

Manx Notes 573 (2022)

“HE TALKED MUCH TO HIS SISTER ABOUT THE MANX SONGS” *

T.E. Brown died on 29 October 1897, having spent part of the previous fortnight visiting the Rev. J. Williamson in Cardiff, from 15–25 October. His physical decline was much in evidence, even short walks now tiring him. “Though it was evident that Mr Brown had lost a good deal of his old strength and vigour, a loss which he told me more than once he attributed to his having climbed the precipitous side of Cronk-ny-Irey-Lhaa, on a day in the summer of 1896, yet his mind was as bright, his interest in men and things as keen, and his talk as full of charm, vivacity, and variety as ever.” On one occasion, the conversation turned to Manx folk songs:

One evening he talked much to his sister about the Manx songs, finding fault with the habit that had sprung up lately of adapting English words to the old Manx tunes. He said it would be much better to leave the original Manx words to be sung to the old airs.

W.H. Gill’s *Manx National Songs with English Words* had appeared in 1896, note the fuller title of the book, and was the source of Brown’s concern. *Manx Ballads and Music* by A.W. Moore had also been published that year, and it was Brown’s refusal to be involved with Moore by writing Anglo-Manx versions of the texts in Manx that led to that title appearing in the format that it did.

STEPHEN MILLER RBV

See, “Death of the Rev. T.E. Brown ... His Last Days [By the Rev. J. Williamson, M.A.],” *Isle of Man Times*, 6 November 1897, 2b. For further on Brown and *Manx National Songs* as well as *Manx Ballads and Music*, see Stephen Miller, “‘About Translating The Ballads I Have My Doubts.’ Letters from T.E. Brown to A.W. Moore (1892–96),” *Manx Notes* 76 (2006): 1–10; “‘Now that Mr WH Gill has made open confession.’ W.H. Gill, T.E. Brown, and *Manx National Songs* (1896),” *Manx Notes* 218 (2015): 1–3; “‘Now that Mr WH Gill has made open confession.’ An Update,” *Manx Notes* 222 (2015): 1.



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