

# Manx Notes 48 (2005)

“I HAVE DONE NOTHING BUT REJOICE OVER THE  
PUBLICATION OF THE MANX NATIONAL SONGS”  
REV. JOHN QUINE’S REVIEW OF  
*MANX NATIONAL SONGS* (1896)

MANX NATIONAL SONGS  
ARRANGED BY W.H. GILL

[clxi] Of late years and indeed for many years, nothing having reference to the Island and to Manx life has appeared of greater interest than Mr W.H. Gill’s *Manx National Songs*. The gentleman who has sent forth this book to the world is Deemster Gill’s brother—a true Manxman. He has long resided in London; he is an accomplished musician, associated with the activities of the best musical circles there; but has retained for the Island an affection “through absence fonder.”

“His heart is in Segovia;  
His body—in Madrid.”

A project was formed many years ago by Deemster Gill and Dr Clague to collect and preserve the national music of the Isle of Man; and Mr W.H. Gill subsequently joined them in carrying the project out. The present work is not the whole harvest; but is the first fruits of their labours. The technical forms of ancient Manx music are peculiar. Special knowledge has been necessary to adapt the old melodies to modern acceptance; and in this work [clxi col. b] that adaptation has been well effected. Mr Gill quite understands the influences that affect the rising generation of the Island. We are inundated with music. The hymnals used in church and chapel comprehend the cream of what is of universal excellence in that class. And of course there are very many musically accomplished people in the Isle of Man. Against this odds does Mr Gill hope that old Manx airs will again be sung and whistled as in old times when they were the only music known in the Island? He has no such illusion. Yet his object is not merely to preserve them from oblivion and ever-lasting silence: he believes that still the Manx people will love them and sing them,—partly because they love their island of “green hills by the sea,” and partly also because the old music has charm enough to be loved for its own sake.

In the *Diocesan Magazine* there is no space for a criticism in detail, which in any case should come from some such authority as Miss Wood or other well qualified person; but there is place for a suggestion. The “Cradle Hymn,” No. 18 in the collection, might be forthwith adopted next Christmas as a carol, and sung in every church all over the island. The hymn is by Dr Watts, and has much literary beauty; the air is Manx, “a tune aisy learnt,” that is to say very melodious and taking. Also the admirable hymn of the Manx Fishermen, the subject being the Harvest of the sea, might be used at harvest Thanksgiving Services. There are other tunes also that

in Sunday schools might well be revived and with almost certain success. And who knows but that half a century hence in a score or a hundred far away parts of the world their echoes will be recalling in Manx hearts “The Island” of home and youth and memory? Why should there not be a rousing of Manx feeling into love and pride of our *Ellan Vannin veg veen*—our dear little Isle of Man?

JOHN QUINE

**Source:** Rev. John Quine, “Manx National Songs,” *Manx Church Magazine* vi (1896): clxi.



The Rev. Quine was seen by one person at least as being the pseudonymous reviewer of *Manx National Songs* (1896) in the *Manx Sun* (see *Manx Notes* 46 and 47). Reproduced here is his review of the book in the *Manx Church Magazine* for 1896. If Quine was indeed the reviewer then he was playing a double game, both damning and praising *Manx National Songs*, although not in equal measure as can easily be appreciated.

STEPHEN MILLER  
VIENNA, 2005

