

Manx Notes 587 (2022)

“THEN THERE WAS THE EILVERRY AT MALEW CHURCH” *

(1861)

Atcheson, Kansas, Ter., U.S.,

Christmas Day, 1860.

[1c] Dear * * * *—What pleasant reminiscences does the name of Christmas day conjure up—delightful family recollections, of a group of happy faces around the table, which groaned under luxuries peculiar to the season—tantalising social and festive remembrances of mirth and jollity, and unalloyed happiness, flavoured and spiced, with romping under kissing bushes, and other delicious exercises. Then there was the *Eilverry* at Malew Church, where droll old c[r]oons sang queer old songs called “carvels” a mile long, exhausting the patience of good old Parson Gill, though vastly amusing to the unsanctified rabble. Cease memory! cease evoking the ghosts of departed joys—“departed never to return,” and let me clutch thee, my little brown jug; let me kiss thy cold lips, the only one accessible to the old man in the wilderness. Your health, * * * ; you must excuse me from passing the bottle, but I require a little old Bourbon to stiffen my lip when I attempt to look backward.

I am passionately fond of music. Believe me, I would walk the five or six miles between here and Atchison, through the foot deep of snow which now [1d] mantles the ground, to hear Miss Caley sing the anthems usually got up at this season. However as we cannot obtain what we wish for, the next best thing will be to extract as much comfort as possible out of that which is within our reach; so I have long practised the habit of singing, nearly always when employed, and often when idle.

Pseud [initialled as “T.W.C.”]. “Letters from Kansas.” *Mona’s Herald* 23 January 1861: [Supplement] 1c–d.

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Here we have a Manx emigrant to Kansas recalling the Oiel Verrey service at Malew, with the “queer old songs called ‘carvels’ a mile long.” One song, however, was beyond recall, “[t]ried ‘Mylechrane,’ but could’nt lick it into shape nohow.”

Stephen Miller, RBV

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