

Manx Notes 606 (2023)

“A HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL MANX CONCERT”

FRANCES CORLETT AT THE GLADSTONE HALL, PORT SUNLIGHT *

(1910)

On Tuesday evening last, a highly successful Manx concert was given at the Gladstone Hall, Port Sunlight, before a crowded house. Many scores being unable to gain admission. The concert, which was in aid of a bereaved Manx family, was organised by Miss Fanny Proctor (late of Douglas), and she was ably assisted by Mr John Mylrea (formerly of Peel). The stage, which was arranged as a Manx kitchen, was very realistic, and the costumes of the fishermen, farmers, and fisher-girls and milk maids forming the chorus were very fine—over eighty performers taking part. Miss Proctor is to be congratulated on her great success, and we are pleased to see our former townsman, Mr Mylrea to the front again in the work of charity. In December last, Mr Mylrea who is well known as a baritone vocalist in Liverpool and Birkenhead, and is also a member of the popular Linwood Male Quartette, organised a successful concert in aid of the “Ellan Vannin” Fund, the proceeds of which helped to swell the Liverpool Manx Society’s Fund. On Tuesday evening Mr Mylrea in his oilskins, top-boots, and guernsey gave a fine rendering of “Mannin Veg Villish Veen,” and Gordons fine song “When the ebb tide flows.” The other soloists were Mrs Caley, Miss Gladys Ager, Miss Fanny Proctor, Mr J. Illidge and Mr Austin Proctor. The following is the full programme: Overture, Mr J.C. Reason; solo, “Hush, Little Darling,” Miss F. Proctor; Manx National Anthem; solo, “The Token,” Mr A.M. Proctor; solo, “Fair Maids Man,” Miss G. Ager; solo, “Mannin Veg Villish Veen,” (Dear little Isle of Man), Mr J. Mylrea; fairies dance, children; solo, “Good-bye,” Mrs Caley; solo, “The Manx Weddin’,” Mr A.M. Proctor; Manx fisherman’s evening hymn, choir; tableau and chorus, “Spin Wheel, Spin,” girls; solo, “Ellan Vannin,” Mrs Caley; duet, “When the Wind Bloweth in from the Sea,” Miss F. and Mr A.M. Proctor; solo and chorus, “King of the Sea,” Mr J. Illidge; solo, “Lovers To-morrow,” Miss G. Ager; part song, “Sweet and Low”; solo, “When the Ebbtide Flows,” Mr J. Mylrea; solo, (a) “If I Built a World for You,” (b) “If no one ever Marries Me,” Mrs Caley; Hunt the Wren, Old Manx custom of Hunting the Wren on the day after Christmas. This is still in practice. Solo and chorus, “Ramsey Town,” Mr A.M. Proctor; “God Save the King.”

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“Manx Concert at Port Sunlight.” *Peel City Guardian* 20 August 1910: [6]d.

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Port Sunlight is a model village built by the Lever Brothers to house the workers employed at their soap factory. In 1910, the Gladstone Hall on Tuesday, 16 August, was the occasion for “Miss Fanny Proctor” to stage by all accounts an ambitious evening as a fund raiser for a Manx family who had recently suffered a death. Their name nor the circumstances are not stated, but given the venue one assumes they were employed at the factory there. As can be seen, this went beyond a simple programme of musical pieces and recitations, and a remarkable number of people—over eighty it is stated—were involved in a musical production featuring a setup of a Manx kitchen, and with those taking part, it must be said, dressing the part. “Manxness” is not only to be heard, but also to be seen. At this date, such a tableaux was the central feature in the Island of what were advertised as a “Manx Tea and Concert,” a phenomenon that needs further study.

“Mrs W.J. Corlett has picked up a fine air—possibly Miss Wood will kindly arrange it for us,”¹ wrote Sophia Morrison to J.J. Kneen on 25 October 1914. This is the married “Miss Fanny Proctor,” who was in her own right, Frances Phoebe Corlett, *née* Proctor, enumerated in the 1901 census as living at 35 Derby Square in Douglas and at that time aged 40. Her husband, William John Corlett, was the same age as her and ran an ironmongers business in Douglas of considerable size.² In the letter, we have Corlett here as song collector, and on the stage Corlett there as promoter of Manxness. And, as ever, present is the figure of Sophia Morrison.

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¹ Letter from Sophia Morrison to J.J. Kneen, 25 October 1914, MNHL, MS 1086/43 c.

² *Census Enumerators' Book* for Douglas, 1901, TNA, RG 13/5304, fol. 47, sch. 58.