On passionate love

I became conscious of my Manx nationality, and felt the first stirrings of that passionate love for the Island and all things Manx which has been with me ever since. On my seventh birthday Mr Collins (who was for a time at Loch Parade by the way) gave me my first treasured book of poetry, which I still have and still love—R.L.
Stevenson’s *A Child’s Garden of Verse*. It was this book, I think, which first made me try to write poems of my own.

You see, I am quite uneducated really. I never went to school and I used to just go round Ballaragh with the farmers and down to Laxey and went out in the boats with the fishermen, and wandering about pretty well as I liked. I got to know Sophia Morrison who was then the secretary of the Cheshaght Ghailckagh and lived in Peel. She knew my parents and she came to see us and when she found the kind of life I was living she started me collecting, putting things down. She didn’t call it collecting then. She said, ‘You know, you ought to write down some of these things that people tell you and sing to you.’ And she gave me a little notebook in which I started to write things down and I still have. And I was learning music so I knew how to write the notes. But I never write notes straight [8] down from the singing. I can’t pitch them properly for one thing. What I have to do when I learn a tune is to learn it from the person who teaches me until I can sing it myself and then I work it out on the piano. At one time I played the fiddle and I used to work it out on the fiddle. But I’ve given that up for many years now.

**Source:** Present in two extracts in Fenella Bazin, ed. *Mona Douglas: A Tribute* (Douglas: Manx Heritage Foundation, 1998) 5–6 & 6–8. **Note:** This typescript is a slightly different version from Mona Douglas, “BEGINNINGS,”, undated typescript, mnhl, ms 09545, Mona Douglas Papers, Box 4. See *Manx Notes*, 119.