

Tottel's Miscellany

Tottel's Miscellany, also called *Songes and Sonettes*, was the first printed anthology of English poetry. It was published by Richard Tottel in 1557, and ran to many editions in the sixteenth century. *Tottel's Miscellany* derives its name from its publisher Richard Tottel. Richard Tottel was an important English publisher with a shop at Temple Bar on Fleet Street in London. His main business was the publication of law textbooks. But his biggest contribution to English literature would come in the form of the anthology of poetry.

The collection includes mostly the works of Henry Howard Surrey and Thomas Wyatt. Both were heavily influenced by Italian poetry, although Wyatt's meter would be adapted to conventional English iambic stress by Tottel. The foremost contributor to *Tottel's Miscellany*, the Earl of Surrey, introduced the English sonnet form by modifying the Petrarchan sonnet. The form which Surrey created is easier to write in English than the Petrarchan form, with its more complex rhyme scheme. Other contributors include Nicholas Grimald, Thomas Norton, Thomas Vaux, John Heywood, Edward Somerset and other uncertain or unknown authors. Among these unknown authors, it is believed that Geoffrey Chaucer wrote at least one of the poems, titled in the anthology as, "To leade a vertuous and honest life."

The first edition of *Tottel's Miscellany* (1557) featured forty poems by Surrey, ninety-six poems by Wyatt, forty poems by Grimald, and ninety-five poems written by unknown authors. The second edition was also published in 1557. In this edition, thirty of Grimald's poems were removed but thirty-nine additional ones were added to the "uncertain authors" category with a final tally of 281 poems. There are only two copies of this work in existence left, one in the Grenville Collection at the British Museum, the other at Trinity College, Cambridge. The next seven editions were all printed between 1558 and 1586, with the final ninth edition being published in 1587.

Tottel's Miscellany was so popular during the Elizabethan era that it is considered the most influential of all Elizabethan miscellanies. It inaugurated a long series of poetic anthologies in Elizabethan England.