

Manx Notes 307 (2018)

A.E. LAMOTHE ON MANX CHURCH CHOIRS *

(1) Kirk Bride choir, now famous as containing some of the best church singers in the North of the Island, consisted in the old times, as did many another choir, of a clarionet and a bass fiddle. The “clar’net” acted as conductor, the bass being rather vague and languid—a sluggish, but full stream. The “clar’net,” in a standing position, indicated the lights and shades of the tune, by swayings of his body, more or less vigorous as occasion demanded. For crescendo he stamped his foot. For diminuendo he took the clarionet from his lips to say: “Lesh bass, Bill, bhoy! lesh bass, la!”

(2) In the days of old Baldwin Chapel, before the luxury of the harmonium was introduced, a well-known old man used to “raise the tunes” every Sunday afternoon and evening, with great success—at least, so he thought. One frosty Sabbath morning, however, he was apparently affected by the cold, and when he reached the second line of the hymn, he went wrong. Just at that moment, his son entered the chapel, and the old man, in despair, shouted out to him: “Thee catch it, Billy. It’s gone from me. Try, bhoy, to purra tune on the hymn.”

A.E. Lamothe, *Manx Yarns: Witty, Wise, and Otherwise* (Douglas: The Manx Sun, 1905) 107.

There are any number of such snippets of information on the past musical life of the Island tucked away as here.

STEPHEN MILLER, 2018



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