

**POETS, POEMS,
AND RHYMES OF
EAST CHESHIRE**

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Poets, Poems, and Rhymes of East Cheshire by Thomas Middleton

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THOMAS MIDDLETON

**POETS, POEMS,
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**Poets,
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OF
EAST CHESHIRE,**

Being a history of the Poetry
and Song Lore, and a Book of
Biographies of the Poets and
Song Writers of the Eastern
Portion of the County Palatine
of Chester.

By THOMAS MIDDLETON,

Author of
"Annals of Hyde," "Old Godley,"
"Legends of Longdendale," etc, etc.

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INTRODUCTORY.

Oh! the Songs of the People are voices of
power,

That echo in many a land;
They lighten the heart in the sorrowful hour,
And quicken the labour of hand;
They gladden the shepherd on mountain and
plain,

And the mariner tossed on the sea,
The poets have given us many a strain,
But the songs of the people for me.

“Prince.”

A perusal of the files of old local newspapers has brought to the notice of the present writer a number of poems, songs, and rhymes written by dead and gone worthies of the north-eastern corner of Cheshire; and a further research among the store of unused and almost forgotten books, buried away in our great public libraries, has revealed the fact that the towns and villages of that portion of the country have produced a wealth of homely poetry that is at once creditable and surprising.

The pleasure attending these discoveries has been somewhat marred by the sad reflection that the vast majority of those whose names were attached to the verses, have been long ago forgotten, while even the poems themselves are totally unknown to the reading public of to-day. To me it seemed a pity that all these men and women, who had lifted themselves above the common, sordid things of life, to dream, and write, and sing, and so brighten the years in which they lived, should pass into the grave, and, as a reward for all their labours, meet with oblivion. They surely deserved some monument to commemorate their work and their worth, even if that commemoration were merely to consist of a brief notice in some review of the local literature of their neighbourhood. And so I determined to write some sort of history of the

poets, poems, and songs of that corner of Cheshire in which I dwell; and the following series of biographical sketches is the result of that determination.

A FEW WORDS REGARDING THE TITLE, and the area covered by the sketches, are necessary. The country dealt with is that part of the county of Chester which was formerly included in the old parliamentary division of East Cheshire, and which is covered by the circulation of the "North Cheshire Herald." Most of the effusions of the nineteenth century local bards first appeared in the columns of the "Herald," and it is to the files of that newspaper that the historian must turn for the groundwork of any history of the local poetry in East Cheshire. In one or two cases sketches are given of writers who dwelt just over the borders of Cheshire, either in the county of Lancaster, or in that of Derby. There are special reasons why these men should be noticed in a work of this class. The town of Stalybridge, for instance, is partly in Cheshire, and partly in Lancashire; and it would seem somewhat absurd to deal with one-half of the Stalybridge bards, and leave the other half severely alone. Again, Hyde, and Denton and Haughton, although in two counties, are merely divided from each other by the breadth of a narrow stream, and for centuries these townships have held local literary traditions in common. Finally, some of the songs or poems dealing with East Cheshire subjects and places, and traditions, were written by dwellers in other shires, but the reason for the inclusion of these writers in this series will at once be obvious.

STRICT IMPARTIALITY

has been observed in the treatment of the subjects, and the writers are dealt with here in chronological order.

It will perhaps be protested that the work of some of the local bards is not poetry at all, but very bad rhyme. To this I have to answer that my object has been to write a history of local poetry and poets; and I have felt it necessary to include the worst with the best, if only as

CURIOSITIES AND MEMENTOES OF WHAT HAS BEEN.

The task of collecting the material has been difficult, entailing much hard work and patient research, but it has been a task of pleasure. It has led me into many strange places, and has introduced me to many quaint and homely characters. It has been rendered lighter by the ready response to requests for information from friends whose kindness I desire to acknowledge.

I am especially indebted to the following gentlemen for encouragement and assistance: Mr. J. W. Sidebotham, J.P., C.C.; the Rev. Alexander Gordon, M.A (author of *Historical Account of Dukinfield Chapel*); Mr C. W. Sutton; (City Librarian, Manchester); Mr. Joel Wainwright, J.P. (author of "*Memories of Marple*"); Mr. Samuel Hill (author of "*Foirewood*," "*Little Spadger's Dog*," etc.); Mr. Robert Hamnett, of Glossop; Mr. John Chor-ton (Librarian, Hyde); Mr. James Leigh (author of "*Gleams of Sunshine*"); Mr. John Wagstaffe, Mottram House, Mottram; Mr. Isaac Bardsley, of Oxford, formerly of Ashton; Mr. Samuel Ashton, Godley; Mr. Thomas Kenworthy, Godley Hill; and the ladies and gentlemen, and the relatives of many of those now dead, who are dealt with in this series of sketches.



