

Manx Notes 38 (2005)

“I DO NOT WISH YOU TO BE A TOTAL ABSTAINER” DR JOHN CLAGUE’S MEDICAL ADVICE

24 Feb 99

My dear Ernest,

I told Kermode today to send you a good cardiac tonic.

I do not wish you to be a total abstainer, I should like you to take beer or stout, which ever you prefer, with your meals, and you may take an “occasional” whiskey & soda when you think “it would do you good.”

“Ghow bine beg dy niartaghey oohene.”¹

Ta mee jerkal dy jean y boteil dy stoo lheihs frays dhyt.²

Dy firrinagh lhiats’ l Clague y Fer lhee.

Source: Letter from Dr John Clague to Canon E.B. Savage, 24 February 1899, Manx National Heritage Library, MS 09885 (unlisted).



This letter was found amongst the unsorted papers of Canon E.B. Savage and may go some way to explaining the success of Dr John Clague as a medical practitioner: regardless of what ails you, keep on drinking. The humour in the letter is engaging, and suggests that Clague knew that there really was nothing wrong with Savage at all; nothing, in any case, that the odd whiskey and soda could not cure...

STEPHEN MILLER
VIENNA, 2005



¹ “Take a little drop to strengthen yourself.”

² “I am expecting that the bottle of healing stuff will benefit you.”