ROBERT BLOOMFIELD

(1766-1823)

by

ELLIOTT A. ^{James} WHITE, A.B.

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

in the

GRADUATE SCHOOL

of the

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI

1916

378.7M71
XW532

The author takes this opportunity of expressing his indebtedness to Dr. Arthur Henry Rolph Fairchild, of the English Department of the University of Missouri, for suggesting the subject of this thesis, and generously permitting the author the use of his practically complete collection of first or early editions of the works of Robert Bloomfield and the Views in Suffolk, Norfolk, and Northamptonshire.

Columbia, Missouri,

May, 1916.

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INTRODUCTION

The following discussion of the poet, Robert Bloomfield, is divided into four parts : first, a detailed account of the poet's life ; second, an account of each of the poet's works, its contents and its general characteristics, and a list of all the available editions ; third, a discussion of the formative influences upon the poet's life, and their place in his poetry; and fourth, an examination into what contemporary and later critics of the poet have said. The Conclusion proposes a new view of the poet's life in its relation to his works, and seeks to make a final estimate of his place in literature. The discussion is completed by the addition of three Appendices and a Bibliography.

ROBERT BLOOMFIELD

(1766-1823)

Part I. Life.

Part I

Life

Introduction.

The life of Robert Bloomfield falls naturally into six periods : the first from his birth in 1766, through his boyhood at home in the village of Homington, and his years on the farm at Sapiston, to his coming to London; the second from his coming to London in 1781, through his youthful apprenticeship under the care of his brother, to the departure of his brother in 1787, and his own entrance upon independent young manhood; the third from this time, through his marriage and his early efforts at writing verses, to his beginning the poem of the Farmer's Boy, in 1796; the fourth through the composition of the poem, his various attempts to have it published, to its final appearance in 1800; the fifth from the beginning of his success, which dated from 1800, through his period of prosperity and the publication of various other volumes of poems, to about 1814 or 1815, when his health began to decline permanently and his income became greatly reduced; and the sixth from his retirement to Shefford through his last years and the composition of a few minor pieces and his one drama, Hazlewood Hall, to his death in 1823; after which the affairs of his family were finally settled and his own scattered writings collected by Joseph Weston and the poet's daughter, into the two volumes published the year after his death and called the Remains.

Part I. Life.

Chapter I

First Period, 1766-1781. Boyhood at Honington and Sapiston.

Concerning the ancestors of the English poet, Robert Bloomfield (1766-1823), little is known except that the poet's great-great grandfather by the male line, Isaac Bloomfield, was apprenticed by an unknown woman at Framlingham, Suffolk; became in later life churchwarden, an office which he held for twenty-seven years, to the parish of Ouseden, Suffolk; quarrelled with a brother who settled and left descendants in Colchester; had seventeen children living at one time; and died at the age of eighty-eight. Isaac's youngest child, and by a second marriage, named James, had a son, Charles Bloomfield, who kept a respectable school at Bury St. Edmund's (where the poet's brother George later settled), a town of which he became capital burgess in 1806.¹

Another grandson of Isaac Bloomfield (and probably descended through a brother of James) was the poet's father, George Bloomfield, a tailor living at the little village of Honington, Suffolk²,-- some eight miles northeast of Bury, between Troston, the home of Capel Lofft, Esq. (who was later the poet's patron and editor), and Euston on the River Ouse, the seat of the Duke of Grafton (who was later the poet's patron), then Lord Lieutenant. The poet's

¹ Views, 17 et seq. For abbreviations in notes, see page

² 1801, pref. vi. The facts for the early part of Bloomfield's life stated identically in 1801, 1824, 1827.

mother was Elizabeth Manby, daughter of Robert Manby, born in 1736 at Brandon (or, according to Brayley³; in a cottage nearly opposite the church, at Fakenham, next to Sapiston, a village on the Ouse a mile or two from Fuston Hall). At her home in the family cottage she kept a village school which she was still teaching in 1782 or 1783.⁴ The cottage itself had been bought by the poet's grandfather as a barn, and was thatched, though it was afterwards covered with tiles by the poet, to whom it devolved,⁵ and by whom it was finally sold for seventy pounds (see page 48).

Here Robert Bloomfield, the author of the Farmer's Boy, was born December 3, 1766,⁶ the youngest of six children, the others being George, Nathaniel, Isaac, Elizabeth (who went to live in America), and another girl.

The father died of the small-pox and was buried at night in the village cemetery, in 1767, when Robert was less than a year old, leaving the mother with the six small children to support. (Mrs. Bloomfield was married again after six years, in 1773, to John Glover of Honington, having by this marriage fourteen children, of whom the eldest, Isaac Glover, was born in March, 1774, and died in December, 1789. Another child was named John.)

3 Views, 38.

4 Ibid., 33.

5 Ibid., 33.

6 1801, pref. vi. Information from quoted letter of George Bloomfield to Capel Lofft, as in note 2.

As schoolmistress of the village school, Mrs. Bloomfield taught Robert and her older children at home, along with the neighbors' children, Robert's formal education being confined to this instruction except for two or three months' instruction in writing⁷ at the school of a Mr. Rodwell, of Ixworth Thorp, who was later (before 1799) senior clerk to the Magistrates of Blackbourn Hundred. The only facts of Robert's childhood at Honington ascertainable are that when ^{he and one of his sisters} ~~they~~ were very young his mother used to read ^{to them} the story of Goody-two-shoes ⁸ ~~to him and one of his sisters~~⁸; that a girl friend of his childhood, later married to a man named Thompson, but then "one of the Whiteheads,-- probably Sarah", used to sing the ballad of "the pretty little baby" and "the false black knight"; and that his brother Isaac knew a song as a boy, about an old ewe with one horn, ^{who} ~~he~~ broke the legs of a butcher who was about to slaughter her.⁹

At the age of eleven (1777)¹⁰ Robert was taken into the family of his uncle, William Austin, a farmer of Sapiston, Sussex (a village adjoining Honington), where Robert slept in the garret¹¹, worked, and lived on an

⁷ Views, 7.

⁸ Rem. II, 120.

⁹ Ibid., II, 89.

¹⁰ 1801, pref. vii.

¹¹ Views, 31.

equal footing with the other farm servants, as farmer's boy. His mother still provided for his clothes.¹² His employer, William Austin, husband to Mrs. Bloomfield's sister, a Manby, was a tenant of the Duke of Grafton, and father, by the one marriage, of fourteen children, five of whom survived him.

Besides the vivid and detailed account of his life at the farm in the character of Giles, in his poem of the Farmer's Boy, the poet relates the following anecdote which illustrates the conditions in the country village where he spent these years of his boyhood: "My good old aunt Austin had many sickly children; burying nine under three years old. With one of them, which was very ailing and fretful, a superstitious cure was attempted. I remember an old woman (Mrs. Osborne of Honington) being employed to 'cut the child for the spleen'. The child's ear was cut so as to bleed, and the blood applied on the temples in the form of a cross, and, I believe, with something repeated by way of charm; for she had charms for the ague, etc.-- The child died." ¹³

On account of the fact that Robert's small stature made it improbable (in the opinion of Mr. Austin) that he would ever be able to earn his living by manual labor, Mrs. Bloomfield wrote to her sons in London -- George, a

¹² 1801, pref. vii.

¹³ Rem., II, 86.

ladies' shoemaker, and Nathaniel, a tailor -- whereupon the arrangement was made that George should take Robert to live with him and should teach him the trade of ladies' shoemaker, Nathaniel furnishing his clothes. Accordingly there now occurred the first momentous event in the poet's life,-- the first turning-point in his career.

Chapter II

Second Period, 1781-1787. Youth in London with his Brother.

On Friday, June 29, 1781,¹⁴ when he was fifteen years old, Robert Bloomfield was brought by his mother to London, to live with his brother George in a garret at Mr. Simm's, 7 Pitcher's Court, obscurely tucked away in Bell Alley, Coleman Street. He afterwards recalled how, on the occasion of his coming, riding backwards on the coach, he wore his Sunday clothes, and had washed his hat surreptitiously in the horsepond at Sapiston, to make it look new and shiny.¹⁵

The quarters in which he now lived were a light garret, with two coarse turn-up beds, where five shoemakers worked,— all single men, and lodgers at a shilling a week. Besides being taught the trade, Robert was errand-boy, fetching dinners from the cook-shop, and whatever else the men needed. He also read aloud to the men the paper¹⁶ of the day before, which the pot-boy brought from the public house when he came in the morning to collect the empty pots and take orders for the day's supply of porter. To help Robert with the hard words in the paper, particularly in the speeches of Foxe and North, of the difficulty of which

¹⁴ 1801, pref. viii.

¹⁵ 1827, pref. xii.

¹⁶ 1801, pref. viii.

the boy complained, his brother George bought him, for fourpence, a worn-out dictionary at a bookstall.¹⁷

On Sundays, after a walk in the country sometimes lasting all day, Robert went to hear the dissenting minister Fawcett at the meeting-house in the Old Jewry,¹⁸ standing up in the crowded aisle, and perhaps seeing in the congregation the poet Wordsworth, who was interested in Fawcett and attended these sermons when he came up to London (see page 99, note). Robert also went infrequently to a debating society at Coachmaker's Hall,¹⁷ and went "a few times" to Covent Garden Theatre.¹⁸ He read to the men in the shop two or three folios --- a history of England, "The British Traveller", and a geography (see ^{page} ~~Appendix~~ 98) --- which came weekly in sixpenny numbers; and the London Magazine, in the Poet's Corner of which he was especially interested.¹⁸

As early as his first coming to London he had begun to try his hand at verse (his brother speaks of his having made smooth verses to an old tune in 1783, when he was seventeen), though it was not till 1786, when he was twenty years old, that any of his verses were published,¹⁹ one of the first being a poem printed in either the General Advertiser, the Gazetteer, or the Courant, and called "The

17 1801, pref. ix.

18 1801, pref. ix.

19 Views, 11, note.

Soldier's Return", ²⁰ written probably in the spring of 1784, shortly after the peace with America and France. Another early poem was one of sixteen anapestic lines, called "A Village Girl" (called by George "The Milk-Maid, on the First of May"), printed in Say's Gazetteer, May 24, 1786.

His home cottage at Honington, where his mother was still keeping school (She had married John Glover in 1773.-- Did they live at her cottage?) was on fire several times, but was saved, during a big fire in the village in 1782 or 1783. ²¹

At some time between 1781 and 1784, Robert's distress at the fits of a man who had come to the same lodgings, led his brother to remove to new lodgings, in a garret in Blue Hart Court, Bell Alley, Coleman Street. There Robert became acquainted with the books owned by a James Kay, of Dundee, the books including Paradise Lost, the Seasons, and some novels, for which Kay cared little. ²²

In 1784 trouble arose between Mr. Chamberlayne, of Cheapside, by whom George and Robert were employed, and the journeyman shoemakers who had united as "the lawful crafts", as to whether shoemakers should be employed

20 Rem. I, 35.

21 Views, 33.

22 1801, pref. xiii.

who had not served a regular apprenticeship, Mr. Chamberlayne going so far as to discharge the "lawful craftsmen", and George going so far as to write a violent letter to a committeeman of the crafts. When Chamberlayne was threatened for employing the Bloomfield brothers, and trouble seemed brewing, upon Mr. Austin's invitation Robert took refuge from the storm at the Sapiston farm where he was first employed as farmer's boy, and where he now stayed to renew his acquaintance with rural sights, sounds, and occupations, for a space of two months.²² This was in the fall of 1784.

Inasmuch, however, as the trouble remained unsettled, with slight prospects of adjustment between the trade factions, it was arranged so that Robert, when he had just turned eighteen,²³ returned to London as a regularly bound apprentice, to conform to the demands of the journeymen, that only regular apprentices should be employed in the shops. By Mr. Ingram, of Bell Alley, he was indentured to John Dudbridge, their landlord, and a Freeman of London. George paid five shillings as a premium.²⁴ It was after this, in the latter part of 1786 or the first part of 1787, that George left London for good, for Bury St. Edmund's, having

22 1801, pref. xiii. The D.N.B., V, 236, says "three months".

23 Ibid. xvi.

24 Ibid. xv-xvi.

looked after Robert for the space of nearly five years, but being later well repaid by Robert's looking after both him and his large family.

From the time of George's departure for Bury, there began a new era for Robert Bloomfield, for he was now independent and must shift for himself. He was also of age, since he was twenty or twenty-one years old when his brother left the shop in which, for five years, they had worked together, the younger learning the trade from the older.

Chapter III

Third Period, 1787-1797. Young Manhood and Marriage.

The first fact of Bloomfield's life in the period of his young manhood, is that he probably revisited his native town in 1788, seven years after his first coming to London, and four years after his two months' visit with Mr. Austin at Sapiston in the autumn of 1784.²⁵

In December of the next year, 1789, Robert's half-brother, Isaac Glover (his mother's eldest son by her second husband, John Glover), born in March, 1774, who would be sixteen years old the following spring, died after an illness of three weeks. George Bloomfield, after attending the funeral at Honington, on Monday, December 27, 1789, wrote to Robert the next Sunday, to request him to write some verses in epitaph, for the stone which Robert's step-father, John Glover, and Robert's brother, Isaac Bloomfield, were going to work into the front corner of the brick chancel buttress of Honington church, by Isaac Glover's grave. The poet thereupon wrote an elegy of six four-line stanzas, afterwards printed in the Remains.²⁶

Between the time of George's leaving for Bury, and 1790, Robert presumably had learned to play the violin, for when he was married, December 12, 1790, he wrote to George that he had sold his fiddle and got a wife. The

25 F.B., 6th ed. supp. xxviii, xxxi; 1827, supp. xxxi.

26 Rem., I, 4-10; cf. ibid., 41.

girl whom he married was Mary Anne Church, of the town of Woolwich (his brother Nathaniel had married a Woolwich woman²⁷), where her father, Joseph Church, was a boat-builder in the Government ship-yard. His father-in-law it was who sent him from Woolwich (before 1797)²⁸ the first present for his housekeeping: the "old oak table" on which he wrote out the Farmer's Boy,²⁹ and about which he later composed the poem called "To My Old Oak Table", written in December, 1803, and published in Wild Flowers.³⁰ After living for some years in furnished lodgings, the Bloomfields were at length able to purchase a bed, and hired a room up one pair of stairs at 14 Bell Alley, Coleman Street.³¹ Robert had the privilege of working at his trade in the light garret two flights above, and he did so in March of the year he came into the new lodgings, when he had just recovered from a period of ill health due to the creeping dropsy³², a disease to which, during all his later life, he was more or less subject.

27 1801, pref. xvi.

28 W.F., 22; Views, 17.

29 W.F., 27.

30 Ibid. 21-29.

31 1801, pref. xvi.

32 W.F., 24.

In the autumn of the year after Bloomfield's marriage, the first child, Hannah (who survived him), was born, October 25, 1791. The other children were Mary Anne, born July 6³³ (or September 6³⁴), 1793; Charles (who survived him), born September 15, 1798; Charlotte, born April 20, 1801; and Robert Henry, born March 23, 1807,-- five children in all.³⁵

Although the above dates are given by Bloomfield himself, in his own preface to the edition of his poems in 1808 (included in the edition of 1827), there is a question raised by a sonnet written by Capel Lofft, and included in the Remains³⁶, which would seem to imply that Bloomfield had another son named Robert, born in January or February, 1804, between Charlotte and Robert Henry (or six children in all),-- "Sonnet, to the author of the Farmer's Boy, on the birth of ^{his} a second son," dated at Cambridge, February 2, 1804, with a note by Joseph Weston, the editor of the Remains, saying that the son was "Baptized after the name of his father, at the church of St. Giles, Cripplegate". Inasmuch as Bloomfield, in the preface, dedicated Wild Flowers, 1806, "To my only son. . . Charles", who was lame,

33 1827, pref. x.

34 F.B., 6th ed., pref. xvii, note.

35 1827, pref. x, note.

36 Rem., I, app. 154.

it is evident that either this son Robert had died before 1803, when Robert Henry was born and named; or that the poet had two sons named Robert; or that Lofft was mistaken as to the fact upon which he wrote the sonnet --- a suggestion which seems unlikely to have been true; or finally, that Bloomfield gave a wrong date for the birth of Robert Henry, in the preface of 1808 (included in the edition of 1827) --- yet in this case, to make this likely, even the months and the days of the month do not agree. It could not have been that Lofft was referring to the birth of his own son, as the sense of the sonnet above cited is clearly congratulation to Bloomfield on having a second male heir. Again, the rather regular sequence of dates of the births of the other five children --- 1791, 1793, 1798, 1801,, 1807 --- shows a gap of six years between 1801 and 1807 which may have been filled by the birth of a son who died in infancy, or at least before 1807, so that the parents gave the same name to the next child, a son. At any rate, Bloomfield wrote a poem of uncertain date, "On the Death of his Infant Son Robert" ³⁷, a poem which in this case must refer, then, to the child about whom Lofft wrote the sonnet,-- the only evidence there is for the fact of this sixth child's birth. Inasmuch as Bloomfield made no revision of the preface of 1808 before his death in 1823, the record he left there, as

³⁷ Rem., I, 84.

it was published in 1827, may be taken as evidence that he had no more children after Robert Henry, who was born when the poet was forty-one years of age.

To return to the narrative of Bloomfield's life: under date of Wednesday night, December 28, 1791, he wrote to his father-in-law, Joseph Church,³⁸ to enclose a copy of verses which he now put down from memory, but which he wrote at the time, "On Seeing the Launch of the Boyne"; to thank him for his kindness; and to tell him that, as he was trying to get into business for himself, he hoped to be able to entertain him better the next time he should come to make a visit. It is not quite clear from the letter, whether or not the father-in-law had seen the baby Hannah, born the preceding October 25, and now two months old. Bloomfield said he had a good business chance, had some good customers, and might get enough at once to provide genteely for his wife and child, if he could take advantage of the opportunity soon,—that is, secure three months' credit at the leather-cutters' for five or six pounds,—since his custom lay among those who were able and willing to improve it. He also added the rather interesting remark, interesting in the light of his subsequent conduct: "Before I was married, I often amused myself with such compositions (referring to the enclosed verses), and had several pieces published in

38 Rem., I, 174

the newspapers, magazines, etc.; but I find other employment now, which is of equal pleasure to me." It was five or six years later that the shoemaker began employing himself with the composition of the poetry which was to change his whole manner of living, his outlook upon life, his social standing, and even the living conditions of his brothers and descendants. The history of the poet comes therefore to the beginning of the ^{fourth} ~~third~~ period, that of composing and publishing the Farmer's Boy.

Chapter IV

Fourth Period, 1797-1800. The Farmer's Boy.

Bloomfield began composing the Farmer's Boy after he had been married six years (he was married December 12, 1790), and during the last illness of Robert Burns, about three months before the latter's death (Burns died July 21, 1797³⁹); therefore presumably he must have begun composing in the spring of 1797, near April 21.⁴⁰ The part of the poem first written was the morning scene in Spring, beginning "this task had Giles", and the description of the lambs at play. Inasmuch as Bloomfield composed nine-tenths of the poem as he worked, and in the garret with the six or seven, usually six, workmen, including himself,⁴¹ he had to remember the lines and afterwards write them down. For this reason, he says, he composed in rhyme, as it was easier to remember; and he retained the poem so well in memory, that several years afterwards, while it was being printed, he often lulled his wife to sleep by reciting the whole poem to her in the evening before the fire.⁴² Winter and half of Autumn he had completed long before he put a word of them on paper. In the portion called "The Harvest Home", he made use of the letters George wrote to him in London. He

39 Cousins, 64.

40 1827, pref. xviii, note.

41 1801, pref. xvii.

42 1827, pref. xix.

wrote out the whole poem but once, retaining no copy, simply holding it in memory. Having had no instruction in grammar, he says, he did not pretend to know how to manage the "stops", that is, the punctuation. ⁴³

Bloomfield took the manuscript first, in June, 1798, ⁴⁴ to W. Bent, publisher of the Universal Magazine, successor to S. A. Cumberlege at the King's Arms, Paternoster Row, who sent it back by a clerk within a week ⁴⁵ or ten days, ⁴⁴ or two weeks, ⁴⁶ accompanied by a note in which he refused to criticize it. The poet then offered it to Lane, the great wholesale novel manufacturer, who sent it back within a few hours, with a note of two lines saying that it was "not in his line". Bloomfield then took the manuscript to Dilly, in the Poultry, who kept it so long that the author had to call for it several times, before finally he found Dilly in. The latter told him that it would not do for separate publication unless he got someone to revise it for him. He advised the author to take it to the publisher, Phillips, who might print it for him in the Monthly Magazine; but since Bloomfield knew he should have to pay five or six shillings for a copy of it to send to his mother --- his primary object in publication ---

⁴³ 1827, pref. xvi.

⁴⁴ Ibid. xiii.

⁴⁵ Rem., II, 207.

⁴⁶ Ibid. II, 198.

he did not do this, but sent it to his brother George, at Bury St. Edmund's. With the poet's permission, George carried it to Capel Lofft, at Troston, in November, 1798.⁴⁷ Lofft, delighted with it, took it to a Thomas Hill, Esq., and it was immediately recommended to Hood for publication.⁴⁸ (See Appendix A, for editorial changes.) Lofft undertook the revising and general editing. Fifteen months elapsed between this time and the publication, in March, 1800, nearly two years after the completion of the poem.⁴⁹ During this period, Bloomfield, then described by George⁵⁰ as of slender build, about five feet four inches tall, and of very dark complexion, employed as a ladies' shoemaker by Davies, Lombard Street,⁵¹ was in poor health,^{4 7} For two, sometimes three, days a week, he was wracked with a headache and unable to help his wife and three children⁵² (Hannah, aged nine; Mary Anne, aged eight; and Charles, aged two and a half). He knew little of the progress of the printing, though by his own fault, he says.⁵³ He had meanwhile written most of the Rural Tales, published in 1802, as he says in the preface to the latter volume.

47 1827, pref. xvii, xviii.

48 Rem., II, 207.

49 1827, pref. xx; R.T., iii; Views, 15; 1801, pref. iii.

50 1801, pref. xvii.

51 1827, pref. xix.

52 see note 49.

53 see note 47.

Two months after this sickness and trouble which had befallen him during the early part of the year, the Farmer's Boy appeared, in March, 1800, and soon he received his first relief, something under a hundred pounds, from the Duke of Grafton,⁵⁴ and only six months later he was visiting the Duke at his estate! Bloomfield tells how he got the first news that the poem was on sale, from his brother Nathaniel, who called to say that he had seen the book on sale in a shop window, but wasn't sure it was Robert's. The poet then went, by a request he had just received through the hands of Lofft, to call on the Duke of Grafton in Piccadilly, whom, although he had not seen him since, he remembered slightly from youth. On Bloomfield's confessing that he had not yet seen the book in print, the Duke brought him from the library "One of the large paper copies" (a special edition, or a proof?) and spread it on the table". Afterwards, when the poet had taken it to his home, he read with surprise, and for the first time, Lofft's preface containing the praise of the author and the poem.⁵⁵

It was from this time that Bloomfield's prosperity was assured. The publication of the poem in March, 1800, was the most important event in his life.

54 1827, pref. xx; R.T., pref. iii; Views, 15; 1801, pref. iii.

55 1827, pref. xix.

Chapter V

Fifth Period, 1800-1814. Prosperity -- Various Poems.

The Farmer's Boy, Bloomfield's rural poem in four books, became immediately popular upon its publication, with the astonishing sale of 26,000 copies in two and three quarter years up to the end of 1802, when the 7th edition appeared,⁵⁶ and was translated into French and Italian (the latter in 1824), and (the first book) into Latin.⁵⁷ One edition followed another, in quick succession. It was mentioned in the Metropolitan Literary Journal, No. 3,⁵⁸ in the New London Review, and in the Monthly Mirror, and was mentioned by Dr. Anderson in his Agricultural Recreations, and reviewed by Mr. Swan in the Ladies Museum of July 12, 1800 (Mr. Swan had asked the poet to his house the Sunday before).⁵⁹ From the time of the publication, Bloomfield's fortunes were entirely changed. Within a few months his fame had spread, and, in his own words, he "became known to the literary, and esteemed by the good". Foxe sent him a letter in his own handwriting.⁶⁰ Through the benevolence

56 1824, I, xxviii, note.

57 Ibid. I, xxxi, xxx, note by Lofft, who says that the French version, which he had seen, called Le Valet du Fermier, was handsomely printed, with neat copper-plate copies of the wood engravings by Bewick.

58 Rem., I, viii, note.

59 1827, xx; R.T., iii; Views, 15; 1801, pref. iii.

60 1827, pref. xxi.

of the Duke of Grafton, as already mentioned, the poet was enabled to return, in May, 1800, after an absence of twelve years, to his native village. He visited at Bury (probably at his brother George's), where he was "receiv'd . . . with an emulous desire of his society";⁶¹ visited at his mother's, at Honington; made himself at home at Troston, under the hospitality of Capel Lofft, his patron and editor (this visit was before May 25⁶¹); and, by Sir Charles Bunbury and many people in Suffolk, was given "the welcome of a friend and a countryman".⁶² On May³⁰, after his return to London, he wrote a poem, "On Revisiting the Place of My Nativity, May, 1800".⁶³

Three months later, in August, 1800, Bloomfield, unaccompanied by his family, spent a month at Wakefield Lodge, Whittlebury Forest, Northamptonshire, the principal lodge (built by Claypole, son-in-law to the Protector Cromwell) of several in the Forest, belonging to the Duke of Grafton. Although he was there by the Duke's invitation, he was not a companion at the Duke's table, and, by the poet's own choice that he might be more at liberty, was not much in the Duke's company.

Besides the benevolence of the Duke of Grafton, Bloomfield, while his works were gradually producing a con-

61 F.B., 6th ed. (1802) supp. xxix.

62 1827, pref. xxi.

63 F.B., 6th ed. supp. xxvii, xxxi; 1827, supp. xxi.

siderable income, enjoyed the munificence of many other benevolent friends and admirers,⁶⁴ notably that of the Duke of York, through Captain Sir Charles Bunbury. Their high esteem for the poet's character, and their pleasure in reading his Farmer's Boy, were testified to by Nathan Drake, M.D., of Hadleigh, and his friends Thomas Sherlocke Gooch, Esq., Major Pocklington, Dr. Gibbons, M.D., The Rev. J. Plampin, The Rev. T. Knottesford, The Rev. R. Pritchett, Abraham Reeve, Esq., George Archer, Esq., J. Mills, Esq., Mrs. Trail, and Mrs. Leake, each of whom contributed a guinea.⁶⁵ Others who helped Bloomfield or praised his poetry were Mr. Green, of Ipswich; Mr. Black, of Woodbridge; Mrs. Opie, "The Muse of Lichfield"⁶⁶; William Smith, Esq., of Bury; and Dr. Watson, Bishop of Llandaff.⁶⁷

Charles Lamb, in a letter to Manning, October 16, 1800,⁶⁸ says he has heard George Dyer read the first book of the Farmer's Boy to a group of friends; in another letter to Manning, December 27 of the same year,⁶⁹ he speaks of Dyer's having the book in his room, so that Dyer picked it up instead of a laundress's bill; and in still another letter

64 R.T., pref. and 90-96; Views, 43-44; 1827, pref. xx; Rem., I, xxvii.

65 F.B., 6th ed. supp. xxv; 1824, I, xxviii.

66 1824, I, xxviii, note.

67 F.B., 5th ed. app. 122; Views, 34.

68 Letters, I, 269.

69 Ibid., I, 285 -- "made a dart at Bloomfield's Poems and threw them in agony aside."

to Manning, November 3, 1800, before he had met Bloomfield, he says: "Dyer knows the shoemaker (a damn'd stupid hound in company); but George (Dyer) promises to introduce him indiscriminately to all friends." Lamb's opinion of the poet was changed later, however, for, as he wrote to Bernard Barton, twenty-three years afterwards, September 17, 1823, "He (Bloomfield) dined with me once (There seems to be no evidence as to the exact date), and his manners took me exceedingly."

Bloomfield had been living in 1798, it will be remembered, at 14 Bell Alley, Coleman Street,— whether Great Bell Alley or Little Bell Alley is undetermined, as his letters submitted to the various publishers with the Farmer's Boy manuscript are dated in both ways.⁷⁰ He must within a short time have removed from these lodgings to Muðberry Court, inasmuch as his brother George speaks of his having remained "at his old lodgings" at the latter place after the publication of the poem, and for "some time after he came into his money", when he had begun to attract attention from literary and society people; and indeed, according to George, stayed there till he was literally hunted out of the place by "persons of consideration" who came to see him. Finally Peter Gedge, the printer, gave him half a guinea and advised him to remove to a better situation. Bloomfield accordingly hired a respectable lodging in Short

⁷⁰ 1827, xxiv, xxv.

Street, Moorfields. This was probably in the first part of the year 1801, for on March 12, 1801, Bloomfield makes a note to the effect that sixteen years before, a relative of Daniel de Foe (sic) had been an old man, a shoemaker, in Broker Row, Moorfields.⁷¹ And it is reasonable to suppose that Bloomfield was living at the place on this date. One night the landlord disappeared, leaving the poet to pay nine pounds of rent to the owner of the house, or lose his goods.

From Moorfields he went probably to Chiswell Street, for, although the date is not certain, he was living in Chiswell Street "at the time the Albion Mills were burned", and living so recluse a life, without seeing the newspapers, that it was three days before he knew of the fire. (When five hundred houses were burned at Ratcliffe, he says, he did not know about it till the next night.)⁷² Although the undated note just referred to, occurs in his "Anecdotes and Observations" (as printed in the Remains) on pages succeeding those on which are dated observations made up to October 4, 1802 --- when he was living in the City Road --- there is no reason for supposing that the note was inserted intentionally at this point when his scattered papers were collected and printed; and moreover, from the facts that follow, it seems most likely that his brief residence in Chiswell Street was between that in Short Street, Moore

⁷¹ Rem., II, 51.

⁷² ibid., II, 74.

fields, and that in the City Road.

At any rate, it was after 1800 and before 1802, that the poet removed to "a very small house" and one "with a large Cockney garden", near the Shepherd and Shepherdess, in the City Road, where his father-in-law, Joseph Church, lived with him, at least for a time, and where Bloomfield lived until his income became reduced and he retired to Shefford, Bedfordshire. He retired for a time to Shefford in 1812, returning to London the next April. (The preface to the Banks of Wye is dated at the City Road, London, June 30, 1811.) But he retired there permanently before 1822, as the preface to May Day is dated at Shefford, April 10, 1822,-- though at exactly what time between April 1813 and April 1822 is not certain.⁷⁴

To return to the narrative: on April 1, 1801, Vernor and Hood published a portrait of Bloomfield, drawn by Edridge and engraved by Ridley, used as a frontispiece for Rural Tales, Ballads and Songs, 1802.⁷⁵

In the spring or early summer of 1801, when his daughter Hannah was nine and a half years old (she was born October 25, 1791), the poet, his wife, and Hannah, touched fingers, except for half a yard, around the great oak in Euston Park, belonging to the Duke of Grafton. Bloomfield measured it later, in May, and found the girth of the tree to be fifteen feet.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Rem., II, 70; Views, 16; W.F., 21-29.

⁷⁵ R.T., 5th ed. frontispiece.

⁷⁶ Rem., II, 81.

The occasion of the first measurement of the oak seems to have been that of a visit home, or a visit to his brother at Bury, or a visit to the Duke when he took at least part of his family with him,-- the family by now consisting of three children, Hannah, Mary Anne, and Charles, if we suppose that it was before the birth of Charlotte on April 20, 1801; or four children, if the occasion was after Charlotte's birth, in other words, in May, but early enough to permit Bloomfield to return to London and come back to measure the tree "some time afterwards". On the whole, however, it seems more likely that the first visit was rather early in the spring, say in March, a month before Charlotte's birth.

During the summer of 1801 the poet was occupied in his garden, in watching the habits of the garden spider, and he recorded in his "Anecdotes and Observations" what he saw, under the dates of August 14, 1801, August 20, September 9, and September 14. (October 4, 1802, he jotted down that he had discovered a note on spiders in the Gentleman's Magazine for 1759, a fact which shows that he was still interested in the subject a year after the first observations, and perhaps showing^{clear} that the last three dates mentioned were for 1802, rather than 1801.)

By September 13, 1801, the manuscript of the "Miller's Maid", and probably that of others of the Rural Tales, was in the hands of the editor, Capel Lofft, since Lofft in this volume, published the next year, has a note to the above poem, with the date "at this moment. . . Taunton, 13th

of September, 1801".⁷⁷ The volume was made up mostly of poems written during the fifteen months between the completion and the publication of the Farmer's Boy; the poems of a later date included were "The Widow to her Hour-glass", "The Fakenham Ghost", "Walter and Jane", and some others.⁷⁸ On September 29, 1801, he wrote the preface for the volume, and on October 10, with a postscript, added a forty-line poem on the peace which had just been announced,-- probably the same event concerning which he put down in the "Anecdotes", without date, "This morning heard the heart-cheering, glorious news of peace!"⁷⁹ While the volume was printing, he got his first sight of Wordsworth's ballads in the Lyrical Ballads, and noted the coincidence between the line in Wordsworth's "Idiot Boy":

"That pony's worth his weight in gold,"
and his own line in his "Market Night":

"That Beast is worth his weight in gold."⁸⁰

On August 9, 1802, Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote, in a letter to Southey,⁸¹ that he thought he might write a criticism of Bloomfield satisfactory "to the admirers of the poet Bloomfield and to the friends of the man Bloomfield", but that other things would interfere with his doing so, as evidently turned out to be the case. On the word of "Bloomfield's son, a printer" (probably Charles, at Canterbury), Robert Chambers asserts in his Cyclopaedia of English Lit-

77 1827, 93 and 96, notes.

78 R.T., 5th ed. pref.iii.

79 Rem., II, 70 and 74.

80 Ibid. II, 111.

81 Letters, I, 395.

erature of 1868, that "Mr. Rogers exerted himself to procure a pension for Bloomfield, and Mr. Southey also took much interest in the poet's welfare. ⁸²

It was in 1802 that, according to Mr. Bullen, in the Dictionary of National Biography, Bloomfield received from the Duke of Grafton the post of undersealer in the Seal Office, and later, when he had resigned the office on account of ill health, received from the Duke an allowance of a shilling a day,-- an allowance continued by the Duke's successor (perhaps Hannah's words about the generosity of the Dukes of Grafton in her dedication of the Remains, is a reference to this fact as well as to the many other evidences of the generosity of this family toward the poet). After leaving the Seal Office, Bloomfield then, according to Mr. Bullen, engaged in the book-trade, but soon became bankrupt. ⁸³

Bloomfield mentions his going to Ranelagh to a grand fête in honor of the peace of 1802, ⁸⁴ and also making a visit, in the late summer of the same year, to one of his sisters, at Thetford. On the latter trip he passed Euston Hall, and wrote a poem about Barnham Water, ⁸⁵ a small rivulet he crossed on the road to Thetford from Euston. ⁸⁶

At the anniversary, in 1803, of the birthday of Dr. Jenner, the discoverer of small-pox vaccine, Bloomfield sang a song of his own composition, ⁸⁷ and the next year pub-

⁸² Op. cit. II, 284.

⁸³ Both these circumstances mentioned also by Americana (III) and Chambers's Encyclopaedia (II, 239),-- probably following W.H. Hart's Selections from . . . correspondence.

⁸⁴ W.F., 83-87.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 95.

⁸⁶ Views, 25

⁸⁷ Rem., I, 49.

lished a poem of considerable length, called "Good Tidings" (1804, though it seems to have been printed at least in part before), on the subject of vaccination, recounting his own father's death of the small-pox,-- a poem which pleased Dr. Jenner so much that he presented the author with "a durable and gratifying memorial of his esteem".⁸⁸ Evidently the poet was thoroughly interested in the subject of inoculation, for he quotes Woodville On Inoculation for his notes to "Good Tidings", and makes a note in his "Anecdotes and Observations" concerning the return to England from Egypt of Dr. Walker, who had spread vaccine inoculation in the army and navy.⁸⁹

A clipping the poet made from the British Press concerning the arrival in England of the first vessel built west of the Alleghanies and coming with a cargo of cotton across the Atlantic, shows that he was reading this newspaper at some time near July 12, 1803.⁹⁰

At some time after 1801 Bloomfield recorded in the "Anecdotes" that he had breakfasted with Mr. Rogers on the last Sunday in March, had then visited Mr. Strothard, and had then spent some hours in Kensington Gardens, and gone to a barber's for a shave, before keeping an appointment with the Duke of Grafton at five o'clock.⁹¹ He jotted

⁸⁸ Views, 34.

⁸⁹ Rem., II, 85.

⁹⁰ Ibid., II, 93.

⁹¹ Ibid., II, 90.

down,—whether upon this occasion or another, there is no way of ascertaining,—that he borrowed from Mr. Rogers the first volume of Southey's Thalaba, published 1801.⁹² In another place he says he has seen some drawings owned by S. Rogers, Esq., author of the "Pleasures of Memory".⁹³ Was the latter the Mr. Rogers with whom he breakfasted? The name of Rogers appears four times on the subscription list initiated after the poet's death: S. Rogers, Esq. -- 10 l., Henry Rogers, Esq. -- 10 l., Miss Rogers -- 5 l., Samuel Rogers, Esq. -- 21 l., a total of 46 l.⁹⁴

In December, 1803, Bloomfield composed the poem on "My Old Oak Table",— the table given him by his father-in-law, Joseph Church; the table on which he had written the Farmer's Boy.⁹⁵

The next year, 1804, John Wilson wrote a review of Bloomfield's poems, in his Literary Hours.

In the summer of 1804 the poet presumably took a trip into the country, inasmuch as he published his poem, "Love of the Country", as having been written at Clare Hall, Hertfordshire, in June, 1804.⁹⁶ August 4, 1804, he put down a prophecy as to the future state of the nation (with a note added on New Year's Day, 1806, after the battle of Austerlitz), saying that there would be either a sudden peace, or a powerful continental diversion, or a tremendous attack and war on English shores;— the second turned out to be the fact.⁹⁷

92 Rem., II, 113; Ryland, 333.
 93 Rem., II, 117; Ryland, 323.
 94 Rem., I, 188, 190. See Appendix

95 1827, 157-160.
 96 W.F., 89-91.
 97 Rem., II, 93.

In a poem "To his Wife", dated at Whittlebury Forest, September 16, 1804, he speaks of "rising from rest", as if he were at this time making another visit to the Duke of Grafton.⁹⁸

In the summer of this year, 1804, Bloomfield's mother made her last visit to London, six months before her death, returning home Friday, June 29, on the anniversary of the day on which his mother had brought Bloomfield to the city in 1781. In December, two weeks after suffering a paralytic shock, Mrs. Bloomfield died, in the presence of her son,⁹⁹ and was buried on the last day of the year. The Duke of Grafton erected a tombstone over her grave, with the following inscription written by the Rev. R. Fellowes, curate of the church at Fakenham :

"Beneath this stone are deposited the mortal remains of Elizabeth Glover, who died December 1804. Her Maiden name was Manby, and she was twice married : by her first husband, who lies buried near this spot, she was the mother of six children, the youngest of whom was Robert Bloomfield, the Pastoral Poet. In her household affairs she was a pattern of industry, cleanliness, and every domestic virtue. By her kind, her meek, and inoffensive behaviour, she had conciliated the sincere good-will of all her neighbors and acquaintance. Nor amid the busy cares of time was

⁹⁸ Rem., I, 18.

⁹⁹ 1834, I, xxix, note.

she ever forgetful of eternity. But her religion was no hypocritical service, no vain form of words!!! — It consisted in loving God and keeping his commandments, as they have been made known to us by Jesus Christ.

READER !

Go thou and do likewise."

Bloomfield says that his mother was an excellent spinner,-- the best in the village, using a special kind of wool imported expressly for her.¹⁰⁰ On her last visit to London, during the summer, her portrait had been painted by P. Violet, published by Vernor, Hood and Sharpe, Poultry, and by J. Storer and J. Gregg, Chapel Street, Pentonville, included in the memoir of the poet in the Views in Suffolk, Norfolk and Northamptonshire, 1818.¹⁰¹

In January of 1805, perhaps after attending the funeral of his mother at Honington, Bloomfield evidently was visiting Capel Lofft, inasmuch as he planted two horse-chestnut trees and two oaks at Troston Hall, January, 1805.

Under date of February 11, 1805, Bloomfield's elder sister Elizabeth, who was living at Georgetown, Potomac, in Virginia, wrote to him: "Your poems, etc., make a great bustle here; they are printing again at Baltimore, New York and Philadelphia; and before I left Philadelphia the Governor of the State of Jersey sent for me";-- it

¹⁰⁰ Views, 33-36.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 7 and 35.

seems the Governor wished to find himself related to the poet, for he was of the same name.¹⁰²

In 1805, Bloomfield says in his preface to Hazlewood Hall (1823), he met on the sands at Worthing, a Mr. Goldhawk, of Hazlewood Hall, Leith Hill, Surrey, who invited him to his house, but whom he never saw afterward. The poet, however, used the gentleman's name and the name of his residence, in the drama mentioned.¹⁰³

Before 1806, for the recovery of his health, the poet visited Shooter's Hill, eight miles from London, on the highroad to Dover.¹⁰⁴

Before March 15, 1806, was published Bloomfield's "third attempt" (that is, the Farmer's Boy, 1800; and Rural Tales, 1802, not counting "Good Tidings", 1804, which was also "partially known to the world" before 1806¹⁰⁵), Wild Flowers; or Pastoral and Local Poetry, a volume (written between^{the} publication of Rural Tales, 1802, and 1806) including "Good Tidings" and "The Horkey", the latter of which was published separately.¹⁰⁶ The date of March 15, 1806, is attached to a memoir of the poet written by E. W. Brayley, which appeared as the first part of the Views in Suffolk, Norfolk and Northamptonshire, published in 1818. This "memoir" written seventeen years before the poet's death and published five years before it (if 1818 was its first appear-

102 Views, 19.

103 H.H., preface.

104 W.F., 75, 79; Views, 47.

105 Ibid., pref. ix.

106 Ibid..

ance) perhaps gave rise to the rumor of the poet's death which he mentions in his preface dated April 10, 1822, to the second edition of May Day, 1822 (first edition 1817).¹⁰⁷

One of Bloomfield's interests in life outside his trade and besides his interest in literature, was his interest in music. He composed verses to be sung; he composed the music for several of his songs; he sang them himself; and finally, he was keenly interested in Aeolian harps,-- their construction and the theory of their operation. Although it is not certain when he built his first Aeolian harp, there are many indications of how much he cared for and thought about this instrument. For example, in the first volume of the Remains, there is a poem called "Lines addressed to an Aeolian Harp, constructed by the Author of the Farmer's Boy", and written by Maria Hester Park (probably the wife or daughter of T. Park), dated Hampstead, March 1806.¹⁰⁸ W. Holloway, of Sheffield, in a letter written to the poet's daughter in 1824 (see page), says that he "saw Bloomfield once at the Shepherd and Shepherdess in London, and bespoke an Aeolian Harp of him".¹⁰⁹ Again there is the poet's own unpublished pamphlet (printed in the Remains), called Nature's Music, "consisting of extracts from several authors; with practical observations, and poetical testimonies, in honour of the harp of Aeolus".¹¹⁰ T. Park himself wrote some verses called "Rumination over an Aeolian Harp made by the late au-

107 M.D. 2nd ed. pref.

108 Rem., I, 140.

109 Ibid., app. 180.

110 Ibid., I, 93-143.

thor of the Farmer's Boy"(dated October, 1823), with a note by Park or Weston: "This was the second or third he constructed, and is made in the simplest manner".¹¹¹ Bloomfield wrote a poem on the same subject.¹¹² And finally we have Weston's note in the Remains, to the effect that "Bloomfield was an admirer of, and manufactured many curious Aedlian harps."¹¹³

In the summer of 1807, with a party of friends in Gloucestershire, and by their invitation, the poet made a tour down the River Wye and through a part of South Wales, keeping a journal of the trip, and four years later (1811) publishing^{ad} a long poem of four books on the subject. Some word as to who the party of friends were, is the fact that the poem, the Banks of Wye, was dedicated: "To Thomas Lloyd Baker, Esq. of Stout's Hill, Uley, and his excellent Lady; and Robert Bransby Cooper, Esq. of Ferney Hill, Dursley, in the county of Gloucester, and all the members of his family, this journal is dedicated, with sentiments of high esteem, and a lively recollection of past pleasures by their humble servant, the Author". Robert Cooper drew the pictures for the illustration of the poem. The trip gave Bloomfield his first sight of mountains. He records in the journal that the party left Dursley at ten in the morning, August 17.¹¹⁴

111 Rem., I, 185.

112 Ibid., I, 62.

113 Ibid., I, app. 168.

114 Ibid., II, 6.

The Poems of 1827 have a preface by Bloomfield, dated at the City Road, June, 1808, referring to "this new and cheaper edition", words which lead one to suppose that perhaps the collected poems appearing in the edition of 1827 (with no indication on the title-page that they are not the first edition) were published in that form first in 1808.¹¹⁵

The next year, 1809, saw the appearance of Byron's estimation of Bloomfield in English Bards and Scotch Reviewers (see page 122).

March, 1809, is the date affixed by the poet to a preface to the Rural Tales and Wild Flowers in the edition of the Poems of 1827.¹¹⁶

In the same month, but a year later, he recorded that Mr. Arnold, the painter, of Buckingham Place, near Fitzroy Square, had an extract from a parish register, telling how a ballad had been made from a tragic incident which occurred,— perhaps an indication of an interest in ballads as such, or else a note that he thought he might make use of in a later ballad of his own.¹¹⁷ He also told how on a hot night near election time he drank some ale at a public house in the City Road, and was taken for a government spy by the other men drinking there and talking politics.¹¹⁸ The preface to the Banks of Wye, published in 1811, is dated at the City Road, London, June 30, 1811. It was at some time be-

115 1827, pref. iv.

116 Ibid., pref. to W.F. and R.T., lxxvi.

117 Rem., II, 94.

118 Ibid., 104, II.

tween this date and 1823, that his income from his writings diminished, and he retired permanently to Shefford, Bedfordshire, to remain there until his death.

But before reviewing the events of this last period of the poet's life, it may be well to record some undated glimpses of what he must have been doing and of the friends and acquaintances he must have had during the middle period of his prosperity.

Undated Glimpses of Bloomfield's Life.

There are various undated glimpses of Bloomfield's life, and references to various friends, to which no definite place may be assigned, so that I may group them here together.

Bloomfield once added to his trade of shoemaker, that of general repairer, when he repaired a bust of Buonaparte for Mrs. Palmer,¹¹⁹ whom Weston mentioned later as having received a letter from the poet.¹²⁰ He once composed a poem of eighty-eight lines, on "Emma's Kid", and sent it with "a pair of kid -leather shoes, which the Earl of Buchan had requested me to make with my own hands for his lady, then at Dryburgh Abbey".¹²¹ He sent some verse to Mr. Sharpe (probably the publisher, of Vernor, Hood and Sharpe) as an apology for not dining with him. (He mentions in the verses a common acquaintance named Doeg.)¹²² Again, he sent some verses to "a lady who was going to a ball", with the remark that his heart "danced thirty summers ago".¹²³

He wrote another poem, with the title, "Five Months I will getting she Married" (sic), on a subject suggested to him by this curious saying of a young man who occasionally called on him, who was born deaf and dumb but was educated at the Asylum in the Grange Road, and was able to speak a little, though indistinctly.¹²⁴ He makes mention of a certain Charles Jones, an old shopmate of his.¹²⁵ In another place

119 Rem., I, 29.

120 Ibid., II, post 215.

121 Ibid., II, 114.

122 Ibid., I, 61.

123 Ibid., I, 69.

124 Ibid., I, 76.

125 Ibid., II, 82.

he makes a note of the fact that he had lately dined in company with Mr. Peel and his brother, who had brought from America a skeleton of a mammoth, the dimensions of which the poet contemplated with astonishment and wrote down; he says that Mr. Peel and his brother were both clever fellows, and masters of their study.¹²⁶ In still another place he mentions that he dined with a Miss Johnson at the White Hart Inn, Fetter Lane, Miss Johnson having been personally acquainted with Burns, and having an amusing anecdote to tell of him.¹²⁷

On of the undated glimpses of the poet's life is afforded by his poem called "A First View of the Sea" (cf. his "Address to the English Channel"), a view Bloomfield says he had from the brow of Chankbury, South Downs, Weald of Sussex.¹²⁸ Since Bloomfield made a short tour to Canterbury and Dover in June, 1814,¹²⁹ perhaps that date may be assigned to these poems, on the assumption that the tour may have extended southward into Sussex.

A further glimpse of the poet's life is afforded by his statement that he saw "in May", for the first time, the art exhibition at Somerset House.¹³⁰ Does this show that he had cultivated or had an interest in art as well as in music and literature?

126 Rem., II, 75.

127 Ibid., I, 78.

128 Ibid., I, 74, 81.

129 D.N.B., loc. cit.

130 Rem., II, 116.

Bloomfield's Friends, Relatives, and Family.

Besides the friends of the poet, already referred to, there were others; and of these the closest and of longest standing were C. Bloomfield, Esq., Thomas Park of Hampstead, Thomas Inskip of Shefford, Capel Lofft of Troston, and Joseph Weston of London. The first was the man who helped Bloomfield's brother George and his family (as will appear in the next paragraph), and who later advised Bloomfield's daughter Hannah after the poet's death. The second evidently carried on a somewhat extensive correspondence with Lofft, for he remarked at the time of the publication of the Remains, that he had eight letters from Lofft, relating chiefly to Bloomfield.¹³¹ The third, Thomas Inskip, speaks of his "long acquaintance with Mr. Bloomfield, and their frequent conversations on the fortunes of the Farmer's Boy".¹³² The fourth, Capel Lofft, a lawyer and literary man, was the poet's patron and first editor, as well as the editor of most of his works. The fifth, Joseph Weston, edited the Remains and looked after the affairs of the poet after the latter's decease.

In addition to the friends of whom the poet makes frequent mention, his relatives and family occupy a large place in his own account of his life and in the accounts of his life written by others, namely, his brothers and sisters and his children, whose fortunes may here be glanced at.

¹³¹ Rem., II, app. 208.

¹³² Ibid. II, app. 209.

The kindness of his brother George in taking care of him and teaching him his trade when he was a boy, Bloomfield in later years amply repaid. He occasionally assisted George's family for more than twenty years; and at one time he kept George's son at Shefford for fourteen months (though he had trouble in supporting his own family), when the boy was ill of rheumatic fever brought on by exposure. The boy had been hunting work after completing his apprenticeship with a tinman of Bury, and had wandered to Gloucester, Burford, Whitney, and Oxford; he later died of enlargement of the heart.¹³³ Moreover, besides the direct aid which the poet gave to George and the latter's son, the poet's success brought George to the notice of C. Bloomfield, Esq., who thereupon took George and his family under his protection. In a letter dated June 9, 1824, George says that this gentleman's bounty is nearly feeding him, and that but for the gentleman's aid he should probably go hungry or be in the workhouse.¹³⁴ George "died in extreme poverty, as he had lived", June 29, 1831.¹³⁵

The poet's brother Isaac, it seems, had been a gay lad in his youth, and on a footing with the young farmers at the village of Homington, but later was weighed down with a family of nine children. Robert took Isaac and the latter's

¹³³ Rem., I, pref. xxviii, note.

¹³⁴ Ibid., II, app. 198.

¹³⁵ D.N.B., loc. cit.

family to London, and set Isaac up in a shop. Then again, when this scheme failed, the poet, because he wanted to keep Isaac's family from the parish, sent them all back to Honington, kept the boys in clothes, and gave the family free rent in his cottage for twenty years,-- a rent amounting, according to Weston, to ~~sixty~~ pounds.¹³⁶

Finally, the poet often gave assistance to, and tried to keep from trouble, his brother Nathaniel, who had thirteen or fourteen children.¹³⁷ Bloomfield's sister Elizabeth had gone to America and was living at Georgetown, Potomac, when she wrote the letter already quoted, written February 11, 1805.

With regard to the poet's children, his daughter Hannah seems to have taken charge of the family fortunes after her father's death, and to have done her best to find support for the widow and the three other children surviving.

The poet's eldest son, Charles, the lame boy, to whom he dedicated Wild Flowers, followed his father in trying his hand at writing. Charles wrote several verse letters in the "Bird and Insect's Post-Office" (published in the Remains) : Letter VIII, "From the Gander to the Turkey Cock"; Letter X, "The Bluebottle Fly to the Grasshopper"; and Letter XI, "The Glowworm to the Humble-Bee".¹³⁸ He also wrote a poem, "On hearing the Cuckoo at Midnight, May 1, 1822",¹³⁹ and four other poems : "Sonnet to the Stream" (July 1, 1823), "To a

136 Rem., II, app. 198.

137 Ibid., II, 200.

138 Ibid., II, 148-153.

139 Ibid., II, 167.

Sigh", "Morning", and "Christmas", the last being addressed to his sister Hannah, and dated at Canterbury, December 30, 1823.¹⁴⁰ It was probably Charles to whom Robert Chambers referred in the Cyclopaedia of English Literature (1842-44¹⁴¹), as a son of Robert Bloomfield's who was a printer.

140 Rem., I, 87-92.

141 Cousins, 78.

Sixth Period, 1814-1823. Last Years -- Last Publications --
Death.

Of exact facts and details of the last period of Bloomfield's life there are few, except that his health was declining and his income being reduced; and that he published three new volumes.

In June, 1814, he made a short tour to Canterbury and Dover.¹⁴²

In 1815 he published A History of Little Davy's New Hat, a trifle for children, which was still popular, says Weston, in 1824.¹⁴³

Two years afterwards, in 1817, Bloomfield published his volume of poems called May Day with the Muses.

The next year, 1818, was published the Views in Suffolk, Norfolk and Northamptonshire, containing the memoir of the poet written by E. W. Brayley, March 15, 1806. It may have been this "memoir" which, as I have before suggested (see page 35), gave rise to the rumor of Bloomfield's death which the poet refers to in his preface (dated April 10, 1822) to the second edition of May Day, 1822.

In August, 1822, the poet wrote some lines "hastily, while in King-street, Margate and given to Mr. Freeman of Minster."¹⁴⁴

The following year, 1823, the last of the poet's life, he published the three-act village drama, Hazelwood

¹⁴² D.N.B., loc. cit.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., I, 38.

¹⁴³ Rem., II, 121. D.N.B. says it was published 1817.

Hall, the preface bearing the date of April 12, 1823, at Shefford, Bedfordshire; and on June 25, 1824, two months before his death, he composed a song, "Flowers of the Mead", included in the Remains.¹⁴⁵

During the last twenty years of his life, that is from 1803 to 1823, the poet was incapable of bodily labor or hard exertion.¹⁴⁶ And not only had his health failed, but his income also, which for a time had been considerable, had waned. His daughter states that "From an examination of their (the booksellers') accounts delivered to my father for nine years past (that is, 1814 or 1815 to 1823 or 1824), our average income from these sales has not reached 60 l a year".¹⁴⁷ Again, Bloomfield, while his income was good, had not saved for the future; and, although the only luxury he ever indulged himself in was a Cockney garden, and although he never kept a servant in the house, he had not shown the "cold, prudential caution of men of the world".¹⁴⁸ In other words, when he had money he was very generous with it in helping out his brothers and their families, as I mentioned above, so that finally he had no money, but a considerable amount of debts (see page 52).

In the summer of 1823 Bloomfield was shown a poem written by his own son Charles. Just after, "his own intellectual spark was extinguished". "A few days after, his reason became obscured, and in less than three weeks he died".¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Rem., I, 39.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., II, app. 200.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., II, 180.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., II, app. 201.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., I, 85.

Robert Bloomfield died at the age of fifty-seven, at Shefford, Bedfordshire, August 19, 1823, leaving a widow and four children: Hannah, aged thirty-two; Mary Anne, aged thirty; Charles, aged twenty-five; and Charlottes, aged twenty-two.¹⁵⁰ His portrait, drawn by Edridge and engraved by Ridley, was published April 1, 1802, by Vernor, Hood, and Sharpe, Poultry, as a frontispiece to Rural Tales.¹⁵¹

Joseph Weston, the poet's friend and the editor of the Remains, gives the following account of the end of the poet's life: ¹⁵²

"Many erroneous accounts having appeared in print, respecting the melancholy close of poor Bloomfield's days; I feel it a duty to anticipate future designs so far, as is necessary to remove the wrong impressions thus made, by the following statement of facts.

"The health of Mr. Bloomfield, which had always been delicate, declined rapidly through the last five years of his life. His general debility was aggravated by very painful and almost constant head-achs, which nearly deprived him of sight.

"He made several ineffectual attempts to place some of his children in situations where they could maintain themselves; but owing in part to their ill health, and in part to a constitutional timidity, which seems to characterise the whole family of the Bloomfields, he succeeded with only one.

"During the last nine years, his regular income (exclusive of a few trifling presents) did not average one hundred pounds per annum, and upon this income, five weakly persons had to subsist, exclusive of the youth, mentioned at the end of my preface (George's son.--See page 42).

"It cannot, therefore, excite much surprise if this income proved insufficient, or that he was unable to clear accounts with his creditors, as he had formerly done. This, however, was the most painful circumstance of all, for he had so great a dread of being treated with incivility, as actually

150 D.N.B., loc. cit.

151 R.T., 5th ed. 1806, frontespiece.

152 Remains T. R. Spence, Bk 179 +

to abstain from the exercise necessary to his health, lest in his rambles he might encounter the altered looks, or be annoyed by the importunity of his creditors.

"In this dilemma he applied for assistance to a few of his friends — and those who have tried this experiment, will readily judge with what success:— some noble exceptions, however, there were to the general rule; to whom full justice shall be done in due time, and place.

"At length, as a last resource, he resolved to sell his cottage at Honington, the paternal estate in which he was born, and endeared to the whole family by many a tender recollection. The sale was effected; but certain objections arising on the part of the purchaser, as to the validity of the title, he found himself involved in new vexations, and in point of fact, never received one sixpence of the money. ¹⁵²

"These accumulating misfortunes, at length depressed his spirits so much that about six months before his death, he began to complain of great confusion of memory, and felt as if his understanding was entangled. He actually wrote to Bury to certify himself as to the existence of his brother George; of which fact he could not be satisfied by any other means.

"About three weeks before his death, this hallucination had so much increased, as to leave but few intervals of perfect recollection. He was not, however, 'for years,' nor even at all, in such a state as to 'render his death consolatory to his connexions,' as some have unkindly affirmed. ¹⁵³ This event, on the contrary, is in every way a most calamitous circumstance to his family — and to his friends will long remain a subject of inconsolable regret. Mr. Bloomfield died at Shefford, in Bedfordshire, on Tuesday August 19th, 1823, in the 57th year of his age."

Mr. Weston further remarks (1824), as to this poet who thus died in want: "I have been informed by persons who travel into every quarter of the country, that almost the only books they are frequently able to find, are the Bible and the poems of Bloomfield." ¹⁵⁴

152 His heirs received 70 l. for it, June, 1824.

153 New Inter. Enc., II, 416: he "died nearly insane".

154 Rem., I, pref. xvii.

Favorable and Unfavorable Criticism after Bloomfield's Death.

The very next month after the poet's death, there appeared an attack upon him and his religion, by one "bloated with malice of twenty-three years' concoction", in the Monthly Magazine for September, 1823,-- an attack explained by Weston as due to the writer's envy as an author, his jealousy as a bookseller, his regret at missing the prize of the Farmer's Boy manuscript when it was offered to him (though Weston believes he did not actually see the manuscript),¹⁵⁵ his desire to say something new as a "periodical pander", his feeling of security in speaking against the dead, and finally his contempt for the poor and his fawning respect for the pockets of the rich.¹⁵⁶ The charges seem to have been that Bloomfield took the manuscript of his Farmer's Boy to the editor of the Monthly Magazine in 1798, when he was trying to find a publisher; that the editor advised him not to waste his time in writing poetry; that the editor advised him to consult Capel Lofft and gave him a letter of introduction; and that Bloomfield, in the heyday of his subsequent popularity, quoted with indignation the editor's remark that he should "stick to his last".¹⁵⁷ Just what the charges were as to the poet's religion, is not clear. At any rate, both Thomas Park and Thomas Inskip testified to

155 Rem., I, pref. xxv, note.

156 Ibid., I, pref. xxiv.

157 Ibid., II, app. 205.

Weston that they had never heard Bloomfield express resentment against the editor of the Monthly Magazine or mention that the editor had advised him to "stick to his last". Inskip also believed the poet was not personally known to the editor.¹⁵⁸

But aside from this attack, Bloomfield found at once many loyal supporters after his death, as he had found in life. In the same month as that in which the attack appeared, Bernard Barton published a poem of a hundred and twenty-eight lines in praise of Bloomfield,--¹⁵⁹ the poem to which Lamb referred in a letter to Barton, September 17, 1823.¹⁶⁰ The Remains contains also the following tributes, in verse unless otherwise indicated:¹⁶¹ one by John Dawes Worgan of Bristol (the author died July 25, 1809, at the age of nineteen, his poems being posthumously published in 1810); one by Fortescue Hitchins, dated March 25, 1802; one by "W.H.", addressed to Lofft as the editor of the Farmer's Boy; one in dialect by Roger Coulter of Dorsetshire (pseudonym?); a sonnet by Capel Lofft, dated at Cambridge, February 2, 1804, addressed to the poet on the occasion of the birth of the latter's son (see page 13); one by "H"; one by a "journeyman carpenter, name unknown"; an impromptu by T. Park, Esq.; a prose letter from "two shopmates", James Devlin and John O'Neill, authors of "The Lyre of St. Crispin"--dated June 12, 1820; a sonnet, evidently by the same; a poem

158 Rem., II, app. 205-209.

159 Ibid., I, 175.

160 Letters, II, 133.

161 Rem., I, app. 147-186.

addressed to "Robert", by W. Holloway; another to the memory of Bloomfield, by the above as an old friend and neighbor; a letter to Hannah Bloomfield, the poet's daughter, dated Sheffield, May 7, 1824, from James Montgomery, enclosing an extract from an article on Bloomfield's poetry published by him "in a periodical work in the year 1811"; an epitaph by "S.W.", dated Shefford, June 15, 1824; and finally, a poem by T. Park, on an Aeolian harp made by Bloomfield, dated 1823. A tombstone was erected to the poet in Campton Churchyard, Bedfordshire.¹⁶²

¹⁶² D.N.B., loc. cit.

The Fortunes of Bloomfield's Family after his Death. — The
Remains.

There now remains to consider the affairs of Bloomfield's family after his death, the steps taken to alleviate their financial distress by a sale, by a subscription, and by the collection of the poet's writings by Joseph Weston; and finally, the mention of some of the poet's writings which seem never to have been preserved.

On account of the circumstances already referred to in Chapter IX, Bloomfield's family was left in distress after his death following upon his long illness and physical incapacity.¹⁶³ From a statement made by Hannah Bloomfield to Miss Weston, March 3, 1824, some six months after the poet had died, the following facts appear: Bloomfield's income for the last nine years had not reached sixty pounds a year; there seemed at this time to be no hope of receiving anything from the sale of the cottage at Honington, as already noted (though, as will appear presently, the matter was finally settled and the money paid); the highest estimated value of the family's household property and books was not above seventy pounds; their gross amount of debts to date was rather more than two hundred pounds; their booksellers, Messrs. Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, had already, in January of the preceding year, advanced them fifty pounds, in anticipation of most of their annual income, and a part

¹⁶³ Rem., I, app. 187.

of this was still due; with this fifty pounds they had made some payments to the creditors, contrary to the advice of Weston, who spoke for a composition; their debts were still increasing; and they wanted to pay their debts and in some way find a living without selling the half-copyrights on Bloomfield's poems, which they held.¹⁶⁴

Accordingly, as a first means of getting themselves out of financial difficulties, they sold the household goods at auction at Shefford, in June, 1824. At the sale the following gifts to the family were made:¹⁶⁵ a certain gentleman (name withheld) bought the "old oak table" (on which Bloomfield wrote out the Farmer's Boy, and concerning which he had written a poem) for the handsome price of thirteen pounds, and gave it back to the family as an heirloom; in a similar way another gentleman bought, for 11. 1s, a pewter dish, which he also presented to the family; Dr. Drake of Hadleigh sent spontaneously a subscription of 13 l. 2s 6d raised among his Hadleigh friends; and a certain "lady" (who wrote to Hannah that "some liberal and handsome gifts have recently been made at your sale"¹⁶⁶) bought some drawings at a price much above their value. (The family bought in themselves the manuscripts of the poems, to avoid dispute as to the right of publishing them.) Yet in spite of the fact that, on the advice of Shefford friends, the sale was held so soon after the poet's death, to take advantage of popular sympathy "while it was warm", and in

164: Rem., II, app. 180.

165: Ibid., II, app. 211.

166: Ibid., II, app. 210.

spite of the gifts made, the clear proceeds of the sale amounted to only eighty pounds, so that when payments had been made to creditors and expenses had been paid for the conveyance of the family to London to seek means of employment for Hannah, only forty pounds were left to divide among five of them, to support them for two years,¹⁶⁷ for payment of the hundred pounds the publishers had advanced, would eat up the income for at least that length of time.

The second means employed to assist the family of Robert Bloomfield from their "considerably embarrassed" ¹⁶⁸ circumstances, was a subscription managed by Mr. Rogers, Thomas Park, and Joseph Weston, who had circulars distributed among Bloomfield's friends in all parts of the country,¹⁶⁹ -- a subscription list which had reached a total of 323 l. 4s at the time of the publication of the Remains (see Appendix B for a list of the contributors and the amounts of their contributions). "Respectable persons" in the principal towns were to collect donations and send a list at the end of each month to Messrs. Rogers and Company, Lombard Street, who would publish a list of new subscribers to the fund, in the Morning Herald during the first week in each month. Donations were to be received by the following:¹⁷⁰

Mr. Murray, Albemarle Street
Messrs. Longman and Company, Paternoster Row
Messrs. Baldwin and Company, Paternoster Row
Messrs. Rogers, Towgood and Company, bankers,
Clement's Lane, Lombard Street
Thomas Inskip, Shefford, Bedfordshire

167 Rem., II, app. 213.

168 Ibid., II, 189.

169 Ibid., II, app. 213.

170 Ibid., I, app. 187-190.

take it".¹⁷³ To this Mr. Weston replied, April 18, 1824, that in regard to the memoir, he feared the latter events of Bloomfield's life would hardly interest the public sufficiently to pay for having them printed;¹⁷⁴ but when he wrote to George Bloomfield from Shefford two months later, June 5, 1824, he said that the memoir of his "much lamented friend" had already received the approval of Mr. Park; and that he was about to send it to the publishers for theirs.¹⁷⁵ The Remains was probably published in the early part of July, 1824, inasmuch as Hannah Bloomfield writes, in a letter to a "lady", dated from Providence Row, London, July 5, 1824, that the Remains is to appear "in a few days",¹⁷⁶ and inasmuch as Weston's postscript to the second volume is dated London, July 7, 1824.¹⁷⁷

As a result of these various means of raising money for the family, every penny of debt was finally paid off, thanks to the efforts of Weston. It was by his intercession that the publishers agreed to advance the hundred pounds for twelve months on the anticipation of two years' income from the sales of the poems; by his advice that the sale of the household goods was held; and by his influence that the creditors, most of whom he knew personally, agreed to a composition.¹⁷⁸ For advising the sale at Shefford rather than at London, he gives seven reasons: the small value of the property -- estimated at not more than 70 l; the difficulty of proving in London that the goods really

173 Rem., II, 185.

174 Ibid., II, 187.

175 Ibid., II, 195.

176 Ibid., II, app. 212.

177 Ibid., post. 216.

178 Ibid., II, app. 189-192.

belonged to the deceased; the uncertainty of London sales, and the certainty of the expense of conveyance thither; the propriety of convincing the creditors that the whole of the property was offered for sale; the desirability of giving the creditors an opportunity for preventing the sale of articles at prices below their value; the inconvenience to himself of superintending the sale in London, and at the same time of arranging the poet's writings for the Remains, and also of arranging his affairs in the country; and finally his reliance upon public sympathy to supply the imperfection of his own arrangements. 179

With regard to accepting a composition, the creditors were influenced not only by Weston, personally, but by the consideration that they had no legal claim upon Bloomfield's estate until one year after his death, and that even then, as Mr. Baldwin the publisher pointed out, the firm of which Mr. Baldwin was senior member, had the prior claim. At any rate, a composition was made, for seven shillings on the pound (35% — 35¢ on the dollar), with the doubtful prospects of a division of the proceeds of the sale of the Homington cottage, a matter which up to this time had never been settled. (If the hundred pounds advanced by the publishers was used for the settlement with the creditors presented above, the debt would amount, by computation, to something like 285 l. 8s 11d) It was after this composition that the sale at Shefford took place, and that the family removed to London, with the determination by their efforts

eventually to pay off the whole debt.

Fortunately, they finally received seventy pounds for the cottage, through the hands of Mr. Weston, June 22; and when Hannah wrote a letter to her brother Charles, from Providence Row, London, the next day, June 23, 1824, probably a month before the publication of the Remains, she was able to tell him that at last they were free of debt; that the creditors had not lost a penny; and that, as mentioned above, they still had forty pounds to divide among the five members of the family, to help them with their self-support for the ensuing two years.¹⁸⁰

¹⁸⁰ Rem., II, app. 191-2.

Bloomfield's Unpublished Writings.

In conclusion, as to the writings of Bloomfield uncollected or unpublished, or not certainly published, there is first the selection of twenty-four of the poet's songs set to music (to be selected from a list of thirty-two : from Rural Tales, 6; from Wild Flowers, 2; from May Day, 1; from the Banks of Wye, 4; from Hazelwood Hall, 3; from the Remains, 16), to be published in folio by subscription, price 20s, as soon as a hundred copies should be subscribed for, and to be printed by G^Ulding and Company, Soho Square. At the time the project was announced, on the last pages of the Remains, fourteen of the songs had already been set to music : by Bloomfield himself, 1; by Bloomfield and Isaac Bloomfield, 1; by Isaac Bloomfield, 5; by R.W. Evans, 3; and by Miss Nina d'Aubigny, R.A. Firth, each one; two others being set to the music of "The Yorkshireman" and "Ligoram Cosh". Four of these songs, with words and music, were inserted as extra sheets at the end of the Remains : "The Dawning of Day" (Remains), music by R. W. Evans; "The Maid of Landoga" (Banks of Wye), music by R. W. Evans; "Rosy Hannah" (Rural Tales), music by Isaac Bloomfield; and "Love in a Shower" (Hazelwood Hall), music by R. A. Firth.¹⁸¹ There is no evidence of this volume's having actually been published.

181 Rem., prospectus, 191-2.

In his "Reflections", collected in the Remains, Bloomfield asks himself why he shouldn't gather all the accounts of shoemakers who have figured in the history of the world, for example, one of Secretary Craggs, who was "a chip of leather", and the old story of St. Crispin, which he might verify. ("I wonder nobody has yet ridiculed me and my garret poetry," he says.)¹⁸² There is nothing to show that Bloomfield ever carried out his project.

Thomas Park, writing to Weston from Hampstead, June 23, 1824, when the latter was collecting the Remains, says that he has never heard of some verses of Bloomfield's entitled "Perplexity", or of an essay of the poet's occasioned by some insurrection in America (for example, the War of 1812?), implying that Weston had heard of them himself, and had asked about them.¹⁸³ The poem and essay mentioned do not appear in any of the poet's works.

Weston himself says, in the preface to the Remains, that he has withheld a few fragments, so that he may get more correct copies of them for publication in his projected "Memoir and Correspondence" of the poet. He says he has been promised letters of Bloomfield's addressed to the Duke of Grafton, Mrs. Palmer, and Capel Lofft; and he requests friends having letters of the poet's, to send the letters to Hannah Bloomfield, at 12 Providence Row, Finsbury Square, London.¹⁸⁴ There is, therefore, the question as to whether these fragments and letters, and other letters, were ever

¹⁸² Rem., II, 103.

¹⁸³ ibid., II, app. 208.

recovered or published, and as to whether the "Memoir and Correspondence" was ever published. There are some letters of Bloomfield's in the British Museum (Add. MSS. 28265-8);¹⁸⁵ and A. H. Bullen, in his biography of the poet in the Dictionary of National Biography, the best modern source of information about the poet's life, lists a volume of Selections from the Correspondence of Robert Bloomfield, by W. H. Hart, published in London in 1870, a volume the *present* ~~author~~ ^{writer} has found thus far unobtainable.

The further sources of information about Bloomfield, as cited by Bullen, in addition to sources already consulted in the preparation of the present discussion, and in addition to the British Museum Manuscripts and Hart's Selections from the Correspondence (1870) mentioned above, are Davy's Suffolk Collections,¹⁸⁶ and Hone's Table Book.¹⁸⁷

The only facts stated by A. H. Bullen for which the writer of this paper has found no source in the references listed, are that of Bloomfield's having been given the office of undersealer in the Seal Office, with a pension continued by the Duke of Grafton's successor, and his having resigned the office on account of ill health, and entered the book business and failed; that of his having retired to Shefford for a time in 1813, returning to London the next April; that of his having made a short tour to Canterbury and Dover in 1814; that of his having left a widow and four children

185 D.N.B., loc. cit. 187 Op. cit., 801-5.
 186 Op. cit., xci. 129-31; xciv. 25-40.

to survive him; that of his having a tombstone erected to him in Campton Churchyard, Bedfordshire; and finally, that of his brother George's having died in extreme poverty, June 29, 1831.

Part II.

Bloomfield's Works

Bloomfield's WorksIntroduction.

The list of editions of Bloomfield's works included in this section is, so far as the author can learn, the first ever compiled.

The purpose of the section is to present a concise discussion of each of the poet's volumes, as regards its contents, form, and general characteristics, followed by a list of all editions of each work concerning which information could be secured from the following libraries and book catalogues :

Abbreviation :

Boston Public Library	"B"
Columbia University Library	"Co"
Harvard College Library	"H"
Yale University Library	"Y"
University of Chicago Library	"C"
University of Michigan Library	"M"
St. Louis Public Library	"L"
University of Missouri Library	"Mo"
Private Library of A.H.R. Fairchild	"F"
Book Catalogues in University of Missouri Library	"Ca"
Loundes' Bibliographer's Manual	
London Catalogue of Books	
Leypoldt's American Catalogue	
American Price Catalogue	

A. Separate Works.

1. The Farmer's Boy.

This poem, as the title-page indicates, is "a rural poem". It consists of a clear, simple, and graphic description of farm life as it appeared to Bloomfield when he was employed between the ages of eleven and fifteen, on his uncle William Austin's farm, at Sapiston, Sussex. It is therefore a description of farm life as it appeared to the Farmer's Boy, named Giles, the character which the author assumed for the purposes of the poem. The whole poem of 1512 lines of rhymed iambic couplets, is divided into four books of practically equal length, under the names of the four seasons: Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter. The contents may be understood by the "argument" of each book, as the arguments were inserted by Lofft in the early editions:

Spring.

Invocation. Seed time. Harrowing. Morning walks. Milking. The dairy. Suffolk cheese. Spring coming forth. Sheep fond of changing. Lambs at play. The butcher.

Summer.

Turnip sowing. Wheat ripening. Sparrows. Insects. The sky-lark. Reaping. Harvest-field. Dairy maid. Labors of the barn. The gander. Night. A thunder-storm. Harvest-home. Reflections.

Autumn.

Acorns. Hogs in the wood. Wheat-sowing. Church. Village girls. The mad-girl. The bird-boy's hut. Disappointments. Reflections. Euston Hall. Fox-

hunting. Old Trouncer. Long nights. A welcome to Winter.

Winter.

Tenderness to cattle. Frozen turnips. The cow-yard. Night. Farm-house. Fireside. Farmer's advice and instruction. Nightly cares of the stable. Dobbin. The post-horse. Sheep-stealing dogs. Walks occasioned thereby. The Ghost. Lamb-time. Returning Spring. Conclusion.

Because the poem is written from a boy's point of view, not only is the description clear, vivid, and detailed, and without the artificial or conventional devices of the classical pastoral, but the poem takes on an air of freshness and hopefulness,-- a farm life of many hardships and privations, but filled on the whole with much joy and hope, and surrounded with an air of rustic piety and whole-heartedness. The versification is rather regular, and the couplets and even the single lines thoroughly end-stopped. An examination of the number of syllables in the rhyme-words reveals the fact that only 185 lines end with anything but a monosyllable, and that only twenty-four in the whole poem end with a word of more than two syllables,-- a fact which may explain the somewhat monotonous, though often musical effect of the verse. (See Appendix C for a detailed discussion of this.)

Separate lists of the English and the American¹ editions follow.

¹ The author had thus far been unable to learn anything of Bloomfield's vogue in America, beyond what the letter of Elizabeth Bloomfield may show (see page 33), and beyond the facts as to the many American editions.

The Farmer's Boy.

a. English Editions :

- 1st. Illustrated with wood-cuts by Bewick. Published by Vernor and Hood, London, March, 1800. Mentioned by Lofft, Weston, Bullen, etc. No copy in any of the libraries listed. Ca
- 3rd. London, 1800. M
- 4th. London, 1801. H Co
- 4th. Same as above, Vernor and Hood, 128 p. pl. 16cm. Privately (?) bound with Rural Tales, 5th ed. London, 1806. Printed by T. Bensley. Announcement at end, of "Poems" by the same author. F
- 5th. London, 1801, printed for Vernor and Hood, by T. Bensley. F
- 6th. Wood engraving by A. Anderson. London, Vernor and Hood. xxxii, 128 p. pls. Small 8vo. 1802 (Mo has xxxix) B Mo
- 7th. Dublin, Wogan. 129 p. pl. 17cm. 1803 Co (1824 ed. of Poems, I, xxx, says "end of 1802".)
- 15th. London, 1827. pls. by R. Westall. Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green. lii, 79 p. pls. Small 8vo. (See 1824) B
- London, 1834. Y
- London, 1845. Ca
- London, Van Voorst, 12mo. 1851. Ca
- London, Bohn, Cabinet Edition of the British Poets, vol. iv. Small 8vo. 1851. B
- London, Low, post 8vo. 1857. Ca
- Same, reduced to 5s. 1860. Ca

b. American Editions:

- 1st. With wood engravings by A. Anderson, N.Y. 1801. Published by Hopkins, 124 p. pls. 16cm. Y Co
- printed from 3rd London. Phila. 1801 H

Farmer's Boy, Continued

American Editions, continued

- 4th. N.Y. Duycinck. xxxii, 92 p. pls. 16mo. 1801.
(Same as above?) B
- 4th. Baltimore. Thomas, Andrew and Butler. 166p.
16mo. 1803. (Two 4th?) B H Co
- 5th. From 6th London. N.Y. Hopkins and Seymour.
16mo. 1803. B H
- 1835? C
- Phila. H.F. Anners. Cloth, gilt edge. 32mo.
70¢ (Same as above?) Ca
- With biographical sketch by Capel Lofft.
Phila. Brower, Hays and Company. 237 p.
pls. 32mo. 1847 (From London 1845?) B
- Illus. from drawings by Birket Foster, Har-
rison Weir, and G. E. Hicks. N.Y. Apple-
ton and Company. iv, 68 p. pls. 8vo 1858 B
- Osgood, Vest Pocket Series. 32mo. 50¢
1877 Ca
- With Lowell's "My Garden Acquaintance", etc.
in Modern Classics, number 31. Cloth. 40¢
Houghton, Mifflin and Company, Boston, 1895? B

c. Translations. (See 1824, I, xxx, note)

Latin. Spring translated into Latin Hexameters "at
an early date", by the Rev. Mr. C——²

French. Le Valet du Fermier ("The Farmer's Boy"),
illustrated with fine copper engravings of
Bewick's wood-cuts.

Italian. Being translated in 1824.— Published?

2. Rural Tales, Ballads and Songs.

This volume, as well as the Farmer's Boy, consists, as the title indicates, of poems on rural themes, as follows :

"Richard and Kate : a Ballad" -- Thirty-eight stanzas of four iambic tetrameter lines, with the rhyme scheme, abab. The story is of an aged couple who renew their youth at a Suffolk fair. The sub-title is "Fair-Day".

"Walter and Jane; or the Poor Blacksmith : a Country Tale". The title-page calls it "a ballad". -- A story in 348 lines of heroic couplet, of how a worthy young smith's uncle gave him a purse of savings and enabled him to wed a young woman above his station.

"The Miller's Maid : a Tale" -- A story in 394 lines of the same kind of verse, telling how an old soldier finds his long-lost daughter.

"The Widow to her Hour-Glass"-- A forty-line moralising lyric.

"Market Night : a Ballad" -- Nineteen "ballad" stanzas, with the rhyme-scheme, abab, expressing the thoughts of a wife waiting for her husband to return through the winter night.

"The Fakenham Ghost" -- Another ballad of twenty stanzas of the same verse, giving a humorous account of how an ass's foal frightened a family into thinking it was a ghost.

"The French Mariner" -- A ballad in fourteen stanzas in which the mariner laments the loss of his family.

"Dolly : a Ballad" -- Nineteen stanzas like those of the preceding poems, in which Dolly expresses her thoughts of her absent lover.

To this point the volume consists of narrative poems telling stories set in the country. The character of them seems to indicate that a narrative poem is what Bloomfield meant by a "ballad". Beyond this point, the poems are, with two exceptions, songs. The first exception is

a long descriptive poem of 104 tetrameter lines divided into thirteen stanzas with the rhyme-scheme, ababcdcd,-- to all intents and purposes the same meter as that of the "ballads". The title is "Lines occasioned by a Visit to Whittlebury Forest", and the visit is described for the benefit of the poet's children, in verse decorated with a rather large amount of fanciful imagery, much of it conventional.

The second exception is a short, whimsical poem of eight lines, "On Hearing of the Translation of part of the Farmer's Boy into Latin, by the Rev. Mr. C---".

The songs which comprise the rest of the volume are :

"A Highland Drover"
 "A Word to Two Young Ladies"
 "Nancy"
 "Rosy Hannah"
 "The Shepherd and his Dog Rover"
 "Hunting Song"
 "Lucy"
 "Winter Song"

The songs run along with a good deal of fluency, and often with a rather graceful lilt, though sometimes Bloomfield put them into tumbling rhythms which would perhaps sound better in the music into which he undoubtedly imagined them as being sung, than in the written form in which they appear. It is sometimes difficult to read the extra syllables correctly the first time; yet the poet evidently had a good ear for music and placed the syllables with intention.

The editions follow.

Rural Tales, Ballads and Songs, Continued

Editions :

1st. London, Vernor and Hood. ix, 119 p. illus.
Portrait of the author. Small 8vo. 1802. B H M

--- London? xiii-xxii, 13-144 p. 16mo 1802? B

5th. London, Vernor, Hood and Sharpe, printed by W.
Wilson. Frontispiece portrait of the author.
Privately (?) bound with Farmer's Boy, 5th ed.
1801. London, 1806 F

10th. 1826. M

See also Poems, 1824.

3. Good Tidings; or News from the Farm.

This poem of seventy-one iambic couplets rehearses the ravages of the small-pox in various parts of the world, and specifically, though not directly, its ravages in the country hamlets near the poet's birth-place, with a description of the midnight burial of his own father, who died of the malady. It pictures the domestic horrors of the disease, as a background for an expression of joy at the discovery, by Dr. Jenner, of the vaccine which will make children immune.

"To the few who know that I have employed my thoughts on the importance of Dr. Jenner's discovery", says the poet in a note to the poem, " it has generally 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; and the account given of my infancy, and of my father's burial, is not only poetically but strictly true."

As a matter of fact, the expository nature of the subject is kept by the author completely in the background, and the couplets run on, often eloquently, with both passion and imagination.

Editions :

1st. London, 1804. H M

Included in Poems, 1824 and 1827, q.v.

4. Wild Flowers; or, Pastoral and Local Poetry.

This volume contains, besides "Good Tidings", which had been printed separately two years before, a group of poems very similar in subject and verse-form, to those in the Rural Tales.

First, there are these narrative poems :

"Abner and the Widow Jones, a Familiar Ballad" -- Fifty-five four-line ballad stanzas telling in a humorous fashion how an elderly man, Abner, was finally led to marry the Widow Jones, by looking for a place to keep his old worn-out horse, for which he had a deep affection.

"The Horkey, a Provincial Ballad" -- Fifty ballad stanzas, telling, in Suffolk dialect, of the Suffolk custom of the "horkey", or celebration of the harvest-home,-- supposedly told by a gossip. The humor is boisterous and, to modern taste at least, somewhat crude and vulgar, though the fun is rollicking. The poem was printed separately long afterwards, in 1882, q.v.

"The Broken Crutch, a Tale" -- A long narrative poem of 376 lines, in iambic couplets, the narrative meter the poet used with facility in the other narratives already mentioned, as well as in the Farmer's Boy. The story is of how Gilbert Meldrum, a kindly but crusty old fellow, was going to beat with his crutch Herbert, a young man of birth, on account of a misunderstanding as to the latter's intentions toward Meldrum's beautiful daughter. The young people marry happily in spite of their difference in birth (a fav-

orite theme with Bloomfield.-- cf., e.g., "Walter and Jane", in Rural Tales), and Gilbert is reconciled at the wedding feast. The style is vivacious and the language well in character.

Second, there^{are} the ornate and fanciful descriptive poems, "Shooter's Hill", and "Barnham Water", much like "Whittlebury Forest" in the Rural Tales. With these, as descriptive poems may be placed the lively and lightly humorous "A Visit to Rahelagh", describing a fête; and the partly reflective lyric "The Woodland Hallô", in anapestic metre, with a sub-title "(Perhaps) adapted for music" (sic).

Third, as in Rural Tales, there are several reflective poems: "To My Old Oak Table", on the domestic recollections aroused by the object; "Love of the Country", religious in tone; and the lyric, "Mary's Evening Sigh",-- Mary's thoughts about her absent lover, Edward.

The English and American editions of the volume follow:

Wild Flowers; or, Pastoral and Local Poetry.

(Containing also "Good Tidings")

a. English Editions:

1st. London; Verner, Hood and Sharpe. x, 132 p.
Illus. Small 8vo. 1806. B H M F, Co has this
or the following)

--- London. 18mo. 1806 Ca Co?

--- London. 24mo. 2 vols. 1814 Ca

--- "A new edition". London, 1826. (In 1824, II)

b. American Editions:

--- Phila. Johnson. pls. 12mo. ? B

This poem is a versified account, in four books, of a ten-day tour Bloomfield took with a party of Gloucestershire friends, by their invitation, in the summer of 1807. It describes the journey down the Wye River and through a part of South Wales, as does the prose journal the poet wrote at the time (The journal is included in the Remains, II, 1-48), but with much as to the scenery and the points of historical or imaginative interest not dwelt upon in the latter.

The Banks of Wye, the longest poem Bloomfield composed, is more than a hundred lines longer than the Farmer's Boy, with 1632 lines, divided into four books :

Book	I	456 lines
	II	346
	III	374
	IV	456

The verse is the same as that of the Farmer's Boy, so far as the use of couplets is concerned, but is written in lines of four feet instead of five, with the effect of lightness accompanied by monotony in a poem so long and on such a subject. The monotony is varied by a change of metre in the induction (heroic couplet), and in a number of songs (in tumbling metre) interspersed through the four books.

The character of the contents may be gathered from the author's (or perhaps the printer's) summary :

Book I.

The Vale of Uley. Forest of Dean. Ross. Wilton Castle. Goodrich Castle. Courtfield. Welch Bicknor. Coldwell. Gleaner's Song. Coldwell Rocks. Symmon's Yat. Great Doward. New

Wier. Arthur's Hall. Martin's Well. The coricle.
Arrival at Monmouth.

Book II.

Henry the Fifth. Morning on the water. Landoga. Ballad - "The Maid of Landoga". Tintern Abbey. Wind-Cliff. Arrival at Chepstow. Persfield. Ballad - "Morris of Persfield". View from Wind-Cliff. Chepstow Castle by moonlight.

Book III.

Departure for Ragland. Ragland Castle. Abergavenny. Expedition up the "Pen-y-Vale", or Sugar-Loaf Hill. Invocation to the spirit of Burns. View from the mountain. Castle of Abergavenny. Departure for Brecon. Pembroke of Crickhowel. Tre-Tower Castle. Jane Edwards.

Book IV.

The Gaer, a Roman Station. Brunless Castle. The Hay. Funeral song - "Mary's Grave". Clifford Castle. Return by Hereford, Malvern Hills, Cheltenham, and Gloucester, to Uley. Conclusion.

The poem may perhaps be said to lack that quality which made the Farmer's Boy much admired, namely, ^{having in} ~~the lack~~ ^{it} ~~of~~ the simple interests of human life, of which Bloomfield's better known poem is full.

A list of the first three editions follows.

The Banks of Wye.

Editions :

- 1st. London. Printed for the author; Vernor, Hood and Sharpe; and Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, Paternoster Row. vii, 134 p. 1811.
Illus. by Robert Bransby Cooper. H F
 - 2nd. (H adds "corrected") London, Crosby. 133 p.
Illus. Small 8vo. 1813 B H
 - 3rd. London, 1823 H
- See also 1824, Poems.

7. A History of Little Davy's New Hat.

Weston, in a note in the Remains (II, 121), says that Bloomfield partly carried out his intention of producing "a trifle for children", when he published the above, in 1815. Whether the piece is in prose or verse, Weston does not say.

Editions:

1st. London, 1815. (Rem., II, 121, note. D.N.B.
gives date of 1817)

--- London, Routledge. 18mo. 45¢ 1877. Ca

8. May Day with the Muses.

This volume, of which Bloomfield says in his preface to the second edition, "I have written these tales in anxiety, and in a wretched state of health...", is in one way the most finished and unified of the poet's works, and perhaps the most original in its conception. Though the idea of a cycle of stories connected together by a narrative thread, or a group of poems with a single narrative background, was not new, at the same time the poet's idea which he used here was in a degree original.-- A kind-hearted country squire offers to let his tenants pay their annual rent by coming together at his invitation and reciting before him original poems they have written .

The volume opens with twenty-four lines of heroic couplets in which Bloomfield laments the coming on of the winter of his life, but invokes Spring to keep his fancy alive. The verse-loving old squire, Sir Ambrose Higham, who is in his eightieth year, is then introduced, and sends out to his tenants a summons, in iambic tetrameter couplets, for his tenants to appear on May Day with their compositions. The coming of May Day and the assembling of the people before the old man, are then described, and the first reader, Philip, a farmer's son, begins his poem of "The Drunken Father", who reforms.

After an interlude, the squire's gamekeeper recites a poem called "The Forester", in which he describes a storm in the forest and draws a moral from it.

Next, after another interlude, the squire's

shepherd recites "The Shepherd's Dream: or, Fairies' Masquerade", about how he dreamed that the fairies visited him in his sleep.

A "pensioned veteran", in "The Soldier's Home", tells how an old soldier came home from Spain.

The youth named Philip now reads a love song written by his sweetheart, Rosamond, called "Rosamond's Song of Hope".

Last "a sturdy yeoman" reads the long poem (402 lines of heroic couplets) of "Alfred and Jennet", a simple and touching story of the love of the blind boy, Alfred, for Jennet Bowman, the yeoman's daughter, and their betrothal and marriage. For naturalness, pathos, and delicacy of both feeling and characterisation, this is the best of Bloomfield's narrative poems.

The editions of the volume follow.

May Day with the Muses.

Editions :

1st. London, 1817.³ (Cousins) 1822?³

2nd. London. Printed for the author; and for Baldwin, Cradock and Joy. viii, 100 p. Illus.
Small 8vo. 1822 B F

See also 1824, Poems.

3 In pref. to H.H., dated April 12, 1823, Bloomfield speaks of having published May Day "last spring"; and the date of the pref. of May Day, 2nd ed., which has no indication that it is not also the original pref., is April 10, 1822; so that perhaps the date of May Day, 1st ed., should be 1822.

9. Hazelwood Hall, a Village Drama.

This three-act drama was begun shortly after 1805, but ^{was} laid aside till after the spring of 1822, so that it was really written a year before the poet's death.

The characters of the play are Captain Goldhawk, a retired officer; Lady Hazelwood, a widow; Donald Morrison, a Scottish country squire, who marries Emma, Lady Hazelwood's daughter; Spok^um, a wheelwright; Joel, his son, who marries Mary Maythorn, brought up by Lady Hazelwood as an orphan, but really the daughter of Captain Goldhawk; Judith, Spoke^um's housekeeper, who knows the secret of Mary's birth, since she was Mary's nurse; John Gosling, Captain Goldhawk's servant, who inherits an estate and marries Betty, Morrison's servant; and Jack Whirlwind, a city stranger, who tries to force Mary into his carriage but is detected and beaten by Joel, at the climax (II, v.).

In ^{the} three acts there are fourteen scenes: Act I, 4; Act II, 5; Act III, 5. The play is enlivened by fourteen songs, and in parts, and especially at the close, almost approaches a light opera, the "finale" being composed of a solo by Morrison, a solo by Emma, a chorus, a solo by Mary, then another chorus. There is a duet (I, iii), and there is a "glee for three voices" (II, iii). The following is a stanza from a song by Joel (I, i):

"Then why should the girl of my heart,
For whom all these raptures I feel,
Be rival'd by waggon or cart,
And slip through my hands like an eel..."

and shows what some of the songs are like, though this is not one of the best. The style of the dialogue may be illustrated by these words of Mary, at the climax :

Mary. Unhand me, you robber! — you miscreant!
O if Joel were here!

The author, in the preface, assures the reader that the play does not contain "an oath, a pun, or an inuendo"; and says that through the character of Jack Whirlwind he has "endeavoured to censure the horrible vice of seducing unguarded females, and then leaving them to scorn and misery". As a matter of fact, the nearest approach to action which might bear upon the subject, is that Jack, as stated above, tries to force Mary into his carriage.

The play contains some lively dialogue and gives a fresh and vivid picture of village folk.

Hazelwood Hall, a Village Drama.

Editions :

1st. London. Printed for Baldwin, Cradock and Joy,
by Thomas Davison, Whitefriars. Paper, 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ " by
7". 71 p. 1823 H Co

See also 1824, Poems.

10. The Remains of Robert Bloomfield.

This work, consisting mostly of odds and ends of the poet's prose, and a few of his verses, was collected and edited by Joseph Weston, with the help of the poet's daughter Hannah, and forms an important source of biographical material.

The first volume contains first, forty-one poetical fragments, largely songs; second, four poems by the poet's son Charles; third, Bloomfield's unpublished pamphlet on the Aeolian harp, called "Nature's Music"; and fourth, a long appendix containing laudatory verses on the poet written both before and after his death.

The second volume contains first, Bloomfield's prose journal of his tour down the River Wye; second, his "Anecdotes and Observations"; third, his "Reflections"; fourth, a collection of jottings about Pope, Dryden, Mrs. Robinson's "Lyrical Tales", Wordsworth's "Lyrical Ballads", children's books, and other miscellaneous notes, all grouped under a division called "Critical", this, like the second and third, being a convenient grouping for a great many small fragments on all sorts of subjects; fifth, "The Bird and Insects' Post-Office", a collection of imaginary letters written as between birds and insects, by the poet and by his son Charles, the poet's idea being that in this way his children might in a pleasant manner learn facts of natural history; and sixth, a series of twenty letters, the correspondence between Weston and the Bloomfields and others, concerning the affairs of the family after the poet's death.

The Remains of Robert Bloomfield, Continued

Editions :

- 1st. London. Printed by Thomas Davison, Whitefriars, for the exclusive benefit of the family of Mr. Bloomfield, and published by Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, and others.
2 vols. Small 8vo. 16.5cm. Folded sheets of some of the poet's songs set to music, with a prospectus of more songs to be published. 1824. B Y F Co Cg

See also 1824, Poems.

11. The Bird and Insects' Post-Office.

From the Remains, q.v.

Editions :

--- London, Griffith and F. 96 p. 4to.
1880. B

12. The Horkey.From Wild Flowers, q.v.

Editions :

- London, Macmillan. Illus. by Cruikshank.
\$ 1.50 1882 H
- New York, Dutton. Illus. by Cruikshank.
Square 8vo. 1884 Ca

13. The Fakenham Ghost.

From Rural Tales, q.v.

Editions :

--- Taken from Bloomfield's Admired Rural Poems.
Phila. 17 p. Y

--- E. and J. B. Young, New York, 1886. Ca

14. Juvenile Pieces, and other Poems.

"The Milkmaid", "The Soldier's Return", etc.,
printed in the London Magazine, Say's Gazetteer, and
other newspapers and periodicals.

Reprinted in the Remains, q.v.

B. Collected Editions.

a. English Editions :

Works, 2 vols. Stereotyped ed. Demy 18mo.
containing F.B., R.T., W.F., and G.T.
"Lately published" -- see adv. in the following, vol. II, last leaf. London, ? .

Works, 8 vols. in 4 (D.N.B. says 3 vols.) Illus.
dated April, 1827. (Referred to as 1824) London,
1822-27. Y

Contents:

Vol. I. F.B., 15th ed. London, April, 1827.
Baldwin, Craddock and Joy, and other proprietors :
Longmans, Reese, Orme, Brown and Green; Harvey
and Darton; J. Booker; G. Cowie and Company;
Hamilton and Adams. Drawings by Richard West-
all, engraved by F. Engleheart. R.T., 10th ed.,
1826.

Vol. II. W.F., "a new edition", 1826. Banks of
Wye, 3rd ed., 1823. Last leaf has adv. of
"Lately published new editions, embellished with
fine wood engravings," of F.B., R.T., W.F.,
M.D., and H.H.; also a stereotyped ed. of wks.
in 2 vols. demy 18mo, containing F.B., R.T.,
W.F., and G.T. -- see above.

Vol. III. M.D., 2nd ed. 1822. H.H., 1823.

Vol. IV. Rem., 2 vols. as before, 1824.

Poems of Robert Bloomfield. Containing F.B., G.T.,
R.T., W.F. London. Published by W. Wilton,
245 High Holburn, and sold by J. King, 126
St. Martin's Lane. xxii, 198 p. Pref. by the
author, giving facts of his life, dated June
1808; R.T. here dated March 1809. (A cheaper
ed. reprinted in one vol. from above, from
same plates, but with abridgements, as shown
by numbering of prefs. to R.T. and W.F. as
pages lxxvi and clxvi, respectively.) 1827. Mo

Poems. London, Van Voorst. vii, 269 p. Illus.
Small 8vo. 1845. B M

Poetical Works, complete edition. Illus. by Bir-
ket Foster. Life of the author prefixed.
London, Routledge and Company. 226 p. pls.
Small 8vo. 1857. B

Poems. London, Routledge and Company. 12mo.
1860. Ca

B. Collected Editions Continued

a. English Editions Continued

Poems. London, Knight and Son. Illus. 16mo
1860. Ca

Works. London? Darton and Company. (A London
edition published by a firm which in 1818
was Darton and Harvey, Gracechurch Street?--
See second item above, 1824, Poems, and
Views, below.) 1883. C

b. American Editions :

The Farmer's Boy. . . Rural Tales, etc., etc.
(with others). Wilmington, Delaware.
1803. H

Poems. Burlington, New Jersey. Allinson. Two
parts in four volumes. pls. 16mo 1803. B

Poems. New York, Myers and Smith. 180 p. 2 pls.
24mo 1821. B Co

C. Miscellaneous Works, Biographical, etc.

Views in Suffolk, Norfolk, and Northamptonshire, illustrative of the works of Robert Bloomfield, accompanied with Descriptions; to which is annexed a Memoir of the Poet's Life, by F. W. Brayley. London, Vernor, Hood and Sharpe, Poultry; Darton and Harvey, Gracechurch Street; and J. Storer and J. Greig, Engravers, Chapel Street, Pentonville. Printed by W. Clowes. 59 p. 1 por. 14 pls. (Memoir 5-22, Scenes and Descriptions 23-56) London, 1806. Y Co (Co says bound with their Cowper, 1803)

--- Same, London, 1818. No indication of its being a 2nd ed. Memoir dated March 15, 1806. 6" by 9½" F

Life of Robert Bloomfield, printed in Dr. Moon's embossed type for the blind. Brighton, England. 39ff 8vo obl. 1882. B

Faucit, John Savill. The Miller's Maid; a melodrama, in two acts. Founded on Bloomfield's poem and the songs principally selected from his works. 40 p. 24mo Baltimore, J. Robinson. 1821. Co (No. 9 of a volume of pamphlets)

--- Same? 1822. B

--- Same. New York, French. (The minor drama, no. 92) 30 p. 12mo 185-? B

Selections from the Correspondence of Robert Bloomfield, by W. H. Hart. London, 1870.⁴

--- Same? or erroneous date? 1871.⁵

4 D.N.B., V, 236; New Inter. Enc., III, 416.

5 Chambers's Enc., II, 239.

Part III

Formative Influences upon Bloomfield,
and their Place in his Poetry.

Formative Influences upon Bloomfield, and their Place
in his Poetry.

Introduction.

The purpose of the first part of this discussion was to present a full, detailed, and exact account of the facts of the poet's life; and the purpose of the second part was to present concisely the contents and nature of the poet's works, with a list of the various editions concerning which information could be obtained.

The purpose of Part III is to examine into the formative influences upon the poet, as they acted upon him during his life, and as they were reflected in his works. The discussion will be divided into four parts: the influences of his life, as they have already been presented in the biography; the influence of his reading and his significant interests; the influence of Thomson; and finally the various influences as they appear in his poetry.

The purpose of the fourth part will be to show how the poet was regarded by contemporary and later critics, with a closing discussion of the poet's real place in literature.

Part III

Formative Influences upon Bloomfield, and their Place
in his Poetry

Chapter I

The Influence of his Life

The influences which surrounded Robert Bloomfield's boyhood were those of the little country villages of Honington and Sapiston. A rude simplicity of living conditions, simplicity of rustic manners, simple piety, and the ever-present facts of country landscape and farm life, were the things which the boy first learned and which fixed themselves ineffaceably upon his character, in spite of the ^Tmarkedly different environment of his later career. He learned whatever he got from formal schooling, from his mother, whose benevolence and piety must certainly have colored the lessons she taught; and he must, from the nature of the family life, have early acquired the domestic affection which was one of his most noticeable characteristics. Not only was he during the whole of his life constantly speaking and writing to, and thinking of, and caring for his brothers and his mother; but he had an equally strong affection for his children, an affection that, like his mother's for him, extended to teaching them at home what they might have had to learn at school. Although he lived in a community full of superstitions, he was taught by his mother, he tells us in the Farmer's Boy, not to be

misled by superstition, but to find out the truth for himself. Domestic affection and common sense were what he learned at home at Honington.

At the age of eleven Bloomfield took the first step toward forming his character himself, outside the direct influence of his mother, when he undertook the serious business of life as Farmer's Boy on his uncle's farm at Sapiston, young as he was for serious farm labor. Concerning this period, the poem of the Farmer's Boy is a vivid commentary. The dull routine, the hardships, the narrowness of outlook, the crudeness, the lack of refinement, the difficult labor, the disappointments, the childish troubles and discouragements; and the corresponding hours of light-hearted joy, sunny idleness, rest after labor, ambitions, and boyish happiness,-- all are expressed. The life of toil, so arduous for a small and frail lad, laid its hand upon his soul, but did not crush it, and strangely enough, filled it with an almost buoyant cheerfulness. The boy seems to have been full of the spirit of fun, though he had little opportunity to express it. In the wide fields, strong-scented air, and open sky, he caught a certain sense of what largeness and happiness the world might contain; though practically, the drudgery of plowing and planting, milking and wood-chopping, feeding and bedding cows and horses, and the thousand and one other chores which fell to his lot, shut him into a world with little promise; nor did the other farm servants, the companions of his narrow gable attic, afford him the means of taking even a boyish

glimpse of whatever might open his eyes to beauty. Whatever impulse he had to look at his surroundings esthetically came from within himself,-- a natural instinct to find beauty in the terror of storms which swept down upon the farmhouse, or in piled-up clouds in which his fancy built castles and towers. Indeed, his closeness to nature seems rather to have given him a sober and a contemplative outlook, than to have given him an esthetic one. Life must have seemed very sober and serious except upon rare occasions such as churchgoing or a holiday, a gleaners' picnic in the hay-field, or a quiet evening before the winter fire, or the harvest-supper, in celebration of the Harvest-Home. He acquired, in other words, a seriousness and contemplativeness of view which perhaps only such a life could give him, a moral and reflective way of looking at everything from nature herself to Suffolk cheese. All these matters he tells about in the story of his life as Giles. The influences of the period may be summarised as giving him a slight impulse to look for beauty, but at any rate keen observation and an eye for details; a conception of the seriousness of life, and a moral point of view which reinforced his early home training; and finally, the habit of self-contemplation. What the experience failed to give him was the habit of courage and independence, and breadth of view. He had learned what rural life had to teach him, and he had missed what rural life lacked: the versatility and self-reliance and breadth of outlook which ^{came from} intercourse

with books, people, society, and the inspiring views of mountain and sea.

But he was still but a young lad. He was fifteen when his mother brought him up to London to enter upon a new, significant period of his career, though he was for a number of years to come, to be under the care of his brother. From a farm-boy in the open fields, he now became a shoemaker's apprentice in a city garret. He read newspapers, and he talked with men. Shoemakers' tongues, says Bloomfield, are not tied by their work; and the boy must have heard many things, both good and bad, in the voluble conversation of the shop. Perhaps it was the habit learned on the farm, when he was lying out in the bushes waiting to shoot crows, and at the same time thinking silently to himself about the habits of the grasshoppers and the birds, which enabled him to think while he still had an ear for what the others were saying, and which in later years enabled him to compose hundreds of lines of verse in his head and retain them in memory.

The boy's outlook was broadened by reading the newspapers and discussing politics, by reading aloud from books of history, geography, and travel, as will be considered in the next chapters in more detail, and by reading the verse in the Poets' Corner of the daily paper. Nor were all his days spent in the garret with the workmen. His interest in the country was kept alive by all-day Sunday walks in the country with his brother, and perhaps the

very fact that these walks were occasional, and this contact with the real country a somewhat distant one, gave him a perspective view of his boyhood, and enabled him to see rural life from outside,-- from a new angle and a new point of view. Perhaps he was now able to philosophize on a subject which hitherto he had been too near. And besides the influence which the long walks must have had upon him, there were also the artistic and intellectual influences of his infrequent visits to Covent Garden Theatre and the debating society at Coachmakers' Hall, and the rhetorical sermons of Fawcett which stimulated his imagination.

It is unfortunate that Bloomfield left no poem to illuminate his growth in this period, as he did in the case of his growth during his younger years on the farm. It is, however, easy to imagine the developing of his consciousness of himself as an independent personality; and it is easy to imagine the broadening of his horizon. There was one respect, on the other hand, in which the influences of this period still left something of incompleteness in the full rounding out of his individuality, namely, that there was still someone to look after him.

The time for Bloomfield's complete independence came with the departure of his brother for Bury, a year or two after Bloomfield had returned to renew his acquaintance with the Sapiston farm for two months during the trade trouble in London. His brother's leaving threw him upon his own resources, and for the first time in his life he was his own master; though what exact difference the change

may have made to him, it is impossible to say. At any rate, in the course of time he was married, and came under the new influences of married life, which in his case meant poverty, a struggle to provide for his family, the care of his children in sickness, and finally his own ill health which for a time prevented his working at his trade and deprived him of his means of support. It was under these influences that the Farmer's Boy and most of the Rural Tales^{were written.} ^ 1

The conditions of the poet's life after the publication of the Farmer's Boy were entirely changed, for now he was no longer, except nominally, a shoemaker, but a poet, and as such his name began to become known beyond the narrow circle in which hitherto his life had moved. He was sought and aided by people of note, by literary men of reputation and society people of rank. He was invited to their houses to dine, and to their country estates to visit. There were opened to him many of the advantages of a popular poet, with many opportunities to cultivate himself consciously as a literary artist. At the age of forty-four he began the training which most literary men have in their youth, with a growing income to free him from entire dependence upon what he earned at his trade and to give him leisure and changes of scene. He traveled into South Wales, the South Downs of Sussex, and the coast of southeastern England. Now for the first time he saw near at hand the mountains and the sea.

But upon the last years of his life misfortune, troubles of various sorts, poverty, anxiety, and ill health

again shut down, to dim what light the years of brightness and prosperity had shed upon him. He had passed through varied experiences and extremes of fortune, under the influences of the family life at home in the village, the patience- and thought-instilling influences of the farm, the influences of city and shoemaker's garret, the influences of his family troubles, poverty, sickness and distress, the influences of literary reputation and comparative affluence, and at the last the influences of declining fortunes and rural retirement.

After a more detailed examination of his reading and significant interests we may glance at what effect these formative influences may have had upon his poetry.

Chapter II

Bloomfield's Reading and Significant Interests.

Since Bloomfield had no schooling beyond the instruction from his mother, who taught the school in the village, and some instruction in reading and writing from Mr. Rodwell of Ixworth, the poet did indeed, for a literary man, lack a literary training. He did not know history and the classics and general literature, so far as the evidence goes, though for a shoemaker he was rather well read; and he was interested in many subjects other than his trade and books, his own modesty aside.

The papers, periodicals, or scientific and literary works which we know he read, or which he mentions or quotes, are: the speeches of Burke, Fox, and North, in the newspapers; a dictionary, a folio history of England, a folio British Traveller, a folio geography; the London Magazine, Thomson's poems, Milton's Paradise Lost, some novels, and probably other books belonging to James Kay;¹ Johnson's Rambler, number 82;² Johnson's preface to his edition of Shakespeare;³ Dibdin's Sailor's Journal;⁴ Cowper's Task, Burns's poems;⁵ Gray's The Bard;⁶ Pope's description of the death of the Duke of Buckingham;⁷ Dryden's Virgil;⁸ Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads;⁹ Southey's

1 F.B., 6th ed. viii-xiii;
Rem., I, 128-131.

2 M.D., pref. iii.

3 W.F., pref. vii.

4 M.D., pref. vii.

5 Ibid. 82; B. of W., 80-82.

6 B. of W., 132.

7 Rem., II, 109.

8 Ibid. I, 97.

9 Ibid. I, 111, 119.

Thalaba (first book); ¹⁰ Shenstone's poems; ¹¹ Walker's Gazetteer; ¹² Guthrie's Grammar; ¹³ The Gentleman's Magazine; ¹⁴ The British Press; ¹⁵ The Publican's Newspaper; ¹⁶ DeFoe's (sic) Robinson Crusoe; ¹⁷ Lempriere's Classical Dictionary; ¹⁸ Sir John Hawkins's General History of the Science and Practice of Music; ¹⁹ Jones's Physiological Disquisitions; ²⁰ Smollett's Count Fathom; ²¹ "a French voyage undertaken in search of the unfortunate Pérouse"; ²² and poems by Mason, Bruce, Park, and other contemporaries.

This list is evidence of the variety of his reading, if not of its thoroughness or quality, though it lacks mention of such literature as the Bible, Shakespeare's plays, and Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, not to speak of such popular works as those of Byron and Scott.

As a boy in the cobblers' garret he read aloud to the men, from the works at the beginning of the list, and read Thomson and probably Milton. Later, when he had gained a reputation, he undoubtedly tried to cultivate himself as a literary man, and to widen his literary knowledge as such. He listened with admiration to the dissenting rhetoric of the Reverend Mr. Fawcett's sermons in the Old Jewry, ²³ the preacher whom Wordsworth also went to hear and whose misfortunes Wordsworth followed with some sympathy. ²⁴

10 Rem., I, 113.
 11 Ibid. I, 115.
 12 } Ibid. II, 75.
 13 }
 14 Ibid. II, 64.
 15 Ibid. II, 93.

16 Ibid. II, 52.
 17 Ibid. II, 51.
 18 Ibid., I, 97.
 19 Ibid. II, 99.
 20 Ibid. II, 102.
 21 Ibid. II, 119.
 22 Ibid. II, 126.
 23 F.B., 4th ed. pref. ix.
 24 Memoir, II, 33-34.

Bloomfield was almost intellectually interested in his trade, and at one time thought of collecting a pamphlet-full of literary material regarding it. His pamphlet on the Aeolian harp I have already referred to,— a case of both scientific and musical interest; and the poet made successfully Aeolian harps himself, and experimented with their construction.

He was interested in spiders, as we see by his recorded observations of their habits; and in the Bird and Insects' Post-Office he tried to make the facts of natural history interesting to the young. His History of Little Davy's New Hat (1815) was a pedagogical "trifle for the use of children".

His "Anecdotes and Observations" give us a glimpse of many subjects of passing or perennial value, on which he was interested to record jottings. He was interested in politics, and wrote at least one political poem,— on "Peace", October 10, 1801.²⁵ "He went sometimes with me," writes his brother George,²⁶ "to a Debating Society at Coachmaker's--hall, but not often; and a few times to Covent-garden Theatre."

Indeed, with all these interests and many more, though most of them were acquired after the momentous year of 1800, it seems somewhat strange that so little of his reading appears in his poetry. But before examining the exact extent of this, let us for a moment consider in more detail the most specific influence upon him,— that of Thomson.

25. R.T., 5th ed. pref. vii-ix.

26 F.B., 4th ed. pref. ix.

The Influence of Thomson.

Bloomfield read Thomson's Seasons, together with Milton's Paradise Lost, when he removed with his brother from Mr. Simm's, 7 Pitcher's Court, Bell Alley, Coleman Street,²⁶ to the garret in Blue Hart Court, Bell Alley, where a Scotchman living there -- James Kay, a native of Dundee -- gave Bloomfield the use of his "many books"; so that we know Bloomfield was acquainted with Thomson's Seasons and admired it at a time some fourteen years removed from the date of composition of the Farmer's Boy. "Robert... spent all his leisure hours in reading the Seasons, which he was now capable of reading. I never heard him give so much praise to any Book as to that," says George Bloomfield, in a letter to Lofft.²⁷ That Bloomfield was acquainted with more of Thomson's works than the Seasons is shown by his quoting four lines from Thomson as a motto for "Good Tidings", and by his quoting a portion of the Castle of Indolence, and the "Ode on Aeolus's Harp" in full, in "Nature's Music". "For myself," says Bloomfield,²⁸ "I have always been drawn irresistibly to esteem that description the most true and the most delightful, which Thomson has given in his 'Castle of Indolence', which is therefore placed first of the poetical testimonies which I have been able to collect." Here he inserts two stanzas, xl and xli, from Canto I.

26 F.B., 6th ed. pref. viii. D.N.B. says "Fisher's Court".

27 F.B., 6th ed. pref. xiii.

28 Rem., I, 128-31.

And Bloomfield prefaces the insertion of the "Ode on Aeolus's Harp" with the words : "Thomson has likewise written the following lines on the same subject, and there is little doubt he felt what he wrote." There is therefore no doubt but that Bloomfield knew the works of Thomson with some intimacy; but whether or not he owed the earlier poet a specific debt is another matter.

Concerning Bloomfield's two-months' visit to the Sapiston farm in 1784,²⁹ George writes :³⁰ "He came home; and Mr. Austin kindly bade him take his house in Sapiston for his home till he could return to me. And here, with his mind glowing with the fine Descriptions of rural scenery which he found in Thomson's Seasons, he again retrac'd the very fields where first he began to think." The connection in the poet's mind between the remembered scenes of his early life, and the Seasons of Thomson, is therefore plausibly established; and it becomes a legitimate supposition that it was the older poem which gave him the hint to write down his own impressions of "the changing year" as he knew it in boyhood. But here again the exact indebtedness is not made certain.

Capel Lofft, the editor of the Farmer's Boy, and himself an admirer of Thomson, finds the later poem ^{not} ~~un~~indebted to the earlier; like it only in common poetical

29 F.B., 6th ed. pref. xiii. D.N.B. says "three months".

30 Ibid. pref. xv.

qualities ; as different as the authors, in regard to education, circumstances, and habits of thought ; and unique in its "simplicity, sweetness, and natural tenderness." Writing in 1799 a preface to the Farmer's Boy, then in press, he recounts his reception of the manuscript and his first impression of it : "At first, seeing it divided into the four Seasons, I had to encounter a prepossession not very advantageous to any writer : that the Author was treading in a path already so admirably trod by Thomson ; and might be adding one more to an attempt already so often, but so injudiciously and so unhappily made, of transmuting that noble Poem from Blank Verse into Rhime ;... from its own pure native Gold into an alloyed Metal of incomparably less splendor, permanence, and worth.

"I had soon, however, the pleasure of finding myself reliev'd 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 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 surrounding intellect, and the diviner sense of the Poet, which alone can deserve the name, must possess.

"But, with the 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."

That Lofft was probably correct in his judgment may be shown by certain facts as to the differences between Thomson's poem and Bloomfield's, as to the medium employed, ^{as to} the length, and ~~as to the~~ authors' expressed aims in writing, facts which outweigh the few similarities which, as Lofft stated, may be found.

In the first place, the medium of the Seasons is blank verse, that of the Farmer's Boy, the heroic couplet; consequently, from this fact alone, there is a diversity of diction, movement, sound, and emotion. The verse of Thomson is splendid, resounding, canorous; that of Bloomfield, simple, rather matter-of-fact, and noticeably regular, though flowing.

In the second place, the diversity in physical length of the two poems contributes to their difference in subject-matter and effect. The Seasons includes from 4,020 to 5,544 lines, according to the edition; the Farmer's Boy includes only 1,512, or from four to five times less. From

the single fact of bulk, then, the poems are necessarily different, the longer one richer in ore, with more space for detail, digression, illustration, comment, and variety in many directions ; and the shorter poem more sparing in detail, with less digression, illustration, comment, and variety.

How this difference in extensiveness is made use of by the two poets is explained by the difference in their aims and their theories of their subject. In the *Defense of Poesy* which he prefixed to the second edition of *Winter*, in 1726, and dropped in 1730,³¹ Thomson asserts³² that in his time poetry is in a bad case, and by many condemned, and this because the subjects of it are trifling and the versifiers uninspired, witty rather than poetically enthusiastic. Poetry, he says, should once more be restored to truth and purity as of old ; low, venal, and trifling subjects exchanged for those fair, useful, and magnificent ; executed to please, instruct, surprise, and astonish. All this needs an author, illustrious, beneficent, great, mentally "generous", with true interest of virtue, learning, and humanity at heart. One great aid to such achievement, he believes, is choosing a subject which is itself great and serious, which will give weight and dignity to the poem, amusing the fancy, enlightening the head, and warming the heart, by the charms of truth in nature. Such a subject — elevating, amusing, and a-

31 Works, Oxford ed. 239.

32 Ibid. 239-242.

wakening poetical enthusiasm, philosophical reflection, and the moral sentiment -- is the works of nature, notably the pageant of the seasons, which he himself is to discuss. To these remarks should be added the lines from his Summer:³³

Nor shall the muse disdain
To let the little noisy summer race
Live in her lay and flutter through her song:
Not mean though simple . . .,

lines which emphasize the fact that, conscious of artistic selection, the author deliberately excludes perhaps not the simple, but at any rate the mean.

With these expressions of Thomson's attitude toward his subject, we may contrast what Bloomfield says in the Farmer's Boy, as to his aim and critical theory, as he reveals in the opening invocation the limitations he has set for himself:³⁴

Retrace the paths of wild obscurity.
No deeds of arms my humble lines rehearse,
No Alpine wonders thunder through my verse,
The roaring cataract, the snow-topt hill,
Inspiring awe, till breath itself stands still:
Nature's sublimer scenes ne'er charm'd mine eyes,
Nor Science led me through the boundless skies;
From meaner objects far my raptures flow; . . .
. . . all the blessings of my infant days!
Bear me through regions where gay Fancy dwells;
But mould to Truth's fair form what Memory tells.
Live, trifling incidents, and grace my song,
That to the humblest menial belong. . .
Delights from trifles, trifles ever new.

With a specific denial of any attempt at seasonal, rhetorical, historical, or even landscape splendors, then, the poem has for its theme humble backwoods obscurity, since the author himself is acquainted with neither the more sub-

33 Lines 32 et seq.

34 Spring, lines 6 et seq.

lime aspects of nature nor with science. The author's task, rather, is the description of "meaner objects far", with fidelity to facts, and the faithful recollection of such "trifling incidents" of childhood as are familiar to the humblest servant.

Such are the contrasted aims and critical theories of Thomson and Bloomfield, in the light of which we may examine the use they made of the space occupied by their long poems on the aspects of nature and farm life. Thomson, avoiding the "mean", gave himself license to seek ornamentation wherever he might find it; Bloomfield consciously limited himself to the true and humble facts recollected from his youthful experiences on the Sapiston farm.

The resemblance between the Farmer's Boy and the Seasons is, as Lofft noted, only a general one, and a close scrutiny reveals only a few coincidences in subject, diction, or style. For example, the opening lines of both have something in common:

Thomson:

Come, gentle Spring, ethereal
Mildness, come;

Bloomfield:

Come, blest Spirit! what-
soe'er thou art;

yet whereas Thomson is addressing Spring herself, the Spirit Bloomfield is addressing is an joy-giving recollection in his breast. Both poems describe thunderstorms, with a few details similar, as is inevitable; but whereas Bloomfield portrays details only in connection with a storm at the end of Summer, Thomson elaborately describes each seasonal in-

clemency: spring rain, the summer electrical storm, the tree-tossing autumn hurricane, and the snowy winter blizzard. Both talk at some length of summer insects; both mention fox-hunting; Bloomfield inveighs against the depredations by the rooks, as Thomson against those by wolves; the Master exhorts Giles to provide the flocks with food and with shelter from winter storms, as Thomson exhorts shepherds to do likewise. Thomson's Winter, though approaching the end with a strain of despondency, concludes with an expression of hope in Spring's return, and in the everlasting virtue which allegorically it represents, just as Bloomfield expresses a similar forward-looking hope, in several places,³⁵ and thus gives an original and unmistakable note of cheerfulness to his whole poem.

Both poets show detailed observation of the universal facts of nature. Thomson, for instance, notes the fragrance of the breath of cattle,³⁶ and in his long exposition of the habits of spiders (a subject in which, as we have seen, Bloomfield later showed great interest), notes that

. the fluttering wing
And shriller sound declare extreme distress.³⁷

The examples of detailed observation in the Farmer's Boy are more numerous. For instance, Bloomfield had noticed

35 Spring 275, 281, 357; Summer 1; Autumn 51, 357; Winter 385.

36 Spring, 33

37 Summer, 267-280, quoted line 278.

that among cattle there was always one, the bell-cow,
to take the lead;³⁸ that the milk-pails were "bright-scour'd ,
and delicately sweet";³⁹ that the milker's hat became matted
with hair from the cow's side;⁴⁰ that in the churn-butter
came "from knotty particles first floating wide";⁴¹ that

Sheep long confined but loathe the present good;
And starve and pine, with plenty at their feet.⁴²

The author had seen earth-worms turned up by the plough,⁴³
had seen how the sun "whitens the fresh-drawn mould",⁴⁴ and
how in the fields after a brief hot-weather shower, "dry
dust beneath the bubbling surface lurks".⁴⁵ He had noticed
the habits of swine: their causeless frights and stampedes,
and their liking for the "hot thirsty" acorn.⁴⁶ He had seen
how the mower

Prostrates the waving treasure at his feet,
But spares the rising clover, short and sweet.⁴⁷

And finally, he had noticed that in flight the skylark is
visible or invisible, according as he passes from shade to
light or light to shade in the sky.⁴⁸

Thomson's Seasons, on the other hand, though it
is equally faithful to natural truth without being trifling,
has a smaller amount of these rural facts, and depends for
its effects upon far other matter, the wealth of a cultivated
understanding. A list of some of the subjects touched upon
in the Seasons but not in the Farmer's Boy may be interesting,

38 Spring 180.
39 Ibid. 194.
40 Ibid. 201.
41 Ibid. 215.
42 Ibid. 296.
43 Ibid. 76.

44 Summer 25.
45 Ibid. 35.
46 Autumn 7-40.
47 Summer 145.
48 Ibid. 101.

the noted difference in the bulk of the two poems being kept in mind :

Geography
History
Philosophy
Classics : Greek, Latin, English
The Bible
Distinguished persons
Patriotism
Sports : Fishing, swimming, hunting the stag, the hare, the wolf; winter sports of skating and coasting
Sciences : Astronomy, chemistry, biology, anthropology, entomology, bacteriology, ornithology, horticulture.

Besides all this matter, injected into the poem often by way of long digressions, there is in the Seasons a vocabulary of such words as irriguous⁴⁹ (twice), gelid (six times; applied to cliff, caverns, berries, and apples), sequacious,⁵⁰ ovarious,⁵¹ and repercussive,⁵² a vocabulary which, going along with full-mouthed numbers, gives an entirely different impression from the simple and prevailingly monosyllabic diction and rhyme of Bloomfield (See Appendix C).

There is in Thomson also the added ornament of narrative, in the form of stories introduced as illustrative of the matter under discussion, such as those of Celadon and Amelia (lightning), Damon and Musidora (swimming), and Lavinia and Palimon (harvest). Yet in spite of all this fulness which gives so great bulk to his poem, Thomson still

49 Spring 21.
50 Summer, 117.
51 Ibid. 164.
52 Ibid. 95.

expresses himself conscious of the fact that "much yet remains unsung"! 53

In contrast to this imposing list of subjects introduced into the Seasons but not present in the Farmer's Boy because the author was not familiar with them and because they were excluded by his very purpose to restrict himself and avoid ornament, there may be mentioned a class of subjects which are found in the latter poem but not in the former, and which Thomson would have regarded as "mean", if not offensive to his taste, as in the following passages :

At home, the yard affords a grateful scene;
For Spring makes e'en a miry cow-yard clean.
Thence from its chalky bed behold convey'd
The rich manure that drenching Winter made,
While pil'd near home, grows green with many a weed,
A promis'd nutriment for Autumn's seed. 54

. . . mixes with the mould
A fatt'ning treasure from the nightly fold,
And all the cow-yard's highly valu'd store,
That late bestrew'd the blacken'd surface o'er. 55

In short, Lofft was well justified in finding the Farmer's Boy without dependence upon Thomson's Seasons; and though Bloomfield was probably more open to influence from Thomson than from any other writer, the actual influence seems, from the evidence, to have been slight. Bloomfield's eye and heart were upon the objects which with fidelity and simplicity he was trying to depict,-- simple joys, fleeting sorrows, humble and unhypocritical virtue, piety and truth.

53 Summer 1092.

54 Spring 185.

55 Autumn 65.

The Formative Influences as they appear in Bloomfield's Poetry.

The statement in the preceding chapter as to the degree to which Thomson influenced Bloomfield's poetry, applies to all the other influences as well, except those of his own life. The evidence, or, perhaps, in this case, the lack of it, points to the negative conclusion that Bloomfield was not demonstrably the debtor of any other poet, and that his work, therefore, was original, so far as literary influences are concerned, possibly for the very reason that the influences of his own life were paramount.

Thus, the poet probably read Milton's Paradise Lost among the books of Kay, but his style and subjects are nowhere Miltonic, and he does not mention Milton or the latter's works by name. To be sure, the opening lines of Bloomfield's "Lines written hastily, while in King-street, Margate",⁵⁶

Visitor! whose'er thou art,
Respect the vine, which climbs this door",

suggest Milton's sonnet, "When the assault was intended to the city, November, 1642",⁵⁷ but evidently the resemblance is not very close.

Again, in the Banks of Wye, Bloomfield writes:⁵⁸

Gray here, upon the stream reclin'd,
Stor'd with delight his ardent mind;

so that he may have been conscious of Gray's The Bard when he wrote a description of the Wye; but Gray's spirit and

56 Rem., I, 38.

57 Poems, I, 85.

58 B.of W., 132.

phraseology do not appear in the poem.

Of Burns, Bloomfield was an expressed admirer. He remembered that it was during the last sickness of Burns that he began composing his own Farmer's Boy (see page 17). In May Day he had Jennet, in "Alfred and Jennet", reading "Robin Burns" under the trees.⁵⁹ And finally, he wrote a long tribute to Burns in the Banks of Wye:⁶⁰

Spirit of Burns! the daring child
Of glorious freedom, rough and wild,
How have I wept o'er all thy ills,
How blest thy Caledonian hills!
How almost worshipp'd in my dreams
Thy mountain haunts,-- thy classic streams!
How burnt with hopeless, aimless fire,
To mark thy giant strength aspire
In patriot themes! and tun'd the while
Thy "Bonny Doon," or "Balloch Mile."
Spirit of Burns! accept the tear
That rapture gives thy mem'ry here
On the bleak mountain top. Here thou
Thyself had rais'd the gallant brow
Of conscious intellect, to twine
Th' imperishable verse of thine,
That charm'st the world.

But there seems to be in Bloomfield's poetry, for example in the songs and the "ballads" of rural life where it might be visible if at all, no trace of Burns; and Bloomfield's rural characters are totally unlike the Scottish peasants of the Scottish poet.

Whether or not Bloomfield was influenced by Crabbe, whom he nowhere mentions, is a question which, like the question of whether or not he was influenced by Pope and Dryden, whom he does mention (see page 98), rests upon the kind of verse Bloomfield wrote in the Farmer's Boy, namely, rhymed

59 M.D., 82.

60 B.of W. 80-82.

pentameter couplets ; and the couplets which Bloomfield wrote lack the one quality without which they could not seem to be derived from these poets, namely, what is called the "ring" of the couplets of Pope's essays or Crabbe's The Village. They are prevailingly end-stopped, it is true, but they have not the individual completeness of the older couplets : Lofft called them the "flowing numbers".

At the same place in May Day at which he mentioned Burns, Bloomfield also mentioned Cowper :⁶¹

She read the poets, grave and light, by turns,
And talk'd of Cowper's "Task", and Robin Burns.

Did Bloomfield know Cowper's Task when he began writing the Farmer's Boy, in 1796? The above reference from May Day, written in the last few years of his life, in 1817 or 1822 (see page 78), would indicate that at least he did in later life, but, in absence of other evidence, and in the presence of ^{all} other evidence as to the scantiness of his reading before the publication of the Farmer's Boy, in 1800, and Bloomfield's beginning to cultivate himself as a literary man, the assumption is that his knowledge of Cowper was acquired at a later date. Both poets have some ideas of rural life in common, such for example as that the old simplicity of the country had gone, and that wealth and its attendant ills had ruined the goodness of the old-time farmer ;⁶² but the Farmer's Boy is quite different from the Task, in meter (rhymed couplets instead of blank verse), in style. (less clever and pungent,

61 M.D., 82.

62 F.E., Summer 333-392 ; Cowper, Works, I, 356, 380-386.

and more matter of fact), and most of all, in manner of treatment of the subject (the Task being on the whole abstract and general, whereas the Farmer's Boy is concrete and specific).

Of notable contemporary poets, Bloomfield mentions only Southey and Wordsworth. He notes "a thousand charming instances of powerful description" in the first volume of Southey's Thalaba, but mentions the poet in only this one place.⁶³ Of Wordsworth Bloomfield makes two notes: one that he had seen Wordsworth's "Ballads",⁶⁴ and the other a brief undated criticism of the same volume, evidently that of 1802:

"I go with pleasure and anxiety along with 'Betty Fay' by moonlight: it was truly a charming night. 'The Thorn,' with all its simplicity, I shall never forget. 'Simon Lee,' 'We are seven,' and 'The Nightingale,' in their eve-like nakedness, I feel greatly pleased with. Resolved to read them through attentively.

"I don't much relish 'The Pet Lamb.' The 'Poet's Reverie' sounds too much like a madman's reverie. It should not be in the same book with 'Michael' and 'The Brothers.'" ⁶⁵

In Hazelwood Hall, 1823, Bloomfield quotes from Wordsworth's "Nutting", perhaps from the same volume of which he speaks in the passage quoted above:

Morrison. Then you have taken the wisest way in the world to give them a contrary turn, for "there is a spirit in the woods". ⁶⁶

If Wordsworth had any influence upon Bloomfield, however, there is little evidence of it. It might be supposed, for example, that Bloomfield got from Wordsworth the hint for his Rural Tales, Ballads and Songs, but as a matter of fact Bloom-

63 Rem., II, 113.

64 Ibid., II, 111.

65 Ibid., II, 119.

66 H.H., II, i, p. 24.

field saw Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads for the first time when his own volume was being printed; ⁶⁷ so that, since he went on in other volumes to write the same kind of versified narratives, Bloomfield may be said to have been in this, the respect in which he was most likely to show an indebtedness to Wordsworth, to have been uninfluenced by the latter.

In other words, to repeat, Bloomfield seems to have been independent of all other writers, and to have worked out his own ideas and impulses to write poems, in a manner of his own. Indeed the circumstances of his life did not bring him into close contact with the literary world, though he was a popular poet. Perhaps the most striking confirmation of this statement is that, so far as can be gathered from his writings or from the statements of his friends and contemporaries, Bloomfield never knew of the slur Byron cast upon him in the English Bards and Scotch Reviewers, in 1809 (see page 122).

In contrast to the meagerness of literary influences, whether of Thomson or of other writers, even of those whose works he seems to have read, as discussed in this and the preceding chapter, the influence of the circumstances of his life is, on the other hand, everywhere evident. What this formative influence was, or rather what the manifold influences were, I have tried to indicate in the first chapter of ^{this} section. By birth, heredity, social and financial condition, and trade, Bloomfield was fitted for being original in his writing, but for being largely untouched by the world

67. Rem., II, 111.

of letters, as proves to be the case. Simplicity, piety, kindness, sympathy, domestic affection, and common sense, characteristics that came to him by birth, heredity, and the environment of his childhood home and his mother's teaching; the soberness and the contemplative habit formed in him at the Sapiston farm, with a repressed spirit of rustic fun; the somewhat broadened outlook which the life in the shoemakers' garret gave him; the kindness and admiration of the friends of his prosperity; and finally the anxiety, poverty, and sickness of his family life, -- all find mention and illustration in his work. His Farmer's Boy gives a detailed and vivid account of his early life; his Rural Tales, Wild-Flowers, May Day, and Hazelwood Hall picture the country as he knew it, and show in his characters what the author thought people ought to be like, -- characters with the same simplicity and kindness which the author had himself; his Banks of Wye is a faithful account of what he saw and felt on his excursion into Wales; and his smaller poems and fragments, as printed in the Remains, are an autobiography in themselves, in recording the facts and sentiments of Bloomfield's life.

The circumstances which seem to have influenced him least, or which at least find most meager expression, are the cobbler's life in itself, and the literary influences which came upon him after 1800. It was the country, and his family, and the scenes and events of his boyhood that had the paramount formative influence upon the poet's emotions.

Part IV

Criticisms of Bloomfield.

Criticisms of Bloomfield.Introduction.

The purpose of this, the concluding section, is to record the criticisms made of the poet Bloomfield, from the publication of his first significant poem, the Farmer's Boy, in 1800, down to 1905. These criticisms fall naturally into two groups, in two respects, for the first group, of contemporary criticisms, from 1800 to 1824, are, with the exception of Lamb's and Byron's, favorable, corresponding to the general judgment which made him a popular poet. Then, after 1823, there seems to have been no mention of Bloomfield, till 1842, when Chambers spoke of Bloomfield as being "little read". There is therefore a second group of criticisms, from 1842 to 1905, the later criticisms, which is generally unfavorable, corresponding to the fact of Bloomfield's decline in popularity to the present day.

The first group, included in Chapter I, includes Lofft, Lamb, Drake, Byron, Weston, Hazlitt, and Wilson, in chronological order. The second group, included in Chapter II, includes Chambers, Brooke, Arnold, Saintsbury, and Gosse, in chronological order.

The body of the chapters is intended merely to record the facts of the criticisms, with summaries at the end.

Criticisms of Bloomfield

Chapter I

Contemporary Criticism, 1800-1824.1. Lofft, 1800.

The first to accord Bloomfield thorough critical attention was Capel Lofft, the editor of the Farmer's Boy, whose warm words of praise for the poet's "simplicity, sweetness, ... natural tenderness" have already been quoted at length (see pages 103-4). The first critic was an enthusiastic admirer, and even found coincidences with the writings of Ausonius, Lucretius, Virgil, and Theocritus.¹

2. Lamb, 1800.

The judgment of the second critic, Charles Lamb, was unfavorable, though he granted the originality I have called attention to in Part III. Lamb says, in a letter to Manning, October 16, 1800:² "I have had the felicity of hearing George Dyer read out one book of 'The Farmer's Boy'! I thought it rather childish. No doubt there is originality in it (which, in your self-taught geniuses, is a rare quality, they generally getting hold of some bad models in a scarcity of books, and forming their taste on them,) but no selection. All is described."³

Again, Lamb remarks in a postscript to a letter to the same person, November 3, 1800:⁴

1 F.B., 4th ed. app. 122-128. 4 Letters, I, 272.

2 Letters, I, 269.

3 Ibid., W.C. Hazlitt's note: "Bloomfield, like Crabbe, did not know, what Lamb did, that Art consists in Selection."

"You ask me about the 'Farmer's Boy' -- don't you think the fellow who wrote it (who is a shoemaker) has a poor mind? Don't you think he is always silly about poor Giles, and those abject kind of phrases, which mark a man who looks up to wealth? None of Burns' poet-dignity. What do you think? I have just opened him; but he makes me sick. Dyer knows the shoemaker (a damn'd stupid hound in company); but George promises to introduce him indiscriminately to all friends."

3. Drake, 1804.

Nathan Drake, the author of Shakespeare and his Times, commented on Bloomfield's "true pastoral imagery and simplicity", in a review of him in his Literary Hours:⁵ "Such indeed are the merits of this Work (the Farmer's Boy), that in true pastoral imagery and simplicity I do not think any production can be put in competition with it since the days of Theocritus.

"To that charming simplicity which particularizes the Grecian, are added the individuality, fidelity, and boldness of description, which render Thomson so interesting to the lovers of Nature. . .

"Several of the topics, it will be perceiv'd, are new to poetry; and of those which are in their title familiar to the readers of our descriptive Bards, it will be found that the imagery and adjunctive circumstances are original, and the effort of a mind practis'd in the rare art of selecting and

5 F.B., 5th ed. app. 113; 1824, I, xxxiii, et seq.; op. cit. II, 439-481, Essay xxxix.

combining the most striking and picturesque features of an object. . . .

"The general characteristics of his versification are facility and sweetness; that ease which is, in fact, the result of unremitted labour, and one of the most valuable acquisitions of literature (sic). It displays occasionally likewise a vigour and a brilliancy of polish that might endure comparison with the high-wrought texture of the Muse of Darwin. From the nature of his subject, however, this splendid mode of decoration could be used but with a sparing hand: and it is not one of his least merits that his diction and harmony should so admirably correspond with the scene which he has chosen. . . .

"From the review we have now taken of the Farmer's Boy, it will be evident, I think, that owing to its harmony and sweetness of versification, its benevolence of sentiment, and originality of imagery, it is entitled to rank very high in the class of descriptive and pastoral Poetry."

Drake thus accorded to Bloomfield's poem a praise as high as that of Lofft, holding the opposite view to that of Lamb, with regard to Bloomfield's selection.

It is interesting to wonder whether there is any significance in the fact that eighteen years after writing this criticism, Drake did not mention Bloomfield at all in his Evenings in Autumn.

4. Byron, 1809.

Byron has the following to say of Bloomfield in
English Bards and Scotch Reviewers:⁶

When some brisk youth, the tenant of a stall,
 Employs his pen less pointed than his awl,
 Leaves his snug shop, forsakes his store of shoes,
 St. Crispin quits, and cobbles for the muse,
 Heavens! how the vulgar stare! how crowds applaud!
 How ladies read, and literati laud!
 If chance some wicked wag should pass his jest,
 'Tis sheer ill-nature -- don't the world know best?
 Genius must guide when wits admire the rhyme,⁷
 And Capel Lofft declares 'tis quite sublime.
 Hear, then, ye happy sons of needless trade!
 Swains! quit the plough, resign the useless spade!
 Lo! Burns and Bloomfield, nay, a greater far,
 Gifford was born beneath an adverse star,
 Forsook the labours of a servile state,
 Stemn'd the rude storm, and triumph'd over fate:
 Then why no more? if Phoebus smiled on you,⁸
 Bloomfield! why not on brother Nathan too?
 Him too the mania, not the muse, has seized;
 Not inspiration, but a mind diseased:
 And now no boor can seek his last abode,
 No common be enclosed without an ode.
 Oh! since increased refinement deigns to smile
 On Briton's sons and bless our genial isle,
 Let poesy go forth, pervade the whole,
 Alike the rustic and mechanic soul!
 Ye tuneful cobblers! still your notes prolong,
 Compose at once a slipper and a song:
 So shall the fair your handiwork peruse,
 Your sonnets sure shall please -- perhaps your shoes.
 May Moorland weavers boast Pindaric skill,
 And tailors' lays be longer than their bill!
 While punctual beaux regard the grateful notes,
 And pay for poems -- when they pay for coats.

6 Works, p. 252, lines 765-798.

7 Ibid. p. 1017, Byron adds this note: "Capel Lofft, Esquire, the Maecenas of shoemakers, and preface-writer-general to distressed verse-men; a kind of gratis accoucheur to those who wish to be delivered of rhyme, but do not know how to bring it forth."

8 Robert's brother, Nathan Bloomfield, a tailor.

9 1827, pref. lxxvi, March 1809, Bloomfield says: "Made a shoe between dinner and tea-time, and composed the 'Widow' beside."

5. Weston, 1824.

Joseph Weston, the editor of the Remains, has the following to say of Bloomfield, in his laudatory preface to the volume :¹⁰

"I cannot refrain from saying, that (take him for all in all) he (Bloomfield) has ever appeared to me, to be one of the most perfect poets of his day. Some, no doubt, have soared on bolder wings, or tuned their lyres to nobler themes : but very few touch, with a hand so delicate, the finest sensibilities of the heart; or lead the affections, with such gentle force, to virtue and to happiness.

"His pictures are drawn directly from nature ; and are always just and true, like the reflection of a polished mirror; while in other poets we frequently meet with dazzling and distorted images, which resemble the face of nature when viewed through a prism. Another excellence, peculiar to Bloomfield, is the extreme purity of his taste, which, considering his want of education, is really wonderful. This faculty in him was so nice and accurate, as to reject not only all gross and impure ideas, but all foreign and artificial ornaments.

"His rural scenes are never infested with dryads, or fauns, or genii, or any other phantoms of foreign extraction; they are also free from every taint of local superstition, and indeed from everything else that has the least tendency to corrupt the taste, debase the mind, or demoralize the heart. Everything is simple and unaffected; truly pastoral and truly

10 Rem., I, pref. viii-xi.

English. Hence some have pronounced his poetry tame, and deficient in classical embellishment, but I much fear, that the tameness complained of, existed, -- not in the writer -- but the reader, whose cold or vitiated taste might require artificial stimulants, and not be able to relish the unsophisticated productions of truth and nature. No one indeed can fully appreciate his peculiar excellencies unless accustomed not only to rural scenes and rural manners, but to those tran-
quil, yet delightful feelings also, which arise from the innocence of rural employments; in which there is little to distract the head or disturb the heart but the gentle pulsations of love."

Weston seems not to have noticed the occurrence in Bloomfield's poetry, in the Bank of Wye and Hazelwood Hall as well as in the Farmer's Boy, of references to personified seasons and abstract qualities such as love, and to Hymen, Boreas, Phoebus, Pomona, Reynard. The "tameness" which Weston tried to disprove is one of the characteristics which Chambers and others later seized upon as a reason for Bloomfield's decline in popularity.

6. Hazlitt, 1824.

William Hazlitt used the motto of the Farmer's Boy -- "The fields his study, nature was his book" (from Spring, 31) -- in his essay "On Going a Journey", published in the New Monthly Magazine, 1822;¹¹ and he also said of the poet in his "Select British Poets", 1824: ¹² "Bloomfield's excellence is confined

11 Works, VI, 181

12 Ibid. V, 377.

to a minute and often interesting description of individual objects in nature, in which he is surpassed perhaps by no one." 125
7. Wilson, 1822-1842.

John Wilson noticed Bloomfield in Blackwood's Magazine, in his Noctes Ambrosianae, 1822-1833;¹³ and is quoted by Chambers¹⁴ as saying concerning Bloomfield's "The Soldier's Return": "The topic is trite, but in Mr. Bloomfield's hands it almost assumes a character of novelty. Burns's 'Soldier's Return' is not, to our taste, one whit superior."

Wilson also mentioned Bloomfield in his Recreations of Christopher North, 1842, some twenty years later:¹⁵ he has the Shepherd say that a shepherd, i.e. the Ettrick Shepherd, is as good as a cobbler anyway, "though Bloomfield was a cobbler".

An examination of the foregoing criticisms in this chapter will reveal the fact that, with the exception of Lamb and Byron, the critics are all disposed to look upon the poet favorably, some with extravagant praise; that the characteristics they comment on with admiration are the poet's simplicity, smooth versification, and exact descriptions of country life; and that Lamb's objection, Byron's being too general and personal to admit of analysis, rests upon the grounds of the poet's abject attitude and phrases, and upon his over-minuteness of detail, with too little selection. It was during the twenty years which elapsed between the poet's death in 1823, and the publication of Chambers's Cyclopaedia of English Literature, in 1842-1844, that the tide turned

13 Op.cit. I, 465.

14 Cyclo. II, 287.

15 Op.cit. IV, 85, 87.

against Bloomfield's popularity, for during this period there seems to have been no mention of him by critics; and the next to speak of him, Robert Chambers, believes that he is "now little read".

The next chapter will take up the later group of critics, from 1842 to 1905.

Later Criticism, 1842-1905.1. Chambers, 1842-1844.

Perhaps the most significant remark with regard to the writings of the poet Robert Bloomfield, and one which time has seemed to justify, was that made by Robert Chambers, in his Cyclopaedia of English Literature, 1842-1844,¹⁶ -- the first criticism after a period of twenty years without mention of the poet. Chambers included in his volume a short biography of Bloomfield, and selections from the Farmer's Boy, Wild Flowers, and May Day with the Muses, with this significant remark, that Bloomfield's "want of vigour and passion, joined to the humility of his themes, is perhaps the cause of his being now little read".¹⁷ This judgment, among all those here recorded, is probably the most true, for Bloomfield is now even less read or known; and this seems the most reasonable explanation for the neglect of his poetry, as I shall later have occasion to observe in more detail.

From this time on, the mentions of Bloomfield by critics and literary historians become more and more scanty and rare.

2. Brooke, 1879.

Among later writers on literary history, Stopford Brooke, in his Primer of English Literature, 1879, has one of

¹⁶ Cousin, 178.

¹⁷ Op.cit. I, 283-288.

the few explicit comments on Bloomfield, in these words, in connection with the works of Crabbe:¹⁸ "Robert Bloomfield, himself a poor shoemaker, added to this poetry of the poor. The Farmer's Boy, 1798, and the Rural Tales, are poems as cheerful as Crabbe's were stern, and his descriptions of rural life are not less faithful. The kind of poetry thus started long continued in our verse. Wordsworth took it up and added to it new features, and Thomas Hood, in short pieces like the Song of the Shirt, gave it a direct bearing upon social evils."

The date he gives for the Farmer's Boy, it will be noted, is that of completion, not that of publication, which was 1800.

Whether Stopford Brooke should have the benefit of the doubt, and be thought acquainted with Bloomfield at first hand, I may not judge; yet the one point he makes sounds much like this of Robert Chambers, in the work mentioned above: "It is interesting to contrast the cheerful tone of Bloomfield's description of rural life in its hardest and least interesting forms, with those of Crabbe, also a native of Suffolk."¹⁹ We may note that Chambers also remarks the "humility of his themes"; and that the incorrect date for the Farmer's Boy (if it was meant for that of publication, as the context seems to suggest), also agrees with the statement in Chambers, that "the author was at this time thirty-two years

18 Primer, 168.

19 Cyclo. II, 284.

old". But perhaps Chambers merely gave the hint to Stopford Brooke for a statement that is undoubtedly true.

3. Arnold, 1888.

Thomas Arnold, in his Manual of English Literature, 1888, says that Robert Bloomfield, "the son of a shoemaker, gave to the world in 1800 the excellent descriptive poem of the Farmer's Boy." Although this statement sounds like a favorable criticism, it is on ~~an~~^a analysis somewhat non-committal, and is probably merely a hearsay mention, without first-hand knowledge. It contains also the downright misstatement as to Bloomfield's father's trade being that of a shoemaker. Bloomfield's father was a tailor,²⁰ as was his brother Nathaniel, mentioned by Byron.

4. Saintsbury, 1903.

George Saintsbury, in his History of Nineteenth Century Literature, 1903, gives a wrong date for Bloomfield's birth, 1760 instead of the correct date, 1766, but makes two noteworthy statements: that the Farmer's Boy is estimable but was much overpraised; and particularly, that Bloomfield was a very minor versifier, "encouraged by mistaken kindness".

20 See George Bloomfield's letter to Capel Lofft, in F.B., 4th ed. pref. vi: "Robert was the younger child of George Bloomfield, a Taylor, at Honington."

5. Gosse, 1905.

Finally, Edmund Gosse, in his Modern English Literature,²¹ giving 1798, instead of 1800, as the date of the Farmer's Boy, places Bloomfield with Graham, among the "pious writers", and suggests that it was Wordsworth's preface to the Lyrical Ballads in 1800, which, in spite of the fact that the critics stormed against it, gave the death-blōw to the sort of verse represented in Bloomfield's pastoral poem; in other words, that Bloomfield was following the school of eighteenth century diction, and that, with his popularity, he might have gone on being esteemed, together with other poets who would have continued the same tradition -- if it had not been for the revolutionary doctrines set forth in Wordsworth's preface. This interesting theory will be mentioned again in the Conclusion (see page 135).

An examination of the criticisms recorded in this chapter will reveal the fact that after 1842 the judgments are prevailingly adverse; that the poet's popularity has markedly declined; and that the explanations offered for this are the humility of the poet's themes (with the exception of Chambers the critics seem unfamiliar with any of his work except the Farmer's Boy), the plainness of his style, his lack of inspiration, and last the old-fashioned quality of his diction and versification.

An examination of the whole course of the criticisms made upon Bloomfield shows extravagant contemporary praise, followed by silence, and then growing disfavor.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, to gather together the four separate parts of the foregoing discussion, the first part presented the facts of Bloomfield's life, his parentage and his birth at Honington, Suffolk, in 1766; his boyhood spent at home and as a farm-boy at the adjoining village of Sapiston, where he worked for his uncle, William Austin; his youth as a shoemaker's apprentice in London, in the shop with his brother; his young manhood and marriage, and the ensuing cares of a family of children and the discouragements of ill health; his composition of the Farmer's Boy, which he began in 1794 and at last published, under the editorship and support of Capel Lofft, in 1800; his period of prosperity, which saw the publication of other volumes of poetry, including Rural Tales, Wild Flowers, the Banks of Wye; and finally his period of decline in health and financial condition, during which he published May Day, and his one drama, Hazelwood Hall, to his enfeeblement of mind and his death in 1823. To this account was added an account of the fortunes of his immediate family after his death, and the various means taken to alleviate their poverty, particularly by the publication of the fragments of the poet's writings in the Remains.

The second part was a presentation of the facts about the poet's works, their contents and general characteristics, together with a detailed list of all available editions of the separate and collected volumes of poems.

The third part, an examination into the formative

influences upon Bloomfield, pointed out first the significant influences of his personal career; second, the influences of his reading and various interests; third, the influence of Thomaen in suggesting the composition of the Farmer's Boy, and fourth, the place which the influence of Bloomfield's circumstances and of literature which he knew, have in his works.

The fourth part presented the judgments of critics upon Bloomfield's poetry, from 1800 to 1905, contemporary praise and later neglect and adverse criticism, with the reasons given by various writers for his early popularity and final rejection.

With all these matters in mind, we may, in closing, be able to express a judgment perhaps broader and more true than any of those recorded, because of our fuller knowledge of the facts. No one can read with painstaking care the many details of the poet's biography, with every work of the poet's before him, with a knowledge of all the criticisms passed upon the poet, and with all that, the perspective of more than a hundred years, without being impressed with certain facts and feelings. Perhaps the later critics regarded Bloomfield too harshly; at least the early ones regarded him with too unbounded an enthusiasm; but neither of these groups of writers, because of the lack of one of the things enumerated above --- the lack of a full knowledge of the details of the poet's life, or the lack of a near acquaintance with his works, or the lack of the perspective which only time can

give to judgments of literature—— could see the real merits and defects of Bloomfield, or the real relation between his life and his works, or his real place in literature, so far as that may be truly found. In other words, both his admirers and his detractors were right in what they found, and it is only that the early writers misjudged his place, and that the later writers lacked a full knowledge of his life and works, that both left something to be desired in the way of a final estimation.

If, then, I may state my conclusions from the facts here presented, I should say, with Lofft and Drake and Weston, that the admirable qualities of Bloomfield are his truth of detail, simplicity of style, kindly spirit, sympathy, and sweetness of disposition, as they appear in his poems; and I should say with Chambers, who seems to me to have struck the right reasons for the poet's decline in popularity, that Bloomfield's defects were the humility of his subjects and his lack of passion; and I should say with Edmund Gosse that it was Wordsworth's prefaces in the Lyrical Ballads which were the beginning of the poet's neglect; but I should add to these statements that the poet's merits and defects must be looked at as intimately associated with the circumstances of his life, and that it was less Wordsworth directly, than the spirit in poetry which Wordsworth represented, which led to the present fact that Bloomfield is little read and little known.

Is it the simplicity of Bloomfield's poetry that Lofft and Weston admire? The quality of simplicity is the keynote in the poet's life. Is it gentle piety, pious contemplation, kindness, patience under difficulties? These are all patent in his life. As a man, Bloomfield was simple-hearted and generous, consciously moral in his whole attitude toward the world. Naturally, then, such qualities appear in the poetry which he wrote only to give pleasure and to express himself.

Or on the other hand, is it narrowness of outlook, rustic crudeness, monotony, flatness of tone, that Lamb and the others object to? These were the characteristics of Bloomfield's life. The poet who cared so much for his mother, brothers and sisters, and family, lacked literary education, was for the greater part of his life poor, and was a ladies' shoemaker in a garret. His sweetness of sentiment and his vivid portrayal of the facts of his boyhood are expressed in a form which shows at the same time all that his life lacked.

Therefore we may say, and at the same time we shall be accounting for every word that critics have said about him, that Bloomfield wrote as he lived. From one point of view his experience was varied, and he made much of himself; but from another point of view, his experience was narrow and his life a pathetic failure, for he never achieved what he desired as a literary man. Both these aspects have been observed, and both groups of facts seized upon, but

rarely both. His virtues were in his humble themes, and also his defects. His simplicity and sweetness were his merits that won him recognition, and also the unsupported qualities which, for lack of something more, finally became but a pathetic light upon a waning reputation.

The "something more" which Bloomfield needed, was, as Chambers pointed out, more than a half-century ago, ~~was~~ "vigour and passion". The sort of poetry that Wordsworth and his contemporaries ushered in, had just this quality; vigor and passion displaced wit and detailed description, not to speak of poetical conventionalities; therefore it displaced the detailed description and the conventionalities of Bloomfield's verse, which lacked the one essential,-- passion. But here again, it was true also of his life, that from his birth to his death he was sweet, simple, pious, but lacking in spirit. "A constitutional timidity," says Weston (see page 47), "seems to characterise the whole family of the Bloomfields." This timid, this calm, this unpassionate disposition of the poet, Robert Bloomfield, whatever other admirable and winsome qualities he may have had, permitted him wide popularity in a period before poetical excellence demanded vigor and passion, but led to his rejection when the period of Romantic Poetry was ushered in.

Editor's Changes in Text of Farmer's Boy

Capel Lofft, in the preface to the 4th edition of the Farmer's Boy, says, with regard to how much alteration he has made in the manuscript in editing it:¹ "My part has been this, and it has been a very pleasing one: to revise the MS. making occasionally corrections with respect to orthography, and sometimes in the grammatical construction. The corrections in point of Grammar, reduce themselves almost wholly to a circumstance of provincial usage, which even well educated persons in Suffolk and Norfolk do not wholly avoid; and which may be said, as to general custom, to have become in these Counties an establish'd Dialect.... that of adopting the plural for the singular termination of verbs, so as to exclude the s. But not a line is added or substantially alter'd through the whole poem. I have requested the MS. to be preserv'd for the satisfaction of those who may wish to be satisfied on this head. The proofs have gone through my hands. It has been printed slowly: because most carefully: as it deserv'd to be printed."

These words of the editor arouse the curiosity as to exactly how much Lofft really did change the MS., especially in view of Bloomfield's known lack of education, and the fact that he did not pretend to know how to manage the "stops". This curiosity is satisfied by a very painstaking and specific

1 Op.cit. xix.

statement included as a supplement to the preface of the 15th edition of the Farmer's Boy, included in the collected edition of 1822-1827, and dated 1827:²

"The following Statement has been four years before the Public; being first printed in the 'Monthly Mirror', for January, 1802'. The reader will remember, that it applies to the first edition only of the poem; as all subsequent emendations have been made by the author.³

"Mr. Park's statement of verbal variations between the MS. Copy and Printed Poem of the 'Farmer's Boy'.

"As it is not improbable that some of those invidious spirits who reluctantly allow to any popular writer the credit of having produced his own work, may hereafter report to the disadvantage of Mr. Bloomfield, that his learned friend and editor was materially concerned in composing 'The Farmer's Boy', I have taken the most effectual means in my power to counteract the injurious tendency of such a report, by collating the printed poem with the author's original manuscript (Footnote: 'Now in the possession of Mr. Hill.'),

2 Op.cit. I, pref. xlvii-1.

3 The changes of the revisions, so far as examined, are merely textual, such as the correction of obvious errors (e.g. in the F.B., Summer 8, 5th ed. has show'ers, 6th ed. showers; Autumn 91, 4th ed. has briar'd, 6th ed. brier'd; Winter 261, 5th ed. has alound, 6th ed. has aloud. Dependant, in Spring 238 is uncorrected in 4th, 4th, 6th eds.), and the change in capitalization from the fourth to the fifth editions (the following words, begun with small letters in the 4th ed., are begun with capitals in the 5th ed.: Spring 142 freedom, morn; 141 white-throat; 188 winter; 143 thrush; Summer 88 music; 343 fashion; Autumn 2 chase.).

which had passed through the hands of Mr. Capel Lofft ; and I transmit all the verbal variations which have been observed in the course of such collection (conjecture : collation?) , that they may be perpetuated on the pages of a miscellany which has been uniformly zealous in extending the well-earned reputation of our rural Bard. I must also premise, what affects not the merits of the composition in any degree, that capital letters and Italic characters were supplied by Mr. Lofft, as were various defects in orthography and punctuation, which arose from the author's want of education, and of leisure fitly to supply that loss.

"SPRING

Page.Line.		MS. Copy	Printed Poem
3	2	hover	hovers and hover'st
	7	lowly tale	humble lines
4	14	those	these
7	65	Summons...plough	summon...ploughs
	66	blow	blows
8	93	traverse once	once traverse
	98	pierce	breaks
9	116	a sentinel	such sentinels
11	135	Gave	Whence
	144	bright	white
12	155	to clear	lighting
	156	And give	Giving
	161	A	The
	163	Giles	He
13	179	Subordination stage	Subordinate they one by one
14	189	And (by stage)	Which
15	217	New milk around	Streams of new milk
17	250	and	or

SUMMER

28	23	milder	closing
	25	parches	pierces
29	34	Have	Has
	44	evinced its	evinces

Page.	Line	MS. Copy	Printed Poem	139
35	143	loins	form	
39	209	thy crest of	thy crest-wav'd	
	220	brush them	brushes	
40	244	And Use	Using	
45	318	the	their	
48	374	other than	now but	

AUTUMN

57	77	Giles--leisure	his--ease to
	81	dust	bones
59	105	and the rose that	hence the tints that glow
		blow	
	106	with-- glow	a--know
60	130	a	her
61	147	With	Her
63	173	and	next
65	216	And place	Placing
71	325	bestrewing round	are strewn around
72	343	capon	cockrel

WINTER

77	5	or burns with thirst	partaking first
	6	trust	thirst
78	17	dependant--low	the storm-pinch'd--lows
	18	grow	grows
80	47	the world	forest
83	103	ye	you
	116	every	all the
85	152	But	Their
92	264	traverse	passes
96	337	First at whose	At whose first birth
		birth	
97	352	Paternal	Maternal
99	390	Pierce the dark wood	Wander the leaf-strewn wood,
		and brave the	the frozen
		sultry plain	plain
	391	Let field and dim-	Let the first flower, corn-
		pled brook, and	waving field, plain,
		flower and tree	tree

"It will be seen from this minute statement, that the editor's emendations were very inconsiderable, though most of them appear highly judicious, and many of them absolutely necessary, for the purpose of removing certain grammatical inaccuracies, which may be considered as mere

freckles on the natural complexion of our Farmer's Boy.

"I have been indulged with a similar opportunity of inspecting the MS. copy of those admirable 'Tales, Ballads, and Songs', recently published by the same interesting poet; but the editor's hints for correction proved too few and too unimportant to authorise any public specification of them.

"Mr. Editor, yours, &c.

"Jan. 18, 1802.

"T. Park."

Subscribers to the Fund for Bloomfield's Family

The following is appended (from the Remains, I, 187-90) as throwing an interesting light upon who the poet's friends must have been, and who his admirers. On the list will be found the names of the friends mentioned in Part I, as well as others who assuredly would have been mentioned, had we all Bloomfield's correspondence.

	Pounds, Shillings, Pence		
Earl of Lonsdale	10		
Rev. W.L. Bowles	3	3	
Rev. C.B. Tayler	1		
Rev. Wm. Walker	1		
Mrs. Leake	1		
Mr. Simpson		2	6
S. Rogers, Esq.	10		
Rev. Francis Fortescue, Knottesford	1		
John Hopper	1		
Rev. Edward Auriol Hay Drummond, D.D.	1		
Nathan Drake, M.D.	1		
Miss Weston	3		
Rev. W. Branwhite Clark	1		
Miss D.		2	6
C. Bloomfield, Esq., Bury St. Edmund's	1		
Rt. Hon. Lord J. Fitzroy	5		
His Grace the Duke of Bedford	10		
His Grace the Duke of Grafton	10		
W. Rodwell, Esq.	1		
H. Alexander, Esq.	1		
Abraham Reeve, Esq.	1		
J. Weston	10		
John Mills, Esq.	1		
Bernard Barton, Esq.	1		
Henry Rogers, Esq.	10		
Mr. J. Everett		10	
Mr. F. Elliott		10	
Miss Rogers	5		
Mr. Park	2		
A Friend		10	6
Rt. Rev. Dr. Poynter	1		
W.H. Whitbread, Esq.	10		
Editor of Time's Telescope	1		
Messrs. Dawbarn and Sons, Wisbeach	1		
Mr. Geo. Cooper, of Shefford	1		

Messrs. Cooper and Argh, of ditto	1		
Mr. C. Gaye, of ditto	1		
Mr. Stranbridge, of ditto		10	
Mr. Parrot, of ditto		10	
Mr. Clark, of ditto		10	
Mr. Wm. Green, of ditto		5	
Mr. Betts, of ditto		5	
Mr. T. Inskip, of ditto	2		
Rev. D ^r . Olivier, Clifton	1		
Shefford Friend		10	
Mrs. Barber, Shefford		10	
A Shefford Friend		5	
Mr. Brewer, Shefford		2	6
Mr. Millington, ditto	1	1	
Two Ladies, ditto	2		
Messrs. Baldwin, Cradock and Joy	10		
Wm. Watson, Esq., of Wisbeach	1		
Mr. John Dawson, of ditto		10	
Mr. Richard Baxter, of ditto		10	
Mr. Wm. Peckover	1		
Mr. James Hill, of ditto	1		
Messrs. Sutton and Stone, Portsmouth	1		
James Morrison, Esq.	2	2	
J. Boddington, Esq.	5		
Rev. Geo. Atwick	2	2	
Henry Hallam, Esq.	5		
----- Morgan, Esq.	2		
Nathaniel Gundry, Esq., Richmond	5		
Mrs. Holmes, of Bury		10	
John Martin, M.D.	1	1	
John James Park, Esq.	1	1	
A Friend	1		
John Peppercorn, Esq.	5		
Rev. G.A. Hatch	2	2	
Mr. James Weston, Biggleswade	5		
Mr. Culling, Canterbury		10	6
Mr. Hovell, Wingham	1		
Mrs. Gedge, Bury St. Edmund's	1		
Rev. Mr. Hasted, ditto	1		
Mr. Harvey, ditto	1		
Mr. Sutton, ditto	1		
Edward Lockwood, Esq., ditto	1		
Mr. W.B. Lockwood, ditto (shire)	1		
Rev. F.J. Lockwood, of Richmond in York-	1		
Mrs. Bellis, near Shefford	1		
Mr. Thomas Inskip, of Shefford-Hardwicke	1		
Mr. Swannell, near Shefford		7	6
Messrs. Robinson and Bent, Manchester	1	1	
Robert Weymouth, Esq.	1		
W. Vaughan, Esq.	1		
C. Dixon, Esq., near Shefford	5		
Samuel Rogers, Esq.	21		

Pounds.Shillings.Pence

Mrs. Hey, Hertingfordbury
 Mrs. Barbara Browne, Richmond
 John Winter, Esq., Shenley Hill
 Mrs. Winter, ditto
 Mrs. Sharp
 Rev. A. Sharp
 Mrs. A. Sharp
 Miss Maunsell

1		
	10	
1		
1		
2		
1		
2		
1		

Total

323	4	0
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Table of the Number of Syllables in the Rhyme Words of the
Farmer's Boy

Book	One syllable	Two syllables	Three syllables	Four syllables	Com- pounds	Total
Spring	321	34	2	2	1	358
Summer	347	50	2	0	1	400
Autumn	326	25	8	0	1	360
Winter	335	52	4	0	3	394
Totals	1329	161	16	2	6	1512
%	88	10.6	1	0.1	0.3	100

From the above table it becomes evident, as was remarked once before, that in this long poem of 1512 lines, only 185 lines end with anything but a monosyllable (Spring 39, Summer 53, Autumn 34, Winter 59), that is, 12%, including compounds; and of these 87% are words of only 2 syllables, or 161 lines out of 185. The other 1329 lines, or 88% -- 88 rhyme words out of every hundred -- end in monosyllables. This should perhaps be taken as one explanation for the apparent monotony of the verse.

ABBREVIATIONS

for Bloomfield's Works, Used in the Notes on All Pages.

(D.N.B. Dictionary of National Biography.)

B.of W. Banks of Wye

F.B. Farmer's Boy

G.T. Good Tidings

H.H. Hazelwood Hall

M.D. May Day

Rem. Remains

R.T. Rural Tales

W.F. Wild Flowers

1801 F.B., 4th ed. pref. 1801

1824 Coll. ed. 4 vols. 1822-1827.

1827 Poems, 1827

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE and BIBLIOGRAPHY

I

Bibliographical Note

The principal source for information with regard to the life and works of Robert Bloomfield is the various editions of the works themselves, a list of which was given in detail in Part II. The other sources are listed in the Bibliography following. Where Bloomfield has been mentioned since 1842, the evident source of the information seemed to have been the Cyclopaedia of English Literature of Robert Chambers, as indicated in Part IV. The best recent source is the excellent article by A.H. Bullen, in the Dictionary of National Biography.(V, 236-7).

There are brief accounts of Bloomfield's life in the Encyclopaedia Britannica (IV,86), the New International Encyclopaedia (III, 416), Chambers's Encyclopaedia (II, 239), Nelson's Perpetual Loose-Leaf Encyclopaedia (II, 145), and Americana (III),-- all articles under the name "Bloomfield". Webster's New International Dictionary, and the Standard Dictionary give the correct dates (1766-1823) for Bloomfield's life. Frederick Ryland, in his Chronological Outlines of English Literature, mentions Bloomfield's death (p. 183), in the column of annual biographical dates, and also gives the following list of his works : Farmer's Boy, 1800 ; Rural Tales and Ballads, 1802 ; Wild Flowers, 1806 ; Banks of Wye, 1811.

The following works contain no mention of Bloomfield:

De Quincey's Reminiscences of the Lake Poets

Ward's English Poets

Phelps's Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement

Gosse's History of English Literature in the Eighteenth Century

Courthope's History of the English People

Moody and Lovett's History of English Literature

Hallöck's New English Literature

Pancoast's Introduction to English Literature

Wendell's Literary History of America

There seems to be no information available, beyond the fact of the various editions made there, as to Bloomfield's vogue in America, where he must have been popular at one time. There seems also to be no trace of the translations made of the Farmer's Boy, into Latin, French, and Italian.

II

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1 One of the subscribers to the Bloomfield fund, see Appendix B.

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--- Same, from the London 3. ed. Phila. : J. Humphreys, 1801. 141 p. 16mo.

--- Same, with wood engravings by T. Bewick. London: Vernor and Hood, 1801. 2 p.l., xxxii, 128 p., 4. ed. 8vo.

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