

DORSET HUMOR.

STORIES, RACY OF THE SOIL, FROM THE WESSEX OF THOMAS HARDY.

From The Cornhill Magazine.

An unusual surname, but one well known in Dorset, is that of Homer. Curiously enough there is a hamlet in the county called Troytown, and not long ago one of the Homers lived there. Another respected member of the Homer family a few years since contested one of the county divisions, and "Punch," struck by the classic name, made humorous reference to the Homeric battle. A local story goes that this same Mr. Homer at a public gathering, feeling unwell, had suddenly to leave, when a local humorist remarked, "Homer's 'Odd, I see,'" and another rejoined "Homer's 'Ill, I add.'"

Not long ago a gentleman of the name of Aldridge Devenish was the popular Mayor of Weymouth. Some new public buildings had been completed during his mayoralty, and at a council meeting held to make preparations for the ceremony of opening them, a town councillor indignantly asked "why the Mayor was to be favored by having his initials A. D. carved in large letters before the date of the year."

Dorset, as is well known, is a great country for hunting, and every squire and many a yeoman ride to hounds. Of the Dorset squire it has been wittily said that he begins life with twelve horses and one child, and ends it with twelve children and one horse—a saying which contains at least a modicum of truth. A story showing true devotion to sport is told of Press, the fine whip of the Blackmore Vale. One day he asked the M. F. H. for a day off, and inquiry being made as to why he wanted it, the reply was that he was going to get married. The M. F. H. very naturally suggested that Press should take two or three days at least. But this he did not want at all; and when he was asked how he proposed to spend the one day he was proposing to set apart for his wedding, the answer was that he intended "to take the misus out for drive with the sick hounds."

Canon Dayman, who for half a century was rector of Shillingstone, published in early life a metrical and scholarly translation of the "Inferno," and in later years for a long period represented a part of the diocese in the blissful realm of convocation. Amusing as well as learned, I remember his telling a story of one of his parishioners, whom he found, one cold, wet and windy night, standing shivering under the archway which spans the high road over which the Somerset and Dorset Railway runs at Shillingstone. Wondering what the man could be doing standing on a cold, wet night in the most draughty place imaginable, the Canon asked him what he did there, and the reply was, "Please, sir, I be going to sing bass next Sunday in the anthem, and I be trying to catch a hooze" (wheeze).

"Times were rougher in those days than now. 'Hangings' were then looked forward to as a pleasant break in the dullness of life. Said an old Dorset shepherd, pointing to where the gibbet stood on the wild downs near Cranbourne. "A hanging was a pretty sight when I were a boy, for the Sheriff and jayvelin men came a-horseback, and they all stopped for refreshment at the inn near by, as they'd come a long way, and we all had a drink." "And did the man who was going to be hanged have anything?" "Lord! yes, sir, as much strong beer as he liked, and we all drank his health; and then they hanged he, and buried him by the gibbet."

A widower in a somewhat prominent position in life had inscribed upon his late wife's tomb, "The light of mine eyes is gone from me." Taking unto himself a second wife with remarkable promptitude, a Dorset yokel scrawled as his comment upon the text set forth upon the tablet, "But he soon struck another match."

Dorset cheese, locally known as "blue vinny," enjoys a doubtful reputation. When first made it is of the color and almost the consistency of the chalk which underlies the Dorset downs. After keeping a while it takes on a pale, blue veined (vinney'd) appearance, and becomes, though always hard, more palatable. William Barnes, after reading some of his poems one evening to a large gathering of the Dorset militia, propounded a riddle which went home to them. "Tell me, my men," said he, "why the Dorset militia is like blue vinny?" "Because," he added, "they'll both stand fire and never run." His joke at the unmelting moods of Dorset cheese was thoroughly appreciated. Another story anent blue vinny relates how, two Gillingham farmers differing as to the merits of blue vinny, the detractor of its qualities offered to bet the other a sovereign that he could not get two Dorset cheeses stolen. The bet being taken, it was arranged that at bedtime a cheese should be left on the doorstep when the house was locked up, to see if any one would take it away by the morning. Next morning the cheese was gone, to the great delight of the backer of blue vinny, and the following night the second cheese was duly locked out on the doorstep. Next day, to his chagrin, both cheeses lay side by side on the doorstep.

A great character among the shepherds of Dorset was one "Nat" Seale. A solitary shepherd upon the downs of Dorset, through his long life of fourscore years and ten he was brimful of native wit. Religious topics were not to his mind. The curate of Fordington, where the old shepherd spent the last few years of his life, tried on many occasions to get "Nat" to talk on religious subjects, but he always turned the conversation. At last, one day the curate got him so far as to speak to him of Christ, when the old man, turning upon him, said: "Well, He were the Good Shepherd, weren't He?" The curate assenting, the old shepherd added, with strong emphasis, "Well, I tell 'ee what I believe. I don't believe as one shepherd will ever round upon another shepherd," savoring something of the philosophy of Omar, the tent maker. "He's a good fellow, and 'twill all be well." So ended this portion of their conversation, and not another word would the old shepherd say upon the subject.

A CONFESSION FROM LOST CREEK.

From The Denver Post.

A sweet confession from the inspired pen of Miss Popsie McSwat, the sweet singer of Lost Creek:

We sat beneath the silvery moon together,
The crickets chirped their vespers in the rocks,
My heart, though light as downy jaybird feather,
Yet beat as loud as William's striped socks.
A night owl screeched in rage at our intrusion,
A bat whirred close enough to fan my hair,
And there, in blushing maidenly confusion,
I heard his sweet, extemporaneous prayer!
His language seemed to flow as molten metal,
He said I was an angel shorn of wings,
A mountain rose of grace in every petal,
And several other quite superior things,
And ere from that sweet spot we had arisen
I knew that he was mine and I was his'n!

WRITTEN ON HIS FACE.

From The Trenton (Mo.) Tribune.

"One time, when trying a case in your Circuit Court here," said Judge Henry C. McDougall, of Kansas City, to a "Tribune" representative in Trenton the other day, "I had a little experience I shall long remember. There was a very deliberate and guarded witness on the stand. I pressed him as to the character of a Grundy citizen, whom I will call Jones for the sake of obscurity, and not with any intention of bringing reproach on a large and respectable family. The reluctant witness dodged my question two or three times, and finally I said with some severity, 'Now, Mr. Blank, I want you to tell me plainly whether Mr. Jones has the reputation in his neighborhood of being an honest man.' Blank took deliberate aim at a knothole in the floor about ten feet away, struck it with a precision in expectation which amazed me, and then slowly answered: 'No, sir, he has not. Any man



"WHO IS THIS HANDSOME YOUNG MAN WHOSE PORTRAIT YOU HAVE PAINTED?"
"THAT IS MY FIANCEE."
"MY! ARE YOU ENGAGED?"
"OH, NO; BUT THAT IS THE WAY HE HAS GOT TO LOOK."—(Meggendorfer Blätter.)

A DRASTIC REMEDY.

From The Troy Press.

Whatever differences of opinion may exist in regard to other subjects, those who have been held up by highwaymen are unanimous in the statement that no matter how few the holders up or how many they held up, each and every man said the robber's weapon was pointed directly and solely at him. Years ago in California a traveller was on a stage coach that a pair of bandits went

through. The fourteen passengers were all made to get out and stand in a row, with their hands high over their heads. One burly ruffian stood guard over them with a double-barrelled shotgun, while the other engaged in the pleasing task of relieving them of their valuables and spare cash. This particular traveller was nearest the man with the shotgun.

While the ceremonies were in progress his nose began to itch, and instinctively he started to lower one hand to scratch it. "Hands up there!" came the stern order, and his hand went automatically back into its place. But that itching redoubled, and again he essayed the relievous scratch. "Say, what's the matter with you, anyhow?" demanded the highwayman. "Are you wishing to become



AFTER THE TEA FIGHT.

MR. CHINLESS (TO FAIR WORKER)—DO YOU KNOW, I FEEL SO FRIVOLOUS! I THINK I'LL GO HOME IN A SMOKING CARRIAGE!—(Sketch.)

a lead mine?" "My noses itches so I can't stand it any longer," tearfully explained the sufferer. "I simply have got to scratch it." "No, you hain't," ungrammatically corrected the knight of the road, "cause I'll do it for you." And with that he proceeded to scratch the offending nasal organ with the muzzle of his shotgun. You can wager your shoes that that particular nose stopped itching with great abruptness.

THE PROVERBS OF PILJOSH.

FREELY RENDERED INTO ENGLISH FROM THE ORIGINAL STYPTIC.

F. Anstey in Punch.

Translator's Note.—The compositions of this philosopher have, as all Orientalists are aware, long enjoyed a considerable reputation in their native land. Of the author himself little is known except that he was born on April 1, 1450 (old style), and filled the important and responsible office of Arch-mandrake of Paraprosdokian. Many of his so-called proverbs are in the nature of short parables or fables, though the text of the "applications" is frequently so corrupt that even a conjectural reading can only be hazarded with the utmost diffidence. The translator has not hesitated to commit a few slight anachronisms whenever he considered that they would render the original meaning more intelligible.—F. A.

The Butterfly visited so many flowers that she fell sick of a surfeit of nectar. She called it "nervous breakdown."

"Instead of vainly lamenting over those we have lost," said the young Cuckoo severely to the Father and Mother Sparrow, "it seems to me that you ought to be very thankful that I am left to you!"

"I am old enough to be thy grandfather!" said the Egg to the Chicken.

"In that case," replied the Chicken, "it is high time that thou bestirredst thyself."

"Not so," said the Egg, "since the longer I tarry here the fitter am I for the career I have chosen."

"And what may that be?" inquired the Chicken.

"Politics!" answered the Egg.

And the Chicken pondered over the saying.

There is only one thing that irritateth a Woman more than a Man who doth not understand her, and that is a Man who doth.

A certain Artificer constructed a mechanical Serpent, which was so natural that it bit him in the back. "Had I but another hour to live," he lamented, "I would have rendered its action yet more perfect!"

The Woman was so anxious to remain independent of Man that she voluntarily became the slave of a machine.

A Singer had a small mole behind her ear, which spoilt its symmetry—but she would never have known of it had it not been for her relations.

The Idol went on smiling, rather than tell the priests that the flowers were making its head ache.

"She used to be so fresh; but she's gone off terribly since I first knew her!" the Slug observed of the Strawberry.

The Ass heard the Lion roar, and exclaimed: "The Plagiarist!"

Some one said to the Mole: "What a splendid sunset this evening!"

"To tell you the truth," he replied, "sunsets have so much deteriorated from what they used to be in my young days that I have long given up looking at them."

"A cheery laugh goes a long way in this world," remarked the Hyena.

"But a bright smile goes further still," said the Alligator, as he took him in.

"I trust I have made myself perfectly clear?" observed the Cuttlefish, after discharging his ink.

The Cockney was told that if he placed the Seashell to his ear he would hear the murmur of the Ocean-waves. He heard not the waves, but he distinctly caught the melody of the negro-minstrels.

"It is some satisfaction to feel that we have both been sacrificed in a deserving cause," said the Brace-button to the Three-penny Bit, as they met in the offertory bag.

HIS PLAIN STORY WON.

From The Omaha World-Herald.

An ungroomed man slouched up to Ed P. Smith in Farnum-st. the other day and accosted him as follows:

"Say, mister, if I was to tell you that I wanted a quarter to get a square meal you'd think I wanted it to buy whiskey, wouldn't you?"

"That's exactly what I would think," replied Smith.

"And if I said I wanted a quarter to buy whiskey you'd say you didn't propose to encourage the drink habit, wouldn't you?"

"That's what I'd say."

"And if I said I wanted a quarter to buy food for a starving wife and eleven children you'd think I was a liar, wouldn't you?"

"I would."

"Well, say, mister, I want a quarter to pay for having me mother-in-law's trunk hauled to the depot. Do I get it?"

Smith effected a compromise by parting with a dime.

A SPOILED TRIBUTE.

From The Denver Times.

I heard a good story the other day, and maybe you have heard it, too; but, anyway, it is worthy of repetition:

"Dan Grogan was a prosperous contractor, and he had four boys, great, big, strappin' fellys, wid hands on 'em like canvas hams, an' wan day whin Dan doid these same boccos had a floral pilly made fer 'im, wid 'Papa' in purphel immartel's ophon et. Phwat do yees tink av thim, 'Papa,' and thim wid hans es big es hams?"

"Well, they tuck Dan, pace be to his soul, out ta the cimetary, and phwin they got 'im thayre the pallbearers all walked along and droppod a clod av dirt upon 'im, and thayre whoit gloves as well, and thim the undhertaker kim along wid the pilly. He bumped up against Mick McCarty and knocked off the first P on 'Papa,' and et left only 'A. P. A.' Thim they tellyphoned fter the caraner."

A PECULIAR GIRL.

From The Chicago Times-Herald.

"That Miss Brandish is one of the most peculiar girls I ever saw. She and I met in Florida last winter, and we've been very good friends ever since—until a couple of weeks ago. Now she barely speaks to me. I can't account for it. We were talking one evening about clever women. We both agreed that talented women are seldom beautiful."

"You probably made some break that she didn't like."

"No, I was careful about that, and she showed no sign of this unaccountable coldness until I asked her whether, if she could have her choice, she would prefer to be talented or beautiful. She never answered the question, and has been different toward me ever since. Most peculiar girl I ever saw."

IT WAS TIME HE LEARNED IT.

From The Chicago Record.

"I waited three solid hours for that palm reader to get around to me."

"Well?"

"He told me I didn't get on in life because of my tendency to fool away time."

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