

Manx Notes 309 (2018)

“MISS MORRISON AT THE WHEEL” (8)

THE PAN-CELTIC CONGRESS THE MANX LANGUAGE SOCIETY’S REPORT, 1901–04 (1904)

The following report was read at the Pan-Celtic Congress at Carnarvon on Wednesday, by the hon. secretary of the Manx Language Society (Miss Morrison):

Much has been attempted by the Manx Language Society since the last Pan-Celtic Congress, and if the results have been less than we have hoped, they have at least been such as to encourage us to further action. In 1901 we were obliged to admit that the Manx language had within recent years declined grievously, and that it was out of favour with the rising generation. We can now assert that, in consequence of the growth of that movement of whose beginnings our secretary spoke in 1901, a distinct revival of the language has taken place among the Manx people themselves. It was found at the last census that the language is spoken by one in 12 of the population of the Island, and at the present moment the existence of a widespread interest in the language is proved by the more frequent use of Manx books in the reference department of our public library. It is now difficult to procure copies of Manx dictionaries, owing to increasing demand for such works. It is also significant that when a census of parents in favour of the teaching of Manx was taken in Peel, they were found to be in a satisfactory majority. As to the children themselves, it has been most encouraging to note the keenness of the little competitors for the recitation prizes offered by the society and by Miss Williams, of Aberclydach. The intense interest taken by all and sundry in the revived Oie’l Verrey also speaks, I think, of a living, and not a dying language.

As to the highly important matter of the official recognition of the language in the course of elementary education in the Island, there is somewhat to encourage. Since the autumn of 1901, the Council of Education has inserted Manx as a subject of instruction in the regulations for evening schools. The regulations have received the approval of the Tynwald Court, and the Council has applied to the Board of Education, Whitehall, to recognise Manx as a subject of the code for public elementary day schools in the Island. We were then requested by the Council to send in the names of persons willing to become teachers of Manx in the schools, and to submit themselves for examination with that end. We sent in the name of Mr J.J. Kneen, who is willing to act as pioneer in the matter. Mr Kneen has been successful in his examination, and has received an excellent report upon it, and the Manx Language Society has been requested by the Council of Education to supply the names of schools in which the managers are desirous that Manx shall be taught. I here the matter rests for the present. As to the advisability of pressing forward in this

direction, our camp is somewhat divided, but surely in the children lies the hope of the future of the language.

As to Manx literature, the most important event since 1901 has been the publication of Mr Goodwin's *First Lessons in Manx*. The book was brought out by the united efforts of the Peel Manx Language Class and the Celtic Association, and it is one of the most notable pieces of work done for the language. At the present moment there are appearing in the *Examiner* Manx translations of various Psalms found among the late Canon Clarke's MSS. Mr A.W. Moore has written an introduction to them, and they are being edited by Mr J.J. Kneen.

Such has been the work of the Manx Language Society during the last three years. It has met, I think, with such a measure of success as to urge it to further efforts.

Sophia Morrison, "[The Pan-Celtic Congress] The Manx Language Society's Report, 1901-4." *Isle of Man Examiner* 3 September 1904: 3f.

STEPHEN MILLER, 2018

