

William Cashen

William Cashen's  
'Manx Folk-Lore'  
(1912)

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- 1 William Cashen, *William Cashen's 'Manx Folk-Lore,'* edited and with an introduction by Stephen Miller (1993).

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Edited by  
Stephen Miller

*Chiollagh Books*  
*Isle of Mann*

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## INTRODUCTION

William Cashen was born in 1838 at Dalby into a fisher-crofter family. They later moved the short distance to the Niarbyl which was in those days home to a small fishing fleet. Cashen knew only Manx until he was nine years old when he began to learn English. After leaving school he first worked on the land at Dalby but when he was fifteen years old he went to sea on the brig *Ada* sailing between Dublin and Whitehaven. At nineteen he went deep sea sailing, travelling to the Far East and visiting, amongst other places, Australia, China, and Polynesia. He was finally shipwrecked—in Peel Bay of all places, when the schooner *Western Trader* went ashore at Traie Fogog. Cashen was carried to a house nearby where he was nursed by the owner's daughter, Susanna Cowell, whom he later married. They settled in Peel and Cashen turned to the herring fishing. Later on he became the assistant harbour-master at Peel, and finally, for the last seventeen years of his life, he was the custodian of Peel Castle.

*William Cashen's 'Manx Folk-Lore'* has been out of circulation for over seventy years now. It appeared posthumously in 1912, the year of Cashen's own death, explaining the rather curious title of the book. It was edited for publication by Sophia Morrison, the Manx folklorist and Gaelic activist. She contributed a valuable introduction which in turn provides the material for this new introduction.

The genesis of this book is recounted by Morrison herself. Cashen first began making notes on Manx folklore and folk life ('in an old ledger') prompted by the publication of A.W. Moore's *The Folk-Lore of the Isle of Man* in 1891. Moore in fact made use of Cashen's material in his series of 'Further Notes on Manx Folklore' which appeared in the English periodical *The Antiquary*. Cashen's collection of folk songs appeared in Moore's *Manx Ballads and Music* (1896).

Cashen passed his ledger-cum-notebook onto to Morrison promising to add to it which she says he never did. Fortunately for us, Cashen did at least hand over the notebook; furthermore, Morrison, prompted probably by Cashen's recent death, prepared his material for publication. It duly appeared in 1912 under the imprint of the Manx Language Society (*Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh*). Prompted was perhaps the word—Cashen died in June 1912 and the introduction is dated August 1912.

Morrison says of her editorial method: 'Here they are [i.e., his notes], ... as he wrote them, except that they have been grouped in chapters.' The quality of the prose suggests that they are not notes jotted down in a time of reflection but material written with the aim of publication despite Cashen's own protestations to Morrison that they were otherwise. Indeed, the material here on fishing is very close in wording to an article published on the self same topic in 1896 in both the *Mona's Herald* and

## INTRODUCTION

the *Peel City Guardian*. This should not be taken to diminish the editorial role of Morrison to whom we should be thankful for making Cashen's material available to us. The notebook is now lost together with the rest of Morrison's papers.

Cashen in a note presented as a preface in the 1912 edition talks about 'standing on the borderland between the going out of the Manx and the coming in of the English,' and conscious of the loss of traditional lore and knowledge, 'the customs, sayings, and doings which I knew and heard in my childhood,' moved himself to write what we have here. 'If any effort of mine should be of any avail it will be to me a sufficient reward.' These words end the preface—reward in plenty is owed to William Cashen. In the following pages there is not one idle word as he recollects the life and times of his childhood at the Niarbyl.

It is an honour to follow in the footsteps of Sophia Morrison and publish once again *William Cashen's 'Manx Folk-Lore,'* the first publication from *Chiollagh Books*.

Stephen Miller

15 APRIL 1993

### A Note on the Text

This is an edited reprint of the original 1912 edition. Omitted from this reprint is the introductory matter which consists of a preface by Cashen, a dedicatory poem by 'Cushag' (Josephine Kermode), and the introduction by Sophia Morrison. From the main text itself, the folk songs have been left out. It is intended that these will appear with other texts from Moore's *Manx Ballads and Music* in a future publication. The typography has been brought into line with house style. The numbers in the left-hand margin of each page refer to the pagination of the original edition.



# MANX FOLK-LORE

## CHAPTER I

### HOME LIFE OF THE MANX

- 3 About fifty years ago the people were housed in cottages, most of them built of stone, and a few built of clay mixed with straw. They were divided into two rooms on the ground floor, with a loft one end, and sometimes a loft on both ends. The floor in most instances was made of hardened clay. The walls would be well coated inside and outside with lime-wash, and had a very pretty appearance. The rooms would be divided with a *choolley* of straw mattress, and every care was taken that the sexes would be separated and all the forms of decency observed. I well remember the cottage where I was born, with its thatched roof, lime-washed walls, and floor of hardened clay, the open *chiollagh* with its whitened hearthstone and wide chimney where the stars peeped through the turf fire glinting on the shining lustre ware of the dresser. The better class houses of the farmers would be longer and covered with slates. I take it that the cottages would be warmer in the winter and colder in the summer than the slate houses would be.
- 4 When I compare the dwellings of the Manx fishermen or labourers with the dwellings of the fishermen or labourers of the present day, in any place I have been to in the out-districts of Ireland or Scotland, there is a good deal to be said in favour of the Manx dwellings. For either health, convenience, or decency, the dwelling of the Manx is much superior in every way. Fifty years ago if you went into one of the country cottages you would find everything shining with cleanliness; there would be the neat dresser with everything on it shining and in order. When you would see the washing out, it would have done credit to any laundry. In the rivalry between the farmers' wives as to who should have the best bleached linen, they used to burn a sort of fern for the purpose of getting the ashes for bleaching. Very few of the houses had a lock to any door, or any fastening except a latch, and the washing could be left out all night without being molested by anyone. The *crosh cuirn*, a cross made of mountain ash, was always behind the door, and would be re-newed every May-day Eve. No evil thing could pass in where the *crosh cuirn* was.

We have a great deal of the outward form of religion now, more than we had then, but somehow or other we don't seem to be any more neighbourly or honest. It may be that as the wheat grows up, the tares grow also. No stranger or wayfarer was allowed to go out of the house without being offered food, and a bed was always prepared for the poor, that had to be kept ready for use. In some cases, it was left on the family in the will of the master that a bed was to be provided for the poor and for the wayfarer.

- 5 When a child was born and the usual offices done to it, care had to be taken to preserve it from the fairies. The father's trousers put across the child was considered

a good preservative. If a child was weakly it was of the utmost importance that the parson should be sent for and the child baptized, as in case the child should die unbaptized it would not attain to the same joy and felicity in heaven that a baptized child would. Dying unbaptized, the infant would be doomed to carry in its hands a perpetual light resembling a candle. There is a story which shows the truth of this belief:

It is said that an heiress of Eary Cushlin had the misfortune to be a mother without being married, and to hide her shame the child was done away with, without being baptized. And every night as the fishermen would be out fishing they would hear the crying and wailing of a child on the shore. One night a fisherman shouted what for it was crying, when he received the answer: *'She lbianoo beg dyn ennym mee'*—'I am a little child without a name.' Then the man shouted back: *'My she inneen oo ta mee enmys oo Joney, as my she guilley oo ta mee enmys oo Juan'*—'If thou art a girl I name thee Joney, and if thou art a boy I name thee John.'

After that the crying ceased and the child was no more heard.

6 Day by day when the infant was getting washed, its head had to be washed in rum. The mother took a mouthful of rum and poured it on to the child's head, but it was a puzzle to me to know whether all the rum that the mother took into her mouth was put on the child's head or not. The rum was put on the head for the purpose of hardening its head, and judging from the men of that day I should say that it answered very well. Another practice the nurse had: when the child was fed and washed, the nurse gathered its clothes round its feet, and grasping it firm by the two heels she passed it across her lap four or five times head downwards. This practice was continued now and then until the child would be about three months old. When asked why they did so, they said that it preserved the child from being griped. It is not right for a child to eat a kidney, or any part of one, before it can pronounce its own name distinctly. It was very unlucky for a child to be born at low water spring tide, he or she would not prosper. If he was an heir to land, or any property, he would be sure to destroy it in his day. The old people firmly believed in that, and they gave instances where it occurred. At whatever state of the tide the child was born, whether low or high, flowing or ebbing, that is the way it would be when that child came to die.

Many were of the signs that foretold a death. Among the rest, the crying or the howling of the dogs; children walking along the road singing or psalming; a hen crowing; a cock crowing in the night-time; a winding sheet upon the candle, etc. It is said that a man having died, when the hour for the funeral came there was no clerk to put out the hymn, or rather, psalm. There happened to be a wag of a fellow present, who seeing that it would never do to lift the coffin without singing a verse,

7 undertook the job, and made one extempore, and this is the verse that he gave out:

*'Fer lurg fer ta talkal roue,  
As dobberan mmoar ny-yei;  
Ny laghyn ta ain dy ceau ayns shoh,  
Mysh three feed blein as jeih.  
  
Cha wooar y foays ren oo rieau,  
Cha ren oo rieau monney skielley;  
Feer aashagh hie oo trooid y theihll,  
Cretoor myr hie sleih elley.'*

'One after one keeps toddling on,  
Great lamentations follow;  
The days that we have to spend here,  
About three score years and ten.  
  
Thou never did very much good,  
Nor yet very much harm,  
Through the world thou easy did go  
Much as other people went.'

The coffin was then lifted and carried along.

When the time came round for ploughing the land, and the first day for ploughing commenced, the sumner, or clerk of the parish, was bound to attend on the field, if requested, and sing a verse of any one of the Psalms before he was entitled to the *groat shesheragh*, the fourpence 'plough-money,' which every one ploughing with a pair of horses was bound to pay. I may say that the word *shesheragh* refers to a pair of horses ploughing in company, and not to one single horse ploughing alone. It took two to go with a pair of horses when ploughing—one to lead the horses and one to steady the plough. All cans and pails were made at home. All repairs to saddlery were made on the farm, and an osier garden was on every farm to supply hoops and so on.

The holidays of those old days are interesting:

December the Twenty-First, *Oie'l Thomase Doo*, or the 'Eve of Black Thomas' Feast,' was reckoned the first night of the Christmas Holidays. The spinning wheel had to be removed from the floor; the making of *jeebins* had to cease, and no labour of that nature was allowed to be done between St Thomas' Eve and *Shenn Laa Chibbyrt Ushrey*, 'Old Feast Day of the Water-Well'; that was the Christmas holidays, on which no work had to be done except such as could not be avoided. Any woman who would be bold enough to spin on the Christmas would be sure to repent of it; and as for making *jeebin*, it was not to be thought of, that rule must not be broken on any condition. The Christmas holidays are sufficiently well described already on

to *Shenn Laa Chibbyrt Ushtey*.

January 5th, *Shenn Laa Chibbyrt Ushtey*, was kept holy in memory of the first miracle that our Saviour wrought in Cana of Galilee. The water was, on a certain time, wine that day, while the cock was crowing. In old times it was kept very holy. Now we come to February 1, *Laa Breeshey Bane*, 'White Bride's Day.'

*'Three kegeeshyn dy kegeeshyn slane  
Voish Laa Thomase Doo dys Laa Breeshey bane.'*

'Three fortnights and none beside  
From Black St Thomase to White St Bride.'

- 9 St Thomas' Day was called 'black' on account of the rainy weather about that time. The snow had not set in then, and the snow having set in by St Bride's, it was called 'White St Bride.'

*'Laa'l Breeshey Bane,  
Dy chooilley yeeig lane,  
Dy ghoo ny dy vane.'*

'Bride's day white, every ditch full of black or of white.'

Every ditch had to be full of rain or snow on St Bridget's day, so that the old *caillag*, or 'witch,' could not gather the *brasnags*, or 'faggots' for firing. If she could lay in a stock of firing on that day there would be bad weather in the spring, but if she could not gather the *brasnags* then there would be fine weather. Another saying was:

*'Eddyry yn Oie'l Thomase as yn Oie'l Breeshey,  
Daa-ayrn jeh dorrin ny bleaney.'*

'Between Thomas' feast-day and Bride's feast-day,  
Two parts of the tempest of the year.'

Two-thirds of the bad weather was expected between St Thomas and St Bride.

*'My nee yn ushag gberryr er laa Breeshey, nee ee  
keayne roish laa Parick.'*

'If the bird crow on Bride's day,  
she will cry before St Patrick's Day.'

On Candlemas Day it was said:

*'Laa Moirrey ny gianle,  
Lieh foddyr as lieb aile.'*

- 10 On Christmas Day, half of the fodder and half of the firing, would be a fair amount to have in unconsumed stock before the new turf and the new fodder would come in.

*'Laal Parick arree yn dow gys e staik dooinney gys e lhiabbee.'*

On St Patrick's Day the ox was supposed to be tied to the stake, and the man to his bed at dark. No light was expected to be lighted after St Patrick's Day. It was supper at dark, and then to bed, both man and beast.

The following prayer, *'Jeeagh Parick orrin!'*—'Patrick look upon us!' I have heard said hundreds of times, it has probably been handed down to us from pre-reformation times. Lights were a rather scarce commodity in those days, and care had to be taken that they would not be wasted. The poorer class had their houses lighted by fish oil, which they used to burn in broken basins, or roagan shells, with peeled rushes for wicks. The farmers, and better class people, would have candles made of tallow, either moulded or dipped.

- 11 One custom they had when perambulating the parish boundaries. When they got to one angle, or to any place which there might be a dispute about, they used to lay hold of a young lad and wring his ears most unmerciful, so that in after years when he would get to be an old man he would be able to remember the wringing that he got when a child, and his wits would be sharpened so that he would remember the parish boundary. At the *Oie'l Columb Killey*, the 'Feast of St Columba,' the fishermen always expected bad weather, they called them, *Gaalyn yn Oie'l Columb Killey*, 'Gales of St Columba's Eve.' All sheep found on the common lands unshorn on the 21 June, the foster, or forester, had the right to shear and keep the fleece; he also had the right to mark the sheep with a mark that was peculiarly his own. It was called 'The Foster's mark.'

At the *Launys* they also looked for gales of wind, which they called *Gaalyn yn Launys*. Between the two Lammass days, that is the 1st and 12th August, was considered the right time to cure herrings for the winter stock. The herring would be at their best then.

The three moons in the fall of the year would be called, *Re-Hollys Mooar yn Ouyr*, 'The Harvest Moon to ripen Corn'; *Re-Hollys Mooar ny Cabbil*, 'The Horse Great Moonshine,' after which the horses would have to be housed at night; *Re-Hollys Mooar Cooil y Cleigh*, 'The Great Moonshine that hove no Shadow behind the Hedge.' Whichever way the weather was on the first of these moons it would be expected to be the same all three.

It is said that when two farmers were desirous of making a boundary fence where none existed before, they set poles a distance apart on what they considered the line

of boundary, and they took a ball of straw rope and tossed it from one pole towards the other, and the way that the rope lay on the ground they built their boundary fence. That would account for the crooked fences.

- 12 In the earlier part of the last century the Island was studded all over with ale-houses and drinking booths, and it is said that said that two different parties would have a licence to sell under one roof. The Big Man of the district would have the seat of honour, and if there was more than one leading man in the district the honour would be divided between them. They would often boast how Big So-and-So could drink so many kishens of ale. A kishen contained eight quarts, and I am afraid that not a few of the farms of the Island were mortgaged for the love of Manx *jough*. The drink was served in a quart measure and handed round the house, and each one drank in turn. It was considered an offence against good behaviour to refuse. The last man that emptied the quart was entitled to the first drink when it was filled. Ale would be the chief drink among a company, a good deal of rum was drunk also, but spirits would be drunk by individuals, and not in company, nor handed round. There was no whiskey allowed to be sold in the Isle of Man before the year 1852. I have heard my father say that he and his crew put into the Niarbyl one day, and they went to Betty Hal's house for jough. She was very slow about bringing it in, so he went out to hurry her. He found her in the back-kitchen pouring a bucket of water into the ale which she had ran off into a tub so as to be able to serve it out quicker.

'Och, Betty,' says he, 'Is that the thing you are going to give us?'

'Deed, an' it'll not put reaching on you all this way itself,' says Betty, quite unconcerned.

- 13 To show you how nearly every person has a nick-name in Mann, a story is told of a Peel coroner who summoned four men in court as jurymen, by the following names, to which the men answered: *Mac y Teare ny mollag, scollag mac y Cleary, guilley bwee glien mooar, glastin mooar mac Killey, bass shiu stiagh dy ghoail y loo ayns daa ghooinney jeig*—'Son of Tear, the mollag, young man, son of Clarke, yellow boy of Glen Mooar, big bulky lad, son of Killey, stand in to take the oath as jurymen.'

## CHAPTER II

### FAIRIES, BUGGANES, GIANTS AND GHOSTS

- 17 The Manx people believed that the fairies were the fallen angels, and that they were driven out of heaven by Satan. They called them

*'Cloan ny moyrn,'*

'The Children of the Pride' (or 'Ambition').

They also believed that when they were driven out of heaven they fell in equal proportions on the earth and the sea and the air, and that they are to remain there until the Judgement. They also said that they fell as thick as a shower of hail, and that they continued to fall for the space of three days and three nights. Whether they took their idea from Milton's 'Paradise Lost,' or whether Milton himself took his idea from the Manx people, certain it is that the Manx people believed that before 'Paradise Lost' was translated into Manx. The prayer they used when walking in the night-time was:

*'Sae Jee mee voish Cloan ny moyrn,'*

'God save me from the Children of the Pride.'

- 18 They believed that the fairies had no power to hurt anyone who was on an errand of mercy or charity. It is related that one of the early Manx Wesleyan preachers, having occasion to cross the mountain one moonlight night, was met by a fairy who asked who should be saved. When the preacher answered and said that none would be saved, but such as had flesh and blood, then he went away wailing and saying:

*'Cha vel ayrn erbee aymys ayns Chreest,'*

'I have no share in Christ.'

There are many fishermen here to this day that declare that they have seen the fairy herring fleet lying before their nets, with their lights upon the water, and the buoys or floats of their nets, and full expected that when the day broke they would see numbers of boats around them, but when the day appeared there were none there, to their very great surprise. There was sure to be a shoal of herrings where the fairy fleet was seen, and the boats that shot their nets there were certain to have a good fishing. The Manx fishermen believed that the fairies, besides fishing on their own account, made barrels, and cured the herrings they caught. A cave on the sea-coast under Cronk-yn-Iree-Laa is called *Ooig-ny-Seyir*, 'Cave of the Carpenter,' where the fishermen have heard them, times without number, making barrels. They were always sure to have a good fishing in the Big Bay when they heard the fairies making barrels. That season always turned out well.

19 The fairies differed from the *bugganes* and other evil things in that the fairies might be in any place, and at any time, and would not covet a full-grown person, but only infants and children, whereas the *buggane*, *lhiannan-shee* and so on, kept to well-defined places beyond which they were not to travel, and *bugganes* appeared in quite different forms—some as tall men without a head, others lying in the road like a heifer, apparently without head or tail, others like a large collie dog with a white collar on his neck. Besides, they did not care at all about children or young people. All fairies, *bugganes*, and ghosts and spirits of every sort would vanish at the cock crowing—particularly *bugganes* and ghosts. Sometimes the fairies stole women. There is a tale about a Ballaleece woman who was captured by the fairies; and, soon afterwards, her husband took a new wife, thinking the first one gone for ever. But not long after the marriage, one night the first wife appeared to her former husband and said to him, and the second wife overheard her: ‘You’ll sweep the barn clean, and mind there is not one straw left on the floor. Then stand by the door, and a company of people on horseback will ride in, and you lay hold of the horse I am on, and don’t let it go.’ He followed the directions carefully, but was unable to hold the horse; the second wife had put some straws on the barn floor under a bushel.

20 The *Lhiannan-Shee* was a ‘Spirit-Friend.’ It was believed that if she got near enough to a man to breathe his breath or to lay her hand on him he would be in her power until death. I have heard a man relate that he once saw the *lhiannan-shee*. He was in the mountain pulling ling when he saw coming towards him a beautiful woman clad in golden-yellow silk. The man jumped into his cart, whipped his horse and fled for his life. He turned his head to see if she was following him, but she was standing stock-still in the ling wringing her hands.

There were giants too. Peel people used to say that it was a woman who carried in her brat the stones from Creg Malin to build Peel Castle: while she was carrying one of the largest stones her apron-string broke. This stone, they said, lies where it fell in Peel harbour. When I was a lad a great storm bared a large stone which was pointed out to me by my old skipper as the stone. I saw the marks of keels of boats cut into it; there were a lot of other red sandstones about it which were said to be part of the woman’s bratful of stones.

I have heard a somewhat similar story of a giant who was engaged in making a footpath to Scotland. He went from Glenaspeth with a creel on his back. The bottom fell out of the creel, and the earth which was let loose formed Cronk Lannag at Ballalough. There is another story of a giant who flung a boulder from Peel Castle after his fleeing wife. The stone with the Giant’s finger-marks still lies poised on the Vaish Hill. The long mounds outside the wall of Peel Castle are supposed to be the graves of giants.



The Manx people firmly believed in ghosts. They believed that if the ghost was troubled in any way he would come back to where he had lived. If the person when living had hidden money or any other thing, or if he or she had died through foul play, he would come back. Care had to be taken in making the shroud that no knot was put upon the thread in the making of it, as, if it was, someone would have the unpleasant work of unloosing it. Many are the stories of men having taken a ghost and put it to rest. A Peel fishing-boat was lost off the Calf about fifty years ago, and a certain man, being anxious to know how it had happened, and where the souls of the departed had gone to, expressed a wish to meet the ghost of one of the men that were drowned. One day he felt an unusual fear come over him, and, looking round, he saw the ghost of his friend close beside him. His fear increased so much that he had not the power to question the ghost, but he signified a desire that he should come to him in the night-time, when he was in bed, believing that he would be stronger when he would have the company of his wife. That night, as the clock struck twelve, he heard a noise, and immediately the ghost of his friend stood beside the bed. His wife had fallen asleep in the meantime, and he found it impossible to waken her. However, he had to make the best of the situation, and while speaking to the ghost he found that it was not alone, but that there were two at least, if not three, in company with the one he was speaking to. After they went away he was able to waken his wife quite easily, but what he heard and what he was told he never let any person know. This same man was known in the neighbourhood (Peel); he was considered a truthful man, and a man above reproach.

At a place near Peel, about sixty years ago, there was a young man came by his death, as many thought, through foul play. A certain house and people were so troubled with his ghost that they had to get a Roman Catholic priest to lay the ghost; for the Manx people believed that a priest of that faith had more power over a spirit than any other minister. Many persons yet alive remember the priest being brought there, and how, walking backward, and reading out of a book, he put the ghost to rest and consigned him to the Red Sea, after which they got rest.

Many other stories can be told of a like nature. The priests could send the ghost to the Red Sea, from whence it was supposed there was no return. They could also consign it to ground between the bark and the tree, but that would only last for seven years, at the end of which time it was liable to come back again. No ghost could cross a newly-ploughed field; neither could a ghost cross a line drawn with iron or steel. You could not injure a ghost with a knife by shoving it from you; you had to cut backwards to do so. Any man on a road where he was afraid of ghosts always carried a knife with the blade pointing behind. The spirit of a person would sometimes come home to his or her family while the person was alive or recently dead. This might perhaps happen when a man was in great distress at sea. If his spirit appeared wet, he

was drowned; if dry, he was only in danger. It might be that a man, without being in any danger, but only anxious about his house, would be seen about the house or crossing a field, or entering a house. It appears that the man in such a case was not usually conscious that his spirit had departed from him for a time, though sometimes it might happen in times of great anxiety that he would be conscious of something unusual having taken place.

23 The *Scaa Goanlyssagh*, the 'Malicious Ghost,' was the revengeful spirit of a living person that had an ill-feeling against some other person or persons, whom it would haunt in the night, when they were in bed. It would torment, nip and pinch them, and give them no rest. But if the tormented person knew who tormented him he could get relief by calling out his or her name. Sometimes the tormentor was a disappointed lover, sometimes merely a spiteful person, and sometimes people were tormented in this way without any apparent reason.

A *Scaa Goanlyssagh* could cut the clothes off a person, just as if they were cut with a pair of scissors, and without the operation being seen or felt. It could also cut clothes even through they were locked in a drawer. It differed from a witch in so far that it had no power to do real injury to the person it tormented. I knew a girl that stayed sometimes in the neighbourhood where I lived. I remember that all the farm lads and men living in the neighbourhood used to go to the house at night with dogs and sticks. When stones would be thrown down the chimney and through the door they would all run out with dogs and sticks and hunt all around, but find nobody, neither could they account for the disturbance. They tied the girl's hands and placed a watch over her, but still the disturbance continued the same. And when she left the neighbourhood the house got to be as quiet as before she came to it.

24 The *Arc-Vuc-Sonney*, the 'Pig of Plenty,' was an apparition that was sometimes seen to cross a man's path on a fine moonlight night in the form of a young pig. As long as a person could keep it in sight and follow it, it led him to good luck, but the moment he took his eye off it, it vanished. It was considered fortunate to see it. But if the man who saw it was lucky enough to catch it, his fortune was made. If a fisherman saw one in the beginning of the fishing season he was sure to be lucky.

## CHAPTER III

### FISHING

- 27 Superstitious as were the Manxmen whose occupations were on land, they were surpassed by the Manxmen whose occupation was on the sea. Proof of this is afforded by the following account of the superstitions of Manx fishermen:

On May Eve, the *crosh cuirn* ('rowan cross') would be put into every boat. They would travel for miles into the country to get this, and would then deposit it in some secret place in the boat, and it had to remain there until the following May Eve.

In making a start for the fishing for the first time, care must be taken (1) not to go out on Friday; (2) to turn the boat with the sun, as to turn against the sun would be unlucky; (3) to have salt in the boat. If by any chance the boat had to turn back, it was considered very unlucky, especially on the first day of going out.

No person was allowed to whistle on board the boat, as it would attract the attention of the *dooinne marrey* ('merman'), who would be sure to send more wind than was required. No person was allowed to speak of dogs, cats, rabbits, horses or mice. A horseshoe was nailed in some place in every boat, that of a stallion being considered the best.

- 28 It was lucky to dream of a ripe cornfield, and of a high tide with an abundance of seaweed on the shore. If a man dreamed of his wife it was sure to bring fine weather; but if he dreamed of strange women the weather would be bad. If a pair of ravens were seen to fly across the bay, creek, or harbour, it was a sign that there would be plenty of herrings caught.

If the boat was becalmed, the surest way to bring the wind in a very short time was for a man to stick a knife in the mainmast. If it blew a gale when the fishing boats were at sea, it was no unusual thing for fishermen's wives to throw handful of salt in the fire. They believed that would stop the wind from blowing so hard. This practice was common fifty years ago.

If a boat was unlucky, recourse was had to the herb-doctor. Many a good handful of herbs have I seen carried on board. The herbs had to be boiled in a pot, and the liquor, when mixed with rum, was divided among the crew, except a portion which was thrown upon the nets. Occasionally some of the herbs would be put in the tail buoy, and disposed of in various ways as ordered by the doctor. The whole ceremony was to be kept a secret from other people. This ritual was believed in, not only by the most ignorant, but by the most intelligent among the fishermen; class leaders and local preachers, and many of that sort believe in it to this day.

29 When a fisherman was leaving home to go to fish on Monday, his wife threw an old shoe after him. If it stopped mouth up with the point of the shoe pointing the way he was going, it was very lucky; but if the point showed back towards the house, he might as well go back himself, as it would be a poor week's fishing. This throwing of the shoe was also a sure indication whenever a person had any venture such as a law-suit, going to sell a cow or horse at a fair, or getting married.

If a fisherman lost the first fish as he was hauling his line in, or if the first fish was caught by the sternmost man in the boat, it was considered unlucky. If the first herring caught in the boat for the season had a roe, it was lucky; if it was milt herring it was unlucky. To go out third board on the first day of the season, especially, but also at any time, was unlucky. To leave home on Monday morning with the stockings, drawers, singlet, or any of the undergarments put on by mistake wrong side out, was lucky; but they had to be left that way during the whole of the week.

There was an old law against fishing on Sunday; but, quite apart from the law, the Manx fishermen have a strongly-rooted superstition against fishing on that day. As a reason for this the following story is related: There is a tradition that the fishing fleet out of Port Masooyl, now called The Niarbyl, once shot their nets on Sunday night, and, being overtaken by a storm from the South-East, they were obliged to anchor in under the foot of Cronk-yn-Irree-Laa, when part of the steep cliff slid down, and the surf which was caused by the rocks falling into the water swamped them all. Ever after that no boat would fish on Sunday night. There was a *bardoon* ('lament') made for them, in which it related that they anxiously looked up for the break of day to  
30 Cronk-yn-Irree-Laa, 'Hill of the Rising Day,' this hill being so called by the fishermen because they saw the sun rising over it. They say there was only one fisherman left alive in Dalby village after the storm, and that he lived on the farm called Balleby. Dalby, where they also farmed, was at that time the chief place for fishermen in the Island, and the Niarbyl, close by, was their headquarters for the fishing. The place where the cliff slid down is called the *Garroo Clagh*, ('The Rugged Stone'). The place was pointed out to me when a child, more than forty years ago, by old men who were then about seventy, with the warning that I was never to fish on Sunday night.

The mermen, or *dooinney-marrey*, 'man of the sea,' as he is called, was feared by the fishermen. No one on board a boat dared to whistle lest he should send more wind than was convenient, and the following shows the need there was of getting on the right side of him: There was a tradition that there was a herring fishing-boat that was manned by a crew of seven single young men; she was called *Baatey ny Guillyn*, 'The Boys' Boat.' Every place that they shot their nets they got herring. They were in the habit every morning when they were hauling their nets of throwing a *jystful* ('dishful') of herring overboard to the *dooinney-maarrey*, with the result that good luck followed them wherever they went. The Admiral (the fisherman in charge of

the fleet) saw that they had more herring than any of the others, and, not knowing how it came to be so, he had them summoned to appear on a certain day on Port Erin shore to be sworn that they would undertake to show the rest of the fleet where  
 31 they were fishing. They swore that they always fished to the South of the Calf, with the result that all the fleet started for that ground. After the fleet had shot their nets some time, the night being fine and calm, the men on *Baatey ny Guillyn* heard the *dooinney-marrey* saying ‘*Te kiune as aalin nish agh bee sterrym beet dy gerrid*’—‘It is calm and fine now, but a storm is coming shortly,’ with the result that they at once put their nets on board and gained the harbour. No sooner had they arrived there than a sudden storm arose and destroyed the fleet. Only two men—brothers—were saved, and they, trying to save their father on the rugged rocks at the Calf, nearly lost their lives, but succeeded in bringing their father’s corpse to land. It was given for law ever after that no crew should consist entirely of all single men. They had to be at least one married man on board. And no man was bound in his hiring to fish in the South Sea, which was called the ‘Bloody Sea’ ever after.

They used to say that mermaids were very found of crabs. Once when a Dalby man, down on the Niarbyl at low water fishing for crabs among the rocks, had got a good string of crabs, up comes a mermaid to him, and says she to him in Manx:

‘Give us a crab, Joe Clinton, an’ I’ll tell your fortune.’

Joe gave her one, and she made off with it, chiming out as she dived into the sea:

‘*Choud as vees oo bio er y thalloo, cha bee oo dy bragb baiht er y cheayn.*’

‘So long as you live on the land, you will never be drowned in the sea.’

32 In the early part of the century the rig of the Manx herring fishing-boat was what they called ‘squaresail,’ i.e., one mast with square-shaped sail which reached from top to bottom of the mast. The luggers at this time were nothing more than large open yawls without cabins and the ‘clout,’ or small square sail, was the only sail which the lugger carried. Later there was a larger class of smack built at Peel which was named Dagon after the great god of the Philistines. They also had the ‘wherry’ rig, i.e., two masts with fore-and-aft sails. About sixty years ago, they changed the rig to the ‘dandy,’ or what is now usually called the ‘yawl’ rig. When the mackerel fishing had got fairly started their attention was drawn to the want of a fast sailing class of boat to carry the fish to market, and the ‘nickey’ or ‘lug’ rig which had been first introduced about 1850 was adopted and has continued ever since. About 1850, a number of Cornish fishermen, whose boats were rigged in this way, came to the Island, and, since Nicholas or Nickey was a common name among them, it was applied to the

rig of their boats. In their turn the Arklow boats which used to fish in Manx waters were called 'Tommy Artlars'—a Tommy from Arklow, so called because many of the Irishmen were named Tommy. To-day there are 'nobbies' from Nobby, and 'dougals,' from the Scotch name—a smaller class of fishing boat.

33 The nets used in times past by the Manx fishermen were made by hand and made into *jeebins*. Each *jeebins* was fifty-two meshes deep and eighteen yards long. Four *jeebins* went to a piece, and four pieces to a net; thus sixteen *jeebins* formed a net—four in depth and four in length. The *jeebins* were joined together for the net with needle and thread, much after the fashion of sailcloth, so that if one *jeebins* became worn out, or torn, it could be easily and quickly taken out and another one put in its place. There were five floats to a net, a pair was that distance that extended from one float to another, thus each separate net of sixteen *jeebins* had five floats and five pairs. The *jeebins* mesh was made square by two rows of network. It was of no exact measurement, but would be made of such a size that a man's three finger tops could easily be inserted through it; if a shilling passed freely between knot and knot, the mesh was considered to be sufficiently large, if smaller than this the net would be condemned. Fifty-six years ago, the Inspector who came round to gage the nets ordered some that had knots closer than the width of the shilling, to be burnt on Close Chiarn. The mesh was made on a gage about four inches long: it was generally rounded on one side and running to an edge—knife-blade fashion—the rounded side being held towards the netmaker. There was no standard gage, the gages would be made after different patterns, according to the locality in which they were used, though all would be about the same girth. The Dalby people liked a short gage and held one end out between the finger and the thumb; in the Southside the gage was used longer, and it had a short shaped handle which came out between the thumb and other the back of the hand, and it had two sharp edges, the greatest thickness in the centre, egg-shaped. Each person in the household had his allotted task in this home

34 net-making: none were idle. The thread of which the *jeebins* was made, was from the hemp grown on the homestead. The hemp being put on the *quiggal* ('distaff') and spun by the women into thread: the old men and women threaded the needles or shuttles: the men with the needles netted the thread into *jeebins*. A smart man could make a *jeebins* of net in the day, and the slowest worker could average from three to four yards of an evening. I well remember when a child going to school, having to make so many yards of *jeebins* after schoolhours, and woe be to me if I failed in my task; my ears would probably be pulled out of all proportion. The *jeebins* needles were generally made of *trammon* ('elder') wood toughened and stained rust-red by being soaked for about a fortnight in the grape of the cow-house: sometimes these needles would be made of apple-wood or bone. Bone needles being smoothest were thought to be best, and many an effort would be made by the workers to secure them. Herders, two little pieces of wood with wires attached, were used to weigh down the

last mesh on each side, so as to keep the work from curling up over the fingers. When the new net was finished it would be stretched out bit after bit over a table, or some boards, and well rubbed with a brush dipped into a mixture of Stockholm tar and oil. It would then be spread out on a field to dry. Care would have to be taken that the drying process was done when the sky was overcast, for bright sunshine would burn the net. Many a time has a net been hurriedly gathered off the field, and plunged into the sea, when the sun came out too strongly: sometimes too, lads would be kept to sprinkle the nets on the field with salt water now and then for fear that they might  
 35 burn. Second-hand nets would be barked. At the Spring equinox the fishermen made their first preparation by getting their boats launched off the bank where they had stowed during the winter from the storms. The crews would gather and each help the other in launching their boats when the tide would not be sufficiently high to float them. A jar of rum would be provided and served out among them, and they all shouted together as they pushed the boat:

*'Lesh ee, lesh ee, lesh ee,'*  
 'With her, with her, with her,'

they launched the boat by main strength and stupidity, and fortunate it was if no one was hurt.

When the crew had got fairly to work and a start made, they chose some particular public-house to start the shot, that is, the drink they got was got on credit. Everyone of the crew or his wife was at liberty to go in there and have his pint of jough or glass of rum whenever he felt thirsty: the whole thing would be settled at the latter end of the season when the boat would be safely moored for the winter. In putting out to sea, once clear of the harbour, all hands on board the boat, at an intimation from the skipper, took their hats off and had silent prayer. One of their prayers was as follows:

*'Dy bannee Parick Noo shin as nym maatey,'*  
 'May St Patrick bless us and our boat,'

or

*'Parick Noo bannee yn Ellan ain, dy bannee eh shin*  
*as yn baatey, goll magh dy mie, heet stiagh ny share*  
*lesh bio as marroo 'sy vaatey,'*

'St Patrick, who blessed our Island, may he bless  
 us and our boat, going out well, coming in better with  
 living and dead in the boat.'

36 When shooting the nets the following was said:

*'Gow magh dy lhome, trooid thie dy mollaigh,'*  
 'Go out bare, come home rough' (or 'coarse').

When the land would be fairly opened out so that they could see the Calf and other headlands, a bottle of rum would be hauled out and served round on all hands in a horn measure that had probably been handed down from father to son for generations. As the fleet stood out for the fishing-ground, every man was looking out for signs of herring—*perkins*, gannets, gulls, fish playing on the oily surface of the water, and such like. The sun being set—which was always strictly adhered to—they were satisfied that the time had come for shooting their nets. If the evening was dark, so that they could not see the admiral's flag or the sun, the skipper held his arm out at full length and when it got so dark that he could not see the black under his thumb-nail, he ordered the crew to shoot the nets. The nets being shot and everything made snug for the night, the first thing that they did was to say their prayers. Every living person on board went on his knees. If there was a man on board that was considered better than the rest, he offered up a prayer, or there might be two or three of that sort, when each one offered up prayer in turn; if there was none of that kind on board then each one prayed a silent prayer for himself. Strange as it may appear, those rough men that would drink ale and rum out of all reason and fight when on shore like demons, would not on any account, blow high or low, attempt to turn in without acknowledging the Creator.

- 37 If the night was short summer's night, a man would be placed on watch and the rest turned in until the day broke over the mountain top, when they commenced to pull in their nets; but if the season was far advanced they hauled sooner. When the nights were long they sailed to find the fish; the way they did was when it came to be so dark that the phosphorus could be seen in the water, they sailed over ground where they had suspicion there was fish, and, at intervals, they caused a sharp concussion by striking the deck with the anchor. If they were in fish it shewed by turning a milky-white, when the look-out shouted: '*Hoy eh, bboy!*'—'Here he is, boy!' After they had thus proved the ground and found fish, they shot their nets; after an hour or two they would prove to see if the nets were creeping, as they expressed it. If there were any herrings they carefully counted what they pulled out of the pair. Other boats also might be sailing on the *briaght* ('quest'), when the crews would hail with the word '*R'ou prowal ayns shen, bboy?*'—'Were you proving there, boy?' The answer had to be a truthful one, and they would be told how many warps had been taken out of the pair. When they had hauled in their nets they would be able to realize, pretty near, how many herrings they had. Here is an account of how crews hailed each other when I was going to sea:

A boat lying to, waiting for the sun to go down so as to shoot her nets—foresail hauled down, leaving only the mizzen up to keep her head to the wind, would be hailed by a boat sailing on the *briaght*: 'Have you seen the *perkin*?' ('herring-hog'—a sign of herring). 'Have you los' one?' would be often the taunting reply.



38 If the nets were shot the passing boat would hail:

‘Hoi, the driver!’ (a boat drifting or driving before the nets).

‘Hello!’

‘Were you proving?’

‘Aye.’

‘What d’ye see?’

‘*Ushtey.*’ *Ushtey*, or ‘Water’ was a great word with them, or sometimes the reply was, ‘*Lieen doo,*’ a ‘Black Net.’ These words meant that they had found no fish in the pair. If they had only a trifle of fish in the nets, they replied:

‘Ten *warpyn—luck-y-pot,*’ that is a potful of herrings—sufficient for breakfast, but not enough to market—poor luck.

Often the hailing would be all in Manx:

‘*R’ou prowal?*’ ‘Where you proving?’

‘*Val!*’ ‘I was.’

‘*Quoid oo er y piyr?*’ ‘How much had you in the pair?’

‘*Pohnnar.*’ ‘A child.’

‘*Cre’n eash dy pohnnar?*’ ‘What’s the age of the child?’

‘*Dussan ny queig-yeig.*’ ‘Twelve to fifteen,’ i.e., mease—a fairish fishing.

‘*R’ou prowal ny smoo na keayrt?*’ ‘Were you proving more than once?’

‘*Val!*’ ‘I was.’

‘*Vel eh snaue, bboy?*’ ‘Is he creeping, boy?’

‘*Ta, t’eh snaue ooilley yn traa.*’ ‘Aye, he’s creeping all the time.’

When the train was hauled on board at dawn the hail would be:

‘*Cre’n sthoir, bboy?*’ ‘What’s the store, boy?’

39 ‘*Sthoir bauk.*’ ‘A full boat,’ would be the reply after a good fishing.

If a boat was taking on board a great haul of herrings the skipper was bound to blow his horn for the purpose of informing others of the fact. Any skipper who heard the horn was bound to go and offer his help, either in relieving him by taking a part of his nets. or in assisting him to get the nets on board his own boat. When they

neared the port the bumming yawls or buyers would board them and he who would give the highest price was the buyer. The earnest would be passed—a shilling, which they called 'a shilling for the bottle'; the bottle would be a bottleful of rum which would be totted round in a horn measure to every one on board. Each buyer would have his flag flying if he was buying—the flag would be the sign of the buyer. The fish would be run fresh to the English market in smacks which would be lying in the bay or harbour; each smack would have on board a small cask of rum, of which the fishermen would be entitled to a bottleful now and then; even when he had no fish he would be scarcely ever denied. Herrings are counted in warps and sold by the mease, that is five hundred fish—six score and four fish to the hundred. In the early part of the last century herrings were sold by the cran, but so much imposition was practised that it had to be discontinued. Now, the herrings are counted into baskets, and it always takes two men to count a basket; they commenced with '*nane, jees, three, kiare, queig,*' and so on, alternately, to '*daa-eed*' or forty warps; then one man would cast in another warp and a herring over, saying 'Warp, tally.' The basket is then finished. The skipper would carefully mark each tally by making a notch with his knife on a stick, every fifth notch crossed the other four, and that was a mease. And so it continued day after day, five days of the week; on Saturday, they made for the harbour and on no account would anyone attempt to go out to sea on Saturday or Sunday night; no matter how poor he might be, no person could persuade him to break the Sabbath.

Their train of nets were so joined that each net could be easily separated, and each man would undo his net, carry it home on his back, and dry it every Saturday. This was the old practice. If they had earned any money during the week they went to their usual public-house to settle or divide the money in shares. The boat would be entitled to two and a half shares, each full man to a share, and each separate net to a half-share. Within the last fifty years the provisions are paid out of the whole gross earnings; before that time each man provided his own. If it should happen that there were any odd shillings—which there often was—the money would be reserved for the poor, the aged, the widow or the fatherless. They believed that their luck depended upon remembering the poor. They called the odd money 'God's Portion,' and it had to be used accordingly. It would have amused anyone to listen to a crowd of fishermen on Saturday night, each one had his own yarn and all would be speaking together—they would be all speakers, and no listeners. If anyone was anxious to be heard, he struck the table with his fist, when the attention of the rest would be drawn to him; he would be a bold man who dared to strike the table in the middle, as some other man might dispute his right, but he might strike it on his own side without fear. And so week after week passed away till the end of the season. Sixty years ago there were three public-houses on the Niarbyl for the accommodation of fishermen. Forty years ago I have myself seen as many as ten fights going on at once on Peel

quay. All that is changed now; the temperance party, so far as the men are concerned, has done that. If one fisherman asked another, when the season was ended, how he had done, if he had done well or fairly well, his answer would be that he would be able to keep the devil and the coroner from the door, that is, poverty and crime, the two enemies which he most dreaded. When the boats were put on the bank and all sided for that season, the final settlement would be made, that is, the nets' shares which had been left in the principal owner's hands until the season had ended would be divided among the crew as each was entitled; and at the final settlement the crew would probably be engaged for the following season. The skipper hired his crew as follows: he passed a shilling to his best man, naming the conditions, and he passed it on to the next and so it went the round of the crew; the last man put the shilling in a quart measure which he tossed and turned mouth under; if the shilling turned up heads it was considered lucky. The man handed the shilling back to the skipper, when he reminded him that he was the skipper, and that the crew expected him to conduct himself in an honest and proper manner as became a skipper towards the owners and the crew, which to my mind is a proof that in those days there was

42 nothing low or cringing in the Manx fishermen. It would be decided on the hiring night when to have the *Shibbyr Baatey* or *Scoltey*, the 'Boat Supper'; it would be held some night in the Christmas, very often on old St Stephen's night or old New Year's night. There would be provided an abundance of pies and puddings, and plenty of rum and jough, what you might call a square feed. All the crew would be present, and each man could bring his wife or sweetheart and have an abundance for one night; that one night's spree has been known to cost from £5 to £10. There are many yet who lament that the practice has not been kept up, as they say that there is no luck since the custom was abandoned.

In the early part of this century, large quantities of herrings were cured for export, and numbers of barrels were sent to the West Indies for the plantations, but after the slaves were freed that trade in a great measure ceased. The late Mr Holmes, who died in 1852, used to cure for the Royal Navy and Mercantile navy. He had curing-houses in Douglas to the year of his death: large quantities also were smoked and salted in Derbyhaven. A hogshead of rum was always kept in his store, and a bottleful of his rum was part of the conditions of sale.

At a time when there were no time-tables, clocks, or watches to guide the fisherman in his calling, the breaking of the day over the hills, the passing of a particular star over a certain point, told him the time; the ebb and flow on the rocks told him whether there was water in the harbour; the noise of the surf on certain points of the coasts,

43 and so on, told him of the probable state of the tide. Children of nature they were, and to nature and nature's God they looked for guidance. It is true that civilization gives a good deal to us, but it robs us also of something that we do not find in our

day, and the old Manx fishermen, in their stubborn and honest independence, had something that might, in my opinion, be copied by the present generation.

## SAYINGS

72 *Ny smoo vees er y tailley, ny strimmey vees yn eeck.'*

'The more on the tally, the heavier the payment'; that is, the worse the crime the heavier the punishment.

*'Veryms y banjagh dhyt.'*

'I will give thee the fallow or commonland'; this is said when a worthless n'er-do-well is in the house: 'If thy behaviour is not better, I'll make thee go out to do for thyself.' All young cattle, when able to do for themselves, were sent to the common or fallowland to pick up for themselves: 'Thou wilt have to root for thyself.'

*'Astan er e amman. Yernagh er e ockle.'*

'An eel by his tail, as an Irishman by his word'; slippery, very.

*'Baase mraane as bishagey kirree.'*

'Death of women and increase of sheep': a farmer who could marry two or three wives, each one having a fortune, and his sheep multiplying, would be supposed to do well.

*'Cre'n aght oddys sack follym shassoo.'*

'An empty sack cannot stand.'

*'Eshyn ta litcheragh ayns yn arragh, t'eh mooaragh ayns yn ouyr.'*

'He who is lazy in spring begrudges in harvest.'

73 *'Neear as neear-ass, dy vishagey yn eeast-glass.'*

'West and Sou'-West to increase the grey-fish or herring': alluding to the wind wished for at Christmas by fishermen.

*'Chiu yn chenn vroit.'*

'Warming the old broth': this is said when two sweethearts who have quarrelled make it up.

*'Stroie yn foddyr er yn grunt.'*

'Spend the fodder on the ground': that is, spend what you have where you live; do not save for others.

*'Cha lane as mollar.'*

'As full as a *mollar*': this is said of one who is as full of ale as a *mollar* (sheepskin buoy which is full of wind).

*'T'eh er gheddyn famman scryss.'*

'He has got his tail or end net pared off': this is a fisherman's saying which means that so-and-so has met with loss or disappointment.

*'Ta'n arroo 'syn ubllin as ooilley dy-kiart,  
Cha nel oo enn ayn yn furriman shaghey yn gart.'*

'The corn is in the haggard and all made right,  
You will not know which reaper was first or last.'

74

*'Gow magh dy lhome as trooid thie dy mollarh,  
Lesh yn eayn-bwoirrin as yn coamrey sonney;  
My heeys oo moddey croym dty chione,  
My heeys oo maarliagh roie er-e-hon.'*

'Go out bare and come home rough,  
With the she-lamb and the plentiful covering;  
If you see a dog stoop your head,  
If you see a thief run for it.'

This was a charm said at sheep shearing.  
*'Innyd dyn eayst ayn—Innyd doo-cheeiragh,  
Oie feailley noght as laa obbyr mairagh.'*

'An Easter without a moon—an Easter very dark,  
A holiday night and work day morrow.'

*'Clagh ny killagh ayns corneil dty hie.'*

'The stone of the church in the corner of thy house.' This is said to be the bitterest curse in our language. The houses usually contained one room, a corner was partitioned off by a choolley of straw, and in this the sick were kept. If a sick person was dying, the priest gave him the last sacrament: the vessels used were placed on the

altar, or church-stone—a flat stone marked with a cross which he brought with him. So when a person said '*Clagh ny killagh ayns corneil dry hie,*' he wished that the priest might soon be in your house to administer extreme unction.

*'Ooir ny three cagleeyn.'*

75 'Earth of three boundaries'; that is, earth from a spot where three proprietors' lands meet, was sprinkled on a person afflicted with the evil eye. It was considered one of the best remedies. The earth from cross-four-ways or from any spot where numbers of people were passing was also considered very good. I saw a spot at Dalby where three boundaries meet, where so much earth had been taken out that a small pit had been made.

No person could practice the Black Art or any necromancy on any person who had in his possession a four-leaf clover.





## RIDDLES

*‘Guess c’red t’ort as ny ennee oo ort, cha nee craue  
nyn grauayn, ny renaig nyn ol.’*

*Ennym dooinney*

‘Guess what is upon thee, and thou dost not feel it on  
thee, it isn’t thy bones, it isn’t thy hair, and it isn’t  
thy locks.’

The man’s name

*‘Kione ny bio ayns beal ny varroo,  
Three cassyn erskyn ny kione,  
As daa chass dys y thalloo.’*

*Dooinney lesh phot er e gione*

‘The head of the living in the mouth of the dead,  
Three feet overhead,  
And two feet on the ground.’

Man with (three-legged) pot on his head

76

*‘Kiare roie, kiare ny boie,  
Jees yeeaghyn, jees geaishtagh,  
Jees yeealley yn moddey  
As yn moddey geamey.’*

*Booa*

‘Four running, four sitting,  
Two looking, two listening,  
Two striking the dog  
And the dog crying.’

A cow

*‘Myr yeeagh mee harrish boalley chashtal my ayrey  
honnick mee yn marroo curlesh ny bioee ersooyl.’*

*Lhong*

‘As I looked over my father’s castle wall I saw the  
dead carrying the living away.’

A ship

*'Va boght doal dy row va shooyl ny dbieyn, as va braar ec yn boght shoh as hie eh dys yn cheayn as v'eh baiht. Cha row braar ec yn baraar shen. Cre mooinjerey va'n boght va shooyl ny dbieyn da'n dooinney baiht?'*

*Shuyr*

'There was a blind beggar who walked the houses, and this beggar had a brother who went to sea and was drowned. That brother had not a brother. What relation was the beggar who was walking the houses to the man who was drowned?'

A sister

77 *'Quoid duirn as uiljyn ta er mummig dty vummig, ben dty shan'er, as dty warree?'*

*Cha row urree agh daa uillin as daa ghoarn*

'How many fists and elbows have your mother's mother, your grandfather's wife, and your grand-mother?'

Two elbows and two fists

YN JERREY

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