

SELECT WORKS
OF MR. A. COWLEY;
IN TWO VOLUMES:
With a PREFACE and NOTES by the Editor.
VOLUME THE FIRST.



Drawn & engrav'd by John Hall from an Original Picture painted by Zinck in Enamel, in the Collection of the Hon.^{ble} Horace Walpole.

THE THIRD EDITION.

“Forgot his Epic, nay Pindaric art;
“But still we love the language of his heart.” POPE.

L O N D O N:
Printed for T. CADELL, IN THE STRAND.
MDCC.LXXVII.



P R E F A C E.

IT would be using most writers of name very ill, to treat them with that freedom, which I have presumed to take with Mr. Cowley. But every thing he wrote, is either so good or so bad, that, in all reason, a separation should be made; lest the latter, which unhappily, is the greater part, should, in the end, stifle and overlay the former.

THE reason of this striking difference in the compositions of the same man, whose genius and learn-

ing are unquestionable, is, That he generally followed the taste of his time, which was the worst imaginable ; and rarely his own, which was naturally excellent ; as may be seen in the few pieces of his poetry, here selected from the rest ; and, especially, in his prose-works, which (except the notes on his *Pindaric Odes*, and *Davideis*) are given entire, and have no common merit.

BUT the talents, by which he is distinguished, as a polite writer, are the least of his praise. There is something in him, which pleases above his wit, and in spite of it. It is that moral air, and tender sensibility of mind, which every one perceives and loves in reading Mr. Cowley.

Cowley. And this character of his genius, though it be expressed, indeed, in his other writings, comes out especially, and takes our attention most, in some of his *smaller poems and essays*; which, therefore, it seemed to be for the author's credit, and the convenience of his readers, to draw near to each other, and place, together, in one view. I have said—*for the convenience of his readers*: for, though all are capable of being entertained, perhaps instructed, by the image of a good mind, when set before them, yet few will be at the pains to seek that instruction or entertainment for themselves, through the scattered works of so unequal and voluminous a writer.

To do justice to the memory of Mr. Cowley, in these two respects, I mean, in his capacity both of a polite and moral writer, is the sole end of this publication. Every man of taste and virtue will read it with pleasure. There are, indeed, many lines dispersed through his other poems, which deserve praise. But, on the whole, it is enough if this small collection go down to posterity : In that case, neither they, nor the author, will have any great loss, though the rest be forgotten.

Lincoln's-Inn,
April 21, 1772.

R. HURD.

CON-



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PROPOSITION for the Advancement
of EXPERIMENTAL PHILOSOPHY.

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A N



A N A C C O U N T

O F

The LIFE and WRITINGS

Of Mr. ABRAHAM COWLEY.

Written to Mr. CLIFFORD:

Prefixed to the Folio Edition of 1668.

S I R,

MR. COWLEY in his will recommend-
ed to my care the revising of all
his works that were formerly printed, and
the collecting of those papers which he had
designed for the press. And he did it
with this particular obligation, *That I*
should be sure to let nothing pass, that
might seem the least offence to religion or

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B

good

good manners. A caution, which you will judge to have been altogether needless. For certainly, in all ancient or modern times, there can scarce any author be found, that has handled so many different matters in such various sorts of style, who less wants the correction of his friends, or has less reason to fear the severity of strangers.

ACCORDING to his desire and his own intention, I have now set forth his Latin and English writings, each in a volume apart ; and to that which was before extant in both languages, I have added all that I could find in his closet, which he had brought to any manner of perfection. I have thus, Sir, performed the will of the dead. But I doubt I shall not satisfy the expectation of the living, unless some account be here premised concerning this excellent man. I know very well, that he has given the world the best image of his own mind in these immortal monuments of his Wit.

Yet

Yet there is still room enough left, for one of his familiar acquaintance to say many things of his poems, and chiefly of his life, that may serve for the information of his readers, if not for the increase of his name ; which, without any such helps, is already sufficiently established.

THIS, Sir, were an argument most proper for you to manage, in respect of your great abilities, and the long friendship you maintained with him. But you have an obstinate aversion from publishing any of your Writings. I guess what pretence you have for it, and that you are confirmed in this resolution by the prodigious multitude and imperfections of us writers of this age. I will not now dispute, whether you are in the right ; though I am confident you would contribute more to our reformation by your example, than reproofs. But however, seeing you persist in your purpose, and have refused to adorn even this very subject, which you love so well ; I beg your

assistance while I myself undertake it. This I do with the greater willingness, because I believe there is no man, who speaks of Mr. COWLEY, that can want either matter or words. I only therefore intreat you to give me leave to make you a party in this relation, by using your name and your testimony. For by this means, though the memory of our friend shall not be delivered to posterity with the advantage of your wit, which were most to be desired; yet his praise will be strengthened by the consent of your judgement, and the authority of your approbation.

MR. A. COWLEY was born in the city of London, in the year one thousand six hundred and eighteen. His parents were citizens of a virtuous life and sufficient estate; and so the condition of his fortune was equal to the temper of his mind, which was always content with moderate things. The first years of his youth were spent in Westminster-school, where he soon obtained

ed and increased the noble genius peculiar to that place. The occasion of his first inclination to poetry, was his casual lighting on SPENSER's *Fairy Queen*, when he was but just able to read. That indeed is a poem fitter for the examination of men, than the consideration of a child. But in him it met with a fancy, whose strength was not to be judged by the number of his years.

IN the thirteenth year of his age there came forth a little book under his name, in which there were many things that might well become the vigour and force of a manly wit. The first beginning of his studies, was a familiarity with the most solid and unaffected authors of antiquity, which he fully digested, not only in his memory, but his judgement. By this advantage he learnt nothing while a boy, that he needed to forget or forsake when he came to be a man. His mind was rightly seasoned at first; and he had nothing to do,