

Manx Notes 456 (2020)

THE MANX NATIONAL ANTHEM

“TO THE EDITOR”
PEEL CITY GUARDIAN
(4 MAY 1907)

DEAR SIR,—Will you please allow me a corner of your valuable paper to offer some remarks on the new anthem, which has provoked such an interesting discussion. It may be said that I am not a poet; that I am not qualified to give an opinion either on the words or the music. This impression I have found from the remarks of some of your correspondents. If the essential characteristic of poetry be to render obscure everything touched upon, so that a great amount of time and thought must be expended to unearth the hidden treasure, and if extravagant embellishment must be substituted for the naked truth, then, I admit that, as an ordinary man, I am utterly incapable to touch the fringe of the subject. But if it is granted that the chief feature in poetry ought to be that the subjects introduced and the points introduced, and the points illustrated should be obviously seen, so that they may be instantly grasped and admired, then there cannot be the slightest doubt regarding my right to have a say on a poem produced specially for my benefit and admiration.

Now, sir, by your permission I will endeavour to point out a few defects in the poem under consideration, which, in my opinion, are somewhat conspicuous. In the first place, it is too lengthy. Any poem purporting to be national should not have more than four or five verses at most. This one has eight. Some of the verses are feeble, particularly Nos. 3 and 4. “Baal fires” have not about them a Manx colouring. Druidical sacrifices would have been in harmony with Manx ancient history, and consequently characteristically Manx. The author appears to have gone out of his way to deify “Orry the Dane.” Why depart from the belief ever held by Manxmen that Mananan beg Mac Lyr was the founder and first legislator of our little kingdom? Our old statute book describes Him as follows: “Mananan Mac Lyr, the first man who held Mann, was ru’er thereof, and after whom the land was named, reigned many years.”

Admitting the Danes were here, their dynasty did not extend over one hundred years, and it was marked by treachery, tyranny, assassination and murder. There is a doubt if Orry himself ever was here. Why not commence the historical part of the song with English line of kings? Sir William Montacute was crowned by order of Edward III in the year 1344, and not by a foreign invader in search of plunder. I am not an ardent admirer of Kings, but as long as we have one—and not a bad one at that—his sovereignty ought to be acknowledged in any song or anthem professing to be national, and it is a matter of regret that this essential is not found in the one in question. Compare the following specimens:

Our National Anthem—
God save our gracious King,
Long live our noble King,
God save the King.

Mr T. Kelly's reproduction—
With blessings our sovereign crown,
In righteousness 'stablish his throne,
With favour Jehovah look down,
And never—Mona disown.

Mr Clucas Joughin—
O God our King and Island save
From pestilence and war,
While earth brings forth and oceans lave
We still Thy children are.

Now for the new Anthem—
O land of our birth,
O gem of God's earth,
O Island so strong and so fair,
Built firm as Barule,
Thy throne of home rule,
Makes us free as thy sweet mountain air.

A pretty verse I admit but it acknowledges no king, and I apprehend that the line "Thy throne of home rule" will have a tendency to weaken the whole concern.

In conclusion just a word regarding the tune. I fail to comprehend the logic that because the music is characteristic of the Island it should be used on this occasion. This, to my mind, is one reason why it should be abandoned. Music is the true universal speech of any nation, and is not only a certain indication of what the people are but a prophecy of what their future life is likely to be. An inspiring, stately and rousing music, as suggested by Mr Kelly, would have the effect of producing the cheerful and orderly anthem of a brave race, whereas the weird music of "Mylecharane," the offspring of the unearthly and supernatural, would only make us the more superstitious, timorous and melancholy. That we should foster and perpetuate the raving of a silly old miser who spent his days alternately among the bent and in the bogs of Jurby, and the other brainless song and weird tune, "Keerie-fo-snaughtey," composed in Castle Rushen by one whilst under sentence of being hanged, is a mystery to me. At best I look upon the new anthem only as a patriotic

song. Next week I will supply you with one by Fred Kelly, set to music by T.G. Faragher, now in Africa, and formerly friends of mine.—Yours truly,

MANNINAGH,

Ramsey.

Pseud [signed as “Manninagh”], “[Letter to the Editor] The Manx National Anthem,” *Peel City Guardian* 4 May 1907, [6]c.

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