

literary revolution were George Crabbe and Robert Burns. The one, self-taught, and wholly shut out from the world of letters, laid in his vast stores of observation, fresh from nature, in an obscure fishing village on the coast of Suffolk; the other, educated in exactly the same style and degree, — Crabbe had a little bad Latin, and Burns a little bad French, — and equally secluded from the existing literature, achieved the same important work on the bleak farm of Mossgiel. And the earlier compositions of these three poets, — all of them true backwoodsmen in the republic of letters, — clearers of new and untried fields in the rich unopened provinces, — appeared within five years of each other — Crabbe's first and Burns' last. This process of renovating a worn-out literature does certainly seem a curious one. Circumstances virtually excommunicated three of the great poetic minds of the age, and flung them outside the literary pale; and straightway they became founders of churches of their own, and carried away with them all the people.

Cowper, however, was better adapted by nature, and more prepared by previous accomplishment, for the work of literary revolution, than either Burns or Crabbe. His poetry — to return to a previous illustration, rather, however, indicated than actually employed — was in the natural what Pope's was in the artificial walk, — of a generic character; whereas theirs was of a strongly specific cast. The writers who have followed Crabbe and Burns we at once detect as imitators; whereas the writers to whom Cowper furnished the starting note have attained to the dignity of originals. He withdrew their attention from the old models, — thoroughly commonplacéd by

to the manner of others, it is almost impossible to avoid it; and we imitate in spite of ourselves, just in proportion as we admire." (*Correspondence*, 1781.)