

**EDITH, OR LOVE
AND LIFE IN
CHESHIRE: A POEM**

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Edith, Or Love and Life in Cheshire: A Poem by T. Ashe

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T. ASHE

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LOVE AND LIFE IN CHESHIRE

A POEM .

BY ^{Thomas} T. ASHE

AUTHOR OF 'THE SORROWS OF RYSDALE' 'PICTURES' ETC.

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PART I.

LOST.

B

THE RECTOR'S CHILD.

Edith Trevor closed the door of the rectory gently ;
 Linger'd in the porch, and twirl'd the string of her bonnet ;
 Slowly pluck'd a flower from jasmine near her, by habit ;
 Slowly, lost in dreams, her fingers nervously twitching,
 Leaf by leaf broke off, and did not know that she did it.
 Edith, you grown sad, the romp and joy of the household ?

On the right you heard the anvil ring in the village ;
 Heard the ass's bray, the mastiff's surly rejoinder ;
 Heard the waggon-wheels, and lusty whip of the carter,
 Starting blithe away, refresh'd, from door of the Heron.
 Greenly water-meadows were spread below in the hollow,
 Sweet with new-mown grass ; and cattle, hither and
 thither,
 Slowly roam'd, at peace, or loved to wade in the water.
 On the left, the garden, in all the glory of summer.

Now she stood so long, the swallow carelessly twitter'd,
 Neath the eaves o'erhead, no longer scared with her pre-
 sence ;
 Then she heard a foot, and quickly, shunning the village,
 Edith slipp'd away, and crossed the lawn, and was hidden ;

Yet she still sped on, beneath the arbuté and laurel ;
 On by warm south wall, and fruit-trees loaded with promise,
 Plum and sunny peach, until she came to the orchard.
 There the daffodils, by gnarl'd roots yellow with lichen,
 Held and charm'd her eye, when March winds sang in the woodlands.
 Strangely she forgot ; nor slack'd her flight, till the wicket
 Turn'd its ill-hung hinge, and brought the air of the meadows.

Down the meads she went, amid the joy of the daisies ;
 Buttercups, and clover, red and white, and the grasses ;
 Till she gain'd the bridge and little stream, with its shadows
 Nestling mid the cress and weeds that trail on the gravel.
 Then she lean'd and dream'd, with half-shut eyes ; and the minnows
 Gleam'd and glanced in vain ; and you could tell she was weeping.
 She let grief have way, when none were by to behold her ;
 Oozed the bright hot tears beneath the fringe of her eyelids.

Will the strangers smile ? sweet is the climate of England !
 Sweet, the English summer, in the woods and the valleys !
 On the hills and uplands, and in the willowy valleys !
 In this spot, if any, the Cheshire hamlet of Orton !
 June ! O June ! how soft, with wood-doves !—why is she weeping

Berthold Trevor, her cousin, she has promised to marry,—
 Him, the old playmate,—but at the word of a father.
 O what dreams she had of lovers' words and the wooing!
 O what dreams she had! and are they faded and vanish'd?
 Nay, was she not worth the little pain of the winning?
 Well she loves her friend, but it is pain to be slighted.

With the golden beams and gentle winds of the summer
 Quickly dry the tears from cheeks and eyes of a maiden.
 Cheeks, so fair, un wrinkled,—soon the wing of the angel,
 Hope, youth's guardian, crown'd with budding roses and
 lilies,

Brushes them as he passes, and strikes a ruddier colour.
 She was but eighteen, and ever gay as a cricket,
 Till, to-day, the rector, from the eyes of his daughter
 Drew sweet fancy's veil, which tints with colours of Heaven
 Womanhood and manhood and all the shadowy future.
 Still for Edith Trevor, all so used to be happy,
 Dimly shone the eyes of demon care in the darkness.
 Long she could not hear the rippling sound of the water,
 Feel the wind blow on her, and still be heavy and sorry.
 Soon it passed away,—her troubled dream,—as a shadow
 From the hillside passes, when the morning is sunny.
 Things became less strange; and, with a glimmer of
 humour,

She could laugh, and say, half pert, "Who knows what
 may happen?"

• So with buoyant foot, and with a song, as of old time,
 Past the fields she went, to pluck the flowers on the hill-
 side;