

Manx Notes 179 (2014)

“I HAVE HEARD THEM SUNG LATELY IN PEEL”

SOME MANX FOLK SONGS COLLECTED

BY SOPHIA MORRISON *

The twelve texts here (no tunes) are taken from Sophia Morrison and Karl Roeder’s *Manx Proverbs and Sayings*, published in 1905.¹ The material had earlier been serialised in the *Isle of Man Examiner* between 1904–05.² The *Examiner* was the only paper in the Island that supported the Celtic Revival and Sidney Broadbent’s enthusiasm and support has been overlooked in accounts of this period. For instance, *Manx Proverbs and Sayings* was published by Broadbents as had earlier been Roeder’s *Manx Notes & Queries* from 1904,³ which gathered together his column from the *Examiner* itself. Earlier, the newspaper had published the correspondence that argued for and urged the foundation of what was to become the Manx Language Society.

In her comment on “Ta mee gollish myr eoylley” [the first line used here as a title], Morrison commented that it was “[s]ung by an old tailor at his work. The last two lines are not always quoted, but I myself heard them sung lately in Peel.”⁴ As regards “Yn Maarliagh Keyrragh,” she notes “[t]here are others and more corrupt versions of the above to be heard, but this version is the best.”⁵ These extra textual

* Originally published as Stephen Miller, “‘I have heard them sung lately in Peel’: Some Manx Folk Songs collected by Sophia Morrison,” *Kiaull Manninagh Jiu* October (2013), [7]–[9]. Reproduced here with sources.

¹ Sophia Morrison and Karl Roeder, *Manx Proverbs and Sayings* (Douglas: S.K. Broadbent, 1905). I am grateful to Dr Ray Moore, University of York, for providing me with a digital copy of this book.

² There were three separate series: (1) “Manx Proverbs,” appearing in two parts in August 1904; (2) a further eight part series under the heading “Manx Notes & Queries: Manx Proverbs,” running between December 1904 and February 1905; (3) and, finally, “Manx Scraps,” in two pieces from July 1905. Bibliographical details are: (1) Sophia Morrison, “Manx Proverbs (Part 1),” *Isle of Man Examiner* 13 August 1904, Sophia Morrison, “—— (Part 2),” *Isle of Man Examiner* 20 August 1904. (2) Sophia Morrison, Manx Notes & Queries. Manx Proverbs (Part 1),” *Isle of Man Examiner* 3 December 1904, Sophia Morrison, “—— (Part 2),” *Isle of Man Examiner* 10 December 1904, Sophia Morrison, “—— (Part 3),” *Isle of Man Examiner* 31 December 1904, Sophia Morrison, “—— (Part 4),” *Isle of Man Examiner* 7 January 1905, Sophia Morrison, “—— (Part 5),” *Isle of Man Examiner* 14 January 1905, Sophia Morrison, “—— (Part 6),” *Isle of Man Examiner* 28 January 1905, Sophia Morrison, “—— (Part 7),” *Isle of Man Examiner* 18 February 1905, Sophia Morrison, “—— (Part 8),” *Isle of Man Examiner* 25 February 1905. (3) Sophia Morrison, “Manx Scraps (Part 1),” *Isle of Man Examiner* 8 July 1905, Sophia Morrison, “—— (Part 2),” *Isle of Man Examiner* 29 July 1905.

³ Charles Roeder, *Manx Notes and Queries* (Douglas: S.K. Broadbent, 1904).

⁴ Morrison and Roeder, *Manx Proverbs and Sayings* 36.

⁵ Morrison and Roeder, *Manx Proverbs and Sayings* 45.

comments, brief admittedly, are still valuable as they indicate that Morrison was collecting from a still active tradition.

Morrison did not collect alone, she was accompanied at times by Josephine Kermode (who wrote poetry under the pen name of “Cushag”);⁶ she also had a circle of collectors such as Cressy Dodd who passed material on to her.⁷ So it may be that not all of the material here was strictly gathered by her. As regards Roeder’s contribution, that was confined to the proverbs alone.⁸ The activities of Morrison as collector as opposed to her Pan Celtic activities still calls for further research although this is hampered by the disappearance of the bulk of her personal papers dealing with her folk song and folk tale collecting. This is, sadly, a familiar situation and one laced with an unintentional irony that the material documenting what was seen as a fading and passing vernacular culture has gone as well. Her papers came to the then Manx Museum Library only in the 1950s—1957 to be precise, exactly forty years after her death—but evidently the deposit is missing material.⁹

Turning to the texts here, it must be said that just two of them appear under a heading that identifies them as songs (“Fragmentary Love Songs”). Here, one of them, “Graih my Chree” is a well-known title. However, one other song, “Yn Maarliagh Keyrragh,” is familiar from *Manx Ballads and Music* (1896),¹⁰ and “Ta mee gollish myr eoylley” is an occupational work song as noted by Morrison. Then there is the “Flout er Vooinjjer ——” set of texts, the places mentioned here being Dalby, Laxey, and Ronague. The Dalby text and its context has been discussed elsewhere;¹¹ it is clear that such skits had a wider circulation in the Island than was first assumed. The other texts are similar short pieces, more often than not just a

⁶ Stephen Miller, “‘On the Manx Quest’: Sophia Morrison and Josephine Kermode,” *Kiaull Manninagh Jiu* April (2012). Reproduced with references as Stephen Miller, “——,” *Manx Notes* 138 (2012).

⁷ Stephen Miller, “Cressy Dodd: An Unrecognised Manx Song Collector,” *Kiaull Manninagh Jiu* August (2011). Reproduced with references as Stephen Miller, “——,” *Manx Notes* 131 (2012).

⁸ “Of the following collection of Manx Proverbs and Sayings, some have been gathered by Mr Roeder, who is so well known to readers of the *Examiner* through his ‘Manx Notes and Queries’ column; the rest by myself.” Sophia Morrison, “Introduction,” *Manx Proverbs and Sayings* (Douglas: S.K. Broadbent, 1905).

⁹ In 1900, the anthropologist and folklore bibliographer N.W. Thomas wrote, “[m]ay I suggest to members [*ie*, of the Folk-Lore Society] that it would be an excellent thing if, in default of a qualified individual legatee, they left to the Society such notebooks and mss. as they may die possessed of?” N.W. Thomas, “Notebooks and MSS,” *Folk-Lore* xi.4 (1900). As regards the FLS, members did not follow up on his suggestion. However, it shows an early concern about the fate of members’ personal papers after their death.

¹⁰ A.W. Moore, *Manx Ballads and Music* (Douglas: G. & R. Johnson, 1896) 214–16.

¹¹ Stephen Miller, “Floutyn er Vooinjjer Ghelby,” *Kiaull Manninagh Jiu* January (2012). Reproduced with references as Stephen Miller, “Floutyn er Vooinjjer Ghelby,” *Manx Notes* 136 (2012). The Laxey and Ronague texts were overlooked in this piece.

single verse. Assumed by collectors in this period to be “fragmentary” texts, *ie* the rest of the song having been lost, they can be seen as complete in themselves, either being satirical in nature or a simple ditty,¹² as in the seasonal piece here: “The Little Christmas is under the bench, / The Big Christmas at the back of the house, / Then let us go down to the port, / For a bellyful of good ale.” Short and, moreover, to the point.

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The Sophia Morrison Collection: (1) “Cray dhoan ec Keeil-Eoin”; (2) * “Flout er Vooijer Laxey”; (3) * “Flout er Vooijer Ronague”; (4) * “Floutyn er Vooijer Ghelby”; (5) * “Graih my Chree”; (6) “Jack Beg Juan John va singal myr lhon”; (7) * “Yn Maarliagh Keyrragh”; (8) “My mraane oast ta’d stoamey”; (9) “O! she yn traa va my ghraih’s beaghey ayns yn Lagg”; (10) “Ollick veg ec y vink”; (11) “Ta mee gollish myr eoylley”; (12) “Ta’n Ollick veg fo’n vink.” Key: * Text with title. [First lines used as titles for the rest of the collection.]

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VIENNA, 2014

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THE SONG TEXTS

(1)

[Cray dhoan ec Keeil-Eoin]

- I. I Cray dhoan ec Keeil-Eoin
Brashlagh bwec ayns Yurby
Claghyn glassey ayns Balla-laaghey
Guillyn mooar ayns Dalby

TRANSLATION

Brown clay at St John’s
Wild mustard [*ie*, poor land] in Jurby,
Grey stones in Ballaugh,
Fine lads in Dalby

Source: *MPS* (1905): 45. **Notes(s):** “Imitation of the song of Kirk Patrick Old Church bell.”

¹² Discussed in Miller, “Floutyn er Vooijer Ghelby.”

(2)

Flout er Vooinjier Laxey

- I. I Maarlee Skeeylley Lonan cha çhiu as ny caaee
As d'eiyr yn shenn ghuilley ad sheese lesh yn traie

Source: *MPS* (1905): 47.

(3)

Flout er Vooinjier Ronague

- I. I Ayns Skeeylley Chreest
Va madgyn neesht
Va foddey smeessey ayns Ronnag
Lheid ny madgyn shoh
5 Cha row rieu bio
T'ad çheet voish foddey as gerrit

Source: *MPS* (1905): 48.

(4)

Floutyn er Vooinjier Ghelby

- I. I Hie yn chriy mygeayrt sheear un laa
As haink eh stiagh er Niarbyl traie
Dy chroghey mooinjer Ghelby
Dy chroghey mooinjer Ghelby
2. 5 Va eirey mooar ayns Rhaby mooar
As eirey mooar ayns Balleby
Ny sodjey sheear ny smessey sthill
Pyht, pyht, pyht, er vooinjier Ghelby

Source: *MPS* (1905): 48. **Note(s):** (1) "The gallows were once swept off Hango Hill by the sea and, and washed up on the Niarbyl shore, after which Southside men returned the taunts of their fellows in the West by saying that when the very gallows went round West to hang them it showed how bad they were." (2) "When this was sung, the thumbs were snapped at "Pyht." A Peel man would say it in the same circumstances as an Irishman would invite one 'to stand on his coat.' It was a challenge to a

fight, and the finger-snapping expressed derision. It was sung to a dance tune.”

(5)
Graih my Chree

- I. I “Graih my chree, vel graih ayd orrym?”
“Ta, red beg cha nel mee follym”
Voish yn red beg haink graih mooar
As lurg shen haink graih dy-liooar

TRANSLATION

“Love of my heart, hast thou love for me?”
“A little I have to give to thee”
From that little soon came more
Then came love in fullest store

Source: *MPS* (1905): 48–49. **Notes(s):** Appears under the heading of “Fragmentary Love Songs.”

(6)
[Jack Beg Juan John va singal myr lhon]

- I. I Jack Beg Juan John va singal myr lhon
Ginsh caggey mooar ayns Nherin
As Bella Barrule vees cheet er-y-chooyl
Dy raip e olt as cleayshyn

Source: *MPS* (1905): 45. **Notes(s):** “Written by a Man on his Termagant Wife.”

(7)
Yn Maarliagh Keyrragh

- I. I She Nick beg ny liargagh
Va bwaag echey ayns yn aasagh
S'maynrey va ayns shen dooinney ceau e hraa, hraa, hraa;
Son cha row echey agh goll magh
5 As curlersh kione mollagh [*ie*, keyrrey] stiagh
Shen y voayl veagh yn scryssey as yn daah, daah, daah
Shen y voayl veagh yn scryssey as yn daah

Source: *MPS* (1905): 45. **Note(s):** “There are others and more corrupt versions of the above to be heard, but this version is the best.”

(8)

[My *Mraane oast ta'd stoamey*]

1. 1 My *mraane oast ta'd stoamey*
Tra ta mish shooyl my voght
As ooilley eiraght my ayraghyn
Currit ayn son jough
2. 5 Ny paitçhyn ain ta rooisht as broigh
Nyn gishtey neesht ta follym
Ta mee-hene my voght lesh giu yn yough
As clooidyn fritlagh orrym

TRANSLATION

The landladies are smart
While I am but a fool
And all my father's heritage
Given away for ale

Our children naked and in filth
Our cupboardsthey are bare
Myself a fool with drinking ale
And ragged clouts I wear

Source: *MPS* (1905): 36–37.

(9)

[O! she yn *traa va my ghraih's beaghey ayns yn Lagg*]

1. 1 O! she yn *traa va my ghraih's beaghey ayns yn Lagg*
V'ish ceau ny goonyn sheeidey as ny bussalyn plaid
Son v'ish ben aeg cha aalin—cha naik shiu rieu ny s'booie
V'ish 'skyn dy-chooilley lady ayns ny skeeraghyn twoaie

CO-CHIAULL

- c. I O! she jeelt shiu dou my chabbyl dy voddym nish goll roym
Dy akin graih veg veen my chree son t'ish feer foddey voym
Hem's harrish crink as couanyn as derrey er mee skee
Dy akin graih veg veen my chree son t'ish feer foddey j'ee

TRANSLATION

Oh! it is the time my love was living in the Lagg
She was wearing gowns of silk and handkerchiefs of plaid
For she was a maiden young—one fairer ne'er you saw
Fairer far than any lady dwelling in the Nor'

CHORUS

'Tis saddle you for me my horse that swiftly ride I may
All for to see my heart's dear love who's very far away
O'er hill and dale I'll go though worn and weary I may be
To see my heart's dear little love—far, far away is she

Source: *MPS* (1905): 49. **Notes(s):** Appears under the heading of
“Fragmentary Love Songs.”

(10)

[Ollick veg ec y vink]

- I. I Ollick veg ec y vink
Fill the cup and give me drink
Ollick vooar ec y thie
Cappan jough as peesh dy phie

Source: *MPS* (1905): 37.

(11)

[Ta mee gollish myr eoylley]

- I. I Ta mee gollish myr eoylley
Whaaley cooat feailley
Tummey yn snaid ayns ushtey
Son nagh goghe ee aile
5 Myr ta'n snaie çheet jeh bluggan
T'eh goll ayns snaid lesh whush ayn

TRANSLATION

I am sweating like dung
Stiching the holiday coat
Dipping the needle in water
Lest it take fire
As the thread comes off a ball
It goes into the needle with a whiz in it

Source: *MPS* (1905): 36. **Note(s):** “Sung by an old tailor at his work. The last two lines are not always quoted, but I myself heard them sung lately in Peel.”

(12)

[Ta'n Ollick veg fo'n vink]

- I. I Ta'n Ollick veg fo'n vink
Ta'n Ollick vooar cooly thie
Eisht lhig dooin goll er gys yn phurt
Son lane bolg dy yough vie

TRANSLATION

The Little Christmas is under the bench
The Big Christmas at the back of the house
Then let us go down to the port
For a bellyful of good ale

Source: *MPS* (1905): 37.

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