CHETHAM COLLEGE ENGLAND "THE OLDEST FREE LIBRARY IN THE WORLD"

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649251582

Chetham College England "the Oldest Free Library in the World" by Robert Blatchford

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

www.triestepublishing.com

ROBERT BLATCHFORD

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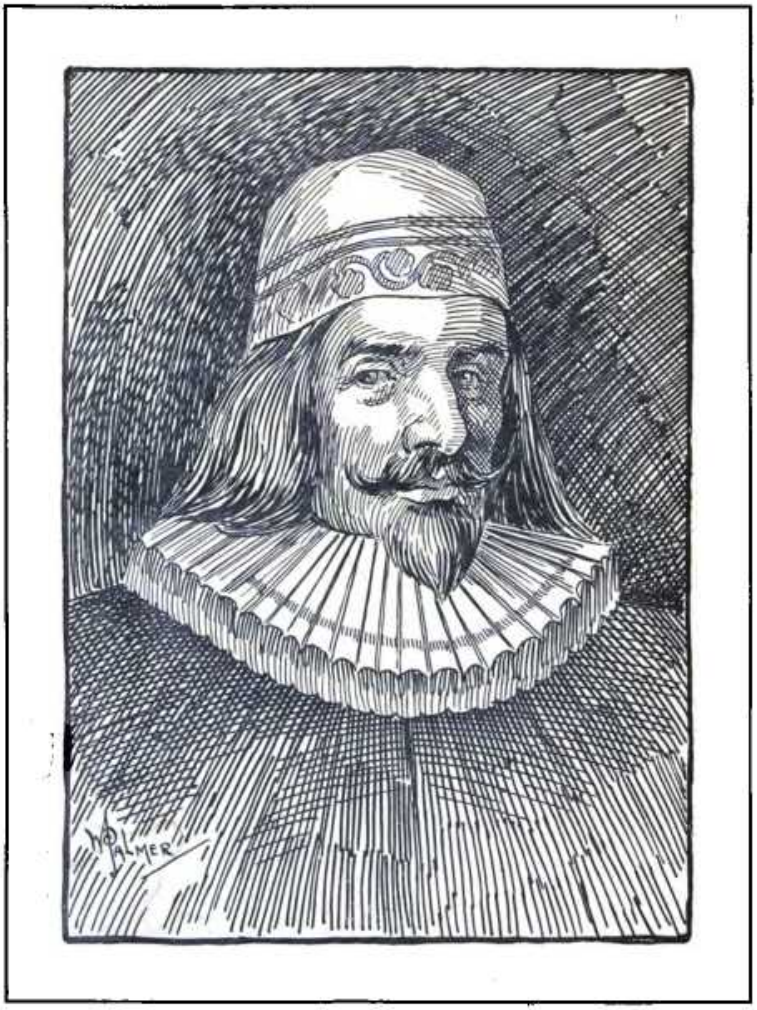

Humphrey Chetham

Obit 1653

From the oil painting in the warden's room, Chetham College

FIRST BODLEIAN BOOKLET

Chetham College

[ENGLAND]

"The oldest free library in the world"

WRITTEN BY ROBERT BLATCHFORD,
WITH INTRODUCTION BY REVD. GEORGE HODGES, D.D.
AND SPECIALLY DRAWN ILLUSTRATIONS AND
INITIALS BY WILLIAM PALMER

PUBLISHED BY
THE BODLEIAN SOCIETY OF BOSTON, U.S.A.

By Way of Introduction

Here opens a little gate out of a noisy street into a green cloister, so that we pass from the sight of reeking chimneys and the company of crowding mill-hands into a place where sweet peace prevails, where there is decent leisure, where there are old portraits of gentlemen, and books written on vellum, and good people who have time to read them. Here in Manchester—of all impossible places!—the past and the present lie thus in instructive contrast.

Mr. Blatchford has no love for Henry VIII, who though he did not himself eject the gentle brethren of this cloister began the bad business and must bear the blame of it. He has a store of hard, round adjectives with which he pelts Henry wherever he meets him,—who thus rudely shut the door in the face of the past and held out a beckoning hand to the present; to this selfish, commercial present, intent, like Henry, on getting all that can be got, regardless

of old sanctities, of dignity, of beauty, of religion, of the best of life. Mr. Blatchford has no love for this present, either; especially as it is manifested in Manchester, and such like enterprising places. To him it means hurry and worry, and cheapness and vulgarity, and things made by machinery, and all manner of bad taste and bad behaviour.

I hope that the past was as good as he thinks it was, and that the parsons and people of the old times were as pleasant as they are picturesque. I am afraid that they were not. It seems to me that it must have been mighty cold for the brethren who had but distant "access to the fire," and that the cold must have entered into their souls. I am inclined to think that it is warmer now on cold days, even in Manchester. But it is cold enough.

Anyhow, here is a charming picture of a remote time, done with sympathy, full of fine feeling, good to look upon, and pleasant and profitable to remember.

GEORGE HODGES.

THE DEANERY,
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS.

William Palmer's Illustrations and Initials