

Manx Notes 206 (2015)

ANNE GEDDES GILCHRIST
TWELVE MANX FOLK SONGS *

(1929)

TWELVE MANX FOLK SONGS with Manx-Gaelic and English Words. Translated by Mona Douglas. Arranged with Pianoforte Accompaniment by ARNOLD FOSTER. Price 2/6. London: Stainer and Bell.

This is a sincere, praiseworthy, and welcome attempt to introduce to musicians and singers not only a well-chosen selection of Manx folk-tunes, but also the original songs to which they were sung. In the collection of fifty-one *Manx National Songs* published in 1896, about half-a-dozen only—such as “The Sheep under the Snow” and “Mylecharane”—were set to words which were any sort of rendering of the original Manx songs, and few bore any relation whatever—unless a mistaken one—to them. The song-words included English lyrics by Dr Watts, Sir Walter Scott, Hogg, Byron, Hood, and even Martin Tupper, thus obliterating any Manx suggestion in their tunes. Speaker A.W. Moore’s collection, published about the same time, contained the old Manx words with their tunes, as noted from folk-singers, but the music was printed separately at the end of the book, and some of the ballads, though given unaltered, were too long or too fragmentary for the modern singer, and the English translations were unrhymed.

Now, for the first time, we have a collection of twelve Manx folk-songs treated as folk-songs, not merely folk-airs, for actual performance, and arranged in a singable and also an artistic and musicianly way by one of our own members, Mr Arnold Foster; while in Miss Douglas we have a Manxwoman not only familiar with Manx-Gaelic but herself a poet, and possessing the necessary gift for translating her island tongue into English verse, and reducing the originals to a convenient and usable form for both Manx and English singers.

As Miss Douglas says in her preface, musical opinion has changed since Manx songs were first collected, and most people will now agree with her that these original Manx folk-words are both of value in themselves and fit the airs better than more sophisticated verses—however pleasing in themselves—could do.

Some of the songs are to be arranged for S. A. T. B. chorus; and string orchestra parts for the accompaniments add to the interest of, and will, it may be hoped, extend general acquaintance with this admirable little selection of Manx folk-songs.

* A.G. Gilchrist, “Twelve Manx Folk Songs.” *Journal of the Folk-Song Society* 8.3 (1929): 170. Under review: Mona Douglas, *Twelve Manx Folk Songs with Manx Gaelic and English Words: Translated by Mona Douglas, Arranged with Pianoforte Accompaniment by Arnold Foster*. Set 1. London: Stainer & Bell, 1928.

It is a pity that the printer has blundered on the cover. “Manx, Gaelic, and English” words should of course be “Manx-Gaelic and English,” as here corrected.—AGG.

