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VNiVERSITAS
STVDII
SALAMANTINI

Letters to the Editor.

VIGORNIAN MONOLOGUES

TO THE EDITOR OF BERROW'S WORCESTER JOURNAL.

Sir,—I should be glad with your permission to say two or three things in reference to the specimens of Worcestershire dialect which you have inserted during the last month for me.

I am fully conscious of some imperfections, which it would have been difficult or impossible to avoid. It is impossible, for instance, to express in writing the intonation of the vernacular of any county, though it is often a striking characteristic of it. It is impossible, too, when the ordinary vowels are so variously sounded in different places, and even in the same place, to represent the vernacular pronunciation by means of them. It is necessary to substitute other signs of sounds, which must be generally accepted. This has been done by the English Dialect Society; but here it would be out of place at present.

The Salamanca Corpus: "Vigornian Monologues." (1895)

It is well to notice too how pronunciation varies in different parts of the county and even in the same place. Words too are current in some parts but extinct in others. Nor is there again absolute uniformity in one and the same place or person, as to the use of phrases and expressions and the manner of expression. For instance the aspirate is often omitted when it should be expressed, or expressed when it should be omitted, especially for the sake of emphasis or stress. But there is no strict rule about it. After comparative adjectives too sometime we have "nor"; sometimes 'than' or 'n'. Sometimes 'be,' sometimes 'is,' are used indifferently. Again we have 'thahy be,' 'a be,' 'a's,' 'thahy'm be' (they am be(?)), 'we'm be' (we am be (?)), 'us be,' for 'they are' and 'we are.' But sometimes double 'them be' or 'em be' is for 'they are.' Then there is the constant interchange of 'a' with, I believe, all the personal pronouns. This will explain the absence of uniformity in the specimens of dialect which I have given. Perhaps to some those specimens may seem exaggerated and unreal; but they are not so. Putting aside the admitted defects in representing their pronunciation, the words and forms of expression are authentic, and their combination is by no means a burlesque, however ludicrous it may seem. A patient listener might hear similar monologues any day in a country place not far from Worcester, as I have heard and do hear them.

It is true that, *verba volant* while *litera scripta manet*, in more senses than one. It is the case that through improved intercourse of man with man, the teaching of our schools, and the raising of the tone of culture generally, our provincial dialects are rapidly dying out, and giving place to standard English more or less pure. It has been my aim to catch and fix some of our own words and expressions and to continue their existence in your columns.

If they have no charm for anybody at present, it may be that, upon the reproduction of these Monologues, in your old Worcestershire column of 1995, somebody (nobody knows) may look with interest at what "Outis" has recorded, and be glad of them as helps towards giving life to any picture he may try to draw out for himself, of the Vigornian rustic of 1895.