

ARCHIBALD CREGEEN, A DICTIONARY OF THE MANKS LANGUAGE, 1835

PREFACE

[iii] The following Vocabulary of the Manks language has been compiled with considerable labour and assiduity. It is designed to facilitate the attainment of that ancient language, and to furnish the reader not only with a variety of vocables, idiomatic phrases, and proverbial expressions, but also the outlines of a Manks Grammar.

That a language so venerable for its antiquity and so estimable on many accounts should be so generally neglected, is much to be lamented. The consequence of this neglect has been, that numerous corruptions have crept into the dialect in general use, and so many anglicisms been adopted, that the Manks is now seldom spoken or written in its original purity. Despised and neglected, however, as the language appears to be at present, it is susceptible of high improvement, and justly entitled to the attention of the scholar. The sublime strains of OSSIAN mark the capabilities of the language, and commend it to the regard of the philologist as a subject of curious enquiry, and deserving accurate investigation.

At the present period, when this interesting little Island promises to become once more the abode of science and literature, it is hoped that Gaelic learning will revive, and that every facility will be afforded for the acquisition of a language so essentially necessary within the precincts of Mona to the students of Divinity, and the students of Law. To both these classes, it is presumed, the compilation now offered to the public will prove an important acquisition. Such a publication has long been a desideratum in Manks literature, and possesses fair claims to general acceptance. Whilst the natives of Wales and the natives of North Britain are enthusiastically attached to the language of their forefathers, let it not be said that the natives of Mona regard *Chengey ny mayrey Vannin veg veen* with disgraceful apathy and heartless indifference. As long as the Manks Bible and the Manks Liturgy remain they will testify that our ancestors thought and felt more correctly.

[iv] Amongst the numerous literary advantages which 'King William's College' is expected to afford the sons of Mona, it is devoutly to be wished that the cultivation of the vernacular tongue be not overlooked. The establishment of a professorship for that specific object would be highly desirable,—such an arrangement would be perfect unison with the pious and benevolent design of the Founder of the Academic Fund, whose primary object appears to have been to prepare candidates for the Holy Ministry in the Isle of Man, and thus promote the highest and best interests of the country.

If the following work should contribute in the smallest degree to advance so important an end, the Compiler will have reason to regard his labour as well bestowed.

INTRODUCTION

[v] I am well aware that the utility of the following work will be variously appreciated by my brother Manksmen. Some will be disposed to deride the endeavour to restore vigour to a decaying language. Those who reckon the extirpation of the Manks a necessary step towards that general extension of the English, which they deem essential to the interest of the Isle of Man, will condemn every effort which seems likely to retard its extinction.

But those will think otherwise who consider that there are thousands of the natives of the Island that can at present receive no useful knowledge whatever, except through the medium of the Manks language; they will judge from experience, as well as from the nature of the case, that no work of this description will hinder the progress of the English, but in fact bare the contrary effect.

It is obvious, that when tribes of men are intermixed who speak different languages, a great part of the knowledge which man should afford his neighbour must lie diminished. The Magistrate cannot address his suitors,—the Pastor his flock, but through the imperfect medium of an interpreter. Lawyers, Divines, Physicians, Merchants, Manufacturers, and Farmers, all feel more or less this inconvenience when they transact business with whom they have no language in common.

To remedy such defect, the following Manks Dictionary, with the corresponding words in English, may, it is hoped by the Compiler, contribute in some degree to facilitate the acquisition of both the Manks and English languages; and if received with indulgence, may be followed by its counterpart, "ENGLISH RENDERED INTO MANKS."

To place the present publication within the reach of the peasantry of the Isle of Man, it has been greatly abridged from what was at first proposed by the author; notwithstanding which, it is hoped will give general satisfaction, and be a standing memorial of that very ancient language—the Manks or Gaelic, to generations yet unborn; as it may with a degree of truth be asserted that we have little more than two-thirds of the language preserved in the published translation if the Scriptures and the Church Liturgy.

The following Remarks of Reference, with the work itself, will enable the reader to form some idea of the construction of the language.

REMARKS

(Extract)

[xv] In concluding my Observations and Remarks, I cannot but admire the construction, texture, and beauty of the Manks Language, and how the words initially change their cases, moods, tenses degrees, &c. It appears like a piece of exquisite network, interwoven together in a masterly manner, and framed by the hand of a most skilful workman, equal to the composition of the most learned, and not the production of chance.—The depth of meaning that abounds in many of the words must be conspicuous to every person versed in the language.

Having but few verbs, its brevity may be complained of by some, but this deficiency is amply supplied in the same manner as when a like want occurs in the English. When a substantive or adjective has no verb belonging to itself, another verb is placed before the noun or adjective; as *DY VE* (to be); *DY GHOAILL* (to take); *DY GEDDYN* (to get); *DY CHUR* (to give, put, send), &c.; *DY YANNOO* (to do, make, or perform), &c.

We have no verb for *MAYNREY* (happy)—neither has the English—nor its noun, *MAYNRYS* (happiness); but we say *DY VE MAYNREY* (to be happy), &c. That our ancestors (the translators of the Scriptures) were tenacious that no infringement should be made in this particular is obvious, as the Scriptures, with a few exceptions to their orthography, &c., are an invaluable work. The verb *to pray* occurs above two hundred times in the English Scriptures; yet the translators have not once used that mongrel word, *PRAYLL*, or its parent *PRAYLL*, (see Remark 79), which, and the like, are now generally used without reserve. I do not, however, allude to the Clergy, who, to their credit, always say *GOAILL PADJER*; *EC PADJER*; *JANNOO PADJERV*, &c.; and when there is no necessity, we should not borrow from the English, but endeavour to keep the language as pure as possible.

A. C.

KIRK ARBORY, 5th JUNE, 1834.

Cregeen, known in his lifetime as ‘the Kirk Arbory lexicographer,’ after the parish where he was born, was not the first to compile a Manx dictionary, that lies with John Kelly, but his was the first to appear. Kelly never saw his dictionary published in his own lifetime. Cregeen’s introductory comments, indeed the very need to defend the enterprise on which he was engaged, are a valuable source of information on elite attitudes to the language in this period. The Professorship of Manx never came about.

Stephen Miller