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Text type: Prose

Date of composition: 1886

Editions: 1886

Source text:

Giles, R. 1886. "Cusses an Ill Wishes". *North Devon Journal*, November 18: 2.

e-text

Access and transcription: March 2021

Number of words: 677

Dialect represented: Devonshire

Produced by María F. García-Bermejo Giner

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CUSSES AN ILL WISHES

ZUR,—Zom that doant beleeve exackly in witchin, think thares zomthin in a ill wish, an thay wud tellee that it is jist as bad, an wud relate zom instance ov how thay raymimber zitch a wish as that fulfill'd. Thare no dowt but hot thay be zomtimes a realized, but praps there may be times wen thay baint, an vor hot I naw tu the contrary, twenty tu wan, an Im beginin tu think that minny ov the superstishus tales that be a towld rise vrom zomthin that tuke plase zomtime or anether, an then 'tis put down vor a rule, wen it maint be nort ov the kind.

I rayd in this week's paper that a man was preychin in Wales, an in referrin tu the future, he zed, "Ere long I shall be with Daniel; there is but a handbreadth between me and eternity," when he dropped down dead in the pulpit. It mite be considered that he foresaw his death, but most probably not, an it is no more likely that his utterance had any moar connection with the death than hot mite be in a isolated case happen wen inny cuss had been pronounced aginst anether. Indeed, how oftin dith wan yer cussin an swarin vrom thay that naw better, an wen thay doant raylly mayn tu wish ther fellows the ill thay ax vor. Thay aiven sware tu ther awn friends, wich I think is no less fulish

than wicked, an hinsted ov shawin off ther breedin, tu my mind it is a hevidense ov a very bad breedin, tu my mind it is a hevidense ov a very bad breedin in the vulgar tong. I shall pass vrom this way ov cussing tu that wich yused tu be car'd owt by preests an popes, an wich was ov a different kind, vor thay "commanded" evils tu com pon thay that was brawt under thare anathemas, wile the others only wish vor min. In the olden times in this England ov owrs, ware we boste ov freedom, men yused tu be excommunicated vrom the Church, wud be cussed, cut off vrom the society ov the faythful, an thare sould delivered tu Satan, an eternal punishment, wayowt the chance ov being liberated vrom Purgatory, an innyboddy was at liberty tu slay sitch a wan as the King's enemy, an he was debarred vrom defendin his rites in inny corte ov law. Thay was ginerally burned at the stake an ther remayns cast into a pit. The form ov the cuss was zomthin awful to contemplate.

The Pope ov Rome clayms the power to dispose ov men's souls, and those he blesses be blessed, an thay he cusses be cuss'd, an in minny cases suspected heretics have bin arrested in the middle ov nite, examined, tortured, an executed, wayowt zeein thare accusers an zometimes wen witnesses was examined it wud be a mockery ov common sense an justice.

In the year 1530 a Thomas Bennet, who had formely lived in Torrington, kept a school in Exeter; seeing the superstition an ignorance that prevayled, he determined that he wud do his best to expose the errors of the church, as he witnessed them in the "ever faithful" city. He wrote his opinions on paper an put them up in public places. They related to the conduct of the Pope, an taught salvation by Christ without the mediation ov Saynts or popes. Diligent search was made for the writer, without avail, an as the search was unsuccessful, it was resolved tu cuss the author publicly with bell, book, and candle, as it was regard as a bad offence. It is related that at the time appointed the clergy an friars assembled in the cathedral. A large cross was held up with the holy wax candles fixed upon it, an one ov the preests went into the pulpit an preached from the subject of Achem in the Book of Joshua, an exhorted that the guilty person should be destroyed from among them. The Bishop then, with great solemnity, pronounced the cuss in the usual form as follows: —"By the authority of God, the Father Almighty, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of St. Peter and St. Paul, and of the Holy Saints, the person accused is ex-communicated. We utterly curse and ban, and commit over to the Devil of

hell, him or her, whosever he or she may be. Ex communicated and accursed may they be, and given, body and soul, to the Devil. Cursed be they in cities, in towns, in fields, in ways, in paths, in houses, out of houses, and in all other places, standing, lying, or rising, walking, running, waking, sleeping, eating, drinking, and whatsoever thing they do besides. We separate them from the threshold, and from all prayers of the Church, from the holy mass, from all sacraments, chapels, and altars, from holy bread, and holy water, from all the merits of God's priest and religious men, from all their pardons, privileges, grants and immunities, which all the holy fathers, the Popes of Rome, have granted, and we give them utterly over to the power of the Fiend. And let us quench their soul, if they be ded, this night in the pains of hell-fire, as this candle is now quenched and put out (and then one of the candles was put out), and let us pray to God that if they be alive, their eyes may be put out, as this candle is put out (another was then extinguished); and let us pray to God and to our Lady, and to St. Peter and St. Paul and all the holy saints, that all the senses of their bodies may fail them, and that they may have no feeling, as now the light of this candle is gone (the third candle was then put out); except they come openly now, and confess their blasphemy, and by repentance (as in them shall be) make satisfaction unto God, our Lady, St. Peter, and the worshipful company of this cathedral church. And as this cross falleth down, so may they, except they repent, and shew themselves. Then the cross was allowed to fall down with a loud noise, and the multitude shouted with fear."

There are other forms of cusses, one of which I have before me, much more lengthy, but just the same in substance.

On the occasion referred to, Bennett was present, and treating the matter lightly, he was suspected, and afterwards taken up, and brought before the Bishop, monks, and friars, condemned, and executed at Livery Dole, near Exeter, on the 15th of January, 1531. When tied to the stake he exhorted the people, with much earnestness, to call upon God, and leave the inventions of men. Two gentlemen, named Carew and Barnhouse, standing by, advised him to pray to the Virgin Mary and the saints. He meekly replied, "No, it is God alone upon whom we must call if we would have our prayers heard." Barnhouse, enraged at this, lit a furze bush, and thrust it in the martyr's face. The pile was then kindled, and the superstitious throng strove with each other as to who should throw faggots into the fire.



The Salamanca Corpus: "Cusses an Ill Wishes" (18th November 1886)

Let us take care that we don't allow any man or men to bring such like cusses upon us again.

Yours truly,

ROGER GILES.

Welcombe, 1886.

