



The Stricken Deer: Or the Life of William Cowper

David Cecil

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First published in 1929, *The Stricken Deer* was the winner of that year's James Tait Black Memorial Prize and also the Hawthornden Prize: it was David Cecil's first book. For a time, towards the end of the eighteenth-century, William Cowper was the foremost poet in England. But David Cecil's biography doesn't celebrate a life of success, rather, in Cowper's own words, 'the strange and uncommon incidents of my life.' Cowper suffered from severe bouts of depression. His personal tragedy however enriched English literature: the fear of madness made him turn to writing poetry as a form of mental discipline, and isolation for the great world and from his own kind helped him to become the most enchanting of letter-writers. 'This is a sympathetic and vivid biography; it is subtle with a kind of gentle acuteness and vivid without literary ostentation. It is the work of a biographer with a clear head and a clever heart ... the rarest of all merits is the sensitive fairness of the of the biographer's estimate of character and situation throughout.' Desmond MacCarthy, *Sunday Times*

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