

Manx Notes 583 (2022)

THE LEZAYRE LIVING CONTROVERSY

(1842)

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SIR—The circumstance of an English Bishop being always promoted to the See of Man, together with the sainted memory of Bishop Wilson, gives the Manx Church all interest in the minds of very many persons, who, otherwise, would know no more of the island than of Fernando Po. Bishop Short has just incurred the Manx wrath by the promotion of a young and inexperienced clergyman to a chief living in the island; but, on the whole, perhaps, the Bishop has done right; and the attempt to influence the people against the said clergyman is abominable in the extreme, and savours too much of an envious jealousy by no means creditable. The excuse about his ignorance of the Manx language is only got up for the occasion; for the clergy know well how rapidly the Manx language has declined, even almost to utter extinction; they know that it is a language of no value, inasmuch as no original work is extant in that tongue; they know how the warehouse of the British and Foreign Bible Society was filled with Manx Bibles that could not *even be given away*; and they know that all the parochial schools are English, and that the people, excepting a very few aged dwellers in the mountains, prefer English services in the church. But the true secret is, that the Manx clergy are jealous of all English assistance, and, as in this case, even of one of their own countrymen, *if educated in England*—and yet, it is a fact, confessed by many of themselves, that the insular clergy are not competent to the efficiency of the Manx Church—that dissent in consequence overwhelms it; and the Manx Church will never be restored to its primitive strength without a decided help from their English brethren. There are Manx clergy beneficed in England; and if the exchange were more reciprocal, it would rescue the Manx Church from much of its feebleness, and its narrower range of exertion. Nothing can exceed, generally, the exemplary conduct of the Manx clergy—they only need *a little going out of themselves* to be among the best clergy on the earth, and it is a pity, with an insidious enemy at their doors, that they should stand in their own light. [...].

“[Letter to the Editor] The Church in the Isle of Man.” *Morning Post* 3 September 1842: 2e.

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SIR,—A church living, in the gift of the Crown, lately became vacant in the Isle of Man. The parish, which is named Lezayre, is situated in the northern part of the island, and is inhabited, in a great measure, by people who understand no other language than that called the Manx, a branch of the ancient Celtic, which has prevailed from time immemorial in this part of the kingdom, and is the language

principally used by the agricultural portion of its population. The parishioners of Lezayre, deeming it probable, in consequence of certain rumours which had got abroad in the island, that an attempt would be made to palm upon them a clergyman unacquainted with the Manx tongue, and, consequently, unable to be of any service to many of them, presented a very humble and respectful petition to the Secretary of State for the Home Department, most earnestly praying, that the new Vicar, whoever he should be, might be a clergyman capable of officiating in this language. At the same time, not fewer than eight clergymen, thoroughly conversant with it, applied for the living. All these are universally admitted to be men of exemplary character; some of them are distinguished by eminent piety; they have all been toiling for several years in the diocese; one has been employed in the work of the ministry here seventeen years; two have been thus occupied upwards of thirty years; another not fewer than forty years. But their applications have been rejected; and the Home Secretary, at the instigation, it is believed, of two or three of the heads of our aristocracy, has forced upon the parishioners a youth who has just entered the ministry in England, has never been employed as a pastor amongst us, and possesses no knowledge of the Manx language. How has this come to pass? The only answer that can be given to the question is this: The young man has lately married the daughter of one of our law functionaries, whom we term the Clerk of the Rolls; and this law functionary has much influence with the Governor and Bishop, who were solicited by most of the clergymen, whose applications have proved unsuccessful, to recommend them to Sir James Graham; but, for reasons best known to themselves, they deemed it proper to refuse the solicited favour. The consequence is, that a large portion of the parishioners of Lezayre will, to all intents and purposes, be without a clergyman. A minister, indeed, will reside in their parish,—will occupy its manse,—will enjoy its glebe, and receive the income provided by the State for the maintenance of its pastor; but he will be to these people as a barbarian. In the season of affliction, they may send for him; but he can impart to them no consolation. In the hour of death, they may desire a visit from him; but he will be utterly incompetent to cheer them at that trying conjuncture; and, unless Dissenting ministers will have compassion upon them, and supply the services denied to them by the Church which they contribute to support, they will be little better off, as to pastoral assistance, than the natives of Nootka Sound, or of Terra del Fuego.

AN INHABITANT OF THE ISLE OF MAN.

October 14, 1842.

“Church Patronage in the Isle of Man.” *Patriot* 27 October 1842: 6b.

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