

THE WORKS OF WILLIAM COWPER, ESP.COMPRISING HIS POEMS, CORRESPONDENCE AND TRANSLATIONS pdf

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He and his brother John were the only two of seven children to live past infancy. Ann died giving birth to John on 7 November. He grew close to her family in his early years. He was particularly close with her brother Robert and his wife Harriot. Cowper was first enrolled in Westminster School in April of after moving from school to school for a number of years. He had begun to study Latin from a young age, and was an eager scholar of Latin for the rest of his life. Older children bullied Cowper through many of his younger years. At Westminster School he studied under the headmaster John Nicoll. Many intelligent boys from families of a lower social status also attended, however. Cowper made lifelong friends from Westminster. He grew skilled at the interpretation and translation of Latin, which he put to use for the rest of his life. He was skilled in the composition of Latin as well and wrote many verses of his own. During this time, he spent his leisure at the home of his uncle Bob Cowper, where he fell in love with his cousin Theodora, whom he wished to marry. But as James Croft, who in first published the poems Cowper addressed to Theodora, wrote, "her father, from an idea that the union of persons so nearly related was improper, refused to accede to the wishes of his daughter and nephew. His poem beginning "Hatred and vengeance, my eternal portions" sometimes referred to as "Sapphics" was written in the aftermath of his suicide attempt. After recovering, he settled at Huntingdon with a retired clergyman named Morley Unwin and his wife Mary. Cowper grew to be on such good terms with the Unwin family that he went to live in their house, and moved with them to Olney. There he met curate John Newton, a former captain of slave ships who had devoted his life to the gospel. Not long afterwards, Morley Unwin was killed in a fall from his horse; Cowper continued to live in the Unwin home and became greatly attached to the widow Mary Unwin. At Olney, Newton invited Cowper to contribute to a hymnbook that he was compiling. In , Cowper experienced an attack of insanity, imagining not only that he was eternally condemned to hell, but that God was commanding him to make a sacrifice of his own life. Mary Unwin took care of him with great devotion, and after a year he began to recover. In , after Newton had moved from Olney to London, Cowper started to write poetry again. After writing a satire of this name, he wrote seven others. In Cowper met a sophisticated and charming widow named Lady Austen who inspired new poetry. Cowper himself tells of the genesis of what some have considered his most substantial work, *The Task*, in his "Advertisement" to the original edition of *He obeyed*; and, having much leisure, connected another subject with it; and, pursuing the train of thought to which his situation and turn of mind led him, brought forth at length, instead of the trifle which he at first intended, a serious affair—a Volume! Writing *John Gilpin* was later credited by G. Chesterton in *Orthodoxy* with saving Cowper from becoming completely insane. His versions published in were the most significant English renderings of these epic poems since those of Alexander Pope earlier in the century. Mary Unwin died in , plunging Cowper into a gloom from which he never fully recovered. He did continue to revise his *Homer* for a second edition of his translation. Aside from writing the powerful and bleak poem, "The Castaway", he penned some English translations of Greek verse and translated some of the *Fables of John Gay* into Latin. Cowper was seized with dropsy in the spring of and died.

2: William Cowper | Open Library

The works of William Cowper, esq., comprising his poems, correspondence and translations. With a life of the author by the editor, Robert Southey.

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5: The Works of William Cowper, Esq.

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