

# Manx Notes 459 (2020)

## “CLAIMED THE PALM FOR HUNT THE WREN AS THE MANX NATIONAL ANTHEM” (1878)

The Rev. E. Ferrier was called upon to preside, and asked the company to repeat the Lord's Prayer with him. He congratulated the town on giving such an entertainment to the poor, and contrasted the condition of the company with the sufferers by the Indian famine and the Eastern war; and after a few very appropriate remarks, introduced the string band who played a choice selection of music, including “Hunt the Wren,” the chorus of which was taken up by the audience and sung with spirit most lustily, and encored vociferously, also, “Molly Charaine.” The pieces were all greeted with loud applause. Several songs were sung by Mr George Kewley and G.P. Quayle, and were heartily encored and responded to. The latter sang for his last encore the well-known old Manx favourite Carol, sung by the “White Boys,” Ree ben Juan they Meigh, which evoked roars of laughter and cheers. After some happy remarks by the Rev. H.S. Gill, vicar of Malew, who claimed the palm for Hunt the Wren as the Manx National Anthem, instead of Molly Charaine from the greater popularity of the former, the proceedings were brought to close with three cheers for the Band, and at the invitation of the Vicar, the audience stood up and sang the Evening Hymn, to the time of the old hundredth Psalm.

“[Castletown and District] Treat to the Poor of Castletown,” *Manx Sun* 19 January 1878, [4]e.

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W.H. Gill's “Manx National Anthem” (1907) was by its very title and purpose written as one. Here we see not earlier candidates as such, but rather a sense that there is one specific song that above all others can be said to be “the” Manx song, in this case, Mylecharaine.\*

STEPHEN MILLER, RBV



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\* For further discussion, see, Fenella Bazin, “Mylecharaine’: A Forgotten Call to Nationhood,” *Folk Song: Tradition, Revival, and Re-Creation*, eds. Ian Russell and David Atkinson (Aberdeen: The Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen, 2004) 336–48.