

Manx Notes 679 (2024)

“SUPERSTITION DIES HARD” (1898)

Superstition dies hard. In the country districts of the Isle of Man the belief in fairies, witchcraft, charms, and other forms of supernaturalism, is still quite common. In the neighbourhood of St John's recently there was a field of turnips which suffered severely from the ravages of rooks. At a certain period of its growth the young turnip is liable to be attacked at the root by a small worm. This worm is a favourite article of diet with the rooks, which root up the plant—in trying to find their food, and some times whole ridges of turnips are destroyed in this way. The farmer's wife was distressed at the ravages in this particular field, and tried several charms to prevent it. Two which were specified to our informant have been heard of before. The lady got together a number of small twigs and arranged them in the form of crosses all along the ridge. No good effects followed this charm, and the good lady tried another, equally popular with the old Manx folk. She collected some dust from a place where four roads met and strewed it along. As the story goes, however, even this charm had no power to stop the ravages of the rooks and no appreciable good was done.

“Superstition dies hard” *Isle of Man Times* 24 September 1898: 4d.

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