

Author: Mary Fitchett Johnson (Mrs. George Moncrieff) (1779-1863)

Text type: Verse

Date of composition: 1863

Editions: 1863, 1881.

Source text:

Moncrieff, Mrs. 1863. "A Dream of the Isle of Wight". In C. Roach Smith. "Isle of Wight Vernacular". *The Gentleman's Magazine* 214: 630-633.

e-text

Access and transcription: December 2012

Number of words: 1,334

Dialect represented: Isle of Wight

Produced by María F. García-Bermejo Giner

Copyright © 2012– DING, The Salamanca Corpus, Universidad de Salamanca

[630]

ISLE OF WIGHT VERNACULAR

MR. URBAN, - "The lines I herewith send you were written by my cousin, Mrs. Moncrieff, of Pitcaithley House, Bridge of Earn, Perth, a few weeks before her heath, which occurred on the 1st of the present month. They were sent me in consequence of my having stated to her that my brother (Major Smith, R. M.) had compiled a Vocabulary of words peculiar to the Isle of Wight, our native place. From the date of her reply to my letter, she must have composed the verses forthwith, and without much, if any, premeditation. They include many words which are well known to us; but there are some quite novel to me; and which are probably becoming rapidly obsolete. The composition may be acceptable to many of your readers, as (to use her own words) "a sketch of the Isle of Wight clothed in the primitive vernacular of my youth."

Mrs. Moncrieff, upwards of half a century ago, published a small volume of poems*, of no ordinary merit. They evince a highly cultivated mind, deep thought, and elegance of expression; but, for some mysterious reason, she suppressed the sale of the book, and, in consequence, it is now extremely scarce, our own copy having been procured by accident. It is dedicated to the Rev. John Barvis, Rector of Niton, and dated at Wroxall Farm. The dedication, and a Sonnet addressed to the Rev. Thomas Dalton, Rector of Northwood, whom she styles "preceptor! second father! friend!" intimates the sources of a refined and matured education, engrafted upon uncommon natural abilities. She married, in 1814, Mr George Moncrieff, a son of Sir Henry Moncrieff, and left the Isle of Wight for her husband's residence

* "Original Sonnets and other Poems by Mary F. Johnson." (London: Longman and co. 1810.) The following epitaph, by Miss Johnson, is a pleasing specimen of her poetic talent. It is inscribed on the monument of her father, John Johnson, Esq., of Wroxall, in Newchurch Church, Isle of Wight: -

The Salamanca Corpus: A Dream of the Isle of Wight (1863)

“Here, till the awful trance of death shall end,
The fondest father and the warmest friend,
Ere Man’s contracted date approached its close,
From years of suffering sunk to calm repose.
If faults were his, and faults to all belong,
His judgment only, not his heart, was wrong;
And if he err’d, misled when Passion wooed,
Where Error strayed, Atonement still pursued.
Now, while her thought to those blest regions soar,
Where join Affection’s ties, to break no more,
The grateful child who closed his dying eyes,
This stone and verse to Johnson’s name supplies.
Obiit Junii 11^o, A. D. 1810, aetatis 59.”

[631]

in Scotland. I am informed (for I never knew her personally) that she probably did not revisit her own, and what was her father’s, property, at Wroxall, unless she may have done so shortly after her marriage.

I had written thus far, when I received from Dr. Laing, Mrs. Moncrieff’s executor, a slightly emended version of her poem, which, by the date (February 28th), it appears she wrote on the evening before, and within a few hours of, her death. Although she had not kept her bed, and her mental faculties remained as vigorous as ever, in the few lines which accompanied the corrected transcript she says she is suffering acutely, and thinks she is sending me “the final assurance of her affectionate regard.” She retired to bed at midnight; before her physician arrived in the morning she was unconscious; and she died without a struggle at noon.

I am, &c.

C. ROACH SMITH.

*Temple Place, Strood, Kent,
March 30, 1863.*

A DREAM OF THE ISLE OF WIGHT.

I DREAMT of thee, Vectis, and thine as of yore:
Joy thou in thy change as I mine deplore.
My dream was of seeking for emmets¹ again,
For my pheasants in nooks made soft by the rain.
I was climbing the shoot² at the top of the butt³,
But the path by a founder⁴ of hummock⁵ was shut:
So I lopped⁶ o’er the fence to a ramshackled⁷ shed,
Where cattle was foddered and mud-calves⁸ were fed:
For good cowed⁹ milk, thought I, this will do;
But the kittle¹⁰ was empty, the cows were assue¹¹.
A main in a corner, in smockfrock¹² and stroggs¹³,
Lolled, lazily sorting the mores¹⁴ and logs;
For he grubbed like a want¹⁵; one source of his pelf
Being trapping the heaving, blind roamer himself:
A larapping¹⁶ fellow, a native I’ll vouch,
By his hybrid gait, between lounge and slouch.

- 1 *Emmets*, Ants, or pismires.
- 2 *Shoot*, a sharp or steep ascent.
- 3 *Butt*, a small enclosed meadow.
- 4 *Founder*, a fall of incumbent earth.
- 5 *Hummock*, an irregular grassy ground.
- 6 *Lopped*, loose, awkward, jumpling.
- 7 *Ramshackled*, dilapidated.
- 8 *Mud-calves*, weaned calves
- 9 *Cowed* (cow-hot?), milk warm from the cow.
- 10 *Kittle*, kettle
- 11 *Assue*, dry, (pronounced *azew*).
- 12 *Smock-frock*, blouse.
- 13 *Strogs*, leggings.
- 14 *Mores*, grubbed roots of large trees.
- 15 *Want*, the mole.
- 16 *Larapping*, loose-made, slovenly, shambling.

[632]

He was dunch¹⁷ as plock¹⁸, and fully as dull;
 Then, inwardly grumblin, he handled a zull¹⁹,
 Which he wistfully tighted²⁰ from right hand to left;
 and then declined meddling because of the heft²¹.
 From a farmer's small bargain²², a plot of a few lugs²³,
 He cultures as garden, and, as freehold, hugs;
 Where too, among greens, small fruits and ruds²⁴,
 A wire stops the hare as nibbling she seuds;
 Out thence the fleet comer never will go,
 But wait, in snug covert, the thuckster's²⁵ "So, ho!"
 The cur at his heel can larger game harry,
 A lank scaithy²⁶ whelp, trained to fetch and to carry,
 As he skulks through the copses for sparrods²⁷ and ledgers²⁸,
 Which he stelthily sells to thatchers and hedgers.
 He, with the long yawn of habitual delay,
 Said, "Tell me aneuse²⁹ the time of the day;
 The duck's³⁰ coming on, I'll be off in astore³¹,
 The fry will be burnt, though 'twas swimming galore³²:
 My Gimmer's³³ at market; one calf she will sell,
 Reserving the lebb³⁴, pluck³⁵, and haslet³⁶ as well.
 I know she was hindered on peering³⁷ the flick³⁸;
 But there she is coming, and just in the nick.
 No empty backcoming whenever she roams;
 And now 'tis a griskin³⁹ that on her head bomes⁴⁰.
 Why behold her, close by, just only there look,
 Nightst the old gallybeggar⁴¹, by the corn pook⁴².
 We'll through the church litten⁴³, and leather that troop
 Kicking there up a dust, all high cock-a-hoop⁴⁴."

The Salamanca Corpus: A Dream of the Isle of Wight (1863)

Fate hangs on a moment, while going they stood,
A waddling, clamorous pair and their brood,
From the dwyes⁴⁵ of the withy-bed⁴⁶ brook where they dived,
For a feast on the long earth-bread eaces⁴⁷ arrived:

- 17 *Dunch*, deaf.
18 *Plock*, block.
19 *Zull*, plough.
20 *Tighted*, poised
21 *Heft*, weight
22 *Bargain*, a farm of small holding.
23 *Lugs*, poles or perches.
24 *Ruds*, marygolfs.
25 *Thuckster*, sportsmn.
26 *Scaithy*, hungry, filching, (A.-S. *scaeth*, ‘a thief’?)
27 28 *Sparrods* and *ledgers*, hazle-rods and withy or willow twigs used for thatching roofs and ricks.
29 *Aneuse*, close by, near to.
30 *Duck*, dusk
31 *Astore*, quickly and soon.
32 *Swimming galore*, swimming in fat.
33 *Gimmer*, wife, old coman.
34 *Lebb*, calf’s stomach.
35 *Pluck*, the liver and lights.
36 *Haslet*, edible part of the calf’s viscers.
37 *Peering*, melting.
38 *Flick*, the lard lining the inside of a pig.
39 *Griskin*, pork steak.
40 *Bomes*, swinging or loosely carried.
41 *Gallybeggar*, a scarecrow.
42 *Pook*, a cock of corn or hay.
43 *Litten*, a churchyard.
44 *Cock-a-hoop*, uproarious exultation.
45 *Dwyes*, eddies.
46 *Withy-bed*, willow-bed.
47 *Eaces*, large earth-worms, (A.-S. *aes*, often applied to bait for fish).

[633]

When, wo to the mallard⁴⁸! a death-dirge his quack,
With her younglings his mate a widow went back.
Then I said, “Ducks will serve when one cannot get geese:”
He leered and slunk off, just drawling out “Eés⁴⁹.”
Then waking, dream, dreamer, were lost without trace,
Leaving Vectis identical only in place.

48 *Mallard*, the male duck.

49 *Eés*, yes.