

A DICTIONARY
OF THE
ISLE OF WIGHT DIALECT,

And of Provincialisms used in the Island;

WITH ILLUSTRATIVE ANECDOTES AND TALES;

TO WHICH IS APPENDED

THE CHRISTMAS BOYS' PLAY,
AN ISLE OF WIGHT "HOOAM HARVEST,"
AND
SONGS SUNG BY THE PEASANTRY;

FORMING

A Treasury of Insular Manners and Customs
OF FIFTY YEARS AGO.

BY W. H. LONG.

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PREFACE.

The following pages aim at giving—besides a Dictionary of the dialect—illustrations of the use of the words, and specimens of the every-day talk and forms of expression current among the peasantry of the Isle of Wight. The list of words could easily have been made more extensive, but many found in other parts of the country as well as in the Island have been purposely omitted; although a number equally as common have been retained, from a desire to make the collection as complete a transcript as possible of the provincial vernacular. The Glossary of Isle of Wight Words edited by Mr. C. R. Smith for the English Dialect Society has been of the greatest service in the compilation of this, (though the larger part of the matter here printed was collected before its appearance in 1881); and considerable assistance has been afforded by the Glossary of Hampshire Words compiled by the Rev. Sir W. H. Cope for the same Society. Akerman's Glossary of Wiltshire Words and Barnes' Glossary of the Dorset Dialect have also been occasionally consulted.

No one knows better than the compiler that a Dictionary like the present must necessarily be more or less incomplete; but he hopes that not many words of importance will be found to have been omitted; and such as it is—he offers the result of his labour to the favourable consideration of his fellow-Islanders, and the Public generally.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE provincial dialects spoken in the southern counties of England, once forming part of the Saxon Kingdom of Wessex, have many general features of resemblance, showing that they all are branches from one parent stock. Many of the provincialisms current in the Isle of Wight are the same as, or very similar to, those found in the adjoining counties of Hampshire, Wilts, and Dorset; but a good proportion seems to be peculiar to the Island; and the dialect of Sussex on the one side, and of Somerset and Devon on the other, are very different from the insular vernacular. The basis of the dialect of the Isle of Wight is purely Anglo-Saxon, and it is remarkable, considering its situation, and intercourse (principally through fishing and smuggling) with the opposite coast of France, that scarcely a word of undoubted French origin seems to have been introduced.

The ever-increasing number of visitors flocking into the Island, and the growing influences of Board Schools, are rapidly sweeping away all vestiges of the native Island speech, while the older inhabitants abstain as much as possible from using it in the presence of strangers; and the rising generation are growing up ignorant of the meaning of words still used by their grandfathers,—some of them far more expressive and comprehensive than their modern substitutes. For instance,—what a combination of common every-day phrases is necessary to explain the influence of dry weather on ripened corn, expressed by an Island labourer in two words—“bret out”; or to give the full meaning he comprises in the single word “snoodle.” There is no doubt that by the gradual disappearance of the local dialects, various words and forms of expression are lost, which modern English replaces but imperfectly. Many of the peculiarities of transposition of letters, and of pronunciation, will be found noted in their places in the

Dictionary, but there are a few forms which may be noted more at length. The vowels and consonants are always transposed in such words as—

hapse for *hasp*
clapse for *clasp*
wopse for *wasp*, &c.

The diphthong *oi* is pronounced *wi*, e.g.—

Spwile for *spoil*
bwoy for *boy*
bunts or
bwyle for *boil*
pwison for *poison*

The old English affix, *en*, is often added to adjectives, as— *timberen* (made of wood, or wooden), *earthen*, *leatheren*, *elmen*—or more commonly, *ellem*,—*ashen* (made of elm or ash); and in verbs ending in *en*, the last syllable is generally dropped, as— “Sharp my riphook,” for “Sharpen my reaping hook”; “I shall fat my pig,” for “I shall fatten my pig”; and so on. The past tense of many irregular, as well as regular verbs, is generally formed by adding *ed* to the present tense, as—

<i>Present.</i>	<i>past.</i>		
bear	beared	<i>instead of</i>	bore
blow	blowed	„	blew
drink	drinked	„	drank
feel	feeled	„	felt
grow	growed	„	grew
hold	holded	„	held

know	knowed.	„	knew
lead	leaded	„	led
lend	lended	„	lent
sting	stinged	„	stung
spend	spended	„	spent

and many others.

The conjugation of the verb “To be,” in the Island, is as follows :-

INDICATIVE MOOD. —*Present Tense.*

		<i>Interrogatively.</i>	
<i>Sing.</i>	<i>Plural.</i>	<i>Sing.</i>	<i>Plural.</i>
I be	We be	Be I?	Be we?
Thee bist	You be	Bist?	Be you?
He or she is	They be	Ezza?	Be urn?

Past Tense.

I was	We was
Thee wast	You was
He was	They was

Future.

Interrogatively.

I shall or wull	We shall or wull	Wull I?	Wull we?
Thee shat or wull	You shall or wull	Wut thee?	Wull 'ee?
He shall or wull	They shall or wull	Wull he?	Wull urn?

POTENTIAL MOOD.—*Past Tense.*

I med a ben	We med a ben
Thee medst a ben	You med a ben
He med a ben	They med a ben

IMPERATIVE.

Thee'at better be	We better be
Let'n be	
Mak'n be	Make urn be

Thee is generally used for *thy*, as—” Hast had thee nammet it, mayet?” But in such a phrase as “Hast *thee* had thee nammet, mayet?” the first *thee* is strongly emphasized.

The objective cases of the personal pronouns *he*, *she*, and *it* are pronounced *en*, or more correctly, *en*; *them* being *um*. *She* is generally represented by *her*, and conversely.

Can't her git'n down?	Can't she get him down?
I don't want noo truck wi' she.	I wish to have nothing to do with her.
Let'n bide, wull'ee!	Let him alone, will you!
I louz he'll gee'n to'n.	I think he will give it to him.
Drow urn down 'bout house.	Throw them down on the floor.
Let goo on 'en, casn't!	Let it [or him] go, can't you!

The nominative of the pronouns is also generally used instead of the inflected cases, as—

What use wull he be to <i>we</i> ?	What use will he [or it] be to us?
He never opened his mouth to <i>we</i> about it.	
I shall talk to <i>he</i> about that.	
I never met wi' <i>she</i> all the time I was there.	

The possessive pronouns *hers, ours, yours, theirs*, terminate in *n*.

That yeppern es *hern*, edclen't it? That apron is hers, isn't it?

That 'ere pig's *ourn*.

Edden't this 'ere hoe *yourn*?

Don't ye titch they apples,—they be *theirn*.

As a contrast, and to show the progress of refinement in the Island dialect, a document is here given, written in 1790 by a parish clerk or overseer; and an epistle addressed to the master of a Board school, by a mother, in 1880.

“Whit Munday 1790.

“A mayn of cocks to fite for three ginneys prise, the sekunt beat cock to have a hat for a faver, and 8 cocks only; and nayther cock to be over four pouns and a haf, to fite in the parish of Northwood, and to meet by 10 a clock, and to way by 11, and hosoever is a mind to putt in a cock must give in there names to John Dore, and to putt down haf a crown, and hosoever is not there to time, to forfeit there haf a crown.”

Thus much for 1790; now for a specimen of 1880, the writer of which is evidently of the opinion that education should be paid for by the piece, or by contract.

“Mister N— If you pleas my Johnny went to school this morning and I sent three apence and I told him that he was to tell you that he would bring tother apeny after he come home to dinner and you send him back again for three apence more and he did not come to school only a day and a haf last week and he brought a peny and I am sure that is enuff for a day and a haf and he havent been michen for I kept him at home to help me and you send him home again three times for a nother peny and if Mister P— comes to me I shall tell he the rayson of it all he shall bring another peny when he goes to school in the morning and if you sends him back anymore I shall keep him away altogether and send him somewhere else. — Yours, &c”

Another epistolary specimen, almost pathetic in its simplicity, is as follows

“Orgest the seventeen 100880, Mr. N— Will you plesse to let my darter lissey have half a day to come home in the afternoon because her granmother is very near dead for she got something the matter with her to legs and I got to go to Mister B—s sowing at three a clock and she as nobody to mind the house nor give her her medcen and oblige yours truly —.”

In conclusion, a reply received by a lady in answer to her advertisement for a general servant is appended. It is *verba-tim et literatim*.

“dear friend I heard that you was in wont of a searvent wich Miss ----- reckamened me to you I ware gannril searvent at Mrs— 3 years and 3 mainths I had 8 pounds a year and my washing put out I want 11 pounds a yeer I am 320 years old in Janivary you repli at Mrs — for my charooter.”