

Manx Notes 259 (2017)

THE REVIVAL OF THE MANX LANGUAGE (1) THE ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER CORRESPONDENCE (1898)

THE ISLE OF EXAMINER CORRESPONDENCE JULY–DECEMBER 1898

1. Pseud [signed as “Manninagh Veg”]. “Plea for the Revival of the Manx Language.” *Isle of Man Examiner* 2 July 1898: [2]e. Refers to “The Irish Language Movement,” *Isle of Man Examiner* 25 June 1898: [2]c.
2. Evan R. Evans, “The Manx Language: Can it be revived?” *Isle of Man Examiner* 27 August 1898: [2]f.
3. Henry Duke, “The Nation and the Language Decaying!” *Isle of Man Examiner* 10 September 1898: [3]b.
4. Pseud [signed as “Manxman”]. “A Practical Man’s View.” *Isle of Man Examiner* 10 September 1898: [3]b.
5. E.E. Fournier, “The Manx Language. Can it be revived? Is it worth reviving? The opinion of an authority.” *Isle of Man Examiner* 1 October 1898: [2]e.
6. Pseud [signed as “Manninagh Beg”]. “The Manx Language.” *Isle of Man Examiner* 8 October 1898: [8]e.
7. J.J. Kneen, “Should the Manx Language be revived?” *Isle of Man Examiner* 5 November 1898: [3]a–b.
8. G.W. Wood, “The Manx Language.” *Isle of Man Examiner* 10 December 1898: [6]a.

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I. MANNINAGH VEG, “PLEA FOR THE REVIVAL OF THE MANX LANGUAGE,” ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER (2 JULY 1898)

SIR,—Whilst perusing the contents of your valuable journal last week, I saw the report of a meeting in aid of the Irish Language Movement, in which I became deeply interested.* After reflecting upon the report for a while, the thought occurred to me, why could not something of this kind be done for the Manx language? Has the love for their “Chengey-ny-mayrey” completely expired in the breasts of Manxmen? To use the words of the late Tom Brown, “The Manx language, though now neglected and almost forgotten, is a fine old language, rich and musical, full of meaning and expression. This he did not assert from his own knowledge alone, but on the authority of those more deeply versed in the language than himself.

* “The Irish Language Movement,” *Isle of Man Examiner* 25 June 1898: [2]c. Reproduced in the Appendix.

Manxmen, therefore, might be justly proud of it, and surely some respect is due from them, even to its noble remains. They should remember that in this old language their forefathers had prayed and preached, traded and bargained, bought and sold. In this old language they had rejoiced and mourned. In this old language the young people had made love under the trammon tree, while the old people sat chatting in the same old language by the cosy fireside, Manxmen ought, therefore, to take a deep interest in this, their native language, rendered doubly dear to them by so many happy associations; and none can help regretting that a language so strong and forcible, so rife with living power, should now be so far dead and gone that if it was uttered in a congregation of our townsmen it would, to a majority of them, be an unintelligible jargon, an unmeaning conglomeration of sounds.”

Surely, after such an appeal as this by one of Mannin’s greatest bards, and one of the most intellectual writers of modern times, Manx people ought to stir themselves up, and make a last brave effort to resuscitate their dying mother tongue, and so retain their nationality, which must necessarily pass away if their native language is allowed to do so. In Wales the young people can converse in Welsh and English fluently, and their mother tongue does not seem to be an obstacle to them when learning English, When conversing among themselves it is all Welsh they use. Even the children playing in the streets use it, but if you put a query to them in English they will promptly answer you in that language. The Gaelic Leagues in Ireland and Scotland have thousands of pupils learning their native languages; whilst in the West of Ireland there are thousands who cannot speak any other language but that which was left to them as an heritage by their forefathers.

But what are they doing in Man for their native language? Calmly sitting by its death bed waiting for it to pass away without making an effort to save its life; watching it growing thinner day by day until it has become a mere skeleton. Oh, cruel fate, and still more cruel people! Is this the respect ye have for the language of your forefathers? Is this the way ye treat the noblest heritage which they have bestowed upon you?

I believe there are many people on the Island who would be proud to be able to converse in their native tongues, and if facilities were afforded for learning it they would avail themselves of the opportunity to do so. I have heard many young men of my own acquaintance declare that they would like to be able to converse in Manx.

Could not, the Manx Society try and do something to revive their native language by establishing adult night schools for the teaching of Manx, and opening competitions, and awarding prizes for the best essays; by publishing and diffusing cheap Manx literature; by endeavouring to form societies and classes throughout the Island; by trying to make the elder people take an interest in teaching their children to converse in Manx, and by trying to introduce Manx teachers in schools and various other ways which they may think practicable. I would suggest that Celtic literature be translated into Manx and published as cheaply as possible, so that Manx

people could read in their native language the history, literature, and traditions of the great Celtic race from which they have sprung. Insular journals might take a pattern from the Irish papers, and devote a column in Manx each week to current topics, with a translation in English opposite, Manx services also might be revived in the churches and chapels of the Island.

I should like to hear the opinions of some of your numerous readers upon this subject. Perhaps some of the suggestions which I have made would be impossible at first, but if success was ultimately achieved, and the Manx language again heard in Ellan Vannin, those who had been instrumental in saving it from the oblivion into which it is rapidly disappearing, would have the pleasure of knowing that they had restored the nationality of their native land, and won the esteem and regard of coming generations of "Manninee."

MANNINAGH VEG.

2. EVAN R. EVANS, "THE MANX LANGUAGE: CAN IT BE REVIVED?" ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER (27 AUGUST 1898)

It is with extreme pleasure that we give a place to the following letter, written by one of the literary staff of the *Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald*. The writer says that "authorities" give it as a fact that barely 3,000 persons to-day speak Manx. We think the number given is too high by one-fifth, at least. The Manx language is fast dying out, and unless a very strenuous effort is made, at once, it will have died out in a few years' time. In Ireland and in Scotland there is at present a wonderful revival taking place in the native languages; while in Wales, as Mr Evans shows in the letter below, the majority of the people speak Welsh daily. If the revival is possible in Ireland and Scotland, why not in Mann? Of course, besides the question, Can the Manx Language be Revived? there is also the question, Is it worth Reviving? Both questions are important ones, and as to the merits of each we leave our patriotic leaders to determine. Correspondence on the subject is invited, and we should be glad if correspondents attached their names for publication.

[TO THE EDITOR]

Sir,—I read with interest your remarks In last week's Examiner relative to the Manx language. As a patriotic Celt I greatly deplore the "dying out" of the beautiful Manx, which is so closely allied to my own native Welsh—being in fact one of the two branches of the Celtic tongue. The highest authorities give it as a fact that barely 3,000 people speak Manx.

WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF THIS

I have spent a most enjoyable week in your delightful little Island, but have failed to come across many who claimed to be able to carry on a sustained conversation in their native tongue, though a large number could give me the Manx equivalents for English words. This is not so in Wales. There from 50 to 60 per cent, speak and

think and write in Welsh, and in many parts—especially in the agricultural and slate quarry districts—there are a large majority who cannot speak English. Even in those parts of Wales where English is utilized side by side with the Welsh, and where all can make use of both languages,

THE PATRIOTIC CYMRO

much prefers to speak in Welsh, and he invariably worships and praises God in the vernacular. A Welshman takes pride in his language, and even though he may have been born in English towns, and has not obtained those advantages for acquiring it as the native did, he feels almost ashamed to own that he cannot speak Welsh, and hastens to learn the language of the people. This has not always been the case; but of late years the nation has, as one man, awakened to a sense of its responsibilities. Societies innumerable have been established, each of which uses the Welsh National Eisteddfod as a pivot to create interest in all that is exclusively, patriotically, and nationally Welsh. The result has been that in most of the board schools

WELSH IS TAUGHT

as a class subject; and Welshmen in Wales, and indeed in many English towns where there is a fairly large Welsh population, are able to demand higher wages than those who speak English only. The patriotic feeling runs high to-day, and like the incoming tide it sweeps all that is anti-Welsh before it.

The Welsh newspapers, magazines, periodicals, and books foster this feeling. They have a large and influential circulation, and mould public opinion far more than do the newspapers which are printed in English, simply because they enjoy a larger circulation, and appeal more directly to the hearts of the people. Wales has become a power in the United Kingdom which even the monoglot Saxon dare not with impunity ignore, and what the “gallant” little Principality has done the Manx can do with perseverance and determination.

An effort is to be made to call together next autumn a

PAN-CELTIC CONGRESS

at Dublin, where representatives of Man, Ireland, Scotland, Brittany, and Wales will meet for the purpose of discussing the best way of welding together the people of *Celtia*. It is to be hoped that the residents of the Isle of Man will endeavour to do something in support of this movement; and, if it is not too late, create

A PATRIOTIC REVIVAL

which will keep their language a distinctive feature of themselves. A nation that loses its language loses also its chief characteristic, and becomes a part and parcel, mentally, as well as physically, of its nearest and most powerful neighbour.—
Faithfully yours,

EVAN R. EVANS.

Journalist, Carnarvon.

3. HENRY DUKE, "THE NATION AND THE LANGUAGE DECAYING!" ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER (10 SEPTEMBER 1898)

SIR,—In your issue of yesterday's date, you print a letter written by Mr Evan R. Evans, relating to the Manx language; you also invite correspondence on this subject. Perhaps I am not possessed of the qualifications necessary to pronounce an opinion on this question, but my fugitive ideas humbly expressed may possibly incite the opinions of more learned and expert writers. The science of Philology is very speculative, therefore contradictory and complex, and being a busy man I have not time to consult any writers on the subject, so must ask any others who join the discussion to be generous to any erroneous statement I may make, as time will not allow me to look up or quote authorities. The tongue of the race or nation to which Mr Evans belongs is called Cwmrye, and may be a branch of the Aryan people who came to Europe from Asia at a time which does not greatly concern our subject. Cwmyric is a dialect of the Keltic race, just as Manx is; this opinion, I believe, is generally held.

In the columns of this journal I have from time to time deplored the decay of the Manx language, and now another representative of the Celtic race takes the matter up. Wales, in the first place, has a population of one and a half millions of people, while the population of the Isle of Man is 55,000, or less than *one-twentieth* of the population of Wales. Here, then, is a very active factor in favour of Wales preserving the language of her progenitors, for after all, numbers are potent. Again, the Isle of Man is isolated, and, except for a few months in the summer, is practically forgotten by the peoples of the larger islands. Some one will say that this ought to foster the Manx tongue; in my opinion it does nothing of the kind. The Welsh nation is largely engaged in mining or agricultural pursuits, the Manx nation is chiefly engaged in catering for the wants of the visitor, and I regret to say that contact with the visitor has more to do with the decay of the Manx language than any other factor I know of. In Wales this is not the case. Once the chief industries of the Isle of Man were farming and fishing; now they fish and farm lodgers. Homely and robust people once, are now simply cadging machines, and in a hybrid way imitating the speech and manners of their patrons. It would be amusing, only for its pathos, to hear people whom I knew twenty years ago as good honest specimens of Manx folk, talk in a jargon, a mixture between a Bolton weaver and a Manchester counter-jumper, with just a trace of the old home-spun vernacular.

Wales has thirty representatives at Westminster, almost without exception patriotic Welshmen. The Isle of Man has no such good fortune. Even her official s are less Manx than English. Wales has a literature, the Isle of Man has none. Of course I do not consider novels of the guide-book type as literature. Besides the influence of the Keltic literature has left its mark upon the writings of Chaucer and Shakespeare; and in our own time Tennyson, who no doubt was inspired by Keltic legend when he wrote "Idylls of the King."

Again, Wales has an annual event which is absolutely national. I mean the Eistedfodd. In this we see the ancient tribal customs revived. Each tribe has its bard, and the oral or written traditions of that tribe are revived each year.

In the Isle of Man we have, I know, Tynwald Day, but what is it? Merely an excuse for many people to get drunk, and for a lot of thoughtless trippers to gape at a tawdry imitation of what was once the national gathering of a robust and hardy people. But there is another aspect. I am forced into the conviction that it is merely a matter of time when English will be the dominant language of the world. The Manx being a small community, they naturally become absorbed first.

Another thing, statistics prove that the rural districts of the Isle of Man are becoming depopulated, and one finds that in the larger centres not only is the language dying out, but the race itself. No Manxman can have failed to notice the growing frequency of English as against Manx names over the doors of the places of business in the towns. Old Manx families are becoming extinct, and I think one reason is that the female members of the so-called Manx aristocracy prefer to remain spinsters rather than they became the wives of Manxmen who are not born in the purple, and so their progeny is lost to the Manx nation. They prefer rather to marry someone from "across the water," who may really be earning a much less income than many a prosperous Manxman. But the god of snobbishness must be served, and this, I believe, is one of the reasons why the nation and the language are both decaying.

I trust my few desultory observations on this question will provoke a discussion which may be both interesting and profitable.—I am, sir, your humble servant,

HENRY DUKE.

Tynemouth, August 28th, 1898.

4. MANXMAN, "A PRACTICAL MAN'S VIEW," ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER (10 SEPTEMBER 1898)

SIR,—Understanding by your last issue that you invited correspondence on the subject of "The Revival of the Manx Language," I have availed myself of the opportunity of making a few remarks thereon, which I hope you will deem worthy of space in your valuable paper.

The Manx language is not, from a moral or Christian stand point, worthy to be revived. By its revival we should be recalling to mind those barbaric and despotic times in which our forefathers lived, and goodness knows we are far enough behind in the matter of progress and enlightenment without recalling to mind those barbaric ages, to be placed in contrast with our present condition.

By contrasting the times in which our ancestors lived and the present, we are able to perceive how much better off we are than were they; and no doubt the contrast may lead some people to think that we have reached the zenith of intelligence. Again, its revival means the expenditure of a vast amount of time and money, both of which are too precious to be wasted on an object which would give so little return on the

outlay. The most proper way in which to ensure its revival would be to have it taught as a class subject in the day schools of our Island; and all sensible people know, as do all school children, that there is a sufficiency of cankerous subjects taught in the schools without introducing Manx.

What are the benefits to be derived by having a knowledge of the Manx language? Will it enable as to earn a livelihood. To a few it might be useful, but to the great majority of the Manx people it would be practically useless, except the vain glory of being able to speak it.—I am, yours &c.,

MANXMAN.

Foxdale.

5. E.E. FOURNIER, "THE MANX LANGUAGE. CAN IT BE REVIVED? IS IT WORTH REVIVING? THE OPINION OF AN AUTHORITY," ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER (1 OCTOBER 1898)

SIR,—I have just seen Mr Evans' letter on the Manx Language. He puts the case very clearly, as far as the modern Celtic-revival goes. That revival is a very notable fact, and one to be reckoned with in the future. It affects some nine million people of the Celtic race, over three million of which use a Celtic language—Gaelic, Welsh, or Breton—habitually.

The leading principle of the movement is not race prejudice or old historic animosity. If it were, it could not be shared by the large number of enlightened men of Saxon, Norse, and Norman blood who hail the intellectual regeneration of the Celtic race with enthusiasm.

THE MAINSPRING OF THE MOVEMENT

is the desire to bring back to their proper position of dignity and influence those treasures of ancient literature, art, music, and folklore which the Celtic nations can claim as distinctly their own. A healthy national self-respect is the first and essential condition of national prosperity. Englishmen often ask: "Why can we not all be English and have done with it?" The Welshman answers: "Because we are no more English than you are Welsh. We cannot derive inspiration from English heroes, since they were not of our own flesh and blood, We can take no pride in English literature, since our ancestors did not help to make it. And above all, we have a language and a literature and customs and traditions all our own. Take those away from us, and our loss would be as grievous as yours would be were you deprived of Shakespeare and Milton, and Nelson and Wellington."

This spirit is being increasingly appreciated by the more enlightened English, who perceive that even from the English point of view it is better to have Wales inhabited by good Welshmen than by bad Englishmen—for a Welshman will never make a good Englishman.

The active and progressive Celtic movement began in Wales. Thence it spread to Ireland to the Scottish Highlands, and quite recently to Brittany, where a language very closely allied to Welsh is spoken by 1,300,000 people.

A FEELING OF SOLIDARITY

has sprung up among these four nations, and the time has come to take practical steps to bring about a closer understanding between them. The first public expression of this understanding will be made at the Pan-Celtic Congress which is to meet in Dublin—not next year, as Mr Evans supposes—but in 1900.

The important question now arises:

IS THE ISLE OF MAN TO BE RECOGNISED

as a Celtic nation, and invited to be represented at the Congress? The answer will depend upon the action of the Manx people themselves. To begin with, Manx is spoken by about 5 per cent, of the Manx people. In Ireland, where Irish is still at a low ebb, the Gaelic is spoken by 15 per cent, of the total population. The percentages in Wales, the Highlands, and Brittany are much higher (all over 50). Like Man, Ireland has been subject to a considerable infusion of non-Celtic blood. Hence Ireland's claim to the Celtic inheritance is not much stronger than the claim which could be advanced by the Isle of Man. Manx is a purely Celtic language, and finds its position among the other Celtic languages as follows:

Gaelic Branch: Irish, Manx, Highland Gaelic.

Cymric Branch: Welsh, Cornish (extinct), Breton.

What exists of Manx literature, folklore, songs, and proverbs, forms, I am told, a very interesting and attractive contribution to Celtic lore.

As regards the language itself, you ask: Can it be revived? and further, Is it worth reviving? The first question I should hesitate to answer in the negative, in face of the absolute wonders that have been accomplished in this way in face of the heaviest odds. The second question I should at once answer in the affirmative.

Manx is worth reviving, or at least of nurturing, cultivating, and refining; because it is your very own, the language of your forefathers, to many of you perhaps your mother tongue in the literal sense It puts you in touch with your kindred in Ireland and Scotland, who feel at home when they hear a word of their beloved Gaelic. It gives you an honourable and distinctive position in the Celtic world, a position which you can hold by right of birth, and not as the price of a servile surrender.

These are the considerations which are suggested to us on this tide of the water. Whether they find a response in Mann remains to be seen Congress committees have been formed in Ireland, Wales, Brittany, and the Highlands. Will the Kingdom of Manannan Mac Lir make the fifth and

COMPLETE THE CIRCLE?

Will the Congress at some future time assemble at Douglas? These are questions to be answered by Manxmen, as none other are competent to do so.—Yours very truly,

E.E. FOURNIER.

Hon. Sec., Pan-Celtic Congress.
Dalkey, Co. Dublin, Sept. 24.

6. MANNINAGH BEG, "THE MANX LANGUAGE," ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER (8 OCTOBER 1898)

SIR,—Reading Mr Fournier's letter on Manx Language, in your valuable journal last week, I was very pleased with the spirited and patriotic tone in which he writes. If we had a few Manxmen of Mr Fournier's stamp, the Manx Language would not be so little spoken as it is at present. The principal question is: what can be done to make Manx people take an interest in reviving their dying mother tongue? Mr Fournier has very ably answered the question, "Is it worth reviving?" The only question that remains to be answered is, "Can it be revived, and what are the best means of reviving it?" Mr Fournier seems to be of the opinion that it is not impossible to revive it, and every patriotic Manxman must concur with him in this opinion. There are many able Manx scholars in the Island who could do a great deal towards reviving their Chengey-ny-Mayrey if they could only receive the inspiration which has seized their brethren in other parts of Celtic who have been quite enthusiastic over the revival of their native languages. Could not public meetings be organised to consider this very interesting subject, and to devise the best means of preventing the decay of the national language of Manx. If there is anything to be done in this direction, prompt action must be taken, ere the grave closes over the noble remains of the beautiful language of our forefathers. It is sincerely to be hoped that something will be done during the ensuing winter by forming evening classes, delivering lectures, etc. By the way, I hear that Mr Kneen, of the Seamen's Bethel, is starting evening classes for teaching Manx. I wish him every success in his undertaking, and I hope that he will be warmly supported. It would also be very desirable if a deputation of Manxmen could be sent to the Pan-Celtic Congress of 1900. Surely we would not have the other four Celtic nations point the finger of scorn towards us and say, "There are some of our brethren in yonder Isle who despise the language of their forefathers. Gladly would we extend a hand to welcome them, but they refuse to recognise us as their brethren; they have become aliens and outcasts from their race." Let not this be said of us, but let us unite as a nation and endeavour to preserve the heritage which our forefathers have bestowed upon us.

MANNINAGH BEG.

7. J.J. KNEEN, "SHOULD THE MANX LANGUAGE BE REVIVED?" ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER (5 NOVEMBER 1898)

[3a] To the above question I at once answer in the affirmative. But some will say, "You have no practical reasons for advocating its revival? Of what use is the Manx language to us now? Let it go." *O Tempora, O Mores!* Is this the way ye Manxmen

treat the language of your ancestors—the language which has been spoken by your race from time immemorial?

As far as practical reasons are concerned. I think there are many things practised in every day life for which no practical reason seems deducible. There are a great many luxuries with which we could dispense, and if practical reason was stringently observed in everything, I think that life would be very dull indeed. Then it will be asked, “What are your reasons for wishing it to be revived?” To this I would answer, “Because it is our national language—the language which was spoken by our forefathers.” The late Tom Brown, in a lecture upon the “Proverbial literature of the Manx language,” said:

“He loved and respected his language, though it was now almost forgotten; so much so, indeed, that no doubt he would be looked upon almost as a resurrection man for daring to disturb it, for attempting to revive it, and for introducing to their notice this ghost of a now neglected language. However, though now neglected and almost forgotten, he would boldly assert that it was a fine old language, rich and musical, full of meaning and expression. This he did not assert from his own knowledge alone, but on the authority of those more deeply versed in the language than himself. Manxmen, therefore, might be justly proud of it, and surely some respect was due from them, even to its noble remains. They should remember that in this old language their forefathers had prayed and preached, traded and bargained, bought and sold: in this old language they had rejoiced and mourned; in this old language the young people had made love under the trammon tree, while the old people sat chatting in the same old language by the cosy fireside. Manxmen ought, therefore, to take a deep interest in this, their native language, rendered doubly dear to them by so many happy associations: and none could help regretting that a language so strong and forcible, so rife with living power, should now be so far dead and gone that if it was uttered in a congregation of our townsmen it would, to a majority of them, be an unintelligible jargon, an unmeaning conglomeration of sounds. Still, if it was a dying language they should at least show some respect to it; and if it must be buried, they would bury it with military honours, they would fire a salute over its grave, and raise an affectionate epitaph to its memory.”

Then if our national language must go, we should try and preserve it as long as possible. What do we do with an old relic which has been in the family for generations—an old armchair, for instance, around which our grandfather or grandmother played when they were children? Do we ruthlessly destroy it? No, but guard it with jealous care, even if it is of no more further use to us. Then should we not guard our

NATIONAL LANGUAGE

with infinitely more care? If a friend or relation is dying, do we not make the greatest efforts to prolong their lives? Then should we not make a last great effort to preserve

our national language from further decay. Is not a nation's language one of the greatest friends which has been given to man by the Creator?

Some people talk about a universal language. For my part I think there will never be a universal language as long as man exists. It is contrary to the laws of nature, it is contrary to the writings of the Scriptures, and it is contrary to both ancient and modern history. According to Scriptural history, there was at one time a universal language, which was divided into several languages at the building of the tower of Babel. Why was this so? Did the Almighty simply do it to prevent them from building the tower? If this would have been the case, the original language would have been restored to their descendants. But it is not so: for there are thousands of dialects in the world at the present time which have been proved by philologists to have sprung from four or five great parents.

According to the researches of modern science, we find that such a theory is directly opposed to the laws of nature. Wherever life is found throughout the universe, there also is found its grim companion death. So it is with languages. At one period of the world's history we find Celtic, Teutonic, and Gothic the prevailing languages. Coming to a later period, we find these divided into fifteen or twenty groups; and, arriving at modern times, we find that some of these have become extinct, while others have sprung into existence. As for language itself, a learned writer observes, that "language, as well as the faculty of speech, must have been the immediate gifts of God." Returning to our native language, we should not only look upon it as a valuable heritage handed down to us by our forefathers, but as a precious gift bestowed upon us by God. As such we should treasure it with guarded care. Like a smouldering fire we should try and fan it into a flame—a flame which will illuminate the hearts of Manxmen, and arouse them to a deeper sense of duty; a duty which as patriots they

OWE TO THEIR COUNTRY.

I think myself that since the Manx language has declined, Manx people take less interest in those things which concern their everyday life. Especially is this the case in political matters. When a nation allows its native language to decline, it is a certain sign of its falling into decadence. It stands to reason they lose their national spirit and reserve. They are content to adopt the language of their conquerors, and consequently become part and parcel of the race by whom they are conquered. They lose interest in those things which directly concern themselves; they eventually become indifferent to their own welfare; and at last, becoming too apathetic and lazy to legislate for themselves, they are content to have their conquerors legislate for them.

Take Ireland for instance. Is she half so prosperous under English rule as she was under her own—when her national language was spoken? She was at one time the greatest seat of learning in Europe. Can she boast of this now? Where are her Filidhs and Bards? Can she produce an Ossian now? Alas, no! Her national spirit is crushed

and broken; she groans beneath the yoke of foreign landowners; she has let her national language slip from between her fingers, and is now suffering the consequences of her dire folly. “But.” you might inquire, “what has foreign landowners to do with the native language of Ireland?” To this I would reply, because instead of learning English and keeping up their national language as well, they neglected their native Erse, and allowed it to be gradually superseded by that of the Saxon. What are the consequences? The foreigner has crept in and appropriated their possessions. They have

SOLD THEIR BIRTHRIGHT

for a mess of pottage. Whereas, in keeping up their native language, they would have kept the wily foreigner out, they would have been more united, they would have been prosperous instead of being demoralised, they would have been free men instead of mere slaves and vassals, they would have remained a nation instead of becoming a dependency. I do not blame England or any other nation for this. Ireland alone is to blame. They have despised one of the gifts which was bestowed upon them by their Creator, and now must take the consequences.

Turning to Wales, we find a different state of things. We find the country in a fairly prosperous condition. We find that Welsh landowners predominate; and we find them not only speaking their native Cymric, but most of them speak in English quite as well. From this we can draw our own deductions.

[Irrelevant material omitted]

[3b] In concluding, I would say that if I have succeeded in stirring up an atom of interest in the language of our forefathers, my feeble efforts have been amply rewarded.

[The above is a paper read before the St Matthew’s Mutual Improvement Society.]

8. G.W. WOOD, “THE MANX LANGUAGE,” ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER (10 DECEMBER 1898)

DEAR SIR.—It is indeed very gratifying to read of the efforts which are being made at the present time to revive the old mother tongue of the Isle of Man. Would that they may be successful! It will require much patience and perseverance both on the part of the teachers and pupils, even though their hearts be in the work. You will doubtless remember that some years ago a similar attempt was made in Douglas, and the services of the late Capt. R.E. Christian (who had the reputation of being one of the best Manx scholars then living) were enlisted as teacher. He went so far as to print some elementary *Lessons on the Manx Language*, which consisted of Manx words and short sentences, with English equivalents. The Manx was taken from a primer composed by the Rev Hugh Stowell. The movement, however, unfortunately came to grief. During the interval which has elapsed between that time and the present a keener interest seems to have been awakened in the antiquities of the Island, and this interest now appears to be extending to its language. I have heard of several young

Manxmen in a country district who are cultivating a speaking knowledge of the Manx. This is something, and it may lead to a reading and grammatical knowledge later on. It was in this latter respect, I venture to think, that the old Manx people failed, as the Manx speakers fail at the present day. Give them a book to read, and with few exceptions, they are lost.

THIS INABILITY TO READ

the language I believe to be one reason why it lost its hold on the people so quickly. They were undoubtedly attached to it, and preferred it for its own sake to English, for its undoubted “power of expression” and “depth of meaning” as Cregeen expressed it. They had their Bibles (although these came to the Manx later than to any other part of the British Isles), but they too often allowed them to fall to pieces on their window sills, because so few could read them. Another reason, and perhaps a weightier one, was—I regret to say it—that owing to the invasion of English, the Manx people, especially the young, became ashamed of their language, and rejected it in favour of the “more polite” English. As an illustration of this. I remember going some years ago to a house in the country to hear a promised dialogue between an old Manxman and his daughter in Manx. The father commenced, but to his chagrin and my disappointment, not one word would the daughter reply, but professed her utter inability to speak the language. Making due allowance for shyness, I am sure the real reason was elsewhere to be found. Unhappily, the North Country people of England, who always formed the great majority of the visitors to the Island, were apt to treat the Manx language as a joke, and the susceptibilities of the Manx speakers were wounded in consequence.

I may also remind you that for years the Manx language was kept alive by being

TAUGHT IN THE SUNDAY SCHOOLS

of the Island, just as Welsh is taught at the present day. Small books were prepared for the use of the scholars. One dated 1808, entitled, *Lessons and Stories for Good Children*, was prepared by the Rev Hugh Stowell. It contained prayers in Manx and English. Another by the same author appeared ten years later, and was a primer for the Manx language. Its title was *Yn Chied Lioar Gailckagh: ny Cooney dy Ynsaghey Chengey ny Mayrey Ellan Vannin, Liorish y Cheshaght son Cummal seose, as cur er nyn doshiaght Schoillyn Dhoonee trooid magh Reeriaght Hostyn* (The First Manx Book: or, A help to teach the mother tongue of the Isle of Man, by the Society for Maintaining and Founding Sunday Schools throughout the Kingdom of England). This little book was entirely in the Manx language. I am not sure how long Manx continued to be taught in Sunday Schools, or whether its ceasing to be so taught was a partial cause or effect of the decline of the language—perhaps both.

I will not weary you by more than a reference to a useful Society which existed in the Island about 70 years ago, viz., “The Manks Society for the education of the inhabitants of the Isle of Man through the medium of their own language.” Its career, however, seems to have been of short duration.

My prime object in addressing you was to forward copy of

AN ORIGINAL LETTER

in my possession, written in 1872, by the Rev J. T. Clarke, once curate of St. Mark's, on the occasion of an attempt to revivify the language at that time. It was written by him from Wales (Caerdon, Merionethshire) to a friend in the Island. I am not sure whether it has ever been printed before; but, being of interest and somewhat appropriate to the present occasion, I venture to think you may like to print the following extracts, with a translation attempted by myself. I have purposely made it as literal as possible, and followed the Manx mode of expression, and hope your readers will extend their indulgence accordingly.—I am, dear sir, yours faithfully,

G.W. WOOD.

Streatham. London.

APPENDIX

9. “THE IRISH LANGUAGE MOVEMENT,” ISLE OF MAN EXAMINER (25 JUNE 1898)
[2]c.

Last week a public meeting in support of the Irish Language Movement was held under the auspices of the committee of the Gaelic League in the Oak Room, Mansion House. There was a large attendance of delegates, representing several branches of the League.

The Right Hon. the Lord Mayor presided.

The Chairman, in opening the proceedings, welcomed the delegates to the Mansion House, and extended to them a hearty Caed Mille Failte. In his opinion the preservation of a nation's language was the first necessity of a nation's existence. It was an evidence of the vitality of Irish nationality that, after three or four hundred years, during which the use of the Irish language was prohibited, it was still spoken by 680,000 Irish people in seven out of the thirty-two centuries of Ireland (applause).

Consequently it was not a dead language (applause). He hoped that through the creditable efforts of the Gaelic League the language would ultimately be spoken in every one of the counties of Ireland (applause). While such an organisation as the Gaelic League was in existence there was no fear that the old tongue would die out (applause). He had no doubt that the movement in which they were engaged would become a matter of general interest, and now that they were getting some measure of management of their own affairs they would begin to find that not only had they a country to live for, but also a country to speak for (applause).

Dr Douglas Hyde then proposed—“That the preservation of the Irish language, wherein is enshrined the intellectuality and individuality of the race, is a duty of primary national importance.” In doing so he said the necessity for keeping alive the Irish language divided itself into two classes, one to be looked at from a national

standpoint and the other from the stand point of intellectuality and humanity. If they allowed the language to die out they also allowed the nation to die. They should strive to keep alive the national language in order to show that Ireland was a nation. The work in which the Gaelic League was engaged was a colossal work, a national work. It was of the people and for the people.—The speaker referred to the progress made by the Irish language in the United States, where in one of the leading cities an Irish chair had been established. There were to-day in Ireland fifty branches of the League at work, each of which was the nucleus of intellectual thought and vigour, a school of poetry, a school for the country (applause).

The Rev M.J. Hickey, in seconding the resolution, referred to the great services which had been rendered to the Irish language movement by Dr Douglas Hyde, who deserved on that account to be held in loving memory (applause).

Mr A. Glynn, Galway, who spoke in Irish, supported the resolution, which was carried unanimously.

Mr M'Farlane, a Scottish delegate, proposed —"That the Gaelic League, comprising upwards of fifty branches in various parts of the country which has successfully established the Oireachtas, is deserving the support of all Irishmen." He opened his address in Irish, and proceeding, said since he came to the meeting he was struck with the similarity between what was done here and in Scotland. He expressed the pleasure it gave him to attend that meeting. In Ireland there were 680,000 persons who spoke Gaelic, but in Scotland they had perhaps only one-third of that number. But then in Scotland they had not such a man at the head of the movement as Dr Hyde. If they had, it would soon be a great success. He was a great admirer of Irish literature. If they wanted the language to reach the people they should first develop Irish music, and the language would soon gain ground.

Rev Father O'Learey, P.P., Castlelyons, Co. Cork, in seconding the resolution, addressed the meeting in very fluent Irish.

Mr O'Mulrenin, M.A., in speaking to the resolution, said that the great difficulty with the Gaelic League was the education of Irishman. No man was educated who did not know his native language. There was no true Irishmen who did not speak Irish. Those who did not speak Irish should assist those who had for their object the cultivation of a love for the national tongue. The way to establish their nationality was to cultivate their language. The Irish language was the most beautiful, most expressive, and formerly the most cultivated of the languages of the world. What the Gaelic League wanted to do was to excite a love for the Irish language in the Irish speaking districts. In parts of the west the peasants were led to believe that they could not get on without the English language. They should be disabused of that idea. They wanted to introduce the Irish literature into these parts. They wanted to force the National Board to modify its programme and introduce Irish literature into the schools there. In the interest of nationality it was the duty of every Irishman to support the Gaelic League in its efforts.

The Rev Father Devine in a very able address in Irish supported the resolution. He was not aware that the movement had taken such a strong hold upon the people, and was surprised at the beautiful and eloquent speeches which he had heard delivered in Irish that evening.

The resolution was passed unanimously.

A resolution approving of the issuing of an appeal to the Irish, asking for pecuniary assistance in their work of rescuing the Irish language from danger of being allowed to die out, was carried unanimously.

In proposing the resolution Father M'Nerney contrasted the literatures of the two countries, Ireland and England, and pointed out that in Irish literature there was no such thing to be found as foulness, and it was, in his opinion, the bounden duty of every minister of religion to try and re-establish the Irish language, if only for the purpose of re-establishing the moral tone of the nation (applause). He suggested the establishment of depots for the sale of Irish books and the appointment of agents and volunteers, who would go through the towns and villages and sell the books, and who should also be qualified to give short readings on the subject of the teaching of Irish. Father McNerney referred to the service which had been rendered by his Grace the Most Rev Dr Walsh, in his capacity as a member of the National Education Board, in getting a teacher of Irish into the Dramcondra Training School (applause). In his opinion, if the work was taken up by Irishwomen generally, it would be successful much sooner than if the teaching of Irish were confined to the men.

Dr Cox, in seconding the resolution, said that the Irish language deserved to live intrinsically on its own merits. It was a language of great antiquity and beauty, and enshrining many monuments of extraordinary beauty.

Writing on the above subject, the Rev Thos. E. Kenny states:—I am delighted to see the society spreading its sphere of patriotic influence on all sides, even to places so remote as Copenhagen, &c. I, myself, am personally indebted to the society, for, when beginning the study of the Irish language many years ago, I derived immense advantage from the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Irish books of the society, as well as from the editions of *Diarmuid and Grainue*, *Tir na n-Og*, *The fate of the children of Tuireann*, &c. You will be pleased to know that here, in the heart of Dublin city, we have a very flourishing class of young Celtic students, who are most enthusiastic in their study of the grand old Celtic tongue—the noblest heritage we have remaining to us as a nation. I may remark that great praise is due to the zealous Redemptorist Fathers who, during their missions here, by coming into our schools and speaking the Irish tongue to our advanced pupils, did much to inspire our youthful students with an enthusiastic love and reverence for the language of the Gael.”

“The Irish Language Movement,” *Isle of Man Examiner* 25 June 1898: [2]c.

STEPHEN MILLER, 2017

