THE VILLAGE.

IN TWO BOOKS.

BOOK I. (1)

(1) [The first edition of 'The Village' appeared in May, 1783. See the Author's preface, *antè*, p. 8., and Vol. I. p. 120.]

The Subject proposed — Remarks upon Pastoral Poetry — A Tract of Country near the Coast described — An impoverished Borough — Smugglers and their Assistants — Rude Manners of the Inhabitants — Ruinous Effects of a high Tide — The Village Life more generally considered: Evils of it — The youthful Labourer — The old Man: his Soliloquy — The Parish Workhouse: its Inhabitants — The sick Poor: their Apothecary — The dying Pauper — The Village Priest.

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THE

VILLAGE.

BOOK I.

THE Village Life, and every care that reigns
O'er youthful peasants and declining swains;
What labour yields, and what, that labour past.
Age, in its hour of languor, finds at last;
What form the real Picture of the Poor,
Demand a song—the Muse can give no more.
  Fled are those times, when, in harmonious strains,
The rustic poet praised his native plains:
No shepherds now, in smooth alternate verse,
Their country's beauty or their nymphs' rehearse; (1)
Yet still for these we frame the tender strain,
Still in our lays fond Corydons complain,
And shepherds' boys their amorous pains reveal,
The only pains (2), alas! they never feel.

(1) [*Strephon.* "In spring the fields, in autumn hills I love
At morn the plains, at noon the shady grove,
But Delia always; absent from her sight,
Nor plains at morn, nor groves at noon delight.
Daphnis. Sylvia's like autumn ripe, yet mild as May,
More bright than noon, yet fresh as early day," &c. POPE.]

(2) ["In order to form a right judgment of pastoral poetry, it will be necessary to cast back our eyes on the first ages of the world. The abundance they were possessed of, secured them from avarice, ambition, or envy; they could scarce have any anxieties or contentions, where every

On Mincio's banks, in Cæsar's bounteous reign,
If Tityrus found the Golden Age again,
Must sleepy bards the flattering dream prolong,
Mechanic echoes of the Mantuan song?
From Truth and Nature shall we widely stray,
Where Virgil, not where Fancy, leads the way?(1)

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one had more than he could tell what to do with. Love, indeed, might occasion some rivalships amongst them, because many lovers fix upon one subject, for the loss of which they will be satisfied with no compensation. Otherwise it was a state of ease, innocence, and contentment; where plenty begot pleasure, and pleasure begot singing, and singing begot poetry, and poetry begot pleasure again. An author, therefore, that would write pastorals should form in his fancy a rural scene of perfect ease and tranquillity, where innocence, simplicity, and joy abound. It is not enough that he writes about the country; he must give us what is agreeable in that scene, and hide what is wretched. Let the tranquillity of the pastoral life appear full and plain, but hide the meanness of it; represent its simplicity as clear as you please, but cover its misery. As there is no condition exempt from anxiety, I will allow shepherds to be afflicted with such misfortunes as the loss of a favourite lamb, or a faithless mistress. He may, if you please, pick a thorn out of his foot, or vent his grief for losing the prize in dancing; but these being small torments, they recommend that state which only produces such trifling evils." — STEELE.]

(1) ["This year (1783) I had," says Boswell, "an opportunity of seeing, by means of one of his friends, a proof that Dr. Johnson's talents, as well as his obliging services to authors, were ready as ever. He had revised 'The Village,' an admirable poem, by the Rev. Mr. Crabbe. Its sentiments as to the false notions of rustic happiness and rustic virtue were quite congenial with his own; and he took the trouble, not only to suggest slight corrections and variations, but to furnish some lines, when he thought he could give the writer's meaning better than in the words of the manuscript. I shall give an instance, marking the original by Roman, and Johnson's substitution in *Italic* characters:

"'In fairer scenes, where peaceful pleasures spring,
Tityrus the pride of Mantuan swains might sing:
But, charm'd by him, or smitten with his views,
Shall modern poets court the Mantuan muse?
From Truth and Nature shall we widely stray,
Where Fancy leads, or Virgil led the way?'

"'*On Mincio's banks, in Cæsar's bounteous reign*,' &c.

Here we find Dr. Johnson's poetical and critical powers undiminished. I must, however, observe, that the aids he gave to this poem were so small as by no means to impair the distinguished merit of the author."—CROKER's *Boswell*, vol. v. p. 55.

Yes, thus the Muses sing of happy swains,
Because the Muses never knew their pains:
They boast their peasants' pipes; but peasants now
Resign their pipes and plod behind the plough;
And few, amid the rural-tribe, have time
To number syllables, and play with rhyme;
Save honest DUCK,(1) what son of verse could share
The poet's rapture and the peasant's care?
Or the great labours of the field degrade,
With the new peril of a poorer trade? (2)
From this chief cause these idle praises spring,
That themes so easy few forbear to sing;
For no deep thought the trifling subjects ask;
To sing of shepherds is an easy task: (3)

(1) [Stephen Duck, the poetical thresher. "It was his lot," says Mr. Southey, "to be duck-peck'd by his lawful wife, who told all the neighbourhood that her husband dealt with the devil, or was going mad; for he did nothing but talk to himself and tell his fingers." Some of his verses having been shown to Queen Caroline, she settled twelve shillings a week upon him, and appointed him keeper of her select library at Richmond, called Merlin's Cave. He afterwards took orders, and obtained the living of Byfleet, in Surrey. Gay, in a letter to Swift, says, "I do not envy Stephen Duck, who is the favourite poet of the court;" and Swift wrote upon him the following epigram: —

"The thresher, Duck, could o'er the Queen prevail;
The proverb says, 'no fence against a flail.'
From *threshing* corn, he turns to thresh his brains,
For which her Majesty allows him *grains*;
Though 'tis confest, that those who ever saw
His poems, think them all not worth a *straw*.
Thrice happy Duck! employ'd in threshing *stubble*,
Thy toil is lessen'd, and thy profits double."

Stephen's end was an unhappy one. Growing melancholy, in 1750, he threw himself into the river near Reading, and was drowned.]

(2) ["Robert Bloomfield had better have remained a shoemaker, or even a farmer's boy; for he would have been a farmer perhaps in time; and now he is an unfortunate poet." — CRABBE's *Journal*, 1817.]

(3) [*Orig. Ed.* They ask no thought, require no deep design,
But swell the song, and liquify the line.]

The happy youth assumes the common strain,
A nymph his mistress, and himself a swain;
With no sad scenes he clouds his tuneful prayer,
But all, to look like her, is painted fair.

I grant indeed that fields and flocks have charms
For him that grazes or for him that farms;
But when amid such pleasing scenes I trace
The poor laborious natives of the place,
And see the mid-day sun, with fervid ray,
On their bare heads and dewy temples play;
While some, with feebler heads and fainter hearts,
Deplore their fortune, yet sustain their parts—
Then shall I dare these real ills to hide
In tinsel trappings of poetic pride?

No; cast by Fortune on a frowning coast,
Which neither groves nor happy valleys boast; (1)
Where other cares than those the Muse relates,
And other shepherds dwell with other mates;
By such examples taught, I paint the Cot,
As Truth will paint it, and as Bards will not:
Nor you, ye Poor, of letter'd scorn complain,
To you the smoothest song is smooth in vain;
O'ercome by labour, and bow'd down by time,
Feel you the barren flattery of a rhyme?
Can poets soothe you, when you pine for bread,
By winding myrtles round your ruin'd shed?
Can their light tales your weighty griefs o'erpower,
Or glad with airy mirth the toilsome hour?

(1) [Aldborough was, half a century ago, a poor and wretched place. It consisted of two parallel and unpaved streets, running between mean and scrambling houses, the abodes of seafaring men, pilots, and fishers. . . . Such was the squalid scene that first opened on the author of "The Village." See *antè*, Vol. I. p. 9.]

Lo! where the heath, with withering brake grown o'er,
Lends the light turf that warms the neighbouring poor;
From thence a length of burning sand appears,
Where the thin harvest waves its wither'd ears;
Rank weeds, that every art and care defy,
Reign o'er the land, and rob the blighted rye:
There thistles stretch their prickly arms afar,
And to the ragged infant threaten war; (1)
There poppies nodding, mock the hope of toil;
There the blue bugloss paints the sterile soil;
Hardy and high, above the slender sheaf,
The slimy mallow waves her silky leaf;
O'er the young shoot the charlock throws a shade,
And clasping tares cling round the sickly blade; (2)
With mingled tints the rocky coasts abound,
And a sad splendour vainly shines around.
So looks the nymph whom wretched arts adorn,
Betray'd by man, then left for man to scorn;
Whose cheek in vain assumes the mimic rose,
While her sad eyes the troubled breast disclose;
Whose outward splendour is but folly's dress,
Exposing most, when most it gilds distress.
Here joyless roam a wild amphibious race,
With sullen woe display'd in every face;
Who, far from civil arts and social fly,
And scowl at strangers with suspicious eye.
Here too the lawless merchant of the main
Draws from his plough th' intoxicated swain;

(1) [This picture was copied, in every respect, from the scene of the poet's nativity and boyish days. See *antè*, Vol. I. p. 10.]

(2) [" This is a fine description of that peculiar sort of barrenness which prevails along the sandy and thinly inhabited shores of the channel."—JEFFREY.]

Want only claim'd the labour of the day,
But vice now steals his nightly rest away.
  Where are the swains, who, daily labour done,
With rural games play'd down the setting sun;
Who struck with matchless force the bounding ball,
Or made the pond'rous quoit obliquely fall;
While some huge Ajax, terrible and strong,
Engaged some artful stripling of the throng,
And fell beneath him, foil'd, while far around
Hoarse triumph rose, and rocks return'd the sound?(1)
Where now are these?—Beneath yon cliff they stand,
To show the freighted pinnace where to land;
To load the ready steed with guilty haste,
To fly in terror o'er the pathless waste,
Or, when detected, in their straggling course,
To foil their foes by cunning or by force;
Or, yielding part (which equal knaves demand),
To gain a lawless passport through the land.
  Here, wand'ring long, amid these frowning fields,
I sought the simple life that Nature yields;
Rapine and Wrong and Fear usurp'd her place,
And a bold, artful, surly, savage race;
Who, only skill'd to take the finny tribe,
The yearly dinner, or septennial bribe,
Wait on the shore, and, as the waves run high,
On the tost vessel bend their eager eye,
Which to their coast directs its vent'rous wav;
Theirs, or the ocean's, miserable prey.
  As on their neighbouring beach yon swallows stand,
And wait for favouring winds to leave the land;

(1) [MS.—" And foil'd beneath the young Ulysses fell,
When peals of praise the merry mischief tell?"]

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While still for flight the ready wing is spread:
So waited I the favouring hour, and fled;
Fled from these shores where guilt and famine reign,
And cried, Ah! hapless they who still remain;
Who still remain to hear the ocean roar,
Whose greedy waves devour the lessening shore;
Till some fierce tide (1), with more imperious sway,
Sweeps the low hut and all it holds away;
When the sad tenant weeps from door to door;
And begs a poor protection from the poor! (2)

But these are scenes where Nature's niggard hand
Gave a spare portion to the famish'd land;
Her's is the fault, if here mankind complain
Of fruitless toil and labour spent in vain;
But yet in other scenes more fair in view,
When Plenty smiles—alas! she smiles for few—
And those who taste not, yet behold her store,
Are as the slaves that dig the golden ore—
The wealth around them makes them doubly poor.

Or will you deem them amply paid in health,
Labour's fair child, that languishes with wealth?
Go then! and see them rising with the sun,
Through a long course of daily toil to run;
See them beneath the dog-star's raging heat,
When the knees tremble and the temples beat; (3)

(1) [Mr. Crabbe was often heard to describe a remarkable spring-tide, in January, 1779, when eleven houses at Aldborough were at once demolished.]

(2) [These lines, expressive of Mr. Crabbe's feelings on quitting his native place, were, he had reason to believe, the very verses which first satisfied Burke that he was a poet. See *antè*, Vol. I. p. 46.]

(3) [Original MS.:—

Like him to make the plenteous harvest grow,
And yet not share the plenty they bestow.]

Behold them, leaning on their scythes, look o'er
The labour past, and toils to come explore;
See them alternate suns and showers engage,
And hoard up aches and anguish for their age;
Through fens and marshy moors their steps pursue
When their warm pores imbibe the evening dew;
Then own that labour may as fatal be
To these thy slaves, as thine excess to thee. (1)

Amid this tribe too oft a manly pride
Strives in strong toil the fainting heart to hide;
There may you see the youth of slender frame
Contend with weakness, weariness, and shame;
Yet, urged along, and proudly loth to yield,
He strives to join his fellows of the field:
Till long-contending nature droops at last,
Declining health rejects his poor repast,
His cheerless spouse the coming danger sees,
And mutual murmurs urge the slow disease.

Yet grant them health, 'tis not for us to tell,
Though the head droops not, that the heart is well
Or will you praise that homely, healthy fare,
Plenteous and plain, that happy peasants share!
Oh! trifle not with wants you cannot feel,
Nor mock the misery of a stinted meal;

(1) ["Let those who feast at ease on dainty fare
Pity the reapers, who their feasts prepare:
For toils scarce ever ceasing press us now —
Rest never does but on the sabbath show;
And barely that our masters will allow.
Think what a painful life we daily lead;
Each morning early rise, go late to bed;
Nor when asleep are we secure from pain —
We then perform our labours o'er again.
Hard fate! our labours even in sleep don't cease;
Scarce Hercules e'er felt such toils as these!" — DUCK.]

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Homely, not wholesome, plain, not plenteous, such
As you who praise would never deign to touch.
Ye gentle souls, who dream of rural ease,
Whom the smooth stream and smoother sonnet please;
Go! if the peaceful cot your praises share,
Go look within, and ask if peace be there;
If peace be his—that drooping weary sire,
Or theirs, that offspring round their feeble fire;
Or hers, that matron pale, whose trembling hand
Turns on the wretched hearth th' expiring brand!
Nor yet can Time itself obtain for these
Life's latest comforts, due respect and ease;
For yonder see that hoary swain, whose age
Can with no cares except its own engage;
Who, propt on that rude staff, looks up to see
The bare arms broken from the withering tree,
On which, a boy, he climb'd the loftiest bough,
Then his first joy, but his sad emblem now.
He once was chief in all the rustic trade;
His steady hand the straightest furrow made;
Full many a prize he won, and still is proud
To find the triumphs of his youth allow'd; (1)

(1) ["Mr. Crabbe exhibits the common people of England pretty much as they are, and as they must appear to every one who will take the trouble of examining into their condition; at the same time that he renders his sketches in a very high degree interesting and beautiful,—by selecting what is most fit for description; by grouping them in such forms as must catch the attention or awake the memory; and by scattering over the whole, such traits of moral sensibility, of sarcasm, and of useful reflection, as every one must feel to be natural, and own to be powerful. In short, he shows us something which we have all seen, or may see, in real life; and draws from it such feelings and such reflections, as every human being must acknowledge that it is calculated to excite. He delights us by the truth, and vivid and picturesque beauty, of his representations, and by the force and pathos of the sensations with which we feel that they ought to be connected."—JEFFREY.]

A transient pleasure sparkles in his eyes,
He hears and smiles, then thinks again and sighs:
For now he journeys to his grave in pain;
The rich disdain him; nay, the poor disdain:
Alternate masters now their slave command,
Urge the weak efforts of his feeble hand,
And, when his age attempts its task in vain,
With ruthless taunts, of lazy poor complain.(1)
Oft may you see him, when he tends the sheep,
His winter charge, beneath the hillock weep;
Oft hear him murmur to the winds that blow
O'er his white locks and bury them in snow,
When, roused by rage and muttering in the morn,
He mends the broken hedge with icy thorn: —
" Why do I live, when I desire to be
" At once from life and life's long labour free?
" Like leaves in spring, the young are blown away,
" Without the sorrows of a slow decay;
" I, like yon wither'd leaf, remain behind,
" Nipt by the frost, and shivering in the wind;
" There it abides till younger buds come on,
" As I, now all my fellow-swains are gone;
" Then, from the rising generation thrust,
" It falls, like me, unnoticed to the dust.
" These fruitful fields, these numerous flocks I see,
" Are others' gain, but killing cares to me;
" To me the children of my youth are lords,
" Cool in their looks, but hasty in their words:(2)

(1) A pauper who, being nearly past his labour, is employed by different masters for a length of time, proportioned to their occupations.

(2) [Original MS.: — " Slow in their gifts, but hasty in their words."]

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"Wants of their own demand their care; and who
"Feels his own want and succours others too?
"A lonely, wretched man, in pain I go,
"None need my help, and none relieve my woe;
"Then let my bones beneath the turf be laid,
"And men forget the wretch they would not aid."
Thus, groan the old, till, by disease oppress'd,
They taste a final woe, and then they rest.
Theirs is yon House that holds the parish poor,
Whose walls of mud scarce bear the broken door;
There, where the putrid vapours, flagging, play,
And the dull wheel hums doleful through the day;—
There children dwell who know no parents' care;
Parents, who know no children's love, dwell there!
Heart-broken matrons on their joyless bed,
Forsaken wives, and mothers never wed;
Dejected widows with unheeded tears,
And crippled age with more than childhood fears;
The lame, the blind, and, far the happiest they!
The moping idiot, and the madman gay.(1)

(1) [This description of the Parish Poor-house, and that of the Village Apothecary, lower down, were inserted by Burke in the Annual Register, and afterwards by Dr. Vicesimus Knox in the Elegant Extracts, along with the lines on the old romancers from "The Library." The effect produced by these specimens has been already illustrated by a letter from Sir W. Scott to Mr. Crabbe, written in 1809. See the preceding volume of this collection, p. 191. The poet Wordsworth, on reading that letter, has said:—"I first became acquainted with Mr. Crabbe's works in the same way, and about the same time, as did Sir Walter Scott, as appears from his letter; and the extracts made such an impression upon me, that *I* can also repeat them. The two lines,—

'The lame, the blind, and, far the happiest they!
The moping idiot, and the madman gay,'—

struck my youthful feelings particularly; though facts, as far as they had then come under my knowledge, did not support the description; inasmuch as idiots and lunatics, among the humbler classes of society, were not to be

Here too the sick their final doom receive,
Here brought, amid the scenes of grief, to grieve,
Where the loud groans from some sad chamber flow,
Mixt with the clamours of the crowd below;
Here, sorrowing, they each kindred sorrow scan,
And the cold charities of man to man:
Whose laws indeed for ruin'd age provide,
And strong compulsion plucks the scrap from pride;
But still that scrap is bought with many a sigh,
And pride embitters what it can't deny.

Say, ye, oppress by some fantastic woes,
Some jarring nerve that baffles your repose;
Who press the downy couch, while slaves advance
With timid eye to read the distant glance;
Who with sad prayers the weary doctor tease,
To name the nameless ever-new disease;
Who with mock patience dire complaints endure,
Which real pain and that alone can cure;
How would ye bear in real pain to lie,
Despised, neglected, left alone to die?
How would ye bear to draw your latest breath,
Where all that's wretched paves the way for death?(1)

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found in workhouses, in the parts of the north where I was brought up, but were mostly at large, and too often the butt of thoughtless children. Any testimony from me to the merit of your revered father's works would, I feel, be superfluous, if not impertinent. They will last, from their combined merits as Poetry and Truth, full as long as any thing that has been expressed in verse since they first made their appearance."—*Letter dated Feb.* 1834.]

(1) ["There is a truth and a force in these descriptions of rural life, which is calculated to sink deep into the memory; and, being confirmed by daily observation, they are recalled upon innumerable occasions, when the ideal pictures of more fanciful authors have lost all their interest. For ourselves at least, we profess to be indebted to Mr. Crabbe for many of

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Such is that room which one rude beam divides,
And naked rafters form the sloping sides;
Where the vile bands that bind the thatch are seen,
And lath and mud are all that lie between;
Save one dull pane, that, coarsely patch'd, gives way
To the rude tempest, yet excludes the day:
Here, on a matted flock, with dust o'erspread,
The drooping wretch reclines his languid head;
For him no hand the cordial cup applies,
Or wipes the tear that stagnates in his eyes;
No friends with soft discourse his pain beguile,
Or promise hope, till sickness wears a smile.
But soon a loud and hasty summons calls,
Shakes the thin roof, and echoes round the walls;
Anon, a figure enters, quaintly neat,
All pride and business, bustle and conceit;
With looks unalter'd by these scenes of woe,
With speed that, entering, speaks his haste to go,
He bids the gazing throng around him fly,
And carries fate and physic in his eye:
A potent quack, long versed in human ills,
Who first insults the victim whom he kills;

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these strong impressions; and have known more than one of our unpoetical acquaintances who declared they could never pass by a parish workhouse, without thinking of the description of it they had read at school in the 'Poetical Extracts.'"—*Edinburgh Review*, 1807.

"The vulgar impression, that Crabbe is throughout a gloomy author, we ascribe to the choice of certain specimens of his earliest poetry in the 'Elegant Extracts,'—the only specimens of him that had been at all generally known at the time when most of those who have criticised his later works were young. That exquisitely-finished, but heart-sickening description, in particular, of the poor-house in 'The Village,' fixed itself on every imagination; and when the Register and Borough came out, the reviewers, unconscious, perhaps, of the early prejudice that was influencing them, selected quotations mainly of the same class."—*Quarterly Review*, 1834.

Whose murd'rous hand a drowsy Bench protect,
And whose most tender mercy is neglect.
  Paid by the parish for attendance here,
He wears contempt upon his sapient sneer;
In haste he seeks the bed where Misery lies,
Impatience mark'd in his averted eyes;
And, some habitual queries hurried o'er,
Without reply, he rushes on the door:
His drooping patient, long inured to pain,
And long unheeded, knows remonstrance vain;
He ceases now the feeble help to crave
Of man; and silent sinks into the grave. (1)
  But ere his death some pious doubts arise,
Some simple fears, which "bold bad" men despise;
Fain would he ask the parish priest to prove
His title certain to the joys above:
For this he sends the murmuring nurse, who calls
The holy stranger to these dismal walls:
And doth not he, the pious man, appear,
He, "passing rich with forty pounds a year?" (2)
Ah! no; a shepherd of a different stock,
And far unlike him, feeds this little flock:
A jovial youth, who thinks his Sunday's task
As much as God or man can fairly ask;
The rest he gives to loves and labours light,
To fields the morning, and to feasts the night;
None better skill'd the noisy pack to guide,
To urge their chase, to cheer them or to chide;

(1) ["The consequential apothecary, who gives an impatient attendance in these abodes of misery, is admirably described."— JEFFREY.]

(2) ["A man he was, to all the country dear,
And passing rich with forty pounds a year."— GOLDSMITH.]

drowsy Bench protect,
mercy is neglect.
attendance here,
his sapient sneer;
where Misery lies,
averted eyes;
ies hurried o'er,
on the door:
g inured to pain,
ws remonstrance vain;
help to crave
s into the grave. (1)
pious doubts arise,
"bold bad" men despise;
arish priest to prove
ys above:
rmuring nurse, who calls
se dismal walls:
us man, appear,
forty pounds a year?" (2)
a different stock,
ls this little flock:
nks his Sunday's task
can fairly ask;
es and labours light,
nd to feasts the night;
oisy pack to guide,
cheer them or to chide;

cary, who gives an impatient attendance
rably described."—JEFFREY.]
the country dear,
h forty pounds a year."—GOLDSMITH.]

A sportsman keen, he shoots through half the day, (1)
And, skill'd at whist, devotes the night to play: (2)
Then, while such honours bloom around his head,
Shall he sit sadly by the sick man's bed,
To raise the hope he feels not, or with zeal
To combat fears that e'en the pious feel? (3)
  Now once again the gloomy scene explore,
Less gloomy now; the bitter hour is o'er,
The man of many sorrows sighs no more. —
Up yonder hill, behold how sadly slow
The bier moves winding from the vale below:
There lie the happy dead, from trouble free,
And the glad parish pays the frugal fee:
No more, O Death! thy victim starts to hear
Churchwarden stern, or kingly overseer;
No more the farmer claims his humble bow,
Thou art his lord, the best of tyrants thou!

(1) [Original Edition: —

Sure in his shot, his game he seldom mist,
And seldom fail'd to win his game at whist.]

(2) "[Mr. Crabbe told me, that when he first published his poem 'The Village,' the letters he received were innumerable from a particular class of religious readers, who were warm in commendation, most particularly of the lines, —

'Sure in his shot, his game he seldom mist,
And seldom fail'd to win his game at whist.'

The letters of remonstrance were as innumerable, when, in his poem, 'The Library,' the lines were read, —

'Calvin grows gentle on this silent coast,
Nor finds a single heretic to roast.'" — BOWLES.]

(3) ["Oh, laugh or mourn with me the rueful jest,
A cassock'd huntsman, and a fiddling priest!
He takes the field. The master of the pack
Cries, 'Well done, saint!' and claps him on the back.
Is this the path of sanctity? Is this
To stand a way-mark in the road to bliss?
Himself a wand'rer from the narrow way,
His silly sheep, what wonder if they stray?" — COWPER.]

Now to the church behold the mourners come,
Sedately torpid and devoutly dumb;
The village children now their games suspend,
To see the bier that bears their ancient friend:
For he was one in all their idle sport,
And like a monarch ruled their little court;
The pliant bow he form'd, the flying ball,
The bat, the wicket, were his labours all;
Him now they follow to his grave, and stand,
Silent and sad, and gazing, hand in hand;
While bending low, their eager eyes explore
The mingled relics of the parish poor.
The bell tolls late, the moping owl flies round,
Fear marks the flight and magnifies the sound;
The busy priest, detain'd by weightier care,
Defers his duty till the day of prayer; (1)
And, waiting long, the crowd retire distrest,
To think a poor man's bones should lie unblest. (2)

(1) Some apology is due for the insertion of a circumstance by no means common. That it has been a subject for complaint in any place, is a sufficient reason for its being reckoned among the evils which may happen to the poor, and which must happen to them exclusively; nevertheless, it is just to remark, that such neglect is very rare in any part of the kingdom, and in many parts is totally unknown.

(2) [" In this part of the poem there is a great deal of painting that is truly characteristic; and had not that indispensable rule, which both painters and poets should equally attend to, been reversed, namely, to form their individuals from ideas of general nature, it would have been unexceptionable." — *Monthly Rev.* 1783.]

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THE VILLAGE.

BOOK II.

There are found, amid the Evils of a laborious Life, some Views of Tranquillity and Happiness — The Repose and Pleasure of a Summer Sabbath: interrupted by Intoxication and Dispute — Village Detraction — Complaints of the 'Squire — The Evening Riots — Justice — Reasons for this unpleasant View of Rustic Life: the Effect it should have upon the Lower Classes; and the Higher — These last have their peculiar Distresses: Exemplified in the Life and heroic Death of Lord Robert Manners — Concluding Address to His Grace the Duke of Rutland.

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THE

VILLAGE.

BOOK II.

No longer truth, though shown in verse, disdain,
But own the Village Life a life of pain:
I too must yield, that oft amid these woes [repose,
Are gleams of transient mirth and hours of sweet
Such as you find on yonder sportive Green,
The 'squire's tall gate and churchway-walk between;
Where loitering stray a little tribe of friends,
On a fair Sunday when the sermon ends:
Then rural beaux their best attire put on,
To win their nymphs, as other nymphs are won;
While those long wed go plain, and by degrees,
Like other husbands, quit their care to please.
Some of the sermon talk, a sober crowd,
And loudly praise, if it were preach'd aloud;
Some on the labours of the week look round,
Feel their own worth, and think their toil renown'd;
While some, whose hopes to no renown extend,
Are only pleased to find their labours end.

Thus, as their hours glide on, with pleasure fraught
Their careful masters brood the painful thought;
Much in their mind they murmur and lament,
That one fair day should be so idly spent;
And think that Heaven deals hard, to tithe their store
And tax their time for preachers and the poor.

Yet still, ye humbler friends, enjoy your hour,
This is your portion, yet unclaim'd of power;
This is Heaven's gift to weary men oppress'd,
And seems the type of their expected rest:
But yours, alas! are joys that soon decay;
Frail joys, begun and ended with the day;
Or yet, while day permits those joys to reign,
The village vices drive them from the plain.

See the stout churl, in drunken fury great,
Strike the bare bosom of his teeming mate!
His naked vices, rude and unrefined,
Exert their open empire o'er the mind;
But can we less the senseless rage despise,
Because the savage acts without disguise?

Yet here Disguise, the city's vice, is seen,
And Slander steals along and taints the Green:
At her approach domestic peace is gone,
Domestic broils at her approach come on;
She to the wife the husband's crime conveys,
She tells the husband when his consort strays;
Her busy tongue, through all the little state,
Diffuses doubt, suspicion, and debate;
Peace, tim'rous goddess! quits her old domain,
In sentiment and song content to reign.

Nor are the nymphs that breathe the rural air
So fair as Cynthia's, nor so chaste as fair:

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These to the town afford each fresher face,
And the clown's trull receives the peer's embrace;
From whom, should chance again convey her down,
The peer's disease in turn attacks the clown.

Here too the 'squire, or 'squire-like farmer, talk,
How round their regions nightly pilferers walk;
How from their ponds the fish are borne, and all
The rip'ning treasures from their lofty wall;
How meaner rivals in their sports delight,
Just right enough to claim a doubtful right; (1)
Who take a licence round their fields to stray,
A mongrel race! the poachers of the day.

And hark! the riots of the Green begin,
That sprang at first from yonder noisy inn;
What time the weekly pay was vanish'd all,
And the slow hostess scored the threat'ning wall;
What time they ask'd, their friendly feast to close,
A final cup, and that will make them foes;
When blows ensue that break the arm of toil,
And rustic battle ends the boobies' broil.

Save when to yonder Hall they bend their way,
Where the grave Justice ends the grievous fray;
He who recites, to keep the poor in awe,
The law's vast volume—for he knows the law:—
To him with anger or with shame repair
The injured peasant and deluded fair.

Lo! at his throne the silent nymph appears,
Frail by her shape, but modest in her tears;

(1) [Original MS.:—

How their maids languish, while their men run loose,
And leave them scarce a damsel to seduce.]

And while she stands abash'd, with conscious eye,
Some favourite female of her judge glides by,
Who views with scornful glance the strumpet's fate,
And thanks the stars that made her keeper great:
Near her the swain, about to bear for life
One certain evil, doubts 'twixt war and wife;
But, while the falt'ring damsel takes her oath,
Consents to wed, and so secures them both.

Yet why, you ask, these humble crimes relate,
Why make the Poor as guilty as the Great?
To show the great, those mightier sons of pride,
How near in vice the lowest are allied;
Such are their natures and their passions such,
But these disguise too little, those too much:(1)
So shall the man of power and pleasure see
In his own slave as vile a wretch as he;
In his luxurious lord the servant find
His own low pleasures and degenerate mind:

(1) ["It is good for the proprietor of an estate to know that such things are, and at his own doors. He might have guessed, indeed, as a general truth, even whilst moving in his own exclusive sphere, that many a story of intense interest might be supplied by the annals of his parish. Crabbe would have taught him thus much, had he been a reader of that most sagacious of observers, most searching of moral anatomists, most graphic of poets; and we reverence this great writer not less for his genius than for his patriotism, in bravely lifting up the veil which is spread between the upper classes and the working-day world, and letting one half of mankind know what the other is about. This effect alone gives a dignity to his poetry, which poems constructed after a more Arcadian model would never have in our eyes, however pleasingly they may babble of green fields. But such wholesome incidents reach the ears of the landlord in his own particular case, most commonly through the clergyman — they fall rather within his department than another's — they lie upon his beat — through *his* representations the sympathies of the landlord are profitably drawn out, and judiciously directed to the individual — and another thread is added to those cords of a man, by which the owner and occupant of the soil are knit together, and society is interlaced." — *Quarterly Review*, 1833.]

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Quarterly Review, 1833.]

And each in all the kindred vices trace,
Of a poor, blind, bewilder'd, erring race,
Who, a short time in varied fortune past,
Die, and are equal in the dust at last. (1)

And you, ye Poor, who still lament your fate,
Forbear to envy those you call the Great;
And know, amid those blessings they possess,
They are, like you, the victims of distress;
While Sloth with many a pang torments her slave,
Fear waits on guilt, and Danger shakes the brave.

Oh! if in life one noble chief appears,
Great in his name, while blooming in his years;
Born to enjoy whate'er delights mankind,
And yet to all you feel or fear resign'd;
Who gave up joys and hopes to you unknown,
For pains and dangers greater than your own:
If such there be, then let your murmurs cease,
Think, think of him, and take your lot in peace.

And such there was:—Oh! grief, that cheeks our pride,
Weeping we say there was,—for MANNERS died:

(1) ["A rich man, what is he? Has he a frame
Distinct from others? or a better name?
Has he more legs, more arms, more eyes, more brains?
Has he less care, less crosses, or less pains?
Can riches keep the mortal wretch from death?
Or can new treasures purchase a new breath?
Or does Heaven send its love and mercy more
To Mammon's pamper'd sons than to the poor?
If not, why should the fool take so much state,
Exalt himself, and others under-rate?
'Tis senseless ignorance that soothes his pride,
And makes him laugh at all the world beside;
But when excesses bring on gout or stone,
All his vain mirth and gaiety are gone:
And when he dies, for all he looks so high,
He 'll make as vile a skeleton as I." — TOM BROWNE.]

Beloved of Heaven, these humble lines forgive,
That sing of Thee (1), and thus aspire to live.
As the tall oak, whose vigorous branches form
An ample shade and brave the wildest storm,
High o'er the subject wood is seen to grow,
The guard and glory of the trees below;
Till on its head the fiery bolt descends,
And o'er the plain the shatter'd trunk extends;
Yet then it lies, all wond'rous as before,
And still the glory, though the guard no more:
So THOU, when every virtue, every grace,
Rose in thy soul, or shone within thy face; [known
When, though the son of GRANBY (2), thou wert
Less by thy father's glory than thy own;
When Honour loved and gave thee every charm,
Fire to thy eye and vigour to thy arm;
Then from our lofty hopes and longing eyes,
Fate and thy virtues call'd thee to the skies;
Yet still we wonder at thy tow'ring fame,
And, losing thee, still dwell upon thy name.

(1) Lord Robert Manners, the youngest son of the Marquess of Granby and the Lady Frances Seymour, daughter of Charles duke of Somerset, was born on the 5th of February, 1758; and was placed with his brother, the late duke of Rutland, at Eton school, where he acquired, and ever after retained, a considerable knowledge of the classical authors. Lord Robert, after going through the duties of his profession on board different ships, was made captain of the Resolution, and commanded her in nine different actions, besides the last memorable one on the 12th of April, 1782, when, in breaking the French line of battle, he received the wounds which terminated his life, in the twenty-fourth year of his age. See the Annual Register. — [This article in the Annual Register was written by Mr. Crabbe, and is now reprinted as an Appendix to "The Village."]

(2) [John, Marquess of Granby, the illustrious commander-in-chief of the British forces in Germany during the Seven Years' War, died in 1770, before his father, the thirteenth Earl and third Duke of Rutland.]

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l third Duke of Rutland.]

Oh! ever honour'd, ever valued! say,
What verse can praise thee, or what work repay?
Yet verse (in all we can) thy worth repays,
Nor trusts the tardy zeal of future days;—
Honours for thee thy country shall prepare,
Thee in their hearts, the good, the brave shall bear;
To deeds like thine shall noblest chiefs aspire,
The Muse shall mourn thee, and the world admire.

In future times, when smit with Glory's charms,
The untried youth first quits a father's arms;—
"Oh! be like him," the weeping sire shall say;
"Like MANNERS walk, who walk'd in Honour's way;
"In danger foremost, yet in death sedate,
"Oh! be like him in all things, but his fate!"

If for that fate such public tears be shed,
That Victory seems to die now THOU art dead;
How shall a friend his nearer hope resign,
That friend a brother, and whose soul was thine?
By what bold lines shall we his grief express,
Or by what soothing numbers make it less?

'T is not, I know, the chiming of a song,
Nor all the powers that to the Muse belong,
Words aptly cull'd, and meanings well express'd,
Can calm the sorrows of a wounded breast;
But Virtue, soother of the fiercest pains,
Shall heal that bosom, RUTLAND, where she reigns.(1)

Yet hard the task to heal the bleeding heart,
To bid the still-recurring thoughts depart,

(1) [Original MS:—

"But RUTLAND's virtues shall his griefs restrain,
And join to heal the bosom where they reign."

See some anecdotes illustrative of the Duke's tender affection for his gallant brother, *antè*, Vol. I. pp. 115, 117.]

Tame the fierce grief and stem the rising sigh,
And curb rebellious passion, with reply;
Calmly to dwell on all that pleased before,
And yet to know that all shall please no more;—
Oh! glorious labour of the soul, to save
Her captive powers, and bravely mourn the brave
To such these thoughts will lasting comfort give—
Life is not measured by the time we live:
'Tis not an even course of threescore years,—
A life of narrow views and paltry fears,
Grey hairs and wrinkles and the cares they bring,
That take from Death the terrors or the sting;
But 'tis the gen'rous spirit, mounting high
Above the world, that native of the sky;
The noble spirit, that, in dangers brave,
Calmly looks on, or looks beyond the grave:—
Such MANNERS was, so he resign'd his breath,
If in a glorious, then a timely death.
Cease then that grief, and let those tears subside;
If Passion rule us, be that passion pride;
If Reason, reason bids us strive to raise
Our fallen hearts, and be like him we praise;
Or if Affection still the soul subdue,
Bring all his virtues, all his worth in view,
And let Affection find its comfort too:
For how can Grief so deeply wound the heart,
When Admiration claims so large a part?
Grief is a foe—expel him then thy soul;
Let nobler thoughts the nearer views control!
Oh! make the age to come thy better care,
See other RUTLANDS, other GRANBYS there!

And, as thy thoughts through streaming ages glide,
See other heroes die as MANNERS died: (1)
And from their fate, thy race shall nobler grow
As trees shoot upwards that are pruned below;
Or as old Thames, borne down with decent pride,
Sees his young streams run warbling at his side;
Though some, by art cut off, no longer run,
And some are lost beneath the summer sun —
Yet the pure stream moves on, and, as it moves,
Its power increases and its use improves;
While plenty round its spacious waves bestow,
Still it flows on, and shall for ever flow.(2)

(1) [Original edition: —

Victims victorious, who with him shall stand
In Fame's fair book, the guardians of the land.]

(2) [" It has been objected to the pastoral muse, that her principal employment is to delineate scenes that never existed, and to cheat the imagination by descriptions of pleasure that never can be enjoyed. Sensible of her deviation from nature and propriety, the author of the present poem has endeavoured to bring her back into the sober paths of truth and reality. It is not, however, improbable, that he may have erred, as much as those whom he condemns. For it may be questioned, whether he who represents a peasant's life as a life of unremitting labour and remediless anxiety; who describes his best years as embittered by insult and oppression, and his old age as squalid, comfortless, and destitute, gives a juster representation of rural enjoyments than they who, running into a contrary extreme, paint the face of the country as wearing a perpetual smile, and its inhabitants as passing away their hours in uninterrupted pleasure and unvaried tranquillity." — *Monthly Rev.* 1783.

" 'The Village' is a very classical composition. It seems designed as a contrast to Goldsmith's 'Deserted Village' in one point of view; that is, so far as Goldsmith expatiates on the felicities and inconveniences of rural life. The author of 'The Village' takes the dark side of the question: he paints all with a sombre pencil; too justly, perhaps, but, to me at least, unpleasingly. We know there is no unmixed happiness in any state of life; but one does not wish to be perpetually told so." — SCOTT *of Amwell Letter to Dr. Beattie, Aug.* 1783.]