UP AND DOWN THE COUNTY.

LXIX.—GRATTON.

The Saxon origin of our forefathers is everywhere made plain to us in this district, and from no source can we obtain better evidence of the fact than in the names of places. The little towns, or Saxon enclosures, surround us on every hand, telling their own tale of their remote origin. Gratton, we understand, was once one of these petty towns, but altogether devoid of the character which goes to make up a town, or what is meant by one, at the present day. Gratton consists of one or two farms and a few labourers' cottages. It has neither church nor hall of its own, or any other pretensions to greatness. The place is cut off from its neighbours by wide fields and lonely old roads that turn and twist in every kind of whimsical deviations. Some of these are deep and hollow, and all bear a look of defying any man rays ever to penetrate their depth.

Gratton is about three miles from Endon, one mile from Horton, and two or more from Redyard. It stands on a beautiful flat overlooking the landscape for many a broadening mile. Exquisite indeed is the view on a clear day in the summer sun, or when winter, with its snow, lies sleeping on the hillsides. Looking in the direction of Horton, ever which a footway leads through the valley which separates the two townships, we have Horton Church tower just peeping out among the trees that form the Lord's picturesque churchyard. A wide view to the east opens up the Churnet, and the dim and misty distance appear the Roaches, and beyond them the Morridge Hills. Near to, and almost adjoining Gratton, we have Harrache Wood, now very diminished of much of its woodland foliage and scenery. There yet, however, remains sufficient to warrant the ancient name being retained. Another patch of landscape, stretching out from Gratton, fringing as it does Harrache Wood, and whose ancient name gives it a claim to notice, is Bradshaw Common. But Common it is no more; long ago it has been enclosed, and the farmer's plough has given monotony over the old waste. Below is Dunwood; dark, gloomy Dunwood, at it once might have been called, although the scene is somewhat changed now, but the place still rejoices in its woodland beauties, the old road leading through the wood and past Dunwood Hall, once antique and solitary, is still picturesque and inviting :—

Where twilight loves to linger for a while.

To the north-east of Gratton is Endon, lying deep in the valley below, but whose church looks from the little mountain of the village.

The walk from Endon to Gratton is among the most pleasant scenes in this neighbourhood. The old lane that unites the two villages is deep and fresh, and sweet. The road is bounded on each side with a hawthorn hedge, and lends over a high piece of moorland. Out of the hedge here and there grow some flowering trees, that in the sunshine throw their forms over the entangled lane. On the roadside there is not wanting the old farm, stead to give life to the surroundings. But the greatest charm of all is the view of the open country which the lane everywhere presents. The scenes we have mentioned peep in to sigh or hide away in the valley following the undulating of the landscape.

Gratton has of itself few historical associations of an ancient character. None indeed beyond the bare mention in some antique deed or other, which tells us nothing, but simply how the lands were transferred from one possessor to another. In this way it is mentioned in a deed in which Radulphus Lord Stafford gave the lands of Gratton to the priory of black canons at Stone.

But if Gratton has nothing of the past to offer us, it in its old cottages and farmsteads, with little crops, interest or carry the mind back to men and things of other days, the place has at least its modern history and modern interest. The solitary hill upon which it stands has become a place which all lovers of poetry in this district make their pilgrimage. And this spirit will in all likelihood grow and intensify as a knowledge of the poet who has for ever made these hills sacred, shall be better known and appreciated. For here, in a humble cot—half farm and half cottage—was born George Heath, now known as the Moorland poet. The landscape which we have described, was the first to meet his sight, and the old names and far-reaching scenery would be the first to inspire his heart with a love of the muses. The Heaths of the Moorlands by their name seem to point to the ancient Saxon race who once ruled this district. And this spirit will in all likelihood grow and intensify as a knowledge of the poet who has for ever made these hills sacred, shall be better known and appreciated. For here, in a humble cot—half farm and half cottage—was born George Heath, now known as the Moorland poet. The landscape which we have described, was the first to meet his sight, and the old names and far-reaching scenery would be the first to inspire his heart with a love of the muses. The Heaths of the Moorlands by their name seem to point to the ancient Saxon race who once ruled this district make their pilgrimage