

Manx Notes 460 (2020)

THE BUGGANE OF ST TRINIONS

(1847)

[3b] Well, coming from Peel the other day, and while passing through Marown, our travelling companion, an English antiquary and fine scholar, pointed out old St Trinion on the left and rising from his seat in the gig, exclaimed, “there is a specimen of the Rude-Gothic, which I have no where seen but in the description of travellers.” “Pray tell me,” continued he, “when was that church built—by whom, and what is its history?” This was a poser—here we are, Manx historians and antiquaries ourself, and yet we were brought up all standing by a single question about St Trinion. Ecclesiastical history makes St Trinion himself archbishop of the Pitts, who flourished in the fifth century; but the history of this old ruin rests in Manx tradition only, which runs thus:—Its walls were built in fulfilment of a vow made by a saint when in a hurricane at sea; but it was never finished, being prevented by the Big Boggane. This evil spright amused himself with tossing the roof to the ground, as often as it was put on, accompanying his achievement with a loud fiendish laugh of satisfaction. One Tim, a tailor, and a very great saint, attempted to counteract the spright. The third roof was nearly finished, when the valorous tailor undertook to make a pair of breeches under it, before the Boggane could be at his old trick. He accordingly seated himself in the chancel, and began his work; but ere he had done, the head of the frightful Boggane rose out of the ground before him, and thus spoke: “Do you see my great head, large eyes, and long teeth?” “Hee! hee” (that is, yes, yes,) replied the tailor, at the same time stitching with all his might, and without raising his eyes from his work. The Boggane still rising slowly out of the ground, cried in a more angry voice “Do you see my great body, large hands, and long nails?” “Hee! hee!” rejoined Tim; but continued to pull-out with all his strength. The Boggane having now got wholly out of the ground, demanded in a terrific voice; “Do you see my great limbs, large feet, and long —”; but ere the last word was out, the tailor put the finishing stitch into the breeches, and jumped out of the window, just as the roof fell in with a crash. The fiendish laugh of the Boggane arose behind him, as he bounded off in terror; looking behind, he saw the monster close upon his heels, with extended jaws, ready to swallow him alive, breeches and all. To escape with life, Tim leaped into consecrated ground, where evil sprights cannot follow; but as it determined to punish such temerity the monster lifted its great head from its body, and with great force pitched it to the feet of the tailor, where, it exploded like a bomb shell! Wonderful to relate Tim escaped unscathed; but the church of St Trinion has remained without a roof to this day. Such is the tradition of old St Trinion. “Sketching by the Way-side.” *Mona’s Herald* 2 June 1847: 3b.

STEPHEN MILLER, RBV