

# Manx Notes 328 (2018)

## “CURIOUS MANX SUPERSTITION”

(1910)

On Saturday, at Ramsey Magistrates’ Court, before Messrs T. Allen and T.H. Midwood, Louisa Corkish summoned Elizabeth Pearce for an assault. Mr T.C. Teare was for the complainant, and Mr M. McWhannell for the defendant.

Louisa Corkish said she lived with her mother On New Year’s Day the defendant came to borrow a flat iron, which her mother lent. Afterwards she was sorry she had lent the flat iron, as it was unlucky, and she said she had never had a day’s luck since lending it. When she brought the iron back, defendant was told of Corkish’s bad luck. Defendant was annoyed, and made a remark to the effect that they had not to mind, so long as the baby was all right. Witness told her she had better be careful what she was saying, as her mother had had trouble with her before. Before she knew where she was defendant struck her on the face, and her cheek was swollen. Witness did not retaliate.

By Mr McWhannell: Defendant struck her with the back of her hand. Witness said she ought not to carry on like that, when her mother had been so good to her. When complainant spoke about bad luck defendant asked what objection there could be to lending a flat iron. Witness said it was unlucky. It was a Manx saying, and witness told defendant her mother was sorry she had lent it. Witness did not hear the word “trash” used, nor did she mention it, though she knew what it meant.

Nellie Corkish, cousin of the complainant, spoke to going into the house and seeing defendant strike the last witness in the face. She heard nothing more until complainant said, “Strike me again,” and defendant struck her. She saw the blow actually struck, and it left a mark. She did not hear the word “trash,” nor any reflection on defendant’s character. Witness said defendant was “passing her debts to her cousin.” The word “trash” might have been used without her hearing it.

Mr McWhannell: What about passing her debts? It was a sort of mutual recrimination—a kind of abuse?

Witness: Yes. I have never been stuck myself in this way.

Mr McWhannell: Never had your ears boxed by your mother?

Witness: No.

Mr McWhannell: What a lucky girl.

Elizabeth Pearce, the defendant, who was rather deaf, and had to be shouted to by counsel, said in consequence of what her husband told her she went to Mrs Corkish and asked what she meant by saying that she (Mrs Pearce) was trying to take away her luck by borrowing the flat iron on New Year’s Day. Corkish said, “So you are. I have been told by several people you are trying to take away my luck by borrowing the flat iron.” (Laughter.) Witness said, “A woman of your age ought to have more sense, you have not got the sense you were born with.” Corkish said, “My luck has

been bad ever since I have known you.” Witness said hers had been the same, and that they were “ditto.” There was no bad language Spoken. Corkish said, “When are you going to pay my mother for the wedding dress she bought you?” and witness denied that she had bought her a marriage dress. Complainant then started boasting about what they were, and who they were, and witness replied. “Don’t tell me who you are: I know too well.” She then said the reason defendant had to leave Queen’s Drive was because they were “trash.” This made her angry. She said she was not “trash,” and complainant’s manner aggravated her. Complainant put her face down to witness’s, and the latter said, “Don’t do that. Many an one would slap you for it.” Witness did slap her with her hand. Complainant said, “Do it again,” and she did, but did not strike her hard.

By Mr Teare: I objected to being called “trash,” because I am not, and I got angry. She asked for it, and I hit her. I am not obliging as a rule, but I was that time. (Laughter.) I admit smacking her upon the cheek with my open hand, but deny that she was black and blue.”

Mr Teare submitted that defendant ought to be fined, and that the offence had been proved. Complainant might have retaliated, but did not.

Mr McWhannell said if an assault, it was one of the most trivial he ever heard of. There was a quarrel about a flat iron, bad luck, passing debts, and so on, and his client, who was called “trash,” was so annoyed that she struck complainant on the latter’s invitation. He asked that the case be dismissed.

Mr Teare, in reply, submitted it was not a trivial assault. If these cases were to be treated as trivial, they would have people taking the law in their own hands, and have nothing but free fights. The complainant took the proper course in not retaliating, but leaving the matter to the Court.

The case was dismissed, each party to pay their own costs.

“Curious Manx Superstition.” *Ramsey Courier* 21 January 1910: 3c.

STEPHEN MILLER, 2018

