



ROBERT BLOOMFIELD.

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THE
POEMS
OF
ROBERT BLOOMFIELD,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

THE FARMER'S BOY,
AND
GOOD TIDINGS.

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GOOD TIDINGS;

OR,

NEWS FROM THE FARM

How vain this tribute; vain this lowly lay;
Yet sought in vain which gratitude inspires!
The Muse, besides, her duty thus approves
To virtue, to her country, to mankind!

THOMPSON.

ADVERTISEMENT.

TO the few who know that I have employed my thoughts on the importance of Dr. JENNER's discovery, it has generally and almost unexceptionably appeared a subject of little promise; peculiarly unfit indeed for poetry. My method of treating it has endeared it to myself, for it indulges in domestic anecdote. The account given of my infancy, and of my father's burial, is not only poetically, but strictly true, and with me it has its weight accordingly. I have witnessed the destruction described in my brother's family; and I have, in my own, insured the lives of four children by Vaccine Inoculation, who, I trust, are destined to look back upon the Small-pox as the scourge of days gone by.—My hopes are high, and my prayers sincere, for its universal adoption.

The few notes subjoined are chiefly from "Woodville on Inoculation;" and if I may escape the appearance of affectation of research, or a scientific treatment of the subject, I think the egotism, so conspicuous in the poem, (no facts give force to argument,) ought to be forgiven.

GOOD TIDINGS,

OR,

NEWS FROM THE FARM.

WHERE'S the Blind Child, so admirably fair,
With guileless dimples, and with flaxen hair
That waves in ev'ry breeze? he's often seen
Beside yon cottage wall, or on the green,
With others match'd in spirit and in size,
Health on their cheeks, and rapture in their eyes;
That full expanse of voice, to childhood dear,
Soul of their sports, is duly cherish'd here;

The Blind Boy

And, hark! that laugh is his, that jovial cry;
He hears the ball and trundling hoop brush by,
And runs the giddy course with all his might,
A very child in every thing but sight;
With circumscrib'd, but not abated pow'rs,—
Play! the great object of his infant hours;—
In many a game he takes a noisy part,
And shows the native gladness of his heart;
But soon he hears, on pleasure all intent,
The new suggestion and the quick assent;
The grove invites, delight thrills every breast—
To leap the ditch and seek the downy nest
Away they start, leave balls and hoops behind,
And one companion leave—the boy is blind!
His fancy paints their distant paths so gay,
That childish fortitude awhile gives way,
He feels his dreadful loss—yet short the pain,
Soon he resumes his cheerfulness again;

The Inquiry.

Pond'ring how best his moments to employ,
He sings his little songs of nameless joy,
Creeps on the warm green turf for many an hour,
And plucks by chance the white and yellow flow'r;
Smoothing their stems, while resting on his knees,
He binds a nosegay which he never sees;
Along the homeward path then feels his way,
Lifting his brow against the shining day,
And, with a playful rapture round his eyes,
Presents a sighing parent with the prize.
She blest *that* day, which he remembers too,
When he could gaze on heav'n's ethereal blue,
See the green Spring, and Summer's countless dyes,
And all the colours of the morning rise.—
'When was this work of bitterness begun?
'How came the blindness of your only son?'
Thus pity prompts full many a tongue to say,
But never, till she slowly wipes away

The Mother's Tale.

Th' obtruding tear that trembles in her eye,
 This dagger of a question meets reply:—
 " My boy was healthy, and my rest was sound,
 " When last year's corn was green upon the ground:
 " From yonder town infection found its way;
 " Around me putrid dead and dying lay.
 " I trembled for his fate: but all my care
 " Avail'd not, for he breath'd the tainted air;
 " Sicknes ensu'd—in terror and dismay
 " I nurs'd him in my arms both night and day,
 " When his soft skin from head to foot became
 " One swelling purple sore, unfit to name:
 " Hour after hour, when all was still beside,
 " When the pale night-light in its socket died,
 " Alone I sat; the thought still soothes my heart,
 " That surely I perform'd a mother's part,
 " Watching with such anxiety and pain
 " Till he might smile and look on me again;

Allusion to the Farmer's Boy.

Whence a warm spark of Nature's holy flame
 Gave the farm-yard an honourable name,
 But left one theme unsung: then, who had seen
 In herds that feast upon the vernal green,
 Or dreamt that in the blood of kine there ran
 Blessings beyond the sustenance of man?
 We tread the meadow, and we scent the thorn,
 We hail the day-spring of a summer's morn;
 Nor mead at dawning day, nor thymy heath,
 Transcends the fragrance of the heifer's breath:
 May that dear fragrance, as it floats along
 O'er ev'ry flow'r that lives in rustic song;
 May all the sweets of meadows and of kine
 Embalm, O Health! this offering at thy shrine.
 Dear must that moment be when first the mind,
 Ranging the paths of science unconfin'd,
 Strikes a new light; when, obvious to the sense,
 Springs the fresh spark of bright intelligence.

Invocation.

" But that was not to be—ask me no more:
 " God keep small-pox and blindness from your door!"
 Now, ye who think, whose souls abroad take wing,
 And trace out human troubles to their spring,
 Say, should Heav'n grant us, in some hallow'd hour,
 Means to divest this demon of his power,
 To loose his horrid grasp from early worth,
 To spread a saving conquest round the earth,
 Till ev'ry land shall bow the grateful knee,
 Would it not be a glorious day to see?—
 That day is come! my soul, in strength arise,
 Invoke no muse, no power below the skies;
 To Heav'n the energies of verse belong,
 Truth is the theme, and truth shall be the song;
 Arm with conviction every joyful line,
 Source of all mercies, for the praise is thine!
 Sweet beam'd the star of peace upon those days
 When Virtue watch'd my childhood's quiet ways,

Jenner's Discovery.

So felt the towering soul of MONTAGU,
 Her sex's glory, and her country's too;
 Who gave the spotted plague one deadly blow,
 And bade its mitigated poison flow
 With half its terrors; yet, with loathing still,
 We hous'd a visitant with pow'r to kill.
 Then when the healthful blood, though often tried,
 Foil'd the keen lancet by the Severn side,
 Resisting, uncontaminated still,
 The purple pest and unremitting skill;
 When the plain truth tradition seem'd to know,
 By simply pointing to the harmless Cow,
 Though wise distrust to reason might appeal;
 What, when hope triumph'd, what did JENNER feel!
 Where even hope itself could scarcely rise
 To scan the vast, inestimable prize!
 Perhaps supreme, alone, triumphant stood
 The great, the conscious power of doing good,

 Its universal Pronouigation.

The power to will, and wishes to embrace
 Th' emancipation of the human race ;
 A joy that must all mortal praise outlive,
 A wealth that grateful nations cannot give.
 Forth sped the truth immediate from his hand,
 And confirmations sprung in ev'ry land ;
 In ev'ry land, on beauty's lily arm,
 On infant softness, like a magic charm,
 Appear'd the gift that conquers as it goes ;
 The dairy's boast, the simple, saving *Rose!*
 Momentous triumph—fiend! thy reign is o'er ;
 Thou, whose blind rage hath ravag'd ev'ry shore,
 Whose name denotes destruction, whose foul breath
 For ever hov'ring round the dart of death,
 Fells, mercilessly fells, the brave and base,
 Through all the kindreds of the human race.

Who has not heard, in warm, poetic tales,
 Of eastern fragrance and Arabian gales ?

 Carried to the New World by the Spaniards.

'Twas thine, while victories claim'd th' immortal lay,
 Through private life to cut thy desprate way ;
 And when full power the wond'rous magnet gave
 Ambition's sons to dare the ocean wave,
 Thee, in their train of horrid ills, they drew
 Beneath the blessed sunshine of Peru*.
 But why unskill'd th' historic page explore ?
 Why thus pursue thee to a foreign shore ?
 A homely narrative of days gone by,
 Familiar griefs, and kindred's tender sigh,
 Shall still survive ; for thou on ev'ry mind
 Hast left some traces of thy wrath behind.

* In 1520, says Mr. Woodville, when the small-pox visited New Spain, it proved fatal to one half of the people in the provinces to which the infection extended ; being carried thither by a negro slave, who attended Narvaez in his expedition against Cortes. He adds, about fifty years after the discovery of Peru, the small-pox was carried over from Europe to America by way of Carthagena, when it overran the Continent of the New World, and destroyed upwards of 100,000 Indians in the single province of Quito.—*Hist. of Inoculation.*

 Small-pox in Arabia.

Bowers of delight, of languor, and repose,
 Where beauty triumph'd as the song arose ?
 Fancy may revel, fiction boldly dare,
 But truth shall not forget that *thou* wert there,
 Scourge of the world! who, borne on ev'ry wind,
 From bow'rs of roses* sprang to curse mankind.
 The Indian palm thy devastation knows :
 Thou sweep'st the regions of eternal snows † :
 Climbing the mighty period of his years,
 The British oak his giant bulk uprears ;
 He, in his strength, while toll'd the passing bell,
 Rejoic'd whole centuries as thy victims fell :
 Armies have bled, and shouts of vict'ry rung,
 Fame crown'd *their* deaths, *thy* deaths are all unsung :

* The first medical account of the small-pox is given by the Arabian physicians, and is traced no further back than the siege of Alexandria, about the year of Christ 610.—*Woodville.*

† First introduced into Greenland in 1733, and almost depopulated the country.—*Ibid.*

 Visiting the Sick: A true Anecdote.

There dwelt, beside a brook that creeps along
 Midst infant hills and meads unknown to song,
 One to whom poverty and faith were giv'n,
 Calm village silence, and the hope of heav'n :
 Alone she dwelt ; and while each morn brought peace,
 And health was smiling on her years' increase,
 Sudden and fearful, rushing through her frame,
 Unusual pains and feverish symptoms came.
 Then, when debilitated, faint, and poor,
 How sweet to hear a footstep at her door !
 To see a neighbour watch life's silent sand,
 To hear the sigh, and feel the helping hand !
 Soon woe o'erspread the interdicted ground,
 And consternation seiz'd the hamlets round :
 Uprose the pest—its widow'd victim died ;
 And foul contagion spread on ev'ry side ;
 The helping neighbour, for her kind regard,
 Bore home *that* dreadful tribute of reward,

Destruction arising therefrom.

Home, where six children, yielding to its pow'r,
 Gave hope and patience a most trying hour;
 One at her breast still drew the living stream,
 And sense of danger never marr'd his dream;
 Yet all exclaim'd, and with a pitying eye,
 "Who'er survives the shock, *that child will die!*"
 But vain the fiat,—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 funeral 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 their trembling light below;
 The solemn night-breeze struck each shiv'ring cheek;
 Religious reverence forbade to speak:

Domestic Trouble.

Sev'n winters cannot pluck from mem'ry's store
 That mark'd affliction which a brother bore;
 That storm of trouble bursting on his head,
 When the fiend came, and left *two children* dead!
 Yet, still superior to domestic woes,
 The native vigour of his mind arose,
 And, as new summers teem'd with brighter views,
 He trac'd the wand'rings of his darling Muse,
 And all was joy—this instant all is pain,
 The foe implacable returns again,
 And claims a sacrifice; the deed is done—
Another child has fall'n, another son!
 His young cheek even now is scarcely cold,
 And shall his early doom remain untold?
 No! let the tide of passion roll along,
 Truth *will* be heard, and God will bless the song.

* I had proceeded thus far with the Poem, when the above fact became a powerful stimulus to my feelings, and to the earnestness of my exhortation

A midnight Funeral.

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!
 'Why tell us tales of woe, thou who didst give
 'Thy soul to rural themes, and bade them live?
 'What means this zeal of thine, this kindling fire?
 'The rescu'd infant and the dying sire?'
 Kind heart, who o'er the pictur'd Seasons glow'd,
 When smiles approv'd the verse, or tears have flow'd,
 Was then the lowly minstrel dear to thee?
 Himself appeals—What, if *that child* were HE!
 What, if those midnight sighs a farewell gave,
 While hands, all trembling, clos'd his father's grave
 Though love enjoin'd not infant eyes to weep,
 In manhood's zenith shall his feelings sleep?
 Sleep not, my soul! indulge a nobler flame;
Still the destroyer persecutes thy name.

Earnest Exhortation.

Indignant Reason, Pity, Joy, arise,
 And speak in thunder to the heart that sighs.
 Speak loud to parents;—knew ye not the time
 When age itself, and manhood's hardy prime,
 With horror saw their short-liv'd friendships end,
 Yet dar'd not visit e'en the dying friend?
 Contagion, a foul serpent lurking near,
 Mock'd Nature's sigh and Friendship's holy tear.
 Love ye your children?—let that love arise,
 Pronounce the sentence, and the serpent dies;
 Bid welcome a mild stranger at your door,
 Distress shall cease, those terrors reign no more.
 Love ye your neighbours?—let that love be shown;
 Risk not *their* children while you guard your own;
 Give not a foe dominion o'er your blood,
 Plant not a poison, e'en to bring forth good;
 For, woo the pest discreetly as you will,
 Deadly infection must attend him still.

Beauty protected.

Then, let the serpent die! this glorious prize
 Sets more than life and health before our eyes,
 For beauty triumphs too! Beauty! sweet name,
 The mother's feelings kindling into flame!
 For, where dwells she, who, while the virtues grow,
 With cold indifference marks the arching brow?
 Or, with a lifeless heart and recreant blood,
 Sighs not for daughters fair as well as good?
 That sigh is nature, and cannot decay,
 'Tis universal as the beams of day;
 Man knows and feels its truth; for, Beauty's call
 Rouses the coldest mortal of us all;
 A glance warms age itself, and gives the boy
 The pulse of rapture, and the sigh of joy.
 And is it then no conquest to insure
 Our lilies spotless and our roses pure?
 Is it no triumph that the lovely face
 Inherits every line of Nature's grace?

Praise and Hope.

That the sweet precincts of the laughing eye
 Dread no rude scars, no foul deformity?
 Our boast, old Time himself shall not impair,
 Of British maids pre-eminently fair;
 But, as he rolls his years on years along,
 Shall keep the record of immortal song;
 For song shall rise with ampler power to speak
 The new-born influence of Beauty's cheek,
 Shall catch new fires in every sacred grove,
 Fresh inspiration from the lips of Love,
 And write for ever on the rising mind—
 DEAD IS ONE MORTAL FOE OF HUMAN KIND!
 Yes, we have conquer'd! and the thought should raise
 A spirit in our prayers as well as praise,
 For who will say, in Nature's wide domain
 There lurk not remedies for every pain;
 Who will assert, where Turkish banners fly,
 Woe still shall reign—the plague shall never die?

American Indians.

Or who predict, with bosom all unblest,
 An everlasting fever in the West?
 Forbid it, Heav'n!—Hope cheers us with a smile,
 The sun of Mercy's risen on our isle:
 Its beams already, o'er th' Atlantic wave,
 Pierce the dark forests of the suffering brave:
 There, e'en th' abandon'd sick imbib'd a glow,
 When warrior nations, resting on the bow,
 Astonish'd heard the joyful rumour rise,
 And call'd the council of their great and wise:
 The truth by female pray'rs was urg'd along,
 Youth ceas'd the chorus of the warrior song,
 And present ills bade present feelings press
 With all the eloquence of deep distress;
 Till forth their chiefs * o'er dying thousands trod
 To seek the white man and his bounteous God:

* The chiefs of the Cherokee Indians, in North America, have applied to the government of the United States for information on the subject of Vaccine Inoculation, and have spread the practice in the Woods

Ceylon, and the Continent of India.

Well sped their errand; with a patriot zeal
 They spread the blessing for their country's weal.
 Where India's swarthy millions crowd the strand,
 And round that isle, which crowns their pointed land,
 Speeds the good angel with the balmy breath,
 And checks the dreadful tyranny of death:
 Whate'er we hear to hurt the peace of life,
 Of Candian treachery and British strife,
 The sword of commerce, nations bought and sold,
 They owe to England more than mines of gold;
 England has sent a balm for private woe;
 England strikes down the nation's bitterest foe.
 Europe, amidst the clangor of her arms,
 While life was threaten'd with a thousand harms,
 And Charity was freezing to its source,
 Still saw fair Science keep her steady course;
 And, while whole legions fell, by friends deplor'd,
 New germs of life sprung up beneath the sword,

 Regret.

And spread amain.—Then, in our bosoms, why
Must exultation mingle with a sigh?

Thought takes the retrospect of years just fled,
And, conjuring up the spirits of the dead,
Whispers each dear and venerated name
Of the last victims ere the blessing came,
Worthies, who through the lands that gave them birth
Breath'd the strong evidence of growing worth;
Parents, cut down in life's meridian day,
And childhood's thousand thousand swept away;
Life's luckless mariners! ye, we deplore
Who sunk within a boat's length of the shore*.

A stranger youth, from his meridian sky,
Buoyant with hopes, came here—but came to die!
O'er his sad fate I've ponder'd hours away,
It suits the languor of a gloomy day:

* So lately as the year 1793, the small-pox was carried to the isle of France by a Dutch ship, and there destroyed five thousand four hundred persons in six weeks.—*Hudonville*.

 Prince Lee Boo.

He left his bamboo groves, his pleasant shore,
He left his friends to hear new oceans roar,
All confident, ingenuous, and bold,
He heard the wonders by the white men told;
With firm assurance trod the rolling deck,
And saw his isle diminish to a speck,
Plough'd the rough waves, and gain'd our northern clime,
In manhood's ripening sense and nature's prime.
Oh! had the fiend been vanquish'd ere he came,
The gen'rous youth had spread my country's fame;
Had known that honour dwells among the brave,
And England had not prov'd the stranger's grave:
Then, ere his waning sand of life had run,
Poor ABBA THULE might have seen his son!*
Rise, exultation! spirit, louder speak!
Pity, dislodge thy dew-drops from my cheek!

* Lee Boo, second son of the King of the Pelew Islands, was brought to England by Capt. Wilson, and died of the small-pox, at Rotherhithe, in 1764.

 Final Exhortation.

Sleep sound, forefathers; sleep, brave stranger boy,
While truth impels the current of my joy:
To all mankind, to all the earth 'tis giv'n,
Conviction travels like the light of heav'n:
Go, blessing, from thy birth-place still expand,
For that dear birth-place is my native land!
A nation consecrates th' auspicious day,
And wealth, and rank, and talents lead the way!
Time, with triumphant hand, shall truth diffuse,
Ner ask the unbought efforts of the Muse.
Mothers! the pledges of your loves caress,
And heave no sighs but sighs of tenderness.
Fathers, be firm! keep down the fallen foe,
And on the mem'ry of domestic woe
Build resolution.—Victory shall increase
Th' incalculable wealth of private peace;
And such a victory, unstain'd with gore,
That strews its laurels at the cottage door,

 Conclusion.

Sprung from the farm, and from the yellow mead,
Should be the glory of the pastoral reed.
In village paths, hence, may we never find
Their youth on crutches, and their children blind;
Nor, when the milk-maid, early from her bed,
Beneath the may-bush that embow'rs her head,
Sings like a bird, e'er grieve to meet again
The fair cheek injur'd by the scars of pain;
Pure, in her morning path, where'er she treads,
Like April sunshine and the flow'rs it feeds,
She'll boast new conquests; Love, new shafts to fling
And Life, an uncontaminated spring.
In pure delight didst thou, my soul, pursue
A task to conscience and to kindred due,
And, true to feeling and to Nature, deem
The dairy's boast thine own appropriate theme;
Hail now the meed of pleasurable hours,
And, at the foot of Science, strew thy flow'rs!