

PHILIP CAINE LATE OF BALLAUGH
WRITES FROM AMERICA
(1871) *



AMERICAN LETTER.
TO THE EDITOR OF MONA'S HERALD.
Geneva, Ontario Co., State of New York, U.S.,

April 5th, 1871.

RESPECTED FRIEND,—Having been a constant reader of the *Herald* during the last 17 years, I greet its weekly visits with the delight and satisfaction of meeting a familiar friend. Think it not strange then, Mr Editor, while thus kept informed of what transpires in my native land, that I feel still deeply interested in its prosperity. “Land of my birth, with all thy faults, I love thee still.” Yea, in the language of the Royal Psalmist, I would say—“Let my right hand forget her cunning if I do not remember thee; let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I ever forget thee,” Mannin Veg-me-Chree. On the 16th day of May, 1827 (nearly 44 years ago) in company with a large number of personal friends, we left the village of Ballaugh to seek a home in this Western Hemisphere. We separated in Liverpool never all to meet again. Your correspondent remained in England. One year, then, meeting more of my cherished friends from Ballaugh, bound for America, I emigrated with them. A few of that number yet remain, settled in different parts of this country; but, Sir, the great majority have passed away to another state of being. Here let me pause and drop the tear of affection, because I loved them. In those days my friends generally settled in the state of Ohio; the land was in its native state. Trees had to be felled, with much hard labour, before they could raise a crop. They had to endure much sickness, and many died at an early day. Well, those that lived were enabled to see the fruit of their labour in fine cultivated farms and pleasant homes. At the present time the Isle of Man has its representatives in every city and village throughout the United States. Whilst perusing the late numbers of the *Herald*, I have been rejoiced to see that the long-contemplated railroad is again mooted. I sincerely hope that the enterprise will be a success. I was also glad to hear that you were going to have another addition to your noble fleet of steamboats. While thus rejoicing at your prosperity, I have also mourned to hear of what has lately taken place at Laxey. I have asked myself the question—Is it possible that men are so depraved as to take each other’s life? If this mournful event had transpired in America, we would not wonder at it; but to hear of such a tragic scene having happened in that highly-favoured spot, to me it is almost

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incredible. I cannot reconcile it, when I know that Laxey is blest with the ministrations of faithful preachers. The example of the Rev. Thos. Cain, as a faithful pastor and a temperance man, is a tower of strength in any place, and ought to be terror to evil doers. Hence my astonishment that an act so awful should be perpetrated in that beautiful glen.

Your countryman,

PHILIP CRAINE.

Philip Craine, "American Letter. To the Editor of *Mona's Herald*." *Mona's Herald* 29 April 1871: 3e.

Emigration was a constant feature of Manx life in the nineteenth century and there could scarce have been a family in the countryside one feels who did not have at least one American relative. The Manx newspapers were a link between the Old and the New Worlds, between Ballaugh and "Geneva, Ontario Co., State of New York, U.S." The newspapers in their turn reported on the deaths of Manx emigrants and at times carried letters from the New World such as the one reproduced above. At one time, the *Mona's Herald* on the banner on its front page even stated the subscription cost for the paper in both sterling and dollars.

The 16 May 1827 when Craine left Ballaugh was a Wednesday and the *Manx Sun* in its next issue on Tuesday 22 May reported on the reason for emigration: the arrival of the valuator of the Duke of Atholl and the overall fear of a tithe on potatoes. There has also been a failure in the Island's fisheries. Under the heading "Expatriation of the Manx Farmers, Peasantry, and Artisans," the paper went on to report:

On Thursday last, at Peel, 52 persons embarked for Belfast, for the purpose of being conveyed to America; and on Friday, 120 more embarked from the same port in two small vessels for Liverpool, on the same destination. To these, above a thousand may be added from the ports of Douglas and Ramsey. ["Expatriation of the Manx Farmers, Peasantry, and Artisans," *Manx Sun*, 22 May 1827]

These are startling and dramatic figures. This is not people drifting away in ones and twos but whole families departing at once and leaving in party with others. Craine as seen remained in England but then left the next year with a group of emigrants again from Ballaugh and bound for America. "We separated in Liverpool never all to meet again." A plaintive note and a heart-rendering reminder that emigration not only impacted on those left behind but also amongst those who left.

STEPHEN MILLER, 2017

