



YORKSHIRE FOLK-TALK

WITH

*CHARACTERISTICS OF THOSE WHO SPEAK IT
IN THE NORTH AND EAST RIDINGS*

BY THE

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London

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York

JOHN SAMPSON

1892

P R E F A C E

FOUR years have now gone by since I circulated a letter among those who, so far as I knew, took an interest in the subject of our East Yorkshire dialect. The main object aimed at in the following pages will perhaps be best understood if I in part repeat what I said at that time. I will quote my own words :—

‘Those who have made a study of the English dialects, and have listened attentively to them as they have been spoken, cannot but have noticed that a considerable change has taken place in the ordinary language of our country-folk during the last twenty years. The North and East Ridings of Yorkshire are no exception to the rule. Railways and certificated schoolmasters, despite their advantages, are making sad havoc of much that is interesting and worth preserving in the mother tongue of the people. This is to be regretted. It is with the object of collecting any such relics of the past, which would otherwise be doomed to oblivion, that I make the following appeal to my brother Yorkshiremen, many

of whom, I know, must have a sort of affection for the rich and powerful dialects of the Eastern half of the County. These sound like music in the ears of many of us. I am well aware that much valuable work has been already done in this direction, and that by more able hands than mine. Still, it is probable that the mine is not exhausted; and if, as Professor Max Müller observes, in his *Lectures on the Science of Language*, "some of the local dialects of England, as spoken at the present day, are of great importance for a critical study of English," surely no stone should be left unturned for discovering any particles of ore which still exist in out of the way places, and for thus rescuing what can still be saved of our decaying dialect.

'Not only, however, am I desirous of gathering together any lingering traces of bygone words, but also of collecting peculiar Yorkshire phrases, sayings, modes of expression, and grammatical usages. Far less has been written about these than about mere dialectic vocabularies, and yet I think it will be admitted that to a Yorkshireman, at all events, they possess a certain interest. There are, I believe, still a vast number of such more or less local peculiarities of expression which are worthy of being preserved.

'But there is a further branch of enquiry which may well be pursued. It has been said that every other Yorkshireman you meet is a character. There is truth in this remark. A healthy independence, originality, and sense of humour meet one at every turn. Many are the Yorkshire stories that can be

related to illustrate such independence and originality—stories which have never yet been placed on record. Very grateful shall I be, then, to those who will be good enough to furnish me with any such, together with any dialectic peculiarities that come before their notice; and in the case of these latter, it will add greatly to their value if the name of the district, or better still the exact place where they are known to have been used, is mentioned. I feel sure there is sufficient material of this kind to fill many a volume, if only it could be collected.'

This request met with a willing response in many quarters, and I have much pleasure in acknowledging my obligations for the assistance I have received from others. These are too numerous to name individually. But my thanks are due in a special way to Hr. Pastor Feilberg, of Darum Præstegård, Denmark, the learned author of the *Jutlandic Dictionary*, whose kindly and ever-ready help was invaluable; also to Mr. R. H. Lipscomb, of East Budleigh, Devonshire; Mr. E. P. Allanson, of York; Mr. G. Frank, of Kirby Moorside; and the Rev. D. S. Hodgson, late of Helmsley, for many interesting literary contributions. To Canon Atkinson, of Danby, for those examples of the dialect from the *Cleveland Glossary*, which I have quoted with his permission in a few cases, as well as for other valued aid, I must express my gratitude. But lastly, and it may also be said mainly, am I indebted to my friend the Rev. E. S. Carter, of York, without whose hearty support and able co-operation, especially at the outset, I should

scarcely have ventured on my undertaking. To him I accord my best thanks.

It will be at once seen that many words, idioms, and grammatical as well as other usages, noticed in these pages, may be found in other parts of England also. To have inserted those which are peculiar to East Yorkshire only would have been wellnigh an impossibility: my rule, therefore, has been to give any which deviated in some way from the usage of ordinary English; even thus difficulties arose, for it was not in every case apparent whether a word or phrase should be reckoned as dialectic or not. On this point opinions will differ.

The Glossary will be found to contain not far short of two thousand words, and there are throughout the volume about twelve hundred original examples of the dialect. By far the greater portion of these I have heard at various times from the lips of the country-folk themselves, many of whom have most willingly given me information in cases of doubt.

After each word in the Glossary I have indicated by a distinguishing letter whether it is commonly, fairly commonly, or only rarely used at the present date in the folk-speech. A word is given as in common usage if it is so in any locality in the North or East Riding, and not necessarily throughout the whole of that district. I am not aware that this has formed a feature of any previous Glossary; I have, however, made this addition because it seemed to me likely to give greater interest to a work of this kind. A few obsolete words are also inserted: these are cases

which have either only recently fallen out of use, or else are connected with observations which have been made in the earlier pages of the volume.

In a large number of instances the Danish equivalents or derivations are given, and as often as possible I have connected the Jutlandic words with our own, bearing as they do such a close likeness, not to say identity with them, in many cases.

In a treatise on Yorkshire Folk-talk, many pages can hardly be otherwise than dull to any but enthusiasts : it has been my aim, therefore, to break the monotony in some sort by introducing lighter touches here and there, in the hope of making the whole more varied and readable.

Many Yorkshiremen are seeking their fortunes or are settled down for life in places far away from the haunts of their younger days. Should this book fall into the hands of any such, I shall consider myself well repaid if it calls up before them pleasant recollections of their youth, or brings back to their minds the familiar and well-loved tones of our rugged, but racy and 'strengthy' folk-talk.

M. C. F. M.

NEWTON-ON-OUSE,

January 14th, 1892.