

Manx Notes 514 (2021)

“UNTIMELY MERRIMENT AND PROFANE REGARDS” * THE OIE’L VERREY (1827)

In this festive time of Christmas much feasting amongst farmers, takes place all over the country, particularly at the North, where the rites of hospitality continue to be performed with hearty good will. There is one custom, however, which we deplore, and that is the keeping up of the ancient Feillvary, or Christmas eve in the country Churches. Crowds flock to witness the usual decoration of evergreens with which our places of Worship are hung, to see the lights, and to hear the carols which untutored peasants sing. The vigil is in itself beautiful for its solemnities—were it not that the inconsiderate and the untaught convert the occasion into untimely merriment and profane regards. It is difficult to stem the torrent of ignorant licentiousness which reigns in the minds of the unlettered clown, who too often converts the solemnities which ought to remind him of greater objects and excite his ardent hopes to a happy futurity, into objects of a more earthly and sensual nature. We understand that from the increasing irreverence and abuse of this ordinance on the last Christmas-eve, owing, doubtless, to an increase of immoral sentiment among the people, several of the Clergy have determined to discontinue these nocturnal festivities.

“In this festive” *Manks Advertiser* 27 December 1827: [3]c.

“Untimely merriment and profane regards” fulminated the writer of the piece as regards the Oie’l Verry which had just taken place that year. And there was more to condemn, namely a “torrent of ignorant licentiousness” that was certain to lead to “earthly and sensual” happenings—in other words, good-hearted fun and merriment all round as the order of the evening, the very purpose of the Oie’l Verry itself with the onset now of Winter. It had never been a time for “solemnities” but was now coming under threat, either to be reformed or simply discontinued.

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