

CHAPTER VI

PECULIARITIES OF FOREST DIALECT

THE peculiarities of the dialect spoken by the humbler forester of “genuine native” origin, have been a subject of much discussion among the learned and I trust therefore, that a brief exemplification of some of them will not be unacceptable to the reader. I do not pretend to be equal to the task of analysing roots or tracing extractions, in what precise degree the forester's vocabulary is Saxon or Norman, I shall not presume to decide. All that I propose to offer is a sample of the style of language that prevails with the forester born-and-bred. And I may perhaps be justified in observing that as my early years were spent in and near the forest and as my avocation in life necessitated an early training of the faculties of the ear and that as, moreover, from liking I learnt to imitate with tolerable accuracy the “brogue” in question, the specimen here set forth illustrates fairly the native Forest tongue.

It will no doubt appear extremely rugged to some while to those who have been accustomed to hear the “vorrest voak” in their familiar converse, the sounds of the words will bear an intelligible assimilation to the expressions of more educated classes. I apprehend that much of the uncouthness and indistinctness which characterise the spoken language of these people, may be attributed to a certain sluggish use or misuse of the vocal organ from their indolence in articulating, which becomes a confirmed habit - they may almost as well be tongue-tied. Speaking as they illustrate that noble function, is a guttural sort of proceeding, in which certain sounds get an inchoate formation within the mouth, with the least possible assistance from the tongue, and *less* (to perpetrate a bull,) from the lips and teeth.

As an instance, take one of the commonest expressions used by farm labourers, “Come hither away” which in the version of our foresters would more resemble “Cum huther a-woag'a.” As a rule for vowel sounds, take the broadest the sibillating *s* often becomes *z*, and *f* is generally supplanted by *v*. Upon the threshold of utterance the letters *th* are detained in order to be sent into the world preceded by a *d*, by which process *thick* becomes “dthick”.

One of the chief peculiarities of the dialect consists in the corrupt employment of its pronouns - a feature which Gilpin notices in his work, and states that he has more than once met with the following tender elegiac in church-yards:

*Him shall never come again to we,
But us shall surely one day go to he.*

THE VEN'ZON MARK, OR THE LOST CHILD

A NEW FOREST LEGEND.

Th' zummer time
Wur in its prime,
And all wur bright and gay;
The bees wur out,
Buzzen about,
All on that zunshine day.

Th' trees did look,
I' th' bubb'len brook,
As thof' they wur at play;
Th' deer did jump
O'er clump and stump
As stood up in their way.

Poor Mary's boy
Wur all her joy,
A happy child wur he:
Ov all bezide
He wur the pride,
But none zo proud az she.

She put 'un down,
The varn among,
Cloze by her cottage door:
And let 'un play,
The livelong day,
Az she had done avore.

A gipzey camp,
Wur on the tramp,
On dthick unlucky day:
Th' child they zaw,
An' spite o' law,
They carr'd 'un vur away.

Th' boy they zed,
Had on his head,
A mark o' ven'zon there:
And all agreed,
It cou'd be zeed,
By a partin' ov his hair.

When Mary miss'd,
The child she'd kiss'd,
And left upon the ground:
Then she did goo,
Th' vorest droo,
But the boy cou'd ne'er be vound.

THE VEN'ZON MARK

She roam'd about,
And loud did shout,
Among the brakes and vences,
And night and day,
Wur passed dthick way,
Till Mary lost her zenses.

Well, time pass'd on,
And years had gone,
But still she roam'd about:
And now't cou'd hear
Ov th' little dear
Az uzed to laaf and zhout.

And all did think
Her on the brink
Ov death, and now't could zave her;
But still she zed,
Wur One o'er hed,
As never 'ood desave her.

For thof' zhe'd weep
When vast azleep
About her darlin' boy,
Yet when she woke
She rarely spoke,
Zo lost wur all her joy.

But zumtimes she
'Ood goo and zee
Th' ztarm in the vorrest wild:
And then they zay
She uz'd to pray
To God, to zend her child.

Th' znow drove vast
I' th' wintry blast,
And all wur cold and drear;
When late one night
I' th' moon's pale light,
A gipzey did appear.

She cry'd and moan'd
And zighed and groan'd,
And loudly did complain,
Of what she'd done,
But one alone
Cou'd aize her vrom her pain.

For oh! she'd cry,
I vearz to die,
Wi' this upon my mind;
Vor I do know,
And zoon can zhow,
Where you your zon may vind.

THE VEN'ZON MARK

Poor Mary heard
The gipzey's word,
And tried to understand;
Her zun she told,
Wur a zodger bold,
Vur in a vorren land.

Th' gipzey died,
And Mary cry'd,
Her wretched end to zee;
Vor her no rest
Wur ever blest,
Zo lost to paice wur she.

The darkzome night,
Zaw Mary's vlight,
And now't could aize her mind;
But she 'ood goo,
The wordle droo,
Her zodger-boy to find.

Vor oh! the zmart
Ov a mother's heart
Can never be beguiled;
'Tis only know'd,
Or can be show'd,
By them az a' lozt a child.

And ye ars did pass;
Time's vleting glass
Agen turned o'er and o'er;
And all did veer
We ne'er should hear
Ov Mary any more.

At last, in time,
Vrom vorren clime,
The tidens reached our ears;
Th' war wuz o'er,
And we once more,
Wur zafe vrom all our vears.

For then came whoam,
No more to roam,
Both zodgers and their wives -
Thank God they cry'd
We've safe arriv'd,
Wi' th' blessing ov our lives.

Alas! that ever
Man should zever
The dearest ties in life;
Or mother's zun
Zould from her run,
Or husbun' vrom his wife.

THE VEN'ZON MARK

At last there came
A man o' vame,
An officer zo brave;
In battle vield
Wi' zword and zhiel
The banner he did wave.

Zo brave wur he
In each degree,
He conquered all his voes;
That then his vriends
To make amends,
Him for their leader chose.

He once wur left
Of zense bereft
Amung the dead and zlain,
And there he lay
Vor one whole day
Vore he ope'd his eyes again.

And when he did
A woman chid
And whispered - "Zleep once more"
Th' while he slept
Wi' joy she wept,
For zorrur now wur o'er.

When he awoke
His mother spoke
And zed, "you are my zun,
Your life I've zav'd
And God be praised
Vor ge'en me zuch a one"

"Vor you my zun
And you alone
I've wandered far and near,
And God did zee
My love for thee
And still my heart did cheer."

"When thy dear hed
Wur zoftly led,
And I tried to zoothy thy pain;
A spot zo dark
I did remark,
That brought thee back again."

"The very morn
That thou wert born
Thy father to me brought,
By his good luck
A vine vat buck,
Which a long time I had zought."

THE VEN'ZON MARK

"O! mother dear
What do I hear?"
The noble captain cried;
And to his breast
He vondly prest,
And did vor her provide.

Vor well he knew
She zpoke right true
When she zed he ven'zon lov'd,
For of'en he
'Neath vorrest tree
Her words th' truth had prov'd.

Then they did come
To live among
Their native vorrest wild,
And heart from heart
Ne'er more did part
Ov mother or ov child.

