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## THE VILLAGE COMMON.

In the parish of Woodfield there is a spot of peculiar beauty, called Bird's-eye Green. Its name is not derived, as some of my readers may have imagined, from the extensive prospect which it commands, but from the profusion of that lovely little turf flower, the minor Forget-me-not, termed by the unlettered East Anglian naturalist the *bird's-eye*, with which the emerald sward is in the merry month of May so gaily enamelled, that, when you glance downwards, it gleams like a bright blue carpeting beneath the spiral blades of grass.

Bird's-eye Green, when first I knew it, was a little world within itself, distinct and separate from the rest of the village. It was one of those beautiful park-like commons which, before the rage of arable enclosures deprived the peasantry of agricultural districts of a sure stimulus for industry and economy, might be seen studded with groups of cattle, or families of pigs and poultry, affording a smiling picture of the prosperity of the rich, and the independence of the laboring classes. It was, in fact, a real commonwealth to all the inhabitants of that parish, where the cow or pig of the humble laborer was free to share the right of pasturage with the flocks and herds of the substantial yeoman. Every cottage then sent forth its proportion of live stock to the green, under the care of some trusty urchin of the family. It was a pretty sight on sweet spring days to watch the rosy curly-pated little cotters, each presiding over the conduct of a cow, a pig, a pet-lamb, a train of downy goslings, or a brood of turkey chicks, whichever it might chance to be, or perhaps a weanling calf just turned out to graze, yet retaining sufficient of its lactivorous propensities to render it

an object of jealous suspicion to the proprietors or guardians of all the recently bereaved cows on the green. Bird's-eye Green, although so picturesque and peaceful in its appearance, that to the eye of the casual traveller from busy noisy towns it bore the semblance of a perfect Arcadia or fairy land, inhabited by juvenile shepherds and shepherdesses, who were not unfrequently seen garlanded with flowers, and dancing or sporting in jocund groups, was nevertheless a spot abounding in strife, jealousy, and in short, teeming with all the evil passions on a small scale that are to be found agitating the great world, and arming nation against nation. The proprietors of the flocks and herds, pigs and poultry, and more especially the youthful guardians to whose keeping they were consigned, had separate interests and petty jealousies, which broke out frequently in open acts of anger and violence. Those blooming picturesque groups of children fought and scratched somewhat oftener than they danced, and scolded more than they sang. The attendant of a cow sometimes quarrelled with the guardian of the goslings, and the protector of a sow and pigs invaded the quiet corner where some junior maiden of the green kept watch over her darling brood of turkey chicks, or enjoyed the company of her beloved pet lamb; and fierce were the clamours and contentions that would follow such aggressions on the positive but undefined rights of the pre-occupants of favourite spots. It was a complete sample of the state of society that would exist in a genuine republic under the law of nature, every one doing that which was right in their own eyes, or wrong if they had the inclination, and at the same time the power of accomplishing their desires without fear of punishment.