

**A GRAMMAR OF THE IRISH  
LANGUAGE:  
COMPILED FROM THE  
BEST AUTHORITIES**

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A Grammar of the Irish Language: Compiled from the Best Authorities by Henry J. Monck  
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**HENRY J. MONCK MASON**

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A

GRAMMAR

OF THE

IRISH LANGUAGE,

COMPILED FROM THE BEST AUTHORITIES,

BY

HENRY J. MONCK MASON,

LL.D. M.B.I.A.

SECOND EDITION.

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FROM THE

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

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*THE following compilation has long been withheld from the public, in the hope that some person more competent than myself would undertake the work ; but, disappointed in that expectation, and finding that no time should be lost in furnishing the Irish student, I hasten to put it forth.*

*Let it not be objected, that I am not acquainted with the Irish as a colloquial, but only as a written, language ; I allow it ; but I have not advanced a single rule except upon the best admitted authorities ; and have decided, in cases of doubt, upon the evidence of a majority of the most approved. I have compared Molloy's, Vallancey's, Neilson's, Halliday's, O'Brien's, and O'Reilly's grammars ; and not neglected others.*

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

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*I HAVE for a long time withheld the publishing of a second edition of this work, although it has been sought for by many, by the same reason which made me slow in editing the first. I knew also that it had been severely criticised, and I was unwilling to undertake a controversy. On reading, however, the very illiberal comment to which I allude, I only drew from it the greater confidence; and adopting some of its hints, for which I thank the author, I determined on a reprint. I must remind the public that I am not to be considered as an author, but only a compiler; but I know that I would be an injudicious one, were I to give up the authorities upon which I have hitherto relied, to that of the very reprehensible comment which I have mentioned.*

# IRISH GRAMMAR.

## PART I.

### LETTERS.

*Their Pronunciation and Orthography.*

The Modern Irish Alphabet consists of 18 letters.

	Name & Form.		
A	Ḃ	Ḃ	Ḃ, lḂ
B	B	b	BḂḂ
C	C	c	Coll
D	Ḃ	Ḃ	ḂḂḂ
E	e	e	eḂḂḂ
F	F	f	FḂḂḂ
G	Ḃ	Ḃ	ḂḂḂ
I	J	i	JoḂḂ
L	L	l	LuḂḂ
M	Ḃ	m	MuḂḂ
N	N	n	NuḂḂ
O	O	o	OḂḂ
P	P	p	PeḂḂ
R	R	r	RuḂḂ
S	S	s	SuḂḂ
T	T	t	TeḂḂ
U	Ḃ	u	ḂḂ
H	Ḃ	h	ḂḂḂ

It will appear in the sequel how the powers of the letters V, W, and Y, are expressed in Irish. C has always the pronunciation of K; and X is expressed by cr, as *ḂḂḂḂḂ*, *Exodus*.

#### *Contractions in common use.*

g for ea.	w for uḂ.	Ḃ for ḂḂ.	Ḃ for ḂḂ.
Ḃ — ḂḂḂ.	Ḃ — eḂḂḂ.	Ḃ — ḂḂ.	Ḃ — ḂḂ.
Ḃ — cḂ.	Ḃ — ḂḂ.	Ḃ — ḂḂ.	



The VOWELS are five, viz. three broad, *a*, *o*, *u*, often used promiscuously in ancient manuscripts; and two slender, *e* and *i*.

The following are the sounds of the vowels; and note, that there is but one accent in Irish, to wit, that drawn up from left to right, as *baꝛ*; and it always denotes a long syllable: it is called, *ꝛꝑe ꝑaba*.

	<i>Pronunciation.</i>	<i>Example.</i>
A—1.	Long and broad, as in <i>war</i> ;	— <i>baꝛ</i> , white.
2.	Long and slender, like <i>i</i> in <i>fine</i> ;	— <i>abaꝛc</i> , horn.
3.	Short and broad, as in <i>war-rant</i> ;	— <i>maꝛc</i> , beef.
4.	Short and slender, as in <i>can</i> ;	— <i>baꝛc</i> , a garment.
5.	Short and obscure, as in <i>fu-neral</i> ;	} <i>coꝛmaꝛꝑa</i> , neigh- bour.
6.	At the end of words, and before <i>ð</i> , it has a peculiar sound, like <i>oo</i> in <i>cuckoo</i> ;	
E—1.	Long, as in <i>there</i> ;	— <i>ꝛe</i> , the moon.
2.	Short, as in <i>egg</i> ;	— <i>ꝛe</i> , strife.
3.	Short and obscure, like the feminine <i>e</i> in French poetry, or as in <i>broken</i> ;	— <i>ꝛillꝛe</i> , folded.
I—1.	Long, as <i>ee</i> in <i>feel</i> ;	— <i>ꝛm</i> , butter.
2.	Short, as in <i>pin</i> ;	— <i>ꝛꝑꝛ</i> , an island.
O—1.	Long, as in <i>store</i> ;	— <i>ꝛoꝛ</i> , great.
2.	Short, as <i>u</i> in <i>buck</i> ;	— <i>ꝛꝛoc</i> , a trumpet.
U—1.	Long, as in <i>rule</i> ;	— <i>cu</i> , a hound.
2.	Short, as in <i>put</i> ;	— <i>acu</i> , the breast.

It is to be observed of vowels—

1st. That there are no quiescent vowels at the end of words, as in English, *ex*, *done*. 2dly. That no vowels are ever doubled in the same syllable, as in *poor*. And 3dly. That there are never two distinct syllables made out of vowels following one another; but diphthongs and triphthongs always form one syllable, though the several vowels may be heard in the pronunciation.

The CONSONANTS are either immutable, as *l*, *n*, and *r*; or mutable, as *b*, *c*, *d*, *f*, *g*, *m*, *p*, *s*, and *t*; so called, because that, by placing over them a mark of aspiration; they either lose their primitive sound, or are altogether suppressed in pronunciation. The letters thus printed are said to be mortified, and the change thus expressed marks some of the most material inflections of the nouns and verbs. This is indeed a peculiarity in the Irish language, among European tongues, that requires the particular attention of the reader; who, if acquainted with the Hebrew, will perceive something analogous to it, in the effect which the dagesch point has upon some of the letters in that language. When the Irish is printed in the Roman letters, the effect of the point is expressed by the addition of an *h*. This greatly tends to confound learners, who, when taught the power of *h*, in Irish books printed in Roman character, will have to unlearn this, when they come to read English books in the same letter. Thus they will be told, that *th* (in Irish) is to be a mere aspirate; but, when they learn to read English, they find it must be strongly sounded; and, what adds to the confusion, very much in the same manner as they were told to pronounce the simple *t*, when learning to read the Irish. The point remedies this evil; and therefore Neilson, although he published his Grammar in Roman character, had dotted letters cast for his purpose.

We shall first treat of the mutables—*B*, *F*, *M*, and *P*, unaspirated, are pronounced as in English.

*b* is like either the English *w* or *v*; it is to be observed, that the difference of the broader or more slender sound of *b*, forms one provincial difference in the pronunciation of Irish. O'Brien's rules for the pronunciation of *b* are thus:—At the beginning of words, when followed by a slender vowel, and when it terminates a word, it is usually sounded *v*; but, in cases where it is connected with a broad vowel, he says “there is no certain standard;” neither does there seem to be any fixed rule for its pronunciation in the middle of words.

*C* is always as *K*.

*c* has a guttural sound, which has nothing analogous

to it in the English tongue, but is quite similar to that of the Greek  $\chi$ , and Spanish  $X$ . There are two varieties of this sound; 1. At the beginning and end of words, when followed or succeeded by a broad vowel, or used in the middle of words in connection with one, it has a sound like  $gh$  in the word *lough*, strongly pressed out through the throat. 2. When thus connected with a slender vowel, its sound is only that of a very strong aspiration.

*D* has two sounds: 1. Like *d* in Italian, or *th* in *there*, but with a greater emphasis—the other like the *d* in French, more light and liquid, but similar to the former. It seems that the length of the following syllable influence the choice of sound.

$\delta$  is the Irish *Y*. If followed by a broad vowel at the beginning of a word, it has a pronunciation to which there is nothing similar in the English language; it is then guttural, and like the German *Y*, and may be expressed by a strong forcing of this letter. 2. In the beginning of a word, and before a slender vowel, or in the middle of a word followed by any vowel, it is simply *Y*. And 3. whenever it is followed by a consonant, or terminates a word, it is either silent, or weakly aspirated. This letter at the end of a word, (not a monosyllable,) gives to the preceding vowel, if a broad one, a pronunciation like *oo*.

$\ddot{f}$  becomes quiescent; it is never used but at the beginning of words, or as the initial of the second part of compounds.

*G* is always pronounced as in *gall*, never as in *gin*.

$\mathfrak{z}$  is liable to the same rules as  $\delta$ , only that at the end of words it is always silent.

$\mathfrak{h}$  is liable to pretty much the same rules as  $\delta$ . Dr. O'Brien in his Dictionary, (remarks on *M*.) says, "that the vowel or vowels which precede  $\mathfrak{h}$  are pronounced with a stronger, clearer, and more open expiration than those which precede  $\mathfrak{h}$ "—we must allow for provincial varieties. O'Brien the Grammarian says, "that preceding a slender vowel in any part of a word, or terminating a word,  $\mathfrak{h}$  is *always* sounded as *v*." (*Grammar*.)

$\mathfrak{p}$ , always as an *F*.