

“WUR BE 'EE GWAIN
THEN JARGE ?”

AND OTHER

QUAINT STORIES AND
QUEER CUSTOMS
OF A SOMERSET VILLAGE

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By HARRY W. BROWN, J.P.

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A. C. Benson, the author, describing in his diary a tour in the West of England, after referring to a stroll through Sherborne Park, says: “But the fine thing was a delicious place called Milborne Port (in Somersetshire), a village such as Morris would have loved, stone houses clustering down to a stream, and a big cruciform church standing up amongst byres and orchards—a quite delicious sight.”

Milborne Port was formerly a Royal Borough, having been won by King Ina when he defeated Gerent of Damnonia in 710. Later it was mentioned in the will of King Alfred, who left certain lands there to his youngest son.

Collinson, in his “History of Somerset,” says: “The Saxons gave this place the name of Myllburn, which is compounded of *Myll* or *Mylen*—a Mill, and *Burn*—a torrent, and from the circumstances of its being a Borough and a market town—the most considerable in these parts—it obtained the additional name of Port.”

THE CROSS.

In the centre of this ancient and picturesque little town, which is situated amongst the well-wooded pasture lands of the Blackmore Vale, stands the base of an old Cross.

It would be indeed a dull, unimaginative soul to whom this quaint old monument would not call up historic memories of preaching friars exhorting therefrom the crowds to righteousness and repentance.

As early as 1307 Milborne Port returned two members to Parliament, and we are told that the Cross was the Polling Place, and the gentlemen who were raised to the dignity of representatives to Parliament were also elevated to the proud position of a seat on the shoulders of their supporters, who bore them from the Cross to the ancient Guildhall, with its beautiful Norman Doorway.

A report of such an election appeared in the *Sherborne Journal* on July 22nd, 1827, which read as follows :—

JULY 22ND, 1827.

MILBORNE PORT ELECTION.—The election of a representative in Parliament for the Borough of Milborne Port, in the room of Lord Graves, took place on Monday. At ten o'clock the borough officers ascended the cross, and the writ and Bribery Act having been read, Mr. Horsey proposed, and Mr. J. N. Highmore seconded, the nomination of J. H. North, Esq. That gentleman then addressed the electors in a speech of unusual eloquence, of which we regret our inability to give more than a bare outline. No other candidate appearing, Mr. North was declared duly elected; and in returning thanks expressed his warm interest for the welfare of the borough, which, as well as the advantage of every individual, he should always feel anxious to promote. He could now only make them promises and professions; but if it should be his fortune again to meet them he trusted he should be able to give a good account of his stewardship and to receive their approbation of his conduct. At three o'clock a large party of the electors and several gentlemen of the neighbourhood met at dinner in the Town Hall, the newly-elected member presiding, and C. Hutchings, Esq., acting as croupier. After the cloth was removed the usual loyal and local toasts were drunk.

It was at the Cross, too, that the Crown had soldiers enlisted for its service, and there that the noted pugilists and cock-fighters used to talk and be talked about.

TOWN HALL.

Opposite the Cross stands the old Town Hall—or Market House, as it was formerly—which is associated with a famous Law Case published in “Smith’s Leading Cases” (9th Edition), and cited in the modern case of *Harrod v. London and South-Western Railway Company* in action of trespass for injury to cattle which had strayed upon the Railway. The case of *Scott v. Shepherd*, which was tried at Bridgwater, gives an interesting peep into the social life of Milborne Port in the 18th Century, when the old Town Hall was used as a Market House before the arches were closed in :—

On the evening of the Fair-day at Milborne Port, 28th October, 1770, the defendant threw a lighted squib into the market-house, which is a covered building supported by arches, and enclosed at one end but open at the other and both the sides, where a large concourse of people were assembled, which lighted squib, so thrown by the defendant, fell upon the standing of one Yates, who sold gingerbread, &c. That one Willis instantly and to prevent injury to himself and the said wares of the said Yates, took up the said lighted squib from off the said standing, and then threw it across the said market-house, when it fell upon another standing there of one Ryal, who sold the same sort of wares, who instantly and to save his own goods from being injured, took up the said lighted squib from off the said standing and threw it to another part of the said market-house, and in so throwing it struck the plaintiff, then in the said market-house, in the face therewith, and the combustible matter then bursting put out one of the plaintiff’s eyes.

A verdict was found for the plaintiff by the jury with £100 damages against the first thrower.

About 100 years ago the Town Hall housed one of the early educational establishments of the Parish. This school was chiefly

supported by the 'Squire, and a story is told of the Schoolmaster, "Old Daddy Read," who used to indulge in an afternoon siesta, after placing one of the scholars to watch by the window and give warning of the approach of "Sir William or any of the 'Squire's family," who used to pay frequent visits to the seminary. Upon receiving the signal, the old Schoolmaster would hastily rub his eyes, and before he was fully awake would give the command in tones of impressive authority, "Rehearse the articles of thy belief."

THE GUILDHALL.

The old Guildhall has many interesting associations. Was it not here that Bamfylde Moore Carew—King of the Gypsies—was brought to justice?

In an account of the exploits of that gentleman after his return from America, it is recorded "As soon as he came to Sherborne he went to his usual quarters, 'The Sign of the Boot,' where he enquired for his wife and daughter, but how was he thunder-struck when he was told they were in hold at Webb's the bailiff! He enquired for what reason, and was informed that four officers had been walking all through the town to take up all strangers, such as chimney sweepers, tinkers, pedlars and the like. What could our hero do? He revolved it over and over in his mind, and at last determined to go to Webb's, resolving either to free his wife and daughter or else to share their fate. When he came he asked to see the prisoners and demanded upon what account they had apprehended his wife, as she had neither stolen nor begged in the town. This occasioned high words and at last ended in blows. Long did our hero maintain an unequal fight with great valour. At length, being overpowered with numbers, he fell, but not till his assailant had felt the force of his arms. He was kept in safe custody that night, and the next morning was taken before Thomas Medlycott, Esq., at Milborne Port, where they were all examined, and all maintained their professions to be extremely useful. The chimney sweeper alleged he preserved houses from taking fire, whereby he saved whole towns, and consequently was a useful member to his country. The tinker harangued on the usefulness of kettles, brass pans, frying pans, &c., and of consequence what use he was to the public. Our hero declared he was the famous Bamfylde Moore Carew and had served his country both by sea and land. The Justice thought proper to send these useful men to their respective parishes at the public expense. Accordingly Mr. Carew, his wife and daughter were ordered to Bickley, in Devonshire."

MILBORNE PORT WORKHOUSE.

"AN IMPIOUS PRAYER.—During the Eighteenth Century a workhouse flourished in Milborne Port. It was situated near the small river which flows through the town, and sheltered the decrepit poor of the parish. A story is preserved relating to the sudden death of one of the inmates under

dreadful circumstances. It seems to be well authenticated, and may be met with in some collections of anecdotes. One of the female inmates stole a garment belonging to another person residing in the house. Search was made for it, and suspicion fell upon her; but being charged with the theft she denied it vehemently. Not satisfied with a simple assertion of innocence, she called upon God to 'strike her blind, deaf and dumb' if she had taken the garment. She was then in her usual health, but very speedily she lost sight, then hearing, then speech, and within a few hours passed away. After her death the missing property was found, wrapped round her body.' This extract is taken from 'Memorials of the Congregational Church, Milborne Port,' by Mrs. E. R. Pitman."

THE PARISH CHURCH.

Of course, the most interesting relic of early Milborne is the Parish Church, which is first mentioned in the Domesday Book in 1086. Probably built under the later Saxon kings, it was granted by William the Conqueror to Rheinbald, who served both Edward the Confessor and William the Conqueror as Chancellor or Prime Minister.

Mr. Edward John Ensor wrote in 1870: "I have often wished, when looking at our Parish Church, that I knew its early history, who built it, and if any of the ancestors of those now living were at its dedication.

Now if some gossiping old chronicler, some monk perhaps of Sherborne Abbey who lived when the foundations of those old Norman arches were laid, and might have been often seen wending his way through Osborne and down Crackment Hill, then crossing the river Gascoigne with its six busy mills, then ascending the rising ground on its eastern side and sitting down to rest on one of the large blocks of stone and watching the builders, had written a history of what he saw and heard, with what interest should we now read it!

He might have told of the piety of the founder of the church, the skill of the architect, the wages paid to the workmen, incidents connected with the progress of the building, some tournaments that he witnessed in Sherborne Castle, what were the chief topics that interested the ecclesiastics and politicians of his day, and a hundred other things."

But to deal adequately with the Church with its 900 years of history would be subject matter itself for a book. Two little stories shall suffice for our purpose. The first relates to the Bells. Now there was evidently a strong feeling of competition amongst the Bellfounders—Bilbie of Chewstoke, Knight of Blandford, and Cockey of Frome, for an inscription on one of the bells gives the following:—

"Come on friend Knight and Cockey too
Such work as this you could not do.
Thomas Bilbie made all we."

The other story concerns the organ of a hundred years ago. The organist of that period lived in Sherborne and was not able to take the three mile journey to attend to his duties on week-days. To meet this difficulty arrangements were made whereby the instrument could be converted into a barrel organ not requiring the same standard of executive efficiency.

Now on a certain occasion the Organist, after carrying out his Sunday duties, set the instrument ready for the funeral music which would be required during the week. Unfortunately when the day of the funeral arrived, the over-anxious deputy exceeded his duties and tampered with the instrument, with the result that the mournful procession entered the church to the joyful strains of "Sound the loud timbrel over Egypt's dark sea."

OLD TIME ROADS.

According to Mr. E. J. Ensor, "Newtown was built by Lord Darlington in 1818. His Lordship's object in building was to gain votes for the Liberal or 'Blue' party. From the party colour originated the name 'Blue Town,' a name that was as often used as 'Newtown.'

A few years before this time the road leading to Newtown was a lonely unfrequented by-way, called Blackberry Lane. It was almost impassable, the grass from its sides nearly meeting in the centre. The late Mr. William Genge so represented the case at Quarter Sessions that the way wardens, Messrs. James Highmore and John Longman, were compelled to make a good road from the corner where the Church Schools now stand to the Oak trees on Milborne Down.

Many coaches and large heavy waggons used to pass continually through Milborne Port to and from the Metropolis and the West of England. As they entered from Sherborne and toiled up the steep ascent of Crackment Hill—for the cutting was not then made—travellers saw on their right hand bare unenclosed land extending as far as Highmore's Hill. The Lodges were not then built nor the wood planted.

The wood on East Hill and the Central Avenue in front of Ven House were planted about 15 years later (1835).

On the London Road, the land on the right hand side as one goes to Purse Caundle, and situated between the two bridges, was unenclosed. A lane ran from the first bridge, called "Gaskin Bridge," to Castleton, intersecting Goathill Road at what was called Tinker's Cross. Here it is said that some unfortunate mender of pots and kettles, who had committed suicide, was buried at midnight with the customary barbarities."

The Reverend William Barnes, the Dorset Poet, says :—

“ Why tidden vields and runnin’ brooks,
Nor trees in Spring or Fall ;
And tidden woody slopes and nooks,
Do touch us most of all ;
And tidden ivy that do cling
By housen big and wold, o,
But this is after all the thing—
The Pleace a teale’s a-twold o !

Zoo whether ’tis the humpy ground
That were a battle viel’,
Or mossy house, all ivy bound
An vallen down piece-meal ;
Or if ’tis but a scraggy tree
Where beauty smiled o’wold, o,
How dearly I do like to zee
The Pleace a teale’s a-twold o ! ”

LOCAL WORTHIES.

And now shall we try to recall a few of the interesting characters of—not so very long ago—say the latter part of the last century. One is inclined to think there are no characters to-day that stand out from the crowd with marked individuality. We seem to be gradually losing our distinctive personalities and more or less conforming to one pattern.

Some of us remember JOHN FROST, the old one-armed postman, with his scarlet velvet coat and tall silk hat with the gold band (all provided by the ’Squire), and complete with the bugle, which he sounded to herald his coming. Then there was his wife, with her scarlet cloak and hood, who used to deliver the mail at the neighbouring hamlet of Purse Caundle. Such preliminaries as the use of the door knocker or bell were not then allowed to delay the King’s messengers. Cottage doors flew open and the letters were deposited in the nearest chair with a cheery “ Good morning ” and a hurried departure.

We recall, too, HANNAH KNIGHT, a rosy-cheeked old woman wearing a sun bonnet, and walking beside her donkey and a cart made of poles for the bottom and sides, and laden with vegetables, fruit and firewood.

Then there was JACK TITE, the water cress seller—an unkempt, ragged figure, with his hoarse cry of “ waater crease, green waater crease, penny a bunch, bee-oo-ti-ful waater crease.”

Mr. John Carter, the old Church Schoolmaster of those days, referred his scholars to Tite’s pronunciation of bee-oo-ti-ful as a model for vowel sounds. Tite was a man of fine physique, with a complexion the colour of the best French brandy, and the picture of health, whose portrait to-day would be a fortune to advertising companies for posters and to vendors of patent foods, although this fine physique was probably manufactured out of pure Bradley Head water, bread, and perhaps “ vinny ” cheese.

You never heard anyone say that Tite had ever asked them for money or food, or that they had seen him the worse for liquor. He seems to have been the ideal character, having no vices and regularly reading his Bible. Whence he came or whither he went was unknown, but the cress was fresh and sweet from Bradley Head or "Seven Springs," and the basket was soon emptied.

A character whom Dickens would have loved to sketch was JOHN BROWN, who was born in 1792, and was famous for his philosophical way of meeting trouble. He carried on business as a manufacturer of linsey-woolsey, and sail cloth before the introduction of machinery, and a hundred years ago employed a large number of hand-loom weavers in the Long room at Newtown and in the homes. It was his old flax burner who set his house in Newtown on fire one Sunday morning. I have many times heard his grandson—my father—relate how his friends were pitying the old man as he stood watching his home perishing in the flames, when to their amazement he remarked with perfect composure, "D' burn well, don't it?"

On another occasion he was enjoying a glass of ale, when a lad rushed in with the information, "One of your cows have dropped dead, Mr. Brown." The old philosopher calmly replied: "Well, they that got live stock must expect dead." But perhaps his fellow townsfolk did not understand the secret of his unruffled calm. I have a letter of John Brown's, whose caligraphy would put to shame many of us whose education began more than a century later. In it the old man says: "I have had as many tryals as most, losing father and mother, wife and children, house and property, but I thank God I have been enabled to bear it hitherto. But I can say as David, 'If Thye law had not been my delight I should have perished in my trouble.'"

KITTY PITMAN was a queer old character in the middle of the last century. Reputed to be a witch, she lived with her crazy daughter, Nan, in a little cottage adjoining the Newtown School House. The old creature was probably harmless enough, but she had a strange fancy for gliding about the road at all hours of the night, carrying her knobbed stick and sometimes one of her black cats, and many a belated villager has been scared by suddenly encountering the glaring eyes of the old dame and those of her cat as he approached his door. She was reputed to have a whole cupboard full of books on the black art, and it is certain that had she fallen upon an earlier age she would have been burnt or otherwise done to death as a witch. People shuddered when they passed her in the darkness, for the belief was common that she possessed the power to curse and blight them and theirs by the glare of her eyes, or by muttering some of her strange incantations over their garden gates. My grandfather was a carrier in the days before the railway ran through the district, and tradition says he incurred the old lady's displeasure, for which she put a curse

upon his horse, saying, "Thee hoss'll never goo to Yeovil again," and, sure enough, so the story goes, "The hoss vell down dead auver right her gaate." An old lady once told my father: "Robert Heathman were turnen' a dung mixen, you know, and he stuck his pick into a toad, and, sure enough, Kitty had to bide a bed," adding, "You see, she could turn herself into whatever she liked, and she turned herself into a toad." It was quite a relief when old Kitty died. Not a soul followed her to the grave. Her imbecile daughter was sent to the Workhouse at Wincanton, and the cottage was closed for many a month before a tenant could be found courageous enough to trust himself within its walls.

Then within the memory of most of us there lived in a tiny thatched mud-hut on the lonely downs, about two miles from Milborne Port, a little wizened old woman, to whom hundreds, probably thousands, of sufferers in mind and body, and people curious to peep into the future, had for a great number of years been going for help, healing and information. Formerly known as "MOTHER HEARN," and latterly as Mrs. Wills, the old lady, who was believed to possess uncanny powers of magic, and mysterious sources of information, shared her tiny hut with a guinea pig, a dog, and a number of fowls, and patients who, like the woman of old "had suffered many things of many physicians," people who were anxious for knowledge of friends far away (especially during the war), and sufferers from any of the "many ills which flesh is heir to" would seek out the old witch doctor on foot, cycle, carriage or motor-car. A young lad would limp up with a knee out of joint and badly swollen. "Go home, my boy, bathe it in water as hot as you can bear, and bind it with bandages soaked in vinegar. It will soon be well." A lad with a "breaking out" on his face would be told: "I will gather some herbs when the sun rises, and will send you some ointment, use it, and your sores will be gone by next Wednesday." But frequently a client would be told to "go home, and at a given time the bleeding will cease, the pain will depart, or the wart will disappear," and, strange to say, in many cases the cure was effected. Possibly an early training in nursing and a shrewd, instinctive knowledge of the power of suggestion, accounted for some of her powers of healing. But these would scarcely explain the widespread confidence in the old lady's powers in other directions. On one occasion a gentleman who was tormented by fleas in a most unaccountable manner was advised to seek her aid, and a friend actually called at the little hut and explained the trouble, with the result that "from that very hour the trouble ceased." I remember on one occasion accompanying a friend who desired assistance regarding the sale of a cart. It was getting dusk as we left the last cottages behind and wended our way between high hedges through the narrow lane leading to the weird abode of the witch. The little woman, looking shabby and dirty, invited us into her tiny room, which was full

of smoke, old bottles and litter of various kinds. We sat down, my friend explained, and the old lady listened carefully, punctuating the story with queries about details as to times and places, and then, after a knowing pause and a wise look, she assured my friend with quiet confidence that "It is all right, you needn't worry, you will sell your cart." We remained in conversation a little while and listened to stories of past successes. "A farmer from _____ came to see me last week. He had a cow bad. I said to him, 'Now you go home, and I shall be there, and the cow will get better.'" The suggestion was some mysterious transportation of the old lady's spiritual presence, apparently, as she certainly was not able to go in person. Before concluding my story, I should like to pay this little tribute to the memory of the old lady. I have never heard of an instance in which she attempted to do anything but help her fellows, and I know one case personally, where a man in financial difficulties went to her for advice and received £2 as a practical expression of sympathy.

OLD CUSTOMS.

My Father used to tell me of many queer and interesting customs, formerly observed in Milborne Port, but now relegated to the limbo of forgotten things. One was known as SKIMMITY RIDING. A townsman who by loose moral conduct or otherwise had disgraced his town was publicly censured in the following impressive manner:—

The offender's effigy, consisting of an old suit of clothes stuffed with straw, and surmounted by a faded top hat, was carried shoulder high through the streets escorted by a crowd of youths making doubtful music with old trays and buckets, to a place of execution—frequently the Square at Newtown—where after the charge had been read, the public executioner made trebly sure of his victim by hanging, shooting and finally burning the effigy.

PAN SHARD NIGHT was another custom which provided amusement and annoyance simultaneously. On the evening of Shrove Tuesday some of the more active spirits among the youths of that day would parade the town in search of pots and pans with which they bombarded the doors, shouting, "Flitter me, flatter me, floor, If you don't give me some pancakes I'll beat down your door." Shrove Tuesday night became known as "Panshard night," and people who valued their vessels of earthenware would take them into the house before evening closed in. On Ash Wednesday a stroll around the town would be rewarded by the sight of heaps of broken earthenware lying in front of disfigured doors. My Great-Grandfather—John Cole—happened to open his front door at an inopportune moment, when he received the surprise of his life and a charge of earthenware full in the face. This was reported in the *Sherborne Journal* on March 7th, 1830.

Another custom of a more salutary nature concerned the method of rebuking wife beaters. A man who had been beating his wife in those days of long ago would find a bundle of straw tied to his front door, signifying that his neighbours had taken note of the fact that he had been threshing, or on arrival at his workshop on the following morning he might find a flail and a bunch of straw on his bench, which marked the disapproval of his shop-mates.

Another way of dealing with wife beaters made the punishment fit the crime.

Before going away to work at Sherborne a member of an old Milborne Port family administered a little chastisement to his wife in the form of a caning. Upon his return in the evening he was informed by his spouse that his dinner awaited him in the oven. Withdrawing the dish and removing the cover the chagrined husband discovered the cane which he had used in the morning, cut up and served for his evening meal.

MUMMERS.

A custom observed at Christmas time was called "The Mummings." Seven or eight lads who had practised in preparation beforehand would call at a house where a party was in progress, knock at the door, and announce the arrival of the mummings. Usually the visitors would be welcomed and Father Christmas, suitably attired, entered first as leader, proclaiming:—

"Here comes I Father Christmas,
Welcome or welcome not.
I hope old Father Christmas
Will never be forgot."

Then Father Christmas would summon his troupe to follow, "Come in my sons, come in."

The next to enter would march in suitably clad and say with appropriate gusto:—

"Here comes I a Turkish Knight
For my native land to fight."

And one by one the whole troupe would enter, each introducing himself in similarly romantic fashion.

A sham fight would ensue, the party taking sides and fencing with sticks until the floor was strewn with the "dead." Then would arrive the doctor, proclaiming:—

"I cure the pip, the pox, the palsy, and the gout,
And all complaints inside and out."

An examination of the corpses, all by this time as stiff as boards, would be followed by the survivors of the protagonists placing their hands underneath the heads of the "corpses" and lifting the stiff forms violently into upright positions. Having regained their feet, life returned and the troupe moved off to their next scene of action.

NATIVE WIT.

Now may I relate a few of my Father's stories illustrating native wit, humour, sagacity and love of fair play.

Farmer Longman, who resided at Limerick when it was a farm-house, engaged a new maid, one of whose duties it was to serve out cider rations to the labourers as they set out for the Harvest field.

John Pitman went to draw allowances for himself and his mate, Joe Davidge. "How many do you want cider for?" enquired the new maid, to which John replied, "There's Barnet, Davidge and Joe, Sailor Jack, John Pitman and meself." So by the ingenious use of one or two nick-names, John drew six rations instead of two.

Old Pussy Frizzle was an inquisitive old fellow, as everybody knew. One day he enquired from a neighbour with a donkey and cart, "Wur be 'ee gwain then, Jarge?" to which Jarge replied mysteriously and very confidentially, "You won't tell nobody if I'd tell 'ee, will 'ee?" "No, Jarge, I won't say a word." "Wull, I be gwain down the lower part o' Carnwall a'der a load o' pippet vor Mrs. Tanner." (Mrs. T. being the proprietress of a diminutive general store which was housed in the little front room of her Newtown Cottage.)

An old relative named John Barrett was paying a visit to the great Metropolis when he accompanied a friend to a public-house. His fellow clients were greatly amused at the old countryman's broad and very deliberate speech and took full advantage of the opportunity of drawing John into conversation. "I tell 'ee what I d' want to zee wull I be in London, and that is a real London sharper. I'd gie half a suvvern if I could clap me eyes on one." Eyes sparkled in eager anticipation, and John was assured that he was fortunate that very evening in meeting just such a wonder in that very company. Incredulity was overpowered by unanimous testimony that a certain member of that company was the genuine article without a doubt. Satisfaction was finally expressed in the old visitor's face and still further by the production of the golden coin, which, to the delight of the company, was duly handed over. "Well I be turrible glad to think I've a zeed a real live London sharper." Then in a burst of renewed enthusiasm, "'Pon my word, if I were zure you were a real London Sharper I'd gie a suvvern." Enthusiastic and unanimous exclamations of assurance quickly provided the necessary evidence, and John seemed satisfied and really delighted, and again drew out his purse. "Gie I thic half suvvern," he demanded. The coin was handed back in happy anticipation. But the old countryman now had a twinkle in his eyes as he retorted, "Ah! I didn't think you were a London Sharper!"

On another occasion John tried his luck at the gaming table at the Fair, where at a fee of a shilling a time the client was invited

to spin a revolving rod and receive the article over which the rod rested. John paused at the standing at the invitation of the attendant, whose expectations were raised when the sagacious old client asked if he could change a sovereign and give him all shillings. The first shilling was tendered and the spin of the rod was encouragingly successful. A second shilling was deposited and success again achieved. A third shilling was produced as John said "I d' like theese gaame." This was also allowed to succeed as a good business speculation, when John suddenly dismayed the attendant by saying in a satisfied way "I think I'll goo on now," and in reply to repeated and vehement remonstrances, quite calmly remarked, "No, I be very well satisfied," and walked away.

Here is a more recent story illustrating a very characteristic dislike of injustice. An extraordinarily simple son of the soil from a local hamlet was mingling with the crowds at Sherborne Fair when he came under the spell of the eloquence of one of the noisy cheapjacks who frequent the Annual Feast, and that to such an extent that he was persuaded to entrust the stranger with a pound of his hard-earned wages. For a long time our simple trusting friend watched and waited for the reward of his misplaced confidence, but any adequate return seemed unlikely until a couple of sturdy friends from Milborne Port who had been watching the proceedings took a hand in the game and remonstrated with the trickster in determined tones. "If thee doesn't hand back thic pound, we'll tip thee standin' awver and thee, too." The intervention was too evidently no empty threat and the unscrupulous orator, acting on the coward's motto, "Discretion is the better part of valour," reluctantly returned the cash.

LOCAL PATRIOTISM AND AN EXECUTION.

The last story is particularly interesting in view of the present situation, recalling as it does the manner in which the inhabitants of Milborne Port expressed their loyalty to King George III. when war with France was threatening.

The story is culled from an old Wiltshire paper and is headed "How Milborne Port Comes to the Front," and proceeds:—"Though Milborne Port is in Somersetshire, the following account of how the inhabitants of that town showed their loyalty to the King and respect to law and order is of interest, and being only a few miles outside the borders of our county, may well be included in this account of the crisis."

A meeting was held in the Market-place of that town, which was well attended, and resolutions to form a society for suppressing seditious and inflammatory publications tending to disturb the public peace, and supporting a vigorous execution of the laws for the protection of persons and property were carried with acclamation. Now, whether it was the desire of the inhabitants to

show their determination to support and carry out the laws of the country and suppress evil doers, or whether it was a mere chance that the execution of Tom Paine, a criminal, had been fixed for the same day, local history does not say. But at half-past one in the afternoon that wicked and, no doubt, miserable Tom was drawn in a cart through most of the streets of the town and at 3 p.m. was hanged outside the public-house known by the sign of "The Tipler."

Whilst hanging he was repeatedly shot at, and remained hanging whilst a large party of loyal inhabitants of Milborne Port were celebrating the occasion of the meeting (or was it the hanging?) by a public dinner in "The Tipler," from the window of which poor Tom was in full view. After having done themselves well and dinner was over, Tom was drawn in a cart to the top of East Hill and there burnt.

An account of this incident goes on to say that "Everyone present at the dinner appeared to be animated with the noble spirit of loyalty to their King and zealous attachment to the laws and constitution of their country. Unanimity, loyalty, sobriety and the utmost decency prevailed during the whole time."

About 10 p.m., when all the fun was over, including the burning of poor Tom, the party broke up, and several of the diners were heard to remark: "They had never known a meeting where greater harmony and propriety prevailed during the whole time."

One is tempted to wonder what poor Tom thought of it all, especially the "decency" part.

I would like to conclude my tale with William Barnes' poem,

OUR FATHERS' WORKS.

"Ah! I do think, as I do tread
Thease path, wi' elems overhead,
A-climen slowly up vrom Bridge
By easy steps, to Broadwoak Ridge
That all thease roads that we do bruise
Wi' hosses shoes, or heavy lwoads:
And hedges bands where trees in row
Do rise an' grow aroun' the lands,
Be works that we've a-vound a-wrought
By our vorefathers ceare and thought.

They cleared the groun' vor grass to teake
The pleace that bore the bremble breake,
An drain'd the fen, where water spread,
A lyen dead, a bean to men;
An built the mill, where still the wheel
Do grind our meal, below the hill;
And turn'd the bridge, wi' 'arch a spread,
Below a road, vor us to tread.

They vound a pleace, where we mid seek
The gifts o' greace vrom week to week ;
An' built wi' stone upon the hill,
A tower we still do call our own ;
Wi' bells to use and meake rejaice,
Wi' giant vaice, at our good news ;
An' lifted stwones an' beams to keep
The rain an' cwold vrom us asleep.

Zoo now mid nwone ov us vorget—
The pattern our vorefathers zet ;
But each be fain to understeake
Some work to meake vor others gain
That we mid leave mwore good to sheare,
Less ills to bear, less souls to grieve,
And when our hands do vall to rest,
It mid be vrom a work a-blest.

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