

THE VILLAGE CHAMPIONS  
(FOUNDED ON FACT)

“ The way to Dorking, mister ? Ay !  
I wean't, a-fearin' to deceive ;  
I bean't a man as can rely,  
To speak on, as you might perceive.  
You go an' ax that chap you see  
A-sitting by the villidge tree.”

“ And who is he ? ” the stranger said.  
“ He seems more aged than you, my friend ! ”  
“ Why, bless you, so 'e be, ” his head  
He sadly scratched from end to end,  
“ But sich a hintellect, I'll lay  
You don't see, mister, hevery day !

“ Why, Billy Stoke 'e were the cove  
A matter o' ten year agone  
What beat Jim Buskett out o' 'Ove,  
What used to be the champion—  
Jim Buskett, wi' the wooden legs,  
What were the champion fur heggs !

“ It weren't a hole-an'-corner lay.  
We painted up a board as said :  
' The Goat-and-Compasses—to-day—  
An' hentrance tuppence hevery 'ead  
The wummen-folk may henter free,  
An' likewise babies under three.

“ ‘ A challenge to the world do I,  
Jim Buskett, with the wooden legs,  
Give forth to all men and sundry  
To win the championship fur heggs ;  
An' this stake o' twenty pound  
To any heater 'ere around.’

“ Now, mister, we ’ad never thought  
To ’ave a heater sich as ’e,  
An’ yet, opined as summon ought  
To take the challenge, fair an’ free ;  
Fur Jim ’e seemed to us to boast,  
The which our villidge hates the most.

“ Well, arter ’arf-a-’our ’ad gone,  
Why, sudden-like there up an’ spoke :  
‘ I’ll challenge this ’ere champion ! ’  
An’ this was this ’ere Billy Stoke.  
So ups we gets upon our legs,  
An’ tells the girl to fetch the heggs.

“ Says Jim, ‘ Bring mine as hard as bricks,  
An’ boil ’em ’arf-a-’our or more,  
An’ bring ’em ’ere in plates of six.’  
When Billy Stoke ’e up an’ swore ;  
‘ Bring mine,’ ’e says, an’ swore like mad,  
‘ An’ bring ’em raw,’ ses ’e, ‘ by Gad ! ’

“ So Jimmy Buskett sits ’im down,  
An’ Billy Stoke ’e ups an’ stands ;  
An’ Parson Bimmins starts to frown.  
But Sawbones Smith ’e rubs ’is ’ands,  
An’ whispers. as ’e wags ’is ’ead,  
‘ Ere’s work fur me an’ Sexton Ned ! ’

“ So Jimmy Buskett takes ’is seat,  
An swallows ’is’n ’ard an’ ’ole ;  
An’ Billy stands upon ’is feet,  
An’ drinks ’em from a chiny bowl.  
So by the time a ’our were gone,  
They eats between ’em forty-one.

“ But Jimmy’s mouth were gitting dry,  
An’ so ’e ’as to wash ’em down,  
While Billy looked ’most fit to die,

An' turned from green to dirty-brown ;  
An' Sawbones Smith was a'most mazed,  
An' Parson Bimmins fairly dazed.

“ Well, mister, Jimmy Buskett ses,  
‘E ses. ses 'e, at fifty-two,  
A-chokin' an' a-blowin' es  
A rileway ingin go to do—  
‘E ses, ses 'e. ‘ I claims a win ;  
Bill Stokes ain't got 'is fifty in ! ’

“ But Bill 'e give a glorious gulp,  
An' swallers six as soon as snakes,  
An' mashes more'n 'em inter pulp,  
While Jim another couple takes.  
‘ My lords,’ ses Bill, ‘ I'm easy fust,  
An' threescore yet afore I bust ! ’

“ Then Jimmy Buskett up 'e riz,  
An' tries to bolt a plateful more,  
When green 'e turns about the phiz,  
An' falls presumptious on the floor.  
So Sawbones swears upon the spot  
A nappleplectic fit 'e's got.

“ Then Billy Stoke 'e ups and' calls  
Fur men to carry 'im to bed,  
When likewise 'e permiscuous falls  
An' 'its the fender with 'is 'ead  
Ses Sawbones, ‘ E's a lucky chap,  
An' wean't be 'urt by *that* mis'ap.

“ ‘ They've appleplectic fits,’ 'e ses,  
‘ An', though their lives I'm sure to save,  
Yet each'll carry, I'll confess,  
A ruin' stummick to 'is grave.’  
An' 'e were right as soon as not ;  
A ruin' stummick 'tis they've got.

“ Well, mister, that’s the facts as seen  
    Ten year ago come Chris’mas day,  
An’ so our villidge always been  
    The leadin’ villidge down our way ;  
But Billy Stokes ’ull always ’ave  
A ruin’ stummick to ’is grave.

“ An’ when ’e tell the story now,  
    ’E seem to gasp fur want of breath—  
Yes, mister, Sawbones ses as ’ow  
    ’E wean’t be better till ’is death ;  
‘ Unto ’is grave.’ ’e ses, ses ’e,  
‘ A ruin’ stummick’s what ’e be ! ’ ”