

Manx Notes 605 (2023)

“LITTLE MANKS MUSIC IS TO BE MET WITH” *

(1802)

It is extraordinary, that in so small a place a distinct tongue should still be preserved. The Manks language is in some respects similar to the Erse. Almost every Manksman can speak English; their accent is very like that of Ireland, and they may easily be mistaken for Hibernians by those who have not attended closely to the niceties of pronunciation.

Little Manks music is to be met with. There are a few original airs, which have much of the wildness of the Irish. To these are sometimes sung ballads in the Manks language. The following is a literal translation of the first stanza of one of them; probably the complaint of some philosophical, though love-stricken fisherman, who has not caught more herrings than what are sufficient for a bachelor!—

“Oh! we must postpone it
Until the time come;
For if it be our fate to be each other’s,
We cannot be disappointed:
We shall entertain esteem for each other,
If we can never be married,
You will still be in my mind,
And I shall often be speaking of you.”

“The Present State of the Isle of Man.” *Monthly Magazine* xiv (1802): 105–12.

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“Little Manks music is to be met with” so the anonymous writer wrote. As ever, it makes one wonder how hard they looked for it. They were aware though that there was a distinct Manx song tradition both in terms of tunes and texts. And here we have recorded in English the opening stanza of one of those “ballads in the Manks language.”

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