

**THE FARMER'S BOY:
A RURAL POEM**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649539499

The Farmer's Boy: A Rural Poem by Robert Bloomfield & Capel Lofft

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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ROBERT BLOOMFIELD & CAPEL LOFFT

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LONDON:

PRINTED BY THOMAS DAVISON, WHITEFRIARS.

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FARMER'S BOY;
A RURAL POEM.

BY
ROBERT BLOOMFIELD.

THE FOURTEENTH EDITION.

'A Shepherd's Boy... he seeks no better Name.'



LONDON:

PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN;
BALDWIN, CRADOCK, AND JOY; DARTON, HARVEY, AND CO.;
G. COWIE AND CO.; AND EDWARDS AND KNIBB.

1820.

English
Dobell
3-6-40
40100

PREFACE.

HAVING had the satisfaction of introducing to the public this very pleasing, characteristic, and original POEM, *THE FARMER'S BOY*, I think it will be agreeable to preface it with a short account of the manner in which it came into my hands; and, which will be much more interesting to every reader, a little history of the author, which has been communicated to me by his brother, and which I shall very nearly transcribe as it lies before me.

In *November*, 1798, I received a MS., which I was requested to read, and to give my opinion of it. It was left for me by Mr. *GEORGE BLOOMFIELD*, the brother of the author, and he had recommended it with a very modest, sensible, and candid letter. It had before been shown to some persons in *London*; whose indifference toward it may probably be explained when it is considered that it came to their hands under no circumstances of adventitious recommendation. With some, a

person must be rich, or titled, or fashionable as a literary name, or at least fashionable in some respect, good or bad, before any thing which he can offer will be thought worthy of notice.

I had been a little accustomed to the effect of prejudices; and I was determined to judge in the only just and reasonable way of the work, by the work itself.

At first, I confess, seeing it divided into the four seasons, I had to encounter a prepossession not very advantageous to any writer: that the author was treading a path already so admirably trod by THOMSON; and might be adding one more to an attempt already so often*, but so injudiciously and unhappily made, of transmuting that noble poem from blank verse into rhyme;—from its own pure native gold, into an alloyed metal of incomparably less splendour, permanence, and worth.

I had soon, however, the pleasure of finding myself relieved from that apprehension; and of discovering, that, although the delineation of RURAL SCENERY naturally branches itself into these divisions, there was little else except the general

* It is not meant that attempts have been often made to turn the whole poem into rhyme; but that there have been many imitations of it in rhyme, or parts of it. C. L.

qualities of a musical ear, flowing numbers, feeling, piety, poetic imagery, and animation, a taste for the picturesque, a true sense of the natural and pathetic, force of thought, and liveliness of imagination, which were in common between Thomson and this author. And these are qualities which whoever has the eye, the heart, the awakened and surrounded intellect, and the diviner sense of the poet, which alone can deserve the name, must possess.

But, with these general characters of true poetry, "*The Farmer's Boy*" has, as I have said, a character of its own. It is discriminated as much as the circumstances and habits, and situation, and ideas consequently associated, which are so widely diverse in the two authors, could make it different. Simplicity, sweetness, a natural tenderness, that *molle atque facetum* which HORACE celebrates in the eclogues of Virgil, will be found to belong to it.

I intend some farther and more particular CRITICAL REMARKS on this charming performance. But I now pass to the account of the author himself, as given by his brother;—a man to whom also I was entirely a stranger:—but whose candour, good sense, and brotherly affection, appear in this