

“Elementary Gaelic Grammar or the elements of Gaelic grammar, based on the work of the Rev. Alexander Stewart, D.D., by H. Cameron Gillies.” Such is the name of an able and instructive Gaelic Grammar, which was published a few months ago. Dr. Gillies resides in London, England, and is engaged in the practice of medicine. He has for several years devoted much attention to Gaelic. He has a keen critical faculty, inasmuch that he finds particular pleasure in prosecuting his studies in the somewhat abstruse domain of Celtic philology. The present position of Gaelic, favourable in a satisfactory degree as it is in London, the metropolis of the world—owes very much to the fine enthusiasm, the diligent learning and the unflinching earnestness of Dr. Gillies. According to his own avowal, Dr. Gillies has based his grammar on the work of Dr. Alexander Stewart. It has always to be conceded that Stewart’s Grammar, so far as it goes, is the best Gaelic Grammar which has ever been written (Dr. Stewart was minister of Moulin, in Perthshire, when he wrote his grammar), involving as it does—for the field of Gaelic grammar was at that time largely, if not entirely, fallow ground—great acumen and pains and reflection. The splendid Irish scholar, O’Donovan, found abundant reason in the honesty of his heart—able grammarian as he himself was—to bestow warm praise on the ability, industry and acumen of Dr. Stewart. It was Dr. Stewart who corrected the proof-sheets of what is known as “Sinclair’s edition of Ossian,” which was published in 1807. In the preface to his Grammar, Dr. Gillies thus writes: “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. 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. As Gaelic Grammars are continually making their appearance, it cannot be denied that Gaelic still possesses the pulsations of a healthy and vigorous existence. If a language is dying, and, like the withered leaves of autumn, is showing unmistakable signs of decay and death, no man can have the courage and energy which the writing of the grammar of such a language involves. A decrepit language, an enfeebled and helpless language, a language which is on the brink of the grave, and which is suffering the loss of all its former friends, can by no reasonable possibility induce any man—unless he is enthusiastic to an unwonted degree—to consume the midnight oil in preparing a grammar which, as he honestly thinks, is able to meet the requirements of his own time, and to impart even a moderate amount of life and strength to the language which he loves as the language of his ancestors, and, therefore, of those who are dearest and greatest in his imagination and memory.”

The inhabitants of the Isle of Man are conspicuous for their zeal in collecting the literary remains that can be found in the island, whether they assume the form of poetry, or folk-lore, or historical narratives, or carols and ballads. Since the Manx Society was established in 1858, very much has been done to rescue from oblivion many of the literary links that connect the Isle of Man of to-day with the Isle of Man of the days that have gone. At an expenditure of endless energy and trouble, Mr. A. W. Moore, M.A., Cronkbourne, Douglas, has conferred great benefits on the literature of his native island. Through his indefatigable exertions much that will prove to be very valuable in the lore of Manxmen has been recovered and published. In addition to other publications with which he had to do he published, in 1891, “The Carvalyn Gailchagh,” or Manx carols. “Manx Ballads and Music” is the name of another collection which he published toward the end of last year. “The object of this publication,” he asserts, “as that of the Manx Carols, is to collect in one volume a curious literature, the greater part of which was threatened with almost certain loss.” Though he has been assiduous in collecting those ballads and in thus preserving from oblivion songs which were wont to be sung by the peasantry of Man, he has no high opinion of the poetical merit of many of them. He divides them into “mythical, semi-historical and historical ballads; children’s songs and ballads connected with customs and superstitions; love-songs, patristic ballads, nautical ballads and miscellaneous ballads.” He thinks more highly of the Manx melodies than of the ballads, forasmuch as they are in most cases older, as well as superior to the words which are now set to them. He has strong reasons for entertaining the hope “that the results of