What is the Use of Reviving Irish?

BY

DERMOT CHENEVIX TRENCH

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WHAT IS THE USE OF REVIVING IRISH?

By Dermot Chenevix Trench.

To know clearly the principles on which their movement is based is surely incumbent on all Gaelic Leaguers. How often an opportunity of vanquishing an opponent, or of gaining a new recruit is lost because those who champion the cause have no sound and effective arguments at the tips of their tongues!

Their hearts know the cause to be a right one, but their reason is not armed to defend it. An attempt, therefore, to supply such arguments in a clear and consecutive form may, perhaps, be found acceptable by many. Although the contents of this pamphlet will be familiar enough to those who already belong to the League, its arguments may possess a fresh interest from being gathered together in a logical whole instead of being scattered through the literature of the movement.

There is, however, another section of our population to which the true meaning and character of the Gaelic Revival are still far from apparent. The Gaelic League has been in existence for fifteen years and its influence dominates the intellectual life of Ireland. And yet there are still worthy people who fail to understand how the study of his native language can have a profound educational value for the Irishman, and who believe that Irish is being revived as the cryptic pass-word of a Fenian Conspiracy. This pamphlet is addressed to the needs of both classes—those who believe in the movement, but whose faith requires to be confirmed and enlightened, and those who view it with ignorant or sceptical hostility. It is an attempt, within brief and modest limits, to sum up the main

ideas underlying the movement of thought which is known as the Gaelic Revival.

The objects for which the Gaelic League was founded were—to quote its articles of association—"the preservation of Irish as the National language of Ireland and the extension of its use as a spoken tongue; also the preservation of existing Irish literature and the production of a modern literature in Irish." A second clause declared it to be non-political and non-sectarian.

Those who had studied the history of similar movements in Europe foresaw that a renewed pride in the National language must lead to a renewed pride in National industry. They knew that the man who was Irish in speech and mind became inevitably less content than his fellows to wear foreign clothes and consume foreign groceries, or to see many thousands of his countrymen leave Ireland every year for lack of industrial employment at home. The teaching of history, therefore, the prophetic insight of those who promoted the movement, as well as the experience of thousands of its members were alike justified when the League adopted the promotion of industries as the second of its objects, and one which was indissolubly bound up with the first.

Founded by seven men in the year 1892, the infant League set itself to carry out a task which seemed hopeless to the last degree. The Census of two years earlier had declared Irish to be spoken by about 650,000, or, roughly, one-seventh of the population. Its very existence, however, was hardly recognised by the educational systems of the country.

As a spoken language it seemed to have dropped for ever from the view of the educated world. Neither in Dublin nor in the greater part of Ireland would any trace of its existence at that time be marked by the ordinary observer. Whereas now the Dublin booksellers are eager to obtain

books on Irish subjects for which they find a ready market, Dr. Hyde records how a couple of precious volumes of Irish poetry lay for years on the bookshelves in Daly's shop in Anglesea Street, disregarded by all who came to buy. Now you can hardly go into a town in Ireland without seeing at least one or two names written in Gaelic above the doors of shops, while the greater number of daily and weekly newspapers contain Gaelic articles. Fifteen years ago, to know the language was a badge of poverty and ignorance, so that those who spoke it as their mother-tongue would conceal their knowledge in order to avoid the ridicule of the well-dressed stranger.

What, then, were the reasons that led the first Gaelic Leaguers to fix on a much-neglected language as the essential basis of National reconstruction?

Like other people, these first Gaelic Leaguers had long pondered on the ills of Ireland. In pointing to the language as the heart of the problem they believe they have made a more profound diagnosis than has been propounded by anyone else. With the remedies offered by politicians and economists they have in general no quarrel to make and no criticism to offer. On the planes of National life affected by such ideas these all have their work and purpose. The Gaelic League, however, believes that it approaches the Irish problem on a still more fundamental plane than these can touch, inasmuch as it affects the Irish people not as electors or farmers, but as human beings.

It is convinced that what is most radically wrong with Ireland as a nation—that is, as a community bound together by a unity of moral and intellectual type—is that it has lost the culture which expresses that type; that the people of Ireland are ceasing to be Irish as is enjoined by the law of their being. Ireland has lost the forms and insti-

tutions which are the symbol and safeguard of racial unity. She is, or was, falling to pieces because she has ceased to believe in herself or even to be interested in herself.

The Gaelic League diagnoses the malady of Ireland as a fundamental lack of National self-reliance, a passion for imitation which pervades every department of our life. A diseased habit of will and character leads us to depend on outsiders for everything that provides for our intellectual and material life. It has thus produced the sad and curious fact that though Europe contains no people of a more gifted and distinctive nature than the Irish it also contains no civilisation shabbier and more imitative than that of which modern Irish people are the authors and proprietors.

That we are utterly dependent on outsiders is a point which surely requires little elaboration. Until recently we had almost discarded our native language, a fact implying that this initial treachery to our Irish nature is repeated in every one of our mental activities. It is little wonder that our institutions reflect an alien point of view, and that our conduct of all our business, from that of our railways to that of our Press, exhibits the same faulty and centrifugal bias.

As for our material commodities it is a platitude that for the most part our people wear English clothes, live on imported groceries, and invest their savings in dubious transpontine securities.

To a Gaelic Leaguer nothing can be more sadly impressive than the way in which the whole mind of Ireland leans outward, away from its proper centre. Long habit has made her people acquiesce in the belief that life in Ireland is only a preparation for a wider career in some more favoured portion of the world. The sons of the educated classes grow up looking on England as their goal and employment abroad as their natural destiny. To the mind of the youthful peasant life will begin

when the steamer bears him away from Queenstown to America.

The other day an old peasant being asked what were the evils the Gaelic League was trying to remedy, summed them up by saying that "Ireland had been slipping away from herself." How may Ireland—to adopt this suggestive phrase—be drawn back to herself; how may the mind of the Irish people be focussed on their own country? how may they learn to rely on native resources for the development of a prosperous and united community? The maxim of the Gaelic League is Ireland, not America or England, for the Irish; an Irish nature can only breathe and wax strong in a fully Irish civilisation.

For Gaelic Leaguers the language is the pivot of this vast and centripetal revolution of thought which aims at concentrating the mind of our people upon Ireland, at making Ireland for them the capital and most interesting point in the planet, at keeping the people at home and finding congenial and remunerative employment for them; in short, of making Irish life an atmosphere in which the Irish nature can fully develop.

What is at once the most distinctive mark and safeguard of National self-hood? Obviously the National language, which sets the stamp of Nationality on our thoughts every moment of our lives. Abandon the use of Irish and we are borrowing even our thoughts from outsiders, for all philosophers will tell us that thought cannot be separated from speech, and that if we speak English only it is only a question of time as to when, after passing through the intermediate torpor of West British chrysalis, we shall develop into full-blown Englishmen.

Whether this would in the end be a good thing or not is a vaguer and more academic question than the Gaelic League, as a practical body, cares to raise. Is life worth living for the Irish race as

such is a question that finds a surer answer in the morality of healthy instinct than in all the refinements of philosophy. At any rate, we are determined to live and to secure the language which is the storehouse of our racial vitality. The suicide of individuals might sometimes be argued to conduce to the welfare of the race, but all moralists are agreed in condemning it from the standpoint of the individual's conscience. And so, for the conscience of contemporary Ireland, the suicide of our racial spirit is a crime that the Gaelic League calls upon us with passionate intensity not to perpetrate.

If there is one thing this generation believes in it is education, and it is in the name of all that is most unimpeachable in modern educational principle that the Gaelic League insists on the native language as the necessary mainspring of Irish development. Consult and interpret the promptings of idiosyncrasy, racial and individual, is the watchword of modern education. The Gaelic League demands the enforcement of this principle in the staple of education—language and its allied subjects.

It is wonderful to note how, once the language is recovered, the whole scheme of a modern education assumes for the Irishman a glowing interest and an intelligible unity.

In proceeding to consider the claims here put forward as to the influence of an Irish education on the Irish mind it should be remembered that their best proof lies in facts of contemporary Irish life that may be verified by anyone who will take the trouble to do so.

It is not any abstract theory of the vital significance of National languages that primarily justifies the movement, but the proved fact that the propaganda of the Gaelic League does produce a higher mental culture in Irish people than is commonly attained in its absence. It should be remembered, too, that the language neither stands nor

falls by itself, but that it is the key to a whole system of native culture, including the study of Irish history, the revival of Irish music and dancing, while its spirit permeates every department of public and private life.

I.—Its Moral Value.

To imbue people with a proper respect for themselves and for the society to which they belong is an educational principle of admitted validity. No one can say that the education hitherto prevalent in Ireland was calculated to produce such an effect. It bore, and, to a great extent, still bears, no special relation to the racial heredity of those to whom it is applied, to the history and topography of their country or its distinctive economic and social conditions. Inasmuch as all these factors are ignored by the system of education imparted to him, the Irish child grows up in the impression that they are so barbarous as to be beneath the level of scientific interest. In later life this view of himself and his people is corroborated by an acquaintance with the cheap English Press and music hall which have done so much to vulgarise Ireland. If any cultivated Englishman should ask wherein lies the power of the anti-Irish influences which the Gaelic League is striving to remove to weaken Irish character, we may well ask him what would be the effect upon himself of imbibing no knowledge of his own country beyond the same amount and kind of information, conveyed in the same spirit as a Cockney tripper of the vulgarest sort has to convey about the people and civilisation of France. It is true that stories and articles on patriotic themes have always been provided by Irish newspapers in order to counteract the calumnious influence of these lower manifestations of the English mind. Inasmuch, however, as they have been written by half-educated men, themselves im-

perfectly acquainted with native culture and tradition, the schooling in patriotic self-respect they have imparted has not been of the most valuable order. To indiscriminate scorn of all that is Irish they have too often opposed the most fulsome and unmeasured laudation.

In any case the influences of popular journalism were a poor substitute for a systematic education carried out on Irish lines.

The propaganda of the Gaelic League has a most beneficial effect in the making of character. It teaches the Irish child to regard himself as a member of a reputable and historic community. There must be something pernicious in the influence of an education which not only provides no means of restraining, but even encourages the widespread anglicising of native surnames from a feeling that in their native form they are not respectable. Before the use of the Gaelic League all over Ireland and among the Irish in America and Australia people were concealing their membership in a historic Gaelic clan by assuming some tawdry and vulgar translation into English of their hereditary names. In the name of modern progress people were brought to be ashamed of their language, and therefore ashamed of themselves. Hitherto the Irish child has grown up inferring from the silence of his school-books or the direct allegations of the Cockney Press that Ireland has no significance except as a shabby back yard of the English mansion, strewn with the cast-off furniture of England's daily life, or as a vast grazing farm where cattle as well as Civil Service clerks and doctors are reared for export. Conceive the effect upon his moral and mental personality when the Gaelic League lifts the veil of obliquy that has so long covered his country and reveals it to his delighted gaze, diversified by a thousand features of historic and topical interest. Ireland for him ceases to be poor little Ireland, the Cin-

derella of the European family. She becomes great Ireland, great by virtue of an historic background stretching back to the earliest ages, and bequeathing to her children as interesting an heritage of language, customs, literature, and historical record as that to which any people in Europe are entitled. In the light of such an education the fact of Irish birth ceases to be primarily and exclusively a time-worn joke, an original sin which may indeed be palliated by a long apprenticeship to an English accent, but which, as a recent writer has pointed out, nothing but an university education, connoting, as it generally does, a complete ignorance of everything that has been done in the country, can wholly expiate. Imagine the moral effect produced upon Jeremiah Murphy, hitherto conscious of his patronymic chiefly as a peg for the vulgar jokes of London comic papers, by finding that his proper designation is Diarmuid O'Murchadha, a name sonorous and dignified, and reminding him of his kinship with the MacMorrogh Kings of Leinster. The place-names of his native barony, prefixed by Kill and Bally, which to that grade of the English mind which chiefly influences democratic Ireland, connote much the same historic prestige as Timbuctoo or the Cannibal Islands are found in this new light to have a meaning, apt, poetical, or linked with the storied past. It is little wonder that the teaching of the League is found to foster self-respect and make people more responsible and efficient in the whole round of their daily conduct. Think, too, of the wonderful amount of self-sacrifice and devotion shown in the working of the movement! Carried on as it is mainly by people who can only devote to it the scanty leisure earned by a day of toil, it counts for much among the moral assets of Ireland.

Next to the language and industries the League is mainly concerned with something that falls more obviously within the sphere of moral conduct—to

wit, the promotion of a sober Ireland. The meetings of the League are distinguished from all others in Ireland by their freedom from brawling and drunkenness. It has compelled the publicans of the Irish cities to close their houses on St. Patrick's Day, while the increased power of conduct and self-control which its teaching inculcates has been attested by the foremost apostles of temperance reform. In these days we hear a great deal of discussion about the Irish character and its weaknesses, real or alleged. For such as exist the Gaelic League has fallen back upon the simple remedy of showing the Irishman that he comes of an ancient and honourable stock, and of calling upon him to live up to his knowledge.

II.—Its Intellectual Value.

Gaelic is a copious and highly-developed language, remarkable for the richness and precision of its grammar. As an instrument of pure intellectual discipline few, if any, languages surpass it. It is especially valuable to the Irishman because it is the counterpart of his own psychology, and we find that whether he is a native speaker or not he is drawn to it by a natural love and affinity.

As a language for social intercourse, for conversation, or for letter-writing, not even French is superior. This is due to the delicate and elliptical character of its idiom and its richness in terms describing personal characteristics.

No one can meet such representatives of the older Gaelic tradition without being struck by the vigour of mind, the refinement of manner, the genuine literary culture which place them far above the inhabitants of the anglicised districts.

It should hardly be necessary to point out how readily the study of the language leads Irish people to the study of native literature and history, whereas the purely English system of democratic edu-

cation hitherto paramount in the land is notoriously barren of this or any other intellectual fruit. The study of Gaelic kindles anew the love of a literature which up till the Famine was the cherished possession of the whole Gaelic peasantry. Considering that the Gaelic literature of the eighteenth century was produced exclusively by peasants whose culture was proscribed and whose race was persecuted by the most weighty engines of Governmental oppression, it has a beauty and elevation of tone that has seldom been equalled. As for the older literature, its beauty and value are already widely recognised.

Every student of education would desire to encourage in Irishmen an intelligent interest in their own history. Many branches of the Gaelic League teach history by regular classes or occasional lectures. A knowledge of it is promoted by the prizes for historical essays offered at the Feiseanna. Only a few weeks ago a leader in the "Claidheamh Soluis" emphasised the importance of Irish history as only second to that of the language. How, indeed, is it possible to appreciate our history if we do not know the language in which its events have been thought and acted, and to a great extent recorded? A man who does not know a word of French can hardly reach a deep intuition of the French historic genius. It is not of great importance that the ordinary Irishman should be versed in the history of France, but it is necessary that he should understand something of the events and principles of which he and contemporary Ireland are the outcome. If we cannot pronounce Irish, Ruaidhrí O'Conchubhair and Seaghan Diomais look as remote and foreign as the names of some Assyrian tablet deciphered yesterday after much labour among the ruins of Nineveh. Our ignorance of the language interposes a film between us and all that appertains to our country. We grope blindly and with muffled fingers round the prob-

lems of our past and present. Thanks to the influence of the Gaelic League, the importance to a race of a clear and dignified sense of its historical background is beginning to be realised in Ireland. A demand is arising for a type of man who, to quote a recent writer, "should not only possess a full knowledge of Irish history but full acquaintance with her early laws and institutions; he should be proficient in Irish both as a written and spoken language; he should know her literature and understand her art; he should be thoroughly acquainted with Ireland agriculturally, industrially, commercially, and topographically. He should know what Ireland has achieved, and be able to show what she could achieve. In a word, he should be what an educated Frenchman or an educated Norseman is—a man who knows his country. Recently someone poured contempt on the Gaelic Revival as an attempt to save a nation by means of organised philology. It is certainly astonishing to note with what manifold and disparate keys the study of Gaelic is proved to unlock the Irish mind. Those who become acquainted with the movement soon cease to be surprised at manifestations of its influence, which bear no obvious relation to the study of a long-neglected language. Recently an Irishman remarked that he had no general interest in birds, but that a plover, its haunts and its habits, became immediately interesting when he knew it under the name of a pilibín. Here you will find an enthusiast collecting and deciphering the place-names of his native district, another is tracing back the history and genealogy obscured beneath the anglicised surnames of his native town. A third finds that the lists of Irish names for plants in the text-books of the League impel him to know and distinguish the plants themselves.

The other day a competitor at the Oireachtas made a Gaelic oration on the importance of culti-

vating athletic exercises in Ireland. While insisting on their importance to the Irish of the present day of a widespread system of physical culture, he was equally positive that it must be carried out by people acquainted with the language or imbued with the spirit of its revival. This, perhaps, was to be a little too absolute in the enforcement of a fruitful idea, but it was interesting as an instinctive recognition of the peculiar potency with which the Gaelic revival calls forth the diversity of talent and aptitude that lie buried in the Irish people.

As for the standard of language teaching, it is undoubtedly very high. The most modern systems have been introduced, and the names of Gouin and Berlitz penetrate to the most remote corners of Ireland. It has been the frequent lament of inspectors of schools and other authorities that the general public in this country take no interest in education. It is interesting to note how the Gaelic movement is fostering an interest in the whole machinery of primary and other instruction. An enthusiasm for the right teaching of Gaelic is the thin end of the wedge that seems destined to admit the public mind into the realm of educational policy. The discussion of the Bilingual Programme, of the withdrawal and restoration of the fees for teaching Irish, the comparisons between Irish and Continental time-tables for primary schools which have been instituted by the "Claidheamh Soluis" all tend to foster this interest.

To judge by the attention paid to it at present, the Irish should be foremost in phonetic science. Wherever you go you will find the Gaelic Leaguers discussing with knowledge and enthusiasm the phonetics of their preferred dialect.

The training colleges founded by the League in Dublin at Ring, in County Waterford, Ballingarry in County Cork, at Partry, in Mayo,

and at Cloghaneely in Donegal, are, as Dr. Hyde has said, the most remarkable instances of educational self-help that have been known in Modern Ireland. There are many who see in them the modest beginnings of the National University that has been so long been desiderated, and who look to the Gaelic movement to create that body of Irish public opinion, definite and enlightened in matters of educational policy, which is so imperatively required for the solution of the University problem. Already a suggestion has been put forward in a prominent Irish newspaper that the Gaelic League should apply for such powers as a teaching body as are available under the College Charters Act, should grant degrees for proficiency in the Irish language, literature, and history, and should, in conjunction with a system of Universitiés Populaires established on the French model by the Trades Unions in the towns and the co-operative societies in the country, constitute the nucleus of a democratic university.

The general effect of the propaganda of the League upon the mind of the country is essentially one that belongs to a liberal education. It must be remembered that a system of native culture, corresponding as it does to the mental heredity of the race, is acquired by the Irishman with greater enthusiasm and mastered with greater thoroughness than he displays with regard to any other subject of instruction. It is for this reason that the work of the Gaelic League, in so far as it influences the mind of Ireland, is educative in the highest degree, and supplies an unique mental discipline. This cannot be better illustrated than through an argument drawn from agrarian politics. It is often argued that to make the Irish tenant-farmer complete owner of his holding is to make him efficient and responsible in the working of his land. A precisely similar argument may be applied in the intellectual order. Give the Irish-

man a thorough native culture and you make him realise that he and his race have a stake in civilisation; you give him a sense of ownership in the moral and intellectual assets of a historic community. No longer is he in an intellectual sense a landless man, a congenital outlaw who must qualify by means of an English education for admission into the civilised communities of England or America. He becomes invested with the fee-simple of a priceless National heritage. Impart to the Irishman, who has, perhaps, been wandering in clouds of rhetorical sunburstry, a clear knowledge of his racial tradition and you pin him down to Irish earth, a territory which is his own, and which it behoves him to cultivate, survey, and map out by every means of intellectual inquiry.

In every generation it is a bye-word how much youthful talent goes to waste in Dublin, Cork, and other centres, because the country affords so few channels of organised intellectual life. It has often been observed how great is the difference between those of the younger generation in our cities whom the Gaelic Revival has influenced and those whose intellectual life is directed to no such constructive purpose. The clever young Dubliner who criticises everything in a spirit of destructive Nihilism is a type known to every generation. How often his brilliancy withers early because his mind sends down no roots into the soil of a native, and therefore assimilable culture! To minds of this kind the influence of the Gaelic Revival imparts sobriety and ballast. In the intellectual temper fostered by the Gaelic League lies the true remedy for that proneness to swing from one pole to another which is too characteristic of Irish opinion. In the Gaelic League you will neither find the type of person who resents the mildest criticism of the Irish people as the foulest aspersion, nor yet the type that declares the Irish to be cursed with a

double dose of original sin, for which the only remedy lies in submerging the island beneath the Atlantic. The Gaelic League fosters a spirit of fairness and moderation. A recent English observer remarks:—"Even a two months' tourist like myself cannot travel through Ireland without feeling, without seeing, that the Gaelic League makes for courage, honesty, and straight thinking."

Nothing can be more erroneous than to suppose that the revival of Gaelic tends to cut Ireland off from the rest of the world. Davis called Ireland the Kaspar Hauser of nations in allusion to the German boy who was brought up in seclusion from all human kind. No one can take part in the movement without feeling that it tends to open windows in the dungeon of Kaspar Hauser which look out upon the wider world of Europe. By acquainting us with our own culture it gives us a standard of comparison and value and a motive for inquiry into other countries. It is a disastrous result of our dependence upon England and America for light and leading that we are abysmally ignorant of the smaller countries of Europe from which, as our compeers in size and resources, we have so much to learn. The effort to revive our racial consciousness directs our attention to similar movements in other countries. The propagandist literature of the League has included many articles on the revival of National languages elsewhere. The Press, inspired by the movement, provides for a new-found interest in the way things are done on the Continent of Europe. The "Claidheamh" has had a most interesting series of articles on the Belgian primary school, written by a gentleman who visited Belgium for the purpose of inquiring into them. On the other hand, there have been articles on the Gaelic Revival in French, German, Spanish, and Danish reviews, to quote a few examples, which otherwise would never have found occasion to mention Ireland. Surely

it is obvious that the more we become a feeble imitation of England the further do we recede from the world's view, while the more we are true to ourselves the more interested we shall be in comparing our civilisation with others, while they in turn will pay more attention to us. The Gaelic Revival makes us not alone good Irishmen, but also good Europeans, or, since Japan has shifted the world's centre of gravity, good cosmopolitans. It is little wonder that the League's offices in O'Connell Street have become the hub of thinking Ireland. The language with which the League is concerned is the proper instrument of Irish faculty. It is hardly too much to say that if you give the Irishman back his language you give him back the use of his mind, which has become atrophied by severance from his racial tradition.

III.—Its Social Value.

Gaelic is the language of a social genius; its use reveals the Irishman to himself and sets in motion the genial current of soul that has become frozen in an Anglicised atmosphere. It is the symbol of a native social culture which was dignified and attractive in lieu of being snobbish and imitative, and for lack of which every man, woman, and child in the country are denied their full expansion of personality. It becomes the badge of a new social solidarity founded on love of our country. In the work and play of the movement people came together who are divided in religion, politics, and prejudice of class.

Ireland, once renowned for a joyous and festive social life, had of late become dull and stagnant. The utter dulness of country districts is a principal cause of emigration. The Gaelic League has an organised system of social festivals, consisting of the Feis or literary festival, the Cuirm Ceoil or concert, and the Aeridheacht, which is neither so

solemn as the Olympian games nor so trivial as the Anglo-Saxon pic-nic. Partly social and partly educational, they re-assemble the people from miles around and draw forth a quickness of wit and social talent which has grown rusty since Ireland became enslaved by English fashions. Thus the League keeps the pulse of social life still beating in a much-dispirited country. A Gaelic Feis, indeed, provides a more effective argument for the movement than the utmost cogency of abstract reasoning can supply.

IV.—Its Economic Value.

The second clause in the constitution of the Gaelic League binds it to the promotion of Irish industry. It may be said that there is no real connection between language and industry, and that to revive what the *Irish Times* has called a comatose language is the most fantastic method of protecting Irish commerce that the wit of man could devise. The union between the two causes, it may be argued, is arbitrary and ill-matched. Whatever connection they have might be dissolved, as it has been brought into being by a single resolution of the Ard-Fheis or Gaelic League Parliament.

Does a knowledge of Irish increase anyone's power or desire to purchase an Irish hat? No doubt an association which paid no heed to the language, but which banded all Irish people together in a resolute support of home industry, might effect a great deal of its purpose. Several such exist already, and few, if any, Gaelic Leaguers would be found to oppose their efforts. It is believed, however, that a practical support of Irish goods is more likely to come from minds imbued with native speech than from those denied this fount of patriotic inspiration. Look a little deeper than is implied by the foregoing objections and it must be plain that the connection between language and industries is direct and vital. At any

rate, the Gaelic League has come to assume an industrial purpose, not because of any preconceived relation between the two, but as the outcome of the predominant feelings of its members. Explain it how you will, an acquaintance with the native language does make people rebel against the fatuous idiocy of beggaring ourselves by importing everything from abroad.

In so far as it has been shown that the effect of the movement is to strengthen character and develop intelligence, its economic value has already in part been demonstrated. You will hear people praise the zeal for mental acquirement which the League has spread abroad while they lament that it is not concentrated on some commercially useful subject, such as French or shorthand. There are, however, thousands of people whom nothing would induce to spend their evenings at those latter subjects, but who do respond to the propaganda of the League. And to make Ireland Irish and self-reliant, to give her back the Irish mind in all its vigour, is a better guarantee of industrial success than to equip her sons with all the diplomas of commercial academies. It is for a very practical reason that the new Irish trade mark bears a Gaelic legend—"Déanta in Eirinn," "Made in Ireland." The section of our people whose attention it is likely to catch is, *par excellence*, that which is most interested in the concrete industrial and economic problems of the nation. It is a direct appeal to the Gaelic Leaguers who form a public already instructed in the judicious support of Irish industry. They constitute the nucleus of an industrial army, in which it is to be hoped the whole nation will presently be enlisted. Supposing that legal protection for our industries is not to be obtained nor desired, we can at least enclose our markets with a halo of patriotic enthusiasm—a magic circle drawn by our own wills which will effectively keep the foreigner at bay.

Manufacturers and traders will, therefore, do well to support the Gaelic Revival. The consuming public must also do their part. To the patrons of the Grafton Street shopkeepers, for example, we commend the idea of insisting that, as far as they are concerned, nothing but Irish manufacture shall be bought and sold in Grafton Street. Such action will conduce to their own material profit. By this co-operation of buyers and sellers the fabric of a flourishing commerce may be reared in Ireland. It will be a house of many mansions, in which the vast host of young men who, from Trinity, the Royal University, and every other of our educational nursery gardens, are yearly transplanted to places abroad, will find a livelihood and a career. And to those whose brightest hopes for the future of Ireland lie in making it a second playground for the tourists of two hemispheres, we submit that an Irish Ireland will attract these latter far more surely than an Ireland which is a shabby copy of an English original, just as Buda Pesth is more interesting for being Hungarian than it would be as a Danubian replica of New York or London.

Every member of the Gaelic League is pledged to give a preference to Irish manufacture as far as is reasonably possible. Such action on the part of Gaelic Leaguers has already contributed in large measure to the industrial revival that is going on in Ireland. Remote as the connection may appear to those who are outside the League, the increased demand for Irish tweeds is largely due to the thousands of students who have so assiduously contemplated Art's new coat in the exercise of O'Growney's Irish Primer.

The Gaelic League is striving to make Ireland realise herself as an economic organism, to foster that sense of economic solidarity in which our people are so deplorably lacking. The other day an Irishman was heard to complain that his investments in a certain Irish railway were falling lower

and lower, while in the same breath he denounced the Gaelic League for its efforts to make the people Irish, and stigmatised the policy of buying nothing but Irish goods as a narrow-minded one. He further declared that he viewed with perfect indifference the annual emigration of a round 40,000 of Irish people. The connection between a depleted and dispirited population, a small volume of internal commerce, and the decline of an income arising from railway dividends did not strike this otherwise intelligent person. This is the kind of sapient stupidity that the Gaelic League is striving to remove. It is not, of course, pretended that a movement for the voluntary protection of Irish industry can have an effect upon the economic condition of Ireland equivalent in its power either for good or for evil to that of a legal tariff. An important step, however, will have been taken when all Ireland has come to realise that it has such a thing as economic interests, which every single individual can promote to his own benefit and to that of the community, the prosperity of which is in general the index of his own. This can be done by rallying the whole country to the cry of "Irish manufacture for the Irish consumer." At present the League is engaged upon a scheme whereby examples of Irish industry in various stages of fabrication shall be exhibited in all the schoolhouses of Ireland. No longer is there any excuse for Irish people who do not insist upon buying native produce. In the establishment of an Irish trade mark an immense advance has been made towards the economic organisation of Ireland. Henceforth we have a definite test to apply to goods which are recommended to us as being of Irish manufacture. It is applicable to every class of goods, and it rests with the Irish public to see that its use is co-extensive with Irish industry itself. To ask for Irish goods and to see that you get them, to use the hackneyed language of advertise-

ment, is at the present juncture the A B C of practical patriotism.

Every Irish person should buy, as far as is reasonably possible, nothing but Irish manufacture, and should further require to see the National trade mark on everything submitted for his approval. It is the symbol of a self-reliant and progressive Ireland with which everyone in the country should become familiar. Every schoolhouse in Ireland should have a large picture of it hung up on the wall, so that its vital significance might be impressed on the children. Every Irishwoman should have it stamped in a silver or other metal device upon the purse with which she does her shopping and imprinted upon the cover of her account-book. Those whose fastidious souls are revolted at the notion of making a trade mark the sacrosanct emblem of a National cause should remember that such trade mark can, if we so will it, be made to stand between ourselves and the loss of 40,000 of our people by emigration every year. Do you deplore the heartrending scenes amid which a host of our exiles every month leave Queenstown for America? Are you appalled at the desolation of rural Ireland? Are you, whether as farmer, shopkeeper, doctor, lawyer, or whatever your occupation may be, alarmed at the smallness of the profits which you reap from a stagnant and dwindling community? If so, you will give substance to your feelings by ordering your grocer, your baker, and your candlestick maker, on pain of losing your custom, to send you nothing but what is stamped with the symbol of Irish self-reliance, of Irish solidarity. Not, of course, that it is in every case reasonably possible to buy Irish manufacture. Sometimes the latter is much dearer, and sometimes it is much inferior to what can be obtained from abroad. Beyond a certain limit of increased price the Irish consumer will not, and ought not, to give a preference to native produce.

In general, however, it will pay the Irish people, whether as individuals or as public bodies, to give a certain percentage of financial favour to their own countrymen. It cannot be too deeply emphasised that the movement for voluntary protection is not based on sentimental grounds. If you despise patriotic idealism you may approve the wisdom of the policy as inculcating the most enlightened form of selfishness. That to combine in the practical support of Irish industry is the best investment the Irish people can make is attested by the example of every other people in the world. No nation in the world has in the first instance gained a footing in the industrial world without the help of protection, voluntary or legal. England herself was strongly protectionist till half a century ago. If you ask the Irish manufacturer, handicapped as he is by a thousand disadvantages, to beat his foreign competitor by his own unaided efforts you impose on him a feat that his like has never accomplished elsewhere.

National commerce is not built up by the efforts of isolated individuals, however valiant, but by the organisation of the nation for purposes of economic defence. It may be objected that the Irish manufacturer is too often dilatory and ineffective in carrying out orders entrusted to him, and that it is often far less convenient to buy Irish goods than to supply one's house by a monthly order from the Army and Navy Stores. It is true the Irish manufacturer is far from what he should be, but so, too, is the Irish consumer. Both parties are singularly short-sighted and prefer a trifling immediate advantage to a large ultimate gain. We have too many manufacturers who are content to pay their way to produce a mediocre article to meet a small demand which they make no attempt to increase. On the other hand, we have too many consumers who are utterly indifferent as to whether the commodities of their daily life are produced in Ireland

or Peru. A movement of voluntary protection is, of course, open to objections, as is every other course of action. It will, however, at least have the effect of enormously increasing the volume of native commerce, of checking emigration, and of focussing public attention upon economic affairs. Contrast the disproportionate interest shown by the Irish public to the land question with that shown in regard to industrial matters. Recall the utter apathy of Ireland when the fiscal question was being discussed on the other side of the Channel! Realise the significance of the fact that until three years ago Ireland differed from every civilised country in the world by keeping no record of the respective amounts of her exports and imports! It is admitted that Irishmen have grave faults *qua* producers and *qua* consumers. It is all the more necessary that the bright light of a vigilant and resolute public opinion should be shed upon their mutual dealings. We must have all Ireland determined and enthusiastic in support of Irish goods; we must have a Press teeming with articles on economic and fiscal subjects. The National problems connected with Irish commerce must come to rival the land question itself as a topical subject of Irish conversation. In the intense light of this new-found interest in our National housekeeping the merits and demerits of the Irish manufacturer will be clearly revealed. Some of his tribe, no doubt, will take advantage of a universal enthusiasm for Irish goods to palm an inferior article on the public. For these and other disabilities of our economic position no doubt an Ireland united and resolute could find a remedy, whether in the form of alteration of our present fiscal arrangements or in an improved system of commercial and technical education. At present Ireland is not resolute and united upon the principle of economic solidarity. The Gaelic League is striving to make all Ireland

cognisant of the vital importance of supporting Irish manufactures. A system of voluntary protection, as rigid as public opinion will enforce, may indeed give rise to abuses for which it will be incumbent upon Irishmen to devise a remedy. The fundamental principle, however, of keeping Ireland's money and population at home must be endorsed by every sane thinker.

V.—Its Psychological Significance.

The central thesis of Gaelic League philosophy may be summed up in saying that Gaelic still expresses the Irish type in spite of the fact that a majority of the people have ceased to speak it. Gaelic is still the rightful vernacular of Irish psychology just as English is the spurious vernacular of Irish speech. Everyone who observes how little Dublin children, who have never heard the language spoken, pick up its accent and its idiom, or with what fervid enthusiasm people who respond to no other intellectual stimulus, take up its study, must be driven to the same conclusion. There are many people who declare that in learning Irish they feel they are recovering something, a possession they had lost. The English speech of the people, right up to the confines of Dublin, is saturated with Irish idiom. Only among the English, more indifferent to matters of language, less philological by temperament than any other people in the world, will it be asked how one language can express a race better than another, and how the substitution of one language for another will react upon the spiritual characteristics of a race.

It must always have been evident to those who have any sense of language that a closer relation must subsist between a nation and its language than any kind of analysis can make clear. Literature and vocabulary have often been analysed in order to illustrate a racial attitude of mind. In our day, however, language in its less elaborate de-

velopments, in its idiom and syntax, is being scrutinised for the same purpose. That idiom is the counterpart of racial idiosyncracy, long believed as a matter of intuition, is now being elucidated with scientific certainty. The most rudimentary idioms of speech are found to indicate the psychological angle from which the racial mind confronts the universe. The relative importance to a race of different ideas is attested by the grammatical structure of its phrases. Analyse English sentences you will find the elemental ideas that constitute the personality of the Englishman. And so a brief examination of Gaelic idiom will reveal the familiar outlines of Irish character.

The Irish respect for personality, the sociability, the fatalism of the race, its delicacy in social intercourse, all emerge upon a brief inspection of the commonest Gaelic phrases. Irish idiom is the logic of Irish psychology, while an Irish sentence, apart from its explicit meaning, commits the speaker, by its grammar and order, to an Irish theory of life. If every Irish word is thus also an Irish idea, to argue that the nation can remain Irish while losing its Irish tongue, is like arguing that one can preserve a whole while subtracting every one of its parts. To say that there can be any real comparison between the value for the Irishman of Gaelic on the one hand, and French or German on the other hand, surely implies a very shallow view of the significance of language.

The prime issue at stake is not (1) the volume of commerce transacted in a particular language, and the number of clerkships in which a knowledge of it would be of use, nor (2) the extent and beauty of the literature contained in it. Which is the speech that most truly expresses the race?" is the crucial question for those who appreciate the basic importance of language as a means of psychic development.

Froude, who, in spite of his hostility towards

Ireland, had a great deal of insight into our character, said the Irish were the most unchanging of races. From an Ireland that was mainly Irish-speaking, we are separated by one or at most two generations. That is but a trifle in the history of a nation. Is it to be believed that in fifty years the Irish brain has ceased to be convoluted in accordance with the subtle architecture of the Gaelic sentence, or that the Irish larynx has ceased to be the counterpart of Gaelic phonetics? Allusion has already been made of the Irishman who, quite indifferent to the subject of plovers, but whose mind was stirred to interest by the thought of a pilibín—the Gaelic name for the same bird. It raises the interesting question as to whether an Irish word has not a greater inherent power of drawing forth an Irish mind than attaches to the corresponding word in any other tongue, quite apart from the question as to whether such mind has acquired a previous knowledge of the Irish language. At any rate you may ask any plain-minded Gaelic Leaguer who, perhaps, has spoken English from his cradle, and has only learnt Gaelic in the last few years, and he will tell you that "pilibín" expresses his meaning with a truth to which the English "plover" cannot attain. In the connection between the Irish language and the Irish mind lies an interesting study occupying the borderland between psychology and philology. In the interests of the Gaelic Revival, it is much to be desired that some student, let us say of the School of Ancient Irish Learning, should take it up and thus elucidate the philosophic basis underlying the practical success which the Gaelic League has achieved. So much for the soil of Irish psychology in which the movement is rooted. That Gaelic expresses the Irishman is a statement which, apart from all abstract theory, the work actually accomplished by the Gaelic League is there to testify.

What the Gaelic League is attempting to do has been carried out with success in other European countries. In Hungary and Finland and Bohemia, to name a few instances, languages which had shrunk to a tiny stream have grown again into mighty rivers, bearing on their waters the argosies of a complete civilisation. It is told how Palacky, the Douglas Hyde of Bohemia, was one day saddened at hearing two girls of the middle class change from Bohemian to German as he approached them one day in a street in Prague, one saying to the other—"Hush, let us talk German or we will be taken for peasants." To such pangs of shame and indignation was the Bohemian patriot of his time dairly and hourly exposed. A short while afterwards, however, his spirits rose to their zenith at hearing two decidedly well-dressed persons talking Bohemian on the Graben. He threw up his hat with joy and took two fellow-enthusiasts for the language off to lunch at a fashionable restaurant.

Bohemian, which, in the language recently applied to the position of Gaelic fifteen years ago, "had dropped to be the mere fugitive tongue of the outskirts," is now spoken by several millions of people. It is the language of that portion of the Austro-Hungarian Empire which is foremost in industry. The fine glass-ware that was so much admired at the Austro-Hungarian Exhibition in London last year (1906) is made by workmen where speech was once the despised patois of a decaying peasantry. In the Press and in the theatre, in public as in private life, Bohemian has won for itself a complete and rightful supremacy. So little is it true that the trend of our time is against the smaller languages, that there are now far more languages spoken in Europe by educated people than there were a century ago. It may be destined that in the end the whole world will speak English, German, or

Esperanto. The mingling of races, the increase of communication may cause national languages to disappear or be merged in an universal speech. If this is to take place through a gradual peaceful process of evolution no one will oppose its consummation. National language movements are not as a protest against the abolition of barriers of race in the interests of human solidarity, but against the forcible extermination of a racial genius through the pressure of political and economic circumstances. Language is not a matter of politics and economics, but of something far more important—namely, human idiosyncrasy. Ireland does not consent that she shall cease to be Irish in thought, simply because she happens to be governed from Westminster, or because the abnormal economic conditions that have prevailed in Ireland for the last half century have required that so large a portion of her people should emigrate to America. There can be no doubt that the violent and artificial suppression of a highly-developed language is a misfortune not only to the race primarily concerned, but to the whole human family.

Every nation has some contribution to make to the sum of human civilisation. Suppress a language and the Ethnic spirit which it preserves evaporates; you have, in fact, "destroyed one of the original forms of the human mind." No one who is aware that thirty years ago children in Ireland went to school with wooden tallies round their necks to be scored with a notch for every word of Irish spoken, and that they were beaten in occordance with the number of their notches, will deny that Irish has been violently and artificially suppressed. The melting of the snows is the only image which conveys the fact of its disappearance. It has not gone because of an intrinsic unfitness to compete with English. Douglas Hyde says that at the time of the conquest of 1172 it was a far more cultivated language than English, and its

natural vigour is placed in evidence by the fact that for three centuries it constantly supplanted English among the colonists of the Pale. It has gone because sixty years ago all Ireland became obsessed with the notion that salvation for the race was only to be attained by emigration to New York, or for those who stayed at home through remedial legislation carried out at Westminster. To know nothing but Irish was a source of untold hardship to the exile landed in their hundreds of thousands at the ports of America. The priest discouraged Irish because he wished to mitigate this hardship and to render, through a knowledge of English, his departing flock more effective missionaries of the Catholic Faith. The politician ignored it because it was not the language of Westminster, and the people eagerly forgot their Irish in order to follow his speeches. The Press took its cue from the politician; we had a new-found system of primary education, planned by men who were not Irish, and who had no sympathy with the country's needs. They treated Ireland as a virgin page uninscribed by the hand of racial tradition, and on which the Anglicised pupils of the National Schools were to write for the first time an historical record of note and interest.

The Gaelic League stands for the restitution of our native culture, and in proof of the excellence of that policy it points to what it has already done rather than to any abstract argument in its favour. On those who oppose it lies the burden of substituting some equivalent impulse towards a higher mental and social life. There might be some strength in the objections brought against the movement if the enthusiasm generated by the Gaelic League had replaced a bent of mind more pleasing to the *soi-distant* advocates of modern progress. It is, however, well known that the

tracts of Irish life which its propaganda has fertilised, have hitherto been barren of all social and intellectual effort. What other policy is open to us but that of drifting aimlessly in the wake of civilisation, which in so far as it is an original must be greatly superior to anything we can produce by copying it?

An eminent Irishman said the other day that if it was not for the language movement Ireland would be the most uninteresting country in the world to live in, because there was nothing in it that could not be seen far better elsewhere. Already there have been many cases in which the potent spell of the Gaelic Revival has induced gifted young Irishmen to throw up employment abroad in order to live in Ireland—the deeply interesting country which the Gaelic movement is giving back to them. Take away the impulse of loving study and inquiry that the movement has generated, and Ireland becomes a palimpsest upon which a race of vandals are writing a trivial and vulgar narrative in English, superimposed upon a native record of immemorial interest and beauty.

The Gaelic League asks all Irish people to rally round the National language. It appeals to Firbolg, Milesian, Gael, or Cromwellian planter. It includes Catholic, Protestant, and Dissenter. Not by everyone in the same degree is the language felt to be his rightful and desired possession. There is, however, no excuse for defaulting from such a movement to be found by a Carlow or Wexford farmer, for example, in saying, "It is all very well to get the Connemara people to speak Irish, but in this part of the country it has not been spoken for eighty years, and it is too late to return to it now," or for a country gentleman to say, "My ancestor was a Williamite planter, and I don't believe that he or his descendants ever spoke Irish, except for the purpose of dealing with the tenants." To all such we put one question—

"Are you or are you not predominantly Irish, and do you not wish to live in an Ireland which reflects your racial type? If so, you will support the language which expresses the Irish nature and which will keep the nation true to itself in all that it sets its hand to accomplish."

Some are too old, others too busy, to learn the language; others, again, are honestly of opinion that to know it would meet no conscious need of their individual nature. All, however, can help by giving their moral and pecuniary support and by carrying out the Gaelic League spirit in the many branches of social and practical life which it is so effectively permeating. Above all, they can see to it that the rising generation grow up in the institutions of a native culture.

Even if it prove impossible to restore Gaelic as the ordinary medium of intercourse in this country, the effort to do so will brace the mind and character of Ireland. The spirit in which this attempt to recover a common heritage is made is the true solvent for all our antagonisms of creed and class and of political tradition. It will draw all Ireland into one path of amity and concord, and place us in a true line with our forefathers' tradition.

Do, therefore, learn Irish. If you have not time, strength, nor ability to learn much, learn a little. It is wonderful what an effect even a little Irish has in curing the malaise of a much-disillusioned race, in rooting the nature of Irish people deep down in the soil of their native country.

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