

**THE RURAL ALBUM, CONTAINING
DESCRIPTIVE AND MISCELLANEOUS
POEMS; WITH HISTORICAL NOTICES
OF BARNWELL AND FOTHERINGHAY
CASTLES, &C.**

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The Rural Album, Containing Descriptive and Miscellaneous Poems; With Historical Notices of Barnwell and Fotheringhay Castles, &C. by Thomas Bell

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THOMAS BELL

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BY
THOMAS BELL,
AUTHOR OF "THE RUINS OF LIVEDEN."

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P R E F A C E.

Few are the observations, and brief the remarks necessary to introduce to the favourable notice of the reader, the little work now offered to the public eye.

The book will speak for itself; and while the contents of its poetical pages may afford amusement and pleasure to some, and its topographical information, derived from the most authentic sources, present matters of interest to others, it is hoped that the work will disarm criticism of its severity by its lowly pretensions, and avert the stroke of censure by its humility.

The poetical parts consist of a small selection from the papers of a humble individual, who during a long life, chequered with a large share of the vicissitudes and trials, which are the characteristic portion of his poetical brethren, has from time to time endeavoured to express his thoughts, and give vent to his emotions of joy and sorrow in humble verse; and now ventures with much diffidence to publish them, trusting to the kindly feelings, and patronage of an indulgent public.

The Author lays no claim to poetical distinction. He ventures not, like many of his more highly favoured brethren, upon a lofty flight, to soar over the wide expanse of nature

and art, to draw from their infinitely varied resources subjects to inspire, and illustrations to adorn his song, but

Content in his own native fields to roam,
He culls the flow'rets of his rural home.

And as the admirer of the plumed songsters of nature listens with delight to the enlivening strains of the early lark, or stands entranced by the melody of the nightingale, yet disdains not the feebler warblings of the more lowly minstrels of the grove; so, while the songs of those gifted sons of the muses, whose works have rendered their names immortal, must ever charm the heart, and claim a just precedence in the minds of their countrymen, yet the Author hopes that his own feeble attempts to please may not be entirely overlooked and despised.

His subjects are for the most part of the simplest character, scenes from the homely incidents of an English village, and thoughts, suggested by the unexciting routine of a country life; yet to Englishmen these scenes, and their associations, can scarcely be devoid of interest; for there are few things more striking in England, or more peculiar to our country, than the character of its rural life, and the whole aspect of its sylvan villages.

The traveller searches in vain for such scenery in other countries of Europe, even in those most highly favoured by nature, and most abounding in temporal advantages.

He may indeed meet with towns, and cities, crowded with objects of the highest interest and beauty; he may behold nature's loveliest scenes in all their majestic grandeur untouched by the hand, or untrampled by the foot, of man: or from time to time he may pass some stately residence, standing alone in its own magnificence, and strangely con-

trasting with the surrounding squalid huts of poverty ; but seldom will he find any spots, which will recal to his mind his dear English villages, with their neat and substantial cottages, their homesteads, and farm-yards, clustering around the ancient church, whose lofty tower seems to stand as a Christian sentinel over them ; while, at no great distance perhaps, the rich man's house, embosomed in trees, hides its own grandeur, lest it should contrast too strongly with the neighbouring lowly tenements of the poor.

In a village of this description, and in a cottage, endeared to his heart by family associations of more than a century and a half, and under the noble family of Montagu and Buccleuch, the Author has spent the greater part of his life ; and most of the poetical trifles contained in the following pages were written in a neighbourhood, characterized in a high degree, by that picturesque and peaceful landscape so congenial to the English mind.

As a portion of this volume is devoted to some Poetical Pieces, in which allusion is made to such scenes, the Author hopes that the descriptive, and historical notes relating to the several localities, which have afforded subjects for his muse, will not be deemed an unsuitable, or unwelcome addition to these pages.

Those at least to whom these scenes are familiar, will doubtless peruse with pleasure a simple account of places, endeared to their recollection by many pleasing associations, while to the general reader, they will present interesting points, connected with history and antiquity.

Such is the little work, which the Author presents to the public, and if these unpretending pages shall be regarded by his subscribers, friends, and his readers in general as affording agreeable amusement, blended with information

on some points not generally known, to employ their thoughts, and while away the tedium of a vacant hour, he will have reached the summit of his ambition.

In conclusion the Author desires to express his liveliest gratitude to the Nobility, and numerous subscribers, who have so liberally patronized his septuagenarian efforts at authorship; and also to those personal friends, who, in consequence of his ill-state of health, kindly volunteered their valuable aid in preparing this little work for the press.

Should the present publication meet with any encouragement from the public, the Author may be induced to string together on another occasion a few historical and topographical notices concerning the interesting parish of Barnwell more acceptable to antiquarian and archæological readers.

T. B.

BARNWELL, *March* 9, 1853.

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