

**THE ELEMENTS OF GAELIC  
GRAMMAR: BASED ON  
THE WORK OF THE REV.  
ALEXANDER STEWART, D.D.**

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The elements of Gaelic grammar: based on the work of the Rev. Alexander Stewart, D.D. by H. Cameron Gillies

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**H. CAMERON GILLIES**

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## P R E F A C E

THE purpose of this Grammar is to afford assistance to such as may desire a living and intelligent acquaintance with the Gaelic language of Scotland. With this object in view, it was at first my settled intention to make little or no reference to the older language, but I soon found this to be impossible. An intelligent understanding of the Gaelic of the present day cannot be attained without some reference to the older language from which the later Grammatical forms had origin. There is no pretence to learning in these pages, nor any attempt even to indicate the results of modern Gaelic scholarship. I have admitted nothing which I did not believe would be helpful to the elementary student; and I hope my references will be found correct, and my inferences also correct and useful.

I have the advantage of being in touch with intelligent students of the language as their teacher, and I have made their actual difficulties guide me in everything. I hope I have been able in some degree to enlighten and to smooth their way, and that of others also who may undertake the same most interesting travel.

I followed the plan of Dr. Stewart's Grammar as closely as possible, feeling that I could not hope to

improve upon it. I have also appropriated all of his work that I possibly could, even to his very words. Dr. O'Donovan—no mean authority—declared Stewart's Grammar to have been 'by far the most important work on Gaelic that ever appeared'; and I cannot express my admiration of it as I should wish. No one can ever clearly see or fully know the philosophical comprehensiveness and the artistic unity of this work, but one whose duty compels him to weigh and examine every word and line as I had to do. All that I claim is to have extended a little way into the light of to-day, the lines which Stewart laid down so well; and all I hope is that I have done so consistently and in some measure worthily.

I endeavoured to have special regard to the phonetic basis of the language and have always appealed to it whenever it was necessary to do so. It is from the speech-power of the organs of Voice that all speech-form proceeds. The written language is at best but an approximation to the spoken word, and the sense of Hearing comes as a not very stable or reliable medium between the Voice and the written Character. The principle of Aspiration which plays so important a part in Gaelic Grammar is based on phonetic expediency, so is Eclipsis, and so the Vowel Law of Correspondence. No attention given to this aspect of the language is lost; without attention to it the language cannot be understood. But as my reference can only be partial and occasional I should wish all who may desire to know this aspect of Gaelic Grammar to refer to Mr. Mac-

Farlane's very useful work on *The Phonetics of the Gaelic Language*.

The division of Nouns into three Declensions is different from all previous classifications. My departure from Stewart's philosophical arrangement I wish to justify by the explanation following:

The method I worked upon was by Exclusion.

1. The great class of Abstract Nouns in *ae*, *hd*, and those in *e* and *ad* of Comparative forms, which have no inflection, were thrown out.

2. Such Nouns as are indeclinable in the Singular—all Nouns ending in a Vowel—were next taken as the First Declension.

3. Of Nouns ending in a Consonant it was found that a great number had a distinct inflection forming a Genitive in *i*. This class was made the Second Declension. It always has the characteristic Vowel Broad.

4. Nouns ending in a Consonant and having a Small Vowel characteristic were made the Third Declension.

But it was found that a considerable number of Nouns remained, which though ending in a Consonant and having a Broad characteristic, were not declined in the Singular. This class must form a Fourth Declension or be included in the First. I have preferred the latter alternative as being the more simple way.

Regarding this classification it is to be remarked that Nouns of the Second Declension are so peculiarly distinct from all others, that they must form a class by themselves. There can be no question regarding them.

It may be said that the First and Third might be put