

**THE MANX SOCIETY, ESTABLISHED IN THE
YEAR 1858, VOL. V: VESTIGIA INSULÆ
MANNIÆ ANTIQUIORA, OR A
DISSERTATION ON THE ARMORIAL BEARINGS
OF THE ISLE OF MAN, THE REGALITIES AND
PREROGATIVES OF ITS ANCIENT KINGS**

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H. R. OSWALD

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VESTIGIA INSULÆ MANNIÆ ANTIQUIORA,

OR A DISSERTATION ON THE

ARMORIAL BEARINGS

OF THE

Isle of Man,

THE REGALITIES AND PREROGATIVES OF ITS
ANCIENT KINGS,

AND

THE ORIGINAL USAGES, CUSTOMS, PRIVILEGES, LAWS, AND
CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT OF THE MANX PEOPLE.

BY

H. R. OSWALD, ESQ., F.A.S., L.R.C.S.E.,

MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL OF THE MANX SOCIETY.

Be tan vortastie di'follie diste est.

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PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

THE accounts of the Isle of Man we find on record are, generally speaking, meagre and of a personal character; at every step we meet with inadequacy of information. We are supplied with a narrative of a few superficial events only. National history appears to have been held in little or no esteem by the historian. Even those narrations which are indubitably authentic have not been well understood, and, of course, not well discussed; although, during our connection with the ancient kingdom of the Isles of Scotland, Manx history was full of stirring incidents, which, even at the present day, are fraught with much ethnological interest, in reference to the surrounding nations, as well as to the great Celtic tribes of Europe.

The multitude of authors who have, from time to time, undertaken the task of giving accounts of the Island, have done so cursorily and without adequate study, or under the influence of feudal supremacy, and therefore have produced works not to inform the public, but to suit their own convenience or to serve the interests of their patrons for the time being. This deficiency of recorded facts is the greatest desideratum I have encountered in compiling this paper. Failing direct evidence therefore, I have

endeavoured to arrive at some conclusions by reasoning from analogy ; but in endeavouring to give a record of all the facts in reference to the armorial bearings of the Isle of Man which I have met with, I hope I am not blind to the foregoing difficulties ; for, perhaps, in tracing the bearings from modern times into remote antiquity, I run the risk of becoming tedious to the reader, and in reasoning on the feudal rights and prerogatives of the Kings of Man, or the constitutional privileges and usages of the people, their subjects, my analogical disquisitions may not be devoid of anomalies. For I am well aware that an attempt to open up some abstruse points of Celtic ethnology will be incomplete. But I think the subject worthy of an attempt ; and having once drawn the attention of the public to it, let me hope that the clew will be taken up by others more competent to perform the task, and the skein unravelled throughout its ramifications.

To some it may appear that the quaintness of the device of the three legs, and the insignificance of the territory occupied by the Manx people are such that a particular treatise is uncalled for ; I believe that these opinions, and others similar to them, are the principal reasons why some particular questions of much interest to the Island have never been investigated, and why our history remains only a meagre record of the bloody and daring exploits of a few stirring men, or of the local enactments which law and usage have established in the country, without any attempt to explain their motives of action or their consequences : but every thinking mind must feel that however valuable the example of such persons may be, the history of a people or nation comprises more than these.