

**A PRACTICAL GRAMMAR OF
THE ANTIEN T GAELIC: OR
LANGUAGE OF THE ISLE OF
MAN USUALLY CALLED MANKS**

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A Practical Grammar of the Antient Gaelic: Or Language of the Isle of Man Usually Called
Manks by John Kelly & William Gill

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JOHN KELLY & WILLIAM GILL

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A PRACTICAL GRAMMAR
OF THE
ANTIEN T GAELIC,
OR
Language of the Isle of Man,
USUALLY CALLED
M A N K S.

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EDITED, TOGETHER
WITH AN INTRODUCTION, LIFE OF DR. KELLY, AND NOTES,
BY THE
REV. WILLIAM GILL,
VICAR OF MALEW.

DOUGLAS, ISLE OF MAN:
PRINTED FOR THE MANX SOCIETY.
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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION.

THE Manx Grammar, like the language itself, was fast hastening to decay. The original and only edition had become extremely scarce; insomuch that a copy could with difficulty be found from which to re-edit the work. At this crisis The Manx Society opportunely intervened for its preservation. The Society was formed in 1858, "for the publication of National Documents of the Isle of Man." Among the first works to which it turned its attention was Dr. Kelly's Manx Grammar, which it deemed deserving of a place among its early publications. In the restoration of this book, the Society acknowledges its obligations to a lady, a warm friend of the Island and a relative of the deceased author, for the generous donation of half the cost of the impression.

Besides the Grammar, Dr. Kelly had prepared two works of great labour, and, in a philological point of view, great value,—a Manx and English Dictionary, and a Triglot Dictionary of Manx, Gaelic, and Irish, based upon English. These works are still lying in manuscript, but complete, and ready for the press.

The Society considers the publication of these too heavy an undertaking for its present funds; but it is not without hope that it may at some future, perhaps not distant, time be able to aid in giving them to the world, and that the present publication may open the way to such a result.

This reprint of the Grammar is an accurate transcript of the original work, with corrections only of errors of the press and of some obvious inaccuracies of the pen. The old plan of making an *English* Grammar was to reduce the structure of the language to a rigid conformity to Latin and Greek, in the number and names of cases, and of moods and tenses. In Manx the same thing was thought imperative. The modern rule is, to have just as many cases, and as many moods and tenses, as there are actual variations of the words, without the admission of prepositions or of auxiliary verbs. To this rule the laws of grammar seem to require the Manx, as well as the English, to be conformed. As, however, the adoption of such a principle in the present instance would involve the rearrangement, to a considerable extent, of the Grammar, it is thought advisable not to attempt the change, but to give the work in its original integrity. Dr. Kelly's Grammar thus presented, especially viewed as an original production, unaided by any pre-existent grammar, cannot fail to strike the intelligent reader as reflecting the highest credit on the author's industry and ingenuity.

The object of this reprint is not to uphold the Manx as a spoken language,—that were a hopeless attempt, were the end ever so desirable; but to afford some assistance to the student of this interesting branch of the ancient Celtic, and to obtain for it, when its lifetime is gone by, a place among the records of the

dead languages of Europe. The decline of the spoken Manx, within the memory of the present generation, has been marked. The language is no longer heard in our courts of law, either from the bench or the bar, and seldom from the witness-box. The courts are indeed still fenced in Manx, according to ancient traditional form; and the Island laws are still promulgated in that language on the Tynwald Mount, where the last lingering accents of the Gaelic in Man—once the language of Europe, the universal language of the British Isles—will probably be heard. In our churches the language was used by many of the present generation of clergy three Sundays in the month. It was afterwards restricted to every other Sunday; and is now entirely discontinued in most of the churches. In the schools throughout the Island the Manx has ceased to be taught; and the introduction of the Government system of education has done much to displace the language. It is rarely now heard in conversation, except among the peasantry. It is a doomed language,—an iceberg floating into southern latitudes.

Let it not, however, be thought that its end is immediate. Among the peasantry it still retains a strong hold. It is the language of their affections and their choice,—the language to which they habitually resort in their communications with each other. And no wonder; for it is the language which they find most congenial to their habits of thought and feeling. In English, even where they have a fair knowledge of the tongue, they speak with hesitation and under restraint. In Manx they are fluent, and at ease. There is little probability, therefore, of their soon forgetting their *chengey-ny-mayrey* (mother-tongue).

A language thus dear to the peasantry from its innate adap-

tation to their use, possesses at the same time no small recommendations to the attention of the philologist and antiquary, and especially of those whose office it is to instruct the people in morals and religion. A few of its distinctive qualities may be here noticed.

The language is peculiarly forcible and expressive, as far as the range of its vocabulary extends. For the purposes of devotion it is especially adapted.* There is a solemnity and simplicity in the Manx Liturgy of which the intelligent worshipper cannot but feel conscious. In the Manx Scriptures the idiom of the language seems to bear a strong affinity to that of the originals, especially of the Old Testament.

The poetical capabilities of the language are beautifully exhibited in many of the effusions of the native muse. The following fugitive production of the pen of a late native clergyman (the Rev. T. Stephen), which appeared many years ago in an Island newspaper, and is now (at the time of writing this Introduction) probably lost to every person but the Editor, will bear comparison, for pathos and idiomatic beauty, with any passage that can be produced from English poetry :—

“As cre ta gloyr, sgh aalid eonym vie,—
 Enym ! ta myr y ghall ta sheidey shaghey ?
 Shoh moyley'n pobble, my she moyley shen.
 Son cre ta'n pobble, sgh yurnaag anreaghit,—
 Earroo neuchinjagh, ta son jannoo mooar
 Jeh nheeghyn eddrym nagh vel toilchin scansh,
 As coontey cadjin reddyn ta feeu arrym ?
 Ta'd moyley as ta'd coashlagh shen nagh nhione daus ;
 As shen ta'd gloyragh jin, ta'd jioldey mairagh ;

* An eminent Scotch nobleman is said to have expressed himself thus:—“If I wish to speak on philosophy, I employ the Greek language. If I utter commands, the Latin is best to express them. If I make love, I speak in French. But if I address my Maker, I have recourse to the Gaelic.”

Cha 'sóc eer quoi, agh eer myr tãd'yr leaidit ;
 Fer er fer elley geiyrt, myr guoies trooid doarlísh.
 As cre'n eocilleen t'ayns soíagh vooar nyn lheid ?
 Dy veaghey er nyn ennal,—goo yn sleih !
 Marvance lheaystagh, myr y gheay neuhiggyr !
 Quoi echey ta resoon veagh blakey lurch oc ?
 Lioroo dy ve lheamysit te moylley."

Literal translation :—

" And what is glory, but the radiance of a name,—
 A name ! which, as a vapour, blows unheeded by ?
 This is the people's praise, if praise it be.
 For what is the people ? An entangled skein,—
 A fickle mob, who greatly prize
 Things vain and worthless ;
 While they contemn what merits veneration,
 They praise and they esteem the things they know not.
 And whom they praise to-day, they blame to-morrow ;
 They know not whom, but just as they are led ;
 One following another, as geese through a gap.
 And what advantage is in the esteem of such ?
 To live upon their breath,—the people's praise !
 Poor wavering mortals, as the wind inconstant !
 Their blame is commendation."

The language abounds in strong figurative expressions. Of this the lines above quoted afford an illustration. The following are additional examples :—

Cassan - ny - greiney.

The footpath of the sun (the zodiac).

Goll twoois.

The going north (the rainbow, which always appears in or towards the north).

Foallagh ny ferrings.

The people of the truth (the perfect).

Cre-erbee t'eh dy yannoo, te chest lesh.

Whatever he doeth, it comes with him (prosper).

Ny cur dty aigney thieu.

Not give thy mind with them (consent not).

Shass er dty chione hene.

Stand on thy head own (rely on your own understanding).

Buitheoorys er hene.

Slaughtering on him - self (on his own account).

Goll shoese ny lhargagh.

Going down the declivity (falling).

S'mie thiam shen dy-jaroo.

Very good to me is that indeed (very pleasing to me).

Shooyl ny thieyn.

Going on the houses (begging).

Ta'n ushtey cloie.

The water is playing (boiling).

Bock Yuan jannee.

The horse of John the flayer (one Juan, who flayed his horse, and took to his stick—walking stick).

Craue - bog - 'sy - chlesau.

A bone little in the breast (remorse).

Lhiam - thiat.

With me, with thee (an inconstant person).

Chengey thiam, chengey thiat.

Tongue wish me, tongue with thee (blowing hot and cold).

In proverbial lore the Manx language has its traditionary stores. The figures which give point and beauty to its proverbs are, as in all primitive languages, taken from nature. The following will serve as specimens of its popular sayings:—

Keeayl kionnit yn cheeayl share,

Wit bought is the wit best,

Mannagh vel es kionnit ro gheyr.

If it be not bought too dear.

Ta cree dooie ny share na kione croustagh.

Is a heart kindly better than a head crafty.

Tra ta un dooinney boght cooney lesh dooinney boght ellee, ta Jee hene garaghtee.

When one man poor helps man poor another, God himself laughs (for delight).

Tra hig yn laa hig yn coyrle lesh.

When come the day will come its counsel with it.

Clagh ny killagh ayns kione dty his vooar.

A church stone be in the head of thy house great (thy punishment be that of the man who commits sacrilege).

Ta'n aghaus veg shuyr da'n aghaus vooar.

Is the hemlock little sister to the hemlock big (a small sin is akin to a great one).

Laih thiat ve marish y chioiltane; agh ta'n eamagh ayd eamagh ny goair.

of the goat.