

**LIVES OF EMINENT AND
ILLUSTRIOUS ENGLISHMEN, FROM
ALFRED THE GREAT TO THE LATEST
TIMES, ON AN ORIGINAL PLAN,
VO. VIII, PART II, PP. 241-471**

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Lives of Eminent and Illustrious Englishmen, from Alfred the Great to the Latest Times, on an Original Plan, Vo. VIII, Part II, pp. 241-471 by George Godfrey Cunningham

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GEORGE GODFREY CUNNINGHAM

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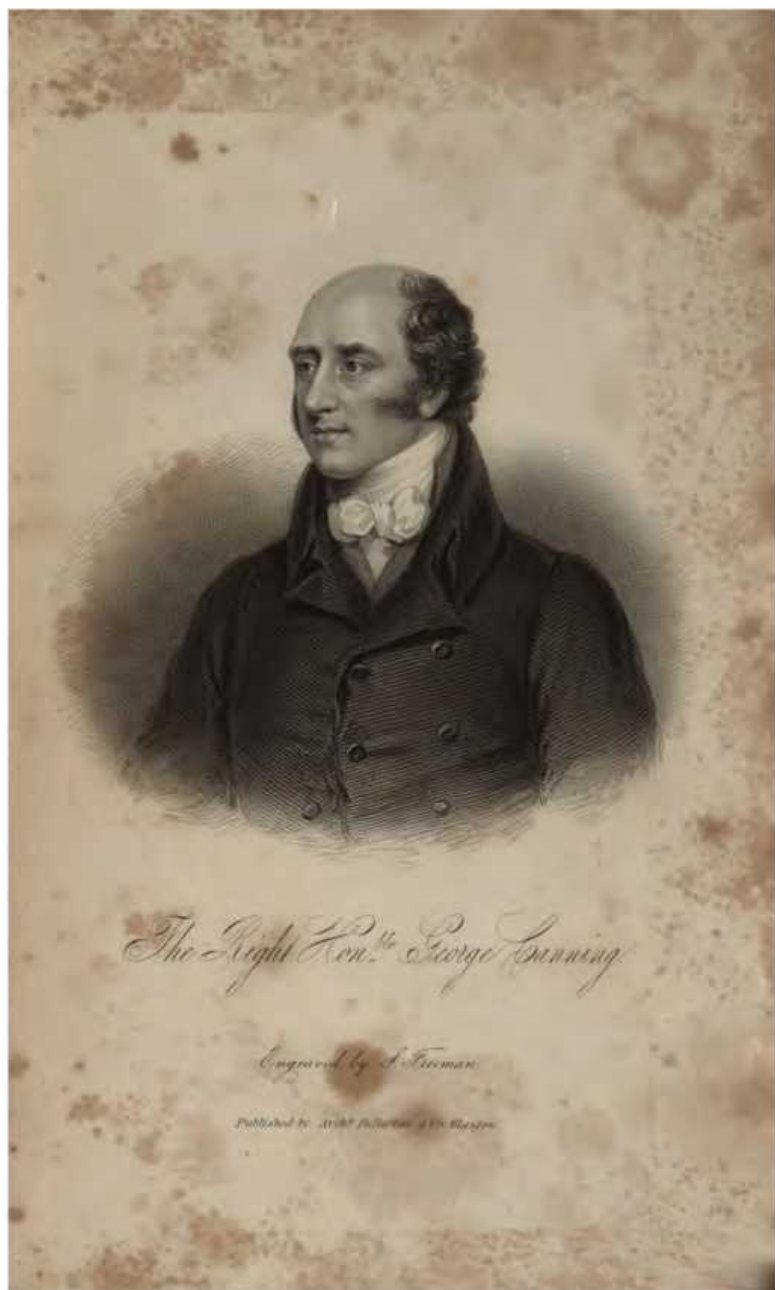
GEORGE GODFREY CUNNINGHAM.

ILLUSTRATED BY A SERIES OF FINELY EXECUTED PORTRAITS, SELECTED FROM THE
MOST AUTHENTIC SOURCES, AND ENGRAVED BY EMINENT ARTISTS.

VOL. VIII.—PART II.

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The Right Hon.^{ble} George Lennox

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Jeremy Taylor D.D.
Bishop of Down & Connor.

Engraved by J. Freeman.

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Sir Humphry Davy, Bart.

Engraved by J. Freeman

Published by Arch^d. Fullarton & Co Glasgow

tired to the village of Stoke-Newington, where he resided to the end of his life. Here he still continued zealously to devote himself to literary labours, and besides editing the 'Monthly Magazine,' and continuing the publication of the 'General Biography,' produced a variety of minor essays, translations, and fugitive pieces. In 1801 he composed for the use of young people a very instructive little volume, entitled 'The Arts of Life.' In 1803 he amused himself with the composition of a volume of 'Letters to a Young Lady on a course of English Poetry;' and shortly afterwards undertook a work, entitled, 'Geographical Delineations,—a performance for which his daughter claims the title of "the philosophy of geography." In 1806 Dr Aikin's connection with the 'Monthly Magazine' ceased, and he engaged in the establishment of a new periodical, entitled, 'The Athenæum,' which was carried on during two years and a half. In 1809, during a suspension of the publication of the biography, he translated, from the Latin, 'Memoirs of the Life of P. D. Huet, Bishop of Avranches, written by Himself;' and in 1812 appeared his 'Memoirs of Selden and Usher.' Towards the close of 1811 he accepted the editorship of 'Dodsley's Annual Register;' and in 1815 he completed the 'General Biography,'—the task of twenty years. Dr Aikin was now 68 years of age, but he still kept planning new literary designs. His last publications were his 'Select Works of the British Poets,' and 'Annals of the Reign of George III.' Shortly after the appearance of the latter work he had a severe and dangerous shock of the palsy, after which his health and spirits gradually sunk, until a stroke of apoplexy closed the scene, on the 7th of December, 1822. He was interred in the church-yard of Stoke-Newington, where a simple monument is erected to his memory.

Dr Aikin, to quote his daughter's description, "was of the middle stature, and well-proportioned though spare; his carriage was erect, his step light and active. His eyes were grey and lively, his skin naturally fair, but in his face much pitted with the small-pox. The expression of his countenance was mild, intelligent, and cheerful; and its effect was aided in conversation by the tones of a voice clear and agreeable, though not powerful." In his political principles Dr Aikin was a devoted admirer of free and liberal institutions, and a staunch contender for the liberty of the subject.

Robert Bloomfield.

BORN A. D. 1766.—DIED A. D. 1823.

ROBERT BLOOMFIELD was the youngest son of George Bloomfield, a tailor, and his wife, Elizabeth, a school-mistress, in the village of Honington, in Suffolk, and was born on the 3d of December, 1766. Before Robert was a year old his father died, leaving his widow with six children. Assisted by her friends she managed to give each of them a little education: two or three months' instruction in writing, however, from Mr Rodwell of Ixworth, was all the scholastic accomplishment that Robert obtained. When he was about eleven years old he was taken into the house, and employed in the farm of Mr W. Austin, of Sapiston, who was married to Bloomfield's maternal aunt; but, after some time,

finding him so small of his age, and unfit for such hard labour, Mr Austin signified the same to his mother, who, having married again, and got a second young family to attend to, wrote immediately to two of his eldest brothers, George and Nathaniel—then settled in London—for their advice and assistance,—when the former readily offered to teach him the business of a shoemaker, and the latter undertook to clothe him. The mother came to London, accordingly, and placed Robert in the care of his brother George, charging the latter “as he valued a mother’s blessing, to watch over him, to set good examples before him, and never to forget that he had lost his father.”

“It is customary,” says Mr G. Bloomfield, who at that time lived at No. 7, Fisher’s-court, Coleman-street, “in such houses as are let to poor people in London, to have light garrets fit for mechanics to work in. In the garret, where we had two turn-up beds, and five of us worked, I received little Robert. As we were all single men, lodgers at a shilling per week each, our beds were coarse, and things were far from being neat and snug, as Robert had been accustomed to at Sapi-ton. He was our man, to fetch all things to hand. At noon he brought our dinner from the cook’s shop: and any of our fellow-workmen that wanted any thing fetched in, would send him, and assist in his work and teach him by way of recompense for his trouble. Every day when the boy from the public house came for the pewter-pots, and to hear what porter was wanted, he always brought the yesterday’s newspaper. The reading of the paper we had been used to take by turns; but after Robert came, he mostly read for us,—because his time was of least value. He often met with words he was not acquainted with: and of this he frequently complained. I one day happened, at a book-stall, to see a small dictionary, which had been very ill-used. I bought it for four-pence. By the help of this, in a little time, he could read and comprehend the long and beautiful speeches of Burke, Fox, or North. One Sunday, after a whole day’s stroll in the country, we, by accident, went into a dissenting meeting-house in the Old Jewry, where a gentleman was lecturing. This man filled little Robert with astonishment. The house was amazingly crowded with the most genteel people; and though we were forced to stand still in the aisle, and were much pressed, yet Robert always quickened his steps to get into the town on a Sunday evening soon enough to attend this lecture. The preacher lived somewhere at the west end of the town—his name was Fawcet. His language was just such as the Rambler is written in; his action like a person acting in tragedy; his discourse rational, and quite free from the cant of Methodism. Of him Robert learned to accent what he called hard words; and otherwise improved himself; and gained the most enlarged notions of Providence. He went sometimes with me to a debating society at Coachmaker’s Hall, but not often; and occasionally to Covent Garden theatre. These are all the opportunities he ever had of learning from public speakers. As to books, he had to wade through two or three folios: a ‘History of England,’ ‘British Traveller,’ and a Geography. But he always read them as a task, or to oblige us who bought them. And, as they came in sixpenny-numbers weekly, he had about as many hours to read as other boys spend in play. I, at this time, read the ‘London Magazine,’ and in that work about two sheets were set apart for a review, which Robert was always very eager to read. Here he

could see what the literary men were doing, and could learn how to judge of the most of the works that came out. And I observed that he always looked at the Poet's corner. One day he repeated a song which he had composed to an old tune. I was surprised that a boy of sixteen should make so smooth verses; and I persuaded him to try whether the editor of our paper would give him a place in the Poet's corner. He succeeded, and they were printed; and as I forget his other early productions, I shall copy this.

THE MILK-MAID ON THE FIRST OF MAY.

Hail May! lovely May! how replenish'd my pail!
The young dawn overspreads the East streak'd with gold!
My glad heart beats time to the laugh of the vale,
And Colin's voice rings through the woods from the fold.

The wood to the mountain submissively bends,
Whose blue misty summits first glow with the sun!
See thence a gay train by the wild rill descends
To join the glad sports:—hark! the tumult's begun

Be cloudless ye skies!—Be my Colin but there,
Not the dew-spangled bent on the wide level dale,
Nor morning's first blush can more lovely appear
Than his looks, since my wishes I could not conceal.

Swift down the mad dance, while blest health prompts to move,
We'll count joys to come, and excharge vows of truth;
And lisply when age cools the transports of love,
Decry, like good folks, the vain pleasures of youth.

"I remember a little piece which he called 'The Sailor's Return,' in which he tried to describe the feelings of an honest tar, who, after a long absence, saw his dear native village first rising into view. This, too, obtained a place in the Poet's corner. And, as he was so young, it shows some genius in him, and some industry, to have acquired so much knowledge of the use of words in so little time. Indeed, at this time, myself and my fellow-workmen in the garret began to get instructions from him, though not more than sixteen years old. About this time there came a man to lodge at our lodgings that was troubled with fits. Robert was so much hurt to see this poor creature drawn into such frightful forms, and to hear his horrid screams, that I was obliged to leave the lodgings. We went to Blue Hart-court, Bell alley. In our new garret we found a singular character, James Hay, a native of Dundee. He was a middle-aged man, of a good understanding, and yet a furious Calvinist. He had many books,—and some which he did not value: such as the 'Seasons,' 'Paradise Lost,' and some novels. These books he lent to Robert; who spent all his leisure hours in reading the SEASONS. I never heard him praise any book equal to that.

"I think it was in the year 1784, that the question came to be decided between the journeymen shoemakers, whether those who had learned without serving an apprenticeship could follow the trade. The person by whom Robert and I were employed, Mr Chamberlayne of Cheap-side, took an active part against the lawful journeymen; and even went so far as to pay off every man that worked for him that had joined their clubs. This so exasperated the men, that their acting committee soon