

2nd THOUSAND

VOICES FROM SALISBURY PLAIN

OR

WHO'S TO BLAME?

A DIALOGUE

ON THE

Franco-Prussian War

BETWEEN

WILLUM AND JEAMES

(Wiltshire Labourers)

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“POEMS IN THE WILTSHIRE DIALECT”

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JEAMES

Good ev'nen ta 'ee naighbour White,
Be 'ee come to av a chat ta-night,
Iv zo, come in an' shut th' doower,
Th' wind blows keen across th' moor;
Coom draa th' zettle leetle nier,
Zo's we can zit up gean th' vier.
Well Will, an wat about th' news?
Which o'm dee think is lik ta looze?
Ta-day I heard young Squire Harris
Zay, "they'd begun ta vier on Paris";
B' that it zeems they wont gie in,
But do 'ee think they'll iver win?

WILLUM

I tell 'ee wat 'tis, naighbour Brett,
Th' Germans be a cowardly zett,
Ta vier on zich a helpless city,
Where is their piety and pity,
I raaly hope th' Vrench will yet,
Gie'm sich a tannen they wont vorget.

JEAMES

Well Will, I can't agree wi' you,
Vor if wat I have yeard is true,
They Vrench voke they declared thease war,
And didden zeem ta know wat var.
If this is zo, as zays the peapers,
'Tis time 'twur stopp'd, zich wicked caapers,
But, Willum, you rades mwore than I,
And be a scholard quite as high,
If dwon't mind as here we zit,
Do jist explain your thoughts ov it.

WILLUM

Wi' all me heart that will I do,
And tell 'ee iverything that's true.
Well, for zome time thease Proosian voke,
Bin gettin saacy an gi'en pokes,
And drowin out their hints and sneers,
That they vor nobiddy did keer.
Their King, tho' rather weak at heart,
Had voun a chap call'd Bizzy Mark,
And Bizzy enough he mead his zelf,
A good vor nothin crafty elf;
He is sa cunnin and crafty we'it,
I'm drat if any o'm coud zee it.
Wi' Denmark vust they pick'd a quarrel,
An then got Austria in th' horrel,
They zar'd thic leetle land sa bad,
It nearly drove I ravin mad.
And wat did Jan Bull zay ta this,
When he know'd they had done amiss?
Why, government in place thic day,
Zed, 'if a hand they did but lay
Upon thease leetle Danish land,
They'd smash em wi' their iron hand.'
They dreaten'd, and dreaten'd, day a'ter day,
But did em do it, no, not they,
They zeed thease Proosians and their cleek
Gie leetle Denmark zich a lick,
Tho, brave they vought, they bein' sa small,
Th' cowards het em droo th' wall.
Well, ater thic are job wur vinished,
Their pride wur nar bit mwore diminish'd,
Vor ardly wur'em zettled down,
When 'nother war agen did zoun;
This time agen their faithful ally,
Their troops they zoon begun ta rally.
And Austria she'd done nought amiss,
Vor they ta trate her jist like this;
But they wur jealous ov her pow'r
And Proosia she long'd vor th'hour,
Ta stick her needles in her heart,
Which she zoon done, and mead her smart.
They beat 'em zo in ivery battle,
That tothers coudn't stand th'rattle,
Their needle guns did kill 'em zo,
They coudn't stand avore th'blow.
Poor Austria out vor mercy cried,
When Bizzy Mark he quick replied:
'You must gie to us certain parts,
Or else we'll shoot 'ee droo th' hearts.'
Poor Austria wur obliged ta do it,
Tho purty much she now da rue it.

Well, leavin Austria nearly dead,
They thought they had no mwore t'dread;
They saacyer than ever got,
And zed 'that they coud tan th' lot,'
And Bizzy Mark look'd everywhere,
To try and plant his power there.
He turned his eyes toward the yeast,
But there he vound a zavage beast,
Bezides th' bear and he wur vrens
And mead each other much amens,
Not only this, thease jining nations
Wur mix'd up zo wi' kind relations.
Then crafty Mark glanced to the west
And spied out leetle Bonny's nest.
But th' King he very much did stare,
'Why Mark, how ere shall we get there?'
'Ne'er mind,' zed Mark, "*Keep watch the Rine,*"
Get ready! be quiet and bide yer time!!!
And purty quiet they did keep,
Vor they wur cunnin and sa deep,
Zo zanctivied wur they begar,
Th'zeame time plannen out thease war.

* * * * *

Zoon a'ter this the Queen o' Spain,
Wur bundled out o' hur domain,
Wich mead th' Spanyolds mighty glad
Vor she had rul'd 'em proper bad;
An vor zome time thease Spanish voke,
Did hunt about to vind a bloke,
To come and be their lawful King,
Zo that he peace and joy med bring.
An Marshall Prim, their toppin man,
Did try ta carry out th' plan.
He hunted here, he hunted there,
But wur declin'd mmost ivery where,
And in a rage, he did exclaim,
'No body will be King of Spain.
There is but one, if I could collar 'un,
Thic ar young prince, call'd Hoben Zollern.'
Zo, he wrote to'n in woeful strain,
Ta knaw if he'd be King o' Spain.
Now thease young prince a Proossian wur,
Wich wur the cause ov thease yer stur,
Related nearly to King Will,
An off'cer in his army still;
Zo, in a stew he rade th' letter,
And zed 'Prim coudn't voun a better;
I'm zure he'll av out own vree will,
Also ov Father and Uncle Bill.'
Then off he went ta tell th' news

To ael th' court, who Prim had choos'd,
 And every one did zeem amaz'd,
 Th' fact on't they were jolly plaz'd.
 But old King Bill zed ' 'twere a lark,'
 'Be quiet do,' zed Bizzy Mark,
 'Jist let un ha'it, can't do better,
 'Twill raise vriend Bonny to th' letter.'
 Th' King then rub'd his hands wi' glee,
 ' 'Tis jist th' very thing vor he;
 Now nephew, quick, accept th' crown,
 You'll make a good King I'll be boun;
 Let Brother Bonny ramp and run,
 We'll zoon show he th' needle gun.'
 Then Zollern he wrote off to Spain,
 With haste his 'tentions to explain,
 Zays he, 'I do accept your offer,
 And all my zarvices I proffer.'
 Th' Spanish court zent all around,
 To tell 'em that a King they'd vound,
 But Bonny, when he heard th' news,
 Shook with vierce anger in his shoes,
 He caall'd his councillors together,
 And zed, 't'ad zet in stormy weather,'
 He zwore, and all o'm did remark
 'That 'twere th' doin's o' crafty Mark,
 And zartin zure is come th' hour
 That they wish to extend their pow'r.
 Jist seeth' course that they be vollern,
 To make a King o' thic young Zollern;
 If we lets he be King o' Spain
 Just look at our own vair domain.,
 Hedged in all zides by Proossian pow'rs,
 What chance will ever be vor ours!
 No! No! this we will not allow,
 Or war shall voller this we vow.'

* * * * *

Then off they zent to Proossian Bill,
 To tell un jist wat wur thar will,
 And that he'd better wi'out delay
 Make Zollern at his own whoam stay,
 Var iv they low'd un King o' Spain,
 Vrom war they hooden long revrain.
 Zo Proossian Bill he rade th' note,
 An call'd his fav'rits vor ta vote,
 ' 'Tis plain,' zed he, 'an this much var,
 Iv we revrain there will be war.
 Now Mark, wat ad ess better do?
 You know we leaves it all to you!'
 Then Mark look'd up and Mark look'd down,
 Then zed he'd better gie up th' crown,

Var tother powers ta we av zent,
Ta zay they wont gie their consent,
And we must let 'em think begar,
That we dwont want ta goo ta war.
Zo Zollern he had best revrain
Vrom gwain ta be th' King o' Spain,
And ov this noon on's will regret,
Vor Bonny this'll ne'er vorget;
Let he be vust ta meak a war,
And then we'll let un know wat var;
Dwont meak a naise, but be in time,
Get our troops andy to the Rine.
Bonny, var war is much inclin'd,
And he'll vind we beant much behind;
Zo get ael ready wi'out delay,
“*And mind and not forget to pray;*”
Vor ther'll be war as zure as I
Be rais'd by heaven's will zo high.'

* * * * *

Zo Zolleran gied up th' crown,
And voke all thought 'twur zettled down.
But Bonnypart, a cutish man,
Zich conduct didden understan,
An not content wi thease yer plan,
Zed 'he'd soon meak 'm understan;
That vor th' future he'd demand,
They should renounce thease Spanish land;
Their little geam I now can zee,
And they zhall make apology
Vor upzetten we in thease yer vashun,
And ael bout thic Spanish nation.'
Zo off he zent his minister,
To tell 'em wat his veelens wur,
Vor zo zhabby they had zar'd un,
They now should koom and beg his parden.

* * * * *

Zo when thease Vrenchman did appear,
Th' Proossian court look'd mortal queer,
And wi' wrothy veelens quite intense,
Express'd surprise but 'twer pretense.
'Twer jist what every one expected,
But they didden want to be detected;
And Mark he rubb'd his hands wi' gle
' 'Tis jist th' very thing vor we.
'Tis plain his monkey's up, begar
He'll not be zlow to meak a war,
Zo tell fren Bonny plain vrom me,
We shall meak no apology.'

' I'll zee King Bill,' then zed th' man,
' P'rapps I'll zoon meak 'n understan,
That Vrance sich insult will revenge,
If you dont mind you may depen.'

* * * * *

Then off he went wi' zswiftish wing,
To goo and vind th' Proossian King;
At a place caal'd Ems he voun un out,
In a gearden ther walkin about;
And up he went wi'out delay,
To tell un zummit he'd got to zay;
But th' old King turn'd on he wi' wrath,
'And zed he'd better zoon be off;'
He know'd that he wur in a clit,
And didden zeem ta keer a bit.
When th' minister he zeed this here,
He thought it wur a strange affair;
Zays he, 'they trates us wi' contempt,
But this conduct we'll zoon rezent;'
Around once mwore he gave a look,
Then very zoon his leave he took.

* * * * *

When Bonnypart and ael his friends
Wur tould of this, they off did zend
To their girt house o' parliament
To tell em wat wur their intent;
And all o'm there wi'out delay,
Declared a war thic verry day;
Zays they 'what e're be th' result,
We will avenge this girt insult,
Now we will vight, they've geed us cause,
Th' vault is their's we will not pause
To give 'em zich a jolly tannen,
No more zich schemes shall they be plannin.'

* * * * *

Zo Jeames you zee now I've a tould 'ee,
Th' truth about thease leetle stoury;
If Vrance wur vust to make a war,
Th' tothers vust begun to spar,
They aggrevated Vrance zo much,
Zuch ways not even we should glutch;
Th' Proossians longed to vight wi' Vrance,
And only waited for th' chance.
'Tis plain to all and must appear,
They'd plan'd thease war vor many a year;
Zuch hypolcrites to prache and pray,

And vor war craven ivery day.
Caal that 'legion, neighbour Willum,
I thinks they'm on th' road to ruin!
Just wait a bit, I knaws vull well
That time will plainly thease truth tell.
Though all wi' they now is zuccess,
There'll come a day nevertheless,
Th' Scripture zays, with much good reason,
' Th' wicked prosper vor a zeaon.'

JEAMES

Well Will I own you've zed a lot,
But zum it zeems you have forgot,
Th' Proossians you zed vust of ael,
Pitch'd into leetle Denmark zmall.
But if wat I have read is true,
This she'd a perfect right to do;
Vor th' reason that she then did vight,
Wur to maintain a subject's right.
It zeem'd zum land belong'd to one,
I think he wur a girt Duke's son,
Call'd Austenburgh, that wur his neam,
Wich certain parts of Denmark claim'd;
And if twur left ta he by will,
I cannot blame his Uncle Bill;
Vor he tried t'put the matter right,
Zom time avore he went ta vight.
And Denmark not gien up, ov course,
They had to take it be main force;
But if Proossia wur so much then wrong,
Why Austria join her, when so strong?
Th' fact o't they wur in the right,
Or else Jan Bull ud went ta vight.
And as vor tannen her old ally,
That's all me puff, fit vor aunt zally;
They bwoth wur jealous of each other,
And each one long'd t'fight wi' tother.
Now Will, lets come to thease yer war,
Proossia you blames, what ever vor?
Just look at th' past history
Of Vrance, and tell it truthfully,
Ha'nt she on Germany made war,
A dozen times or mwore begar!
Ant she vor zich a length of time
Wanted to get tother side th' Rine!
Thease Germans never have had peace,
Vrom thease yer Vrench, a stuck up race;
They'd never zar'd th' Vrench amiss,
Nor gied em cause to act like this.
Zo jealous be they ov Germany,

They'd het her ael to smithrey;
I knaw thay dreaded every hour,
Proossia's girtness and her pow'r.
She being of German affinity,
Got right to make all unity.
Just look back now, in zixty-zix,
Didden she put Proossia in a fix
About thic place called Luxembur,
I zeem ta think th' name o't wur,
How saacy then they got begar,
And talked so big of gwain to war,
That t'others pulled a vortress down,
And took their zoldier's vrom the town;
Vor peace they did want to zustain,
And humbled much, this to maintain.
I tell 'ee what th' Vrench voke be,
Touch'd too much wi' that jealousy,
They hates to zee a country rise,
As Proossia's done to their zurprise;
And then about thic Bizzy Mark,
Who kept ael Vrance zo in the dark;
I dwon't believe it, for 'tis plain,
'Twur no odds to he, who wur King of Spain.
'Twur jist a zummet to kick up a row,
And Vrance wur in the wrong I vow,
Vor when the King of Proossia he,
Did sanction one ov his vamlee,
I dwont believe he tried to spite
The Vrench, in what he thought wur right;
And when they ax'd un to displace un,
He done it then, jist vor to plaze em.
And when he'd done ael this accordin,
They wanted he to beg their parden.
A purty bit of cheek, begar,
I wonder they didden vust meak war.
But I tell 'ee wat and 'tis me mind,
Th' Vrench do want th' River Rine.
This wur th' drift of thease yer war,
Depend upon't that's wat twur vor;
If 'twurden zo, wat made Germany
All join together in unity,
To meet their haughty foe in time,
And keep un t'other zide th' Rine.

WILLUM

Th' Vrench I think wur much ta vast,
Thease war wur boun ta com ta pass,
Vor they wur jealous of each other,
And each one long'd ta vight wi' tother.
But Jeames now you must this confess

When Germany had zuch zuccess,
In winnin battles ivery day,
Peace she no longer ought delay.
Vor you know when they 'gun ta vight,
King Will ta ael th' Vrench did rite,
'I beant come t'vight th' pesantry,
But th'mpror who mead war on me.'
This wur he zed his leetle plan,
But did hur do it at Zedan?
Var there ya know he beat 'em all,
And took alive th' girt and small.
Well, when he'd got 'em in his pow'r,
He ought made pace thic very hour;
But no, a'ter zending all away,
He marched to Paris wi'out delay,
And now is viering on thic City,
Were's his religion and his pity?
Iv that's th' man, and that's his creed,
He ha'nt a stuck to wat he 'greed.

JEAMES

Vriend Willum do but stop a bit,
Vor you do misunderstand it;
I know th' King ta they did rite,
He didden come th' poor to vite.
Now when th' Emperor wur took,
The Germans ael around did look,
To zee if they did ax vor peace,
And if they wanted war to cease.
But there wur a army shut in Metz,
And another one wich I vorgets,
Who zed 'they never would gie in,
Vor they wur zartin zhure ta win.'
And Paris voke, they in their wrath,
Did drave th' Empress Regent off;
And they Republicans zo red,
Whom Monarchies da mmostly dread,
Zet up their vlag and did proclaim,
That they now rul'd th' Vrench domain.
What did em do, *not ax vor peace*,
But went on wosser much a piece,
They arm'd, and drill'd, and zwoe, and vow'd,
In zuch girt talk zo mighty proud,
That every German that they vound,
Zhould rot upon th' Vrenchman's ground.
Now Willum do now let me ax 'ee
Coud you put up wi' cant zo nasty.
This wurden from th' Emperor,
But th' people now that zaid this here.
And when Jan Bull he did propose,

A way for peace he would disclose,
Why Bizzy Mark he listen'd to it,
And he was willing vor t' do it.
Then Jules Favre he came out,
To try and bring a peace about.
'What is th' terms?' he did remark,
'Let me consider,' zaid Bizzy Mark.
'A armistice for thirty days,
We will grant you without delay,
On thease conditions, that you will
Gie up Verdun, Strasburgh, and Toul.
Then you a Gover'mint can make,
Zo's we officially can trate;'
But no, they would not this accept,
And in a rage Jules Favre left;
Zays he 'we shant gie up a screw,
To sich a hungry lot as you.'
Now Willum you know 'tis the rule,
Vor it you larn'd when at th' school,
That when two bwoys do gwo to'fight,
Th' bwoth of they thinks they be right.
Th' vanguish'd one you well doth know,
Must humble to his conquer'n foe,
And if th' vanguish'd 'gun the fight,
Th' terms ov pace is purty tight.
But Bizzy Mark did not do this,
Vor his terms wur not much amiss,
Vor Favre knew those places were,
Just on th' point o' vallin there.
That wur a proper voolish bit
Ov th' Vrenchman not to accept it;
It zeems to me thease Vrench are voke,
That to reason never will be broke;
Vor thease Republicks had a chance,
To make a lastin pace vor Vrance.
And by th' world wou'd have been cheer'd,
And to true Vrenchmen be endear'd;
Vor well th' world doth know that they
Did not begin this dreadful vray,
But th' Emperor who they did hate,
And wur well pleazed at his defeat;
Vrom vightn then they ought to cease,
And ax Proossia vor a lasting peace.

WILLUM

Ah! Jeames, 'tis very well vor you,
To talk ov this like as you do;
You know if voke ov any merrit,
Ha' got a leetle bit o' sperrit.
Th' never do like to gie in,

While they can zee a chance to win,
And still I hold th' Vrench begar,
Is not to blame vor prolonging war,
Vor when th' Emperor wur took,
Th' Germans ought to took their hook,
Not kept on war wi' zuch poor voke,
'Tis jist like cuttin a country's droat.

JEAMES

Now Will, oncemwore I will relate,
And try ta vix it in yer pate.
When two partees begin a vight,
Each thinks ov coorse that he is rite.
We 'zume ov coorse that one is bate,
Then wat da voller vor goodnez zake;
Th' Victor then his terms da meak,
Wich th' tother he is bound ta teak.
Zuch is th' case wi thease here Vrench,
They's beat an must gie recompense.
Though hard th' terms may zeem ta be,
Yet to them they must now agree,
Vor had th' Vrench bin victors now,
I think that this you will allow,
Their terms would have been quite as hard,
Therevore thic vact you must regard.

WILLUM

Well, I cant zee it as you do,
If I wur they I'd vight it droo,
I glories in ther plucky sperrit,
An calls em voke ov truest merrit.
An this I hold, that Jan Bull ought
Ta help 'em, vor wi' us they vought,
In thic war out at th' Crimear,
Zee how thay stuck ta we za dear.
Ees, thay have bin good vriends ta we,
An help'd us win zom victorys;
I tell 'ee wat it meaks me mad,
Ta think we have behaved zo bad
Depend upon it we zhall rue,
Not helpin our old vriends zo true;
Here we do bide a looking on,
At this ere dreadful war zo long,
And zeeing ael this dreadful dearth,
Th' like ne'er visited thease earth;
Look at'em, round that zplendid city,
A blowin o'nt ael to a jiffy,
And killin voke zo innercent,

How bitterly they will repent.
Starvation staars them in th' vace,
Thousands will die ov this I gess.
'Tis zickening to rade about it,
Iv we know half, I much do doubt it;
Then look around about th' nation,
Do jist behold th' dezolation;
Look where you will ael droo the narth,
Nothing but vlames a busten vorth;
Thar's skearce a town or village thare,
That's not a pictur ov despair;
Ther's skearce is left a vamilee,
That is not vull ov misery;
Cursed I zay must be thease men,
That brings thease things to zich an end.

JEAMES

Ees Will, I veels as much as you,
Vor what you've zed is zartin true,
About th' dearth, and dezolation,
Ravaging this unhappy nation.
How they, ther men must now repent,
When half ov this they coud prevent;
Vor they know'd months and months agoo,
What they shoud then av to goo droo.
We know th' poor voke cried vor peace,
And vor thease wicked war to cease;
But 'twur thease upstarts ov th' hour,
Who ael at once azzumed th' pow'r,
Ta keap on war wi' Proossia still,
Tho much agean the poor vokes will.
I zay thease men are much to bleame,
And hist'ry will record th' zeam,
Vor twice they had a vamous chance,
To meak a lasting peace vor Vrance.
You spoke ov vierin on thic city,
Wich ael good voke da mmostly pity;
But they know'd it vor months agoo,
Wat they zhud zoon 'av ta goo droo.
They know'd th' Germans woud keap on,
If they thease war did then perlong.
Did not Bizz Mark before th' walls,
Ov Paris on th' nation call,
To witness wat would be th' kease,
If Paris did not zue for peace.
Thousands will starve, and dread dizeaze
Myriads ov innerzent victims zeize,
And you I ask, upon whose yead
Will be th' cause of this zo dread?
'Tis impossible that we can veed,

Th' thousands that will stand in need,
Therefore, I zay, those upstarts knew,
All thease wur comin on zo true.

* * * * *

Then Will you zed that Englishmen,
To whom th' Vrench had ben zich vrens,
Ought ta have help'd em in thease war,
But goodnez me, wat ever vor?
Vor as vor thic ar Roossian war,
'Twur as much ther's as ours begar;
And even if they help'd us droo,
Zo did th' Proossians at Waterloo,
And ta help th' Vrench in thease yer vite,
I zays we ant ha' got no rite;
Vor they ha' got no claim on we,
Mwore than th' pow'rs ov Germany.
They 'gun thease war thats zartin true,
And they alone must car it droo.
If in thease war we wur ta mix,
We mite git in a purty vix;
'Tis ten to one if we shudden zee,
Both o'm a pitchen into we.

* * * * *

An incident I'll put avore ee,
Jist to explane thease leetle stowry.
Zum time agoo, in winter dark,
As I wur comin roun th' park,
Zum one did shriek zo madly out,
I went ta zee wat 'twur about;
A man an woman in th' pike,
Wur vightin I could zee at zight,
An ov ael th' zenes that ere I zeed,
Thease one did meak my hart mmost bleed,
Th' man did hit hur zich hard blows,
Th' blood wur sprinkled on hur clothes;
Wi' rage I nearly did git mad,
To zee he use hur ther zo bad;
I doff'd my cwoat an' up I went,
Thic horrid vight vor to prevent,
But zoon as I ad jined th' fray,
Th' case wur altered t'other way;
Vor th' 'oman whose peart I ad took,
Gid me zich an indignant look;
And 'vore I'd time to look around,
Toward hur, I wur on th' ground.
And then thease two did beat I zo,
E'en now I often vind the blows,
Thay pummied zo, my poor dear 'ead,

And left me on the ground vor dead,
And thus wat came of my poor vreake,
In trying to pertect th' weak;
Niver na mwore will I appear,
In others quar'lls to interfere.

* * * * *

Thus woud it be wi' Englishmen,
Upon my word you may depend;
Therefore Jan Bull I'll not dispize,
Vor I da think he've acted wise
In lettin thease ere voke alone,
Although 'tis bad to hear 'em groan.
Both ov ther wounds he've tried ta heal,
Vor he've a spent a goodish deal,
In sending money an zich loike,
Ta neither he've a show'd a spite;
Not faver'd one mwore than tha t'other,
Ta both he've acted loike a brother.
Therefore ov him they can't complain,
Vor he've bin neutral in the main;
Tho' much it vexes him ta zee,
Th' ruin ov that vine country.
In time this yet may prove a blessin,
Vor Vrance will surely learn a lessin.

FINIS