

**POEMS
AND HYMNS**

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Poems and Hymns by Samuel John Stone & F. G. Ellerton

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**POEMS
AND HYMNS**



S. J. Stone.

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BY

SAMUEL JOHN STONE

WITH A MEMOIR BY

F. G. ELLERTON, M.A.

VICAR OF ELLESMERE

WITH A PORTRAIT

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*Say, when in pity ye have gazed
On the wreathed smoke afar,
That o'er some town, like mist upraised,
Hung hiding sun and star,
Then as ye turned your weary eye
To the green earth and open sky,
Were ye not fain to doubt how Faith could dwell
Amid that dreary glare, in this world's citadel?*

* * * * *

*There are in this loud stunning tide
Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide
Of the everlasting chime;
Who carry music in their heart
Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,
Plying their daily task with busier feet
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat.*

JOHN KEBLE.

DEO DANTE DEDI

A MEMOIR OF SAMUEL JOHN STONE

I

EARLY DAYS

1839-1862

SAMUEL JOHN STONE was born at Whitmore Rectory, in Staffordshire, on St. Mark's Day—Keble's birthday—1839. The first thirteen years of his life he spent in the country; the rest, with the exception of his residence at Oxford and a curacy of eight years at Windsor, in London, where he worked for thirty years in two different parishes—for twenty years in St. Paul's, Haggerston, and for ten in All Hallows', London Wall. He died in 1900.

Stone is generally known as the author of *The Church's one Foundation* and as a religious poet; hardly at all on his other side as a strenuous parish priest. When we think of a religious poet, the fancy calls up a picture of George Herbert in his tiny church at Bemerton, or of John Keble at quiet Hursley, or of John Henry Newman coasting along

Italian shores. Samuel John Stone, however, was not only a poet, but also an East End parson.

All his childhood was spent in the depths of the country, in remote Staffordshire rectories. From the time he was five his home was at Colwich, a village which lies hard by the water meadows of the Trent just below Cannock Chase. Cannock Chase is a wide stretch of rolling moorland, all about the edges of which there are little rounded heather-clad hills, crowned here and there with a clump of Scotch firs, alternating with softly-scooped-out hollows and combs, which would very easily conceal a troop of men. Where the garment of heather which covers these little hills has been torn off, or the hillside has been cut open by the hand of man, yellow gravel gleams out underneath. Further on this moorland country becomes wilder, and then there are collieries, while beyond it are the red furnaces of the Black Country.

This was just the sort of scenery to bring out all the latent poetry of a romantic lad's nature, and it had a very strong influence on Stone, an influence of which he has left a record in the poem called *The Birdie*, which gives expression to his boyish love of romance. The sloping lawns of the vicarage garden at Colwich, the river with its swans and moorhens, the little rills and runnels bubbling up in tiny sand fountains amongst the hills, were amongst his earliest recollections.

But if the spell of the hills and of the countryside helped to call forth in him something of the spirit of George Herbert, from the streams he soon learned to be, what he remained to the end of his life, an ardent votary of Izaak Walton. The sporting vein in him, which made him not only *Piscator* but *Venator*, had plenty of scope for early development. As a boy he was "always doing something or other with gunpowder or firearms," or climbing dangerous trees, or tumbling into the river. He was full of pluck, and full to the brim of the love of adventure. Even at an early age these qualities were allied with the imagination and the idealism of a poetical nature, and with a strong strain of religious feeling, which came out in childish sermons and verse.

His father was a learned and pious Evangelical of the best type, who had taken honours at Oxford and then settled down to quiet work as a country clergyman. He was a Hebrew scholar and a botanist; but what marked him most was, it was said, the quiet repose of a mind which rested entirely in God, and which seemed in consequence to be always stored with beautiful thoughts. Whilst at Whitmore he had published a sacred epic in six books, and in later days he was the compiler of a hymn-book, many of the hymns in which were from his own pen.

His character is very well illustrated by a story which his son used to tell of him. When the elder