

**TOM BALCH: AN HISTORICAL TALE, OF
WEST SOMERSET DURING MONMOUTH'S
REBELLION; TOGETHER WITH AMUSING
AND OTHER POEMS, SOME OF THEM IN
THE SOMERSETSHIRE DIALECT**

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Tom Balch: An Historical Tale, of West Somerset during Monmouth's Rebellion; Together with Amusing and Other Poems, Some of Them in the Somersetshire Dialect by George Parker

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GEORGE PARKER

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1780-1785

THE MARKET CROSS,

WHERE THE DUKE OF MONMOUTH WAS PROCLAIMED KING.

TOM BALCH;

AN HISTORICAL TALE,

OF WEST SOMERSET DURING MONMOUTH'S
REBELLION;

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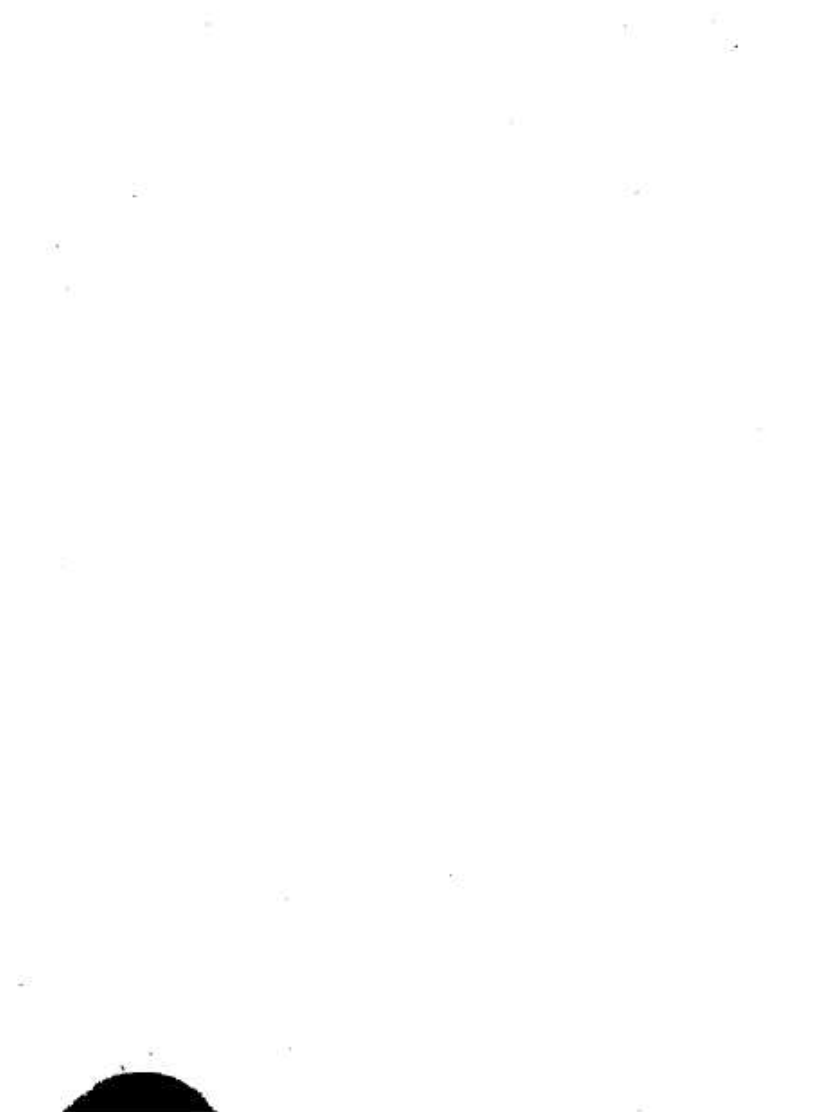
SOME OF THEM IN THE SOMERSETSHIRE DIALECT,

BY

GEORGE PARKER.

BRIDGWATER
ROBERT BRODIE.

—
1879.



PREFACE.

In the course of a long and active life amidst its toils, my amusements have been of a literary character. Amongst the many manuscripts in my possession I have selected for publication an Historical Tale. The reader will find it evinces the strong and ardent feelings towards Protestantism, manifested by the county families of Somersetshire at the time of Monmouth's Rebellion, and it displays the severe trials some of them endured.

The Poems appended are mostly written in the Somersetshire dialect, and are intended to describe and commemorate what the peasantry, and some immediately above them, were about many years ago, and to evidence a noble heartiness of character worth recording.

TOM BALCH:

A TALE OF WEST SOMERSET.

IF we trace the world's wide History from its commencement, both in temporal and spiritual affairs, what wonderful links of an over-ruling Providence are apparent, one event leading to another in order and progression, and what appears to our finite minds darkness and confusion, ends in light and reason, and out of seeming difficulties and misfortunes arise unexpected blessings. Still to participate in those blessings He requires of us obedience to His commands and submission to His will. I trust the reader will find the realization of those truths in the following tale.

About the year 1685, incidents occurred in the History of England of great importance, which caused many changes in the hearths and homes of the Inhabitants, especially in the Western part of the Island. My narrative is laid in Somersetshire, in one of the most interesting parts of that beautiful County. Over Stowey is situate about 8 miles

from Bridgwater towards Minehead, lying on the side of the Quantock Hills, and was then as now, a picture of rural neatness. Amongst the cottages dotted here and there with well-stocked gardens, stood the Village Church and the Parsonage House.

The Rev. Mr. Middleton who was possessed of good private means, his wife and daughter Ann, who was their only child, were sitting in their parlour, and with them a young man about 20 years of age, Harry Balch, the son of Squire Balch, as he was commonly called, of St. Audries, who read with Mr. Middleton in the spare time he had from keeping his terms at Oxford. It was intended that he should when old enough, be admitted to Holy Orders, and commence his duties in the living which was held by the rev. gentleman, with an understanding it should be transferred to him when he should be qualified to take it.

"Now papa," said his daughter, "mamma and myself intend staying, with your permission and Mr. Balch's, to hear you explain, as you promised, the early History of the English Church."

"My dear," said her mamma, "you have spoken for both of us, but I have some domestic duties to perform and cannot insure you the whole of my time."

"Thank you ladies," said Mr. Balch, "I am sure the lecture Mr. Middleton has promised me, will have much more interest from your presence, and how can he refuse such an audience."

