

Manx Notes 704 (2025)

“NOW READY.

WILLIAM’S CASHEN’S MANX FOLK-LORE”

(1912)

(1)

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“[Notice] Now Ready. William’s Cashen’s Manx Folk-Lore.” *Isle of Man Examiner* 14 December 1912: 4b.

(2)

There has just been published, at the price of one shilling, a neatly printed and well get-up volume of Manx Folk-Lore from the pen of the late William Cashen, for many years custodian of Peel Castle, with an introductory memoir by Miss S. Morrison. This posthumous publication of the output of a rich mine of Island story and legend, forms a most acceptable supplement to the book of folk-lore compiled by the late Mr Arthur W. Moore. An extended notice of the volume will appear later. The publishers are George and Lucy Johnson, Prospect-hill, Douglas.

“Manx Folk-Lore.” *Isle of Man Examiner* 14 December 1912: 3c.

(3)

Something new in the way of a Christmas present is furnished by the publication last week, by G. & L. Johnson, of a book of Manx Folklore, by the late William Cashen, custodian of Peel Castle, with an introduction by Miss S. Morrison. The book contains chapters on “Home life of the Manx,” “Fairies, bugganes, giants and ghosts,” “Fishing,” “History and legend,” and “Songs, sayings and riddles.” The above are confined to what Mr Cashen knew and heard himself in his childhood. This little work should prove most interesting to Manx people in all parts of the world. Copies may be obtained at the Guardian Office—price 1s.

“Something new in” *Peel City Guardian* 21 December 1912: 5c.

(4)

The late Thomas Edward Brown would surely have wept tears of joy could he have been permitted a perusal of the posthumously published volume of Manx Folk Lore, by the late William Cashen, sometime custodian of Peel Castle. Simply but deliciously the old man tells his story, and in telling it makes fine use of the Manx idiom which Brown revelled in. Yet is the idiom never obtrusive—there is just sufficient of it to flavour acceptably the homely though beautiful English in which the folk lore, garnered from the abundant stores of a magnificent memory, is couched. There is internal evidence that the book was written a considerable time before Mr Cashen’s death—indeed the preface indicates that it was ready for the printers before the death of Mr Arthur W. Moore, late Speaker of the House of Keys. As this preface concisely sets out the author’s intention, and affords a fair illustration of his style, it were, perhaps, as well to quote it here:

Standing on the borderland between the going out of the Manx and the coming in of the English I have thought it advisable to save all that is possible of the customs, legends, superstitions, and folklore of the Isle of Man, conscious of my inability to do anything except as an addition to Mr A.W. Moore’s Folk-Lore Book, and with the hope that that gentleman will be induced to issue a new edition, and save all that is possible of the sayings and doings of our common forefathers. I pride myself on

being a Manninagh Doobie voish y clean. I intend to confine myself as much as possible to the customs, sayings, and doings which I knew and heard in my childhood. If any effort of mine should be of any avail it will be to me a sufficient reward.

W. CASHEN.

Following the preface are certain verses concerning William Cashen, by “Cushag,” which are in that gifted authoress’s best style. Then comes an introduction from the pen of Miss S. Morrison, of Peel, whose friendship with Cashen was long and close. The introduction is in the nature of an interesting memoir of the fine old Manxman, and it materially enhances the interest of the book. Cashen’s first chapter, dealing with Manx home life, mainly consists of delightful legend delightfully imparted, and records of quaint customs long since either obsolete or forgotten except by the few. It is very evident from this chapter and from the others of the book, that firm hold as the Reformation took in the Isle of Man, remains of the Old Faith long lingered among the Manx people. The “crosch cuirn,” the invocations of St Patrick, and the belief which actually prevailed up to sixty years ago that only a Roman Catholic priest could effectually exorcise, are sufficient proof of this, while Cashen has frequent references to customs undoubtedly of pre-Reformation origin that were observed within living memory. The author delighted in stories concerning fairies, bugganes, giants, and ghosts—had the opportunity been afforded him he would have rivalled Andersen or Grimm. His second chapter teems with yarns of the little folk, the “Lhiannan Shee,” bugganes, giants, and ghostly manifestations. Some of these mythical folk were decidedly agreeable; others the reverse, but always Cashen discourses of them and their doings charmingly. The best chapter of the book is undoubtedly that which concerns the customs and superstitions of Manx fishermen. A practical sailor and fisherman himself, Cashen appears to have gone to considerable trouble to compile the traditions which were abundant among the sturdy and somewhat turbulent folk who gathered the harvest of the sea in his youth, and the result, as contained in the third chapter, is both interesting and refreshing. Like their ancestors the Vikings, the Manx fishermen of the mid-nineteenth century were mighty in their potations, and teetotaller though Cashen was during his prime of life and closing years, he would appear to regard the more temperate habits of modern fishermen in the light of degeneracy. The fourth chapter is given over to legendary and traditional history of the Isle of Man, and is particularly concerned with St Patrick’s connection with the Island. By way of conclusion several pages are filled with songs, sayings, and riddles in Manx and English, many of them published for the first time, and all of them interesting. A fine portrait of the author forms an appropriate frontispiece. The book is admirably printed on good paper, and the beautiful typography worthily maintains the great reputation of the old-standing firm of Johnson.

* “Wm. Cashen’s Manx Folk Lore.” G. and L. Johnson, Douglas, 1/-.

“William Cashen’s Manx Folk-Lore.” *Isle of Man Examiner* 28 December 1912: 7f.

Stephen Miller RBV

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