read over his verses to the memory of Thomson and despaired."

Cowper having finished reading some of Johnson's Lives of the Poets, mentions the obscurity of Collins and then proceeds to discuss Collins's religious propensities, apparently forgetting the poets literary accomplishments.

"I have lately finished eight volumes of Johnson's Prefaces, or Lives of the Poets. In all that number I observe but one man - a poet of no great fame - of whom I did not know that he existed till I found him there, whose mind seems to have had the slightest tincture of religion; and he was hardly in his senses. His name was Collins. He sunk into a state of melancholy, and died young. Not long before his death, he was found at his lodgings in Islington by his biographer, with the New Testament in his hand. He said to Johnson, 'I have but one book, but it is the best'. Of him, therefore, there are some hopes. But from the lives of all the rest ther is but one inference to be drawn:- that poets are a very worthless, wicked set of people."

Dr. Johnson gives Collins scant praise in his 'Lives' and concludes his four page discussion with the following summary:- "As men are often esteemed who cannot be loved, so the poetry of Collins may sometimes extort praise when it gives little pleasure."

In his letters the Doctor mentions the poet once and then refers to his ability as a scholar and student.

"But how little can we venture to exult in our intellectual powers or literary attainments, when we consider the condition of poor Collins. I knew him a few years ago full of hopes and full of projects, versed in many languages, high in fancy, and strong in retention. This busy and forcible mind is now under the government of those who lately would not have been able to comprehend the least and most narrow of its designs. What do you hear of him? Are there hopes of his recovery? Or is he to pass the remainder of his life in misery and degradation? Perhaps with complete consciousness of his calamity."

Gray in writing to Thomas Wharton on December 27, 1746, speaks of Collin's volume entitled Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegoric subjects. Oddly enough Gray did not perceive the rare worth of Collins's work.

"Have you seen the works of two young authors, a Mr. Warton and a Mr. Collins, both writers of Odes? it is odd enough, but each is the half of a considerable man, and one the counterpart of the other. The first has but little invention, very poetical choice of expression, and a good ear. The second a fine fancy, modelled upon the antique, a bad ear, great variety of words, and images with no choice at all. They both deserve to last some years, but will not."

Thomas Gray.

Gray's appearance in the Literary world came too late for the wits of the pseudo-classic age to express their opinions of his work, in their correspondence. The author of the Elegy, while his correspondence fills two fair sized volumes, did not have a large list of correspondents, and these men were not the leaders of the literary world. When we have included Rev. William Mason, Horace Walpole, Richard West, Thomas Wharton, Richard Stonehewer, Rev. Norton Nicholls, and Gray's family the list is about complete.

His personal letters make interesting reading for they portray a personality that is attractive. Gray says little about his contemporaries and gives scarcely any information about the origin of his own compositions. His critical faculty was well developed and when he uses it we get enlightening criticism, The following strictures on poetic diction are excellent.

"As to matter of style, I have this to say: the language of the age is never the language of poetry; except among the French, whose verse, where the thought or image does not support it, differs in nothing from prose. Our poetry, on the contrary, has a language peculiar to itself; to which almost everyone, that has written, has added something by enriching it with foreign idioms and derivatives: nay sometimes words of their own composition or invention. Shakespear and Milton have been great creators this way; and no one more licentious than Pope or Dryden, who perpetually borrow expressions from the former. Let me give you some instances from Dryden, whom everyone reckons a great master of our poetical tongue. Full of museful mopeings- unlike the trim of love-stood silent in his mood with knots and knares deformed-his ireful mood-in proud array- his boon was granted-and disarray and shameful rout-wayward but wise-furbished for the field- the foiled dodderd oaks-disherited-smouldering flames-retchless of laws-crones old and ugly-the beldam at his side-the grandam-hag-villanise his Father's fame.- But they are infinite: and our language not being a settled thing (like the French) has an undoubted right to words of an hundred

years old, provided antiquity have not rendered them unintelligible. In truth, Shakespear's language is one of his principal beauties; and he has no less advantage over your Addisons and Rowes in this, than in those other great excellences you mention."

Gray refers to the publication of the Eton Ode, and the Ode on Spring in a letter to Horace Walpole.

"As to my Eton Ode, Mr. Dodsley is padrone. The second you had, I suppose you did not think it worth giving him: otherwise, to me it seems not worse than the former."

Walpole is outspoken in his great admiration for the poet's work.

"Your Lordship sees that I am no enthusiast to Mr. Gray: his great lustre has not dazzled me, as his obscurity seems to have blinded his contemporaries. Indeed I do not think that they ever admired him, except in his Churchyard, though the Eton Ode was far its superior, and is certainly not obscure. The Eton Ode is perfect: those of more masterly execution have defects, yet not to admire them is total want of taste."

Ambition to win fame and prominence through his poetic achievements seems not to have been a constant force in Gray's life. For instance let us examine his first reference to the Elegy in a letter to Walpole.

"I have been here at Stoke, a few days (where I shall continue a good part of the summer); and having put an end to a thing, whose beginning you have seen long ago, I immediately send it you. You will, I hope, look upon it in the light of a thing with an end to it: a merit that most of my writings have wanted, and are like to want, but which this epistle I am determined shall not want, when it tells you that I am ever yours."

He gave the MS to Walpole who handed it around freely among his friends as a result it came near being published without the author's knowledge or consent. The situation worried him and the next February he urged immediate action on Walpole.

"As you have brought me into a little sort of distress, you must assist me, I believe, to get out of it as well as I can. Yesterday I had the misfortune of receiving a letter from certain gentleman (as their bookseller expresses it), who have taken the Magazine of Magazines into his hands. They tell me that an ingenious Poem, called reflections in a Country Church-yard, has been communicated to them, which they are printing forthwith; that they are informed that the excellent author of it is I by name, and they beg not only his indulgence, but the honour of his correspondence, etc. As I am not at all disposed to be either a correspondent or so indulgent as they desire, I have but one bad way left to escape

the honour they would inflict upon me; and therfore am obliged to desire you would make Dodsley print it immediately (which may be done in less than a week's time) from your copy, but without my name in what form is most convenient for him, but on his best paper and character; he must correct the press himself, and print it without any interval between the stanzas, because the sense is in some places continued beyond them; and the title must be, Elegy, written in a Country Church-yard. If he would add a line or two to say it came into his hands by accident, I should like it better. If you behold the Magazine of Magazines in the light that I do, you will not refuse to give yourself this trouble on my account, which you have taken of your own accord before now. If Dodsley do no do this immediately, he may as well let it alone."

In 1775 Rev. William Mason published the letters of Gray; the poet's friends apparently appreciated his letters almost as much as they did his verse. Mrs. Boscawen, in writing to Miss Hannah More, praises the letters, and Gray's poetry.

"I return at intervals to my charming book, with all the eagerness of a glutton I went through it with more than pleasure - with enthusiasm. I had always a passion for Gray, which his letters are calculated to increase. His poetry is so exquisite, that the delight I feel in reading him is generally mixed with regret that he wrote so little; a sentiment which would diminish the pleasure of it, were it not so perfect as to admit of no diminution.

Though my great admiration of the poetical works of Gray had made me form the highest expectations of his letters, yet my ideas were all fulfilled upon reading them. In my poor opinion they possess all the graces and all the ease which I apprehend ought to distinguish this familiar species of composition. They have also another and a higher excellence: the temper and spirit he almost constantly discovers in the unguarded confidence and security of friendship, will rank him among the most amiable of men: as his charming verses will give him among the first of lyric poets."

Dr. Johnson's inability to pass a fair judgment on anything of Gray's, shows clearly in his letter to Mrs. Thrale.

"The book which is now most read, but which, as far as I have gone, is but dull, is Gray's letters prefixed by Mr. Mason to his poems., I have borrowed mine, and therefore can not lend it, and I can hardly recommend the purchase."

In strong contrast is the extreme praise of Walpole.

"You I am sure, sir, will let his genius want no due honour; and it is not to interfere with anything that you design to say of him, and which you will say better than anybody, that I send you the following lines.

Great shades of Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, hear,
A genuine Bard from Genius claims a tear.
He, who in numbers, worthy of the Lyre,
Enshrin'd your names, now joins the mighty choir.
Amidst your radiant Urns his Urn enclose,
A spot more hallow'd than where kings repose;
Aloft let pomp her Edwards, Henrys, keep;
Near Homer's dust should Pindar's ashes sleep.

If I could have greater contempt for the age than I have, it would be on observing that one single paragraph is all that has been on our friend; but when there are columns in every paper on Sir Francis Delaval, ought we not to be glad? Who would be the hero of these times?"

Cowper gives, I think a fair opinion, which is plainly without the violent partisanship of Johnson or Walpole.

"I have been reading Gray's works, and I think him the only poet since Shakespeare entitled to the character of sublime. Perhaps you will remember that I once had a different opinion of him. I was prejudiced. He did not belong to our Thursday society, and was an Eton man, which lowered him prodigiously in our esteem. I once thought Swift's letters the best that could be written; but I like Gray's better. His humour, or his wit, or whatever it is to be called, is never ill-natured or offensive, and yet I think equally poignant with the Dean's."

Oliver Goldsmith.

No collection of Goldsmith's letters has been available for my study. What letters I have read have been found in biographies and have not been numerous. In these no references are found to his best known poems The Traveler and The Deserted Village.

Cowper, of the poets of the age, alone mentions Goldsmith's poetry, in his personal letters.

"I have read Goldsmith's Traveller and his Deserted Village, and am highly pleased with them both, as well for the manner in which they are executed, as for their tendency, and the lessons that they inculcate."

It is common knowledge that Dr. Johnson, was a sort of literar guardian to Goldsmith and was largely responsible for the latter's position in the clubs of London, yet "The Great Cham", does not comment, on the works of his protege, in his correspondence.

Goldsmith had great difficulties with Colman, the manager of Covent Garden, in getting him to stage fairly, She Stoops to Conque

The author's confidence in the merit of his production, with his determination not to allow any change to be made, is clearly shown in this letter to Comman.

"I entreat you'll relieve me from that state of suspense in which I have been kept for a long time. Whatever objections you have made or shall make to my play, I will endeavor to remove and not argue about them. To bring in any new judges either of its merits or faults I can never submit to. Upon a former occasion, when my other play was before Mr. Garrick, he offered to bring me before Mr. Whitehead's tribunal, but I refused the proposal with indignation: I hope I shall not experience as harsh treatment from you as from him."

The success of the play was prodigious. Goldsmith refers to it very simply.

"The play has met with success much beyond your expectations or mine. I thank you sincerely for your epilogue, which, however, could not be used, but with your permission shall be printed."

Horace Walpole could see little merit in any production that came from the circle over which Johnson presided. His prejudice comes out plainly in the following quotations taken from three letters.

Mr. Walpole writes to the Rev. W. Mason: "Dr. Goldsmith has written a comedy, it is the lowest of all farces, it is not the subject I condemn, though very vulgar, but the execution. The drift tends to no moral; no edification of any kind. The situations, however, are well imagined, and make one laugh, in spite of the grossness of the dialogue, the forced witticisms, and total improbability of the whole plan and conduct. But what disgusts me most is, that though the characters are very low, and aim at low humour, not one of them says a sentence that is natural or marks any character at all. It is set up in opposition to sentimental comedy, and it is as bad as the worst of them. Garrick would not act it, but bought himself by a poor prologue."

Walpole writes to the Countess of Upper Ossory: "What play makes you laugh very much and yet it is a very wretched comedy? Dr. Goldsmith's, She Stoops to Conquer. Stoops indeed! so she does, that is the Muse; she is draggled up to the knees, and has trudged, I believe, from Southwork Fair. The whole view of the piece is low humour, and no humour is in it. All the merit is in the situations, which are comic; the heroine has no more modesty than Lady Bridget, and the author's wit is as much manque as the lady's; but some of the characters are well acted, and Woodward speaks a poor prologue, written by Garrick, admirably."

Walpole writes to Rev. William Cole: I have no thirst to know the rest of my contemporaries, from the absurd bombast of Dr.

Johnson down to the silly Dr. Goldsmith, though the latter changeling has had bright gleams of parts, and the former had sense, till he changed it for words, and sold it for a pension. Don't think me scornful. Recollect that I have seen Pope, and lived with Gray."

This comment from Burns is a memorable tribute to the beauty of Goldsmith's poetry and is a proper one with which to close our study.

"I oft repeat that couplet of my favourite poet, Goldsmith--

"---States of native liberty possest,
Tho' very poor, may yet be very blest."

* *

Before presenting my study of Cowper I shall summarize the results of our investigation concerning the four men just considered.

Our judgment of Thomson is entirely taken from the correspondence of his contemporaries for his letters were not available. Of the Queen Anne coterie, Swift alone mentions the poet. He commends him by saying that Thomson had exceeded all men of that day in the use of blank verse.

Elizabeth Montagu and Horace Walpole, stand much alone in their adverse criticism. Pope maintains an unbroken silence in his correspondence on the subject. And strange to say Gray does not even mention so prominent a poet in his letters.

The personal letters show that Thomson was well received by the literary people. Boswell in writing to Samuel Johnson, says that Dr. Joseph Warton had written an excellent treatise on the beauties of Thomson's poetry. Johnson tells us that it was through his opinion of Thomson that he was included in the "Lives".

In addition we have the ardent admiration of Burns, Cowper discusses specifically the qualities of Thomson's verse, and concludes by saying, "he was a true poet and his lasting fame has proved it.

Our discussion of Collins is likewise handicapped by the lack of his personal letters. Dr. Johnson tells us that he was never a widely known poet, and that his poetic life was short. To our surprise Gray saw no virtues in Collins's poetry. The praise of Johnson, Burns and Cowper is sufficient testimony that, Collins was appreciated by the judicious.

In the personal letters of Gray we find little information as to the origin or purpose of his poetry. The most valuable part of his published correspondence for our purpose is contained in one

letter in which he discusses, poetic diction. In this controversy he maintains in general that the use of the diction of the past is in part justified and proper for "the language of the age is never the language of poetry."

The question of his popularity may be answered from the information in the correspondence of the day. Horace Walpole, Rev. Mason, Richard West, Mrs. Boscawen, and Cowper held a high opinion of his merits, but Johnson could not appreciate the poetic beauties claimed for him.

Gray gives no estimate of his own accomplishment and does not explain what he considered his poetic qualities. As we have learned to expect, Cowper expresses his estimate without prejudice. He calls him the only poet since Milton that can be called sublime. He even acknowledges a former prejudice. In conclusion he gives higher rank to the wit and humor of Gray's letters than to the same qualities in the correspondence of Swift.

If we do not go outside of the letter for information; we must conclude that the poetry of Gray did not have a wide popularity in England during this century.

Colman, the manager of Covent Garden, did all he could to cause, She Stoops to Conquer, to fail on its first appearance, but it succeeded in spite of his efforts. In his letters Goldsmith tells us of his difficulties with Colman, and that the success of the play exceeded his expectations. This comedy is commended frequently in Boswell's life of Johnson. Different men of the group are quoted as having thought highly of the drama. The letters of these men and of Johnson give us no information.

Walpole, in his correspondence takes many opportunities to criticise Goldsmith. He speaks of him, as "Silly Dr. Goldsmith". In spite of the popular success of She Stoops to Conquer, Walpole insists several times that it is a vulgar farce; he admits that it made one laugh, but maintains that the witticisms are forced. The very selection and arrangement of Walpole's language informs us of his violent prejudice against this poet.

For an appreciation and estimate of Goldsmith that is similar to the modern opinion, we turn to Burns and to Cowper. The Scottish bard calls him his "favourite poet", and Cowper approves heartily of both The Traveler and The Deserted Village.

We have learned from the personal letter what the contemporary opinion of these poets was as expressed by the leading literary men of the time. We know something of their estimate of themselves, and in the correspondence of the day we have found what their chief and lasting poetical qualities were.

* *

William Cowper.

The great figures of the literary world of England, who dominated the field during the first half of the 18th century, had disappeared before the publication of Cowper's first volume of poetry on March 1st 1782. Of the strictly Queen Anne group none were living at this time. Even of the Johnsonian circle only the Doctor and Boswell were still living. Goldsmith, Gray, Collins, and Thomson had all passed on. While the vogue of the personal letter was still in fashion, (being greater than ever considering the mere numbers of letters written) yet there were few writers of great literary prominence or promise in England at that time. It was a time of many minor translations, a time of going back to Shakespeare and Milton for the germs of the new movement in poetry, which had been promoted in part by Thomson, Gray, Collins, and Goldsmith and many minor figures. This being true there were few fellow-craftsmen to encourage Cowper in his work. A glance over the list of his correspondents fails to discover a name that is known today beyond the limits of the English class room. We therefore lose what might have been the critical comment, on Cowper's work; of the best poets of the century. Cowper comments upon the men of his day, quite freely, and these criticisms of Gray, Collins, Thomson, Johnson, Pope, Addison, and Burns while brief form the most interesting part of his collected letters.

In presenting the critical literary opinions as found in Cowper's correspondence we discover that although he is termed by the editor of his letters, 'the greatest of English letter writers', that these four volumes are principally valuable for our purpose, in giving Cowper's own opinion of his work and in stating the opinions of others as paraphrased by Cowper.

The earliest letter in the four volume collection of Cowper's correspondence, is dated Nov. 1753. However it is not until Feb. 27th, 1780 in a letter to Rev. Wm. Unwin that we find mention of his attempts at verse making.

"When I wrote last, I was a little inclined to send you a copy of verses entitled the 'Modern Patriot', but was not quite pleased with a line or two, which I found it difficult to mend, therefore did not."

What Cowper thought of hymn writing and of his own Olney Hymns would be worth while for us to know but he, in his correspondence, does not discuss them. The Hymns were published in 1779 and represent his first noteworthy contribution to English poetry.

The selections from Cowper's poems used in anthologies for undergraduates are usually made from the Task, to which is added a few hymns and the poem, written on the Receipt of My Mother's Picture. The serious note in these poems and the fact of his

derangement give the idea to the reader that Cowper was a long-faced protestant who might have been a methodist minister of his day: unfortunately, therefore, the sprightly humour of his compositions is almost entirely unnoticed. During the year of 1780, he wrote many riddles in rhyme, the following extract displays his poetic fancy dealing with a theme which might be thought typical of Burns.

"When my Muse comes forth arrayed in sables, at least in a robe of graver cast, I make no scruple to direct her to my friend at Hoxton. This has been one reason why I have so long delayed the riddle. But lest I should seem to set value upon it that I do not, by making it an object of still further inquiry, here it comes.

I am just two and two, I am warm, I am cold,
And the parent of numbers that cannot be told;
I am lawful, unlawful-aduty, a fault;
I am often sold dear, good for nothing when bought,
An extraordinary boon, and a matter of course,
And yielded with pleasure-when taken by force!"

In 1781 Cowper composed more verse than in any other year of his life. His creative imagination was active and displayed remarkable energy in comparison with his many years of inactivity. In January he had finished his Progress of Error, during the same month he also wrote the first draft of Truth.

"Truth will be seasonable at any time, and though the Progress of Error has some connection with the present day, it is not so closely related to the occurrences of it as the new one, which has the name of Table Talk."

While writing to Rev. John Newton, his fellow laborer in the Olney Hymns, he discusses the contents of his Table Talk and gives definite reasons for his method of handling the material.

"I send you Table Talk. It is a medley of many things, some that may be useful, and some that, for aught I know, may be very diverting. I am merry that I may decoy people into my company, and grave that they may be the better for it. Now and then I put on the garb of a philosopher, and take the opportunity that disguise procures me, to drop a word in favor of religion. In short, there is some froth, and here and there a bit of sweetmeat, which seems to entitle it justly to the name of a certain dish the ladies call a trifle. I did not choose to be more facetious, lest I should consult the taste of my readers at the expense of my own approbation; nor more serious than I have been, lest I should forfeit theirs. A poet in my circumstances has a difficult part to act: one minute obliged to bridle his humour, if he has any, and the next, to clap a spur to the sides of it: now ready to weep from a sense of the importance of his subject, and on a sudden constrained to laugh,

lest his gravity should be taken for dulness. If this be not violent exercise for the mind, I know not what is; and if any man doubt it, let him try. Whether all this management and contrivance be necessary, I do not know, but am inclined to suspect that if my Muse was to go forth clad in Quaker colour, without one bit of riband to enliven her appearance, she might walk from one end of London to the other, as little noticed as if she were one of the sisterhood indeed."

This poem appeared in his first published volume, but there is only one reference where he mentions its reception and that is in a letter to Rev. William Unwin in 1784.

"He said that one passage in particular had absolutely electrified him, meaning the description of the Briton in Table talk. He seemed indeed to emit some sparks when he mentioned it. I was glad to have that picture noticed by a man of a cultivated mind, because I had always thought well of it myself, and had never heard it distinguished before."

During the same month of February he planned another poem, Expostulation. In a letter to the Rev. W. Unwin he outlines the thought of the proposed work.

"Notwithstanding my purpose to shake hands with the Muse, and take my leave of her for the present, we have already had a tête-à-tête, since I sent you the last production. I am as much or rather more pleased with my new plan, than with any of the foregoing. I mean to give a short summary of the Jewish story, the miraculous interpositions in behalf of that people, their great privileges, their abuse of them, and their consequent destruction; and then by way of comparison, such another display of the favours vouchsafed to this country, the similar ingratitude with which they have requited them, and the punishment they have therefore reason to expect, unless reformation interpose to prevent it. Expostulation is its present title; but I have not yet found in the writing, that facility and readiness without which I shall despair to finish it well, or indeed to finish it at all."

That Cowper believed that the poet should also be a religious teacher, is shown in his statement of the purpose of the poem Truth.

"That you may understand me better, I will subjoin--that I wrote that poem on purpose to inculcate the eleemosynary character of the Gospel, as a dispensation of mercy, in the most absolute sense of the word, to the exclusion of all claims of merit on the part of the receiver; consequently to set the brand of invalidity upon the plea of works, and to discover, upon scriptural ground, the absurdity of that notion, which includes a solecism in the very terms of it, that man, by repentance and good works, may deserve the mercy of his maker: I call it a solecism, because mercy deserved ceases to be mercy, and must take the name of justice."

In spite of the religious and moral flavor of Cowper's poem, which no one can miss in reading them, at the very time when his serious purpose was in his mind, we can see the gentle wit and humor of the poet. Particularly in the poem on Charity does he show these qualities. The following extract is taken from his famous 'Hop O' My Thumb' letter.

"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 hoiden ing 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 snatch 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 bought 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 was forced to begin a minuet pace, with an air and a grace, swimming about, now in, 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 penn'd; which that you may do, ere Madam and you are quite worn out with jiggling about, I take my leave, and here you receive a bow profound, down to the ground from your humble me."

The reasons he assigned for the publication of his first volume are different from those usually expressed by young writers who for the first time brave the judgments of the reading public.

"If a board of inquiry were to be established, at which poets were to undergo an examination respecting the motives that induced them to publish, and I were to be summoned to attend that I might give an account of mine, I think I could truly say, what perhaps few poets could, that though I have no objection to lucrative consequences, if any such should follow, they are not my aim, much less is it my ambition to exhibit myself to the world as a genius. What then, says Mr. President, can possibly be your motive? I answer, with a bow--Amusement. There is nothing but this--no occupation within the compass of my small sphere, Poetry excepted--that can do much towards diverting that train of melancholy thoughts which,

when I am not thus employed, are for ever pouring themselves in upon me. And if I did not publish what I write, I could not interest myself sufficiently in my own success to make an amusement of it."

Johnson the bookseller, was slow in his printing, he delayed the publication so much that Cowper's first volume did not appear until March 1st, 1782. His most valued friends were pleased with the volume. The approbation of Rev. William Unwin is evident from this reply by Cowper.

"Nothing has given me so much pleasure, since the publication of my volume, as your favourable opinion of it. It may possibly meet with acceptance from hundreds, whose commendation would afford me no other satisfaction than what I could find in the hope that it might do them good. I have some neighbors in this place, who say they like it:--doubtless I had rather they should than that they should not,--but I know them to be persons of no more taste in poetry, than skill in mathematics; their applause therefore is a sound that has no music in it for me. But my vanity was not so entirely quiescent when I read your friendly account of the manner in which it had affected you. He was tickled and pleased, and told me in a pretty loud whisper, that others perhaps of whose taste and judgment I had a high opinion, would approve it too. As a giver of good counsel, I wish to please all; as an author, I am perfectly indifferent to the judgment of all, except the few who are indeed judicious. The circumstance, however, in your letter which pleased me most was, that you wrote in high spirits, and though you said much, suppressed more, lest you should hurt my delicacy; my delicacy is obliged to you, --but you observe it is not so squeamish, but that after it has feasted upon praise expressed, it can find a comfortable dessert in the contemplation of praise implied."

Cowper, while not puffed up by praise, was by no means indifferent to it. He seemed delighted with the recognition of his merit by Rev. William Bull.

"Your letter gave me great pleasure, both as a testimony of your approbation and of your regard. I wrote in hopes of pleasing you and such as you; and though I must confess that, at the same time, I cast a sidelong glance at the good liking of the world at large, I believe I can say it was more for the sake of their advantage and instruction than their praise. They are children: if we give them physic, we must sweeten the rim of the cup with honey. If my book is so far honoured as to make a vehicle of true knowledge to any that are ignorant, I shall rejoice; and do already rejoice that it has procured me a proof of your esteem, whom I had rather please than all the writers of both Reviews."

The fits of despondency that Cowper was subject to were brought on in part by unfavorable criticism. The frankness with which he acknowledges the effect of praise and censure upon him adds to our opinion of his simple nobility.

"You have my sincere thanks for your obliging communication, both of my book to Dr. Franklin, and of his opinion of it to me. Some of the periodical critics I understand have spoken of it with contempt enough; but while gentlemen of taste and candour have more favourable thoughts of it, I see reason to be less concerned than I have been about their judgment, hastily formed, perhaps, and certainly not without prejudice against the subjects of which it treats.

Your friendly intimation of the Doctor's sentiments reached me very seasonably; just when in a fit of despondence, to which no man is naturally more inclined, I had begun to regret the publication of it, and had consequently resolved to write no more. For if the man has a fortune to please none but his friends and their connexions, he has reason enough to conclude that he is indebted for the measure of success he meets with, not to the real value of his book but to the partiality of the few that approve it. But I now feel myself differently affected towards my favourite employment; for which sudden change in my sentiments I may thank you and your correspondent in France. His entire unacquaintedness with me, a man whom he never saw nor will see, his character as a man of sense and erudition, and his acknowledged merit as an ingenious and elegant writer, and especially his having arrived at an age when men are not to be pleased they know not why, are so many circumstances that give a value to his commendations, and make them the most flattering a poor poet could receive, quite out of conceit with himself, and quite out of heart with his occupation.

If you think it worth your while when you write next to the Doctor to inform him how much he has encouraged me by his approbation, and to add my respects to him, you will oblige me still further for next to the pleasure it would afford me to hear that it had been useful to any, I cannot have a greater, so far as my volume is in question, than to hear that it has pleased the judicious."

The letter of Benjamin Franklin to which he refers is given in full.

"Sir,- I received the letter you did me the honour of writing to me, and am much obliged by your kind present of a book. The relish for reading of poetry had long since left me, but there is something so new in the manner, so easy, and yet so correct in the language, so clear in the expression, yet concise, and so just in the sentiments, that I have read the whole with great pleasure, and some of the pieces more than once. I beg you to accept my thankful acknowledgments, and to present my respects to the author.

I shall take care to forward the letters to America, and shall be glad of any other opportunity of doing what may be agreeable to you, being with great respect for your character,- Your most obedient humble servant, B. Franklin."

Cowper mentions many men from various walks of life who wrote to him in praise of his poetry. The London Magazine, the Gentleman's and the Monthly Review all comment favorably upon his work. The latter magazine said:- 'His notes are peculiar to himself, he classes not with any known species of bards that have preceded him'. 'His religion has a smile that is arch, and his sallies of humour an air that is religious'. 'His language is plain, forcible, and expressive.

The Critical Review was rather severe, when it remarked that his verses were "Weak and languid; with neither novelty, spirit or animation"; the prejudiced view is continued in the following comment "They were flat and tedious, no better than a dull sermon, coarse, vulgar and unpoetical!" Cowper refers to all the Reviews in his correspondence and comments upon them without either bitterness or exaltation.

One critic whose approval Cowper was anxious to receive was Samuel Johnson. The feelings of the poet concerning Johnson's criticisms are expressed in a letter to Rev. John Newton.

"My dear Friend,- I am glad to have received at last an account of Dr. Johnson's favourable opinion of my book. I thought it wanting and had long since concluded that not having had the happiness to please him, I owed my ignorance of his sentiments to the tenderness of my friends at Hoxton, who would not mortify me with an account of his disapprobation. It occurs to me that I owe him thanks for interposing between me and the resentment of the Reviewers, who seldom show mercy to an advocate for evangelical truth, whether in prose or verse. I therefore enclose a short acknowledgement, which, if you see no impropriety in the measure, you can I imagine, without much difficulty convey to him through the hands of Mr. Latrobe. To him I also make my compliments, with thanks for the share he took in the patronage of the volume. If on any account you judge it an inexpedient step, you can easily suppress the letter."

The poem that best expresses Cowper's capacity for fun, is John Gilpin. The tale was told to him by Lady Austen and was founded on the adventures of a Mr. John Beyer, a linen draper. It was first printed anonymously in November 1782. In a letter to Rev. William Unwin he says that he never intended to publish the poem, and gives an account, somewhat pathetic in its truth of why he wrote this poem on trifles merely to amuse.

"I little thought when I was writing the history of John Gilpin, that he would appear in print - I intended to laugh, and to make two or three others laugh, of whom you were one. But now all the world laughs, at least if they have the same relish for a tale ridiculous in itself, and quaintly told, as we have. Well- they do not always laugh so innocently, or at so small an expense- for in a world like this, abounding with subjects for satire, and with satirical wits to mark them, a laugh that hurts nobody has at least the grace of novelty to recommend it. Swift's darling motto was, Vive la bagatelle

a good wish for a philosopher of his complexion, the greater part of whose wisdom, whencesoever it came, most certainly came not from above. La bagatelle has no enemy in me, though it has neither so warm a friend, nor so able a one, as it had in him. If I trifle, and merely trifle, it is because I am reduced to it by necessity - a melancholy, that nothing else so effectually disperses, engages me sometimes in the arduous task of being merry by force. And, strange as it may seem, the most ludicrous lines I ever wrote have been written in the saddest mood, and, but for the saddest mood, perhaps had never been written at all. To say truth, it would be but a shocking vagary, should the mariners on board a ship buffeted by a terrible storm, employ themselves in fiddling and dancing; yet sometimes much such a part act I."

We get a glimpse of Rev. Unwin's appreciation of the poem in a letter to him from the author.

"You tell me that John Gilpin made you laugh tears, and that the ladies of court are delighted with my Poems. Much good may they do them! May they become as wise as the writer wishes them, and then they will be much happier than he! As to the famous horseman above-mentioned, he and his feats are an inexhaustible source of merriment. At least we find him so, and seldom meet without refreshing ourselves with the recollection of them."

We hear of the fame of the poem through Cowper's letters to Rev. William Unwin and to Rev. John Newton. The first two extracts are taken from letters to the former, and the third from a letter to Rev. Newton.

"I thank you for your intelligence concerning the celebrity of John Gilpin. You may be sure that it was agreeable;- but your own feelings on occasion of that article pleased me most of all. Well, my friend, be comforted! You had not an opportunity of saying publicly, 'I know the Author'. But the author himself will say as much for you soon, and perhaps will feel in doing so a gratification equal to your own."

"I return you thanks for a letter so warm with the intelligence of the celebrity of John Gilpin. I little thought when I mounted him upon my Pegasus, that he would become so famous. I have learned also, from Mr. Newton, that he is equally renowned in Scotland, and that a lady there had undertaken to write a second part, on the subject of Mrs. Gilpin's return to London, but not succeeding in it as she wished, she dropped it. He tells me likewise, that the head master of St. Paul's school (who he is I know not), has conceived in consequence of the entertainment that John has afforded him, a vehement desire to write to me."

"When I received your account of the great celebrity of John Gilpin, I felt myself both flattered and grieved. Being man, and

having in my composition all the ingredients of which other men are made, and vanity among the rest, it pleased me to reflect that I was on a sudden become so famous, and that all the world was busy enquiring after me; that the next moment, recollecting my former sel and that thirteen years ago, as harmless as John's history is, I should not then have written it, my spirits sank, and I was ashamed of my success."

Cowper's best known longer poem the Task was finished and ready for the publisher in October 1784. He gives an account of it in the following.

"I am again at Johnson's in the shape of a poem in blank verse, consisting of six books, and called The Task. I began it about this time twelve-month, and writing sometimes an hour in a day, sometimes half a one, and sometimes two hours, having lately finished it. I mentioned it not sooner, because almost to the last I was doubtful whether I should ever bring it to a conclusion, working often in such distress of mind, as, while it spurred me to the work, at the same time threatened to disqualify me for it. My bookseller, I suppose, will be tardy as before. I do not expect to be born into the world till the month of March, when I and the crocuses shall peep together."

It was almost a year after its publication before Cowper refers to the reception of the poem. He then speaks of receiving a handsome desk, and snuff box. The latter was embellished on the lid with a landscape and was overlaid with crystal.

In writing to Lady Hesketh he says, "The Task has succeeded beyond my utmost expectations." That the second volume of the poet's work, of which The Task was the principal poem, was read by the public is indicated by his reference to the necessity for a third edition. "Mr. Newton writes me word that they are at this time doing me the honour to read my Task at Freemason's Hall. It could not have a more effectual advertisement, nor one more likely to occasion a speedy call for a third edition. Perhaps it may have the fate of John Gilpin, who was little known or noticed for a long time after his first appearance, and then made a noise enough."

We have already presented the letter from Mr. Ben Franklin, showing his appreciation of Cowper's first volume. That the poet was not only accepted, as worth while, in England but that his poems were also favorably received in America is shown by the following letter.

"I have had a letter lately from New York, from a Dr. Cogswell of that place, to thank me for my fine verses, and to tell me, which pleased me particularly, that after having read The Task, my first volume fell into his hands, which he read also, and was equally pleased with. This is the only instance I can recollect of a reader who has done justice to my first effusions: for I am sure that in

point of expression they do not fall a jot below my second, and that in point of subject they are for the most part superior. But enough, and too much of this. The Task, he tells me, has been reprinted in that city."

The poem that has met with universal approbation, is the one written, sometime after Feb. 27, 1790, entitled, "On Receipt of My Mother's picture". He received the picture from his first cousin Mrs. Bodham in February of the year 1790. Cowper refers to the praise he had received, in a letter to Lady Hesketh.

"The General's approbation of my picture verses gave me also much pleasure. I wrote them not without tears, therefore I presume it may be that they are felt by others. Should he offer me my father's picture, I shall gladly accept it. A melancholy pleasure is better than none,-- nay verily, better than most."

This closes Cowper's creative work. From this time on he was deeply engrossed in his translation of Homer, both the Iliad and Odyssey, and in editing Milton. He was not completely convinced that his translations were successful. He received much praise and much adverse criticism. From 1786 until his death his correspondence is filled with references to his excessive labor in making the translation and to the praise and censure he received. I shall quote several extracts from his letters that will give us an idea of the contemporary opinion of this work.

Here he refers to the comments in the Gentleman's Magazine.

"You have seen perhaps the beginning of a review of my Homer in the Gentleman's Magazine for last month. Can you tell me, or can you guess who is the author of it? He says so many handsome things of me that at time I suspect it to be the work of Nicholas himself, but then he seems so much disposed to find fault, that at other times I give it to I know not whom. I ask out of mere curiosity. In the meantime I have received and heard of so many testimonies in my favour given by some of the best judges, that I felt myself armed with at least a sevenfold shield against all censure that I can have to expect from others."

The critique in the Analytical Review is discussed by him at length and in detail, I quote only enough to give Cowper's attitude toward the criticism.

"I have read the critique of my work in the Analytical Review, and am happy to have fallen into the hands of a critic, rigorous enough indeed, but a scholar, and a man of sense, and who does not deliberately intend me mischief. I am better pleased indeed that he censures some things, than I should have been with unmixed commendation, for his censure will (to use the new diplomatic term) accredit his praises. In his particular remarks he is for the most part right, and I shall be the better for them; but in his

general ones I think he asserts too largely, and more than he could prove."

The most important contribution that Cowper makes in his translation, is in his use of blank verse. His discussion of rhyme and blank verse and translation is quite clear.

"I wondered to hear you say you thought rhyme easier in original compositions; but you explained it, that you could go no further a-field, if you were pushed for want of a rhyme. An expression preferred for the sake of the rhyme looks as if it were worth more than you allow. But to be sure in translation the necessity of rhyme imposes very heavy fetters upon those who mean translation, not paraphrase. Our common heroic metre is enough - the pure iambic, bearing only a sparing introduction of spondees, trochees, etc., to vary the measure.

Mere translation I take to be impossible, if no metre were required. But the difference of the iambic and heroic measure destroys that at once. It is also impossible to obtain the same sense from a dead language, and an ancient author, which those of his own time and country conceived; words and phrases contract, from time and use, such strong shades of difference from their original import. In a living language, with the familiarity of a whole life, it is not as easy to conceive truly the actual sense of current expressions, much less of older authors. No two languages furnish equipollent words; their phrases differ, their syntax and their idioms still more widely. But a translation strictly so called requires and exact conformity in all those particulars, and also in numbers: therefore it is impossible. I really think at present, notwithstanding the opinion expressed in your Preface, that a translator asks himself a good question. How would my author have expressed the sentence, I am turning, in English? for every idea conveyed in the original should be expressed in English, as literally and fully as the genius and use and character of the language will admit of."

Later he carried on a controversy over the fitness of using blank verse in translating Homer.

"The Chancellor and I, my dear, have had a correspondence on the subject of Homer. He had doubts it seems about the propriety of translating him in blank verse, and wrote to Henry to tell him so, adding a translation of his own in rhyme of the speech of Achilles to Phoenix, in the ninth book; and referring him to me, who, he said, could elevate it, and polish it, and give it the tone of Homer. His lordship sent me two sheets in reply, filled with arguments in favour of rhyme, which I was to answer if I could; and containing another translation of the same passage, only in blank verse, leaving it to me to give it rhyme, to make it close and faithful, and poetical. All this I preformed as best I could,

and yesterday I heard from him again. In this last letter he says,- 'I am clearly convinced that Homer may be best translated without rhyme, and that you have succeeded in the passages I have looked into.'

Such is the candour of a wise man and a real scholar. I would to heaven that all prejudiced persons were like him!"

Many of his friends regretted his giving up original work for translation. Rev. John Newton is writing to Hannah Moore expresses his feeling in the matter.

"I am sorry to see the author of the (Task) degraded into a mere editor, though of Milton himself, whom I certainly prefer to a hundred Homer's. But it seems he is not to be merely an editor he thinks he may do some service by notes and elucidations, not in the manner of Dr. Newton, but in a moral and religious strain.

Yet it is pitiful, and to many who love him it seems strange, that a writer so truly original should not favor us with writings in his own original way."

Likewise Miss More in her reply indicates her disapproval of Cowper's new venture and gives her opinion of his best work.

"So I throw myself on your mercy and proceed to thank you in Patty's name for Mr. Cowper's stanza. It is elegantly turned, but I confess if it were to me, I should not have been contented to be put off with a compliment from a hand which can deal out so much nobler things. You know my admiration for the truly great genius, but I am really grieved that he should lower his aims so far as to stoop to become a mere editor and translator. It is Ulysses shooting from a baby's bow. Why does he quit the heights of Solyma for the dreams of Pindus? "What is Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba"? In his own original way he has few competitors; in his new walk he has many superiors; he can do the best things better than any man, but others can do middling things better than he."

Without doubt, if Cowper could have forseen the judgment of posterity, the commendation that would have been most precious to him, is the one contained inthe quotation from one of the letters of Robert Burns.

"Now that I talk of authors, how do you like Cowper? Is not the "Task" a glorious poem? The religion of the "Task", bating a few scraps of Calvinistic divinty, is the religion of God and nature the religion that exalts, that ennobles man."

Our study of the personal letter in its relation to Cowper has given us the opinions of his work held by many of his friends and contemporaries; unfortunately we have been forced to find many

of these criticisms as reported by Cowper and not in the personal letters of his correspondents. Of the great figures in England, at that time, we have only the opinions of Samuel Johnson and Robert Burns. The other prominent men, as I stated in the introduction to this discussion, had passed on before the rise of William Cowper.

Our judgment of the worth of the personal letter in its presentation of the critical opinion of Cowper must unfortunately be made chiefly from his own letters. These, however, are rich in the material they furnish us concerning his poetical work. Our estimate of his letters will be treated under four topics:- Reasons that led him to write, Method of Composition, Translator and Editor, and Popularity of his Work.

The reasons he assigned for publishing his first volume, are very odd when compared to the anxious feelings of other poets. He says, that it is not for money, but in reality for amusement (by which he chased away melancholy), and if he did not publish what he composed then it would cease to have enough interest to make an amusement. In the explanations given of the purpose of his serious poems, he states that he hoped to teach, both religious and moral truth, and that he put in enough humor to attract and entertain his readers. In response to the many letters complimenting the fun and humor in John Gilpin, he said that he wrote that without any idea of publishing it, and that he trifled by necessity, and was merry by force to dispel despondency.

Cowper, if we exclude the Olney Hymns and On Receipt of My Mother's Picture, had not the gift of writing short poems. The lyric intensity of Burns is lacking. The genius of Cowper demanded a discursive manner of composition; he had to have many lines of varying power and beauty, (at many times he descends to mere versifying), in which to present his themes. Of course he is not the only poet that discussed in detail the plan of what he expected to write, but the very ordinariness of his comments upon his progress in writing gives the impression, that there was little fire and emotion or high thinking in his creative moods. His letters do not hint that composing was mechanical, but rather that it was common, a part of his daily routine in order to have something to do. Yet we know that in one year he wrote a really remarkable number of lines, that must have cost him great energy.

That he had a well defined method, of composition could not be demonstrated. That he was somewhat haphazard, never being sure just what the result, as to merit or length, would be is true. In the Task his starting point was the Sofa, but just consider the final length and power of the finished poem, that grew in his hands to such a length.

Our poet was much interested in the Greek Classics and could boast of a knowledge of that language that might be called scholarly

Previous translations of the Greek bard, were unsatisfactory to him, especially was Pope's use of the rhymning couplet objectionable. His ambition was to put the beauties of Homer into blank verse. In a discussion, with some learned acquaintances on the relative merits of rhyme and blank verse as a medium of translation. Cowper succeeded in winning them to his side of the controversey. During this discussion he states, the qualities of a good translation most interestingly. His friends among his ministerial acquaintances expressed their belief in him, they compared his translation with passages of Pope and told Cowper that his rendition was far superior.

The labor necessitated in translating both the Iliad and Odyssey was tremendous but he finished them and even revised his first edition as criticisms came in from men whose authority he respected. At times he felt that he had done a fine piece of work then again he would wonder if it had been worth doing. His friends approved his translations but there is little information that can be found in the correspondence concerning their merit.

The last years of Cowper were spent in editing Milton. His friends objected strenuously to his endeavors, maintaining that it was a loss to literature for him to stop his creative work and become a mere editor. He however loved Milton and in his letters, having been aroused by Johnson's unfairness in the Lives he gives us excellent interpretive criticism of the beauties of Milton.

There is no doubt that the beauty of Cowper's poetry was understood and appreciated in his own time. When three of the four leading magazines of England, as stated in the personal letters, compliment him highly, when Johnson, Hannah More, and Burns stamp his work with their approval, then there can indeed be no question of the recognition that he received.

CHAPTER VI.

SAMUEL JOHNSON.

After reading biographies and essays on Dr. Samuel Johnson, the attentive reader must realize that it is the personality of "The Great Cham of Literature, "that has gripped all critics. The power of this robust character, even in his circle, was a result more of his individuality than of his works. The interest for us in Boswell's life, comes from the many incidents that he relates, in minutest detail, of the thought, action, manners, opinions, prejudices, and idiosyncrasies of this man.

If Johnson's personal letters contained essentially the same material as the above work and gave us glimpses of his vigorous mind dealing with the men and books of the day, then they would make interesting reading indeed.

Unfortunately, his letters are mostly to persons with whom he could not discuss matters of literary value; and their contents give us little information about the man or his work that is new or that adds to what we have from other sources.

The poem London appeared in 1738 and according to the Gentleman's Magazine, "got to the second edition in the course of a week." Johnson wrote four letters to Mr. Cave about publishing the poem. This publisher gave the author no satisfaction, he did not even comment upon the value of the poem and failed to set a date for its publication. Johnson at this time was twenty eight years of age, and the language of his letter broaching the matter to Cave displays none of the absolute certitude of the later Dr. Johnson. He does not even acknowledge the authorship: "but having the enclosed poem in my hands to dispose of for the benefit of the author (of whose abilities I shall say nothing, since I send you his performance), I believe I could not procure more advantageous terms from any person than from you."

The tone of the following sentence will serve to bring the young poet in strong contrast with the imperious Doctor of fifteen years later, "I will, if you please to transmit the sheets from the press, correct it for you; and take the trouble of altering any stroke of satire which you may dislike." Robert Dodsley finally published the poem having bought all rights to it by paying Johnson a total of 10 pounds.

In his discussion with the publisher Johnson shows no anxiety about advancing his reputation as a literary man, but emphasizes his need of money. His own opinion of its merit expressed only once in all of his correspondence leads us to believe that he hoped that that satirical element, dealing with the people of London would win

him approval. He says, "part of the beauty of the performance (if any beauty be allowed it) consisting in adapting Juvenal's sentiments to modern facts and persons."

What the Coffee Houses and prominent people thought of the poem's qualities cannot be discovered in the personal correspondence covering that period. According to Boswell, Pope at this time knew nothing personally of Johnson and could judge of his ability only from the poem London. Yet he was so struck with the genius of the poem that he recommended to Earl Gower that he write to Dean Swift to try to secure for Johnson the M.A. degree from Dublin University. Gower apparently did not know Johnson and his information must have come from Pope's letter, therefore the following comments, from the letter of Gower gives us an idea of the opinion held of Johnson at that time.

"Mr. Samuel Johnson (author of London, a satire, and some other poetical pieces) is a native of this country, and much respected by some worthy gentlemen in this neighborhood. They highly extol the man's learning and probity; and will not be persuaded, that the university will make any difficulty of conferring such a favour upon a stranger, if he is recommended by the dean."

The year 1738 marks another important step in Johnson's literary career, he became a contributor to the Gentleman's Magazine. However neither he nor his contemporaries refer to his years of work on this periodical.

The Vanity of Human Wishes, likewise, remains unheard of in the correspondence of the day.

The project of an English Dictionary had been running in Dr. Johnson's mind for sometime before he outlined the plan addressed to Lord Chesterfield in 1747. Mr. James Dodsley refers to a time when his brother Robert, the publisher, several years before this had suggested the scheme to Johnson who after first considering it favorably dismissed the matter by saying, "I believe I shall not undertake it." However, the plan was made and accepted by the publishers in 1747, the contract stipulating that the author was to receive 1575 pounds for the completed work.

The prospectus which gave an idea of the method to be pursued, came to the notice of the Earl of Orrery who in a letter to Dr. Thomas Birch, a prominent historian, commends both the method and the substance as shown in the plan.

"I have just now seen the specimen of Mr. Johnson's Dictionary addressed to Lord Chesterfield. I am much pleased with the plan, and I think the specimen is one of the best that I have ever read. Most specimens disgust rather than prejudice us in favour of the work to follow; but the language of Mr. Johnson's is good, and the

arguments are properly and modestly expressed. However, some expressions may be cavilled at, but they are trifles. I have great expectations from the performance."

As a new figure in the literary world Johnson was becoming increasingly prominent. While at an earlier date Lord Chesterfield had thought it not worth while to recognize Johnson now that the latter was about to complete this original and stupendous undertaking, Chesterfield wrote his highly complimentary articles in "The World" as an invitation to have the work dedicated to him. This flattery brought out decidedly the feelings of Johnson who in this letter confesses his insignificance during his first years in London, and shows that he, at this time, thought his reputation was sufficiently secure not to need the patronage of anyone.

"The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity, not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron, which Providence has enabled me to do for myself."

It would seem that our author's work on the Gentleman's Magazine did not go entirely unnoticed; for up to 1755 his total prose work comprised his contributions to that periodical and to his own Rambler. The Chancellor of Oxford University, in recommending Johnson for the degree of Master of Arts, wrote a letter that throws light upon contemporary opinion. The essays to which he refers were probably those found in both the Gentleman's Magazine and the Rambler. The approbation and acknowledgment by Oxford represents a great victory for Johnson and demonstrates the fact that his power and influence were being recognized by the eminent authorities of the land, before the appearance in public of his Dictionary. The letter follows: "Mr. Samuel Johnson, who was formerly of Pembroke College, having very eminently distinguished himself by publication of a series of essays, excellently calculated to form the manners of the people, and in which the cause of religion and morality is every where maintained by the strongest powers of argument and language; and who shortly intends to publish a Dictionary of the English Tongue, formed on a new plan, and executed with the greatest labour and judgment; I persuade myself that I shall act agreeable to the sentiments of the whole university, in desiring that it may be proposed in convocation to confer on him the degree of master of arts by diploma."

To collect, arrange, and transcribe the material for such a reference book, as a pioneer in the dictionary field in England, was a tremendous task. That the task took nine years for its completion is not to be wondered at, but rather that it was completed at all by the industry of only one man. Frequently in Johnson's letters we read his complaint of the long hours and arduous labor

that this kind of work required; and finally when it was done, his feelings were not that he had done a great and momumental work but that he was through with a most laborious job, To Rev. Dr. Taylor he wrote: "I am now within a few hours of being able to send the whole dictionary to the press, and though I often went sluggishly t the work, I am not much delighted at the completion."

Johnson's Dictionary appeared in print in 1755, and met with immediate praise. Dr. Thomas Warton, of Oxford University, who represents more strictly the academic point of view, in writing to his brother, comments favorably upon the nobility of the preface ar upon the book as a whole, but expresses the fear that the author's obvious consciousness of superiority, and contempt of patronage might disgust many people.

The tone of Dr. Birch's letter to Johnson is one of entire approval. Dr. Birch, a man of many sides who was familiar with the world was, probably in a better position to judge of the popular approval and value of the Dictionary than was Warton. The spirit of his entire letter seems to be one of judicial fairness and not of mere adulation.

"The part of your Dictionary which you have favoured me with the sight of, has given me such an idea of the whole, that I most sincerely congratulate the public upon the acquisition of a work long wanted, and now executed with an industry, accuracy, and judgment equal to the importance of the subject. You might, perhaps, have chosen one in which your genius would have appeared to more advantage but you could not have fixed upon any other in which your labours would have done such substantial service to the present age and to posterity."

About one month after the publication of the Dictionary, Johnson states clearly what the public's reception of the book had been up to that time.

"I have, indeed, published my book, of which I beg to know your father's judgment, and yours; and I have now staid long enough to watch its progress in the world. It has, you see, no patrons, and think has yet had no opponents, except the critics of the coffee-house, whose outcries are soon dispersed into the air, and are thought on no more."

When he says "no patrons" he does not mean that it had no friends; he is using the word to refer to the patronage of important men that authors usually tried to secure before venturing to appear in print.

Dr. Charles Burney, a prominent minister, father of Fannie Burney (Madam D'Arblay) and author of a History of Music, sent Johnson a favorable review of his Dictionary taken from the

Bibliotheque des Savans and with it a list of subscribers to the edition of Shakespeare that was contemplated by the latter. This was in 1757, when Johnson's position was preeminent in literature when his power was certain and unquestioned; and because of his high reputation we are the more surprised at the information in his reply to Dr. Burney. As Johnson was not given to a mis-statement of facts we must conclude from the following that the Dictionary was never popular and did not even receive the approval of most of his friends.

"I remember with great pleasure your commendation of my Dictionary. Your praise was welcome, not only because I believe it was sincere, but because praise has been very scarce. A man of your candour will be surprised when I tell you that among all my acquaintances there were only two, who, upon the publication of my book, did not endeavor to depress me with threats of censure from the public, or with objections learned from those who had learned them from my own preface. Yours is the only letter of good-will that I have received; though, indeed, I am promised something of that sort from Sweden."

It has been impossible to find out what the number of the first edition was, but what ever it was, the first edition was not exhausted to the point that a second printing was needed until 1773. Johnson, in a letter to Boswell, tells of the printing and revising of the Dictionary and expresses his own opinion of its worth in plain terms.

"A new edition of my great Dictionary is printed, from a copy which I was persuaded to revise; but having made no preparation, I was able to do little. Some superfluities I have expunged, and some faults I have corrected, and here and there have scattered a remark; but the main fabric of the work remains as it was. I have looked very little into it since I wrote it, and, I think, I found it full as often better, as worse, than I expected."

The first number of the periodical, The Rambler, whose name is synonymous with Johnson, and whose fame he established by his own genius, appeared on March 20, 1750 and came out twice a week, on Tuesdays and Saturdays, for two years.

Richardson the novelist on being sent the first five numbers of the Rambler, by the publisher, wrote to Mr. Cave thanking him for the number and said that "he was inexpressibly pleased with the and that the man was Samuel Johnson." This high praise from Richardson, who had already gained his position in the field of the novel, given before he was sure of the author's identity certainly can be taken as his sincere opinion of the true worth of the Rambler.

Cave's reply, discloses the real author and expresses his feeling that Johnson was the only man in England who with his other work, his Dictionary, could have kept up two such papers a week.

He also gives the information concerning the Rambler's circulation, and standard of excellence.

"The encouragement, as to sale, is not in proportion to the high character given to the work by the judicious, not to say the raptures expressed by the few that do read it; but its being thus relished in numbers gives hopes that the sets must go off, as it is fine paper, and, considering the late hour of having the copy, tolerably printed."

In the same letter Cave elaborates on the fact that the worthwhile judges agree to the excellence of the paper; and mentions the names of five representative people, who gave it high rank (one of whom was Dr. Young), in the words of the letter, "most of them, like you, setting them in a rank equal, and some superior, to the Spectators (of which I have not read many, for the reasons which you assign): but, notwithstanding such recommendation, whether the price of two-pence, or the unfavourable season of their first publication, hinders the demand, no boast can be made of it."

The Rambler was published in six volumes soon after the last number was issued. Johnson revised it carefully but does not refer to it in his correspondence. Boswell tells us that Johnson was much pleased with the news that the Rambler had been translated into Italian and that Catherine of Russia had ordered it to be translated into her language and had promised to send the author a copy of the work when it was finished. Johnson does not give any opinion in his letters and as for the correspondence of his contemporaries, from 1755 to his death no mention is found of the Rambler except in a letter of Shenstone. Shenstone was familiar with the productions of the men of Queen Anne's reign and with those of the forties and fifties. These facts with his reputation for excellent taste in literature should cause us to give considerable weight to his judgment.

"I have lately been reading one or two volumes of "The Rambler who, excepting some few hardnesses in his manner, and the want of more examples to enliven, is one of the most nervous, most perspicuous, most concise, and most harmonious prose writers I know. A learned diction improves by time."

On different occasions Johnson is reported by Boswell to have said that he wrote not for reputation but for money, that he wonde if anyone wrote for anything different.

However sincere the above statement may be, he wrote Rasselas for money to be used for a specific purpose, namely, to defray the expenses of his Mother's funeral. When it was printed in 1759 he receives 100 pounds for it, and later the publisher added 25 pounds when a second edition became necessary.

Johnson refers to its existence, very modestly. From his letter to Miss Porter you would think that he considered it to be of very little importance, when he tells her, "I am going to publish a little story book, which I will send you when it is out."

During the year of the poem's publication Shenstone wrote to a Mr. Graves giving his opinion that it was inferior to Johnson's other works that it, "had a few refined sentiments, thinly scattered."

In strong contrast is the opinion of Sir David Dalrymple, a lord of the session in Scotland, a graduate of Eton and Utrecht, and a contributor of articles to the "World" and "Mirror". In this letter to Boswell, he congratulates him on his good fortune in having been taken into such intimacy with a great man like Samuel Johnson. He terms the author of the Rambler and Rasselas, "one of the best moral writers that England has produced". His recommendations of Rasselas and the comparison with Swift is worth quoting verbatim.

"In Rasselas you will see a tender-hearted operator, who probes the wound only to heal it. Swift on the contrary, mangles human nature. He cuts and slashes, as if he took pleasure in the operation, like the tyrant who said, Ita feri ut se sentiat emori."

Rasselas found its way into an American edition. Rev. Doctor Joseph White, the Episcopal Bishop of Pennsylvania, sent Johnson a copy. The author in his reply expresses his pleasure and refers to the popularity of his work.

"I received a copy of Rasselas. The impression is not magnificent, but it flatters an author, because the printer seems to have expected that it would be scattered among the people. The little book has been well received, and is translated into Italian, French, German, and Dutch. It has now one honour more by an American edition."

In 1756 some booksellers applied to Johnson that he edit an edition of Shakespeare with notes. He issued proposals and engaged to do the work; while he knew that to produce a scholarly edition would require much work, he deceived himself so far that he wrote to a friend that the subscription did not progress very fast but he expected to publish it in March 1757. His Shakespeare was finally published in 1765.

Upon the completion of the work he seemed quite indifferent to its success. In writing to Thomas Warton his principal feeling seems to have been that he had fulfilled his obligations to the public. He does not suggest that this work had any special merit. Neither in Johnson's letters nor in the correspondence of his friends, do we find his edition of the great dramatist referred to,

though we know that it was well received by the public and ran through several editions.

In the conversation that took place between King George III and Johnson we probably have the first suggestion that came to Johnson that he write the Lives of the English Poets. Boswell tel us that his Majesty expressed a wish to have the literary biograp of England ably executed, and proposed that Johnson undertake it; who signified his willingness to comply with his sovereign's wishe

The above conversation took place in 1767, while the first time The Lives of the Poets is mentioned, is in a letter from Boswell to the Great Doctor ten years later. Boswell says, "Pray tell me about this edition of 'English Poets, with a Preface, biographical and critical, to each Author, by Samuel Johnson, LL.D.' which I see advertised. I am delighted with the prospect of it."

Johnson's biographer can not restrain his boundless admiration even before he has seen the work, "But is not the claim of this publication chiefly owing to the magnum nomen in the front of it?"

In reply Johnson says, "I am engaged to write, Little Lives and little Prefaces to a little edition of the English Poets." This announcement would not indicate that he expected to create his most famous work; either this conclusion is true or he was, in modesty, minimizing his own efforts and that was not his custom.

In a long letter to Boswell, Mr. Edward Dilly explained in detail the origin of The Lives of the Poets. A group of the most respectable booksellers of London, partly because they felt the need of a new edition of the poets, beginning with Cowley, partly because a Scotch firm had issued an edition that was then selling in London, and chiefly because such a venture promised large, financial returns, providing they could get the most prominent literary figure in England to further the proposed work, with prefaces and lives. In their anxiety to be sure of Johnson's consent, they appointed a committee of three to wait on him and ask him to name his own terms; he suggested 200 guineas, and Dilly adds that they expected to add a further compliment. Dilly's comment, upon the prestige that Johnson's name would guarantee, testifies to the recognition of his preeminence in the field of letters.

"The edition of the poets, now printing, will do honour to the English press; and a concise account of the life of each author, by Dr. Johnson, will be a very valuable addition, and stamp the reputation of this edition superior to anything that has gone before

The first four volumes, of the new edition of English poetry, appeared early in the year 1779, the remaining fifty-six, the total edition was sixty volumes, were not published until March 1781. The delay being caused by Johnson's slowness in writing the prefaces.

While Johnson has been accused many times of carelessness, in verifying the facts in his biographies, yet the author's correspondence with various men, who had known certain poets, is sufficient evidence that his efforts were quite painstaking, especially if we compare his work with the biographies written before his time and consider the number of men included in the sixty volumes. The following letter taken from a letter to Dr. Thomas Warton, is a good example of his method, and illustrates the value he put upon details.

"The shares of Fenton and Broome in the Odyssey I had before from Mr. Spence, Dr. Warburton did not know them. I wish to be told, as the question is of great importance in the poetical world, whence you had your intelligence; if from Spence, it shows at least his consistency: if from any other, it confers corroboration."

During the writing of the "Lives", Johnson in his personal letters referred to his work many times. These remarks of his,, however to our regret, are concerned entirely with the progress he is making. From these comments his objective was to complete the task, he says nothing that gives his opinion of the critical value of what he was doing. He expressed no hope for its success, and no anxiety for its reputation. His real interest in the men whose lives he was writing, and in the permanent literary value of their poetry, is evidenced in one letter, when he states that through his suggestion a number of minor poets had been added to the list, and of course is further proved by his many letters to persons for information.

One would think, on account of his intimacy with and love for Mrs. Thrale that, if with any one, he would discuss his belief in the merit of this work with her. As an illustration of the total absence of this quality of self revelation, and appeal for sympathy in Johnson's letters I shall quote in a group, selections from a number of his letters in which he refers to this work.

To Mrs. Thrale:-"I have not quite neglected my Lives. Addison is a long one but it is done. Prior is not short, and that is done too. I am upon Rowe, who cannot fill much paper. If I have done them before I come again, I think to bolt upon you at Bath; for I shall not be now afraid of Mrs. Cotton. Let Burney take care that she does me no harm."

"My Lives creep on. I have done Addison, Prior, Rowe, Granville, Sheffield, Collins, Pitt, and almost Fenton, I design to take Congreve next into my hand. I hope to have done before you come home, and then whither shall I go?"

"Congreve, whom I dispatched at the Borough while I was attending the election, is one of the best of the little lives; but then I had your conversation."

To Mr. Nichols:-"What will the Booksellers give me for this new edition? I know not what to ask,"

To Mr. Boswell:-"I have at last finished my Lives, and have laid up for you a load of copy, all out of order; so that it will amuse you a long time to set it right."

"My Lives are reprinting, and I have forgotten the author of Gray's character: write immediately, and it may be perhaps inserted."

The silence of this irrepressible talker, in his personal correspondence with his friends, concerning his ambitions for his literary work and his opinion of their qualities is emphasized by the fact that his only mention of their success, found in his letters, is in one written to a Mr. Hector of Birmingham about whom we know little, and who could not be numbered among Johnson's intimate friends.

"I know not that I have written anything more generally commended than the Lives of the Poets; and they found the world willing enough to caress me if my health had invited me to be in much company but this season I have been almost wholly employed in nursing myself."

The Lives of the Poets, was successful. The publishers paid the author the contract price of 200 guineas. We learn from a letter to Boswell that a second edition of 3000 was printed in 1787 about a year after its first publication. During the first year the "Lives" were published separately, for which Johnson received another 100 pounds.

The correspondence of Johnson during the last two years of his life, gives no information concerning the author's opinion of his own work, or of their reception by the public.

In presenting the critical opinions of Johnson's contemporaries concerning this last work of his, we must remember that of all his early literary friends, none were now living: of his later friends only Hannah More and Fannie Burney were left; of the poets only Crabbe and Cowper were living. The one prominent man, of reputation as a critic, who had known Johnson's early work and who was still living, was Horace Walpole.

The ability of Johnson as a writer of critical biography was favorably commented upon by Hannah More in 1781. Miss More knew Johnson well socially and had discussed literature and literary men with him at many different times. The opinion of this authoress, to whom the public gave its most decided approval, (to the great mass of people she was a much greater writer than Johnson), is typical of the opinion of the thoughtful people who expressed themselves during the year in which The Lives of the Poets was published.

"I have just finished Johnson's Life of Addison. There is the same exquisite determination of character, the same exactness of criticism, and moral discernment, which have distinguished and dignified the other writings of this truly great biographer. The only thing I am inclined to quarrel with him for is, that he has perpetuated the malignity of that foe to genius and to worth John Dennis, of crabbed memory. He has given a quotation of forty or fifty pages from this old snarler's barking at Cato; which produces these two evils, that we lose forty or fifty pages of Johnson's elegant writing and that the satire, which had some acuteness and more malice, will be this means, be rescued from that oblivion into which Dennis had fallen; and the slander will now be as durable as its object. Entre nous, what Johnson says of Cato may be applied to his Irene; the same exalted sentiments, harmonious verse and highly polished style, and the same deficiency in what relates to the passions and affections."

In this letter of Hannah More's, we have a reference to the unfavorable opinion that Johnson's critical estimates of some of the poets met with, from the people who had known them.

"He" (Johnson) "has just finished the poets; Pope is the last. I am sorry he has lost so much credit by Lord Lyttleton's; he treats him almost with contempt; makes him out a poor writer, and an envious man; speaks well only of his "Conversation of St. Paul" of which he says, "it is sufficient to say it has never been answered." Mrs. Montagu and Mr. Pepys, his two chief surviving friends are very angry."

Horace Walpole the critic who resented Johnson's dictatorship in the English literary world, well represents the prejudiced opinion of a man anxious and ready to see any faults, and who at least in his letters, saw no virtues in Johnson's performance. Probably the principal reason, for Walpole's bitterness, was that Johnson, had undervalued both Gray's poetry and his personality. Walpole especially attacks the language of the "Lives" then proceeds to make fun of the man.

"Sir Joshua Reynolds has lent me Dr. Johnson's Life of Pope, which Sir Joshua holds to be a chef-d'oeuvre. It is a most trumpery performance, and stuffed with all his crabbed phrases and vulgarisms, and much trash as anecdotes; you shall judge yourself. He says that all he can discover of Pope's correspondent, Mr. Cromwell, is that he used to hunt in a tie-wig. The Elegy on the Unfortunate Lady he says, signifies the amorous fury of a raving girl; and yet he admires the subject of Eloisa's Epistle to Abelard. The machinery in The Rape of the Lock, he calls combinations of skilful genius with happy casualty, 'in English I quess a 'lucky thought': publishing proposals is turned into 'emitting' them. But the 66th page, is still more curious: it contains a philosophic solution of Pope's not transcribing the whole Iliad as soon as he thought he should, and it

concludes with this piece of bombast nonsense, 'he that runs against time, has an antagonist not subject to casualties. 'Pope's house here he calls the house to which his residence afterwards procured so much celebration,' and that 'his vanity produced a grotto where necessity enforced a passage'; and that, 'of his intellectual character, the constitutent and fundamental principle was good sense, a prompt and intuitive perception of consonance and propriety.' Was poor good sense ever so unmercifully overlaid by a babbling old woman? How was it possible to marshall words so ridiculously? He seems to have read the ancients with no view but of pilfering polysyllables, utterly insensible to the graces of their simplicity, and these are called standards of biography!"

The personal bitterness, and violent prejudice of Walpole is evident in the following selection.

"Have you got Boswell's most absurd enormous book? The best thing in it is a bon mot of Lord Pembroke. The more one learns of Johnson, the more preposterous assemblage he appears of strong sense, of the lowest bigotry and prejudices, of pride, brutality, fretfulness, and vanity; and Boswell is the ape of most of his faults, without a grain of his sense. It is the story of a mountebank and his zany."

Cowper, of all contemporary critics of The Lives of the Poets, displays the soundest judgment and furthermore he goes into details, and presents an analysis that seems much like that of modern critics.

A friend had sent the poet the first four volumes of the English Poets. Cowper commends the work but objects strenuously to Johnson's handling of Milton.

"I have been well entertained with Johnson's biographies, for which I thank you: with one exception, and that a swingeing 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. As a poet, he has treated him with severity enough, and has plucked one or two of the most beautifulfeathers 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 any thing 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 thresh his old jacket, till I made his pension jingle in his pocket."

These remarks of Cowper, are clearly stated and can be substantiated by a study of Milton and of Johnson. Such criticism is in strong contrast to the partisan view of Walpole.

The author of the Task compliments Johnson on the execution of his biographies in the following reference to Watts:- "I am glad to be undeceived respecting the opinion I had been erroneously led into on the subject of Johnson's criticism on Watts. Nothing can be more judicious, or more characteristic of a distinguishing taste, than his observations upon that writer; though I think him a little mistaken in his notion, that divine subjects have never been poetically treated with success. A little more Christian knowledge and experience would perhaps enable him to discover excellent poetry, upon spiritual themes in the afore-said little Doctor."

In discussing the biographies of Addison and Pope, Cowper agrees with Johnson in his opinion that Pope was inferior to Dryden. This critic, however, objects to the biographer's attack upon Prior's love poems and says:- "I admire Johnson as a man of great erudition and sense; but when he sets himself up for a judge of writers upon the subject of love, a passion which I suppose he never felt in his life, he might as well think himself qualified to pronounce upon a treatise on horsemanship, or the art of fortification."

Cowper in discussing this criticism of Prior, quotes a passage of the Lives and proceeds to analyze its meaning.

"'His words', he says, 'appear to be forced into their proper places; there indeed we find them, but find likewise that their arrangement has been the effect of constraint, and that without violence they would certainly have stood in a different order.' By your leave, most learned Doctor, this is the most disingenuous remark I ever met with, and would have come with a better grace from Curll or Dennis. Every man conversant with verse-writing knows and knows by painful experience, that the familiar style is of all styles the most difficult to succeed in. To make verse speak the language of prose, without being prosaic-to marshall the words of it in such an order as they might naturally taken in falling from the lips of an extemporary speaker, yet without meanness, harmoniously, elegantly, and without seeming to displace a syllable for the

sake of the rhyme, is one of the most arduous tasks a poet can undertake. He that could accomplish this task was Prior; many have imitated his excellence in this particular, but the best copies have fallen far short of the original. And now to tell us, after we and our fathers have admired him for so long, that he is an easy writer indeed, but that his ease has an air of stiffness in it, in short, that his ease is not ease, but only something like it, what is it but a self-contradiction, an observation that grants what it is just going to deny, and denies what it has just granted, in the same sentence, and in the same breath? But I have filled the greatest part of my sheet with a very uninteresting subject. I will only say that as a nation we are not much indebted, in point of poetical credit, to this too sagacious and unmerciful judge; and that for myself in particular, I have reason to rejoice that he entered upon and exhausted the labours of his office before my poor volume could possibly become an object of them."

This is excellent criticism and this carefulness, with his willingness to see faults, makes Cowper's favorable criticism of Johnson of much greater value.

In writing to his friend Rev. William Unwin, Cowper goes more fully, than at any other time, into the reasons for his admiration of the "Lives".

"I am very much the biographer's humble admirer. His uncommon share of good sense, and his forcible expression, secure to him that tribute from all his readers. He has a penetrating insight into character, and a happy talent of correcting the popular opinion, upon all occasions where it is erroneous; and this he does with the boldness of a man who will think for himself, but, at the same time, with a justness of sentiment that convinces us he does not differ from others through affectation, but because he has a sounder judgment. This remark, however, has his narrative for its object, rather then his critical performance. In the latter, I do not think him always just, when he departs from the general opinion. He finds no beauties in Milton's Lycidas. He pours contempt upon Prior, to such a degree, that were he really as undeserving of notice as he represents him, he ought no longer to be numbered among the poets. These, indeed, are the two capital instances in which he has offended me."

As a final tribute to Johnson from Cowper's pen, I quote this epitaph, written in a letter to Rev. John Newton.

"EPITAPH ON DR. JOHNSON.

Here Johnson lies-a sage, by all allow'd,
Whom to have bred may well make England proud;
Whose prose was eloquence by wisdom taught,

The graceful vehicle of virtuous thought;
Whose verse may claim, grave, masculine, and strong,
Superior praise to the mere poet's song;
Who many a noble gift from Heaven possessed,
And faith at last-alone worth all the rest.
Oh man immortal by a double prize,
On earth by fame, by favour in the skies!"

That Johnson's fame was not confined to England is evident from his recognition by Trinity College of Dublin, which spontaneously created him a Doctor of Laws. To this the learned Doctor refers in his letter to the Rev. Dr. Leland, an official of that institution,

"Sire,- Among the names subscribed to the degree which I have had the honour of receiving from the University of Dublin, I find none of which I have any personal knowledge but those of Dr. Andrews and yourself.

I flattered myself that I owe much of the pleasure which this distinction gives me to your concurrence with Dr. Andrews in recommending me to the learned society."

The appreciation of Scotland's learned men is well represented by the comments of Dr. Beattie, the poet and philosopher, in a letter to Boswell.

"'You judge very rightly in supposing that Dr. Johnson's favourable opinion of my book must give me great delight. Indeed it is impossible for me to say how much I am gratified by it; for there is not a man upon earth whose good opinion I would be more ambitious to cultivate. His talents and his virtues I reverence more than any words can express."

The personal letter as used by Samuel Johnson was usually a means to a definite end, in other words the letter was to him chiefly a carrier of information. The letters were in no sense a substitute like Burns for conversation, even for the oracular pronouncements of his opinions of men and things. And certainly he never used the personal letter as a means of unburdening his inner feelings concerning himself, his ambition, his hopes, or his accomplishments. They are the product of his intellect, the emotion is all squeezed out by the mind.

Had some one suggested that the letter had value as a literary form, I can easily imagine the scorn that such an idea would have received from him. Of all of his writings Johnson's letters are the least interesting and the least representative of his genius.

To answer the question, what has Johnson said in his letters that has value as a criticism of his own work is more difficult than to state what he has not done. His letters contain no analysis

or discussion of what he conceived his qualities as a literary man to be. His correspondence is made up mostly of statements of facts: that he had planned a certain work, that he had found difficulty in accomplishing the desired end, that he expected to publish at a certain date, that he had at last completed the work, that he knew not what the public would think of the production, that his book had no friends and no enemies as yet, that the Lives of the Poets had met more commendation than any of his works, etc. He does not say this is my best work and has or has not certain qualities, neither does he compare, his work with that of others in the same field. This total absence of self-appraisal even in writing to his intimate and closest friends would argue that the absence was not accidental but intentional.

Throughout all of his letters that have been available for my study, the only motive ever definitely assigned for his writing, is that of making money, though the King's admiration and the admiration of any discriminating person pleased him yet we look in vain for any expression of elation at the success of his work or at his attainment of power in the realm of literature.

If he hoped, as the moral quality of his work would indicate particularly in the Rambler and in his poetry, to improve the public taste and morals you will not discover this ambition in his personal correspondence.

And finally when he did refer to the fact of the approval of his work either before or after its publication, he never overestimated but rather undervalued the public approbation of his prose and poetry.

The letters of Johnson's contemporaries, give us well defined opinions of his merit and demerits. We learn that with the publication of the Rambler and the Dictionary he became the Dictator in English Literature; his opinions, of men and of their productions were almost conclusive in their power and finality!

However, there were some who delighted to ridicule his person and his literary attainments; their point of attack was his preference for polysyllables, and his latinized vocabulary. Regardless of this adverse criticism of his style, most of the literary folk of judicious minds recognized the distinguishing force and dignity of his language and the moral strength of his literary productions.

The correspondence also brings out the fact that at that time the educated public realized that Johnson's opinions of the qualities of individual writers, as expressed in his critical estimates, were often determined by his prejudices against the person as in his evaluation of Swift, Gray, and Milton.

In concluding our study of Samuel Johnson, we wish to emphasize the value of the honest, and at times brilliant, criticism of Johnson's greatest work, The Lives of the Poets, found in the letters of that conscientious student and lover of literature William Cowper.

CHAPTER VII.

ROBERT BURNS.

After reading the personal letters of Burns, the conviction is forced upon us, that of all the writers of the 18th century, letter writing to friends and acquaintances was a more important part of Burns's life than of any other literary man, of that century of personal letter writing. Not only did he receive encouragement, one might almost say inspiration, from this close meeting with the leading men and women of Scotland, but this constant stream of letters formed a vital part of his training and education. The letters of Burns fulfill the strictest demands of letter writing, they are never hastily or carelessly thrown together. The English of them is remarkably expressive and flexible. His sentences lack a sort of classical stiffness and formality that run through the letters of Swift and Pope. Apparently to Burns, the personal letter was a capable substitute for conversation and as a result we find that these dashings off of his spirit are sparkling with humor and wit, and are crowded with reflections from all parts of his daily life. They contain his wholesome reaction to the various phases of man's life around him, and frequently these letters convey so directly the ache and pathos of his life that our sympathy goes out immediately in response to his simple tale of disappointment, remorse, and hardship.

These letters show that Burns, in the most narrow sense, was the national poet of Scotland, Among his chief correspondents only one, perhaps two, lived beyond the bounds of Scotia's land.

The letters that Burns's friends wrote to him have not been available to me, consequently this study will bring out chiefly, the critical opinion of Burns as expressed by himself. As early as 1783 he wrote to Mr. Robert Riddell concerning his earliest work.

"My dear Sir,- On rummaging over some old papers I lighted on a MS. of my early years, in which I had determined to write myself out; as I was placed by fortune among a class of men to whom my ideas have been nonsense, I had meant that the book should have lain by me, in the fond hope that some time or other, even after I was no more, my thoughts would fall into the hands of somebody capable of appreciating their value."

"OBSERVATIONS, HINTS, SONGS, SCRAPS of POETRY, &c., by ROBERT BURNESS; a man who had little art in making money, and still less in keeping it; but was, however, a man of some sense, a great deal of honesty, and unbounded good-will to every creature, rational and irrational.- As he was but little indebted to scholastic education, and bred at a plough-tail, his performances must be strongly tinctured with his unpolished, rustic way of life; but as I believe they are really his own, it may be some entertainment to a curious

observer of human nature to see how a ploughman thinks and feels under the pressure of love, ambition, anxiety, grief, with the little cares and passions, which, however diversified by the modes and manners of life, operate pretty much alike, I believe, on all the species."

"There are numbers in the world who do not want sense to make a figure, so much as an opinion of their own abilities to put them upon recording their observations, and allowing them the same importance which they do to those that appear in print."

--Shenstone.

Pleasing, when youth is long expired, to trace
The forms our pencil or our pen designed!
Such was our youthful air, and shape, and face,
Such the soft image of our youthful mind."-Ibid.

"There is certainly some connexion between love and music and poetry; and, therefore, I have always thought it a fine touch of nature, that passage in a modern love-composition:-

"As towards her cot he jogged along,
Her name was frequent in his song."

For my own part I never had the least thought or inclination of turning poet till I got once heartily in love, and then rhyme and song were in a manner the spontaneous language of my heart. The following composition was the first of my performances, and done at an early period of my life, when my heart glowed with honest warm simplicity; unacquainted and uncorrupted with the ways of a wicked world. The performance is, indeed, very puerile and silly; but I am always pleased with it, as it recalls to my mind those happy days when my heart was yet honest, and my tongue was sincere. The subject of it was a young girl who really deserved all the praises I have bestowed on her. I not only had this opinion of her then - but I actually think so still, now that the spell is long since broken, and the charm at an end:-

O, once I lov'd a bonnie lass,
Ay, and I love her still
And whilst that virtue warms my breast
I'll love my handsome Nell.
Fal lal de ral, &c.

As bonnie lasses I hae seen,
And monie full as braw,
But for a modest graceful mien
The like I never saw.

A bonie lass, I will confess,
Is pleasant to the ee,
But without some better qualities
She's no a lass for me.

But Nelly's looks are blithe and sweet,
And what is best of a',
Her reputation is complete,
And fair without a flaw.

She dresses aye sae clean and neat,
Both decent and genteel:
And then there's something in her gait
Gars onie dress look weel.

A gaudy dress and gentle air
May slightly touch the heart,
But it's innocence and modesty
That polishes the dart.

'Tis this in Nelly pleases me,
'Tis this enchants my soul!
For absolutely in my breast
She reigns without control.
Fal lal de ral, &c.

Lest my works should be thought below criticism; or meet with a critic who, perhaps, will not look on them with so candid and favorable an eye; I am determined to criticise them myself.

The first distich of the first stanza is quite too much in the flimsy strain of our ordinary street ballads; and, on the other hand, the second distich is too much in the other extreme. The expression is a little awkward, and the sentiment too serious. Stanza the second I am well pleased with; and I think it conveys a fine idea of that amiable part of the sex - the agreeables; or what in our Scotch dialect we call a sweet sonsy lass. The third stanza has a little of the flimsy turn in it; and the third line has rather too serious a cast. The fourth stanza is a very indifferent one; the first line is, indeed, all in the strain of the second stanza, but the rest is mostly expletive. The thoughts in the fifth stanza come finely up to my favourite idea- a sweet sonsy lass: the last line, however, halts a little. The same sentiments are kept up with equal spirit and tenderness in the sixth stanza; but the second and fourth lines ending with short syllables hurt the whole. The seventh stanza has several minute faults; but I remember I composed it in a wild enthusiasm of passion, and to this hour I never recollect it but my heart melts, my blood sallies at the remembrance.

Shentone finely observes, that love verses, writ without any real passion, are the most nauseous of all conceits; and I have often

thought that no man can be a proper critic of love-composition, except he himself, in one or more instances, have been a warm votary of this passion. As I have been all along a miserable dupe to love, and have been led into a thousand weaknesses and follies by it, for that reason I put the more confidence in my critical skill, in distinguishing foppery and conceit from real passion and nature. Either the following song will stand the test, I will not pretend to say, because it is my own; only I can say it was, at the time, genuine from the heart:-

Beyond yon hills where Stinchar flows,
'Mang moors an' mosses many, O,
The wintry sun the day has clos'd,
And I'll awa' to Nanie, O.

The westlin wind blaws loud an' shill;
The night's baith mirk and rainy, O;
But I'll get my plaid, an' out I'll steal,
An' owre the hill to Nanie, O.

My Nanie's charming, sweet, an' young:
Nae artfu' wiles to win ye, O;
May ill befa' the flattering tongue
That wad beguile my Nanie, O.

Her face is fair, her heart is true,
As spotless as she's bonie, O;
The op'ning gowan, wat wi' dew,
Nae purer is than Nanie, O.

A country lad is my degree,
An' few there be that ken me, O;
But what care I how few they be,
I'm welcome aye to Nanie, O.

My riches a's my penny-fee,
An' I maun guide it cannie, O;
But warl's gear ne'er troubles me,
My thoughts are a', my Nanie, O.

Come weel, come woe, I care na by,
I'll tak what Heav'n will send me, O;
Nae ither care in life have I,
But live, an' love my Nanie, O."

His ambition to do for his part of Scotland, what Ramsay and Fergusson had done for their localities, is forcefully and determinedly stated in this enclosure to Riddell.

"However I am pleased with the works of our Scotch poets, particularly the excellent Ramsay, and the still more excellent Fergusson, yet I am hurt to see other places of Scotland, their

towns, rivers, woods, haunts, &c. immortalized in such celebrated performances, while my dear native country, the ancient bailieries of Carrick, Kyle, and Cunningham, famous both in ancient and modern time for a gallant and warlike race of inhabitants; a country where civil, and particularly religious liberty have ever found their first support, and their last asylum; a country, the birth-place of many famous philosophers, soldiers, and statesmen, and the scene of many important events recorded in Scottish history, particularly a great many actions of the glorious Wallace, the savior of his country; yet, we never have had one Scotch poet of any eminence, to make the fertile banks of Irvine, the romantic woodlands and sequestered scenes on Ayr, and the heaty mountainous source and winding sweep of Doon, emulate Tay, Forth, Ettrick, Tweed, &c. This is a complaint I would gladly remedy, but, alas! I am far unequal to the task, both in native genius and education. Obscure I am, and obscure I must be, though no young poet, nor young soldier's heart, ever beat more fondly for fame than mine:-

"And if there is no other scene of being
Where my insatiate wish may have its fill,
This something at my heart that heaves for room,
My best, my dearest part, was made in vain."

Burns's strong interest in the old songs of his native land evidenced itself early in his poetic life. This fragment taken from the MS. sent to Riddel shows his strong desire to write songs to the old familiar tunes of the country-side.

"There is great irregularity in the old Scotch songs, a redundancy of syllables with respect to that exactness of accent and measure that the English poetry requires, but which glides in, most melodiously, with the respective tunes to which they are set. For instance, the fine old song of "The Mill, Mill, O, "to give it a plain, prosaic reading, it halts prodigiously out of measure; on the other hand, the song set to the same tune in Bremner's collection of Scotch songs, which begins, "To Fanny fair could I impart", &c. it is most exact measure: and yet, let them both be sung before a real critic, one above the biases of prejudices, but a thorough judge of nature,-how flat and spiritless will the last appear, how trite, and lamely methodical, compared with the wild-warbling cadence, the heart-moving melody of the first! This is particularly the case with all those airs which end with a hypermetrical syllable. There is a degree of wild irregularity in many of the compositions and fragments which are daily sung to them by my compeers, the common people - a certain happy arrangment of old Scotch syllables, and yet, very frequently, nothing, not even like rhyme, or sameness of jingle, at the ends of the lines. This has made me sometimes imagine that perhaps it might be possible for a Scotch poet, with a nice judicious ear, to set compositions to many of our most favourite airs, particularly that class of them mentioned above, independent of rhyme altogether."

The following extract interests us because it refers to the composition of several of Burns's most famous pieces. It is taken from a letter to Mr. John Richmond written in 1786 from Mossgiel.

"I have not time at present to upbraid you for your silence and neglect; I will only say I received yours with great pleasure. I have inclosed you a piece of rhyming ware for your perusal. I have been very busy with the Muses since I saw you, and have composed, among several others, "The Ordination", a poem on Mr. M'Kinlay's being called to Kilmarnock; "Scotch Drink," a poem; "The Cotter's Saturday Night;" "An Address to the Devil," &c. I have likewise completed my poem on the "Dogs", but have not shown it to the world. My chief patron now is Mr. Aiken in Ayr, who is pleased to express great approbation of my works. Be so good as send me Fergusson, by Connel, and I will remit you the money."

Writing to David Brice he very simply announces his intention to publish his first volume of poems.

"You will have heard that I am going to commence poet in print; and tomorrow my works go to the press, I expect it will be a volume of about two hundred pages - it is just the last foolish action I intend to do; and then turn a wise man as fast as possible."

Mrs. Dunlop happening to see the "Cotter's Saturday Night", was so stirred and delighted with it, that she at once wrote a letter to Burns expressing her admiration and giving an order for a half dozen copies of the Kilmarnock edition of the poet's work. This is Burns's reply.

"I am truly sorry I was not at home yesterday, when I was so much honoured with your order for my copies, and incomparably more by the handsome compliments you are pleased to pay my poetic abilities. I am fully persuaded that there is not any class of mankind so feelingly alive to the titillations of applause as the sons of Parnassus: nor is it easy to conceive how the heart of the poor bard dances with rapture, when those, whose character in life gives them a right to be polite judges, honour him with their approbation."

This letter displays effectively the real Burns; her praise pleased him but left his vanity untouched. He shows his love of Scotland and expresses his desire to celebrate in verse the fame of his hero William Wallace.

Prominent among the friends made for Burns by the first edition was the blind poet Thomas Blacklock, who wrote to the Rev. Mr. Lawrie, from whom it passed through Gavin Hamilton to Burns.

"I ought to have acknowledged your favor long ago, not only as a testimony of your kind remembrance, but as it gave me an

opportunity of sharing one of the finest, and perhaps one of the most genuine entertainments, of which the human mind is susceptible. A number of avocations retarded my progress in reading the poems; at last, however, I have finished that pleasing perusal. Many instances have I seen of nature's force and beneficence, exerted under numerous and formidable disadvantages; but none equal to that with which you have been kind enough to present me. There is a pathos and delicacy in his serious poems; a vein of wit and humor in those of a more festive turn, which cannot be too much admired, nor too warmly approved; and I think I shall never open the book without feeling my astonishment renewed and increased. It was my wish to have expressed my approbation in verse; but whether from declining life, or a temporary depression of spirits, it is at present out of my power to accomplish that agreeable intention. Mr. Stewart, Professor of morals in this University, had formerly read me three of the poems, and I had desired him to get my name inserted among the subscribers: but whether this was done or not I never could learn. I have little intercourse with Dr. Blair, but will take care to have the poems communicated to him by the intervention of some mutual friend. It has been told me by a gentleman, to whom I showed the performances, and who sought a copy with diligence and ardour, that the whole impression is already exhausted. It were therefore much to be wished, for the sake of the young man, that a second edition, more numerous than the former, could immediately be printed; as it appears certain that its intrinsic merit, and the exertion of the author's friends, might give it a more universal circulation than anything of the kind which has been published within my memory."

This letter of encouragement determined Burns to give up his passage to Jamaica and to try his fate with a second edition of his poems. This new hope was also the cause of his expedition to the city of Edinburgh. Of his success among the prominent folk of Edinburgh, Burns speaks simply and plainly in a letter to John Ballantine a patron from Ayr.

"I have found a worthy warm friend in Mr. Dalrymple, of Orangefield, who introduced me to Lord Glencairn, a man whose worth and brotherly kindness to me I shall remember when time shall be no more. By his interest it is passed in the "Caledonian Hunt", and entered in their books, that they are to take each a copy of the second edition, for which they are to pay one guinea.- I have been introduced to a good many of the noblesse, but my avowed patrons and patronesses are, the Dutchess of Gordon-the Countess of Glencairn, with my Lord, and Lady Betty - the Dean of Faculty- Sir John Whitefoord. I have likewise warm friends among the literati: Proffessors Stewart, Blair, and Mr. Mackenzie- the Man of Feeling. An unknown hand left ten guineas for the Ayrshire Bard with Mr. Sibbald, which I got. I since have discovered my generous unknown friend to be Patrick Miller, Esq., brother to the Justice Clerk; and drank a glass of claret with him by invitation at his own house yesternight.

I am nearly agreed with Creech to print my book, and I suppose I will begin on Monday. I will send a subscription bill or two, next post; when I intend writing my first kind patron, Mr. Aiken. I saw his son today, and he is very well.

Dugald Stewart, and some of my learned friends, put me in the periodical paper called the Lounger, a copy of which I here inclose you. I was, Sir, when I was first honoured with your notice too obscure; now I tremble lest I should be ruined by being dragged too suddenly into the glare of polite and learned observation."

The paper referred to was written by Mr. Mackenzie the author of, "The Man of Feeling". The following selection from that article indicates the high opinion held by Mr. Mackenzie of Burns's talents.

"The power of genius," Mr. Mackenzie proceeds", is not less admirable in tracing the manners, than in painting the passions or in drawing the scenery of nature. That intuitive glance with which a writer like Shakespeare discerns the characters of men, with which he catches the many changing hues of life, forms a sort of problem in the science of mind, of which it is easier to see the truth than to assign the cause. Though I am very far from meaning to compare our rustic bard to Shakespeare, yet whoever will read his lighter and more humorous poems, his Dialogue of the Dogs, his Dedication to G-H-, Esq., his Epistle to a Young Friend, and to W-S-, will perceive with what uncommon penetration and sagacity this heaven-taught ploughman, from his humble and unlettered station, has looked upon men and things."

That Burns was not only received by the literati of Edinburgh, but that the middle class also appreciated his poetic accomplishments is shown in this letter to John Ballantine.

"I went to mason-lodge yesternight, where the most Worshipful Grand Master Chartres, and all the Grand Lodge of Scotland visited. The meeting was numerous and elegant; all the different lodges about town were present, in all their pomp. The Grand Master, who presided with great solemnity and honor to himself as a gentleman and a mason, among other general toasts, gave "Caledonia, and Caledonia's Bard, Brother Burns, "which rung thrugh the whole assembly with multiplied honours and repeated acclamations. As I had no idea such a thing would happen, I was downright thunderstruck and trembling in every nerve, made the best return in my power. Just as I had finished, some of the grand officers said, so loud that I could hear, with a most comforting accent, "Very well indeed!" which set me something to rights again."

The boyish freshness and exuberance of the following letter to Ballantine gives us the happy side of his disposition.

"While here I sit, sad and solitary, by the side of a fire in a little country inn, and drying my wet clothes, in pops a poor

fellow of a sodger, and tells me he is going to Ayr. By heavens! say I to myself, with a tide of good spirits which the magic of that sound, Auld Toon o'Ayr, conjured up, I will send my last song to Ballantine. Here it is-

Ye flowery banks o'bonnie Doon,
How can ye bloom sae fair;
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
And I sae fu' o' care?"

The feeling of bitterness and scepticism that expressed itself constantly in letters during his stay in Edinburgh comes out decidedly in a letter to Mrs. Dunlop.

"You are afraid I shall grow intoxicated with my prosperity as a poet: alas! Madam, I know my self and the world too well. I do not mean any airs of affected modesty; I am willing to believe that my abilities deserve some notice; but in a most enlightened, informed age and nation, when poetry is and has been the study of men of the first natural genius, aided with all the powers of polite learning, polite books, and polite company - to be dragged forth to the full glare of learning and polite observations, with all my imperfections of awkward rusticity and crude unpolished ideas on my head - I assure you, Madam, I do not dissemble when I tell you I tremble for the consequences. The novelty of a poet in my obscure situation, without any of those advantages which are reckoned necessary for that character, at least at this time of day, has raised a partial tide of public notice which has borne me to a height, where I am absolutely, feelingly certain my abilities are inadequate to support me; and too surely do I see that time when the same tide will leave me, and recede, perhaps, as far below the mark of truth. I do not say this in the ridiculous affectation of self-abasement and modesty. I have studied myself, and know what ground I occupy. and however a friend or the world may differ from me in that particular, I stand for my own opinion, in silent resolve, with all the tenaciousness of property. I mention this to you once for all to disburthen my mind, and I do not wish to hear or say more about it. But,

"When proud fortune's ebbing tide recedes,"

you will bear me witness, that when my bubble of fame was at the highest, I stood unintoxicated, with the inebriating cup in my hand, looking forward with rueful resolve to the hastening time, when the blow of Calumny should dash it to the ground, with all the eagerness of vengeful triumph."

Dr. Moore's opinions in his reply are expressive of his admiration of the rustic genius of Scotland.

"If I may judge of the author's disposition from his works, with all the other good qualities of a poet, he has not the irritable temper ascribed to that race of men by one of their own number,

whom you have the happiness to resemble in ease and curious felicity of expression. Indeed the poetical beauties, however original and brilliant, and lavishly scattered, are not all I admire in your works; the love of your native country, that feeling sensibility to all the objects of humanity, and the independent spirit which breathes through the whole, give me a most favourable impression of the Poet, and have made me often regret that I did not see the poems, the certain effect of which would have been my seeing the author, last summer, when I was longer in Scotland than I have been for many years."

Everyone who knows any of the songs or anything of the fame of Burns, realizes that the song is his chief medium of poetic expression, and that the love theme is predominant. How early in his life love and song sprang together in delightful spontaneity from his simple heart is told to us, by the bard, in a letter to Dr. Moore, written from Mauchline, the home of his mother. After a description of the slavery of his farm life while working at home for his father he gives the interesting account just referred to.

"This kind of life - the cheerless gloom of a hermit, with the unceasing moil of a galley slave, brought me to my sixteenth year; a little before which period I first committed the sin of rhyme. You know our country custom of coupling a man and a woman together as partners in the labours of harvest. In my fifteenth autumn, my partner was a bewitching creature, a year younger than myself. My scarcity of English denies me the power of doing her justice in that language, but you know the Scottish idiom: she was a "bonnie, sweet, sonsie lass." In short, she, altogether unwittingly to herself, initiated me in that delicious passion, which, in spite of acid disappointment, gin-horse prudence, and bookworm philosophy, I hold to be the first of Human joys, our dearest blessing here below! How she caught the contagion I cannot tell; you medical people talk much of infection from breathing the same air, the touch, &c.; but I never expressly said I loved her. Indeed I did not know myself why I liked so much to loiter behind with her, when returning in the evening from our labours; why the tones of her voice made my heart-strings thrill like an AEolian harp; and particularly why my pulse beat such a furious ratan, when I looked and fingered over her little hand to pick out the cruel nettle-stings and thistles. Among her other love inspiring qualities, she sung sweetly; and it was her favourite reel to which I attempted giving an embodied vehicle in rhyme. I was not so presumptuous as to imagine that I could make verses like printed ones, composed by men who had Greek and Latin; but my girl sung a song which was said to be composed by a small country laird's son, on one of his father's maids, with whom he was in love; and I saw no reason why I might not rhyme as well as he; for, excepting that he could smear sheep, and cast peats, his father living in the moorlands, he had no more scholar-craft than myself.

"Thus with me began love and poetry; which at times have been my only, and till within the last twelve months, have been my highest enjoyment."

In the same letter to Dr. Moore, we read of his early attempts in English and of the first book he was able to secure. The youth's love of Scottish heroes may also be seen.

"Though it cost the school-master some thrashings, I made an excellent English scholar; and by the time I was ten or eleven years of age, I was a critic in substances, verbs, and particles. In my infant and boyish days, too, I owe much to an old woman who resided in the family, remarkable for her ignorance, credulity, and superstition. She had, I suppose, the largest collection in the country of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elf-candles, dead-lights, wraiths, apparations, cantrapis, giants, enchanted towers, dragons and other trumpery. This cultivated the latent seeds of poetry; but not so strong an effect on my imagination, that to this hour, in my nocturnal rambles, I sometimes keep a sharp look-out in suspicious places; and though no one can be more skeptical than I am in such matters, yet it often takes an effort of philosophy to shake off these idle terrors. The earliest composition that I recollect taking pleasure in, was "The Vision of Mirza", and a hymn of Addison's beginning, "How are thy servants pleased, O Lord!" I particularly remember one half-stanza which was music to my boyish ear.-

"For though in dreadful whirls we hung
High on the broken wave-"

I met with these pieces in Mason's English Collection, one of my school books. The first two books I ever read in private, and which gave me more pleasure than any two books I ever read since, were "The Life of Hannibal", and "The History of Sir William Wallace". Hannibal gave my young ideas such a turn, that I used to strut in raptures up and down after the recruiting drum and bag-pipe, and wish myself tall enough to be a soldier; while the story of Wallace poured a Scottish prejudice into my veins, which will boil along there till the flood-gates of life shut in eternal rest."

This lengthy letter gives us further information concerning, his ever recurrent tendency to fall in love with a pretty face, his schooling in surveying, and his reading, with his trials at composition.

"Here, though I learnt to fill my glass, and to mix without fear in a drunken squabble, yet I went on with a high hand with my geometry, till the sun entered Virgo, a month which is always a carnival in my bosom, when a charming fillette, who lived next door to the school, overset my trigonometry, and set me off at a tangent from the spheres of my studies. I, however, struggled on with my

sines and co-sines for a few days more; but stepping into the garden one charming noon to take the sun's altitude, there I met my angel-

"Like Prosperpine gathering flowers,
Herself a fairer flower-."

It was in vain to think of doing any more good at school. The remaining week I staid I did nothing but craze the faculties of my soul about her, or steal out to meet her; and the two last nights of my stay in the country, had sleep been a mortal sin, the image of this modest and innocent girl had kept me guiltless.

I returned home very considerably improved. My reading was enlarged with the very important addition of Thomson's and Shenstone's Works: I have seen human nature in a new phasis; and I engaged several of my schoolfellows to keep up a literary correspondence with me. This improved me in composition. I had met with a collection of letters by the wits of Queen Anne's reign, and I pored over them most devoutly. I kept copies of any of my own letters that pleased me, and a comparison between them and the composition of most of my correspondents flattered my vanity."

During this year the first edition of, The Scott's Musical Museum, was published. Burns because of his interest in native Scotch tunes began at this time to contribute songs to this collection. In the following letter written to Rev. John Skinner in 1787, Burns expresses his delight with the compliment he had received and discusses the matter of song writing.

"Accept, in plain dull prose, my honest sincere thanks for the best poetical compliment I ever received, I assure you, Sir, as a poet, you have conjured up an airy demon of vanity in my fancy which the best abilities in your other capacity would be ill able to lay. I regret, and while I live I shall regret, that when I was in the north, I had not the pleasure of paying a younger brother's dutiful respect to the author of the best Scotch song ever Scotland saw - Tullochgorum's my delight!" The world may think slightingly of the craft of song-making, if they please, but, as Job says- "O that my adversary had written a book!"- let them try. There is a certain something in the old Scotch songs, a wild happiness of thought an expression, which peculiarly marks them, not only from English songs, but also from the modern efforts of songwrights, in our native manner and language.

There is a work going on in Edinburgh, just now, which claims your best assistance. An engraver in this town has set about collecting and publishing all the Scotch songs, with the music, that can be found. Songs in the English language, if by Scotchmen, are admitted, but the music must all be Scotch. Drs. Beattie and Blacklock are lending a hand, and the first musician in town presides

over that department. I have been absolutely crazed about it, collecting old stanzas, and every information remaining respecting their origin, authors, &c, &c. This last is but a very fragment business; but at the end of his second number - the first is alreat published - a small account will be given of the authors, particul ly to preserve those of latter times. Your three songs, "Tullochgorum", "John of Badenyon", and "Ewie wi' the crookit Horn", go in this second number."

That Burns did not receive only favorable criticism while in Edinburgh is shown by this acknowledgment in a letter to Professor Dugald Stewart.

"Need I make any apology for this trouble, to a gentleman who has treated me with such marked benevolence and peculiar kindness who has entered into my interests with so much zeal, and on whose critical decisions I can so fully depend? A poet as I am by trade, these decisions are to me of the last consequence. My late transient acquaintance among some of the mere rank and file of greatness, I resign with ease; but to the distinguished champions of genius and learning, I shall be ever ambitious of being known. The native genius and accurate discernment in Stewart's critical strictures, the justness (iron justice, for he has no bowels of compassion for a poor poetic sinner) of Dr. Gregory's remarks, and the delicacy of Professor Dalzal's taste, I shall ever revere."

We do not think of Burns as a man who could exercise his critical faculty in such a way as to measure out judgments both favorable and unfavorable with an even hand, yet that is just what we discover in these letters written to Miss Helen Maria Williams a poetess of that day. The careful detailed analysis, with clearly stated reasons for the strictures made, are not in harmony with the commonly accepted opinion that Burns was at all times dominated by gusts of passion.

"Of the many problems in the nature of that wonderful creature man, this is one of the most extraordinary, that he shall go on from day to day, from week to week, from month to month, or perhaps from year to year, suffering a hundred times more in an hour from the impotent consciousness of neglecting what he ought to do, than the very doing of it would cost him. I am deeply indebted to you, first for the elegant poetic compliment, then for a polite, obliging letter, and lastly, for your excellent poem on the Slave Trade; and yet, wretch that I am! though the debts were debts of honour, and the creditor a lady, I have put off and put off even the acknowledgement of the obligation, until you must indeed be the very angel I take you for, if you can forgive me.

Your poem I have read with the highest pleasure. I have a way whenever I read a book - I mean a book in our own trade, Madam, a poetic one - and when it is my own property, that I take a pencil and mark at the ends of verses, or note on margins and odd paper,

little criticisms of approbation or disapprobation as I peruse along. I will make no apology for presenting you with a few unconnected thoughts that occurred to me in my repeated perusals of your poem. I want to show you that I have honesty enough to tell you what I take to be truths, even when they are not quite on the side of approbation; and I do it in the firm faith that you have equal greatness of mind to hear them with pleasure.

I know very little of scientific criticism; so all I can pretend to do in that intricate art is merely to note, as I read along, what passages strike me as being uncommonly beautiful, and where the expression seems to be perplexed or faulty.

The poem opens finely. There are none of these idle prefatory lines which one may skip over before one comes to the subject. Verses 9th and 10th in particular,

"Where ocean's unseen bound
Leaves a drear world of waters round,"

are truly beautiful. The simile of the hurricane is likewise fine; and indeed, beautiful as the poem is, almost all the similes rise decidedly above it.

Either my apprehension is dull, or there is something a little confused in the apostrophe to Mr. Pitt. Verse 55th is the antecedent to verses 57th and 58th, but in verse 58th the connexion seems ungrammatical:-

Powers * * * * * * *
With no gradations mark'd their flight,
But rose at once to glory's height."

"Ris'n should be the word instead of "rose". Try it in prose. Powers,- their flight marked by no gradations, but (the same powers) risen at once to the height of glory.

I have got so much into the cant of criticism, that I begin to be afraid lest I have nothing except the cant of it; and instead of elucidating my author, am only benighting myself. For this reason, I will not pretend to go through the whole poem. Some few remaining beautiful lines, however, I cannot pass over. Verse 280th is the strongest description of selfishness I ever saw. The comparison in verses 285th and 286th is new and fine; and the line, "Your arms to penury you lead," is excellent.

In verse 317th, "like" should certainly be "as" or "so;" for instance-

"His sway the hardened bosom leads
To cruelty's remorseless deeds;
as (or so) the blue lightning, when it springs

With fury on its livid wings,
Darts on the goal with rapid force,
Nor heeds that ruin marks its course."

If you insert the word "like" where I have placed "as", you must alter "darts" to "darting", and "heeds" to "heeding", in order to make it grammar. A tempest is a favourite subject with the poets, but I do not remember anything even in Thomson's "Winter" superior to your verses from the 347th to the 351st. Indeed the last simile beginning with "Fancy may dress", &c. and ending with the 350th verse, is, in my opinion, the most beautiful passage in the poem; it would do honour to the greatest names that ever graced our profession.

I will not beg your pardon Madam, for these strictures, as my conscience tells me, that for once in my life I have acted up to the duties of a Christian, in doing as I would be done by.- R.B."

Dr. Moore, Burns's patron and friendly critic, wrote a novel Zeluco and sent it to Burns with a request for his opinion. Burns's first reply indicates the thoroughness with which the poet set about a task.

"I am sadly ungrateful in not returning you my thanks for your most valuable present, "Zeluco". In fact, you are in some degree blameable for my neglect. You were pleased to express a wish for my opinion of the work, which so flattered me, that nothing less would serve my overweening fancy than a formal criticism on the book. In fact I have gravely planned a comparative view of you with Fielding, Richardson, and Smollett, in your different qualities and merits as novel-writers. This, I own, betrays my ridiculous vanity, and I may probably never bring the business to bear; and I am fond of the spirit young Elihu shews in the book of Job-"And I said, I will also declare my opinion." I have quite disfigured my copy of the book with my annotations. I never take it up without at the same time taking my pencil, and marking with asterisms, parentheses, &c., wherever I meet with an original thought, a nervous remark on life and manners, a remarkable well-turned period, or a character sketched with uncommon precision.

Though I should hardly think of fairly writing out my "Comparative View", I shall certainly trouble you with my remarks, such as they are."

Dr. Moore's position was an enviable one and Burns felt the inferiority of his own humble station. We might expect Burns to be somewhat afraid of criticising adversely the work of so prominent and powerful a man, yet notice the straightforwardness and independence of the following comments.

"I have just read over, once more of many times, your "Zeluco" I marked with my pencil, as I went along, every passage that pleased me particularly above the rest; and one or two, I think, which, with

humble deference, I am disposed to think unequal to the merits of the book. I have sometimes thought to transcribe these marked passages, or at least so much of them as to point where they are, and sent them to you. Original strokes that strongly depict the human heart is your and Fielding's province, beyond any other novelist I have ever perused. Richardson, indeed, might perhaps be excepted; but, unhappily, his dramatis personae are beings of another world; and however they may captivate the unexperienced, romantic fancy of a boy or a girl, they will ever, in proportion as we have made human nature our study, dissatisfy our riper years."

The first mention of Tam O' Shanter is in a letter to Mrs. Dunlop dated 1790.

"I am much flattered by your approbation of my "Tam O' Shanter", which you express in your former letter."

The hot impulse that aroused the desire for and determined Burns's method of composition is well illustrated in the following account.

"As for the rest of my fancies and reveries - how I lately met with Miss Lesley Baillie, the most beautiful, elegant woman in the world - how I accompanied her and her father's family fifteen miles on their journey, out of pure devotion, to admire the loveliness of the works of God in such an unequalled display of them - how, in galloping home at night, I made a ballad on her, of which these two stanzas make a part-

Thou, bonie Lesley, art a queen,
Thy subjects we before thee;
Thou, bonie Lesley, art divine,
The hearts o' men adore thee.

The very Deil he could na scathe
Whatever wad belang thee!
He'd look into they bonie face
And say, "I canna wrang thee."

The real passion that Burns had for Scottish songs never left him, and greatly to his praise, he seemed always willing to give praise and prominence to a fellow-craftsman or a pleasing song.

"Your observations as to the aptitude of Dr. Percy's ballad, "O, Nancy, wilt thou go with me"? to the air, "Nannie, O!" is just. It is, besides, perhaps the most beautiful ballad in the English language. But let me remark to you, that in the sentiment and style of our Scottish airs there is a pastoral simplicity, a something that one may call the Doric style and dialect of vocal music, to which a dash of our native tongue and manners is particularly, nay peculiarly, apposite. For this reason, and, upon my honour, for

this reason alone, I am of opinion (but, as I told you before, my opinion is yours, freely yours, to approve or reject, as you please) that my ballad of "Nanie, O!" might perhaps do for one set of verses to the tune. Now don't let it enter into your head, that you are under any necessity of taking my verses. I have long ago made up my mind as to my own reputation in the business of authoship, and have nothing to be pleased or offended at in your adoption or rejection of my verses. Though you should reject one half of what I give you, I shall be pleased with your adopting the other half, and shall continue to serve you with the same assiduity.

In the printed copy of my "Nannie, O!" the name of the river is horribly prosaic. I will alter it:-

"Behind yon hills where Lugar flows."

Girvan is the name of the river that suits the idea of the stanza best, but Lugar is the most agreeable modulation of syllables.

His continued appreciation of Thomson comes out again in his correspondence with Mrs. Dunlop.

"There is a charming passage in Thomson's "Edward and Eleanora":-

"The valiant, in himself, what can he suffer?
Or what need he regard his single woes?"-&c.

"As I am got in the way of quotations, I shall give you another from the same piece, peculiarly - alas! too peculiarly - apposite, my dear Madam, your present frame of mind:-"

"Who so unworthy but may proudly deck him
With his fair-weather virtue, that exults
Glad o'er the summer main? the tempest comes;
The rough winds rage aloud; when from the helm
This virtue shrinks, and in a corner lies
Lamenting.-Heavens! if privileged from trial
How cheap a thing were virtue!"

I do not remember to have heard you mention Thomson's dramas. I pick up favourite quotations, and store them in my mind as ready armour, offensive or defensive, amid the struggle of this turbulent existence. Of these one, a very favourite one is from his "Alfred:".

"Attach thee firmly to the virtuous deeds
And offices of life; to life itself,
With all its vain and transient joys, sit loose."

As a critic of his own efforts his judgment of their real worth has been substantiated by posterity in a remarkable manner.

"The foregoing song ("Highland Mary,") pleases myself; I think it is in my happiest manner: you will see at first glance that it suits the air. The subject of the song is one of the most interesting passages of my youthful days; and I own that I should be much flattered to see the verses set to an air which would ensure celebrity. Perhaps, after all, 'tis the still glowing prejudice of my heart that throws a borrowed lustre over the merits of the composition."

Burns's broad mindedness in accepting criticism from a man of less rank and importance is noteworthy and in contradiction to the opinion that his actions were controlled by temperamental whims and fancies. Contrast the openness and kindness of this letter to Thomson, the musician, with the bitterness and pride often found in Pope's letters.

"Your alterations of my "Nannie, O!" are perfectly right.. So are those of "My wife's a winsome wee thing;" your alteration of the second stanza is a positive improvement. Now, my dear Sir, with the freedom which characterizes our correspondence, I must not, cannot, alter "Bonie Lesley." You are right, the word "Alexander" makes the line a little uncouth; but I think the thought is pretty. Of Alexander, beyond all other heores, it may be said, in the sublime language of Scripture, that "he went forth conquering and t conquer."

"For nature made her what she is,
And never made anither." (Such a person as she is).

This is, in my opinion, more poetical than "Ne'er made sic anither."

The ingenuousness of Burns's account of the origin of his stirring and famous national song arouses our sympathy.

"You know that my pretensions to musical taste are merely a few of nature's instincts, untaught and untutored by art. For this reason many musical compositions, particularly where much of the merit lies in counterpoint, however they may transport and ravish the ears of you connoisseurs, affect my simple lug no otherwise then merely as melodious din. On the other hand, by way of amends, I am delighted with many little melodies, which the learned musicia despises as silly and insipid. I do not know whether the old air, "Hey, tuttie taitie," may rank among this number; but well I know that, with Fraser's hautboy, it has often filled my eyes with tears There is a tradition, which I have met with in many places of Scotland, that it was Robert Bruce's march at the battle of Bannockburn. This thought, in my solitary wanderings, warmed me t throw into a kind of Scottish ode, fitted to the air, that one mig suppose to be the gallant Royal Scot's address to his heroic followers on that eventful morning.

("Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled.")

So may God ever defend the cause of truth and liberty, as He did that day!-Amen."

This modesty expresses itself again when he sends "Auld Lang Syne", to Thomson and gives merit to the air but not to his verses.

"One song more I have done - "Auld Lang Syne." The air is but mediocre; but the following song, the old song of the olden times, and which has never been in print, nor even in manuscript, until I took it down from an old man's singing, is enough to recommend any air."

This same modesty displays itself in his announcement to Thomson of the composition of the following lyric, which in its short compass carries more personal feeling than any similar song in English literature.

"There is an air," The Caledonian Hunt's Delight," to which I wrote a song that you will find in Johnson. "Ye Banks and Braes o' bonnie Doon;" this air, I think, might find a place among your hundred, as Lear says of his knights."

The often heard and often repeated comment of the American undergraduate, that Burns's English songs are most appealing but that when he writes in his native language he loses their attention, seems quite out of place when we read the author's reflection on his work in English.

"These English songs gravel me to death. I have not that command of the language that I have of my native tongue. I have been at "Duncan Gray", to dress it in English, but all I can do is deploringly stupid."

The only English poet in whose letters we find an estimate of Burns as a poet is William Cowper. While praising the rustic bard he, too, displays the English prejudice against the dialect of Scotland, and wishes that Burns would forsake the language that he learned to babble in as a child and in which he, according to our modern judgment, has attained the greatest heights of his poetic fame.

"I have therefore read Burns's poems, and have read them twice: and though they be written in a language that is new to me, and many of them on subjects much inferior to the author's ability, I think them on the whole a very extraordinary production. He is I believe the only poet these kingdoms have produced in the lower rank of life since Shakespeare, (I should rather say since Prior), who need not be indebted for any part of his praise to a charitable consideration of his origin, and the disadvantages under which he has laboured. It will be a pity if he should not hereafter divest himself of barbarism, and content himself with writing pure English,

in which he appears perfectly qualified to excel. He who can command admiration, dishonors himself if he aims no higher than to raise a laugh."

The above letter was written on July 24, 1787, the following extract was written in August of the same year and indicates the continuation of Cowper's feeling toward the language of Scotland.

"Poor Burns loses much of his deserved praise in this country through our ignorance of his language. I despair of meeting with any Englishman who will take the pains that I have taken to understand him. His candle is bright, but shut up in a dark lantern."

The quoted passages show that Cowper thought highly of Burns's poetic gift and admired his success made against almost overwhelming disadvantages. However the following passage indicates clearly that he did not estimate in a true fashion the lasting merits of the ploughman poet.

"I have Burns's poems by the gift of my lately acquired friend Mr. Rose, who knows those who know the author. It is true that he was a ploughman when he composed them; but being a ploughman in Scotland, where the lowest of the people have yet some benefits of education, makes the wonderment on that account the less. His poetical talent has, however, done that for him, which such a talent has done for few; it has mended his circumstances, and of a ploughman has made him a farmer. I think him an extraordinary genius, and the facility with which he rhymes and versifies in a kind of measure not in itself very easy to execute, appears to me remarkable. But at the same time both his measure and his language are so terribly barbarous, that though he has some humour, and more good sense, he is not a pleasing poet to an English reader, nor do I think him worth your purchasing. Some time or other, surely, we shall see you at Weston, and then you will have an opportunity to taste for yourself, gratis. They came into my hands at a time when I was perfectly idle, and being so, had an opportunity to study his language, of which by the help of a glossary at the book's tail, I made myself master. But he whose hands are not as vacant as mine were at that moment, must have more resolution than I naturally possess, or he will never account it worth his while to study a dialect so disgusting."

From the letters of Burns we have found his method of getting material and of composition. His material was chiefly the old tune and ballads of Scotland, with experiences from his daily life and from the lives of hardy Scotsmen, crowded into verses; whether it was a love song, or the frolics of Tam, or the fireside of the proud Cotter, they were all redolent of the land he loved. The first step in composition with him was to get the central incident, around which his emotion could center and his heart delight in, then came the impulse of creation as the words of exaltation rushed into the

meter of some familiar song, the tune of which had long been stored in his memory.

In the simplest and most frank manner, he estimated the poetic rank that posterity would give to him. Many times he outlined even as to the words or lines just what seemed wrong in his work: he was a painstaking and honest critic of his poems.

Through our study, we know, what the literary men of Edinburgh and of Scotland thought of his work and of his meteor-like rise to fame. We are convinced, too, that Burns's audience was confined almost exclusively to the people of Scotland. He was, therefore, their national poet both as to his material and as to the people's appreciation of his poetry.

The letter writers of England during the last fifty years of the eighteenth century knew not of Burns, or if they did he was not considered to be of sufficient importance to be referred to in their correspondence. Cowper alone of the poets expressed his opinion of Burns in his personal letters.

In order to present clearly and briefly the contribution that the personal letters of Burns have made to critical opinion, it would be well if we could classify the letters. To find a principle on which such an analysis can be made, presents many difficulties. His letters are but frank simple statements to his friends of the important events of his life as they happened, with here and there, the announcement that he had written or was sending for inspection a certain composition. Now and then he estimates the place of his work in literature and gives praise to the efforts of others.

In the following discussion, the contribution of the letters will be considered under five headings:- The Material of Burns's Poetry, Method of Composition, Attempts to write English Verse, His criticism of His Own Work, and The Public Reception of His Poetry.

Burns tells us very simply in his personal letters that he wrote of the rustic people and their life, manners, and customs, because he knew their life, and because he thought that the life of the rural Scotchman, in his fundamental qualities or emotions, was essentially the same as that of a man more favored by fortune. This is the nearest he ever approaches to a philosophy of poetic composition.

The event that caused Burns to compose his first verses, is characteristic of his entire life. He fell in love with a simple country lassie while working as her partner in the fields; and since he knew of another young man who had made verses to his sweetheart, Burns thought that while he could do nothing very great yet he could at least equal the verses of this rustic. This was the modest beginning of those ardent love songs that reached their climax in Highland Mary.

We learn that early in his life, about 1783, after reading Ramsay and Fergusson, he became tremendously interested in old Scotch songs and ballads. Many of the tunes and even some of the words were first collected by him. His frequent references in his letters to the old song writers indicate that he was thoroughly familiar with their productions. Among the songs that he sent to Johnson and to Thomson for their published collection of Scottish Songs, the great majority had been worked over from the originals by his genius. While he was indebted to these old masters both for the tune and the material, yet the songs as we know them are among the most characteristic productions of the poet at his best.

His high praise of Ramsay and Furgusson, repeated at different times in his correspondence, leads us to believe that he was much indebted to these two poets.

Partly from his letters but chiefly from other sources we know that he had a slight acquaintance with some of the English poets, Pope, Gray, Goldsmith and Thomson, and that he in his experiments in English verse, imitated them. His letters do not indicate that he received anything that added value to his poetic accomplishment.

From his letters his chief sources for poetic material were his own life of love and sorrow, the life of the rural folk around him, and the songs and ballads of the Scottish singers who had preceded him.

Our poet's method of composition is clearly presented in his letters. A subject would fasten itself upon his mind, and would work upon him until the passion to write dominated him and then in a frenzy of emotion he would compose a poem.

Dr. Moore advised Burns to write English verse, and as a result he made many experiments in this medium. Unquestionably, The Cotter's Saturday Night reflects his best efforts in English and in that he has intermingled enough of his own language to give it a Scotch flavor. He even got the Spenserian stanza from Beattie and used it with success in the poem, but most of his attempts in English verse do not show the qualities that distinguish his individuality as a poet. Burns sensed this and confesses in his letters that he felt bound and hampered in English meters. His judgment was true, and we are glad that he had the good sense to devote himself to his original and native element.

Burns is frank in stating his ambition as a poet. At first he wrote verse because, he liked to write, and thought that sometime in the dim future someone might recognize in his compositions something that was worth while. From his letters, after his stay in Edinburgh, he did not think that his poetry would live. He says that his popularity was the result of the novelty of his performance.

His feeling was that his popularity would grow much less in his own life time. So much for his general estimate of his poetic accomplishments; when he selected his best work his accuracy is remarkable. The judgment that Highland Mary and Tam O' Shanter, were in his best manner", has been accepted by our best critics. The personal letter certainly demonstrates conclusively that Burns never dreamed that his poetry would ever approach the height to which it has been assigned since his death throughout the English speaking world.

His own comments and references are sufficient evidence to justify us in believing that he was the poetical favorite of all of Scotland. The literary men of Edinburgh received his work, in the first edition, as that of a genius. In addition Dr. Moore and Cowper recognized the same outstanding brilliancy.

In Burns's letters we have the picture of a real poet who wrote of the life around him and of the emotions that swept through him. He wrote because he was impelled to sing, because he loved the things he celebrated, and because he loved his art.

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