

Manx Notes 337 (2018)

“SUPERSTITIONS IN 1843”

(1843)

A farmer not 100 miles from the Union Mills, which are less than 2½ miles from this goodly town of Douglas, recently had the misfortune to lose two or three cows; whether carried off by disease or had keeping we cannot avouch. The proprietor on whom these misfortunes fell, not choosing to bother his cranium in searching out the cause of his losses, found a ready way of solving the mystery, by charging it wholly to *witchcraft*: or rather, in the language of these believers in spiritual interference among the cattle, he alleged that some naughty body had “looked with an *evil eye*” on his cows. An old toothless bos 20 years old was the last one of his stock that had died. Now to break the charm and save the remainder of his stock, what think you reader the old man did? Why, you will say, perhaps he instituted a *post-mortem* examination to search out the nature of the disease:—no such thing—he paraded the old carcase in the centre of the Churchroad, so called, and there burned her to ashes, hide, and hair and all. While the combustibles were in flame and the smoke ascending as from an Indian sacrifice, a gentleman was about to pass by the place of barbecue, when he was cautioned, with most significant looks, and words of ominous import, that he better avoid going in that direction, lest he be fastened on as the conjurer, who had “looked with an *evil eye*,” and killed the beasts with necromancy.

That such superstitions should be found among the poor untutored savages of the “far west,” is not to be wondered at; but that they should still retain their hold on men bred in the centre of Christendom:—that on the Isle of Man, where there are 40 churches and 60 chapels for religious worship, and schools in every parish, the grossest superstitions of barbarism should still be found, presents a subject of deep inquiry in the mind of a christian philosopher.

“Superstitions in 1843.” *Manx Sun* 21 January 1843: 4d.

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