

Manx Notes 345 (2018)

HENRY JENNER

“THE MANX SERVICE AT KIRK BRADDAN”

(1919)

To the Editor.

Sir,—I have just received a rather belated copy of your issue of July 12th, containing an interesting account of the Manx Service that was held at Kirk Braddan on July 6th. In it you say that it is claimed that it is the first that has been held in the Isle of Man for nearly seventy years. This is not quite correct. I was present in Kirk Arbory Church at a Manx service on Sunday, April 25th, 1875, held by the then Vicar of the parish, the Rev J. Qualtrough. He used to have a Manx service on the last Sunday of every month in those days, but I do not know when it was discontinued. At Kirk Bride there had been a Manx service four times a year until about 1871 or 1872. At Kirk Christ, Lezayre, it was used until 1852, and at Jurby until about 1860. At Kirk Braddan, the Rev W. Drury told me that he often introduced bits of Manx into his sermons for the benefit of old people, and if he saw many in church he would sometimes say the Lord's Prayer or give the blessing in Manx. Also in the summer he used to preach on the quay at Douglas to fishermen in a mixture of Manx and English.

When I visited the Island in 1875, I was engaged in making investigations on the existing state of the Manx language, the results of which I embodied in a paper which I read before the Philological Society soon afterwards. I sent a paper of questions to all the beneficed clergy of the Church of England in the Island, asking them as to the state of the language in their respective parishes, and they were all of them extremely kind in giving information, some of them, such as Mr Qualtrough, of Kirk Arbory; Mr Kermode, of Kirk Maughold; and Mr Aire, of Kirk Michael, taking a great deal of trouble to supply it. I found by tabulating what they told me that out of a population of 41,084 (not including the almost purely English town of Douglas) there were then about 12,340 who could and did talk Manx, and 190 who could speak no English.

The present state of the language is very interesting to me, for it seems now to be in the same state that Cornish was in when Edward Lhuyd visited Cornwall and enquired into the language in about 1700. Cornish lasted for nearly another century, I thought the last person whose mother tongue it had been, the celebrated Dolly Pentreath, died in 1777. There must have been some, who could talk it to some extent, who lived well into the nineteenth century, and a faint tradition of a few words, the numerals up to twenty, etc., goes on still. Also there are three or four hundred Celtic words still in use in the English of West Cornwall, though there is no one person who uses all of them, for there is one set in use among fishermen, another among miners, another among farm labourers, another for household matters,

diseases and their remedies, etc., and another, more generally known, for names of plants, trees, birds and other animals. It would be interesting to note the extent to which similar words survive in the English of the working classes in the Isle of Man, who do not now speak Manx. There is now a grand opportunity of watching the inevitable decline of Manx, from which a good many interesting things may be noted.

I see from your reports that Lord Ashbourne was present at the service, and that at a meeting about the same time he spoke in Irish Gaelic, which he does exceedingly well. It would be interesting to know how much he was understood by those who knew Manx, and how much he himself could follow of Archdeacon Kewley's sermon. In 1903, at a Congress of the "Union Regionaliste Bretonne," I made a speech in Cornish, which was fairly well understood by the Bretons who heard it, but I have tried the same experiment on Welshmen at Eisteddfodau without any such success.—Yours faithfully,

HENRY JENNER,

Vice-President for Cornwall of the Celtic Congress.

Bospowes, Hayle, Cornwall.

30th July, 1919.

[Mr Jenner encloses a copy of his interesting booklet, "The Manx Language: its grammar, literature, and present state." 1875. The Philological Society.]

Henry Jenner, "The Manx Service at Kirk Braddan." *Isle of Man Examiner*
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STEPHEN MILLER, 2018

