

**FROM THE PLOUGH-TAIL TO THE  
COLLEGE STEPS: BEING THE FIRST  
TWENTY-NINE YEARS OF THE  
LIFE OF A SUFFOLK FARMER'S  
BOY: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

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From the Plough-Tail to the College Steps: Being the First Twenty-Nine Years of the Life of a Suffolk Farmer's Boy: An Autobiography by James Mills

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**JAMES MILLS**

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*BEING THE FIRST  
TWENTY-NINE YEARS OF THE LIFE  
OF A  
SUFFOLK FARMER'S BOY:*  
AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

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"Not myself, but the truth that in life I have spoken,  
Not myself, but the seed that in life I have sown,  
Shall pass onto ages; all about me forgotten  
Save the truth I have spoken, the things I have done.  
So let my living be, so be my dying,  
So let my name lie, unblazoned, unknown;  
Unpraised and unmixed, I shall still be remembered,  
Yes, but remembered by what I have done.  
DR. H. BONAR.

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NOTTINGHAM: J. DERRY, WHELEER GATE.

1885.

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## PREFACE.

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AFTER glancing at the title the enquiry will naturally arise:—  
“What lessons has this man to teach? What can a farmer’s boy say that will be interesting to general readers, or even to his own class?” The subject of farming is worn threadbare. For the last few years we have heard much about the relations of Landlord to Tenant, of Farmer to Labourer, of Giles to his master, each in turn having been the subject of book and lecture, of speech and song, of pamphlet and sensational appeal. Perhaps on all these points the servant might have something to say if he could get a hearing, though he and his class have had to make a great noise before anyone would hear.

I have endeavoured incidentally but quietly to pen a few thoughts for the consideration of those whom they may concern.

In writing these papers I have had but one object, and that I have endeavoured to keep steadily in view, viz. :—The dealings of the Lord with me. I began life as a very poor boy, and during the period embraced by this narrative had to struggle with unheard-of difficulties and discouragements; but by the blessing of God I surmounted those difficulties, outlived the discouragements, and at last gained a position of usefulness, comfort, and respectability. May I not show to others what can be done by self-reliance and trust in God? I want to leave “footprints on the sands of time,” that some poor, struggling farmer’s boy—or any other poor boy—may mark, and look up, and take heart

and work on. I claim no credit for genius or extraordinary abilities, but perhaps I may for a resolute will and plodding perseverance. Temperance and Godliness have given me my position in society, and these are attainable by everyone. God's providence works in harmony with man's free agency in the use of the best means to accomplish the end. I have long taught that health and life are very much in our own hands, that happiness and usefulness lie within the reach of all, that a farmer's boy may rise to be a blessing even in the very narrow sphere in which the Providence of God has called him to move. This work is a simple narrative of facts—not in the order of time, but rather as incident, experience, effort and result could be classified so as best to illustrate my early life. It possesses no literary value—a very busy, active life has forbidden this, if even it could have answered any good end. Written mostly before others were awake, or before the day's work began, and with many other claims intervening, I commit these simple annals to Him who sometimes "chooses the weak things of the world, and things that are despised, yea, things that are not," to accomplish His purpose, that he who has cause to glory "may glory in the Lord."

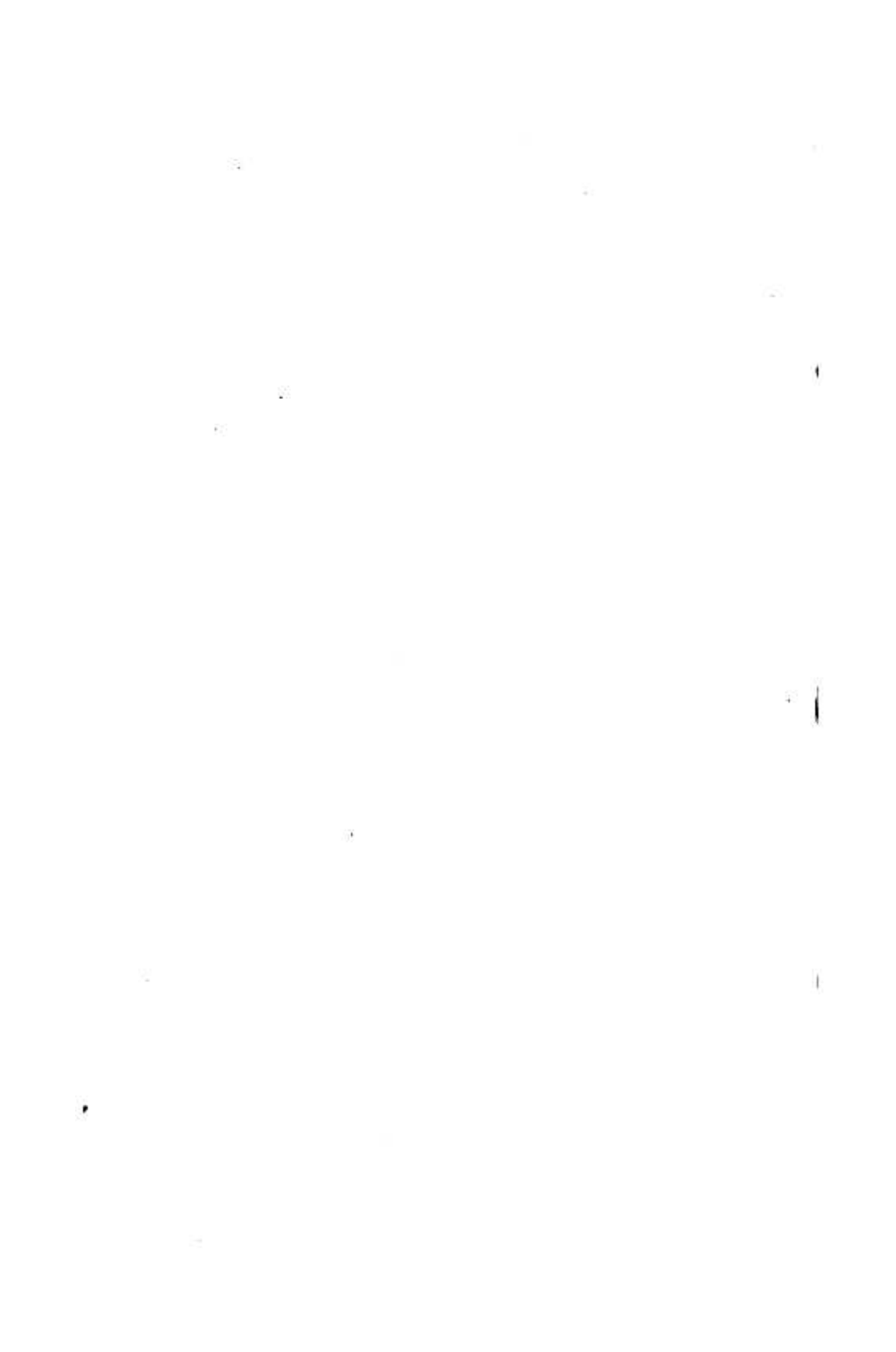
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## CHAPTER I.

### MY EARLY LIFE.

My heart leaps up when I behold  
A rainbow in the sky :  
So was it when my life began ;  
So is it now I am a man :  
So be it when I shall grow old,  
Or let me die !  
The Child is father of the Man ;  
And I could wish my days to be  
Bound each to each by natural piety.

WORDSWORTH.

“ **L**IFE is a dream ;” so the poet teaches. This is not poetry alone, but the best and truest representation of life that is past. When the facts of bygone years come up for review, they are very like “a dream when one awaketh.” Then no part of the picture will be perfect or very clear, only like a faint etching with imperfect outlines ; the foreground of the present may show a few striking figures of life-size, but there will be a background of past and half-forgotten events, with child-life as the vanishing point of the picture. Here conscious thought lies hid in the mists of memory. “Very little can be said about the dawn of life.” This is often an honest confession. The indications and tendencies of life may be present early,