

**RAMBLES IN
DEVONSHIRE: WITH
TALES AND POETRY**

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Rambles in Devonshire: With Tales and Poetry by H. J. Whitfeld

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H. J. WHITFELD

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DEVONSHIRE: WITH
TALES AND POETRY**

Rambles in Devonshire,

with

Tales and Poetry,

By

The Rev. W. J. Whitfeld, A.M.

Author of "Silly and its Legends."

"Hill or hill, nor brook, we pace along,
That has its legend, or its song."

LONDON:

SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, AND CO.

R. T. VIBERT, MARKET-PLACE, PENZANCE.

1854.



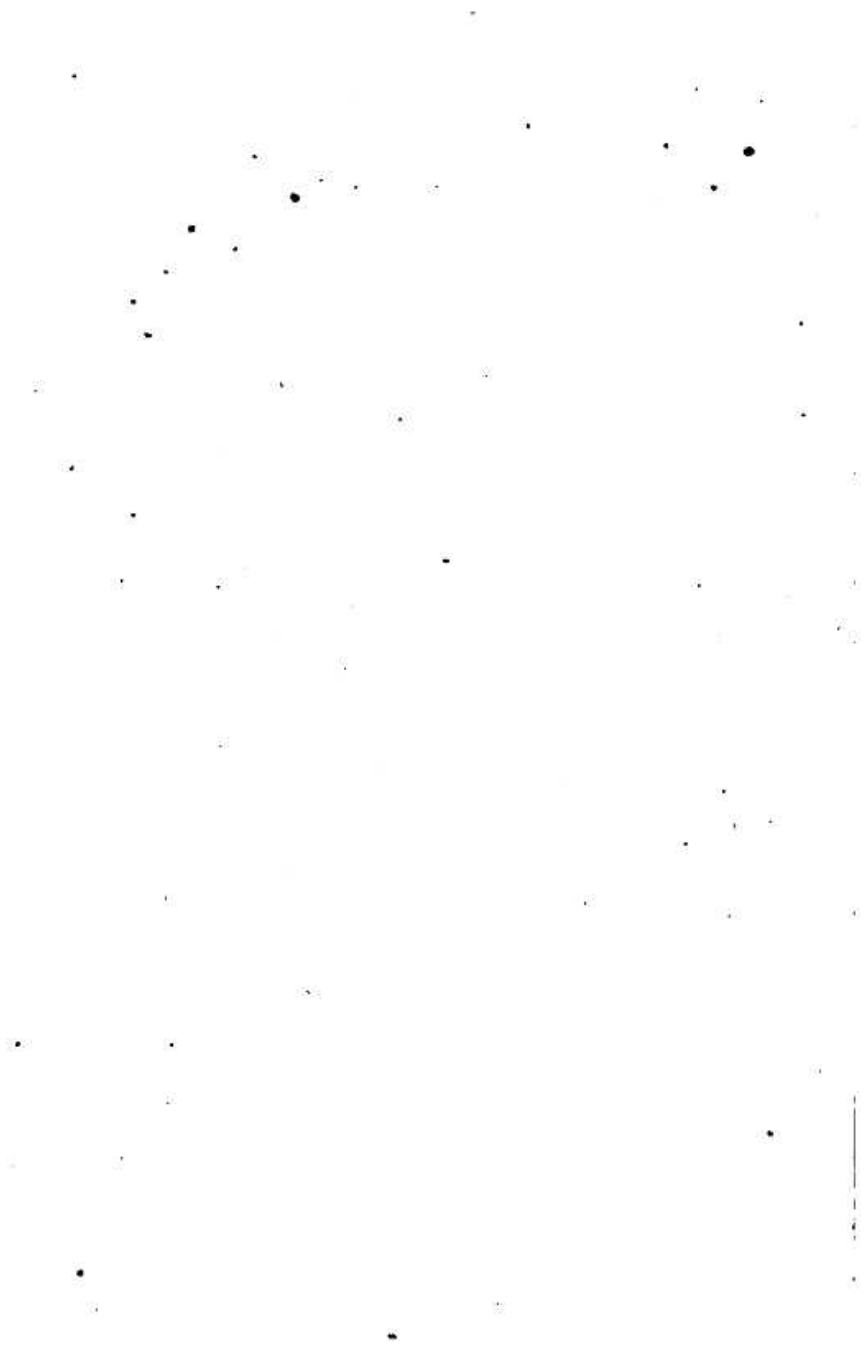
TO MY WIFE.

If, my dear Sarah, this little work possesses any merit, it owes the greater part of that merit to you, and you must therefore accept the dedication of it, as a mere act of justice. Perhaps, in the words of Statius to his wife Claudia, I may find a dearer motive for coupling your name with a Book, during the composition of which your care and affection have given me so many causes for gratitude.

*" Forsitan, exhausti Lachesis mihi tempora futi,
Te tantum miserata, dedit."*

Your affectionate Husband,

H. J. W.



Chapter First.

STOKE GABRIEL.



OF all natural boundaries, the most beautiful is that formed by a noble river. It was, indeed, the origin of the word "rival," from the disputes to which its wanderings to and fro gave rise, yet there is no resisting its appeal to the eye. It lends to the imagination another element, another sense, without the addition of which the interest felt in any scenery is incomplete. A stream, like the Dart, is a fair object, of which any place might be proud. But it is fairer still, when its course is through a romantic country, full of historic associations, always lovely, and sometimes bordering on the sublime.

The parish of Stoke Gabriel, where I write, extends irregularly, for nearly three miles, along the verge of the Dart. It could not have a more delightful barrier, as it seems to think, for its belt of woods comes down to the

margin of the water droopingly, forming a peaceful solitude. The groves along its borders are full of paths, but they are hidden; and the absence of an apparent thoroughfare makes the retirement of its banks more solemn, and more sacred. The river does not flow along the parish in an unbroken line. It trends round a green slope, on which is seen Mr. Hulme's pretty seat "Maisonette." Then an indentation is formed by a wide estuary, across which there is a stone mill-dam; and so the village, or, as it would be called in Cornwall, the "church town," of Stoke, is divided from Sandridge, and from the hamlet of Waddeton,

The place itself has nothing in it remarkable, with one exception, which, however, is an object deserving almost a pilgrimage of its own. In the church-yard is a yew-tree, of such magnificent proportions, as to have, I believe, one rival only, of its age and size, in England. It overshadows the Church, which possesses but the remains of a light rood-screen, and an ancient perpendicular window in the tower, to tell us what it was of old.* But the great tree beside it is of an architecture that knows neither degradation nor change. Much to the credit of the parish, it is protected with the most scrupulous care, a wall being erected round it, and props placed under all its limbs. Bampfylde Moore Carew is said to have begged, or held forth, beneath it, but this incident is comparatively modern. When we look at it, how the Past rises before us! What a history, what a tale

* I am happy to say that there is a prospect of its partial restoration. Towards renewing the roof, and substituting open seats for the wretched deal boxes, called pews, Mr. Hulme, of Maisonette, offered the magnificent sum of £50; and I have no doubt that his Christian generosity will call forth corresponding spirit in the other parishioners.

of romance, might not that patriarch tell, could only its foliage, like that of the oak at Dodona, find a tongue! In the corner of the burial-ground lies an antique arch, prostrate, and overgrown with moss. Ask whose hand it was that shaped and fashioned it. In another corner stood once, it is said, a religious house. Who built it, and who flung it down? How much should we learn, could we but give speech and language to that august and silent witness of other days!

THE CHURCH-YARD YEW.

Fairy spells, that memory weaves,
Shades with outlines dim,
Linger in thy whispering leaves,
Moan in every limb.
Aged Yew, for many a day
Wherefore dost thou murmur so?
And the aged Yew replyeth,
Well-a-day, well-a-day,
'Tis the ghost of Time that sigheth;
Life and death 'tis mine to show,
Life above, and death below.

Thou hast seen the Druids' reign,
Thou hast seen the grey Culdee,
And the Raven of the Dane,
And the Cross of Calvary.
Thou hast seen them pass away,
Like the Dart's eternal flow;