VIEWS IN SUFFOLK, NORFOLK, AND NORTHAMPTONSHIRE; ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE WORKS OF ROBERT BLOOMFIELD; ACCOMPANIED WITH DESCRIPTION: TO WHICH IS ANNEXED, A MEMOIR OF THE POET'S LIFE

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649399840

Views in Suffolk, Norfolk, and Northamptonshire; illustrative of the works of Robert Bloomfield; Accompanied with Description: to which is annexed, a memoir of the poet's life by E. W. Brayley

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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E. W. BRAYLEY

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LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY VERNOR, HOOD, AND SHARPE, POULTRY; DARTON AND HARVEY, GRACECHURCH STREET; AND J. STORER AND J. GREIG, ENGRAVERS, CHAPEL STREET, PENTONVILLE.

1818.

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THE very flattering reception which the Illustrations of COWPER and BURNS have experienced from the Public, encourages a hope that the same liberal patronage will be extended to the present undertaking; and though we are aware that it is a maxim generally received, that living authors are of comparatively small consideration, we are happy to know that the world have, in the instance of "THE FARMER'S BOY," conferred on its author that generous countenance and support which perhaps equal merit has in former times sighed for in vain.

To CAPEL LOFFT, Esq., of Troston Hall, we are much indebted for his useful communications. Mrs. LATHBURY, of Levermere Magna; the Rev. ROBERT FELLOWES, of Fakenham; and Mr. ROBERT BLOOMFIELD; have equal claims upon our gratitude.

J. STORER AND J. GREIG.

Memoir

OF

ROBERT BLOOMFIELD.

TO trace the progress of intellect through the successive stages of its growth, from its early dawn to the period of its full expansion, is an interesting and useful labour; inasmuch, as the formation of proper precepts for moral conduct, must always depend on our acquaintance with the nature of the mind, whether deriving strength from education, or acquiring superiority from the independent exertion of its own powers. The more humble the state, perhaps, from which any human being has emerged to eminence through the vigour of his talents, the higher must have been his merit; for the disadvantages of birth and fortune have a far greater influence on the evolution of the mental faculties, than the moralist, who, with Pope, makes "Virtue its own reward," is at all times willing to acknow-

ledge. Powerful, indeed, must be his genius, who can dissever the brazen trammels that Poverty has forged for her children, and 'outstepping' the control of circumstance, make literature his passport to affluence and to fame.

ROBERT BLOOMFIELD, the *Farmer's Boy*, was born at the little village of Honington, in Suffolk, on the 3d of December, 1766. He was the younger son of George Bloomfield, a tailor; and Elizabeth, daughter of Robert Manby, who was the village schoolmistress, and who instructed her own offspring with those of her neighbours. His father died a victim to the small-pox, when the subject of this Memoir was less than a twelvemonth old, and his mother was left a widow with six children.

It is observable that Bloomfield has incorporated the most material events of his life with some one or other of his poems, so that were all the passages selected, and duly arranged, his history would want but few additional particulars to be told in the descriptive language of his own muse. Thus, in his "*Good Tidings*," after alluding to the family distress occasioned by the fell disease just mentioned, he

notices his parent's death, and the general horror which the contagion inspired, in these words:

——— Heav'n restor'd them all,
And destin'd one of riper years to fall.
Midnight beheld the close of all his pain,
His grave was clos'd when midnight came again:
No bell was heard to toll, no fun'ral pray'r,
No kindred bow'd, no wife, no children there:—
Its horrid nature could inspire a dread
That cut the bonds of custom like a thread.
The humble church-tow'r higher seem'd to show,
Illumin'd by the trembling light below;
The solemn night-breeze struck each shiv'ring cheek,
Religious reverence forbade to speak:
The starting sexton his short sorrow chid,
When the earth murmur'd on the coffin lid,
And falling bones and sighs of holy dread
Sounded a requiem to the silent dead.

The lowly occupation of Mrs. Bloomfield, and the number of her children, which was increased by the issue of a second marriage, deprived her of the means of giving her son Robert any regular schooling; and nearly all the tuition that he ever received out of her own cottage, was from Mr. Rodwell, of Ixworth (now senior clerk to the magistrates of Blackburn Hundred), to whom he went for about two or three months to be improved in *writing*.

At the age of eleven he was taken into the house of Mr. William Austin, his mother's brother-in-law, a respectable farmer of Sapiston, a little village adjoining to Honington, his mother still continuing to find him "a few things to wear," though even this "was more than she well knew how to do." Mr. Austin, having himself a large family, could pay but little attention to his young kinsman, more than to providing him with food and employment: in this respect, however, the treatment of his servants and of his sons was the same; "all worked hard, all lived well."

'Twas thus with Giles; meek, fatherless, and poor,
Labour his portion, but he felt no more;
No stripes, no tyranny his steps pursu'd,
His life was constant, cheerful servitude:
Strange to the world he wore a bashful look,
The fields his study, nature was his book:
A little farm his generous master till'd,
Who with peculiar grace his station fill'd;
By deeds of hospitality endear'd,
Serv'd from affection, for his worth revet'd;
A happy offspring blest his plenteous board,
His fields were fruitful, and his barns well stor'd;
And fourscore ewes he fed, a sturdy team,
And lowing kine that graz'd beside the stream:
Unceasing industry he kept in view,
And never lack'd a job for Giles to do.

FARMER'S BOY.