

Manx Notes 23 (2004)

“I COMPOSED SOME VERSES ABOUT THEM THE OTHER DAY”
EDWARD FARAGHER’S “SONG ABOUT COVETOUS FARMERS”

ARRANE MYCHIONE
EIRINEE SAYNTOILAGH

A SONG ABOUT
COVETOUS FARMERS

Ta'n imbagh fouyr er jeet dy jeean
As ta ny magherny geayne¹ creen.
Ny labreeyn ta goit ayns foayr
Choud's ta berchee çhaglym troayr

The harvest is quickly come
And the (once) green fields are ripe.
The labourers are taken into favour
Whilst the rich gather (in) the crop.

Ny eirinee ta gastey shooyll,
Freayll arree harroo lesh dagh sooill.
Ny-yeih s'beg failll t'ad dy cur da.
Nagh vel Goo Yee er shoh gimraa?

The farmers are walking (about) on the alert
Keeping watch on them with each eye.
Nevertheless it is but little hire that they give them
Does not the word of God speak of this?

Feer-veg t'ad cur da labree boght
Son e hooilleil as laboraght:
Son kianglely arroo ayns yn ouyr.
Ny-yeih t'ad geam dy vel eh rouyr.

Very little do they give the poor labourer
For his toil and labour:
For binding corn in the harvest.
Yet they exclaim that it is too much.

Kiarail son berçhys cha vel fea:
Ec lheid y dooinney ayns e vea
Yn eill ta² shymley lesh imnea,
Shen ta Mac Sirach shickyrr gra.³

Care for riches is not rest:
To such a man in his life (time)
The flesh is wasting away with solicitude,
So the Son of Sirach truly says.

¹ MS *gheiney*.

² MS *that*.

³ “Ta kiarail son berhys shymley yn eill, as ta imnea mysh nyn dashtey castley cadley.” Ecc. 31:1. The English version has “Watching for riches consumeth the flesh, and the care thereof driveth away sleep.” The wording of Faragher’s quotation, following closely the Manx version, suggests that he had the first edition of the Manx Bible—Ecclesiasticus was printed only in that edition.

Ta'n berçhagh goaill er lane tooilleil
 Ta ayns e verçhys cur treishteil.
 Cha vod eh goaill lane fea ny shee.
 Raad ta e hashtey ta e chree.

The rich man assumes a burden of labour
 Who puts trust in his riches.
 He cannot possess full rest or peace.
 Where his treasure is (there) is his heart.

Agh bee nyn mea dy lheah ec kione,
 Ersooyl myr Adam as e chloan.
 Shegin da faagail dy chooilley nhee
 Son dy ve briwnysit e Jee.

But our life will shortly be at an end,
 Gone like Adam and his children.
 He must forsake everything
 For to be judged by God.

Te'r ghra dy bee eh feanish gheayr
 Noi yn sayntoilagh as molteyr
 Ta conney⁴ labree ayns e aill:
 Cha vod eh veih jymmoose scapail.

It is said that there will be a severe witness
 Against the covetous man and deceiver
 Who straightens a labourer in his wages:
 He cannot escape from wrath.

Agh ta yn saynt trooid ooilley roie,
 Ga dy vel airh whilleen er stroie.
 Agh fegooish gerjagh ayns angaish
 Pardee ad rish ec oor nyn maase.

But covetousness runs through all (mankind),
 Though gold has destroyed so many.
 But without comfort in (their) pain
 They will part with it⁵ at the hour of their death.

Yn cree ta soit er cosney airh
 As jannoo reddyng nagh vel cair
 Gyn smooinght er nyn yerrey treih
 As yn jymmoose ta çheet nyn yeih.

The heart is set on gaining gold
 And does things that are not right
 Without considering their sad end
 And the wrath that comes after them.

Edward Faragher

Source: C.I. Paton, “‘Arrane mychione Eirnee Sayntoilagh’: A Song about Covetous Farmers by Edward Faragher (‘Neddy Beg Hom Ruy’) of Cregneish,” *Journal of the Manx Museum* v.71 (1944): 160–61.*

⁴ *MS chonney*. I can make nothing from this word, but have assumed that it is a derivative from *coon*, “narrow” in several senses.

⁵ i.e. the *gold*.

* The English translation was provided by Paton together with the notes. Faragher’s original is bound into Charles Roeder, *Skeelalyn Æsop* (Douglas: S.K. Broadbent, 1901) between pp. 12–13. This is a copy from Roeder’s own personal library (acquired by G.W. Wood, a noted Manx bibliophile) and is deposited as Manx National Heritage Library (MNHL), MS 1494 A. Present too is a letter from Edward Faragher to G.W. Wood, 19 September 1899, to whom the composition was sent.



The people on the whole are prosperous and contented; though the staple industries—agriculture, fisheries, and mining—have all suffered serious depression, this is counter balanced by the new order of things, the Island having become very popular as a health and holiday resort.⁶

P.M.C. Kermode wrote this in 1896 as background material for an outing to Man by the British Association who was meeting that year in Liverpool. There was nothing to worry about as good times were being had by all. The official report of the 1891 Census had highlighted population loss but only in two of the Island’s seventeen parishes and pointed a finger as a cause at economic stagnation. In the case of German, “The decrease in the population of this part of the parish is attributed to depression in the fishing and agricultural industries,”⁷ whereas for Maughold, “The decrease in the population of this part of the parish is attributed to the fact that the iron mines were not being worked at the time of the Census of 1891.”⁸ Douglas, however, was growing, “the increase since 1881 being attributed to its growing popularity as a watering place and to the greater facilities of locomotion.”⁹ It is more likely that this was due to internal growth rather than any drift from the countryside. In the first place, the tourist trade was by its very nature a seasonal one and the demand in any case was largely for female labour, the consequences of which were felt in Cregneash as Edward Faragher (1831–1908) recounted to Karl Roeder in September 1896:

We have had very windy and wet weather here this month and we have all been very very busy making the harvest the labourers are very scarce on account of the young girls being in the lodging houses I had to go out to bind corn after the machine although working is very troublesome to the rheumatism¹⁰

It was no different three years later in 1899; once again harvest time in September:

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- ⁶ P.M.C. Kermode, “Introduction, History and Antiquities,” *British Association, Liverpool, 1896: Handbook to Liverpool and the Neighbourhood*, ed. W.A. Herdman ([London]: British Association for the Advancement of Science, 1896) 149.
- ⁷ H.M. Government, *Census—1891: Islands in the British Seas, Isle of Man, Jersey, Guernsey and Adjacent Islands*, C.—7133 (London: HMSO, 1893). Table 2, “Civil Parishes,” 3–4, see “German, Landward-part,” 3 fn a.
- ⁸ H.M. Government, *Census—1891: Islands in the British Seas, Isle of Man, Jersey, Guernsey and Adjacent Islands*. Table 2, “Civil Parishes,” 3–4, see “Maughold, Landward-part,” 3 fn d.
- ⁹ H.M. Government, *Census—1891: Islands in the British Seas, Isle of Man, Jersey, Guernsey and Adjacent Islands*. Table 2, “Civil Parishes,” 3–4, see “Douglas, Town, part of,” 3 fn f.
- ¹⁰ Edward Faragher to Charles Roeder, 18 September 1896, MNHL, MD 11064, Box 2. Karl Roeder (1848–1911) was a German national who lived in Manchester. As a regular summer visitor to the Island he collected folklore from Faragher and others. He became a friend to Faragher and the two wrote to each other frequently.

I am very busy at present binding corn after the machiene every day but the harvest will soon be done in cregnaish.¹¹

Not only did Faragher have to face inclement weather in the harvest field and the effect it had on his rheumatism, but he also had also to face suffering in his pocket to add to that of his bones, by exploitation from the farmers who paid too little for the backbreaking work of working in the harvest:

The harvest is done now and I expect I will be at leisure for a bit, for there is nothing to do in Cregneash when the harvest is done. And the wages for binding corn is very small, and the farmers think it is too much. I composed some verses about them the other day in Manx, and I send you a copy and hope you can read it and understand it.¹²

There is no evidence that this composition was in fact ever sung or indeed ever intended to be so, it remaining instead as a personal venting of fury on paper but one which he nevertheless did share with the Manx bibliophile G.W. Wood.¹³

The boarding houses Faragher was referring to were in the coastal villages of Port St Mary and Port Erin both of which had ready access by railway from Douglas and were now no longer just fishing villages but also places of resort for tourists. They were both accessible by foot from Cregneash and the village itself was of course equally accessible as well, lying as it did on the road to the Sound and the Calf of Man. Nevertheless, it was seen as isolated, but not too isolated of course so it could not be easily reached and taken in as part of a day's walking itinerary. Nearby to Cregneash were the Chasms, a stretch of the Island's highest sea cliffs, where the local geology had created a series of remarkable deep fissures into which visitors could peer and feel the dread of Nature and into which the locals peered to try to find their lost sheep.¹⁴

Cregneash also provided a linguistic chasm of passing interest, as a village where Manx was a community language still in everyday usage (to some extent). As J.G. Cumming had remarked in his *Guide* from 1861, "Here the Manx language lingers, and may linger some time longer."¹⁵ It was, however, to linger much longer than

¹¹ Edward Faragher to Charles Roeder, 17 September 1899, MNHL, MD 11064, Box 2.

¹² Edward Faragher to G.W. Wood, 19 September 1899, MNHL, MS 1494 A.

¹³ The piece is worthy of comparison with the Sicilian harvest song from 1876 as originally discussed by Leonardo Sciascia, "a most extraordinary document, the most direct encounter with the condition of the Sicilian peasant in the last century," in "Verga e la Liberté," *La Corda Pazza* (Torino: Einaudi, 1970), 79–80. This reference and detail is taken from Peter Schneider and Jane Schneider, "Peasants Speak: Sicilian Harvest Song," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 1 (1974) which reproduces the text of the harvest song together with a commentary.

¹⁴ "The tourist who does not walk with fear over the tremendous 'chasms' must at least walk with caution." William Kneale, *Kneale's Guide to the Isle of Man* (Douglas: W[illiam] Kneale, n.d. [but c. 1860]) 143.

¹⁵ Rev. J.G. Cumming, *A Guide to the Isle of Man* (London: Edward Stanford, 1861) 90.

Cumming supposed. Ned Maddrell who was born at Glenchass down the coastal path from Cregneash managed to keep Manx going just a few days short of the last quarter of the twentieth century, dying as he did 27 December 1974.

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VIENNA, 2004

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