

David Craíne

Mannanan's Isle:  
Selected Essays (1)

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MANX NOTES

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David Craine

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Selected Essays (I)*

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Stephen Miller

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## CONTENTS

Introduction	i
1 The Killing of William Mac a Faille, 1639	1
2 Sorcery and Witchcraft	5
Imitative Magic	7
Jane Ceasar	8
The Tarra	9
Witches Quarter Day	11
The Evil Eye	12
The Sieve and Shears	13
The Curses	14
Skeab Lome	15
Antidotes	16
Fire	17
The Oural Losht	18
Charms	19
The Fairies	20
3 Church and Clergy, 1600–1800	21
Rectories	21
Parish Clerk	22
Woods of Balleira	24
The Church	26
Seats	27
Pews	28
The Civil War	29
Sins of Omission	30
The Manx Language	31
The Fish Tithe	32
The Clergy	33
Sir John Crellin	34

## CONTENTS

Church Yard	34
Agriculture	35
Sir John Huddleston's House	36
Books	36
Clocks	37
Clergyman's Wife	38
Sir Thomas Parr	38
Stipends	40
Edward Moore	41
The Mellia	42
Conclusion	43

## INTRODUCTION

To date, the outlet for Manx historical studies has been either the *Journal of the Manx Museum*, now sadly discontinued, or the *Proceedings of the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society*. Within the pages of these journals is a wealth of material which deserves to be better known. This task is admittedly not helped by the lack of any systematic indexes to their contents. In the case of the Bodleian Library at Oxford University, one also needs a paper-knife, in order to cut the pages of the earlier volumes, as the present writer appears to be the first reader to show any interest in them.

David Craine's *Manannan's Isle: A Collection of Manx Historical Essays*, containing contributions which had previously appeared in the *Journal* and *Proceedings*, was the first collection of historical essays on Manx topics to appear in print in book form. Published in 1955 the first edition sold sufficiently well so as to be followed by a second impression the following year. Since then, it has remained stubbornly out of print.

Craine's historical interest was mainly with Manx society in the early modern period. The titles of his essays show something of his range: "Sorcery and Witchcraft," "Early Manx Settlers in America," "Church and Clergy, 1600–1800," "A Manx Merchant of the Eighteenth Century," "The Great Enquest." All his publications were based on a close-reading of the surviving material held at the Manx Museum Library.

Craine's handling of source material is problematical. He provides no reference at all to where the originals may be found. Craine in his written work manages to avoid, one feels evade is perhaps the better word, giving any clue, given the absence of footnotes or endnotes one has to rely on the text itself, where one may locate his source material.

In his essay, reprinted here, "Church and Clergy, 1600–1800," he mentions a farming account book kept by Edward Moore of his working of the Kirk Andreas glebe between 1727 and 1733. This is the earliest farming account book in existence for the Island. Locating it proved impossible under any of the subject headings in the Manx Museum Library card index to its manuscript holdings. Only when an item, said on the index card to be a tithe list for Kirk Andreas for the year 1731, was called up when surveying the surviving material for that parish, was Edward Moore's account book actually found. The index card had been written using what appeared on the hand-written label on the cover of the account book which proved not to be an accurate description of the item in hand.

## INTRODUCTION

Craine's work is marked like nearly all Insular publication by a good grasp of available archival material but lacking any balance by failing to contextualise Manx material, especially in a wider Irish Sea context. To an extent, this is of course understandable—Mann has no institution of higher education to act as a focus, for academic research in the humanities and soft sciences; nor are there in post elsewhere, any historians or social scientists active in Manx research. Historical effort is largely Insular, and those living on Mann face the lack of access to the necessary library resources for sustained research and, as a consequence, publication is truly insular.

Craine's work on witchcraft has been entirely overlooked by those working in the field. It was through reading Craine's essay in *Manannan's Isle*, which is reproduced here, that the present writer was drawn to examine the material for its potential folkloric content. Starting with the episcopacy of Bishop Wilson (1698–1755), and working on through to 1799, an extensive corpus of material has been recovered which would never have been suspected to have existed, save for Craine pointing the way.

Three essays from *Manannan's Isle* are reprinted in this present publication. "The Killing of William Mac a Faille," originally appeared as Chapter IX, pp. 100–103. It had previously appeared in the *Journal of the Manx Museum*, v (1945–46), Nos 72–73, pp. 183–85. "Sorcery and Witchcraft," appeared as Chapter I, pp. 13–30. This essay is a re-written and expanded version of "Sorcery and Witchcraft in Man in the 17th and 18th Centuries," in 2 parts, *Journal of the Manx Museum*, iv (1939), Nos 59 & 60, pp. 122–24 and 139–40. Finally, "Church And Clergy, 1600–1800," was Chapter X, 104–28. The typography has been brought into line with house-style. The marginal numbers refer to the pagination of the original edition. *Chiollagh Books* intends to make further essays from *Manannan's Isle* available at a future date.

Stephen Miller  
31 JULY 1994

THE KILLING OF WILLIAM MAC A FAILLE,  
LEZAYRE, 1639

100 The broken body of William Mac a Faille, nicknamed 'Boddough,' was found on the last morning of the year 1639, at the out end of the Eary Beg in Glen Auldyn, not far from his own house and on his own land.

The circumstances of his death and the telling of it provide some interesting glimpses of the life and beliefs of people in Lezayre three hundred years ago.

According to custom, the Coroner of Ayre, William Kissage, obtained the Deemster's token for the impanelling of a jury of six who immediately assembled with Coroner and parish Lockman at the spot where the undisturbed body lay. Their conclusions were delivered to a Court held at Milntown on January 3rd, 1640, before Ewan Christian, Edward Christian and Robert Quaile.

At that time the fortunes of the house of Milntown were approaching their zenith. The most powerful Manx family since the beginning of the fifteenth century, the Christians retained the favour of the Earl owing to their great influence in the country, rather than from any love he bore them. Ewan had been Deemster since 1605 and, in spite of the activities of his son 'Illiam Dhone,' held office till his death fifty-one years later. At the time of the trial he was Deputy [i.e. Deputy Governor], a post from which the able but restless Edward Christian of Maughold had been relieved not long before. The third member of the Court, Deemster Robert Quaile, died in 1644.

The Coroner's jury, through their spokesman, Ewan Kneale, deposed that portions of the dead man's clothes, including his band (neck cloth), were wet, though he lay on dry ground, after a dry, frosty night. Near by 'a little bogge of water' shewed plainly the impress of a man's body and the ground was bruised as by the body of a man cast down upon it. Grass of the bog was upon Mac a Faille's stockings, and the wool of his clothes 'raysed' as if by a wool card, by dragging along the ground.

101 The jury, who apparently pursued their enquiry without direction from the Coroner, caused two men, John Kinread and Ewan Casement, to handle the body in turn. Nothing happened nor was considered likely to happen, for they were not implicated.

Then they called upon Gilnow Casement, who was 'much suspected for the murder,' to handle the dead man. As soon as he turned him as the others had done, Mac a Faille bled pure blood from the nose, a phenomenon attested to by various members of the jury.

When Edmond Casement was asked to do as his brother had he turned pale, as if ready to die, and, on his touching the body, the bleeding was repeated. There was a general belief that such a reaction pointed to the murderer, and the jury required no further confirmation of their suspicions. But if the judges were less willing to accept this manifestation as a proof of guilt, the statements of the other witnesses must have turned their doubts to conviction.

These depositions are noteworthy not only for their dramatic quality, but also for their literary form which suggests that some part of the evidence, at any rate, was given in the Manx idiom and set down in English. This is what might be expected, since much of the business of the Common Law Courts was conducted in the native language until the third decade of the nineteenth century. Lezayre, too, was one of the parishes, which protested strongly at various times in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries against the use of English instead of Manx in the Church service.

The stories told to the Court at Milntown show that there was an extraordinary lack of concealment on the part of the criminals and their relatives before and after the commission of the crime—as if the tragedy was fated and inescapable, though the murder was coldblooded enough.

‘An ill hour upon Gilnow, an ill hour was ordained for him!’ cried his mother.

For some time before the event William Mac a Faille knew he was in danger and walked under a cloud of fear. He had had a quarrel with Standish of the Ellanbane regarding a church seat, which had disquieted him, ‘but there are others,’ he told John Corlett, ‘who go about to destroy and kill me.’

Corlett asked him who they were. William seeing two kinsmen of Gilnow approaching said, ‘I will tell thee another time. They come upon us: I cannot tell thee now.’

At the root of the trouble was Gilnow’s desire for Mac a Faille’s wife and land, a craving that was not to be thwarted. Katherine had been living apart from her husband for five years and had returned only three weeks before to the Eary Beg. One night when  
102 there was a gathering at Cannon’s miln, Gilnow’s mother prayed that he should forgo the company of Katherine Mac a Faille, but he answered that he would not leave her and that it would do her no good to dissuade him from her.

To Edmond Corleod he said at that time, ‘It may be that the ground the Nary Beg which William Mac a Faille now possesseth, may come to me, and it is not known but I may have it.’

On December 19th a young woman named Margrett Foster was going to Kirk Bride and Gilnow came into her company. He spoke of his relationship with Mac a Faille’s wife and Margrett said to him, ‘If thou have given a false oath it were better that thou

had given all the world if it were thine, and better for thee to suffer in punishment than to forswear thyself.’

He answered evasively, and began to talk of ratsbane and a herb called *nahau*,<sup>1</sup> a name Margrett did not know but supposed to be micklewort. Shocked by the sinister implications of this talk she exclaimed, ‘Thief! If her husband were dead thou would marry his wife!’ Whereat, she says, ‘he smiled and said nothing.’

Kathrin Casement, a cousin of Gilnow, was at the Eary Beg on December 20th. William Mac a Faille was ploughing and his brother Edmond drying malt, when Gilnow appeared. He sent to the miln for ale and went into the chamber<sup>2</sup> to drink with his cousin and William’s wife.

His last visit was on December 30th and some days later Kathrin Casement told John Kinread ‘By God I may swear that Gilnow Casement and whosoever was with him murdered Mac a Faille, for he was at this house three times that day,’ and that she had wondered and asked him what brought him so often to the house:

‘I get anger for thy coming,’ she complained.

Then Gilnow Casement said, ‘Who is angry with thee? Is it Boddough? I will take order with him,’ and presently coming out of the chamber he invited Mac a Faille to come that night to his mother’s house to take part of some meat they had. Essabel, William’s sister, was afraid for him and wished him not to go, but he said, ‘I think they will do me no hurt and therefore I will go.’ At nightfall he went out of the house.

That night his wife Katherine ‘after his going out became very pensive and often times sighed and leaned her head upon her hand which she used not to do, and afterwards she sent for Kathrin Casement when she was in bed to know of her mother if her husband was gone.’

But William did not return.

103 In the night Gilnow and his brother Edmond came to the house of young John Crowe, the parish Lockman. Gilnow remarked on the scanty fire, and the Lockman thought some evil occasion brought them, for they were not in the habit of coming.

On the following morning old John Crowe, going up into the hills, met Gilnow’s aunt, Christian Casement, who asked him what the people were doing below. Thinking she feigned ignorance he answered ironically, ‘They are taking a beast which is fallen.’ Then again he said, ‘Knowest thou what they are doing? Boddough is killed

<sup>1</sup> *Yn aghaue vooar*, the great hemlock.

<sup>2</sup> The parlour known as *shamyrr*, or *cuillee*.

and lieth dead in yonder place. God send that some near unto thee be not challenged.'

She answered, 'Doth thou say that Gilnow did it?'

He replied, 'I say it not, if thou say it not.'

'I did not,' said she, 'see Gilnow since yesterday.'

Amy Mac a Faille said that she was in the house of Emill Mac a Faille on January 3rd, the day of the Court at Milntown, when Edmond Casement came in. His sister, the wife of the house, said, 'An ill hour on you if you killed Mac a Faille! Why left you him not in the water, that people might think himself had done it?'

Edmond answered, 'If they have no better proofs than yet is had, they can do us no harm, for, sure, some must swear that we did it or else it cannot be proved.'

At this time Margaret Casement, mother to the supposed murderers, was saying to John Kinread, 'My two sons are gone down to Milntown.'

He said, 'The Deputy will cause John Lace who is now there to shew the picture of the murderer,' whereupon the grieving mother cried, 'God forbid! An ill hour upon Gilnow, an ill hour was ordained for him!'<sup>3</sup>

Thus by his own indiscretions and the unguarded talk of his people was the rope twisted for his hanging.

<sup>3</sup> Apparently Lace, who was a doctor, was credited with magical powers.

## SORCERY AND WITCHCRAFT

- 13 The Isle of Man enjoyed a reputation for sorcery and witchcraft from very early times. The Celtic poets made it the home of the nebulous Manannan and the scene of his magical activities; and pre-Christian navigators, creeping cautiously along the neighbouring coasts of Ireland and Scotland, saw dimly across the sea the necromancer's mantle capping the Island hills.

However uncertain Manannan may be considered, either as a Manx ruler or a Manx magician, there is at any rate some suggestion of the presence of wizards in Man at an early date; for a stone found on Ballaqueeny near Port St. Mary has an Ogham inscription in Irish of the fifth century: *Dovaidona maqui druata*—which has been translated, '[The stone] of Dovaidu son of the druid.'

And long centuries after the Island paganism had yielded to Irish missionaries, one hears an echo of the Druid powers in the claim of a Kirk Michael witch in 1690, when she boasted of a herb she had gathered in the fields of Bishops court, that if a man drank the drink of it he would forget himself, but if he drank of it twice he would forget himself for ever.

No details of sorcery are to be found in the Island records until the sixteenth century, though doubtless it was practised there through the Middle Ages, as in every other part of Europe. Martolene, a Governor of Man in 1338, is said to have written a book condemning the witchcraft prevalent there in his time; and, according to a fifteenth century chronicler, Manx witches were widely known for selling winds to sailors, in the shape of magical cords knotted in three or more places. A mariner requiring a moderate wind unloosened one knot; for a very strong wind, two. The three were undone to provide a tempest for the overwhelming of an enemy.

It was not until 1468, when Pope Innocent published his famous Bull against it, that drastic measures were taken to suppress the Black Art in Christian lands. The Isle of Man was inevitably affected by the witch hunt which then swept over Western Europe; but Man, like her neighbour, Ireland, appears to have escaped the excesses which followed elsewhere upon the prosecution of suspected witches.

- 14 It is probable that Manx witches had suffered death at an earlier period. The mountain, Slieau Whallian, has long been connected in popular tradition with stories of witches, though there is no record of an execution there. But its nearness to the Tynwald Hill and the nature of the witches' punishment said to have been inflicted there point to Viking times, when offenders were sometimes enclosed in spiked barrels, and so rolled to death down the precipitous slopes of a hill.

A parallel to the Tynwald and Slieau Whallian is to be found dose to Duntulm Castle in Skye, an ancient seat of the successors, in the Hebrides, of the kings of Man and the Isles. There, two hillocks are pointed out—one known as the Hill of Justice, and the other, the Hill of Rolling, on which criminals were executed.

The Curragh Glass, 'the grey curragh,' a bog also not far from Tynwald, was associated by tradition with witch trial by ordeal of water. If the suspect floated in it she was a witch; if she sank she was innocent. But no documentary evidence of a witch-killing there survives in proof.

Only three cases stand on record in Man in which the unhappy wretches arraigned for witchcraft were condemned to death. The first of these, Alice Ine Quay, was reprieved in 1569, after examination by a jury of matrons composed of 'six honest women.'

The others were a woman, Margrett Inequane, and her son. The precise nature of the charges brought against them is not recorded. After being found guilty in the ecclesiastical court by a jury of six drawn from the parishes affected by their alleged practices they were, according to law, handed over to the temporal power by the Bishop's chief executive officer, the General Sumner. In 1617 mother and son appeared in the Head Court before the Deemsters and a Jury of Twelve out of several headings, with the advice of Chapter Quest men. When they had deliberated on their verdict the foreman of the Jury for Life and Death was asked by the Deemster, according to the ancient custom,

*Vod y fer-carree soie?*—'May the Chancel-man sit?'

*Cha vod*—'He may not,' was the reply, for the Jury, like their fellows in the Ecclesiastical Court, had found the accused guilty, and the Bishop or Chancel-man, who occupied a place among the judges, left the Court to avoid being involved in the shedding of blood. Thereupon the dread sentence was pronounced: 'That she be brought by the Coroner of Glen Faba to the place of execution, there to be burned till life depart from her body.' A like fate befell Margrett's son, who, with his mother, died at the stake erected near the Market Cross at Castletown.

- 15 There is no doubt that the Manx judges and jurymen at that time were greatly influenced by contemporary events in Great Britain. The Scottish King James the Sixth, in his treatise on Demonology, published in 1597, had shown an extraordinary credulity regarding the reality of demons and witchcraft; and his convictions provided an excuse for the exercise of a sadistic vein in his character which enabled him to listen with complacency to the cries of suspected sorcerers put to the torture.

The year after his accession to the English throne in 1603 was marked by the passing, at his instigation, of an English statute against witchcraft which for more than a

hundred years sent numerous victims, innocent and guilty, to the pillory, the scaffold and the stake. The Lordship of Man at that time was in dispute among members of the Stanley family, and was temporarily in the hands of the King whose influence was therefore directly felt in the Island.

But the burnings of 1617 mark the last time in Man when the extreme penalty was exacted for sorcery, and thenceforth the Manx records are not darkened by the horrors which attended the witch hunt in Great Britain and other countries during the seventeenth century.

For this one may thank the Manx Ecclesiastical Courts and the moderation of the average Island jurymen, rather than his liberation from superstition. He had as profound a belief in the sinister possibilities of witchcraft as any Calvinist of his time, but he hated extremes and the legalised shedding of blood.

The cautious verdict returned by Kirk Arbory farmers in 1666, in a case in which any one of half a dozen counts would have sent a Scottish witch to the fire, is typical:

‘We give for answer, that for as much as wee have not had any proofs that she is positively a witch, therefore wee doe cleere her, and say (being questioned) that she is not guilty to death, but notwithstanding, the proofs already by us taken into consideration by the spirituall officers, wee leave her to be punished at their discretion.’

She escaped with three Sunday penances, for which she stood barefoot and white-sheeted, carrying a white wand and with a paper on her breast proclaiming her offence. She went down on her knees before the congregations of Rushen, Arbory and Malew, in turn, confessed her sin and promised reformation.

The last witches to stand formal trial—Ealish Vrian of Ballaugh in 1712, and Jony of Kirk Braddan in 1717—were punished more severely. Bishop Wilson was trying to stamp out the practice of charming which had been stimulated by bad harvests and frequent deadly epidemics; and Ealish was confined in the crypt of St. German’s for thirty days, Jony for fourteen. In addition Jony did penance, Sunday after Sunday, in all the churches of the Island, and stood in sackcloth at the market crosses of the four towns.

John Curghey, the Spiritual judge, was quite aware of the drastic nature of Jony’s punishment, and was careful to excuse it by stating that ‘the offender, seeming yet to be utterly insensible of her wickedness, it is highly necessary to treat her with an uncommon Degree of Rigor in order to save her, if possible, from perishing eternally.’

#### IMITATIVE MAGIC

The earliest details of a witchcraft case were recorded in 1560, when *Juan Yernagh*—‘John the Irishman’—who had a grudge against Stephen of Ballamoar in Ballaugh,

one night set up a *muclagh* or pigsty on a pathway used by the owner of the farm. In it he hung a dead weasel. So to the insult was added the wishing on the farmer of the weasel's fate, by a magical transference through the dust on which the victim had trodden. Juan was found guilty of sorcery but appears to have escaped the extreme penalty.

Another instance of the same sort of imitative magic occurred in Ramsey in 1665, when the witch told her client to bury a goose egg, in the name of the person to be affected, in a dunghill, so that as the egg rotted away, the victim would also decay and die. It was for an alleged practice of this kind that the Duchess of Gloucester was accused in 1446. She was said to have made, with the aid of a notorious witch, a waxen image of Henry VI, so that as it melted away the King's health would decline. The story that she was imprisoned in Peel Castle has been denied.

Nowhere in the Civil or Ecclesiastical records is there evidence or indeed the vaguest tradition of witches' sabbats and other organised witchcraft in Man. In the seventeenth century a Kirk Arbory witch acted in collusion with another known as the *Ben Vane*—‘the Fair Woman’; in Kirk Braddan mother and daughter shared their dark secrets; and in Ballaugh two sisters acted together. But these chance partnerships bear no resemblance to the witch companies which are alleged to have existed in Great Britain and on the Continent.

It is clear from the Court records that those believed to be expert practitioners of the Black Art in the Island were in poor circumstances and played upon the credulity of their neighbours to increase their scanty resources.

#### JANE CEASAR

17 One notable exception was Jane Caesar of Ballahick, whose husband was a member of the House of Keys in the seventeenth century. No doubt some aspects of her forceful personality set tongues wagging for there appears to have been a general belief in her occult powers, and she was said to have used them to keep her ailing husband alive for many years. Finally, in 1659, she was charged with diabolical practices—mainly on the evidence of a vindictive maid who said her mistress had steeped herbs to steal away the fertility of her neighbours' lands, and, for a sinister purpose, had taken parings from the hooves of a bullock before its sale.

A jury found her not guilty, but nevertheless the Governor who was apparently sceptical regarding her innocence ordered her to avow her freedom of any association with the Satanic powers, before the congregation of Kirk Malew. Sullen and resentful she at first refused, and it was only after the earnest pleadings of her husband, who, aware of her peril in case of non-compliance, repeatedly in a loud whisper begged her to say, ‘I renounce the Divil,’ that she made a reluctant submission; saying ‘I defy the Divil and all his works,’ and then cried, ‘May those who brought me to this Scandal,

never see their eldest children in the estate my youngest are in!

Probably Manx people viewed occasional but enthusiastic amateurs like Jane Caesar with as great respect as the professionals, for these latter could be bought off, but a man's greatest fear was of a neighbour who, he had reason to believe, envied or hated, and whose malevolence could not be placated with gifts. And that last passionate outburst in Kirk Malew must have chilled the hearts of those who had testified against her.

#### THE TARRA

The charges against Manx witches follow the universal pattern. They include the power to take away the *tarra*, or increase, from a man's cattle or crops, and transfer it to another, to cast spells upon men and cattle, crops and churning, and to change, at will, into hares. There is no tradition that Manx witches rode through the air on broomsticks, though they were sometimes credited with similar activities. At the last Manx witch trial in 1717 a witness reported that a traveller, benighted, sought shelter at Jony the witch's cottage, in Kirk Braddan. After he had gone to bed he saw, by the light of the fire at which Jony was sitting, a *saagh* or vessel moving upon the floor. The witch went into it, and both she and the *saagh* flew out of doors. At the latter end of the night she came home by the same convenient transport with a good store of fish.

At the same trial evidence was given of the witch's vindictiveness. 'It was a common saying,' said Thomas Cubbon, 'that if anybody denied Jony anything he got no good of it.'

- 18 Ann Cretney said that Jony asked for milk but got none. At that time the herd of cattle was passing the door. One of the best cows immediately fell down and could not be made to rise. Eight men were engaged in lifting it, whilst the witch and her daughter, highly amused, watched the proceedings from a nearby hedge.

This indiscreet exhibition of a sense of humour did not favourably impress the court any more than the account given by a woman who suddenly saw Jony's figure loom up in the darkness, and, startled, called out to ask who it was. *She mish, yn ven-obbee vooar, ta ayn*—'It is I the great witch'—came the sardonic reply.

Harry Taggart, the miller of Ballaughton, too, described a visit of Jony to his mill when he was grinding. When she asked for flour he refused since it was wheat flour. She replied that the poor should be served of the best. When she had gone a little distance from the mill it stood and could not, by any endeavours, be made to go and grind, until they had changed the bewitched corn upon it. Then, he said, it fell to its grinding as formerly.

The magical transfer of productiveness was one of the commonest charges made against a *caillagh*, and Elizabeth the Kirk Arbory witch was said to have boasted that it was as easy to take away the substance of one man's corn and give it to another as it was to turn a cake of bread upon the griddle. Thomas Parr, Vicar of Kirk Malew for half a century, and Elizabeth's contemporary, had as great a belief in its possibility as any of his parishioners, and in 1650 wrote the following as a presentment from his parish:

'It is a common report that Margrett Ine Reah was seen in the shape and likeness of a haire and returned againe into a woeman.

'And att another time words were spoken by and touchinge the saide Margrett which are not tollerable, which wee desire that the Venerable Court would be pleased to take into examination, namely: the said Margrett sayd to John Bell (who was the man that saw her in the likeness of a haire),.

"Hould thou thy tongue and thou shall never want," and the same J. B. after that bought againe his lands, which he had formerly sould away to others when he was in poverty.'

This widespread belief that the *tarra* or fertility of a neighbour's crops and cattle could be stolen away by unholy charms and incantations caused constant anxiety to the Manx Church at a later period.

In the late eighteenth century form of service used in the annual perambulation of the parish boundaries great emphasis was laid upon the sin of covetousness and the witchcraft to which it led. The outstanding date of such sorcery was May day when practitioners of the Black Art were said to walk before sunrise on the dew in their neighbours' fields, and, gathering some of it, magically transferred the increase to their own crops. In an old ballad the *phynmoddere*, the kindly Manx brownie or troll, is said to go to the meadows *Dy broggal druight y vadran glass*—'to lift the dew in the grey morning'—to benefit his farmer friends.

Dust, too, was looked upon as an important agent in the magical transference of prosperity. In 1677 Henry Corrin's wife was accused of taking dust from the boundary hedges of neighbours at sowing time. She laid half of it up in her porch and had the other part sown with the first oats which would, as she thought, then have the added vigour and growth magically acquired from other people's fields.

The famous Irish witch, Dame Alice Kyteler, acting from the same motive, swept the dust of the Kilkenny streets towards her son's door, so that he might have the wealth of the town. And on the morning of New Year's day the Manx housewife swept the floor of the *thie-mooar* from the door towards the hearth, in order to keep prosperity within the house for the year.

## WITCHES QUARTER DAY

The beginning of each quarter of the Celtic year—February, May, August, and November—was an important date in the calendar of Manx witchcraft. It marked a renewal in the strength and activity of the sorcerer's operations: a renaissance of power which is hinted at in a belief once current in Scotland that on the first Monday of the quarter the smoke from a witch's chimney went against the wind.

There was therefore a corresponding need at such times for a renewal of protective charms on behalf of those who imagined themselves threatened; and in 1694 Thomas Gell of Rushen was punished by the Church Courts for safeguarding his property by making use of sorceries four times a year.

Some years earlier Elizabeth, the Kirk Arbory witch, was accused of frequenting her customers at the beginning of every quarter. One of them complained that the witch was accustomed to visit his farm at these times in quest of payment for protection, and that once when he had sent her away without the expected gift, he had suffered heavy losses in crops and cattle ever after.

Elizabeth appears to have visited her customers on these quarterdays as regularly as an insurance collector on his rounds, and with profit to herself. Her impoverished neighbours saw her returning from her periodic excursions into the countryside laden with her illgotten gains of meat, meal and fish; and, in the end, their fear of the witch was swallowed up by resentment and envy; and in 1666 they informed upon her.

The parish sumner arrested her on charges of having obtained contributions of food for sorcery and wicked practices, and by deluding poor ignorant people; and also because of many resorting to her house to get sorcery off her; and bad signs having been seen by credible persons.

One touch of humanity brightens the indictment and is, one would like to think, an example of the traditional Manx kindness and tolerance. 'Whereupon,' it says, 'she is committed into St. German's prison, and being remote from her friends, we therefore, Henry Maddrell of Ballamaddrell, and William Cubbon of Ballacubbon (to the end that she may have her enlargement out of prison) do become bound for the said Elizabeth.'

The evidence at her trial went to show that Elizabeth vented her spleen on those who annoyed her, by damaging or destroying their goods, and that she often appeared in the form of a hare.

Catherine Norris of Knock Rushen swore that for twelve years she could not rear a calf, but all died, nor make butter or cheese right; during all which time Elizabeth frequented the house of Knock Rushen using, Catherine believed, witchcraft and sorcery there, so that they were very low in estate every way. And the manservant

who looked after the kiln for drying corn, could never go there, without meeting a hare about the kiln or lying near it in the gorse.

The hare was mentioned by several other witnesses. One said that he saw it by the Ballanorris sheepfolds, and then it disappeared into the pin-fold. To his surprise, when he looked over the hedge, there was the witch walking inside the pound. 'And,' he said, 'being amazed at the sight, he went his way and left her there in that bodily shape that he ever did see her in.' Mrs. Norris, wife of Deemster Norris, who owned the sheep, testified that after the witch's visit to the folds the sheep became ill, and for a long time ceased to give milk.

Captain Stanley of Ballacagen told how with Tyldesley of the Friary, Calcott of Ballalough and others, he was riding to Peel through the Garee Moar, where Elizabeth was pulling ling, and Tyldesley spying her there said, 'Look, a hare!' Calcott replied, 'What! Do you call Elizabeth a hare?'

They rode on without further speech, the mare on which Calcott was mounted going very well. But on the return journey, when they reached the very place where he had named the witch, his mare fell sick and came to a stand. So he had to leave her there, and ride pillion on Stanley's horse. Shortly afterwards the mare died in the view of the witness, clearly a victim of the vengeful witch.

#### THE EVIL EYE

- 21 The dislike which Manx people felt for a prying person who showed too lively an interest in his neighbour's affairs was partly due to the activities of the parish Church Wardens and the Chapter Quest who were sworn in annually to report breaches of the ecclesiastical law. But it probably sprang, too, from the deeply rooted belief in the Evil Eye. To look at your neighbour's crops too closely and in particular to count his flocks or herds was viewed with great suspicion.

In 1733, in a charge brought against a well-known Ballaugh character, Dan Cowle, the parish lockman, he was reported to have insinuated that the Rector had the Evil Eye, and that when he passed Cowle's team of oxen, one of them lay down, as Dan declared, 'before the Minister's face, a thing it had never done before or since.' Dan said he took dust from the Rector's footsteps and threw it over the ox, which immediately rose to its feet.

An interesting part of the statement is Dan's complaint that in passing him at the plough the Rector had not given him his blessing. Regarding this an eyewitness was made to say that 'it was not becoming to pass by a team, without bidding God Speed.' Gregor in his *Folk-Lore of North-east Scotland* says that ploughmen in that region showed a similar displeasure when the blessing was omitted. The usual Manx benediction was *Dy bishee Jee Ayr shiu*—'God the Father prosper you!' For his double

crime of slandering the Rector and charming the ox, the lockman did penance in the churches of Ballaugh, Kirk Michael and Jurby.

In 1672 a Kirk Braddan farmer out after his lambs observed Thomas Thwaites, Vicar of Kirk Onchan, leaning on the field gate and watching with interest the rounding up of the flock. Later some of them died, and the owner, convinced that his loss arose from the Vicar's baleful eye, carried the carcasses to the Vicarage and piled them up in the porch.

It is not likely that the punishment visited upon the farmer—committal to the Bishop's prison and one hour sitting on the stool of correction on Douglas market day at the height of the market—altered his belief in the malevolence of the Vicar.

#### THE SIEVE AND SHEARS

22 One of the most ancient and enduring practices of sorcery was that of coscinomancy, or divination by the use of a sieve, for the discovery of thieves. Reference to it is found in Greek literature of the third century B.C., and it was used in Ireland and Scotland in the seventeenth century. Four Manx cases which attracted the censure of the Church belong to the eighteenth century, when the practice had largely fallen into disuse elsewhere, having been superseded by the 'Key and Book.'

In ceremonial use the sieve was suspended from a thread, or balanced on the point of a pair of shears which was held upright by two fingers. The participants then prayed to the gods for assistance and repeated the names of persons suspected of the theft. The sieve swung round at mention of the culprit. Samuel Butler, the seventeenth century satirist, writes of 'The oracle of sieve and shears, That turn as certain as the spheres.'

Both instruments were believed to possess magical qualities. In the ancient world the sieve was the symbol of the rain-giving powers of the gods. Iron was credited with a potency against agents of evil, a belief which may date from the time when Bronze Age warriors had to yield to foes armed with weapons of iron.

The Manx case given in most detail happened in the parish of Kirk Braddan in 1733. The affair came to light owing to the protests of two men of the parish whose names had been submitted to the trial of the sieve, but who claimed to have been always of honest character. 'Yet,' they wrote in their petition to the Vicars-General, 'James Kelley and his wife have very wickedly, by the diabolical practice of the Sieve and Shears, aspersed and slandered the petitioners as accomplices in a Theft and Robbery committed in the Parish some years ago.' The cautious charge made by the Vicar and parish officers was, 'Jane Kelley, wife to James, for turning a sive after the manner, as we think, to be charms or witchcraft.'

The witnesses testified that at a gathering in John Quilliam's house James Kelley proposed the turning of the sieve in order to discover a theft. He declared that the sieve was true, and that his mother had practised such divination. Jane and the housewife held the sieve—the former playing the principal part and naming suspects. She was not satisfied with the inertness of the sieve when the petitioners' names were spoken, and persisted in repeating them. It was this, very naturally, which aroused their indignation.

John Quilliam's wife pleaded entire ignorance of such wicked practices and said that she only held the sieve when James pressed and urged it. The two Kelleys were found guilty and sent to St. German's prison, later performing penance at the Parish Church.

#### THE CURSES

23 Among the most impressive weapons at the command of witches and occasional enthusiastic amateurs were the ritual curses. It was said of Ciaran of Clonmacnoise, one of the great Irish saints whose keills and devotees were to be found in Man, that he was powerful in blessing and violent in cursing—two qualities greatly, if not equally, admired by the early Celtic church. And perhaps it was from it and the pagan cults preceding it that the Manx inherited a flair for picturesque cursing and vituperation which was stimulated by the practices of medieval society and survived the Reformation.

One must not, however, put all the blame for violent speech upon our Celtic ancestors. In 1758 John Cashen of Ramsey, imprisoned for the offence of uttering, as he admitted, 'rash and imprecations expressions,' pleaded that his language had been corrupted by his association with the British Navy into which he had been forced by the press-gang some years before.

Women apparently had a greater fund of striking phrases than men. 'The curse of God be his bed and bolster!' cried a Kirk German woman in 1782. It was assumed that the curse used on behalf of the poor and dependent was of peculiar efficacy. Two oft-used expressions were 'The curse of the widow,' and 'The curse of the fatherless children.' There is also the case of forlorn Richard Quirk who in 1669 uttered *Y mollaht dooinney-treoghe*—'the curse of a widow-man.'

Among the imprecations of the greatest power were the euphemistic 'Curse of the King of Easter, of the King of Light, and of the King of the Sabbath'; and *Drogh ooir, drogh yerrey as beggan grayse*—'An ill hour, an ill end and little grace (of God).'

Of those coming down from pre-Christian times there were the *Shiaght mynney mollaht*—'the seven swearings of a curse;' and most potent and most terrifying of all, the *Skeab Lome*—'the bare broom,' or the besom of destruction.

The *Shiaght mynney mollaht* was, in early times, associated with a ritual in which the actor turned a round Swearing Stone seven times anti-clockwise in the cup-shaped hollow of a larger stone. This ceremonial was said to have sometimes taken place furtively at night on the summit of the Tynwald Hill, and at other times on its north side. The simple utterance of a curse was almost as greatly disliked by the Manx as one with ritual accompaniment. In 1677 a man working in John Moore's haggard at Pulrose said, 'I hear bad talk of my god-daughter. If it be true, my seven curses on her!' Moore immediately reported him to the Church authorities and he afterwards did penance at Kirk Braddan.

## SKEAB LOME

24 The curse and ritual of the *Skeab Lome* does not appear to have an exact parallel in folklore elsewhere, though, of course, the association of the broom plant with witchcraft has been wide-spread. In some parts of Great Britain there is the old saying, 'If you sweep the house with the blossomed broom in May, you sweep the head of the house away.'

The Manx word *lome* (naked or bare) as it is used in the name *Skeab Lome* has the added significance of complete destruction. It has a similar implication in the now forgotten exclamation, *Losta lome!* literally, 'The naked fire!' or as Kelly's dictionary translates it, 'Hell fire!'—the fire of perdition: a cry used by the Manx in extreme and desperate urgency.

*Skeab Lome* was, therefore, a curse of annihilation, aimed first of all at the *chiollagh* or hearth, the gathering place and centre of the family, with its ever-burning turf fire, mystic symbol of life in primitive times set in the middle of the one-roomed *thie mooar* or 'great house,' and later at what was called 'the upper end of the house.'

In the full ritual of the *Skeab Lome* the person uttering the imprecation carried a besom with which she made the gestures of sweeping. Her hair was uncovered and fell loose upon her shoulders; her face was turned to the door of the enemy's house. And as she swept she cursed.

There were many variations and abridgments of the maledictory formula. The following, used in Rushen in 1744, is typical:

*Dy jig Skeab Lome ort bene, er dty hiollagh, er dty blaynt, er dty chooid as er dty chloan!*—'May the Besom of Destruction come upon thee thyself, upon thy hearth, upon thy health, upon thy possessions and upon thy children!'

A Kirk Patrick curse of 1735 was *Skeab Lome, chiollagh gyn chloan, as follym faase gyn cass gyn rass, er y dooinney slesh y Cleigh!* —'The besom of destruction upon the man belonging to the Cleigh, a fireside without offspring, and an empty desolation with neither root nor seed!'

In accordance with Celtic custom a person often knelt to pronounce a curse, for, like the removal of the coif and kerchief and the loosening of the hair, the act of kneeling was believed to magnify greatly the potency of the malediction. 'Rise off your knees! Curse nobody on your knees!' cried a horrified Kirk Maughold man, on seeing an aggrieved neighbour suddenly drop to the ground to curse a false accuser.

25 In 1713, at a time when professional lawyers had not yet appeared in the Manx courts, Henry Quay, arguing his case with an opponent before Deemster McYlrea, suddenly dropped upon his knees and bitterly cursed his opponent, 'using,' it was said, 'such imprecations as are not fit to be repeated.' The scandalised judge passed him over to the Church to discipline him with the cold comfort of the Bishop's dungeon at Peel.

As time went on *Skeab Lome* lost much of its early significance. It was no longer reserved for great occasions of emotional hate, but was evoked casually by the trivial irritations of everyday life. *Skeab Lome!* was pronounced on the shingle the fisherman shook out of his net, on frogs and apple-stealers, on trespassing sheep and unproductive hens to quote instances taken at random from the records. And when the Church Courts relaxed their discipline in face of the growing hostility of the community, the Curses which had been raised to an undeserved importance by Ecclesiastical censures, lost their terrifying qualities and largely fell out of use.

A woman of Rushen, however, is said to have used the broom ritual in the last half of the nineteenth century.

#### ANTIDOTES

There was a general belief that the most effective way of neutralising a witch's spells was to draw her blood above the breath generally by scratching the forehead with a pin.

'She is a *caillagh ny pishag* (a witch of charms) and by pishags doth she live!' exclaimed Christian of Cranstal, Captain of Kirk Bride in 1695, speaking of a neighbour's wife; and called for a knife that he might draw her blood. It was in this way that the mistresses of Scarlett, Knock Rushen and the Friary sought for relief from the spells they believed Elizabeth the Kirk Arbory witch had cast upon their cattle, crops and churning. The housewives, who had not been able to make satisfactory butter and cheese for some time, fell in turn upon the witch at a convenient opportunity and scratched her face. Afterwards, as they complacently told the judges, they made butter and cheese well enough, and all things prospered with them.

At the trial of the Ballaugh witch, Ealish Vrian, John Corlett of Broughjiarg Beg told that Ealish and her sister came to his wedding feast, and that they were seen to take up dust near the threshold of the outer door, and put it under the chair where his bride sat. Thenceforth for years no heir was born to the house of Broughjiarg. Finally

in desperation, Katreena his wife sought out the witches and scratched both above the breath, and her desire was soon gratified.

The legality of such barbarous assaults was recognised by the Manx Courts, as elsewhere. In 1617 the defendant in a blood-wipe was cleared with the consent of the Deemster because he did it in defence of his life and to avoid harm that might befall him by the witchcraft of the complainant.

- 26 Three other antidotes often used were dust, iron and fire. Dust was taken from the footsteps of the suspected sorcerer, or from crossroads and the church stile, where, sooner or later, all the people of the parish passed. When sprinkled over the bewitched victim it neutralised the evil influence. As this procedure can be carried out in secret it has survived to the present day.

An example of the common belief in the magical potency of iron is found in the tale of Jane Corrin who was combing wool at Ballacallin in Kirk Marown. She said that Jony of Kirk Braddan came in and received an alms from the mistress of the house. Jane, having heard ill things of the witch, then put the tongs into the fire in the name of Jony who was thereby kept against her will, and was only able to leave the house later in the evening, when the wool comber withdrew the tongs from the fire. Afterwards Jane Corrin had a long and severe illness which she attributed to the witch.

At a burial in Kirk Andreas in 1628 Philip Crebbin showed a similar belief in the restraining power of the metal. Apparently he feared that the spirit of the dead, of whose malignity he was apprehensive, would return to plague him. He therefore unobtrusively dropped a piece of iron into the partly filled grave; but was detected and did penance for his fault.

#### FIRE

Fire occupied the most important place among the safeguards against witches and agents of evil in general. On the eve of *Laa Boaldyn*, May Day, gorse bushes were set on fire everywhere to drive out the witches and fairies, so that, as an eyewitness wrote in 1837, the evening sky looked down upon the scene of a universal conflagration. The custom quickly declined in the last half of the nineteenth century, and had almost died out at its end.

The memory of the Druidical practice of giving protection to cattle by passing them between two fires persisted into the twentieth century and there are Manxmen still living who, years ago, secretly drove their animals through the smoke of a fire lit in some spot out of sight of their neighbours.

## THE OURAL LOSHT

For protective and cleansing purposes fire was used in another way. In 1719 a farmer's wife in Rushen was accused of the diabolical practice of making *oural losht*, or a burnt sacrifice, in the church way, of a calf, to avert their ill luck in cattle. Incidentally, the  
 27 informer in the case sought to justify the charge by pointing out the great success of the operation for, after it, he said, the farmer's cattle had escaped further loss and had multiplied.

Many other cases of burnings have been recorded up to the present century. There is nothing to suggest that the Manx *oural losht* was a sacrifice in the ordinary acceptance of the term, or an appeal to a supernatural being; though it is said, on somewhat shaky evidence, that cases of lambs burnt on May Day, *son oural*—for a sacrifice—occurred in the nineteenth century. The actors in the rite believed that the purifying virtue of fire would drive away or destroy the malignant spirit present in the dead or dying animal, and so prevent further misfortune.

In 1847, a man whose ducks were dying of a mysterious complaint, took the last dying bird and, building a great fire at cross roads within a mile of Douglas, surrounded the duck with a ring of burning ling. People who had gathered at the spot swore they saw the Evil Spirit rising from the flames as the duck expired.

The *Oural* was also intended to overcome the Evil Eye, or other malignant activity of the person responsible for the disease. This could be effected if dust from the enemy's footsteps were consumed in the fire. This done the evil-doer would not only lose his power but would be magically attracted to the place, and be the first to arrive.

For the scene of his fire, therefore, the farmer invariably chose a highway in frequent use, and along which travelled the people suspected by him. In 1713 the wife of the Captain of Kirk Arbory burnt a calf in the high road at the Ballabeg. The fire lasted more than a day, its fumes causing great annoyance to passers-by and the people of the neighbourhood, and the lady was presented.

The court, however, treated her tenderly and adjourned the case indefinitely, for she was socially important, and moreover, it would have been difficult to bring home a charge of witchcraft, since incantations were apparently not used in such circumstances.

In a later case which occurred a hundred years ago a dead cow was burned on a fire of turf, coal and gorse, on the Starvey Road two miles from Peel. When an old man well-informed in the practice arrived he found that the thrifty farmer had skinned the animal and sent the hide to the tanner's. He declared that this destroyed the value of the proceedings, which were stayed. The hide was brought back by the reluctant owner and then the whole animal burnt, to everyone's satisfaction.

28 At this point the spectators saw, through the drifting reek and smoke, a figure approaching. It was a reveller returning with unsteady steps from a *mellia* or reapers' feast. Instantly they cried out that he was the worker of witchcraft. Sobered by fear he took to his heels and so escaped the rough treatment which he might have received from the excited and uncritical crowd.

## CHARMS

Like their Druid predecessors the witches claimed a knowledge of charms and curative herbs to overcome sickness, and their sinister reputation did not prevent constant demands for their services by a community which seldom saw a doctor. In 1713 when Gilbert Cain who had a sick child was asked by the Spiritual Judge why he had sought help from Ealish Vrian he replied rather pathetically that if it was in her power to hurt his child, it must surely also be in her power to do her good. Ealish sold charms to rid the fields of weeds, and restore fertility; and on one occasion when refused a present by a farmer, reminded him that at his request she had cleared his fields of the *basthag bwee* (yellow marigold). She sold love potions which, according to the evidence, were not always successful.

The heads of one family called Teare of Ballawhane in Kirk Andreas restricted their activities to White Witchcraft; and for at least five generations clients came to them from all parts of the Island in search of charms for sickness, wounds, success in fishing and other contingencies. They were also believed to be able to foretell the future; and in 1741 a witness in the Church Courts told how he had met a sad and anxious Kirk Braddan man making his way on foot twenty weary miles over the mountains to Ballawhane, to find out if his sick wife was going to recover.

In vain did Bishop Wilson and his clergy preach against charms and point out that King Saul received divine punishment for consulting a charmer. The Church's counsel went for the most part unheeded, and even in the last half of the nineteenth century, highly respected and respectable members of Church and Chapel, when need arose, sent to the witchdoctor of Kirk Andreas for herbal charms to counteract evil influences and prosper the churning.

Many protective charms were used at the time of the four great festivals of the Celtic year. On *Oie Voaldyn*, May Day eve, leaves of the trammon or elder tree and primroses were strewn on the thresholds, and crosses made from a twig of the *cuirn* or mountain ash were placed above the doors, fastened on animals and worn on the person.

The *bolan bane*, St. John's wort, or mugwort, was used as a charm at the Midsummer feast. It was worn in olden times by those who attended the annual meeting of the Tynwald at St. John's, and this use of it was revived over twenty years ago.

- 29 Among unusual charms was one which a Kirk Santan farmer disclosed in 1690 when he innocently asked the Vicar ‘to give him libertie to tie some of his sister-in-law’s haire to the steeple of the church above the bell, to cure her of the falling evill, this to be done three Sundays before sunrise, it being a charm given him by a wise woman of Ballasalla.’

Although snakes were banished from Man under the same happy dispensation as that bestowed on Ireland, lizards remained and were made use of as a charm. A *jialgan leaghyr* or mancreeper lizard was steeped in water and the liquid sprinkled over the cattle to promote fertility.

THE FAIRIES

There are many accounts of fairies in Manx folklore, but remarkably few references to them in sworn evidence. Where they are mentioned it is clear that, as in Scotland, they were regarded as malevolent beings with none of the pretty accessories given them by imaginative writers in modern times. Charges of commerce with fairies as with witches, were looked upon as of the greatest gravity, and were bitterly resented by the accused.

Two of the most ancient of Manx charms were directed against them. The first arose from the belief that the flint arrowheads found on pre-historic sites were of fairy origin. A projecting part of the brooighs of Ballaugh is known as the Gob ny Shee—‘the promontory of the fairies’—for the field on the top was a Stone-age settlement and is thickly sown with flint chips and with occasional arrowheads. Fairies were supposed to use ill-disposed mortals to fire the arrows. The charm against elf-shots runs: ‘If it came out of the earth or the air or from under the tide of the sea let it return again.’

Judging from the charms which have survived in writing most of them were prayers depending for potency upon the names of God and the Saints. The most attractive is the well-known protective charm against fairies and all other evil influences of the night, with its invocation of St. Columba:

*Shee Yee as shee ghooinney, Shee Yee er Columb Killey, Er dagh uinnag, er dagh ghorrys, Er dagh howl goaill stiagh yn Re-hollys, Er kiare corneillyn y thie, Er y voayl ta mee my lhie, As shee Yee orrym-pene.*

- 30 Peace of God and peace of man, Peace of God on Columb Killey, On each window, on each door, On each hole admitting moonlight, On the four corners of the house, On the place of my rest, And the peace of God on myself!

## CHURCH AND CLERGY, 1600–1800

103 It is generally accepted that the Manx parishes were created in the twelfth century in the time of the Norse kings of Man.

The districts about to be formed into parishes already contained on the average ten keills or chapels, used by the Celts and the early Norse Christians; and one of these, chosen for its importance and the convenience of its site—which was generally near the sea—became the parish church. Although not every parish at the outset was equipped with accommodation for the incumbent and land for his support, they all had cemeteries and received endowments from the old ecclesiastical lands. In 1221 the Manx King Reginald was asked by the Pope to make up deficiencies, and provide a grant of free land for the priest's house where it was lacking.

### RECTORIES

It has been suggested that at first there may have been sixteen parishes, later increased to seventeen when one of them was divided into two to make Santan and Marown, but this is not certain. All of them were Rectories, each with its *persona* (i.e. the 'person' or parson of the parish), and each enjoyed the whole of its endowments and income until the episcopate of Bishop Reginald in the twelfth century, when one third of the parochial tithes was granted to the Bishop for his own maintenance by an agreement made with the clergy.

But this state of affairs did not long continue. At various times, during the Middle Ages, the Manx kings and other patrons of livings made over churches and lands to monasteries—to Rushen Abbey, the Priory of Whithorn in Galloway, the Abbeys of Bangor and Sabal in Ulster and the Priory of St. Bees in Cumberland. When a religious foundation of this kind gained possession of a church it nominally assumed the functions of rector and appointed a *Vicarius* or substitute, who had to manage his parish on a third of the total revenue. He was therefore known as a 'Vicar of Thirds.'

104 Some vicars did not have this fixed income, but had to be content with a smaller stipend at the discretion of the patron—as in the case of Jurby and Lezayre, whose incumbents were called 'Vicars of Pension.' They sometimes revolted against the uncertain conditions of their appointment. In 1654, when Sir Edward Crowe was presented by the Lezayre parish quest for absenting himself from church and neglecting the duty of preaching, he protested that he had had no pay from the proctors. 'Neither,' he declared, 'do I intend to serve any longer for the same stipend.'

It is true that sometimes compensation was given to a parish in return for carrying off a substantial part of its income. For example, it was customary for a Manx boy

from Kirk Maughold to be given free education in the school at St. Bees. The Rev. Thomas Howard, a rector of Ballaugh in the nineteenth century, was the last to be accepted on such grounds. But this kind of return for benefits received obviously gave no relief to the unfortunate Vicar.

The austere nature of his celibate life in pre-Reformation times is hinted at in a Manx Spiritual law of 1417 which prescribes what property of a deceased Vicar of Thirds must be passed on to his successor.

It names a pair of bed stocks, a cupboard, a board and trestle, a chair and form, a pot or pan, a roasting spit, a chain from which to hang the pot over the fire, and finally, a spoon, if he had one. Forks had not yet come into use in the fifteenth century, and a knife is not mentioned because every man, clergy and lay, carried a knife or dagger at his girdle.

One can, however, read too much into this scanty list of the household equipment due to a newcomer; and it must be remembered that the famous Synod, over which Bishop Mark presided at Kirk Braddan in 1291, found it necessary to issue a sumptuary law restraining the Island clergy from going about in worldly attire. They were ordered to wear the *capa clausa* or closed cassock, a gown of sober colour falling below the knees; and particularly on those solemn feast days when they would be most tempted to cut a dash. The open cloak and other ostentations were strictly forbidden; and disobedience was to be punished by the confiscation of the offending dress, and its sale in aid of the building of the cathedral of Kirk German.

At the end of the Middle Ages the English Church, through the spoliation already mentioned, had lost a third of its rectories, but the Isle of Man proportionately had suffered much more severely; only three out of the seventeen parishes retaining their original status: Kirk Andreas, which was generally reserved for the Archdeacon whose office carried no stipend, Ballaugh and Kirk Bride. The Reformation brought  
106 no relief to the hard lot of the clergy, for the Lord of the Isle eventually got possession of the Thirds formerly taken by the monks, and the vicars were as badly off as ever.

#### PARISH CLERK

One parochial office which has disappeared in modern times was that of Parish Clerk. In pre-Reformation times he belonged to the most important of the four minor orders of the Church and acted as assistant to the priest. In the Isle of Man no details of his functions are recorded until after 1600.

Then the position was held by a layman, who was still an assistant to the priest, and enjoyed a position of profit, having the use and produce of the portion of Church land known as the Clerk's glebe, and receiving certain perquisites. A competent Clerk was a great aid and comfort to the parish incumbent. He attended on the priest, robed

him for service and accompanied him upon visitations of the sick and other business of the parish. He took care of the vestments and church vessels, and cut the bread for the Sacrament. John Clague, Vicar of Rushen at the end of the eighteenth century, who has left a full account of the Clerk's duties, says that he also saw to the baptismal font which was to be filled 'with fair water once a month.'

He led the congregational responses and, what was important at a time when only a small proportion of the country people were conversant with English, he read the psalm for the day, line by line, in Manx, the congregation then singing the line with him.

In Santan, as late as 1798, there were great complaints of the Clerk's failure to follow this practice. 'It is well known,' said the churchwarden, John Moore,

'that the custom of reading the Manx metrical psalms of David, line by line, has been always practised in this church, and was thought to tend much to the comfort and edification of the unlearned, by enabling them to sing with the spirit, by singing with the understanding—whereas the present mode of John Crebbin in reading out the first two lines only of the psalm or that part which he intends singing, and often sings two, three or four stanzas, can tend no more (with submission to the court) to the comfort and edification of the illiterate, than if he sang them out in high Dutch, or in any other foreign and barbarous language.'

107 Save in a few special cases such as Kirk Andreas, where the Lord of the Isle had the right of appointment, the parish clerks for a long time were elected by the votes of the parishioners. Their choice was limited, for there were only a few men in any parish possessing the required qualifications. In 1671, Ballaugh chose John Corlett of Ballakeoig, and the parishioners in submitting his name for the Bishop's approval, justified their action by saying, 'John Corlett of Ballakeoig is the ablest and fittest man in this parish for this place by reason of his learning, good carriage, vicinity of the minister and propinquity to the church.'

In the nineteenth century before the disappearance of the office its prestige had declined—perhaps because of the rapid increase in the number of literates. But in previous times it was an attractive appointment for those with good voices and the requisite amount of education. Its glebe and other emoluments formed an agreeable addition to the slender income of a Manx landowner, and one often finds, particularly in the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century, the office occupied by the Captain of the Parish.

In fees, the Parish Clerk received fourpence—the *Groat shesheree* or 'Ploughman's groat'—for each plough which during the year had turned a furrow. Where there was a dwelling-house with a fire but no plough, he received the *Ping jaagh*, the 'Smoke

penny.’ He also got a head-penny from each parishioner, and fees and gifts came to him for christenings, marriages and burials.

Wills were generally written down by the parish minister or the clerk, who was expected to appear at the *Aaght-oie*, ‘the night of lodging,’ a phrase equivalent to ‘Wake,’ a word not used in Man. There he read, line by line, an appropriate psalm, followed in the singing by the mourners.

The funeral procession was led by the Clerk who again read the psalm line by line. At one time the custom of circling the Church Cross, sometimes the Church itself, three times clock-wise, was practised—a ritual survival of pre-Christian days. In one parish, Kirk Bride, the mourners halted at a holy pool, the *Dem ny marroo*, ‘the pool of the dead,’ to sprinkle the bier with the water.

A church enquiry in 1666 reported that a ‘death bell’ stood on the altar of Kirk Andreas, and its removal as a superstitious relic was immediately ordered. In conformity with ancient practice, the Rector, bell in hand, had met Clerk and funeral procession and led it from the churchyard stile, tolling the bell as they proceeded.

#### WOODS OF BALLEIRA

When the Parish Clerk was a substantial owner-farmer he sometimes exhibited the independent spirit of his class, and overstepped the limits prescribed for him. In 1665, for example, Henry Woods of Balleira, Parish Clerk of Kirk Michael, in the absence of the Vicar, took upon himself to administer the Holy Sacrament and duly did penance for his presumption. He appeared for an hour at Castletown Cross in a white sheet and with a white wand in his hand; and falling on his knees desired all good people passing by to take example from his downfall. This penance which was accompanied by the recital of his offences and a promise of reform was repeated at Douglas, Peel and Ramsey; and finally at the Church Stile of Kirk Michael, where he knelt during the whole of the morning service.

Henry Woods was not the only member of his family to display unorthodox tendencies. His grandfather, John Woods, had been Clerk half a century before, and had apparently come under the influence of the extreme Puritanism which played such an important part in the religious and political developments of the seventeenth century. In 1616 he refused to fulfil some of the customary duties of his office—in particular, attending the minister in the Chancel and reading the First Lesson there. He demanded that the Communion Table and Bible be moved down into the Body of the Church where he sat, and where alone, he said, he would execute those services, and not in the Chancel.

On the Sunday preceding his appearance before the Spiritual Judges he made his way into Kirk Michael Church, armed with sword and dagger. ‘Whereat,’ says the ac-

count, 'the Minister of the Church, Sir Hugh Cannell, was dismayed and made afraid, for that he did especially contest him in maintenance of his own wilful demeanour offensive to good devotion amongst the Congregation.'

He was luckier than his grandson in not having the Sword-Bishop to pass judgment upon him. He was fined forty shillings, which was reduced to ten shillings, 'in hope,' said the Court, 'of his better Demeanour and Conformitie of life hereafter.'

One Braddan Clerk, Daniel Curghey, achieved notoriety by tearing leaves out of the parish register to oblige an alien Douglas merchant, who wished to falsify his marriage record. But the Clerk appears in a more favourable light in a pathetic little story of domestic tragedy, with its atmosphere of piety and superstition and human kindness. In 1714 he was out walking with his wife to Mullen Doway (now Union Mills), when Thomas Oates's wife Isabel came to him and asked for the loan of a Bible to lay under her husband's head to cause him to sleep. The Clerk asked her how he was, and she answered that he dreamed that he was dead. The night before, he had said that he would go three times about the house and pray for the pardon of his sins.

109 'What needs that?' said Curghey to the sick man. 'Go your ways to your bed and pray there.' Thomas asked them if they would pray with him. They said they would and so they joined together in prayers. Later Isabel came out of the room and clapped her hands together, crying, '*Losta lome!*' Yonder man says that he is beside himself for want of sleep' In the night he broke through the thatch of the low-roofed little cottage and next day was found dead in the Black River [The Dhoo].

He had been sick for some time with a disorder of the head, and his neighbour John Gelling had taken him home and, with his servant, ploughed for him. He was said to have been of good life and conversation; and the sympathetic jury called together by the Coroner of Middle, found his death had been caused by his disorder and by the river; so avoiding a verdict of *felo de se*, which would have entailed the forfeiture of the dead man's property to the Lord, and his burial in unconsecrated ground.

The office of Parish Clerk sometimes persisted in a family for generations, and in one parish the Clerk's glebe had been attached so long to an estate which had provided a succession of Clerks that the wardens had difficulty in establishing the rightful ownership. One remarkable instance of family succession was quoted at the death of Margaret Cannell in 1831. She was widow of John Cain, Parish Clerk of Kirk Michael; and her great-grandfather, grandfather, father and brother had all occupied the post in turn. Her son Thomas was Clerk in 1831.

In the course of time, with the diminishing financial value of the office and changes in its functions, it was often an extra duty for the parish schoolmaster. In 1840 Rector Howard of Ballaugh advertised for a schoolmaster for the parochial school, 'who is

also required to fill the situation of Parish Clerk and to be able to fill the duties of Clerk in Manx and English.' There is no mention of a popular election but the one chosen had to be approved by the Bishop.

#### THE CHURCH

The Church was the social as well as the spiritual centre of the Manx parish. At the Parish Cross which stood outside every churchyard fence people gathered after service to exchange news and hear the Sumner make public announcements; there, warning was given for attendance at the Spiritual and Civil courts; and there, too, were held the annual fairs.

The Manx of past times disliked any break in the practices of their ancestors. *Man-nagh vow cliaghtey cliaghtey, nee cliaghtey coe*, they said—'Unless custom is indulged by custom, custom will weep.'

110 This reluctance to sever relations with the past is seen plainly in the history of the churches. The sites they occupy appear to have been sacred places from time immemorial, and were chosen by the first Christian missionaries because of the veneration they had already aroused in the minds of the people.

The late Canon Quine drew attention, too, to the influence of tradition on the form and proportions of the ancient Manx parish churches. Nearly all have now disappeared but there is evidence enough to show that in plan they resembled the medieval church of St. Trinian. They were rectangular and without transepts, the length being approximately three times the breadth. These traditional proportions are to be found in Old Kirk Lonan which is fifty-four feet by eighteen. Kirks Malew, Andreas, Bride and Maughold were originally of the same proportions; and when Ballure Chapel was re-built in 1743, its dimensions, either by accident or design, followed the tradition, and were fifty-seven feet by nineteen.

The absence of transepts and the stark simplicity of the old Manx church sometimes made doubtful the position of the boundary between the Chancel and the body of the Church. It was important to know the dividing line, since the patron or owner of the appropriated (or Improprate) third of the tithes was liable for the repair of the Chancel, and the parishioners for the rest of the fabric.

In 1663 when the repair of the Church of Kirk Andreas was being considered and the division was in doubt, a jury of two clergy, two churchwardens and two soldiers, representing the interested parties—clergy, parishioners and the Lord as patron—was appointed to hear the evidence of the ancients, and find out 'the distinct division betwixt Church and Chancel.'

There was a pre-Christian belief in the Scandinavian countries that evil came from the north. This superstition is found in the Manx expression *Bee er dty hwoaie!*,

'Be on thy guard!' which is literally, 'Be on thy north!' north being synonymous with danger. And in the early Celtic church building the architect, actuated by the same superstition, made as few openings as possible in the north wall. The Manx churches perpetuated this custom. Old Kirks Malew and Marown had no window on the sinister northern side; Kirk Lonan and Kirk Michael, one small window. The present windows of Old Ballaugh Church are of fairly recent date—not earlier than the eighteenth century—and take the place of two small openings of earlier times.

The early Manx keeills were thatched or roofed with scrahyn (sods); but the Episcopal records imply that the parish churches were slated by the end of the sixteenth century, and that it was customary to whitewash them periodically inside and out.

#### SEATS

- III Medieval chapels and churches were not provided with seats for the congregation. In the case of the Manx keeills their small size makes it probable that the building itself was often reserved for the officiating priest, whilst the worshippers knelt outside. After the Reformation the floor space in a Manx church was divided up into portions which were allotted in country parishes to the occupiers of quarterlands, crofts and intacks; in other words, to land and not to houses, as in England. Generally the seat holders were responsible for the erection of their own benches; and this sometimes led to trouble when a bench was shared between two landowners. The fact that the seats were private property made their owners sensitive to any uninvited intrusion into them; and their resentment led to scandal.

Much the same sort of trouble arose in the towns. In 1669 there was a squabble during service time in St. Mary's, Castletown, over the possession of a seat. Two prominent women, members of Castletown society, were involved. One pricked the other several times with a great pin to induce her to move, and tore off her kerchief and scarf 'to the great offence,' it was said, 'of the congregation.' And no doubt they agreed with the victim of the assault when she cried out, 'Good Lord! deliver me from such rude bears!'

In Kirk Arbory in 1718, when there was disagreement between two parishioners over their adjoining pews, the man and woman concerned went separately and secretly to Church, and ripped out the opponent's pew.

Many burials took place within the churches, the quarterland owners being interred below the seats owned by them. But the most desired place was the chancel, and for this a special fee was charged. Richard Fox, Vicar of Lezayre, who died in 1679, even requested in his will that he should be laid to rest beneath the altar.

As a result of these inside burials the floor was often uneven and the body of the church unpaved; and during Bishop Wilson's episcopate the Ecclesiastical authorities

adopted a policy of strong discouragement when such interments were sought. It was expressly laid down in 1714, for example, that the newly built Church of St. Patrick should not be used as a burial place or a school room—these being the two main causes of the dirty, dishevelled condition of some of the parish churches.

## PEWS

112 Pews which had already appeared in England in the sixteenth century were introduced into Man in the eighteenth. This late adoption was partly due to the expensiveness of the imported timber and the unprosperous condition of the Island. The churchwardens found difficulty even in getting some sort of uniformity of repair of the plain unbacked benches, and more than once complained that they were propped up on big stones.

A general lack of money and resources reduced the decoration and upkeep of the churches to the lowest level. Here there were no wealthy village squires and other magnates with a proprietary interest in the parish church, and with the means to embellish it; and the Manx churches never developed the elaborate high-screened enclosures often reserved in English country churches for the local overlord, sometimes furnished with fireplace, sofa, table and curtains, and a servant bringing in sherry and light refreshments between prayers and the sermon.

Some differentiation in Manx churches did occur in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with the more general introduction of pews; and as these, like the benches they supplanted, were provided and paid for by their occupants, the size of their estates was sometimes reflected in their more spacious pews.

But the Manx countryside viewed any attempts to introduce such social preferences into a place of worship with the greatest distaste; and the churchwardens and chapter quest quickly raised their voices in protest. In 1804, for example, when the Milntown pew was remade, the Lezayre wardens immediately objected to it because it did not conform in height to the common level, to the great annoyance of those sitting behind; and brought the matter before the Vicars-General.

When a request for special treatment was made in 1663 by James Christian, a member of the same powerful family, it was received very coldly by the Lezayre wardens, who failed to move in the matter. Their lukewarmness was rebuked by Bishop Barrow. The Bishop, accustomed to more strongly marked social distinctions in England, issued a peremptory order to the wardens to provide James Christian with a seat suitable to his quality. History does not say how the Lezayre men, with a vision of the dungeon at Peel before their eyes in case of disobedience, responded to the command.

## THE CIVIL WAR

113 The Civil War (1643–1651) imposed a great strain upon the material and spiritual resources of the Island, and the Manx Church shared in the general decline of public and private morale. It had, in addition, its own peculiar difficulties. The diocese, for example, suffered greatly from absentee bishops and archdeacons. Even so great a friend of the Manx as Bishop Phillips divided his time between North Yorkshire where he was Archdeacon of Cleveland, two English livings which he had received, and the diocese of Sodor and Man; and, what was worse, for seventeen years, from 1644 to 1661, there was no Bishop at all, and during a part of that time the revenues of the Bishopric were apparently used by the Earl of Derby for his own purposes. It is to the credit of the Parliamentary regime under Fairfax that during his Lordship (1651–1660) the income in question was used for the benefit of education and the clergy.

The general indiscipline in the first half of the century was reflected in the conduct of many of the parish clergy, who often failed to live up to their professions and fulfil their primary obligations to the extremely patient and long-suffering people in their care. Nevertheless, when viewed against the background of their turbulent and intolerant age they display themselves to quite as great advantage as their contemporaries in neighbouring countries.

But they were the creatures of their time and environment; often hot-tempered and rash in action, like Sir Silvester Crowe, Vicar of Lezayre, who, when a political controversy flamed out in violence in a parish alehouse in 1612, and weapons were brandished, was the first to draw his dagger; and of William Cosnahan, Vicar of Kirk German, a black shepherd of the flock, who, enraged on receiving an order to appear before the Ecclesiastical judges, Sir Robert and Sir Thomas Parr, to answer for various misdemeanours, horrified his listeners with a frightful medieval oath; ‘By God’s blood,’ he roared, ‘I will not be censured by any Sir Robert or Sir Thomas, Sir Jack or Sir Jill!’

For such outbreaks, the Church had a potent antidote—suspension from office with the loss of emoluments, and confinement in the Bishop’s prison at Peel for a period whose length usually depended upon the quickness with which the offender found sureties for future good behaviour. Sir William Cosnahan like many of his brethren before and after his time secured a mitigation of his punishment by submitting a petition in which he expressed abject contrition for his offence, gave a promise to reform and, describing the calamities brought upon his innocent wife and children by his wrongdoing, begged humbly for a reinstatement.

## SINS OF OMISSION

But it was the clerical sins of omission which most tried the tempers of the parishioners, who were prepared to overlook even grave faults of personal conduct, if their pastors performed their duties with reasonable efficiency, and provided the services which were so universally and so eagerly desired.

- 114 It is difficult to reconcile the contradiction sometimes found in the virtuous clergyman of the time and his conscienceless failure to feed his flock. There is, for example, an agreeable letter from young Robert Allen, curate to his father, Thomas Allen, Vicar of Kirk Maughold, members of a family which in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries provided the parish with five vicars of good reputation and sober life. It was written to Vicar-General Robert Parr excusing his absence from the Ecclesiastical Court; and runs,

Mr. Parson Parr,

My love and dutifull respects tendered.

These are to desire your excuses for my absence from the Ecclesiastical Court and to shew the reason; my father and mother are both at Castletown, so that there is nobody at home but myselfe to take care of any thing in my absence. Neither have I a horse, and the way longe for I could not well goe and come in less than two days in which time my parents might bear losse through the neglect of servants.

Thus I only desire your excuse for this time, and at the next Ecclesiastical Court, God permitinge, I will attende.

Vale

Yours to comande

Robert Allen: April 5th, 1642.

There, one is disposed to say, is a good type of young man, the worthy son of a virtuous father, anxious to carry out his everyday obligations.

But, five months before, the churchwardens and chapter quest of Kirk Maughold had produced an indictment at the Chapter Court which clouds this vision.

They complain, 'There is no Manx sermon in our Church; not for so much as one in the year, for the edification of the people, who understand no other language; the want whereof is a great grief to the people. There is no catechising or only a little at Lent; the sick are not visited; the parties dying without prayers, exhortations and the Holy Communion, though much desired by the sick. Children weak and strong have to be taken to other parishes for their christendom and to pay for it.'

The Vicar, they go on to say, has ploughed and sown a part of the churchyard which is rooted up by swine, its gates having been broken down by the Vicar's cattle. They further declared that he had not gone in procession round the parish—a formal annual

perambulation which was regarded as being of great importance by countrymen, since it was accompanied by a religious service and the blessing of the fields and their growing crops.

- 115 The Maughold Wardens' presentment names some of the most important matters affecting the relationship of parishioners and pastor. Seventeenth century Manx people were, as Bishop Lloyd said, very religious, and believed unquestioningly that their eternal salvation depended on their observance of the teachings of the Church. Failing to give them the spiritual solace afforded by the normal ministrations of the clergy, deeply disturbed them. This failure, as we have seen, was sometimes due to the inadequacy of the incumbent, but it sometimes arose from the slowness of Bishop or patron in presenting to the living.

Owing to this, Lonan was left for a long period without a minister. In 1680, when Sir Thomas Thwaites was appointed he was asked to serve also the vacant living of Kirk Onchan. Thus cheated once more of their regular services and led by the Moores of Baldromma, the exasperated Lonan men held a mock funeral of the absent Vicar. They covered a bundle of hemp on the church bier with a black blanket used for funerals and brought it to the vicarage door, making a great noise, 'as if it were by way of lamentation,' for half an hour. After singing psalms, they carried the bier to the Church door and tolled the bell.

The culprits were punished for what their indictment described as 'impudent insolencies.'

#### THE MANX LANGUAGE

Again the country people wanted the services in Manx, the language they all understood. Bishop Barrow's answer to their demand was to introduce schools for the teaching of English. But the native language died hard, in spite of the indifference of the Anglicised townspeople and other sections of the population. Bishop Wilson wrote, 'The English is not understood by two-thirds at least of the island, though there is an English school in every parish; so hard is it to change the language of a whole country.'

It was in his episcopate in the first half of the eighteenth century that some of the clergy, prejudiced perhaps by the emphasis on a classical education in the schools at Douglas and Castletown, began to cold-shoulder their native tongue. There is a suggestive passage in a letter as early as 1742, in which Vicar-General Matthias Curghey, Rector of Bride, asks the Ecclesiastical judge to reprimand his young and erring Parish Clerk.

'I do not object,' he says, 'if you... slip [him] some words in Manx, which may not please all nice and prejudiced palates....'

116 In 1763 Bishop Hildesley expressed astonishment at the indifference and disapprobation which he met with in his endeavours to circulate religious reading in the Manx. ‘This,’ he exclaimed, ‘I believe is the only country in the world that is ashamed of, and even inclined to extirpate, if it could, its own native tongue.’

But the Manx Bible for which he was so largely responsible and in the translation of which the parish clergy all took their honourable share, gave great satisfaction and happiness to the country people of his time, and long afterwards their reception of the translation is typified in the Bishop’s own story of the Kirk Michael woman listening with joy to her son reading the Manx and crying out in exultation, ‘Until now we have sat in darkness!’

#### THE FISH TITHE

It would be too much to expect that any fixed ecclesiastical levy would fail to breed grievances, but the fish tithe aroused especial dissatisfaction owing to the fact that when a fisherman landed his fish over a third of the catch disappeared in dues to the Lord and his officer, the Water Bailiff, and to the Church. As some recompense the Water Bailiff provided harbour lights, and the parish clergy visited the harbours and creeks during the fishing season, to conduct services for boats about to sail for the fishing grounds.

The Clergy complained bitterly of the Fish Tithe evasions, and the difficulties of collection. Sir Thomas Parr, walking down from Malew vicarage to Castletown one day in 1691, saw a boat fresh in from the sea with dogfish in it. He asked the owner, John Elsmore, for his tithe. Elsmore refused; and taking up a dogfish said, ‘Sir Thomas, if you want a fish at home, here, take a *gobbag* along with you, but I would not have you take it as tithe.’

‘And,’ said a witness, ‘Sir Thomas going away from them, the wife of Elsmore, coming to the boat, said, “You do better pay him tithe, for Sir Thomas knows the law better than you do.” Whereupon Elsmore said, “I care not a jot for him or his laws!” A rash assertion which his subsequent experience in the Ecclesiastical Court made clear.

In 1733 John Cosnahan, Curate of Rushen, complained that the boat masters did not, as in other parishes, openly divide the fish, but concealed and panniered up their fish before they landed, so depriving him of tithe. The fishermen, he said, did not fish grey fish, but caught lobsters which they sold at three and four shillings a dozen. The minister got no consideration for these, ‘though,’ he said, ‘they, too, grow of God’s providence from the sea.’

117 By the middle of the eighteenth century the fish tithe had ceased to be collected, but in 1770 the Vicars-General were instructed to find out the legal position, and obtained a declaration in their favour from the Island Courts. Some of the Kirk

Michael fishermen however made a costly appeal to the Privy Council. They lost their case and were ruined, but the fishermen persisted in their refusal to pay the tithes, which were never again exacted.

#### THE CLERGY

The country clergyman, in addition to his parochial work and the superintendence of his glebe, found change and relaxation in attendance at the Church Courts; and in friendly gatherings in farm houses where the countrymen sat over their cups of home-brewed ale, and discussed intelligently in their native Manx the current events and problems of the day.

There is a brief glimpse of one of these meetings at the house of John Teare of Loughcroute in Jurby in 1672. The Vicar, William Crowe, is there with a number of neighbouring farmers. They are comparing Island Bishops of whom they have knowledge. The formidable Bishop Barrow is still alive, and all save one unite in praising his educational policy, Gilbert Skally of the Kerroocroie admiring its scope in giving a chance of schooling to the children of all classes, the poor as well as the rich. But Patrick Clarke of Bretny, Serjeant of the Bishop's Barony, considers Bishop Phillips better than Barrow, against whom he has a grievance, arising from his duties as Serjeant. He said the Bishop had done him wrong and had denied him justice and the law.

The Vicar was thereupon forced for his own protection to take official notice of Patrick's indiscreet talk and report him to the chapter quest for his scandalous aspersions of the Bishop. But when he appeared in court the judges mercifully accepted the plea that his good sense had been affected by the ale he had drunk, and let him off with a fine and admonition.

Isaac Barrow, the Bishop who had won the praise of the Jurby men, succeeded the amiable Bishop Rutter in 1663 and played a great part in giving fresh energy to the debilitated Church and its ministers. One of the ablest of the long line of occupants of the See of Sodor and Man, Barrow proceeded to discipline the faltering clergy with a ruthlessness which spared none, from the Vicars-General to the humblest Church officer.

His first impression of his Manx brethren was that they were very illiterate and completely ignorant, but this sweeping statement is not borne out by the evidence of William Blundell who visited Man in 1648, and wrote in his History, 'I did not converse with anyone but that I found him a scholar and discreet;' and Governor Chaloner who in 1655 said, 'Considering the ministers here are generally natives, and have had their whole education in the Isle, it is marvellous what good preachers there be.'

SIR JOHN CRELLIN

These more optimistic estimates get some support from the results of a questionnaire sent to the wardens of the parishes in 1666. In the parish of Kirk Arbory the Vicar was Sir John Crellin whose people had put on record their approval of him long before the coming of the reforming Bishop. Of him his churchwardens reported in 1665—

‘He observes holydays, fasting days, Ember weeks and yearly perambulations. He instructs children diligently, preparing them to be confirmed.’

‘He never neglects to visit the sick nor baptise any children.

‘He preaches true and sound doctrine to his congregation in knowledge, faith and obedience.’

‘Our vicar is, in our apprehension, sober and unblamable in his life. Neither doth he accompany any vitious or excommunicate persons, neither is hee a drinker, a swearer, gamester or quarreller.’

‘As for his apparel it is but baire, though grave; and according to the fashion of the country, and the colour poore. As for his behaviour in any kinde, he is affable, without scandal, but as it becomes a minister....’

The reference to the unadorned and faded clothes of this Manx Vicar of Wakefield recalls the fact that when he died his earthly wealth in money amounted to half a crown; and his greatest household treasures, in addition to his books, were a chest, a press, and a half share of a silver spoon.

Among other favourable reports in the answers to the Bishop’s enquiry regarding the parish incumbents was one from Kirk Maughold. Robert Allen, the letter writer of 1642, was dead, having been succeeded by his son Thomas, who was Curate for the time being, but a year later was made Vicar, a post he held for sixty years.

Of young Thomas the Wardens say, ‘The Curate is sober as becometh, and his apparel is fitting according to his abilities; which himselfe in that kind wee cannot say anything by him but good.’

One old grievance emerges, however the misuse of the churchyard. The wardens say,

‘The churchyard is well fenced and yet not without beasts (as swine) to annoy; and other beasts come there, which only eat the grass, and with rubbing [act] prejudiciously, the windows being low.’

CHURCH YARD

119 In former times the Churchyard, so far as its grass was concerned, was looked upon as an adjunct of the Glebe, and the parish incumbent often pastured his horses and cattle there. Any expression of doubt as to the propriety of such use appears to have surprised the person concerned. When Henry Allen, nephew of the long-lived Thomas,

was presented by his chapter quest in 1744, for making a gap in the churchyard fence, his tart letter to the Ecclesiastical judges reveals his resentment at the charge made against him. He wrote,

‘I find myself presented for my too much freedom in the churchyard.... This is the eighteenth year of my being Vicar and I thought I never took any other freedom in it than my predecessors did, time out of mind. As they did, I had my milch cows grassed in it every morning in summer and then driven to the glebe; but last summer I made free to open a gap in the churchyard fence in a convenient place, to drive my cattle through it for a shorter passage to the glebe, ... without making undecent passage through the graves; and before presentment I had the gap shut up in better order than before.’

Apparently public opinion, which had been long opposed to the custom was growing more critical of the use of the churchyard for pasturage, for in 1759, the Kirk Michael Chapter Quest arraigned the Vicar, Vicar-General Wilks, for a similar offence. But the practice continued and in 1836, an observer saw twenty cattle grazing in Kirk Maughold churchyard.

Neither the custom nor the attitude of the Clergy was confined to the Isle of Man, however, and there is the story of the nineteenth century Archdeacon of an English diocese, who found that a Rector had sown the unoccupied part of the burial ground with turnips. The Archdeacon admonished him saying that he must not let him see turnips there again.

‘Certainly not, Sir!’ replied the innocent Rector. ‘It will be barley next year.’

#### AGRICULTURE

Agriculture was the obvious means of adding to a country vicar’s emoluments and one sometimes finds him farming much more land than the glebe contained. At the beginning of the seventeenth century Sir John Oates, Vicar of Kirk Onchan had a team of six oxen for the working of his land; and he had a boat at Port Onchan which was used for inshore fishing and at the right season went after herrings.

Sir John Huddleston, Curate of Kirk Andreas between 1660 and 1674, had apparently a prosperous farm. He had four draught oxen for the plough, ten other cattle, six horses, seventy sheep and four pigs; and eleven stocks of bees; and he also had a fishing boat.

120 The clergy had to do a good deal of travelling, and, like the quarterland farmers, invariably owned a riding-horse with saddle, and a pillion for a female companion. Among the indispensable articles of dress belonging to the wife of a clergyman or well-to-do farmer of the period were a riding-cloak and hood. Without a horse the only means of land travel was walking; for there was little or no wheel traffic on the

uneven highways until the last half of the eighteenth century.

As late as 1763 Bishop Hildesley, who had driven in his coach by way of Peel to Castletown for the funeral of Deemster Taubman, was unable to return the same day, owing to a rainstorm which made the roads and river fords impassable.

#### SIR JOHN HUDDLESTONS HOUSE

Some indication of the size and furnishing of the house of one of the most prosperous clergymen in the last half of the seventeenth century is given in an inventory, of 1674, of the goods of the curate of Kirk Andreas, Sir John Huddleston, already mentioned. He occupied the Rectory house which was rebuilt in 1666, the year of the Great Fire of London, and part of it still survives. There were at least five rooms—the *thie mooar* or ‘great house,’ the parlour, chamber, closet and upper chamber. The parlour and chamber had iron grates. The *thie mooar* was the centre of family life, and had an open hearth with hanging chain, from which to suspend the pots. A cupboard in the Kirk Andreas house contained a store of pewter ware, weighing sixty-five pounds. The curate’s earthenware consisted of some bottles and eight white dishes standing upon a dish-board. There were also eighteen wooden bowls and trenchers. There were brass pans among the cooking utensils, and the candlesticks were of pewter.

Three little spinning wheels for flax and hemp, and two big ones for wool, stood ready for the use of female members of the household with any unoccupied time. The house furniture included two tables, made up in the ancient way with movable boards and trestles, a small table, two cupboards, a press and two chests. There were stools but only two chairs. Cushions and a settle provided the rest of the seating. Two bedsteads with feather beds stood in the parlour, and one with curtains in the upper chamber. The inventory mentions green curtains and carpets—including some of Kidderminster—but rushes were the usual floor covering, and the carpets were probably used, not for the floor, but for covering beds and tables.

#### BOOKS

121 There is no mention of books. Huddleston was apparently much better off than most of his brethren and might be supposed to have a small collection of the theological works of the time, and perhaps he had disposed of them among his friends before his death. Sir Thomas Thwaites, Vicar of Lonan, may have done the same, but he was in less prosperous circumstances. He died in 1686, and the only literature he presumably owned at the time was some old books valued at ninepence.

Books were scarce and expensive, and as Bishop Barrow said, almost impossible to buy out of the small incomes of the impoverished country clergy.

Sir Charles Coole, Vicar of Santan, who died in 1658, owned thirty volumes, all theological. His contemporary, Sir John Crellin, Vicar of Arbory, possessed seventy-

one, sixty-eight of which were theological, the remaining three consisting of a volume of poetry by Chatelard; the popular seventeenth century satire, 'Hudibras'; and the third volume entitled, 'The Mystery of Witchcraft,' a subject which often occupied the attention of the Church Courts until the third decade of the eighteenth century.

At a later time, Bishop Wilson, who was familiar with the disabilities under which the clergy worked, made provision for parochial libraries of theological books and for addition to a library in Castletown. This, founded in 1669, numbered more than 1,000 volumes, and was eventually housed at King William's College, where it was destroyed in the fire of 1844.

#### CLOCKS

Pictures, musical instruments and clocks, were still rarer adornments of Manx vicarages in the seventeenth century. The late Mr. Daniel Clarke of the Nappin, Jurby, when he was ninety-one years of age, told in Manx, an artless story of unknown antiquity, given to him by his grandfather, which illustrates the scarcity of timepieces; though it was primarily a simple commentary on the vagaries of human nature, and, frail and unsubstantial, by word of mouth had been passed down the centuries.

'Long, long ago,' he said, 'on a frosty moonlit night in Winter, the Archdeacon sat dozing over the warm turf fire in his Rectory at Kirk Andreas, with his manservant Patrick sitting on the other side of the *chiollagh*. At length he roused himself, and wishing to know how far the evening was advanced, he said to the servant, *Jean siyr, Pharic! Gow as jeeagh my vel yn eayst harrish y thie 'n ollee!* "Make haste, Pat! Go and see if the moon is over the cowhouse!" Upon which Patrick, hating to leave the warmth of the chimney nook, grumbled, "Aw, your Reverence, and what can I do with the moon if it is over the cowhouse?"'

- 122 The lack of timepieces, apart from hour-glasses and a sun-dial in the churchyard, gave importance to the Parish Clerk's duty of what was known as the ringing of the 'Three Bells.' Failure to perform this regularly on the Sabbath and in due time, caused much indignation in the parish he served and might lead to the delinquent's appearance before the Spiritual Judges.

Though all Manx parishes at one time or another produced someone nicknamed *Mun-laa*—'Noon' because of his extraordinary ability to recognise the time to stop work for the mid-day meal, the average parishioner was not so gifted, and, in the absence of a signal, might not only miss his desired participation in the Church service, but also expose himself to Ecclesiastical censure for non-attendance. The first warning bell was therefore rung at eight o'clock in the morning, the second at nine, and the third before Service began at ten. Similarly for the Evening service—'evening' being the translation of the Manx *fastyr* which may also mean 'afternoon'—the first bell was rung at one o'clock, the second at two and the third before the service at

three o'clock.

CLERGYMANS WIFE

The life of a clergyman's wife two or three hundred years ago was somewhat circumscribed. Except for the occasions when she mounted a horse behind her husband to visit friends, she did not travel outside her own parish, and her ordinary days were busily occupied in attending to her family, and in supervising and sharing in the many activities of the housecombing and spinning of wool, carding and heckling of hemp and flax, the brewing of small beer, the making of butter, bacon, salted mutton and beef, salted herring and cod-fish, looking after the poultry and bee-hives, milking sheep in the sheep fold, and making sheep's and goats' cheese.

In the outspoken seventeenth century the clergyman's wife sometimes refused to keep strictly to her role of housewife and allowed her tongue to wag too freely. In such a case she discovered that her social position did not save her from the consequences of her indiscretion.

In 1637, for example, the wife of the Vicar of Kirk Gernan was brought before a Church Court for saying that a certain Peel woman was a witch. She paid for her offence by doing penance at the north stile of St. Peters in Peel, with a bridle of leather in her mouth, whilst her husband's congregation filed past her out of Church.

123 A complaint of another kind was made in 1669 against the English-born wife of Charles Parr, Vicar of Kirk Lonan. She was presented by the Chapter quest for not coming to church. Her attitude before the Court was that of a contemptuous newcomer. 'The Minister's wife,' she said, 'not having the service of the Church read to her in English and not understanding the Manx, absents herself till the parish will allow half the service to be read in English; and then she will duly observe the service.'

If the Spiritual Judges were taken aback by her nonchalance, they soon made her realise that a change of mind on her part was preferable to a stay in the bleak prison of Castle Peel; and she quickly decided to reform her ways.

SIR THOMAS PARR

Among the notable clergymen of the last half of the seventeenth century was Vicar-General Sir Thomas Parr, whose strongly marked idiosyncrasies make themselves apparent in quaint entries in the Register of Kirk Malew, where he was Vicar from 1641 to 1691. He was a man of good life who faithfully performed his obligations to Church and parishioners. But he was humourless, with a niggling cantankerous vein in his character, which sometimes brought him into conflict with his flock and his brethren.

A complaint he made against a churchwarden in 1674 is revealing and typical:

‘Sir,’ he writes to the Ecclesiastical Judge, ‘som of our wardens take great bouldness and regard nothings that I say but will doe as they please, fighting and undervaluing me; the cover of the pulpit and cushion [that] was made two yeeres and wanted but a fringe; and the thrid of the same being culloured before Christmas, the workman Chas Voas came to Wm. Carrowne, warden, for bonds to pay for the same; haveing the money in his hande [he] would not pay nor come to the Church to see the cover put up; he refused and said he would not neglect his owne worke and when the workman tould him that I would have it done for Christmas he said, “What care I for Sir Thomas I care not for him. I will do nothings for him,” and disdained me very much.  
Thomas Parre.’

He was for a long time at cross purposes with the vicar of the neighbouring parish of Kirk Arbory, who was a Scot named Sam Robinson. How he got the living is not recorded, for he was doubly unsuitable, not only because he could not speak Manx—an indispensable qualification for the incumbent of a Manx parish then and for long afterwards—but also because he was not a good exemplar of important Christian virtues. The Kirk Arbory people complained that he did not preach either in Manx or English and that when he tried to read a homily in the native language they were unable to make out what he was saying.

- 124 His wife was successful in picking up a little Manx, not all of the right kind, which she used irritatingly in wordy battles with Mrs. Parr, and once when her husband was suspended for his conduct, she cried, ‘*Lane y mollagh* (A full curse) on the parish!’ as the Kirk Arbory wardens plaintively protested, ‘exclaiming against the parish that did them noe harme but bore too longe with them.’

On one occasion in 1675 Robinson appeared to get the better of the argument with the Vicar-General, who had the reputation of being fond of money. Sir Thomas had supplied the church of Kirk Arbory when its vicar was in disgrace, and in due course asked the parish sumner to claim his fee. Robinson asserted, quite untruthfully (as it turned out) that it had been demanded during service time, and wrote to the Vicar-General with a show of virtuous indignation:

Sir Thomas

If you were as serious in studying the gift of the Holy Ghost as you are upon the contrivance of money I hope I should not be disturbed with your orders upon the Lord’s Day in time of service, nor the people neither; however I shall only make application what was said to Simon the Sorcerer, Acts VIII, 20, and leave it to be read at leisure; and for further confirmation be pleased to consult with the new Catechism, p. 166. If I have done you any injury I begg your pardon and rest

Yours  
Sam Robinson.

Robinson took the oath of allegiance to the Island Lord and laws and became a naturalised Manxman, but retained to the end the defects of character which had alienated his Arbory flock. He was suspended for the last time in 1708 for calling the highly respected Deemster Parr a Church robber, and died four years later.

He had survived into an age which frowned on the boisterous social interchanges of the century that was past; and if the occupants, male or female, of the eighteenth century vicarages and parsonages chose to disagree with their colleagues and their parishioners they usually conducted themselves in a genteel manner according to the temper of the times.

#### STIPENDS

125 Bishop Barrow who had found so many weaknesses in his diocese fortunately did not stop at criticism and penal remedies for the sickness of the Church. He says that the salary of a parish priest was only £5 or £6 a year, and that sometimes as in the cases of the Vicars of Kirk Santan and Rushen he was reduced to keep an alehouse for addition to his income. The Bishop was well aware of the effect of poverty on the outlook and actions of the average man. With great energy he proceeded by various ways to increase clerical salaries, and by 1686 every parish priest was assured of at least £17 per annum, which appears to have been considered a competence at that time. In addition he raised a fund to provide an income for an Academic school in Castletown with four free scholarships for boys intended for the Church.

A free Grammar school established in 1707 provided a similar education in Douglas; and most eighteenth century Manxmen in public life were educated at one or other of these schools. Shortly before the Rev. Philip Moore died in 1783, he was able to declare with pardonable pride that, with four exceptions, every clergyman serving in the Manx Church at that time had been trained by him at the Douglas School. 'Two things above all,' he says, gave him satisfaction, when he viewed his life in retrospect, 'that I had a capital hand and concern in the Manx Scriptures, and was instrumental in the education of several ingenious, sensible and pious young men.'

Philip, like his elder brother Edward Moore, was educated at Douglas. Both entered the Church, and both in their early years of manhood exhibited the defects of their times, and the easy-going complacency of the sceptical eighteenth century. When curate of Marown Philip got into Bishop Wilson's bad books by masquerading one night in the ruins of St. Trinian's to scare the country people, and then show them how wrong they were in their belief in the famous Buggane. But his escapade irritated rather than changed the Marown people in their superstitions. In maturity however he acquired a reputation for scholarship and virtuous living, and became

the valued friend of two great bishops Wilson and Hildesley. He was incidentally the most noted Manx pluralist, being at once Chaplain of Douglas, Master of the Grammar School, Chaplain to the Bishop, Private Chaplain to the Duke of Atholl, and Rector of Ballaugh and Bride in succession.

Obviously he could not fill these positions simultaneously with reasonable efficiency, and he aroused the anger of his Ballaugh parishioners by his failure to provide the services for which they were tithed. And in 1762 when similar complaints of neglect came from Kirk Bride, even his intimate and indulgent friend, Bishop Hildesley, was compelled to remind him that 'We must not think to enjoy our preferments without care and trouble.'

#### EDWARD MOORE

126 Edward Moore in the first years of his curacy at Kirk Andreas was also adversely criticised for negligence of duty, but later, appears to have reformed, and joined his brother as a valued assistant of Bishop Wilson. He became a Vicar-General and spent the last years of his life as Vicar of Kirk Michael. He left behind him an interesting little account book which he kept at Kirk Andreas for several years from 1727, and which throws some light on life there.

In addition to the barn, cow-house, and ox-house, there were a lime-kiln, drying kiln for corn and malt, and a brewhouse. The work of cultivating the glebe and some other fields was done by a manservant and boy, hired by the year. The man's wages ranged from 20s. per annum in 1728 to 33s. in 1733, together with food and lodging. When hired he received earnest money to seal the bargain, the amount varying from 2d. to 12d. In addition a *dhooragh* or present was also given—generally a pair of old breeches.

Boys naturally got much less. In 1733 John Christian was hired for 9s. per annum and a pair of old breeches; and when advances had been made to his father for clothing there was not much left—a petticoat (short coat), cost ls. 2d.; russet breeches, 1s. 9d.; a hat, ls. 2d.; a buckle for his neck-cloth, 3d.; shoes, 3s.

The domestic staff at the Rectory consisted of a maid who got 20s. a year, and earnest money of 7d. when she was engaged. On several occasions a girl was hired to assist the maid. In 1730, for instance, Ann Moore was engaged for 8s. a year, but as in the case of the boy most of the sum disappeared in 5 yds. of stuff for her gown; 4 yds. of linen, 1s. 10d.; a bodice, 1s. 2d.; 1 yd. of material for an apron, 10d.; a total of 7s. 11d., leaving 1d. for luxuries for the whole of the year.

Apparently conditions were not very attractive, or perhaps the curate was not fortunate in his choice, for his hired servants, domestic and outside, did not remain more than a year or two.

The clergy had the privilege known as 'Bridge and Staff'; that is to say, a servant who had come to them voluntarily, could not be 'yarded' by those privileged officials—the Deemsters, Moars and Coroners—who until 1777 had the legal right to conscript for their service one or more servants who took their fancy.

A good deal of casual labour was employed on the glebe, the pay, with food, varying from 2d. to 5d. a day. Threshing with flails went on at intervals throughout the year, as corn was needed for food, at 2d. a day. It was done by two workers—sometimes women—who stood opposite to one another at the threshing floor, and struck alternate blows with their sticks at the heads of the corn lying between them. The grain was winnowed, and then dried on the floor of the kiln.

- 127 Edward Moore grew wheat, rye, barley, oats, hemp, potatoes and pease; and in his notebook names the fields he grew them in. One called the *Faaie-ny-Oalan*, 'the field of the Holy Wafer,' according to tradition was consecrated, and always used in the Middle Ages for growing the wheat for the sacramental bread; but the notebook shows that barley and rye were sown in it during Moore's occupation.

Twopence with food was the daily wage for various labouring work like hedging, breaking lime-stones to burn in the kiln, thatching turf stacks, setting potatoes and gorsing the folds. The folds or *booillyn* were temporary small enclosures in which cattle were kept for a week or two until they had eaten the grass and had manured the ground. Cutting turf in the Archdeacon's turf *lag* below the Guilcagh, drying malt, and harvesting corn and hay, were paid at the higher rate of 4d. per day.

#### THE MELLIA

In 1728 Edward writes in his notebook: 'Aug. 29th we cut down the last of the glebe corn and had the melleh brought in,' the Mellia, of course, being the last sheaf of corn cut, and decorated with ribbons, carried in by one of the workers to grace the table at the harvest feast. He sets down the number of stooks of corn and pease as being 384 of 12 sheaves each, and the number of working days to cut down the corn and bind it was 81 at 4d. a day, a total cost of £1 7s.

He also gives the result of the harvest in 1729, the 'Melleh' taking place on the same day of the month as in the previous year—August 29th. The number of stooks has increased from 384 to 426, and, with a full heart, he writes, *Deus et Gracia Deo optimo et maximo!* 'Praise and thanks to God best and greatest!'

## CONCLUSION

The two centuries under review produced not only individual divines of note like William Walker, James Wilks and Philip Moore, but also remarkable examples of families with a long history of service to the Church.

Thomas Allen, a Puritan clergyman from Norwich, was the first of six of his family to take Orders, all but one following in succession as Vicars of Kirk Maughold from 1625 to 1754, and maintaining the tradition for piety and sober living created by the founder of the family.

At least eight descendants of Robert Parr of Parville in Kirk Arbory who died in 1645, entered the Manx Church. Five Cosnahans, Vicars of Kirk Santan, lie under the famous great stone in the parish churchyard; and the Crowes and Curgheys of 128 Lezayre and the Norrises of Ballanorris in Kirk Arbory appear as often in the lists of parish incumbents.

Nearly all the eighteenth century clergy had benefited from the humanistic education afforded by the schools at Douglas and Castletown, and Bishop Hildesley found them, as he told the Archbishop of York in 1762, 'Almost without exception a very sensible, decent set of men.'

The eighteenth century saw a great increase in the material prosperity of the Island, and the clergy shared in the growing amenities of life, though for a period between 1735 and 1757 a claim made by the Duke of Atholl deprived them of a large part of their income and reduced some of them to destitution. Even as late as 1832 Governor Smelt could write that only four church livings were worth more than £100 a year.

But the position of the clergy in the national life during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is not to be measured by the size of their emoluments. In the greater part of the two hundred years under consideration none of the other learned professions enjoyed the respect of the Manx community. It was the clergy, generally, who taught in the schools, the few lay schoolmasters being, for the most part, failures from other occupations.

The medical profession was still struggling towards a modest respectability; but had not yet rid itself entirely from the imputation of charlatanism of which it had been accused in former times.

There were no professional lawyers until the middle of the eighteenth century. 'It is but of late years wrote Bishop Wilson, 'that attornies and such as gain by strife have even forced themselves into business.'

A great responsibility, therefore, of providing spiritual and intellectual illumination for the people, rested on the Church; and if, at times, its ministers, following the

way of human nature, may have deviated a little from their appointed course and the light burned dim, in the result they exercised a supremely important influence for good upon the life of the Manx community.

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