

**THE MILLER'S
MUSE:
RURAL POEMS**

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The Miller's Muse: Rural Poems by Robert Franklin

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ROBERT FRANKLIN

**THE MILLER'S
MUSE:
RURAL POEMS**

*Received from my kind friend
Edw Westlake
THE TUESDAY 22nd Dec
1822*

MILLER'S MUSE;

RURAL POEMS.

BY ROBERT FRANKLIN,

FERRBY SLUICE, LINCOLNSHIRE.

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TO THE PUBLIC.

AT the time of putting several of the following ideas into metre, I had no thought of offering them to the world, in their present shape ; but by the solicitations of several of my friends, who have seen some of them in the newspapers, I have been induced to undertake their publication.— Whether they possess any thing like poetical merit, I do not feel sufficient confidence to pronounce ; but I trust there will be little found that can be offensive to a liberal mind ; and, when it is considered that their author labours under the disadvantages of a limited education, I am in hopes they will be read with some indulgence on that account.

With respect to criticism, it is observed in the preface to Robert Bloomfield's *Farmer's Boy*, that "with some, a person must be rich, or titled, or fashionable as a literary name, or at least fa-

shionable in some respect, good or bad, before any thing that he can offer will be thought worthy of notice."—If these are requisites essential to poetical reputation, I must fall infinitely short, since I can make no pretensions to any of them. Formerly in the humble capacity of a servant, and latterly engaged in the business of a miller, there can be little in these situations of life to commend me to the attention of my readers; yet I cannot forbear thinking, that wherever merit is found, in however humble a degree, it will, sooner or later, obtain friends and meet with its proportionate reward. Impressed with this idea, without farther hesitation I commit my feeble efforts to the world, leaving their merits or defects to the decision of a generous and discerning public.

Should any objection be made to the title of the book, (several of the poems having been written during my state of servitude) I can assure the reader, if I may be thus allowed to express myself, that I have been a miller at heart all my life,—that my forefathers were millers for ages past,—and I was brought up at the post mill at Barrow, till the age of fourteen, where I acquired a knowledge of the business, which, perhaps, in more mature years, I might never have so effectually obtained; but having no

father to protect me, and my grandmother, of course, leaning somewhat more to the inclinations of her own children than to those of her grandchild, I was obliged to leave the place, and went to live with the Rev. Edward Henry Hesleden, Vicar of Barrow.

* * * * *

I have since frequently pondered over what may justly seem to have been the work of an overruling Providence—the chain of events, by which I not only obtained a situation in life congenial to my wishes, but also became the possessor of that very place, which, when a boy, I was unwillingly compelled to leave in tears.

It is a common observation, that he who talks much of himself is, for the most part, either disagreeable, or heard without any degree of attention; but if I may be permitted to proceed a little farther, in my own way, I have a few remarks to make respecting some of the poetry.

The *Native Village*—the first piece in the book, has been the longest written. Except some slight alterations, it was composed in the year 1809. A visit to my friends at that time gave rise to it, after a long absence—during part of

which time I had been with Mr. John Goodwin, upon the continent. Whilst there, I had listened attentively to the chimes and different bells, particularly at *Hamburg*, and thought none sounded with such sweetness as those of my own native village; and although gratified in many respects, I believe it was the strangeness of a foreign land, and the turbulence of a wintry main, contrasted with the calm serenity experienced on re-visiting the scenes of my youth, that perhaps, raised in my mind a greater partiality for my native village than might otherwise have existed.

If I am thought to have exaggerated on the *Pleasures of Childhood*, or to have displayed an overweening fondness for the place of my birth, I ask forgiveness. But in my opinion there are few affections stronger, and none more lasting, than the affections of childhood. Our boyish rambles, and childish amusements, with few exceptions, are held in pleasing remembrance to the latest day.

Poor William, though a singular character, is a copy from real life,—his name was *William Gowthorpe*, a native of *Barrow*.

Having read the newspapers during the penin-

sular campaigns, and reflected on the dreadful accounts of war and bloodshed, at the time of Bonaparte's first overthrow, and subsequent to his banishment to the island of Elba, I felt truly rejoiced at the cessation of hostilities; and while rejoicings and illuminations were taking place on every side, and *Orange Boves* was the cry, *The Blessings of Peace* was written, and obtained a place in one of the Hull newspapers.—I mention this, because it will be found applicable to that period only.

The seat of John Nelthorpe, Esq. at South Ferriby, forms the subject of the verses entitled *The Banks of the Humber*; the introduction to them is descriptive of the front of his house, which, at the period of their composition, was covered with woodbine and roses, the tendrils of the woodbine extending up to the slates; and at the spring time of the year, it was one unvaried bloom.

Although my stay with the above gentleman was not very long, and immediately previous to my becoming a miller, yet I can justly observe, that I never felt the shackles of servitude press lighter, than while in his service. But to say the least, it never was my misfortune to meet