

Manx Notes 441 (2020)

“FORGOTTEN CENTENARY: ISLAND TAKEN TO TASK” HALL CAINE (1853–1931)

(1)

Yesterday was the 100th anniversary of the birth of the most distinguished Manx novelist, Sir Hall Caine, and the National Press has taken the Island to task that this notable centenary went unmarked.

The *Daily Dispatch* said: “You would have thought that the Manx people, who revere even minor writers and artists, would have remembered the man they made a Freeman of Douglas in 1929 and then acclaimed as Manxland’s greatest son. It is a wistful fading epilogue to the story of the great Sir Hall Caine, the Celtic volcano of literature who is now the forgotten man of Man.”

But even in its criticism, the National Press shows that Sir Hall Caine was honoured and revered in the Island in his lifetime. He was, as this criticism said, made a Freeman of Douglas and acclaimed as one of the Island’s greatest sons. He had the satisfaction of knowing it in his lifetime. Too often is genius acknowledged and acclaimed only after the death of the object of reverence.

Hall Caine is well remembered in the Island as a great novelist of his day. His works *The Manxman*, *The Deemster*, *The Christian*, *The Eternal City*, and others which were best sellers in the Victorian era, are known to many.

“Forgotten Centenary: Island taken to Task,” *Isle of Man Examiner* 15 May 1953, if.

(2)

The centenary of Sir Hall Caine’s birth passed almost unnoticed in the Isle of Man, and in the Douglas Public Library I am told there were no more inquiries than usual for his books. Has anybody under the age of 40 read *The Woman Thou Gavest*, I wonder, or *The Deemster*? Probably not. Yet they were pretty hot stuff once. Sermons were preached about them. They sold like hot cakes, and the author—on sales at least—was the most famous figure in English literature. Now the demand for them is small, but steady, and mostly by middle aged or elderly people.

Pseud [signed as “Islander”], “[At Random] Hall Caine,” *Isle of Man Weekly Times* 23 May 1953, 3c.

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A somewhat measured response (read indifferent) from the *Isle of Man Examiner* to the charge of neglecting the centenary of the birth of Hall Caine (1853–1931), namely he was known in his lifetime and that was surely better than being acknowledged

after death. “Yet they were pretty hot stuff once,” wrote “Islander” of his novels and indeed they were but ever now in the past tense.

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