

Manx Notes 574 (2022)

P.W. CAINE
“SONGS OF DRINK” *
(1924)

A LITTLE GRAIN OF BARLEY

The little grain of barley, as good a grain
As ever grew in the kiln,
To make the old men run like lads,
And lads run like deer, like deer,
And lads run like deer.

Fragment of an old Manx song.

The little grain, the barley grain,
The grain that makes good beer,
That makes the old men run like lads,
And young men run like deer, like deer,
And young men run like deer.

There's hardship in a sailor's life,
There's peril on the wave;
But, primed with liquor, men become
Like lions bold and brave, and brave.
Like lions bold and brave.

The farmer's crops are often spoiled
By ill-timed drought and rain;
But he can always lose his loss
In the juice of the braw wee grain, wee grain,
In the juice of the braw wee grain.

THE MARKET GROUND

“Bare is the ground of the market-town.”
Old Manx Proverb.

* Originally published as Stephen Miller, “P.W. Caine, ‘Songs of Drink’ (1924),” *Kiaull Manninagh Jiu* January (2022), [16].

At St Catherine's Fair, held at Colby, it was customary to kill a hen and carry it around the fair-ground singing, "Kiark Katriney Marroo" ('Catherine's hen is dead'). When a man got drunk at a fair, people said of him, "He has been plucking a feather of Catherine's hen."

O, bare is the ground of the market town,
And bare is the purse of John Curphey and me;
Between us we've got just the one half-crown,
And the rest is gone in a glorious spree.

I sold the two heifers, and got a good price,
It was paid in my hand, and now, it's all spent;
And the yough that it bought was all very nice,
But I meant to have put it by for the rent.

I've never got through all that money on beer
They've robbed me, they've robbed me, that's what they've done;
But well, when I'm merry my head gets so clear,
They could empty my pockets, I'd think it was fun.

I'll have to go borrowing from Neddy the brewer,
And the mortgage will press on me many a day;
And me that might live so easy and *coar*,*
To be toiling to keep the cur'ner away.

For if it's not paid when it's due, he'll foreclose;
The same thing has happened to dozens of men;
I've seen twenty farms change hands, I suppose,
Through plucking a feather of Catherine's hen.

And what will Herself say, when I come to her?
Oh, how I'm fearing her tongue and her frown!
The fool and the wastrel I was, to be sure!—
But I must go sometimes to the market town.

P.W.C.

* *Coar*—comfortable, pleasant. The reader is asked to assume that the hero of this story owned his farm, but also rented accommodation fields.

P.W. Caine [initialled as “P.W.C.”], “Songs of Drink,” *Isle of Man Examiner*, 14 March 1924, 3c.

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These two pieces appeared in the *Isle of Man Examiner* in 1924, under the title of “Songs of Drink.” That said, they are poems rather than songs proper, though the first is based around what Caine describes as a fragment of a Manx folk song, while the second is an extremely assured pastiche that could pass for an original. “Neddy the brewer” is a reference to Edward Gawne of Glentraugh with his alledged tactic of acquiring land through the foreclosure of mortgages.

STEPHEN MILLER RBV

For further on P.W. Caine and Manx folk song, see Stephen Miller, “‘Taking down music in the dorian mode is not so easy as it looks.’ P.W. Caine (1887–1956) and Manx Folk Song,” *Manx Notes* 150 (2013), 1–7; “‘The Songs of Mannin.’ A Checklist of P.W. Caine’s Writings on Manx Folk Song,” *Manx Notes* 164 (2013), 1; “[P.W. Caine] Manx Carvals and their Writers (1913),” *Manx Notes* 165 (2013), 1–2; “[P.W. Caine] The Songs of Mannin (1925),” *Manx Notes* 166 (2013), 1–5; “[P.W. Caine] The Songs Our Mothers Sang (1926),” *Manx Notes* 167 (2013), 1–5; “[P.W. Caine] The Manx Fishermen’s Evening Hymn (1926),” *Manx Notes* 168 (2013), 1–3; “[P.W. Caine] The Manx Fishermen’s Evening Hymn (1926) (2),” *Manx Notes* 169 (2013), 1–2; “[P.W. Caine] Manx Carols and their Writers (1926),” *Manx Notes* 170 (2013), 1–10; “[P.W. Caine] Manx Folk Songs (1927),” *Manx Notes* 171 (2013), 1–3; “Some Letters from A.G. Gilchrist to P.W. Caine (1921–26),” *Manx Notes* 234 (2016), 1–27. For an obituary notice, “P.W. Caine (1887–1956),” *Manx Notes* 351 (2018), 1–2.

