

Manx Notes 279 (2017)

“WITH COURTING IN THE WINTER I’D SELDOM BE IN BED” *

“With courting in the winter I’d seldom be in bed.” This is the opening line of Arrane Sooree (‘Courting Song’), which goes on to recount the *travails* of courting in winter.¹ The suitor is out and about in the dark and the rain and hoping that his intended will respond to his knocking at her window and let him in. Here, he is successful, and the song ends, “Our hearts were so mellow with / Our mutual pleasure / You never heard such before / And you scarce will again.” A court case from 1903, reported in the *Isle of Man Examiner* with a headline that sets the scene, “Alleged Seduction by a Parish Commissioner: £500 Damages Claimed,” contains detail that is there in the song: “On occasions defendant would visit the house late at night, knock at the bedroom window, and plaintiff’s daughter opened the door and let him in.”² And, further,

He paid frequent visits to the house, nearly always late at night, or in the early hours of the morning, and it was during this time the seduction took place, the plaintiff’s daughter, as contended, being a consenting party upon a promise that he would marry her and it would make the engagement binding.³

Unlike in the song, here there was no happy ending as no marriage took place after she fell pregnant and gave birth. Being seduced and abandoned by a lover belongs to another folk song.

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REFERENCES

- Anon. “Alleged Seduction by a Parish Commissioner: £500 Damages Claimed.” *Isle of Man Examiner* 21 February 1903: 8a.
- Anon [but A.W. Moore]. “Manx Ballad: ‘Lesh Sooree’ (Courting Song).” *Manx Note Book* i.4 (1885): 142–44.
- Moore, A.W. *Manx Ballads and Music*. Douglas: G. & R. Johnson, 1896.



* Originally published as Stephen Miller, “With courting in the winter I’d seldom be in bed’,” *Kiaull Manninagh Jiu* October (2017): [15]. Reproduced here with sources.

¹ A.W. Moore, *Manx Ballads and Music* (Douglas: G. & R. Johnson, 1896) 81–82. Reprints Anon [A.W. Moore], “Manx Ballad: ‘Lesh Sooree’ (Courting Song),” *Manx Note Book* i.4 (1885).

² “Alleged Seduction by a Parish Commissioner: £500 Damages Claimed,” *Isle of Man Examiner* 21 February 1903.

³ “Alleged Seduction by a Parish Commissioner: £500 Damages Claimed.”