

Manx Notes 522 (2021)

“REVIVAL OF THE MANX LANGUAGE”

TWO LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

(1880)

(1)

[3g] Sir,—I presume with the intention of instilling a desire into the minds of the public of the Isle of Man to take some interest in the revival—or possible retention—of the rapidly decaying vernacular tongue of their native land, you published during the last winter a series of Manx carols, with the English translation. No doubt the effort was valued by your country readers; but in my opinion the publication of a Manx lexicon, whereby English words could be readily traced, would have a more appreciable effect upon the general public. As a Manxman I have often been asked the Manx term for specific English words, but although I am in possession of one of the few dictionaries in existence there is no means through that source of complying with such request, as it only gives the English translation of Manx words. If a work could be carried out on the same lines of the ordinary dictionaries—commencing with English words—no doubt it would receive the patronage of all persons interested in the preservation of this branch of the Gaelic tongue, and prove remunerative to the compiler. The edition to be something after this manner:

ABASE.—Lhiey; aggle; cur-jee sheese.

ABHOR.—Dwoaie; dwoaigh; cur-cooyl; feoh.

ABIDE.—Fuirrie; fuirraght; baghey; cummal; tannaghtyn; hannaghtyn; lhied; gymmyrkey; ry-foddey; aaght.

ABILITY.—Phooar; booar; fort; feeu; hushtey.

[3h] The foregoing definitions are culled from the Manx Bible—different texts where the same word occurs to the same meaning are varied: as in Job 40th chap., 11th verse—“Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath; and behold every one that is proud, and *abase him*.” The version in the Manx Bible of the last sentence of the same verse is—“as *lhieg* eh.” Then in Isaiah 31st chap. 4th verse, a portion of which verse reads—“nor *abase* himself for the noise of them;” in the Manx version it is given—“cha bee *aggle* er roish yn coraa oc.”

I should be happy to hear from any of your Manx scholars who appear desirous of resuscitating the language whether I am right in my collation of the words, or whether the suggestion I have thrown out would find favour.

I remain, | A RESIDENT OF BROUGHTON.

Bury New-road, Manchester.

Pseud [signed as “A Resident of Broughton”]. “[Letter to the Editor] Revival of the Manx Language.” *Mona’s Herald* 13 October 1880: 3g–h.

(2)

[1d] Sir,—Seeing a letter in the *Herald* of 13th inst., written by a Manksman who signs himself “A Resident of Broughton,” on the subject of the revival of our mother-tongue, I wish to say a few words in support of the writer of that letter. I have myself done a great deal to promote such a revival, and if spared will do more yet. I have not the smallest doubt that a lexicon such as your correspondent speaks of—that is to say a dictionary of English words with their Manks equivalents—would be a valuable work to anyone who loves this country and its language. In my opinion there is no language spoken that is equal to it (if properly used) for getting to the bottom of a subject. I have at present in my possession a Manks primer, which was the only book taught from in the Church Sunday Schools eighty years ago. I have it all translated into English, in manuscript, and part of it printed; but I got no encouragement, and had to give up the printing for want of funds to complete it. Last winter I translated (from Manks into English or from English into Manks) several carols, which were revised by A.W. Moore, Esq., of Cronkbourne. I intend, if spared, to have some more done this winter. I have already commenced the work, and will have some ready for the press soon. Your correspondent mentions a few English words. I believe the following to be the proper Manx equivalents for them:

ABASE.—Dy injillaghey; dy hilgey bun-ry-skyn.

ABHOK.—Dy choyrt dwoaie; dwoiagh; feoh da.

ABIDE.—Dy hannaghtyn; dy nirroraghtyn ’syn un voayl

ABILITY.—Fort; schlei; niart.

Anyone who is conversant with the Manks language will understand that when English is translated into Manks (in the Scriptures, for instance), in many cases the Manks words used are not the exact equivalents of the English words, but the substance only of the English is given in the Manks rendering. Also, the initials are often changed, as in the case of the word *pay*, the Manks for which is eeck; past tense deeck or jeeck; present and future, neeck; and the same [ɪe] in regard to many other words. The reason why I prefer the Manx language is that there are fewer words, but still the meaning, is there. Defoe wrote, some 300 years ago, that the English was no language, only a gibberish. In every new English dictionary there are thousands of new words added, that cannot be translated; nevertheless their meaning can be given in Manx. I think “A Broughton Resident’s” suggestion is a good one, and I will do all I can to assist in the future as I have done in the past.

R.E. CHRISTIAN,
North Quay, Douglas.

R.C. Christian, “[Letter to the Editor] Revival of the Manx Language.”
Mona’s Herald 20 October 1886: 1d–e.

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STEPHEN MILLER RBV