

THE BOYS OF CORNWALL.

Disobedience to Parents Almost Unknown Among Them.

Their Rough and Rugged Sports--They Delight in All Kinds of Harmless Mischief--"Toe-Stones" and "Cob-Nutting"--The Delights of "Cob Day"--An Honest and Worthy People.

[Special Correspondence of RECORD-UNION.]

CORNWALL, Nov. 28, 1891. It is a "talk and a seat," as Cornish folk themselves say, that is a word and a blow, and often the blow first, in the discipline of Cornish children, and particularly Cornish boys.

The girls of Cornwall give nobility trouble in early life. They are little automatons in youth, silent as pagan stone circles in girlhood, voiceless and blushing thereafter until wedded, when they at once develop such strength of character, temper and tongue that half the men of Cornwall are known individually as "Jenny's Jack," and in railway are greeted with the inquiry: "How's the woman as owns 'ee?"

Whether or not the boys require rough treatment, they get it. They seem to expect it. And they thrive under it. They are all boys of parents who labor freely, and whose fathers before them for more than a thousand years have drugged and striven in the same sturdy way. Sentiment in child-training is here unknown. A drill-hammer, a hob-nailed boot, or a huge fist goes along smartly with the reprimand. Discipline is almost unknown. Whenever it occurs it is a nine-days' wonder to the entire village. Recently I witnessed an instance in a mining village. A miner had given his boy a command: "I want 'ee to" replied the lad stoutly. "I'll give 'ee a nump in the neck (back of the neck)!"

The words were not out of the father's mouth before he had knocked the boy senseless by a nump in the neck. No one expressed surprise at the treatment, and the boy was left where he fell until his senses returned, when he marched straight to his father's command. But the astonishment and horror at the boy's disobedience set the entire village in an uproar.

The Cornish boy is not permitted to imagine himself proficient. One boy I know, apprenticed to his grandfather, the village joiner, who, after having made a little dove-tailed box with hinges, lock and key, in which to store his pennies and other boy treasures. He was naturally proud of his work, and asked the old man if he would not let him do it. The latter immediately proceeded to kick the too-aspiring lad from one end of the village to the other.

As a rule our American boys have a keen ambition to go, be, or possess something, and are encouraged in such ambition. I cannot remember a trace of this in Cornwall. Its boys simply exist until old enough for endless labor, and then take their places unflinchingly in the dangerous fishing-boats, on the farms, or in the mine, the hardest working and the most blunt, rough and honest men in the world.

Still, in their way and within their rigorous conditions of life, the boys of Cornwall are perhaps as jolly a lot and secure as much rough, boyish enjoyment as the sons of any other race. Over the latter, their costume from the age of 4 to about 10 is peculiar, and gives them the appearance of rudely dressed girls. Their feet are shod in wooden shoes, and they wear short coarse woolen stockings as always hanging. A bare reach of shin intervenes between the stockings and the corduroy trousers. Over the latter is a skirt, as with the boys of the west of Ireland, reaching to the knees. Trousers and skirt have a rough woolen waist; and over all is a bush woolen savaill, of canvas or coarse muslin, something after the pattern of a short smock frock. The head is encased in the discarded caps or billy-cock hats, with the best of ventilation always provided.

At this age the Cornish boy is simply a voracious little animal, bent solely on applying a never wholly satisfied hunger, and his mother's chief duties toward him consist in the constant and diligent supply of what he is forever demanding in the form of "treacle morsel." He means treacle and a morsel of bread, and the happiest home of the Cornish boy is never lonesome in his chief laborer. He has "chores" or errands, his chief labor being to supply the household with water. This is brought in by a bucket or pail from long distances, from a half-mile to two miles, from "pen-stalks," springs and ancient wells in villages, and this he manages to convert into diversion, as he is never without company.

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Indeed the most marked characteristic of the Cornish boy is his endless participation in mischief. It never goes the length of brutality and harm; but it is as though his whole life were a mild form of Halloween license; and it often seems divinely ordained as a compensative form of punishment and scourge to those desecrating occasions of stealing, misbehavior, meanness and irresponsibility. The "penny" as the village rector or curate is called, must lead a most godly life to escape this. A stinging scolding is more than generosity would otherwise deprive him of. A scold is peculiarly the object of their attention, and a drunkard, who is regarded in Cornwall almost as thoroughly as a stranger, never knows peace. A miserly farmer who shuts his fist and door to the tender custom of Cornish giving to all who come on many of the least days of the year, is sure to lose his turkeys in the old Beltaine fires of St. John's Day. While lords of manors who refuse their parks to Cornish folk for an annual outing, find much difficulty in securing a good day's "shoot" for their city friends in the winter.

The games and pastimes of Cornish boys are distinctive, and are markedly different from those of boys of the same quality elsewhere. In the game of football, the universal boys' game of England, is altogether unknown in Cornwall. Cricketing is only kept up through the combined efforts of the Church of England curates. But kite-flying is a passion with all Cornish boys. It even extends to men. I have seen many a miner, after his long day's toil, "below grass," seated upon some old padan menhir or top above his village home, smoking his short pipe, and in a kind of grave rapture flying a kite taller than himself, in an endeavor to outdo a similar achievement on the part of his own boy and other village lads.

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Music and Musical Instruments. Buy your holiday music of-- L. K. Hammer, 820 J street. A. J. Pommer, corner Ninth and J streets. H. L. Hammer, 1023 Ninth street. A. C. Shaw & Co., 922 Second street.

Gents' and Boys' Clothing. Ready-made clothing, equal to custom-made, can be had of-- Westlock, Lubin & Co., corner of Fourth and K streets. Red House, 714 and 716 J street. Hale Bros. & Co., corner Ninth and K streets. H. Marks, 414 K street. Capital Clothing Company, corner Sixth and K streets. S. S. Nathan & Co., 301 and 305 K street.

Gents' Furnishing Goods. If you want bargains in gents' furnishing goods go to-- Westlock, Lubin & Co., corner Fourth and K streets. Hale Bros. & Co., 217 and 219 J street. Red House, 714