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*Popular romances of the
west of England*

Robert Hunt



Cornwall 870



The Giant Bolster, striding from the Beacon to 'arr Brea. —
— A distance of six miles —

POPULAR ROMANCES

OF THE

WEST OF ENGLAND

OR

The Drolls, Traditions, and Superstitions of Old Cornwall

COLLECTED AND EDITED BY

ROBERT HUNT, F.R.S.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY GEORGE CRUIKSHANK.



THIRD EDITION, REVISED AND ENLARGED

London

CHATTO AND WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1881

Brough Add. Cornwall 870.

“‘Have you any stories like that, guidwife?’

“‘Ah,’ she said; ‘there were plenty of people that could tell those stories once. I used to hear them telling them over the fire at night; but people is so changed with pride now, that they care for nothing.’”—CAMPBELL.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION.

DURING the last few years a new interest has been awakened, and the West of England has attracted the attention of many, who had previously neglected the scenes of interest, and the spots of beauty, which are to be found in our own island.

The rugged granite range of Dartmoor, rich with the golden furze; the moorlands of Cornwall, with their mighty Tors and giant boulders fringed with ferns and framed in masses of purple heath; the stern coasts, washed by an emerald sea, quaint with rocks carved into grotesque forms by the beating of waves and winds, spread with the green samphire and coated with yellow lichens; are now found to have a peculiar—though a wild—often a savage—beauty. The wood-clad valleys, ringing with the rush of rivers, and the sheltered plains, rich with an almost tropical vegetation, present new features of interest to the stranger's eyes, in the varied characters of the organisation native to that south-western clime.

The railways give great facilities for visiting those scenes, of which the public eagerly avail themselves. But they have robbed the West of England of half its interest, by dispelling the spectres of romance which were, in hoar antiquity, the ruling spirits of the place.

The "Romances of the West of England"—collected into a volume which has served its purpose well—gives the tourist

Preface to the Third Edition.

the means of restoring the giants and the fairies to their native haunts.

The growing inquiries of those who are desirous of knowing something of the ancient Cornish miners,—of the old peasantry of this peninsula, and of the aged fishermen who almost lived upon the Atlantic waters,—have convinced me that a third edition of this volume of folk-lore has become a necessity.

While correcting the pages for a new edition, a scientific friend, who was deep in the cold thrall of positivism, called upon me. He noticed the work upon which I was engaged, and remarked, "I suppose you invented most of these stories."

In these days, when our most sacred things are being sneered at, and the poetry of life is being repressed by the prose of a cold infidelity, this remark appears to render it a humiliating necessity, to assure my readers that none of the legends in this volume have been invented. They were all of them gathered in their native homes, more than half a century since, as stated fully in the Introduction to the volume.

For this edition some necessary corrections have been made; and additions will be found in the Appendix, which it is thought will increase the interest of the volume.

ROBERT HUNT.

March 1884.

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