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The elder George Crabbe had been a teacher at a village school in Orford, Suffolk , and later in Norton, near Loddon, Norfolk ; he later became a tax collector for salt duties, a position that his own father had held. George, his brothers Robert, John, and William, his sister Mary, and another sister who died as an infant. He showed an aptitude for books and learning at an early age. He was sent to school while still very young, and developed an interest in the stories and ballads that were popular among his neighbors. His father owned a few books, and used to read passages from John Milton and from various 18th-century poets to his family. The senior Crabbe had interests in the local fishing industry, and owned a fishing boat; he had contemplated raising his son George to be a seaman, but soon found that the boy was unsuited to such a career. He spent three years at Stowmarket before leaving school to find a physician to be apprenticed to, as medicine had been settled on as his future career. This doctor practiced medicine while also keeping a small farm, and George ended up doing more farm labour and errands than medical work. In he changed masters and moved to Woodbridge , [8] where he remained until While at Woodbridge he joined a small club of young men who met at an inn for evening discussions. Through his contacts at Woodbridge he met his future wife, Sarah Elmy. Crabbe called her "Mira", later referring to her by this name in some of his poems. They were signed "G. Other known verses written while he was at Woodbridge show that he made experiments in stanza form modeled on the works of earlier English poets, but only showed some slight imitative skill. Crabbe later said of the poem, which received little or no attention at the time, "Pray let not this be seen He had intended to go on to London to study at a hospital, but he was forced through low finances to work for some time as a local warehouseman. Crabbe continued to practice as a surgeon after returning to Aldeburgh, but as his surgical skills remained deficient, he attracted only the poorest patients, and his fees were small and undependable. This hurt his chances of an early marriage, but Sarah stayed devoted to him. In late he decided to move to London and see if he could make it as a poet, or, if that failed, as a doctor. He composed a number of works but was refused publication. He wrote several letters seeking patronage, but these were also refused. In June Crabbe witnessed instances of mob violence during the Gordon Riots , and recorded them in his journal. He was able to publish a poem at this time entitled The Candidate, but it was badly received by critics. There he was given an apartment, supplied with books, and made a member of the family. The time he spent with Burke and his family helped by enlarging his knowledge and ideas, and introducing him to many new and valuable friends including Charles James Fox and Samuel Johnson. Burke helped him have his poem, The Library, published anonymously in June , by a publisher that had previously refused some of his work. The Library was greeted with modest praise from critics, and slight public appreciation. Crabbe had a good knowledge of Latin and an evident natural piety, and was well read in the scriptures. He returned to live in Aldeburgh with his sister and father, his mother having died in his absence. Crabbe was surprised to find that he was poorly treated by his fellow townsmen, who resented his rise in social class. During his time there, his poem The Village was published in May , [22] achieving popularity with the public and critics. It is original, vigorous, and elegant. It was said at the time of publication that Johnson had made extensive changes to the poem, but Boswell responded by saying that "the aid given by Johnson to the poem, as to The Traveller and Deserted Village of Goldsmith, were so small as by no means to impair the distinguished merit of the author. He visited the theatre, and was impressed with the actresses Sarah Siddons and Dorothea Jordan. Around this time it was decided that, as Chaplain to a noble family, Crabbe was in need of a college degree, and his name was entered on the boards of Trinity College, Cambridge , through the influence of Bishop Watson of Llandaff , so that Crabbe could obtain a degree without residence. This was in , but almost immediately afterwards he received an LL. A child had been born to them at Belvoir, dying only hours after birth. During the following four years

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at Stathern they had three other children; two sons, George and John, in and , and a daughter in , who died in infancy. Crabbe later told his children that his four years at Stathern were the happiest of his life. The Duchess, anxious to have their former chaplain close by, was able to get Crabbe the two livings of Muston, Leicestershire , and Allington, Lincolnshire , in exchange for his old livings. Crabbe brought his family to Muston in February His connection with the two livings lasted for over 25 years, but during 13 of these years he was a non-resident. He stayed three years at Muston. Another son, Edmund, was born in Their son William was born the same year. His solace here was the company of his friend Dudley Long North and his fellow Whigs who lived nearby. Crabbe soon sent his two sons George and John to school in Aldeburgh. The family remained here for four or five years. In their third son, Edmund died at the age of six. This was a heavy blow to Sarah [34] who began suffering from a nervous disorder from which she never recovered. Crabbe, a devoted husband, tended her with exemplary care until her death in Robert Southey , writing about Crabbe to his friend, Neville White, in , said "It was not long before his wife became deranged, and when all this was told me by one who knew him well, five years ago, he was still almost confined in his own house, anxiously waiting upon this wife in her long and hopeless malady. It is no wonder that he gives so melancholy a picture of human life. In October , Crabbe returned with his wife and two sons to the parsonage at Muston. He had been absent for nearly 13 years, of which four had been spent at Parham, five at Great Glemham, and four at Rendham. Four editions were issued during the following year and a half, the fourth appearing in March The reviews were unanimous in approval, headed by Francis Jeffrey in the *Edinburgh Review*. Scott told Crabbe "how for more than twenty years he had desired the pleasure of a personal introduction to him, and how, as a lad of eighteen, he had met with selections from *The Village* and *The Library* in *The Annual Register*. The *Borough* was begun at Rendham in Suffolk in , continued at Muston after his return in , and finally completed during a long visit to Aldeburgh in the autumn of It was published in The poem appeared in February , and went through six editions in the next six years. He did have his two sons, George and John, with him; they had both passed through Cambridge , one at Trinity and the other at Caius , and were now clergymen themselves, each holding a curacy in the neighbourhood, enabling them to live under the parental roof, but Mrs. Crabbe felt well enough to want to see London again, and the father and mother and two sons spent nearly three months in rooms in a hotel. Crabbe was able to visit Dudley North and some of his other old friends, and to visit and help the poor and distressed, remembering his own want and misery in the great city thirty years earlier. The family returned to Muston in September, and Mrs. Crabbe died at the end of October at the age of He rallied, however, and returned to the duties of his parish. In , he became Rector of Trowbridge in Wiltshire , a position given to him by the new Duke of Rutland. He remained at Trowbridge for the rest of his life. Nearby was the poet William Lisle Bowles , who introduced Crabbe to the noble family at Bowood House , [53] home of the Marquess of Lansdowne , who was always ready to welcome those distinguished in literature and the arts. In , on the recommendation of Rogers, Crabbe stayed in London from the middle of June to the end of July in order to enjoy the literary society of the capital. While there he met Thomas Campbell , and through him and Rogers was introduced to his future publisher John Murray.

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In , Crabbe published *The Borough*, a series of twenty-four verse letters written to a friend, and in his *Tales*. After the death of his wife, Crabbe accepted the livings of Croxton-Kerrial in the Vale of Belvoir and of Trowbridge, to where he moved in . Crabbe met John Murray on one of his visits to London, who became his publisher. Crabbe became a member of the Literary Society in and was admitted to the Athenaeum in . In he became a magistrate in Trowbridge. Crabbe died in his rectory at Trowbridge in .

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