

several noblemen. It is an indication of the good market for poetry that in 1819 John Murray, the publisher, paid him £3000 for the rights to his works.

Inebriety was published anonymously, and Crabbe may well have regarded it later as a youthful indiscretion, because of the bibulous portrait it contains of a country clergyman. It was printed and sold by C. Punchard, bookseller, in the Butter-Market, and by the rest of the booksellers of Ipswich, at a price of one and sixpence. In a modest preface Crabbe apologised to the critics for the many liberties he had taken with Alexander Pope, the "Swan of the Thames," and declared "as a humble disciple of Pope that the passages modelled on the master seemed to him "the best part of the performance." But though the work is imitative in manner, Crabbe's choice of subject was original and characteristic.

The poet asks his readers to follow him into a country inn. It is a winter evening when the blood freezes in the veins, "the tendons stiffen and the spirit cools." The "labouring peasant" enters the inn, sits down by the warm chimney-piece, and disdaining "limpid punch or rosy wine," plunges into "the muddy ecstasies of beer." After a night of drinking and swapping yarns with "Colin, the prince of rural wits," this "jovial savage" staggers home to a midnight quarrel with his wife:

Fire in his head and frenzy in his heels,
From paths direct the bending hero swerves,
And shapes his way in ill-proportioned curves.

The poem's third part, describing a subsequent orgy in a private room at the inn which was presided over by a clergyman, was omitted by one of the poet's biographers for showing disrespect to the cloth which Crabbe himself later wore. Though the poem as a whole has many faults, the realistic character portraits contained in its unsparing analysis of "the various forms of Bacchic folly" were a preliminary for the more extended studies of his contemporaries which formed the characteristic note of the poems of Crabbe's maturity. *The Parish Register, The Borough, and Tales of the Hall.*

All of Crabbe's writings are in the Turnbull collections in Wellington, mainly in original editions. In addition the Library holds the manuscript of Crabbe's poem *Midnight*, which remained unpublished until 1905. This manuscript occupies 24 pages, and was never completed. The treatment is characteristically gloomy, and the poem is generally regarded as an early imitation of Young's *Night Thoughts*. Its interest lies in the fact that it seems to be Crabbe's only experiment in blank verse. The manuscript was formerly in the library of Edward Dowden, the noted literary critic, and was bought by Alexander Turnbull at a sale in London.

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