

**THE "ROMANCE" OF  
PEASANT LIFE IN THE  
WEST OF ENGLAND**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649024223

The "Romance" of Peasant Life in the West of England by Francis George Heath

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**FRANCIS GEORGE HEATH**

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WEST OF ENGLAND**



THE  
"Romance" of Peasant Life  
IN THE  
WEST OF ENGLAND.

BY  
FRANCIS GEORGE HEATH.

*BASED, BY PERMISSION, UPON LETTERS CONTRIBUTED  
TO "THE MORNING ADVERTISER."*

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LONDON:  
*PUBLISHED FOR THE AUTHOR, BY*  
CASSELL, PETTER, AND GALPIN,  
LA BELLE SAUVAGE YARD, E.C.

1872.

TO  
ROBERT ARTHUR KINGLAKE, ESQ.,  
ONE OF HER MAJESTY'S JUSTICES OF THE PEACE FOR  
THE COUNTY OF SOMERSET,  
ETC., ETC.,  
AS A MARK OF ESTEEM  
FOR HIS GENUINE KINDLINESS OF DISPOSITION,  
AND IN RECOGNITION ESPECIALLY OF THE  
WARM INTEREST WHICH HE TAKES IN THE WELFARE  
OF THE SOMERSETSHIRE PEASANTS,  
THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED  
BY HIS SINCERE FRIEND,  
THE AUTHOR.

## PREFACE.

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I PLACE this, my first book, in the hands of the public in the hope that it may prove both interesting and instructive. Amidst the vast multitude of literary productions which exist in the present writing and reading age, I send forth my small volume to fight its way for a place in the popular estimation: a tiny bark launched upon a wide sea. Of one thing I am certain, namely, that my book treats of a thoroughly popular subject. Whether or not I have handled that subject in a manner which will please the public, it is for themselves to judge. All that I can myself say is, that my book is an earnest one.

FRANCIS GEORGE HEATH.

*London, August, 1872.*

## CONTENTS.

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CHAPTER I.		
DOWN THE GREAT WESTERN LINE	- - -	PAGE 1
CHAPTER II.		
THE "ROMANCE" OF PEASANT LIFE	- - -	5
CHAPTER III.		
A STORY OF THRILLING INTEREST	- - -	11
CHAPTER IV.		
THE FRIENDS OF THE PEASANT	- - -	20
CHAPTER V.		
THE VALE OF WRINGTON	- - -	26
CHAPTER VI.		
"TWO TAPS RUNNING"	- - -	34
CHAPTER VII.		
FACT IS STRANGER THAN FICTION	- - -	40



CHAPTER VIII.		PAGE
STARVATION - - - - -		47
CHAPTER IX.		
THE TRAGIC STORY OF SEDGEMOOR - - -		53
CHAPTER X.		
A MODERN COWHERD - - - - -		59
CHAPTER XI.		
A FAMILY OF TWELVE - - - - -		65
CHAPTER XII.		
THE "PRIVILEGES" OF THE PEASANT - - -		70
CHAPTER XIII.		
THE WEST OF ENGLAND SANATORIUM - - -		78
CHAPTER XIV.		
A SUNDAY WITH CANON GIRDLESTONE AT HAL- BERTON - - - - -		81
CHAPTER XV.		
FACTS ARE STUBBORN THINGS - - - - -		86

THE  
"ROMANCE" OF PEASANT LIFE.

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CHAPTER I.

DOWN THE GREAT WESTERN LINE.

"Black sin may nestle below a crest,  
And crime below a crown ;  
As good hearts beat 'neath a fustian vest,  
As under a silken gown.  
Shall tales be told of the chiefs who sold  
Their sinews to crush and kill,  
And never a word be sung or heard  
Of the men who reap and til ?"

*The Kings of the Soil.*

ONE of the most lovely journeys out of London is down the Great Western line. To reach the west of England by this route the traveller must, after quitting Middlesex, pass across Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Wiltshire, and a portion of Gloucestershire—a magnificent stretch of country, constituting some of the most fertile parts of England. After being con-

fined to London during the whole of the winter and the early spring months, it is impossible to conceive anything which is really more refreshing and delightful than taking a rush into the country in the lovely month of May. The huge city itself cannot resist the genial influence of the month of spring flowers. Within the great desert of houses the shrubs and trees, which here and there charmingly break the dull regularity of our metropolitan streets, burst into unwonted verdancy in the "merrie month." Even the uncongenial London soil is enriched by the wealth which lies hidden in atmospheric vapours, and which is collected and brought down to earth by the soft April showers. During May, therefore, there is about the streets a freshness which, once lost, never returns until the succeeding spring. But to obtain a real taste of nature one must leave far behind the smoke-begrimed houses of the metropolis; and there is no part of our rich old England where one can find more exquisite scenery than in the beautiful counties of the west.

"Oh, green was the corn as I rode on my way,  
And bright were the dews on the blossoms of May;  
And dark was the sycamore's shade to behold,  
And the oak's tender leaf was of em'rald and gold."

The Great Western Railway is one of the safest lines in England, and one of the most pleasant lines to travel over. Leaving the Paddington terminus by the 11.45 a.m. express train, we soon pass away from the