

SONGS OF THE SOIL

(Isle of Wight Dialect)

BY

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FOREWORD.

As a dialect publication of necessity needs an explanatory foreword, I have ventured to re-issue an excerpt from the Introduction to my *Legends and Lays of the Wight* published by Constable in 1912 and now out of print.

I am old enough to have heard this quaint and expressive vernacular as a common everyday occurrence, and have studied it at first hand for half a century. Alas! that it is now practically extinct, and I doubt even the "British Drama League" being able to revive it. Although, in general, common throughout Wessex, in some respects the Isle of Wight version is undeniably distinctive.

In dialect verse it is a somewhat difficult task to render our local vernacular correctly, as it so often varies. For instance, "of" is represented by *uv*, *o*, and *by*; ¹ "the" is not only shortened to *th'* and *t'*, but is often dropped entirely; ² "him" becomes *'en*, and more often *'n*; ³ "she" and "her" are invariably transposed; ⁴ an *n* is tacked on to the possessive pronoun, ⁵ and the last syllable of verbs ending in *en* is dropped. ⁶ The substitution of *z* for *s*, *v* for *f*, *a* for *o*, and *e* for *a* is universal. ⁷ An Islander never "leaves out his *h's*,"

1 Eny uve zid my hriphook : top o' down : I kent git hold by it.
2 Harses be in ztable. 3 I tell'd en. I zid 'n.
4 A caal'd zhe but her wudn't ztop.
5 Be this yourn ? noa, tes his'n.
6 Sharp for sharpen : fat for fatten. 7 Zun, vire, harse, thetch.

though he puts them in before words beginning with *r*,¹ and has a curious habit of replying to a statement of fact by an assertion with interrogative inflexion.² Though many similar words and idioms are to be found throughout Wessex, on the other hand, many are peculiar to the Isle of Wight. What modern English can so well express the verbs to shuffle, to startle, to scratch, as our local *scuff*, *scart*, and *firk*, or the pangs of hunger as *leer*? Who that has met a farm-hand on a dull overcast day has not been struck by his assertion, 'Oi, a zerow daay vor zure'; or in drizzling rain, 'tes ter'ble zluttish weather zure 'nuf'? Again, what better describes the appearance of a sickly child or a weakly plant than the adjectives *tewly* and *miffy*, or the outspokenness of an honest man than *jo an' blunt*?

The pity of it is, the spread of education must ever be the death of vernacular. Children are taught to speak as never their forbears did, and are rapidly picking up a most detestable urban twang, which in a few years will have entirely displaced the homely and expressive Saxon speech of rural England—a matter to be greatly regretted. Though local words and idioms are duly noted in the glossary edited by Mr. C. Roach Smith, F.S.A., for the English Dialect Society in 1881, and the dictionary compiled by Mr. W. H. Long in 1886, I fear me much my homely verses may prove to be the swan-song of the Isle of Wight dialect.

PERCY G. STONE.

MERSTONE, ISLE OF WIGHT.
1933.

¹ Hrabbit, hrough, etc.

² You have? It is?

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HOW THEY RAN THE FIRST FOX
IN THE WIGHT (1830)

PASSON FENWICK o' Brook a kep' a darg vox
On a chain i' his yard at the rear ;
Where a got en, an' how, I niver yet heerd,
All thet I knows—he wuz theer.

To Passon cum hrinnin' one vine zummer day,
As a moistened a's clay on the laan,
A's zervant man Zam wi' the ter'ble news—
' Pleaze zur, measter Reynolds be gaan.'

High an' low did they zeek vor en, measter an' man,
But niver a traace uv en vound.
Zo twuz clear to they both, as they moppet theer brows,
Zly Renyard had got en to ground.

But a's presence I hreckon zoon gun ter be velt
I' rickess an' hen roost an' hrun ;
Tho' vew uv em zaw en, a vast uv em zmelt
Wheer the rogue had been oop to a's vun.

A got sech a noosance, I tell 'ee, at last
Thet the whole blessed country-zide hrose,
An' they argued it this way, they argued it thet—
They very nigh ended in blows.

2 HOW THEY RAN THE FIRST FOX

Last they 'greed vor to gether an' dresh en out vair,
 Zo us met at the 'Dragon' an' dined—
 Varmer Day, Zquire Thetcher, an' Jemmy Scovell,
 An' a mort more bezaide I doan't mind.

Zaays Zquire, a zetten oop top i' the cheer,
 As a's knife on the table a knocks,—
 'My hounds they'm be stoutish at hrunning a hare,
 I hreckon they'll zhow to a vox.'

Oop gits Varmer Day. 'Then a Toosday let's meet,
 An' I knaws hright good sport us'll zee;
 An' when us hev hrunned en an' killed en—o' carse
 You mun all come an' dine long o' me.'

Toosday come an' old Ned he've a brought oop the
 hounds,
 Zquire Thetcher a hriden behind,
 Wi' Harvey an' Jacobs an' Day an' Scovell
 An' the rest uv us—eager to vind.

Us hed hriden dro' Brison—a cup at the 'Bells'—
 When a shepherd lad gi'ed us the neows,
 A'd zeen Master Renyard on top o' Brook Down
 Thet marning a volding a's yowes.

'Move on Ned wi' the hounds an' draw t' Rue vust,
 Us'll vind—if a's theer'—Zquire cried.
 But zly Reynard a zaays, 'Wot's this bother an' vuss,
 I'll jest zteal away t'other zide.'

HOW THEY RAN THE FIRST FOX 3

'To en, my pets. Tally-ho!' hollers Ned—
 Zquire blaws till a's blue i' the veace—
 Ga-a-r-n awa-a-y! Us wor galloopen long top o'
 Down,
 As a zunk the hill, nigh to Pitt Pleace.

Grimes o' Yafford an' Day they pushed haard vor the
 lead
 —They hrode jest a bit jealous thet day—
 'Vor Barnes High a's makin,' zhouts Mr. Scovell,
 A'll ground ef not headed away.'

But a shepherd's grey bobtail here joined the vun,
 An' vor Yafford an' Troopers a turned;
 But they gallied en on wi'out valter or check,
 Vor the zcent by this time vairy burned.

By Troopers a zhip-vold a breather us gev
 Us wor none uv us zorry to take—
 Vor the pace wuz a hot un—hounds picked oop the line
 An' for'ard us ztreamed i' theer wake.

Now vor Presford a made, wheer zome laberen' chaps
 Wi' theer zhouts turned vor Kingston a's head.
 Us vollied the line past the church by the varm,
 An' on dro' the home withy-bed.

Then no'thard a zwing vor the Wilderness earths—
 Many zince theer hev vanished vrom zight—
 But us pushed en on thro'. Wi' a turn to the left
 A made vor the Chillerton height.

All long top o' down—harses blawin' like mad—
 Then hround Westridge covers a went,
 Past Larden copse, down Zhor'ell zhute an' across
 Passon's garden—vair screaming the zcent.

By Smallmoor, across Haslett's-heath an' away—
 Vor Atherfield Cliffs wuz a's aim.
 Nigh done, dro' t' rickess i Dungewood a creeps
 An' makes vor the open—ztill game.

But hounds they are on en—a znarl an' a znep—
 A's life an' misdeeds they'm past.
 Ned snatches en oop vrom the worryen pack—
 Bold Reynard dies game to the last.

'Who zays thet my beauties ken't zhow to a vox?'
 Cries Zquire, a moppen a's veace;
 'They stuck to en prime vrom the vind to the kill,
 Tho' I hreckon a zhowed we the pace.'

Us zlackened our girths—both harses an' men
 Wor tired as martals cud be—
 Cries Day 'Jog along, our ligs us can hrest
 Beneath my mahogany dree.'

I mind wot a spread Madam Day gev us theer—
 Every thing thet a martal cud eat—
 I hreckon as proper a housekeeper she
 As iver in Wight you cud meet.

An' to drink, theer wuz prime old October brewed ale,
 Wi' zherry an' poort uv the best,
 Ah! how us discussed the events uv the day—
 The hrun an' the joomps an' the hrest.

Ole Zquire—thet tired wi' dinner an' sport—
 Vell asleep in a's cheer an' 'gun znore,
 Then a'd wake up an' zhout wi' a wave of a's hand,
 'Yes us killed en, us killed he vor zure.'

Last in come the jorum, all zteaming an' strong,
 An' us toasted the high an' the low;
 When thrice us had empt'd the bowl an' villed oop
 Zquire hreckoned it time vor to go.

But when harses wor zadelled an' brought to the door,
 Many tried vor the ztirrup in vain;
 Many wuzn't quite zure a wich zide to mount,
 An' many zaw ghoasts i' the laane.

Charge your glasses—no 'heel taps' we make it our
 boast
 In the health I'm proposing to-night—
Squire Thatcher, of Wackland, I give as the toast
 Who ran the first fox in the Wight.

HOW THEY INTRODUCED FOXES TO WIGHT

Oi, vox do creak a bit i' the wind,
 We'm zure to have hrain avore night ;
 'Twuz once Squire Thetcher's—you mind,
 Who hran the vust vox i' the Wight.

Vor years over stable a' hung,
 A tellin' the wind i' the sky,
 As all hround the compass a' zwung—
 When a' died Squire 'queathed en to I.

At sport any place I could fill,
 Zo I whipped till old Ned on the shelf
 Wuz laid. Then Squire zay'd 'Will,
 Best take to the tootler yerself.'

One o' the dead an' gone zort,
 A hard un to vollow, zur. Zounds,
 A rare chap wuz Squire vor sport,
 Be it cock-fighten', harses, or hounds.

But the huntin' it wuz a' loved best,
 For a' knowed all its wiles an' its ways.
 Gad ! a' vollied it too wi' a zest
 You'm none of 'e got now-a-days.

Ay, one o' the best zur, wuz 'e,
 An' that I can trewly declare,
 Tho' when a wuz crossed, I agree,
 A ter-ble veller to zwear.

'Twuz harrier hounds that a' kept
 Up at Wackland. The beauties ! I mind
 How over the country they zwept,
 Ah ! a stout pack to gallop behind.

Us hadn't no voxes i' Wight
 In them days ; but old Squire's zon—
 A thoroughbred bit of all hright—
 Thowt a'd just interjooce 'em, vor vun.

Me and him took to Portsmouth a trip—
 As a zay'd, 'to gi' Willum a treat'—
 Brought vour brace o' cubs home by zhip,
 An' nigh lost em in Union Street.

Well, us got back to Wackland by dark
 And uptipp'd the hampers i' wood ;
 Then waited to zee how the lark
 By his daddy would be understood.

November come voggy an' chill,
 Wi' vust meet a' Wackland o' carse ;
 'Hares be plenty, zcent prime, us should kill'
 Zaays Squire, a pattin' hes harse.

Girths zeen to. A'hright? Us moved on
Down lane to the home withy bed,
When, a' zudden, old Klinker gev tongue
An' the rest opened out to a's lead.

A hrush, an' they gallied en thro',
Old Ned vollied, crying, 'war' stubs!'
Squire's zon whispers, 'Tween me an' you
A hreckon 'tis one o' our cubs.'

'I believe you'm hright, zur,' zaays I.
As us galloped thro' Horringford leaze,
The line was as straight as a die,
The pace, zur, as hot as you please.

Zaays Squire, 'A've hrun a vair zight
O' hares and no hrun I would miss,
We'm got ztoutish hares i' the Wight,
But a niver zid ar' one like this.'

Me an' Squire, us hrode zide by zide;
As us crossed by the wold 'Fightin' Cocks,'
Squire stood in his stirrups an' cried,
'*D—nation! they'm hrunning a vox!*'

'Be'm zur?' answered I. 'Well, thet's hrum,'
An' I stuck my tongue in t'other cheek
As young Squire a' winked me 'Be mum';
But o' carse I warn't goin' to sneak.

Away went Charles, headen for Hale,
Us zat down for a reg'lar bust;
As a zwung roun' vor Budbridge the tail
Slackened down. Us hrode hard who'd be vust.

Ay, gad, thet day didn't us hride!—
At the brook there wuz many a zpill—
Into withy-bed, out t'other zide,
Then a quick turn thro' Moor to Godshill.

As us zwep thro' the village, a gurl
Cried, 'A zid 'em a galleyin' a beast,
Wi' a gurt bushy tail like a squ'r'l
An' a head like our colley dog!' . . . least . . .

But it's for'ard away, us can't stop.
An' little o' yawners us hrecked,
As they made vor Bleak Down, gained the top
Where the vuz bushes thicken, an' checked.

How they veathered, the beauties. 'Twuz prime
To zee Verity hit off the zcent
Wi' a whimper—but Charles by this time
Had to ground in the Wilderness went.

Zo it's whip off, and hoam us must vare—
Us didn't dig out then-a-day—
Vor Squire wouldn't try vor a hare
After hrunning a vox in thet way.

How a showed off did Squire, thet zick,
 An' zwoe, if a' got on the track
 O' the rogue as had play'd en the trick,
 A'd lay hes whip over a's back.

Tho' a zay't, a toppen' vine hrun—
 A straight vorty minutes or zo—
 Us two had the best o' the vun,
 There was none o' the rest i' the know.

How a' mind they hrode for'ard and well,
 Smith o' Languard an' Jacobs o' Chale,
 Gibbs o' Bowcombe an' Hills, too, o' Hale,
 Grimes o' Yafford an' Day an' Scovell,
 Hughes o' Whitcombe, Lord Alec¹ the swell,
 And the lawyer chap, young Beckingsale.

Then vences *were* vences, ztiff pleshed,
 Made up proper as one could desire,
 If a hrode straight a' didn't get heshed;
 There warn't none o' this cussed barbed wire.

An' when Squire got too old to hride
 He'd hay his cheer zet on the laan,
 Wi' a's spying glass close to a's side,
 Jest to zee how I carried the harn.

¹ Lord Alexander Russell, who hunted the Isle of Wight Harriers
 1840-50.

Ay, Squire wuz one o' the best,
 An' I zeerved 'un vor many a yeer,
 His body at Newchurch doth hrest—
 His zowl be a hunten' up theer.

Hrainen'! Vox wuz a' right, as a zaid,
 Here's a coat, zur, you'm welcome to borryer,
 It's hoam now an' early to bed;
 Zcent 'ull be breast high to-morrer.

SPRING.

I'm neyther zick, nor hrich nor poor
 —A jolly kearter's mate I be—
 I whistle ez I pass t' door
 Wheer waits my maade expectantly,
 An' kreck my whip hright lustily,
 Whiles heyam's¹ bells hring wi' zilver tongue,
 'Wold Winter's past, ztep cheerily—
 Coom oop, my harses. Ztep along.'

¹ Hames, the pieces of wood on the horse-collar to take the
 traces.

Oi, Zpring be here ; theer's zigns vor sure,—
 Green buds pe'p owt in hedge an' dree
 An' dro t' meadow, ez uv yore,
 T' zstreamlet hripples merrily ;
 Whiles high above, a zpeck to zee,
 A titty lark breks inter zong ;
 Would I could zing zo zweet ez he—
 'Coom oop, my harses. Ztep along.'

Grass zsprings agen in mesh an' moor
 An' zunlight's over land an' zea,
 Whiles on t' ledges 'long t' zhore
 The nesten' doves coo lovingly.
 Vor Zpring hev come to gladden we,
 An' zummer zoon will volley¹ on
 Wi' vlowers bright in lynch² an' lea—
 'Coom opp, my harses. Ztep along.'

Zpring ! Oi, thet's t' time vor me ;
 When Natur's hright an' nuthen's hwrong ;
 When t' very air zims villed wi' glee—
 "Coom oop, my harses. Ztep along.'

¹ Follow.

² A strip of copse, generally on a hillside.

SUMMER.

Now yields be green an' zkies be vair,
 Coo duvs around theer dwellen,
 The hum o' bees be in t' air ;
 In ear t' karn be zwellen.
 All Natur wide
 Dro zummertide
 O' vuture plenty tellen.

Vrom buries hrabbets peep an' pass,
 Ez da'an vrom East comes creepen.
 Then vearless zeek t' dewy grass,
 O'er tuft an' tussock leapen.
 They veed an' play
 At time o' daay
 Thet most o' we be zleepen.

Above, the zwallows dart an' turn ;
 In copse t' megpies chitter ;
 Whiles nigh theer nest uv bent an' vern
 T' game-chicks cheep an' twitter.¹
 They'm vairly zote²
 Ez mother ztoat
 Zteals by to zeek her litter.

¹ To be agitated.

² Silly, out of one's mind.

Neath zky thet's one girt hroof o' blue
 The hripened grasses veather.
 Swish-o, Swish-o, t' zives¹ zweep dro
 An' zwauth lines grow an' gether.
 Then ztoans zing blithe
 Along t' zive
 T' zong o' haarvest weather.

Now pratty maades, wi' buzy tongue,
 Bunch meadow-zweet an' mallow
 Bezaide t' ztream, all overhung
 Wi' bramble bush an' zallow,²
 Wheer moorhens desh
 An' dip an' zplesh
 Dro' zpire an' pool an' zhallow.

When daay hev draan to eventide
 Young couples 'gin to wander :
 Wi' tender znoodlen zaide by zaide
 They dro t' laanes meander,
 Or han' in han'
 All mumchance stan',
 Laike zilly goose an' gander.

Dro' warm ztill nights, wi' trusten' love,
 Green things pursue theer growen'.
 Dews vresh t' earth, an' ztars above
 —Bright angel lamps—be glowen'.
 Zings nightingale
 In lynch an' vale,
 Her zong laike water vlowen'.

1 Scythe.

2 Willow.

AUTUMN.

WHEN daays begin to zhelten in,¹
 An' leaves be turnen' brown,
 An' gossamer wi' vairy laace
 Do cover up t' groun',
 An' zkies, till now zo clear an' blue,
 Wi' zullen hrain clouds vrown ;

When zwallows hev a vlitted zouth
 In zearch o' warmth an' zun,
 When hoar vrost comes wi' early daan
 An' cubbin' hay begun :
 Then all on varm hright glad prepare
 Vor haarvest work an' vun.

Vrom edge o' down t' Haarvest moon
 Arises big an' bright
 —Most laike a goolden grinden' ztoan—
 An' zheds a's welcome light.
 Whiles vixen caals at edge o' copse
 An' breks t' hush o' night.

When karn be cut an' 'boun an' hiled,²
 An' keerted zafely hoam,
 An' hroots push oop theer hrouded tops
 Above the zandy loam,
 An' apples vall. Us knaw vor zure
 Thet autumn time be come.

1 Shorten.

2 Sheaves set up for carting.

An' then t' meyaster's Haarvest Hoam,
 T' zupper an' t' zong.
 —A middlen' dido¹ us kicks oop
 When laughter's loud an' long—
 An' clean vorgot be weather bad
 An' zmut an' blight an' hwrong.

Oi, Zpring an' Zummer med be vair
 An' Winter hay its joys,
 But 'tes vor autumn's gatheren'
 Us zing wi' thankful voice,
 When passon bids we come to church
 An' wi' t' choir rejoice.

¹ Noise, disturbance.

WINTER

T' ZLUGGARD waakes wi' many a ya'an,
 Vrost ztars t' winder pane a :
 Zure getten' oop i' winter da'an
 Ez zleepy zloggards bane a.

Whiles Kezzie 'way to cowhouse trips,
 Wi' ankles trim an' neat a,
 Zo tight Jeck Vrost her vingers grips
 Her zcarce ken draa t' teat a.

T' waggon harses ztep along
 T' hroads all white wi' hrime a,
 Whiles Jem t' keerter kreks hes thong
 An' heyam's bells hring a chime a.

Will Zhepherd whistles oop hes daags
 An' zeeks t' lamen' yowes a ;
 Hes meyaster way to market jaags
 To larn t' latest neows a.

T' jolly huntsman mounts hes harse
 An' leaves hes hoam an' wife a.
 Zly Reynard breks vrom vuzzy¹ garse ;
 Yo-oi ! Us'll hay hes life a.

¹ Furze.

WINTER

T' sportsman hreaches vor hes gun :
 ' Let's dry t' mesh¹ vor duck a,
 An' chance zum znipes vore us ha' done—
 Ef us hay any luck a.'

When daylight zinks along t' West
 'T'es time no more to hroam a.
 Gie over. Us ha' done our best—
 Zo, hey, my bwoys, vor hoam a.

Ay ! theer it be, at end o' lane,
 T' hoam us dearly love a.
 Zee, vire-light bivers² dro' t' pane
 An' chimley zmoaks above a.

Vling on a log. Draa to t' cheer.
 Come, let's be znug an' warm a.
 Vill oop t' glass. Away wi' keer.
 Zhet owt t' caald an' ztarm a.

Zo let our voices merry zound
 Wi' zong an' tale an' jest a.
 Then, villen oop a vinal hround,
 Toss off—an' zo to hrest a.

1 Marsh, or low land.

2 Flickers.

THE WIDOW

THE WIDOW

KEZIAH ! Anna Mary ! Cum heer you zilly zluts,
 I'll hay my house kep' tidy—Noo answers an' noo
 ' buts.'

What ! zcoured up thet zarcepan. Well, do'en once
 agen.

Call thet a proper cleanin ! wi' zmears on winder pen.
 The oben door lef' open ! Keziah, I'll be bound—
 Zims now-a-days a missus needs allus chivvy hround—
 I'll hay no dust in carners, noo rust nor zlops o' wet,
 I'm Varmer Zibbick's missus—an' doant you maades
 vorget.

Well, Venner's Jarge, what be 't ? Doant ztand theer
 like a vool,

Mumchance, ez ef I'd arst 'ee a pozer vore the zkool.
 Here ! hands off my clean table—they'm well nigh
 black ez coal.

What ! want the vet i' Nippert—Zo Nancy's dropt her
 voal—

Ef you kent tend to harses, why man you jest ken zhunt,
 You ent no good to me, Jarge, I tell 'ee jo an blunt.¹
 I'll waste no hard earned money on a stuck oop Nippert
 vet,

I'm Varmer Zibbick's missus—an' doant you men vorget.

1 Outright.

Leer! bren cheese¹ you'm a wanten? 'Tis allus
nammet time,²

I louz, wi' you young slaabacks.³ Heer! mind thet
tub o' lime,

Jest zletched⁴ to white the skillen⁵—No! beer's vor
men, my zon,

Zpring water's drink vor nippers—There! zee what
you've a done,

A harlen⁶ oop they knittles,⁷ you buffle-headed lout.

Hike off⁸ to Vourteen Acre—an' mind what you'm
about;

But vust tell Jem i' garden I want them taters zet.

I'm Varmer Zibbick's missus—an' *doant you bwoys
vorget.*

You doos yer best. I knaws it. Theer doant 'ee mind
my tongue,

My heart be hright towards 'ee. Lard! I wor zweet
an' young

When I took up wi' Zibbick, nigh vorty year ago—

Lef' twenty year a widder to work the varm alone,

An' not a zon to help me—Lard! when I lost my Ned

It 'most zimmed thet dark winter, my blessed heart
ztopt dead.

Zure, when hoped up⁹ an' lonesome, 'ithin my parlour
zhet,

I'm jest your poor wold missus, God help her!—*doant
vorget.*

1 Bread and cheese.

4 Slaked.

6 Knotting up, entangling.

8 Begone, or be off with you

9 Perplexed, troubled.

2 Time for refreshment.

5 The lean-to outhouse.

7 Strings for tying the bundles of
sacks.

3 Louts.

NEWNTOWN RANDY¹

I BUNCHED a tutty,² big ez a plate,
An' garbed me oop a dandy o,
To meet my maade by her mammy's gate
An' away to Newtown Randy o.

Ef ar-a-one hed a vlouted zhe,
Reckon I'd hay tann'd he o:
The volk they vairy ztared at we
A walking to the Randy o.

I bought zhe a proper parazall—
Happen her'll vind en handy o,
Chance zun do zhine or hrain do vall
Gooi' to Newtown Randy o.

Us ztood to zee t' boxin' bout
'Twixt Tinker Tim an' Zandy o;
Zandy he knock'd the Tinker out
An' tuk the prize at t' Randy o.

I bought zhe hribbons an' ginger cake,
Laces an' zugar candy o;
Us danced away till our ligs did ache
Vor zure at Newtown Randy o.

I treated us both to the 'What is it'
—An' a drop o' Kecksy³ brandy o—
'Tired, my maade?' 'Me! Not a bit,
I'm jest enjoyin' t' Randy o.'

1 Fair. The one at Newtown was the most noted in the Wight.

2 Nosegay.

3 Sloe.

NEWTOWN RANDY

Us zid the dwarf an' a proper play,
 An' a larned pig called Andy o.
 Us zid most iverything thet day
 Theer wuz at Newtown Randy o.

Last her gev in. 'Come, tek my arm
 Wi' your pratty handy-pandy o.
 Snoodle¹ 'gen me an' I'll keep 'ee warm
 Way back vrom t' Randy o.'

Us lingered most by ivery ztile,
 Like lovin' goose an' gandy o.
 I hugged zhe ivery quarter mile
 Comin' vrom Newtown Randy o.

I'm a granfer nigh on vower score yeer,
 My back an' ligs² be bandy o.
 Her's zetten theer i' the chimbley cheer—
 The maade I tuk to t' Randy o.

1 Nestle.

2 Legs.

MY MAID

THE maade I luv be Island barn
 —Zame ez I do be—
 Med zearch t' Wight vrom end to end
 To vind t' laiike o' zhe.
 I plucked a tutty t' other day
 Vrom off our vlower knot¹:
 Chinay asters, marygolds,
 An' more I've clean vorgot;
 An' when 'twuz bunched I tied en hround
 Wi' zpire² vrom off t' mesh
 An' waited auverright³ t' ztile
 Down by t' barley esh⁴.
 But when her come all I cud mind
 Wuz, 'Marnin' you—Vine day'—
 Zure them wuz not t' tharts I hed,
 Nor what I meant to zaay.
 Vor bothered, when her looks at me
 Wi' eyes zo blue an' bright,
 My taalk 'tis all harled up⁵—zomehow
 I kennot git en hright.
 Zometimes I zhets my eyes an' thinks
 I zee her ztandin' theer,
 A dainty maade vor sure—I'll dry
 An' dra' her picter heer.

1 Flower-bed. 2 Reed. 3 Opposite. 4 Stubble. 5 Entangled

Her eyes be blue ez vairy bells
 Thet blaw along t' lane.
 Her zmile is jest t' April zun
 A-zhinin' arter hrain.
 Her cheeks they match t' apple bloom :
 Her mouth a rosebud be ;
 Her ears zim like they tiddley zhells
 You vind agen t' zea.
 Her breast be zaame when drifted snaw
 Lies wreathed along t' down—
 Kin zee the dimples in her neck
 A-peepin' dro' her gown.
 Her voice coos zaft ez turtle duv's
 When zummer hours hrun.
 Her hair gleams laike t' goolden karn
 A-hrippin' i' t' zun.
 Her laugh most minds me uv t' brook
 Thet pleshes dro' t' moor.
 Her breath comes zweet ez milkin' time
 'Ithin t' ztable door.
 Her hands be rosy, mimfy¹ things—
 Cud hold they i' my one.
 Her lips—zure ef I tell 'ee more,
 I niver zhall hay done.
 Mebbe you wants to knaw her naame ?
 Thet's tellins, doan't 'ee zee—
 Her's jest the zweetest maade i' Wight,
 The on'y maade vor me.

¹ Dainty, delicate.

SHICKSHACK DAY

(ROYAL OAK DAY, 1660)

THE twenty-ninth o' May
 Es Zheckzhack Day,
 Zo mount your oak my bwoys an' gie
 A hip hooray !

Wold winter's gone away
 —Vor zummer comes i' May—
 Zo ivery one med joyful be
 A Zheckzhack Day.

'Twuz arter Wor'ster vray,
 Wheer Crummell gained the day,
 King Charles he hrode vor zafety wi'
 A hip hooray !

Oi you, zhout vor they
 Ez helped King Charles away
 An' hid 'en in an oaken dree
 A Zheckzhack Day.

The knave as wunt obey
 An' zport his oak to-day,
 We'll tweak 'en and we'll towse 'en wi'
 A hip hooray !

SHICKSHACK DAY

Here's to Penderel an' Lane
 An' pratty Missus Jane,
 Who zaved the King vor England
 A Zheckzhack Day.

Zo jine in, no nay,
 'T'es Zheckzhack Day,
 An' wi' us zing God zave t' King
 Wi' hip hooray.

THE CARTER'S MATE

THE CARTER'S MATE

THO' I'm nobbut a Keerter's mayet, you mind,
 An' draw but den zhillen a week,
 I can whistle an' zing an' enjoy my life—
 An' better I do not zeek.

I stride longzaide o' my team zo proud
 As a paycock burd i' Joon,
 Wi' a kreck o' my whip an' a 'get oop theer'
 As t' heyam's bells ring i' toon.

I luvs t' hring o' they jinglin' bells
 As t' harses ztep along.
 It zounds to I like t' harmony
 In t' chorus uv a zong.

An' I luvs a maade—t' prattiest maade
 As iver i' Wight wuz barn—
 Her's one o' t' dainty tiddley¹ zart,
 A vlower amed t' karn.

I mind 'twuz oop at harvest hoam—
 Us wor all enjoyin' oursels—
 When meyster's³ nevvie a made en vree
 An' vair tarmented t' gels.

1 Diminutive.

2 Fists, i.e. hands.

3 Master.

I cudn't abaide the luk uv t' chap—
 Tho' I owns a good zong a zang—
 A taller-veaced, peaky-znouted¹ laad,
 Wi' a ter'ble² Nippert twang.

I zhuv'd oop agen he—chance belike—
 He called I a lubberly lout;
 'Mebbe,' zaays I, 'but thee doan't kum heer
 A messin' my maade abowt.'

'I meant no harm i' the wurld,' zays he.
 'Best thee didn't,' I zaayd,
 'Vor, meyaster's nevvyy or not, my laaad,
 I'd jolly zoon punch thy yead.'

Not that I be a quar'lzum chap,
 But can use by vests if I must.
 I had but waan reel turn oop i' my life—
 But thet wor a reg'lar bust.

'Twuz Gipsy Zam oop at Barley Mow,
 The zilly vool 'bout half zlued,³
 A tried vor to peck a quar'l wi' I—
 But I warn't i' a quar'lzum mood.

'Time thet thee hiked⁴ off hoam,' I zaays—
 Bein' allus a man vor peace.
 Then a vlouted⁵ my maade. 'Adone!' I zaays,
 An' zmacked 'n i' the veace.

¹ Pointed nosed.
³ Half-drunk.

² Terrible, a very common superlative.
⁴ Be off.
⁵ Spoke ill of.

Us hed it owt by the rickess¹ end
 —I zwoore I wudn't gev in—
 At vinish my veace wuz all uv a hoogh²—
 But a didn't zhow hackle³ agin.

I wuz a bit uv a zmock-veaced⁴ laad
 When vust I zaw my maade.
 Her looked zo zweet an' zo tired laiike,
 'Doost want a hride?' I zaayd.

Quiddle⁵ an' znigger?—Her warn't thet zort—
 But 'I taake it kind,' zaays she.
 I ken zee her perched on t' overrods⁶
 Laiike t' Jenny Wren her be.

Venner's Tummas a vancied she
 —When a zid I off did shab⁷—
 A maggotty, pumble-vooted⁸ chaap,
 Wi' a wunnerful gift o' gab.

Now thet's a gift I hevn't a got,
 Tho' at els I med be bresh,⁹
 An' mumchance¹⁰ by her zaide I walked
 Athert¹¹ t' barley esh.

'Art veared uv a little vly laiike me,
 Thou gurt big Dumbley Dore¹²?'
 Then I ketched she hround t' waaste I did
 An' kissed her lips vor zure.

¹ Rickyard. ² Out of shape. ³ Show fight. ⁴ Bashful.
⁵ Fuss. ⁶ The overhanging rails of a wagon. ⁷ Shuffle off.
⁸ Club-footed. ⁹ Impetuous. ¹⁰ Shy, silent. ¹¹ Across.
¹² Humble bee.

Her snoodled¹ agen my zaide an' zaayd—
 A lookin' zo zweet an' zly—
 'I knaw'd thee 'd niver hev vound a tongue
 To tell the news to I.'

Us voregather nammet² taime—
 Taime maades do meet the men—
 But wen I'd taalk o' banns, her'll zmile,
 'Thet med be—enywen³.'

'Tis zumwen, Jenny Wren, vor zure,
 A cottage us'll hay
 Wi' a vlower knot 'ver-right⁴ t' door
 Wi' pinks an' panzies gay.'

Zo I whistle an' zing as blithe ken be,—
 Tho' I hreckon us two mun wayet
 Till a keerter I be—at prednt⁵ you zee
 I'm nobbut a keerter's mayet.

¹ Nestled.

² Harvest bread and cheese and beer taken at four o'clock in the afternoon.

³ A very common Isle of Wight expression, i.e., any time.

⁴ In front of.

⁵ Present.

THE OLD GREY HEN

I ZING abowt my wold grey hen
 —The best t' Island dro—
 You wouldn't vind her laiike, my bwoys,
 Wheeriver you med go.
 Oi, zearch ye med dro ivery varm,
 Vrom Lee to Totland Bay,
 There's nowt to metch wi' my grey hen
 Thet niver lays awaay.

Her ligs be clean ; her veet be virm ;
 Her zteps zo neat an' zpry ;
 Her veathers lie thet thick an' close,
 Not one uv 'em awry ;
 Her beak be yaller guinny goold ;
 Her comb be gay an' hred ;
 Her eye be bright ; her breast be plump
 As grammer's¹ veather bed.

Her's niver broody long, but zets
 As regler ez the zun :
 I've know'd her cover vourteen iggs
 An' hetch 'em—ivery wun.
 Her regler breshes² i' the dew
 To help t' peepen' chicks.
 An' iggs her don't vorget to turn—
 Her's oop to all t' tricks.

¹ Grandmother's.

² Brushes, i.e., wets her feathers.

Her clucks zo zweet an' ztruts zo proud
 Wi' all her chicken hround.
 Begob! her lifts her veet thet high
 They zcарсely tetch t' ground.
 An' zould a hawk or crow come nigh—
 Show hackle! Thet her do.
 An' caals her brood 'ithin t' coop
 As vast ez they ken go.

When dry you doos to veel her iggs,
 Her zims to unnerstand,
 An' zits ez gentle ez a duv
 An' niver pecks yer hand.
 But clucks zo zaft, ez ef to zaay,
 'A knows what you'm abowt.
 Zure doan't be vussen' hround they iggs,
 I'll hetch the bwoylen owt¹.

Now thet I've zung my titty² zong
 I'm zure you'll all agree
 Thet this yer wold grey hen o' mine's
 The best you'm laike to zee.
 Oi, jest t' best man iver had
 —What more ken martal zaay?
 Here's to her then 'The wold grey hen
 Thet niver lays awaay.'

1 The whole lot.

2 Little.

MARY

VROM owt my life the joy be gone,
 An' day hev zet in darkest night,
 Vor He've a called my deary one,
 My Mary, to the realms o' light
 To worship wi' the angels bright.
 'Twuz haard indeed thet thou medst go,
 Dear maade o' mine, vrom eartly zight:
 Vor, Mary, maade, I loved 'ee zo.

Thou know'st best. Thy will be done,
 An' what Thou do'st I louz¹ 'tes hright
 —Tho' man be ztarved when left alone
 To carry on the earthly vight—
 Zupport me, Lard, in my zore plight,
 An' help me bear this bitter woe
 Thet grips an' dra's my heart-ztrings tight.
 My maade! My maade! I loved 'ee zo.

Zweet maade o' mine I loved an' won
 —Zure thou wast gentle, I voreright²—
 Thou zervest now at t' Lamb's white throne
 Up theer, above the ztarry height,

Suppose.

2 Headstrong.

Wi' zaints, like thee, in hrobes o' white,
 An' know'st what us kennot know
 Till Heavenward our zouls tek vlight.
 Ah ! Mary maade, I loved 'ee zo.

Ah ! Mary—zweetest maade in Wight—
 I ne'er zhall zee agen below ;
 May we in Heaven reunite,
 God ! Mary, maade, I loved 'ee zo.

FORSAKEN

I ZET an' think t' livelong daay :
 It haants me waaken, zleepen.
 Ken nuthen drave¹ this dread awaay
 Thet's closer, closer creepen ?
 Lord, help a maade
 By Love betray'd
 —The love thet ends in weepen'.

I am no Nanny light-o'-love²
 —'Tes Heaven's druth, I zwear it—
 This burden zore I kennot move,
 Wi' he not here to zhare it.
 Me all vorlorn,
 Wi' babe unborn,
 Hay got alone to bear it.

I vell bevore hes lyen' tongue
 —Woe's me ! I loved he dearly—
 God's pity ! I wor bresh³ an' young ;
 I zee it now most clearly.
 A zilly child
 By love beguiled,
 A passen' vancy merely.

¹ Drive.
³ Impetuous.

² A nanny is an opprobrious local term.

An' this thet's vutteren' i' my breast,
 —The fruit of love vorsaken—
 A 'wuzburd' ¹ caal'd in crool jest,
 A's mother's zhaame opp-raaken.
 Ah! cruel woe!
 'Twere better zo
 Thet both on us be taaken.

In zilence nabers pass me by
 —Var zooner they'd a curst 'en—
 No 'Marnen you,' no taalk, tho' I
 Vor one kind word a'm thirsten'.
 Wi' bitter zhaame
 I kennot naame
 My very heart be bursten.'

Var kinder be t' beasts an' burds
 Who gie me Natur's 'Marnen':
 They do not hurt wi' crool wurd
 Or zting wi' looks uv zcarnen'.
 They doan't pint zly,
 Ez I pass by,
 To other maades a warnen'.

Abroad I creep when daay be done,
 Zo none ken zee my gooen.
 Dro lane an' lynch I wander on
 To wheer I met my hruen.

¹ Whore's-bird, bastard.

Heer by t' ztile
 I zet awhile
 An' wetch t' watter vlowen'.

Dark night—zaave long t' edge o' down
 Wheer lightnen' vlashes biver.¹
 T' rustlin' boughs abuv me vrown
 An' in the night wind zhiver—
 Whiles gurt an' zmall
 T' voices call
 Way down along t' hrivier.

He who forgied t' zinnen' maade,
 —Her vuture zervice winnen'—
 An' wi' zweet words o' comfort ztaay'd
 Her tears o' zhaame a hrinnen.
 He chance mebbe
 'Ull pardon me
 An' wesh awaay my zinnen'.

The Voices. . . . Closer, closer, creep
 The waters. . . . None ken zee me.
 I come. . . . Kind hrivier vlowen' deep,
 Vrom this dread burden vree me.
 Wi' zhaame opprest,
 Heer's vinal hrest.
 Ah—Mercy—God forgie me.

¹ Quiver.

THE RECRUITING SERGEANT

I CHANCED to be i' Nippert town
 —'Twuz on a market daay—
 An' auver-right¹ t' 'Rose an' Crown'
 I met a zargeant gaay.

Hes hair wuz iled, hes cap atop
 Wuz bunched wi' hribbons vine;
 Hes coat wuz laaced, hes trousies vaaced
 Each zaide wi' a hred line.

Zhouts he, a ztridin' oop an' down,
 A gorgeous zight to zee,
 'Hroll up, my lucky lads, hroll up,
 An' jine our grand armee.'

'Times be baad,' zaays I. Zaays he
 'Twull be t' very thing:
 Zo, ef you'm willin', taake t' zhillen,
 An' zarve our grashus King.'

'Not me, my zargeant gaay,' zaays I.
 'To vight I doan't knaw how,
 Wi' zword an' gun an' sech like vun—
 I'd liever volley plow.'

1 Opposite.

'Theer's glory an' renown,' zaays he.
 'Mebbe,' zaays I, 'vor you.
 Chance I veer, wi' all their gear,
 I might git hurted too.'

'Lor when they zee my sojer laad,
 Zo boold an' brave an' gaay,
 They'll heve a vright—they'll niver vight,
 But turn an' hrun awaay.

'Bezaides,' zaays he, 'a vine young chap,
 Ez what you zim to be,
 Should not stop hoam, but come an' hroam
 The world along o' me.

'Theer's goold to git an' loot to zell.'
 Zaays I, 'I med get zoold:
 Best ztop I vow an' mind my plow
 Then be a sojer boold.

'Wi' zwords an' guns aw'm not acquent.
 I'd liever use a zool.¹
 'Ten't in my waay, my zargeant gaay;
 Goo—dry another vool.

'None o' yer blood an' war vor me—
 I'll baide at hoam I vow.
 Cuckoo,' zaays I, 'Goo to, zaay I—
 I'll ztick to meyaster's plow.'

1 A stake for fastening hurdles to.

A CHRISTMAS PARTY

'Marnen, you! 'Tis vine to-daay,
 Zure wind ha' blawed the hrain awaay.
 Oi, us done well this lamben' time,
 An' hay be oop an' hroots be prime—
 A' coom to ask the both uv 'e
 To tek your vittles long o' we.
 Theers hrabbit pie an' hroasted teal,
 An' viggy pudden thick wi' peel,
 An' jest about a breast o' veal
 In oben¹ now a baaken!
 And missus' made a toppen brew
 —Zure I've a tub of whiskey too
 Will last we most the winter dro—
 To cheer our meery maaken.'

'Thankee, Zal, I'll tek a zeat.
 You kips t' cottage nice an' neat.
 Noo, not vor I—ahem—well jest
 A drap, mebbe, to warm my chest.
 —Must kip this plaguey caald awaay—
 An' drink yer health this Crismus daay.
 Wind be mighty hrough vor zure.
 Vair hists t' carpit aff t' vloer.

1 Oven.

Raw too. Mebbe 'twull turn to snaw
 An' gie us Crismus weather.
 Zpeers¹ pint to ten; tes time vor hoam,
 Now mind you'm both uv you to come—
 I hreckon you'll enjoy it zome
 When all do meet together.'

When Varmer'd gone, Zal bustled hround
 —Vor church bells hed begun to zound—
 'They'm ztartet'in, I do declare,
 An' I ent drest nor zsmoothed my hair,
 An' thee 'ull want thy Zunday cloes
 Zet out an' breshed avore us goes.'
 But Lard! At sech my Zal be prime,
 An' us got theer in vamous time
 Whiles they did hring t' Crismus chime
 Vrom out t' gray wold stipple.
 Us heerd what Passon hed to zaay
 On all thet happ'd a' Crismus daay,
 When He did come on earth to ztaay
 An' zave all Cristen pipple.

Church vinished, on th' ztroke o' noon
 Uz ztartet. To git theer too zoon
 Tent manners. Varmer Chick wor hright,
 Zure snaw wor turnen brown to white.
 Zal histed oop her gown vrom harm,
 But let 'en down in zight of varm,
 Wheer by t' door ztood Varmer drest
 Wi's missus all in Zunday best,

1 Spears, the hands of a clock.

A CHRISTMAS PARTY

A welcome word vor ivery guest
 —Most laike our goose an' gander.
 Zam Zprake be theer vrom Cheverton,
 Jem Gurd an' Eniss, Izaak's zon—
 I zid 'n znoodlen later on
 'Gen pratty Jane Viander.

Us zettled down. Wold Jarge zaid grace,
 An' then us did pitch in apace.
 I hreckon us maade proper plaay
 Wi' all t' zpread thet Crismus day.
 Zoon 'Missus' Varmer Chick did cry
 'Heres bottom to thy hrabbet pie.'
 Then vollied¹ on the breast o' veal,
 The hribs o' beef, the hroasted teal,
 The viggypudden, thick wi' peel,
 All vairly hround divided.
 Us vinished off wi' cheese an' bread,
 White zelery an' beetroot hred.
 Begob! it wor a toppen² zpread
 Thet Varmer Chick provided.

All done, us pushed the cheers awaay
 An' started in vor vun an' plaay.
 Then Missus brought her vamous brew
 As Varmer'd zaid zhe 'lowed to do,
 An' tongues got loose an' eyes got bright,
 As orter be on Crismus night.
 Granfer ketched wold Missus Loe
 An' kissed zhe under mistletoe,

1 Followed.

2 First-rate.

A CHRISTMAS PARTY.

A did, an' wouldn't let her go.
 Lard! didn't it zurprise her.
 Then kiss wi'in the ring begun,
 The bwoys did ketch, the maades did hrün—
 The zmeartest cupple at t' vun
 Wor Zam an' Zerle's Elizer.

Then Jem tooned oop. Us klee'd t' vloer
 An' vooted it two hours or more.
 Gad! ligs did work an' dust did vly,
 An' all our droats got ter'ble dry;
 Till, vair wore out, Jem's ztring did bust—
 I lows a'd coom to 'bust a must'—
 'I'll tek it on,' Jan Venner zayd—
 Es, he thet's zweet on Zibbick's maade
 Vrom Alverstone—I war'nt a plaay'd
 The concertina proper.
 —To zee t' laike you var med go—
 At vigger danceen Natty Loe
 Wor proper zpry; at heel an' toe
 Jan Zibley wor a topper.

The Crismus Bwoys¹ came tumblen' in
 Wi' daance an' taalk an' merry din.
 'Girt Head an' Blunder,' ztarts t' zhow
 An' arter he 'King Jarge' 'e know;
 Next 'Vather Crismus' an' he's wife,
 Wi' broom an' cudgel vair at ztrife.
 Then 'Nobul Captin,' 'Turkish Knight'
 —Thet most do gie t' maades a vright

1 The Mummers.

A CHRISTMAS PARTY

When he wi' brave 'King Jarge' do vight—
 Each arter t' other comen.'
 Next 'Valiant Sojer,' 'Poor and Mean,'
 Then 'Doctor' wi' his vizicks zeen,
 Last "Johnny Jack," zo leer¹ and lean—
 'Twuz proper Crismus mummen.

Then Varmer vrom hes whiskey keg
 Gie'd all uv em a middlen peg.
 'Twud kip the dust down,' zo a zaid,
 'An' niver hurt your ligs nor head.'
 Twuz then the zong an' tale went hroun',
 The best o' both, you may be boun'.
 Last, Varmer zet a dancen bout
 Twixt Nat and Jan, they dancers ztout;
 I hreckon neyther wud gie out,
 But kep theer ligs a zhaken.
 A done! us cried, the metch be draan,
 Els ye med daance awaay till da'an.
 —Begob! I'll mind zo long's I'm barn
 Chick's Crismus merry maken.

A SCROW DAY

A SCROW¹ DAY

Oi, marnen' be mis'able² dull,
 Mist henges along down ez a veil;
 An, most laike our Hereford bull,
 T' vog-harn be blaren³ to Chale.

T' zky be all grey overhead
 —Not a zign to be zeen uv its blue—
 T' hedges look zo they weer dead,
 An' cattle crowd inter t' lew⁴.

No' light zims to come vrom t' zky.
 Wheer pewits cry plaintively zhrill.
 Hrooks vlap along lazily by
 —All Nature lies zullen and ztill.

T' hruts i' t' laane be thet deep,
 An teams zweat an' ztrain ez they goo,
 Whiles keerters trudge, well-nigh asleep,
 Ez waggons draa heavy an' zlow.

T' zky an' t' land an' t' zea,
 Most ivery thing zims to be grey.
 Not a bird chirps in hedge-row or dree
 —Vor zure tes a proper zcrow day.

¹ Overcast.
³ Bellowing at.

² Used in the Isle of Wight as a superlative.
⁴ Lee, shelter.

GOLDEN GORSE

Come to t' down, my maade, wi' me—
 T' wind be zaft, t' zkies be vair,
 An' Zpring be in t' very air;
 All Natur' zims a growen'—
 We'll hroam together, vancy vree,
 Wheer goolden vuz be blowen'.

Theer's nowt to kip we now at hoam;
 T' vallow hath bin cleaned an' tilled,
 An' harrowed over zsmooth an' drilled.
 Zo—now us done wi' zowen'—
 Come to t' down an' let us hroam
 Wheer goolden vuz be blowen'.

Athert t' vield, wheer path zhews brown
 Agen t' green, t' yard we'll crass
 —Wheer eager vor t' juicy grass
 T' zwagéd kine be lowen—
 An' zo dro laane thet leads to down
 Wheer golden vuz be blowen'.

Wheer mossy grass a carpet maakes
 We'll zit us down i' lew an' wetch
 T' zstreams thet dro t' valley ztretch,
 Laike threads o' zilver vlowen';
 Whiles all around t' breeze awaakes
 T' zent o' vuz a blowen'.

T' zky be all vorget-me-not,
 An' zea, thet metches zky in blue,

Bounds ivery zaide t' distant view,
 Wheer zhips be comen—goen.
 You zhall not vind a zweeter zpot
 When golden vuz be blowen'.

Pass wild things, vearless, to an' vro
 —O' man they zimen hay no dread—
 An' vleacy clouds vloat overhead,
 Theer moven zhadders thrown
 O'er pit an' mound o' long ago,
 Wheer now t' vuz be blowen'.

A luvs our busy yard to hoam,
 Wheer hens do virk an' chicken peep
 An', hright up top o' midden heap,
 Boold Chanticleer be crowen'.
 But ztill tes here I mind to hroam,
 When golden vuz be blowen'.

I 'louz to this you will agree,
 No matter zeason o' t' year,
 Laike kissen', vuz be wi' us, dear,
 Be't vallow taimé or growen'.
 Come hrain, come zhine, come vrost, you'll zee
 —Zomewheers—t' vuz a-blowen'.

An' when it comes my taimé to die
 Doan't lay me theer among t' hrest
 Wi' two gurt ztoans athert my chest
 An' dank grass hround me growen',
 No! Here above I'd lieber lie
 'Neath goolden vuz a-blowen'.

THE PARSON OF CHALE.

A passon to Chale, zo a've yeard volk zaay,
 —A bachelor man wi' a lonzome lot—
 Kep oop hes hreckonen, daay by daay,
 By doen a bit on a lobster pot.

Monday a'd put t' wands azide,
 Toosday a'd ztart t' bottom o' pot,
 Wednesday to Vriday a plaited an' plied,
 —Come Zaterdag a'd vinished t' lot.

Zunday 'twuz, just service time,
 Bells hed ztopped hringen' an' ztartet chime,
 An' chaap at t' organ 'gen ter blow—
 But theer ent no parson to ztart t' zhow.
 T' buoys in choir gen zcuffen theer veet
 An' zexton a vidgeted in his zeat.
 Last wardens they oop to he did go
 Wi' a whisper uv 'Wheer be Passon to?'

Zaays zexton, 'I know no more'n yeou.
 I'd best hrund down to t' Rectory
 An' zee what be oop.' Zo away went he
 —An' this wor t' zight thet he theer did zee.

In a's zhirt zleeves unnder a zycamine dree
 —June it wuz an' terble hot—
 Zat Passon quite unconzarnedly
 Worken' awaay on a lobster pot.

THE PARSON OF CHALE.

Zaays Zexton, 'T' volk be waitin' i' church,
 Be zent to zee ef you'm comen' or not;
 If 'ee doan't wunt to leave they all in t' lurch
 Thee'd best gie over thet lobster pot.'

'Waitin' i' Church! You'm zote,¹ I zaay,
 I kent be out—no, zurely not.
 I tell 'ee, my man, tes Zatterday—
 I've ztill to vinish this lobster pot.'

'Azen' your pardon 'tes you inztead
 Uv I thet be zote. T' bells be ztopt,
 An' organ's begun—Ef you've zense i' your yead
 You'll gie over plien thet lobster pot.

'Tes Zunday vor zure, ez I've tell'd it 'ee,
 Tho' 't looks most laike ez you've vorgot,
 Zo put on thee coat an' come 'long me,
 An'—jest let 'n baide, thet lobster pot.'

Passon a pondered an' hrubbed he's yead,
 Jest about wheer he'd a baldy spot.
 'I mind now a colic a kep me i' bed
 —Mebbe I *am* out wi' my lobster pot.

'Here, hreach me my coat an' my walken' cane,
 Goo tell 'em I'm comen'—Gad! I'll be zhot
 Ef I hreckon t' daays uv t' week again
 By t' wark I doos on a lobster pot.'

Passon wor in zech a mis'able hurry
 Hes hat an' hes zpecks a clean vorgot.

¹ Foolish.

THE PARSON OF CHALE

An', ez a ztartet awaay, in's vlurry
Ketched hold, a did, by t' lobster pot.

Ez luck 'ud hay 't—bein' blind a'most—
A'd zcarcelly as var as t' litten got
When a hrun vull butt 'gen a hrecten' post
An' vinished hes life—an' t' lobster pot.

This is the true and authentic tale,
—You can believe or believe it not—
Told me once on the beach at Chale
By a granfer mending a lobster pot.

THE TORTOISE-SHELL CAT

My zong tes konzarnen a hurdle-shell cat,
'T most mis'able artful you iver did zee,
Zo zly an' zo zpiteful, zo zleek an' zo vat—
I tell 'ee a proper wold hradical he,
Wuz my Grammer Cheverton's hurdle-zhell cat.

Black Zally, a's muther, her kitted I mind
I' t' crown uv wold Granfer's best church-gooen hat ;
'Twuz t' properest nest at t' taime her cud vind—
Tho' Granfer he eddn't agreein' to that.

THE TORTOISE-SHELL CAT

Nine, eight uv 'em black 'uns wi'out a'r a spot,
An' t'other a hurdle-zhell—letten it out
Thet Gurd's yaller Tom hed a vathered t' lot,
Vor Zally wor black vrom her tail to her znout.

'Vor zure, t'whole bwoylen' to bucket sholl go
I wunt hay noo more uv this kittenen muck,
Zaays Granfer—but Grammer her zayeth, 'Not zo,
Us'll jest kip t' hurdle-zhell kitty vor luck.'

Zo Grammer her took 'en an' petted he up,
An' a growed wi' t'vittles zo zleek an' zo vat
That a hefted zo much ez our big colley pup—
Ah ! didn't her cocker thet hurdle-zhell cat.

Tho' Grammer her loved en an' wudn't allow
Thet iver her Tittums did ar a thing hwrong,
Granfer's often bin heerd vor to cuss an' to vow
Ef a had hes own way Tittums wudn't live long.

When a's out on t'wetch vor a mouse or a burd
A'll lie along ground on a's ztummuck thet flat
Wi'out moven'—a looketh, I gie you my wurd,
More laike a poached igg then a hurdle-zhell cat.

Zometimes Grammer 'ull let zister Meg vor a treat
Zet oop uv an evemen' a wetchen' her tat—
T' titty maade curled i' t' oak chimbley zeat,
A znoodlen' o' Tummas, t' hurdle-zhell cat.

THE TORTOISE-SHELL CAT

A purren' an' blinken' a's eyes at t' vire,
 Ztreched out all along on t' best parlour mat,
 A looketh t' gentlest thet you cud dezire
 Doth my Grammer Cheverton's hurdle-zhell cat.

But, git you a-cross en or put Tummas out,
 A'll arch oop hes baack wi' a zwear an' a zcrat—
 I hreckon you've got to mind what you'm about
 When you teazes uv Grammer's wold hurdle-zhell
 cat.

I mind I wuz coorten o' Kelleway's Bell,
 Zetten znug i' t' lew uv her daddy's new hrick,
 When down on her shoulders—Lard! didn't her yell—
 Flopped t' hurdle-zhell, zame ez a hunderd o' brick.

Her zscreeamed an' he scratted—I tell 'e my buoys,
 A've niver zince yeard zech a dido ez that.
 T' wold man come out vor to zee what's t' noise,
 An ketched we—along o' thet hurdle-zhell cat.

One marnen vat Tummas vell into t' pond.
 How did et happen? That's tellens, buoys. What!
 I dit et? Not me—tho' I bean't over vond
 O' my Grammer Cheverton's hurdle-zhell cat.

Begob! what a zight a wuz when a come out—
 I hreckon wold Tummas wuz near it thet daay—
 Black and green wi' t' zlime vrom hes head to hes
 znout—
 But a jest crep to rickess an' licked en awaay.

THE TORTOISE-SHELL CAT

T'other daay Granfer ketched 'n crouched down on
 t'vloor,
 A yetten t' best uv our hroast dinner meat,
 Wech a'd pulled vrom t'table—a zhowed off an zwoore
 A'd zettle t' hesh o' thet hurdle-zhell cheat.

Zo a hreachd vor a's gun vrom t' mantel zhelf hrack,
 Resolved vor to vinish t' zly thieven' cuss.
 Bang! bellered gun. Tummas vell on a's back—
 Then ligged 'n awaay, not a penny the wuss.

Lives! Nuthen wunt kill he, a's got t'whole nine,
 Zo a lives; but theer's vew o' we loves en—thet's
 vlat.
 When they draa's a's death warrant I hreckon I'll zign,
 Vor I own I doan't hold wi' a hurdle-zhell cat.

A's bin zhotted, bin pizened, bin ketched in a znare;
 Bin drownded i' pond—leastways zo I've yeard
 zaay—
 Bin stuck wi' a prong—T'en't noo odds, I declare,
 He ent gooen ter end in an or'nary waay.

But 'twould grieve Grammer's heart were her Tummas
 to die.
 Theer niver wuz zech at a mouse or a hrat,
 Her declares. An' her loves he—tho' Granfer an' I
 'Ud be glad to be zhet uv thet hurdle-zhell cat.