

STANLEY HILL ON THE MANX LANGUAGE (1931)

To the Editor of the *Mona's Herald*

Dear Sir,—During a year's residence in the Isle of Man, the saddest and the most heart-breaking thing to me seemed to be the sure and steady demise of the Manx tongue. This tragedy was again brought to my notice by a column in one of the daily papers this morning concerning the efforts of the Manx Society to keep alive their Gaelic speech. I am convinced that only the strongest action by Tynwald can now be of the slightest avail. The experience of the Irish Free State in these matters would surely be at their disposal. The Manx tongue is vital to the Manx people, the loss of their language is the first and surest step to their loss of individuality as a nation. When Ireland became an independent nation they realised their responsibility by starting on the restoration of the national tongue. Cannot Mann, which has never known anything else but independence, show that it realises its responsibility in the same way.

The three Goidelic tongues are mutually intelligible, and to know Manx is to know not merely one language but to know three languages. The Island must decide whether it is to fall completely under Saxon culture or whether it is to look westwards and northwards.

The time to act is now; the Manx people must be made to realise the spiritual value of their language at once. Our Manx speakers must be turned into teachers at once, the churches must help in this battle against materialism, the people must be made familiar with the sound and appearance of the Manx language. Children must be taught their native language at home and at school, and to hear and understand Manx in church. Their diet should include a good amount of Gaelic literature.

This will not be achieved without trouble and expense, the materialist will be certain to grumble most bitterly, the pessimists will lapse into their century old apathy, there will be the usual cry that the precious smattering of continental languages that the child is given at school (to enable him to understand continental culture) will be in serious danger and that he will be able to forget and ignore it more easily (if that be possible) than he does at present after leaving school.

The people of the adjacent islands must be made to realise that a language exists in the Isle of Man, the B.B.C. must be approached and their help enlisted that they may place Manx on a similar footing to that of Welsh.

This Island, this splendid geographical and economic microcosm, is in danger of a most dismal and awful tragedy. Only the most drastic and immediate action can avert it.—Yours truly,

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King William's College)
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Stephen Miller