ENGLISH GEORGICS AND JOHN PHILIPS

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Lo! where the heath, with withering brake grown o'er,
Lends the light turf that warms the neighbouring poor;
From thence a length of burning sand appears,
Where the thin harvest waves its wither'd ears;
Rank weeds, that every art and care defy,
Reign o'er the land, and rob the blighted rye:
There thistles stretch their prickly arms afar,
And to the ragged infant threaten war;
There poppies nodding, mock the hope of toil;
There the blue bugloss paints the sterile soil...
Go then! and see them rising with the sun,
Through a long course of daily toil to run;
See them beneath the dog-star's raging heat,
When the knees tremble and the temples beat;
Behold them, leaning on their scythes, look o'er
The labour past, and toils to come explore;
See them alternate suns and showers engage.

This is neither pastoral nor bucolic, though portraying the country life. Crabbe's Village can by no means be named a pastoral poem. It is more realistic, practical, and something didactic, pertaining to daily work of the plowmen. It is a poem of the soil and toil. It belongs to, if to any, a kind of georgics in my opinion. Crabbe's Village is to a pastoral poem what Mr. J. W. Robertson Scott's prose sketches of rural life as in his England's Green and Pleasant Land to the late Mr. Robert Lynd's essays about the similar subject like "Happy England." Both are charming, but their view-points are different—the country-man's and the townsman's.

There are many pastorals in English poetry; but few georgics can be cited, so few that the very appellation of English georgics may [169]
sound queer and strange to some ears. As plowboys scarcely hold a pen, it is no wonder that a Burns, a Bloomfield and a Clare may be rare cases. All georgics, however, need not necessarily be written by plowmen. Theocritus was not a plowman, nor Virgil either. To the list of Crabbe’s *Village* (1783), Burns’s *The Cotter’s Saturday’s Night* in the *Poems, chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* (1786), Bloomfield’s *The Farmer’s Boy* (1800), and Clare’s *Poems, Descriptive of Rural Life* (1820), may be gathered Cowper’s *The Task* (1785), John Dyer’s *The Fleece* (1757), Robert Dodsley’s *Agriculture* (or *Public Virtue*, 1753), and Thomson’s *The Seasons* (1726–30). This tradition might be traced down to William Barnes’s *Poems of Rural Life* (1844–79) and Mr. Edmund Blunden’s *The Waggoner* (1920). But Thomson cannot be called the father of English georgics. This honour should be divided between the great Spenser and the obscure John Philips, and in my opinion, John Philips’s *Cydor* (1708) is the first authentic English georgic poem that directly succeeded Virgil, while Spenser’s *Virgil’s Gnat* in his *Complaints* (1591) is as it were a mock-georgic.

For the sake of comparison, let us turn for a while to the tradition of pastoral poetry. It is said to have originated from the Greek *Idylls* of Theocritus which was followed by the Latin *Elegy* of Virgil. A few lines of the latter will be quoted here from James Rhoades’s English version. The poet sings the praises of Consul Pollio:—

Muses of Sicily, essay we now  
A somewhat loftier task! Not all men love  
Coppice or lowly tamarisk: sing we woods,  
Woods worthy of a Consul let them be.  
Now the last age by Cumae’s Sibyl sung  
Has come and gone, and the majestic roll  
Of circling centuries begins anew:  
Justice returns, returns old Saturn’s reign,  
With a new breed of men sent down from heaven.  

——Elegy IV. Pollio.

Here can be felt a high-toned lyricism peculiar to the pastoral poems. ‘The occasion of the poem was the tragic death in Egypt of a fellow-poet, and in all probability a friend, of Virgil called Cornelius Gallus. He is represented as breathing his last in Arcadia among the sympathetic shepherds, to whom he bemoans the cruelty of Lycurgus, who had deserted him.’ In the last Eclogue, the poet laments for Gallus:——
ENGLISH GEORGICS & JOHN PHILIPS

For him, outstretched beneath a lonely rock,
Wept pine-clad Maenalus, and the flinty crags
Of cold Lycaeus . . .

Came shepherd too, and swine-herd footing slow,
And, from the winter-acorns dripping-wet
Menalcas. All with one accord exclaim:
‘From whence this love of thine?’ Apollo came:
‘Gallus, art mad?’ he cried, ‘thy bosom’s care
Another love is following.’ Therewithal
Silvanus came, with rural honours crowned;
The flowering fennels and tall lilies shook
Before him.

—Elegy X Gallus.

These lines remind us of many famous echoes in English poetry,
especially in pastoral elegies, such as Lydias, Adonis and Thyrsis.

In England, though Alexander Barclay wrote Elogues early in the
sixteenth century (1515, ’21), the real pastoral school was founded by
Spenser in 1579 when he published The Shepheardes Calendar. Prof.
J.A.K. Thomson rightly says in his Classical Influences on English Poetry:

After Spenser pastoral poems became almost too common, though not merely
because Spenser had set the fashion; the fashion was European. But The Shepheardes
Calendar had very great influence in at least two ways: it permitted a great range
and variety of metres, whereas the classical pastoral is almost invariably written
in hexameters; secondly, it encouraged pastoral poets to look for their material
at home, and not in Arcadia or Sicily or Italy. The result is that the classical
influence on nearly all these Elizabethan and Jacobean pastorals is superficial
and indirect.

Then he traces the pastoral tradition from Drayton and Browne
down to Parnell and Goldsmith, and makes a remark on the protest
of The Village:

The first effective protest came from George Crabbe,
On Mincio’s banks, in Caesar’s bounteous reign,
If Tityrus found the golden age again,
Must sleepy bards the flattering dream prolong,
Mechanic echoes of the Mantuan song?
From Truth and Nature shall we widely stray,
Where Virgil, not where fancy, leads the way?

One does not readily think of Crabbe’s grim pictures of East Anglia as pastoral
poetry, but they are in fact the pastoral seen in reverse. His salutary protes
fortunately did not kill the pastoral, but it made it impossible to write it in the manner of Pope or even of Shenstone.

Crabbe's *Village* may be said 'the pastoral seen in reverse,' but it can not in fact be said the pastoral proper. It belongs to, as I have said, a kind of georgics, because it was meant for a didactic or an epic, though lyrical sometimes; while the pastoral poems are lyrical in nature from beginning to end. The style of the opening of the *Village* shows what kind of poetry it belongs to. It begins with:

The Village Life, and every care that reigns
O'er youthful peasants and declining swains;
What labour yield, and what, that labour past,
Age, in its hour of languor, finds at last;
What form the real picture of the poor,
Demand a song—the Muse can give no more.

And what with the opening style and the definition of the georgic, the first few lines of Rhoades's version of Virgil's *Georgics* might be quoted here:

What makes the cornfield smile; beneath what star
Maecenas, it is meet to turn the sod
Or marry elm with wine; how tend the steer;
What pains for cattle-keeping, or what proof
Of patient trial serves for thrifty bees;—
Such are my themes.

By far the more lyrical than Crabbe's *Village*, Cowper's *Task* also has the similar style of the epic opening lines:—

I sing the Soafa. I who lately sang
Truth, Hope, and Charity, and touch'd with awe
The solemn chords, and with a trembling hand,
Escaped with pain from that adventurous flight,
Now seek repose upon an humbler theme;
The theme though humble, yet august and proud
The occasion—for the Fair commands the song.

The themes as well as the style of John Dyer's *Fleece* can be said properly georgic:—

The care of sheep, the labours of the loom,
And arts of trade, I sing. Ye rural nymphs,
Ye swains, and princely merchants, aid the verse.
An immediate predecessor of *The Fleece* was Robert Dodsley’s *Agriculture*, which was an obvious failure, though the poet was the successful publisher of Johnson’s *London* and Gray’s *Elegy*. But in my opinion his *Colin’s Kises* and *The Kings of Europe* are among the smartest of the English light verse. His laborious georgic opens with:

Of culture and the various fruits of earth,
Of social commerce, of the nobler arts,
Which polish and adorn the life of man;
Objects—demanding the supreme regard
Of that exalted monarch, who sustains
The sceptre of command o’er Britain’s sons;
The muse, disdaining idle themes, attempts
To sing.

As seen in these lines, the poet’s original design was to write a big poem entitled “Public Virtue,” which was intended to have been comprised in three books, including 1st, Agriculture, 2nd, Commerce, 3rd, Arts. But of this ambitious undertaking only *Agriculture* in three cantos was accomplished. Each of these didactic poems, *Agriculture, The Fleece, The Task* and *The Village*, has its Argument after the manner of an epic poem like *Paradise Lost*; and in this point *The Seasons* may be said to belong to the same order, though the opening seems somewhat different:

See, Winter comes to rule the varied year,
Sullen and sad, with all his rising train—
Vapours, and clouds, and storms. Be these my theme.

And two years after the publication of *Winter*, appeared *Spring* with the beautiful beginning which charmed Clare and many other poets:

Come, gentle Spring, ethereal mildness, come;
And from the bosom of yon dropping cloud,
While music wakes around, veiled in a shower
Of shadowing roses, on our plains descend.

O Hartford, fitted or to shine in courts
With unaffected grace, or walk the plain
With innocence and meditation joined
In soft assemblage, listen to my song,
Which thy own season paints—when nature all
Is blooming and benevolent, like thee.
Though lyrical in its tone, this opening form of the poem displays the epic formula. *The Seasons* may be descriptive, or didactic, and in any case it takes the form of an epic, especially after the manner of Virgil's *Georgics*.

Nor, ye who live
In luxury and ease, in pomp and pride,
Think these lost themes unworthy of your ear:
Such themes as these the rural Maro sung
To wide-imperial Rome, in the full height
Of elegance and taste, by Greece refined.

—*Spring*, ll. 52–7.

Mr. A.H. Thompson said that the form of *The Seasons* was suggested by the example of Virgil's *Georgics*. 'In this respect, he had a conspicuous forerunner in John Philips, author of *Cyder*, and it is impossible to overlook the debt which Thomson owed to the older writer. Philips was an imitator of Milton's poetic manner, and it may have been through Philips's poetry that Thomson first felt that Miltonic influence which moulded his style and the characteristic shape of his phrases.'

John Philips (1676–1709) was born on the 30th of December 1676, at Bampton in Oxfordshire, of which place his father Dr. Stephen Philips, Archdeacon of Salop, held the living. He was educated first at Winchester. 'At school he became acquainted with the poets ancient and modern, and fixed his attention particularly on Milton.' (Dr. Johnson) He was removed afterwards to Christ Church, Oxford, a college at that time in the highest reputation. 'Here he was distinguished as a genius eminent among the eminent, and for friendship particularly intimate with Mr. Smith, the author of *Phaedra and Hippolytus*. The profession which he intended to follow was that of physic; and he took much delight in natural history, of which botany was his favourite part.' (Dr. Johnson.)

In 1701 appeared his famous burlesque, *The Splendid Shillings*, in *A Collection of Poems* printed by David Brown and Ben Tooke. The author became so famous that, when the Whig poet Addison sang the victory of Blenheim, the Tory ministry chose John Philips for their champion poet and engaged him, rather against his will, to write a poem, *Blenheim*, which was published in 1705. In the following year he produced his greatest work, *Cyder*, in two books. He wrote these three poems all in Miltonic blank verse.
He was suffering from his diseases, a slow consumption and an asthma, and died on the 15th of February 1709, at the beginning of his thirty-third year, and was buried in Hereford Cathedral, where there is a monument to his memory. Another monument is erected to him in Westminster Abbey, with a Latin inscription by Atterbury.

As his life was short, his works are few. He had been dead when his contemporary "Namby Pamby" Ambrose Philips (1675?–1749) was gaining some reputation by his *Pastorals* and his play adapted from Racine. But John Philips's is by far the nobler name than Ambrose Philips's. Dr. Johnson, in his *Life*, says of John Philips that he 'has been always praised, without contradiction, as a man modest, blameless, and pious; who bore narrowness of fortune without discontent, and tedious and painful maladies without impatience; beloved by those that knew him, but not ambitious to be known. He was probably not formed for a wide circle. His conversation is commended for its innocent gaiety, which seems to have flowed only among his intimates; for I have been told, that he was in company silent and barren, and employed only upon the pleasures of his pipe. ... He died honoured and lamented, before any part of his reputation had withered, and before his patron St. John had disgraced him.' Edmund Smith, the friend and fellow-collegian of John Philips, wrote a poem to the memory of his deceased friend, which is, again according to Dr. Johnson, 'among the best elegies which English language can shew, an elegant mixture of fondness and admiration, of dignity and softness.' I shall quote a few lines from it:

Forgive, dear shade, the scene my folly draws,
Thy strains divert the grief thy ashes cause:
When Orpheus sings, the ghosts no more complain,
But, in his lulling music, lose their pain:
So charm the sallies of thy Georgic Muse,
So calm our sorrows, and our joys infuse;
Here rural notes a gentle mirth inspire,
Here lofty lines the kindling reader fire,
Like that fair tree you praise, the poem charms,
Cools like the fruit, or like the juice it warms.

... ... ...

Your judgement, Philips, rul'd with steady sway,
You us'd no curbing rhyme, the Muse to stay,
To stop her fury, or direct her way.
Oh best of friends, will ne'er the silent urn
To our just vows the hapless youth return?
Must he no more divert the tedious day?
Nor sparkling thoughts in antique words convey?
No more to harmless irony descend,
To noisy fools a grave attention lend,
No merry tales with learn'd quotations blend?

Whom shall I find unbiass'd in dispute,
Eager to learn, unwilling to confute?
To whom the labours of my soul disclose,
Reveal my pleasure, or discharge my woes?
Oh! in that heavenly youth for ever ends
That best of sons, of brothers, and of friends.
He sacred Friendship's strictest laws obey'd,
Yet more by Conscience than Friendship sway'd;
Against himself his gratitude maintain'd,
By favours past, not future prospects gain'd:
Not nicely choosing, though by all desir'd,
Though learn'd, not vain; and humble, though admir'd:
Candid to all, but to himself severe,
In humour pliant, as in life austere.
A wise content his even soul secur'd,
By want not shaken, nor by wealth allur'd.
To all sincere, though earnest to commend,
Could praise a rival, or condemn a friend.
To him old Greece and Rome were fully known,
Their tongues, their spirits, and their styles, his own.

Sweets to the sweet. Though a little exaggerated in the elegy, there can be no doubt as to the noble character of John Philips. In fact, he was too good to be remembered long in this world. If he had been eccentric, or immoral, or hypochondriac, or crazy, he might have been better remembered.

If remembered just, his name should be known as the poet of Pomona, author of Cyder. As for this poem, Dr. Johnson says that it 'was received with loud praises, and continued long to be read, as an imitation of Virgil's Georgics, which needed not shun the presence of the original.' And again, to the poem 'may be given this peculiar praise, that it is grounded in truth; that the precepts which it con-
tains are exact and just; and that it is therefore, at once, a book of
entertainment and of science. This I was told by Miller, the great
gardner and botanist, whose expression was that there were many
books written on the same subject in prose, which do not contain so
much truth as that poem.’ So far, Dr. Johnson is right.

Then he proceeds to say that John Philips ‘unhappily pleased him-
self with blank verse’. I am afraid that this is a case of Dr. Johnson’s
wellknown prejudices. Saintsbury is quite right when he says that
‘the burlesque of Milton in The Splendid Shilling is good humoured,
not in the least offensive, amusing and by no means critically unjust;
while the credit of the serious blank verse of Cyned (Philips was the
first wellknown writer after Milton to make this metre his chief vehcle)
need not depend on the certificate received by Johnson from “the great
gardener and botanist” Miller, to the effect that there was more truth
in it than in many prose treatises on the same subject.’ Prof. Courthope
says that Cyned is ‘incomparably his best poem’, and for this the author
received from Jacob Tonson forty guineas. It is further added by
the historian of English poetry that John Philips ‘had the same fine
perfection of the capacities of merical language that has already been
noticed in Crashaw. He was perhaps less of an original musician than
the latter poet; on the other hand, he had a true intuition of the rela-
tionship between subject and style; and, when he was on his own
ground, no English poet ever approached so nearly to the manner of
Virgil in the Georgics.’ And again, in Cyned ‘the poet is dealing with
the common things of life, having yet a certain beauty of their own,
which can be best expressed by the humours and the nuances of mock-
heroic verse. Philips gives the reader the double pleasure of a faithful
description of natural objects, and an ingenious reproduction of the
grand Virgilian manner.’ Thus, this poem has been rather highly
appreciated by scholars, but generally it is almost quite forgotten.
The opening lines make the proposition of the themes as usual in the
georgics:—

What soil the apple loves, what care is due
To orchats, timeliest when to press the fruits,
Thy gift, Pomona, in Miltonian verse
Adventurous I presume to sing; of verse
Nor skill’d, nor studious: but my native soil
Invites me, and the theme as yet unsung.

Above all, the planter must choose a warm snug place for the
orchard:—

Whoe'er expects his labouring trees should bend
With fruitage, and a kindly harvest yield,
Be this his first concern, to find a tract
Impervious to the winds, begirt with hills
That intercept the Hyperborean blasts
Tempestuous, and cold Eurus' nipping force,
Noxious to feeble buds: but to the west
Let him free entrance grant, let Zephyrs bland
Administer their tepid genial airs;
Nought fear he from the west, whose gentle warmth
Discloses well the earth's all-teeming womb,
Invigorating tender seeds; whose breath
Nurtures the Orange, and the Citron groves,
Hesperian fruits, and wafts their odors sweet
Wide through the air, and distant shores perfumes.

Such a snug place will also enjoy the heavenly gentle rain:—

Nor only do the hills exclude the winds:
But when the blackening clouds in sprinkling showers
Distil, from the high summits down the rain
Runs trickling; with the fertile moisture cheer'd,
The Orchats smile; joyous the farmers see
Their thriving plants, and bless the heavenly dew.

Not only the outward aspect of land, but the nature of the soil should
be examined carefully; otherwise the must or new wine of cider would
become pernicious to the drinker. The description is humourous:—

The miry fields,
Rejoicing in rich mold, most ample fruit
Of beauteous form produce; pleasing to sight,
But to the tongue inelegant and flat.
So Nature has decreed: so oft we see
Men passing fair, in outward lineaments
Elaborate; less, inwardly, exact.
Nor from the sable ground expect success
Nor from cretaceous, stubborn and jejune;
The Must, of pallid hue, declares the soil
Devoid of spirit; wretched he, that quaffs
Such wheyish liquors; oft with colic pangs,
With pungent colic pangs distress'd he'll roar,
And toss, and turn, and curse th' unwholsom draught.
Then, what soil should be selected for the apple orchard?

But, farmer, look, where full-ear'd sheaves of rye
Grow wavy on the tilth, that soil select
For apples; thence thy industry shall gain
Ten-fold reward; thy garners, thence with store
Surcharg'd, shall burst: thy press with purest juice
Shall flow, which, in revolving years, may try
Thy feeble feet, and bind thy faltering tongue.

Then the poet makes some digressions, and advises the farmer to plant the sturdy pear-tree if a rough soil with sandy stones should be his lot. He proceeds the instruction:

Thus nought is useless made; nor is there land,
But what, or of itself, or else compell'd,
Affords advantage. On the barren heath
The shepherd tends his flock, that daily crop
Their verdant dinner from the mossy turf,
Sufficient; after them the cackling goose,
Close-grazer, finds wherewith to ease her want.

He seems to be a naturalist that does not like any artificial foreign compound manure, and he gives his practical advice:

There are, who, fondly studious of increase,
Rich foreign mold on their ill-natur'd land
Induce laborious, and with fattening muck
Besmear the roots; in vain! the nursling grove
Seems fair a while, cherish'd with foster earth:
But when the alien compost is exhaust,
Its native poverty again prevails.

Though this art fails, despond not; little pains,
In a due hour employ'd, great profit yield.
Th' industrious, when the Sun in Leo rides,
And darts his sultriest beams, portending drought,
Forgets not at the foot of every plant
To sink a circling trench, and daily pour
A just supply of alimental streams,
Exhausted sap recruiting; else false hopes
He cherishes, nor will his fruit expect
Th' autumnal season, but, in summer's pride,
When other orchats smile, abortive fail.

You need neither sneer nor smile at this pedestrian style of these lines. You will sometimes see the realistic poet soar high up to the
sphere of imagination. Such is the description of Ariconium, a city of old England engulfed by the thunder storm and earthquake, in an episode of this poem:—

Where should they turn
Distress'd? whence seek for aid? when from below
Hell threatens, and ev'n Fate supreme gives signs
Of wrath and desolation? vain were vows,
And plaints, and suppliant hands to Heaven erect!
Yet some to fane's repair'd, and humble rites
Perform'd to Thor, and Woden, fabled gods,
Who with their votaries in one ruin shar'd,
Crush'd, and o'erwhelm'd. Others in frantic mood
Run howling through the streets, their hideous yells
Rend the dark welkin; Horror stalks around,
Wild-staring, and, his sad concomitant,
Despair, of abject look: at every gate
The thronging populace with hasty strides
Press furious, and, too eager of escape,
Obstruct the easy way; the rocking town
Supplants their footsteps; to, and fro, they reel
Astonish'd, as o'er-charg'd with wine; when lo!
The ground adust her riven mouth disparts,
Horrible chasm; profound! with swift descent
Old Ariconium sinks, and all her tribes,
Heroes, and senators, down to the realms
Of endless night.

Some digression is at once an episode of 'entertainment and of science'. A passage from Abraham Cowley's essay, "Of Myself", that "the natural affections of my soul gave a secret bent of aversion from them, as some plants are said to turn away from others, by an antipathy imperceptible to themselves, and inscrutable to man's understanding", will find an adequate commentary on it in the following lines:—

The prudent will observe, what passions reign
In various plants (for not to man alone,
But all the wide creation, Nature gave
Love, and aversion): everlasting hate
The Vine to Ivy bears, nor less abhore
The Colewort's rankness; but with amorous twine
Clasps the tall Elm: the Paestan Rose unfolds
Her bud more lovely, near the fetid Leek,
ENGLISH GEORGICS & JOHN PHILIPS

(Crest of stout Britons), and enhances thence
The price of her celestial scent: the Gourd,
And thirsty Cucumber, when they perceive
Th’ approaching Olive, with resentment fly
Her fatty fibres, and with tendrils creep
Diverse, detesting contact.

There is something humorous in this description of the Gourd and thirsty Cucumber that ‘with resentment fly the fatty fibres’ of the approaching Olive. The personification of the plant life reminds us of Erasmus Darwin’s *Love of the Plants* which appeared more than eighty years after. Then the poet proceeds to teach the pruning and grafting, and mentions Virgil’s *Georgics* by the way:—

Nor is it hard to beautify each month
With files of particol’d fruits, that please
The tongue, and view, at once. So Maro’s Muse,
Thrice sacred Muse! commodious precepts gives
Instructive to the swains, not wholly bent
On what is gainful: sometimes she diverts
From solid counsels, shews the force of love
In savage beasts; how virgin face divine
Attracts the hapless youth through storms and waves,
Alone, in deep of night:

His addiction to tobacco is famous, and he often sings of the fragrant fume. Here again, when he recommends ‘sage experience’, he declares that to her we owe

The Indian weed, unknown to ancient-times,
Nature’s choice gift, whose acrimonious fume
Extracts superfluous juices, and refines
The blood distemper’d from its noxious salts;
Friend to the spirits, which with vapors bland
It gently mitigates, companion fit
Of pleasantry, and wine; nor to the bards
Unfriendly, when they to the vocal shell
Warble melodious their well-labor’d songs.

Prof. Courthope makes a remark to the point on ‘a delightful humour in the poet’s advice a’s to the kind of scarecrow which ought to be used’;—

It much conduces, all the cares to know
Of gardening, how to scare nocturnal thieves,
And how the little race of birds that hop
From spray to spray, scooping the costliest fruit
Insatiate, undisturb'd. Priapus' form
Avails but little; rather guard each row
With the false terrors of a breathless kite.
This done, the timorous flock with swiftest wing
Scud through the air; their fancy represents
His mortal talons, and his ravenous beak
Destructive; glad to shun his hostile gripe,
They quit their thefts, and unfrequent the fields.

No less humorous is the following lines about the invading swine
and the defending mastiff:—

Besides, the filthy swine will oft invade
Thy firm inclosure, and with delving snout
The rooted forest undermine: forthwith
Halloo thy furious mastiff, bid him vex
The noxious herd, and print upon their ears,
A sad memorial of their past offence.

The invasions of nuisances form three paragraphs in succession:
the birds, the swine, and the invasion of the snail which is also, as
Prof. Courthope says, 'most picturesquely described':—

The flagrant Procyon will not fail to bring
Large shoals of slow house-bearing snails that creep
O'er the ripe fruitage, paring slimy tracts
In the sleek rinds, and unprest Cyder drink.
No art averts this pest; on thee it lies,
With morning and with evening hand to rid
The preying reptiles; not, if wise, wilt thou
Decline this labour, which itself rewards
With pleasing gain, whilst the warm limbeck draws
Salubrious waters from the nocent brood.

With some digressions about patriotism and Toryism, Book One
of Cyder is concluded. I also must conclude this article with two more
quotations from Book Two. Both are rather pastoral, and as beauteous
as romantic poems. One is the delineation of the morning walk among
the apple-orchard in autumn:—

Autumn paints
Ausonian hills with Grapes; whilst English plains
Blush with pomaceous harvests, breathing sweets.
ENGLISH GEORGICS & JOHN PHILIPS

O let me now, when the kind early dew
Unlocks th' embosom'd odors, walk among
The well-rang'd files of trees, whose full-ag'd store
Diffuse Ambrosial steams, than Myrrh, or Nard,
More grateful, or perfuming flowery Bean!

The other is the praise of the soothing influence of cider in summer and winter. Especially, the picture of rustic merriment in winter has a flavour of L'Allegro:—

Thus to the generous bottle all incline,
By parching thirst allur'd: with vehement suns
When dusty summer bakes the crumbling clods,
How pleasant is 't, beneath the twisted arch
Of a retreating bower, in mid-day's reign
To ply the sweet carouse, remote from noise,
Secur'd of feverish heats! When th' aged year
Inclines, and Boreas' spirit blusters frore,
Beware th' inclement heavens; now let thy hearth
Crackle with juiceless boughs; thy lingering blood
Now instigate with th' apple's powerful streams.
Perpetual showers, and stormy gusts confine
The willing plowman, and December warns
To annual jollities; now sportive youth
Carol incondite rhythms, with suiting notes,
And quaver unharmonious; sturdy swains
In clean array for rustic dance prepare,
Mixt with the buxom damsels; hand in hand
They frisk, and bound, and various mazes weave,
Shaking their brawny limbs, with uncouth mien,
Transported, and sometimes an oblique leer
Dart on their loves, sometimes an hasty kiss
Steal from unwary lasses; they with scorn,
And neck reclin'd resent the ravish'd bliss.
Meanwhile blind British bards with volant touch
 Traverse loquacious strings, whose solemn notes
Provoke to harmless revels.

'How humorous', remarks Prof. Courthope, 'and yet how dignified in its humour is this!' Again, this historian of English poetry asserts: 'John Philips had the same fine perception of the capacities of metrical language that has already been noticed in Crashaw. He was perhaps less of an original musician than the latter poet; on the other hand,
Yasuo Yamato

he had a truer intuition of the relationship between subject and style; and, when he was on his own ground, no English poet ever approached so nearly to the manner of Virgil in the Georgics.'