IRISHMEN OF TO-DAY

DOUGLAS HYDE

DOUGLAS HYDE

AN CRAOIBÍN AOIBHINN

BY

DIARMID O COBHTHAIGH

MAUNSEL & CO., LTD.
DUBLIN AND LONDON
1917

PREFACE

WHEN the movement for the revival of the Irish language was conceived, its founders, men of vision though they were, could hardly have foreseen the manifold aspects which their offspring would assume.

At first it was simply an effort to call back the spirit of an earlier Ireland. As the movement spread other reasons for the revival were realised, and to-day a hundred arguments based on its literary, educative, and even commercial value, have been advanced with effect. But the fact remains, and something of the first inspiration has flashed back with its perception, that one man learns Irish because he feels that he is doing a service to European scholarship by saying "téanam oṁc" instead of "come on," for nine hundred and ninety-nine who learn it on a blind instinct "because it's our own."

It is comparatively easy to lay before men a reasoned policy and to appeal to their minds; but to lead a movement which rests its strength on calling forth half-forgotten sentiments, to awaken sub-con-

scious memories is a work which can only be accomplished by a man whose whole being vibrates in sympathy with his fellow men.

To anyone acquainted with Douglas Hyde in the splendid days of his American tour, or in the hardly less strenuous but more thrilling period of the fight for compulsory Irish in the National University, it is fascinating to conceive of the brilliant personality of the man lying dormant in the shy and lonely boy who fished and shot and sat by country firesides in his native Roscommon. It was there that the child of an alien tradition fell under the spell of Irish culture. Already perhaps he had the charm, when he chose to exercise it, which earned for him, his famous pseudonym "An Craoibhin Aoibhinn,"(which translated means "The Delightful Little Branch,") and the genius for friendliness, a touch of which is characteristic in all the distinguished figures of the Gaelic League.

Men of his race, aware that once approached the Irish spell was irresistible, made stringent rules to save themselves and each other, but Douglas Hyde, who was never in his life afraid to be charmed, surrendered

unconditionally and got so good a reward from his captor that he became for many the embodiment of the charm and practical idealism of his cause.

It has been stated in this book that, but for him, the language would have died, and though at first sight this may seem an exaggeration, there is a large share of truth in it. A movement for national revival, unless forwarded in a spirit of human sympathy as distinguished from intellectual sympathy, may easily become academic and cease to attract the young and ardent to its ranks. An Craoibhin is a type of his country in the appeal of his eternal youthfulness to the young. A northern Gaelic Leaguer has told of how he went to the first meeting held to found the Belfast branch of the Gaelic League. "When I saw him up on the platform," he said, with a heat of loyalty in his voice which is remarkable without being singular

"Ba dóigh liom gurb é an fear ba dheaghta ar dhuim an domhain é—agus ba ead, leis. Chánaig fé anuas in aice liom agus é ag dul amach—agus thairbeánfaidh fé feo díb com óg 7 beag a bíos—ba leor dom mo lámh do chur amach ar imeall a chóta—ba leor san."

"He seemed to me the finest man on the ridge of the world—and he was too. He came down near me while he was going out—and this will shew you how little and young I was—it was enough for me to put my hand on the edge of his coat, it was indeed."

It is easy to multiply instances of An Craoibhin's effect upon others, but more interesting to try and define it. A friend was once arguing with him about some question involving the phrase "ordinary men." Hyde placed himself in their ranks. "But you are not an 'ordinary man,' a Chraoibhin," the friend hastened to assert. "Indeed I am," he replied, "that is the reason I am able to persuade him, I understand him." Upon reflection, it appears that there is a sense in which this is true. There is no question here of the typical strong man of Irish history, the Owen Roe or the Parnell, men aloof, to be obeyed, generals of an army. An Craoibhin may more aptly be compared to the conductor of an orchestra during the first rehearsals of a brilliant and difficult piece of music. His necessary quality is the complete understanding of each part, his equipment a large share in the composing of it and a per-

sonality fitted to inspire his musicians with the same self-forgetting desire for the successful performance of the whole as he himself displays. The full beauty of the music is not yet apparent; there is always a deal of drudgery and wearisome repetition in a rehearsal, despite passages which already are of brilliant effect. But the conductor does not relinquish his baton until he has evoked a spirit of harmony and understanding between himself and the orchestra.

One of An Craoibhin's disciples wrote a poem, in which he said :—

Do dallar mo fúil
Is mo cluar do dúnar
Do chuadar mo chroidhe
Is mo mhian do múchar
Do tugar mo cúl
Ar an airling do cumar
. . . . . .
Do tugar mo ghnúis
. . . . . .
Ar an ghníomh do-chím.

(I blinded my eyes,
And I closed my ears,
I hardened my heart,
And I smothered my desire,
I turned my back
On the vision I had shaped,
. . . . . .
I have turned my face.
. . . . . .
To the deed that I see).

An Craoibhin is the very opposite to this in his method. In contrast he appears as the ordinary man he asserts himself to be, and all his magic lies in his being the ordinary man on an immense scale. He has not given his life to any one "gníom do-ċím," but rather to the creation of an atmosphere in which the genius of the Gael can live and blossom for the good of Ireland; and no one who looks at his work can doubt that his life as President of the Gaelic League was given as generously as the life of any man since the battle was joined between the Gael and the Gall.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

YOUTH.

In the beginning of the year 1916 there was a great public meeting held in the Mansion House, Dublin, to protest against the withdrawal of governmental grants for the teaching of Irish. The place was thronged, the audience boisterously enthusiastic. The crowded room shook with applause or seemed captured by the very spirit of fury as the speakers aroused the enthusiasm or the anger of the audience.

But whether it were during the exuberant applause or the angry protests, one who could detach himself from the feelings of the moment could see in the eager, determined faces around him a final justification of the life of An Craoibhin Aoibhin, Douglas Hyde, LL.D.

Hyde spoke forcibly and temperately. There were many speakers, and some were hot and furious; some spoke of matters other than the defence of the Irish language, and their fiery words awoke burning feelings

in their audience; but it was Hyde who was the central figure, for it was Hyde's life work that the meeting was summoned to uphold.

Amid the ardent speeches and the impassioned interruptions of the audience there seemed to arise a vision of past meetings. Behind the meeting one could see the shadow of years of patient work in small committee rooms, and of countless meetings throughout the country, that each added to each made up the strength of the Gaelic movement.

In the eighties of the nineteenth century the Irish Language seemed at its last gasp, and few would have prophesied that it could outlive the century except in the mouths of a very few old folk. Irishmen watched its decline with indifference born of ignorance. A few struggling societies tried to keep up an interest in the language, but their membership was insignificant, and their work, though valuable in republishing old manuscripts, found no echo in the minds of their countrymen. Such monies as they had were largely the gift of men who took a purely academic interest in Irish, and, as he who pays the piper may call the tune, the societies confined their attention to works of scholarship.

As for a century or more the only attempt at Irish teaching or publishing had been the

work of proselytising societies, the Roman Catholic population of Ireland had been taught to look with the greatest suspicion on strangers who attempted to learn their language, a suspicion which died slowly. No attempt was made to revive the dying tongue, except among a few dilettantes.

When Hyde came to Dublin he saw that such work would not lead to anything beyond mere scholarship. He saw that the only way to stay the decay of the language was to arouse a general feeling for Irish as Irish, and to teach Irishmen that Irish was an essential part of their nationality.

With this idea he started a campaign of education in the country which produced a great educational revolution. Travelling over Ireland from Cork to Belfast and from Dublin to Westport, he held a series of meetings. He found individuals everywhere whose enthusiasm was easily aroused, who had implanted in them the instincts of the language and the race so strongly that they only needed a suggestion to make them see all that the Irish language meant to Ireland. These people flocked to meet Hyde, and he taught them the paramount importance of preserving their tongue. Enthusiasts, fired by his example and teaching, carried on the movement. In all parts of the country small bodies gathered together to teach Ireland that she was losing

with her language not only a means of national expression but one of the very essentials of her nationality. The Irish were not long in learning the lesson. They had lost their language through ignorance, and that only for a generation or two; when they learned its importance in national life they set to work to undo the evil of their neglect.

As the idea of preserving the Irish tongue spread through the country every kind of man seemed to see in the revival of the language a means of furthering his own particular national aspiration; and he saw rightly, inasmuch as the Irish Language movement helped on every other movement for the good of Ireland. It aroused men to a new interest in their own land and, even apart from the language, brought many benefits in its train.

The extravagance of some reformers who embraced the Irish language as furthering their own causes raised a smile on the faces of those who heard them; as for instance, the man who said that Irish was the best language on earth because no heresy had ever been spoken therein, or the temperance enthusiast who said that the Irish never had any drinking songs because the old Gaels never drank intoxicating liquors! But even these extremists showed by their very extravagance that the language movement had

an universal appeal to Irishmen and that each man saw in it the reflection of his own highest good.

Thus, the philologist sees in the language a very highly developed tongue capable of expressing the nicest shades of meaning; the socialist, the bringing forward of ideas in which all Irishmen have an equal heritage; the aristocrat remembers the high chivalry of the Irish Chiefs; the religious mind thinks of the countless saints of Ireland; the youths and maidens think of the revival of Irish national life, with its dances and songs; and even the toper can rejoice at the descriptions of old Irish banquets, and hope that in a re-Gaelicised Ireland the ale and mead will circulate freely. Music, too, smiled on the Irish revival; the Irish pipes, sweeter in tone than the war pipes of the Scottish Highlands, were once again heard with pleasure in parts of the country where they had almost been forgotten. Old airs and songs were collected. Irish melodies and songs have done much to revive the popular interest in Irish through music, but music has not played so large a part in the Irish revival as it has in the revival of Scottish Gaelic.

In brief, all the finer elements of the Irish character were drawn out by the Gaelic movement; the life of the country seemed quickened afresh. With the language came

a new interest in all things Irish. A new outlet was opened for the development of nationality, which had suffered a check in the collapse of the Parnell movement. The political movement associated with Parnell having become intimately connected with the agrarian question, had, to some extent, deadened men's minds on the purely intellectual side. The last movement associating literature with nationality had been the Young Ireland movement, with its group of writers, Davis, Mangan, and others. Then came the revolutionary Fenian movement which, though it embraced many men of high intellect, did not depend on literature for its inspiration, but was content to follow on the path prepared by the Young Irelanders. When the political and agrarian Parnell movement suffered defeat with the Home Rule Bill of 1893, the country seemed to be dead in intellect.

At this critical moment the Gaelic League opened up a new avenue of national thought more purely intellectual and less political than any in the history of the country. It was at this point that Hyde first became intimately and publicly associated with Irish ideals.

Once started, the movement caught the imagination of the country, and in the position of Irish in the National University of Ireland and the universal indignation at

the threat to withdraw the grants for Irish teaching, is a monument to the Irish revival of the end of the nineteenth century, and through it to An Craoibhin.

The family of Hyde is of Norman origin. When the Hydes came to Ireland they settled in Munster, and Castle Hyde on the Blackwater was in the hands of the family until quite recent years. There is a story told by James Stephens the Fenian, that after Smith O'Brien's rising Sir Patrick Hyde befriended him, but it is possible that this was an embroidery of Stephens' dotage.

Douglas Hyde, the youngest son of the Rev. Arthur Hyde, Rector of Frenchpark, was brought up from his earliest childhood in a largely Irish-speaking community, and was accustomed to mix freely with the peasantry of the district. He was, and is, a good shot and a keen fisherman, and this, together with an unusually genial temperament, opened the hearts of the people to him. He was never at school except for a short stay of ten days at a school in Dublin, when he caught measles and never returned.

The Rev. Arthur Hyde must have been a good classical scholar and linguist, for An Craoibhin learnt from him until he entered Trinity College, and it is impossible to read his more serious books without seeing that he is a thorough master of Latin and Greek.

We probably have to thank the attack of measles for much that is admirable in Hyde, because it sent him back to Roscommon and prevented his becoming as Anglicised as most Dublin schoolboys. It is perhaps too easy to say that this or that trivial incident was the turning point in a man's life; in fact it is very difficult to say what made him what he is. Thus Hyde may have felt more eager to revive Gaelic because of his long childhood spent among Gaelic speakers, but he must always have had in him the Gaelic spirit as the master impulse of his nature. We cannot allow a measle germ to claim any important share in the formation of the Gaelic League, though to many of its enemies the rapid spread of the League throughout Ireland must have appeared like the spread of an infectious disease.

To have at once the will and the opportunity is not the lot of every man, so Hyde may consider himself fortunate in that he was given abundant chances to exercise his will to learn Irish. He, therefore, at an early age knew much about his native country that was in those days denied to those who knew no Irish. The traditional tales of the country, tales of the pagan heroes and of the early Christian saints, which may now be procured in several different translations, were then practically unknown except to Irish speakers. The average boy of the upper classes

then as now went to school in England and learnt nothing about his native country. When he came back to his home for the holidays he was not encouraged to learn anything of the history of the land in which he lived, and probably regarded the tenants on his estate as so many potential but pleasant murderers.

Before he came to Trinity College Hyde must have seen among his neighbours in the country much of the indifferent or hostile spirit of the Irish gentleman to Gaelic. In Trinity he was surrounded by this spirit. Many of his later speeches and writings shew that in the University he always regarded himself as an alien in a hostile place. One cannot but think that this feeling must have arisen largely in the imagination of a youth brought up in semi-isolation from those of his own age. It is impossible for anyone who has met An Craoibhin to believe that he was anything but popular in College. The nature of the man is such as to disarm hostility and to call forth love on all sides. Had he carried on a controversy by letter or set speeches with his fellow undergraduates, he might have been thought a pugnacious fellow. But, in College, intercourse is not carried on at long ranges, and in a hand to hand encounter men might disagree with, but could not dislike Hyde. One thing is certain, the hostility of his fellow undergraduates was not enough to upset their sense of justice.

He obtained the Silver Medal for oratory of the Historical Society, a distinction which is given solely on the votes of those who listen to the speeches.

The dislike of the Board of Trinity College to all Gaelic studies, a dislike which the pressure of the past few years has done something to modify, but which was in Hyde's day universal in that body, made it his enemy from the very beginning. The Board of Trinity was the first "Board" with which Hyde came into conflict; since then he has been the remorseless opponent of many "Boards." There is scarcely a "Board" in Ireland which has not been warped as the result of Hyde's attacks, and occasionally, under very severe pressure, bent slightly in the direction of Irish. Hating the governing body of the College, it is natural that Hyde should not have felt at ease under its control, but, to repeat, it would need much evidence to convince one that he was not liked by the vast majority of the under graduates.

Hyde went to Trinity College with a view to taking Orders, and entered the Divinity School. After a short course in this school, he decided that he was not suited for clerical life and abandoned his original intention. Mr. Crook, who knew him in College, wrote a short sketch of his acquaintance with An Craoibhin at the University. He

had known him for some time before he discovered that Hyde knew Irish. In the course of conversation Crook, who was a classical scholar, was struck by Hyde's knowledge of the classics, a knowledge wider, though possibly less minute, than that of the average classical man. He quotes a short conversation :—

"You do know a lot of languages, Hyde. How many do you know? English, German, Hebrew, Latin, Greek, and French, I suppose?"

"Yes, and I can read Italian; but the language I know best is Irish."

"'Irish!' I exclaimed in astonishment; 'do you know Irish?' 'Yes,' he said quietly, 'I dream in Irish.'"

It is easy to imagine the astonishment of Mr. Crook, who thought of Irish as a language known by a few Sizars and divinity prizemen, who were as often as not ashamed of their knowledge. He was amazed when Hyde produced a huge bundle of manuscript poems in Irish which he had written. Crook also tells of a conversation Hyde had in Gaelic with a piper of a Scottish Regiment whose band was playing at the College races, and of an encounter with a German scholar who had come to Ireland knowing Irish but no English, and who was as astonished as he was disgusted to find that he had to learn English to make himself understood at his hotel. This last experience, painful as it is

to an Irishman to tell, was repeated by Dr. Karl Marstrander within the last few years.

Hyde's blood must have boiled within him as he heard the foreigner tell of how he had come to Ireland to perfect his knowledge of the Irish language and found that he had to speak English to get the simplest necessaries of life. It may be of interest to say that Hyde's acquaintance of the College Park shewed his appreciation of meeting one who could speak to him in Irish by borrowing money and taking himself off.

Hyde's time in the University had brought him in direct contact with much of the un-Irish side of Irish life.

A short digression is here necessary to explain the words un-Irish. It is an undoubted fact that in Trinity College the prevailing spirit is intensely Irish. No one there can imagine he is anywhere but in Ireland; an Englishman is distinctly a foreigner. But there is also a feeling that, though when confronted with a foreigner the Trinity man is as Irish as possible, still he is generally drawn from a class that in its own country regards itself as apart from the rest of the land. It is easy for those who have not been in Trinity to say it is un-Irish or anti-Irish, the "university of the Garrison" or "an English outpost in Ireland." Such phrases have some truth when used with regard to the teaching of the

college, especially some years ago. It is a matter of gratification to every Trinity man who is interested in Gaelic Ireland to see the gradual but decided change in the tone of teaching in Trinity, especially in such subjects as History.

The general tone of undergraduate life is Irish with the limitation that it is not consciously Irish. This is the fault of an education which excludes all mention of Ireland. It is against such education that the Gaelic League made its battle, and rightly; for how can a man love, respect or serve his country when all he has been taught about her could be written on a single sheet of notepaper. What there is of un-Irish spirit in Trinity is the result of ignorance. That it is ignorant of its own country is perhaps the most damning thing that could be said of any University.

Hyde, surrounded by this mental atmosphere, burned to change it and to shew to his countrymen that they had a country. In Trinity he was brought into direct touch with this ignorantly un-Irish spirit; but it was not confined to Trinity, all over the country there was a depth of ignorance about Ireland and Irish that could hardly be paralleled in any other land. Education was, and still is, the root of the whole matter. Hyde, with exceptional insight, saw this in its naked reality, and determined to do

what he could to redress it; but it is better to leave the consideration of this to a later chapter. It is only brought in here to shew the wide-reaching nature of the influence of Trinity College on Hyde's outlook. He must have felt like a young Hercules when he looked at the Augean Stable of ignorance which he must clear if he were to reach the foundation on which Gaelic Ireland had been built, and on which any native Irish revival must be erected.

Soon after graduating Hyde went to Canada to teach English literature in the State University of New Brunswick in the place of his friend Mr. W. F. Stockley, now the well-known Professor of University College, Cork. He did not stay long in Canada, though he liked the land. One poem of his about Canada gives his feelings towards that great country. There are four stanzas, but the last two give the spirit of the poem:

The ravaging winter is over,
The Wizard of Silence is fled,
And violets peep from their cover,
And daisies are raising their head,
Earth blushes to life like a lover,
And wakes in her emerald bed,
And she and the heavens above her
In torrents of sunshine are wed,
Forgetting the swoon of the snow.

By the pole slope that Canada faces
The ice giants hurtle and reel,
For her seven months winter she cases
Her land in a casket of steel.

Yet I pine for her mighty embraces
In the home of the moose and the seal,
And I pine for her beautiful places
And sad is the feeling I feel
When snowflakes remind me of her.

The words about "her seven months winter" brought down on his head much comical wrath from the Canadians, but the poem was copied into nearly all their papers.

While in Canada Hyde studied the Red Indians, especially the Melicites. He learnt much of their customs and folk lore. But the chief relic of his sojourn in Canada known to Irishmen is a photograph in a fur cap, which has more often been reproduced than any other photograph of this much photographed man.

He married Miss Kurtz soon after his return to Ireland.

CHAPTER II

THE FOUNDATION OF THE GAELIC LEAGUE.

BEFORE entering on the important chapter in Hyde's life, the founding of the Gaelic League, it is well to consider the history of the Irish language for the past few hundred years.

The English Government in Ireland had from its earliest days done its utmost to suppress the Irish language.

This was but part of a general scheme to anglicise Ireland. Everything which distinguished the Irish from their conquerors was proscribed. Language, dress, and customs alike were forbidden. English settlers were poured into the country, but when they arrived they rapidly adopted the native habits and language. Laws were passed forbidding the immigrants from marrying or even holding intercourse with the Irish, but all these laws were of no avail. After a couple of generations there was hardly a family of planters but lost every trace of its English origin.

Though the efforts of the Government did not succeed in killing the spoken tongue, they were effectual in disturbing the life of the country. Though even the sons of the

English settlers spoke Irish they were not in a position to set up permanent schools and colleges in Ireland. Such seats of learning as the Irish had were always liable to be raided. Hence it followed that there was little printed matter in the Irish tongue. Practically all Irish books were in manuscript, and though there were many thousands of manuscripts in Ireland, the greater number of which have been lost or destroyed, there can have been comparatively few copies compared to the number of printed books in Latin and English.

As Hyde puts it in his *Literary History of Ireland* (page 534),

> "The Irish, having no press of their own in Ireland (though they had some outside it), were obliged to print and set up all their books abroad, chiefly at Louvain, Antwerp, Rome and Paris. Any attempts to introduce founts of Irish type in the teeth of the English Government would, I think, have been futile, so that, except for the works she was able to print in Irish type abroad, and afterwards smuggle in, Ireland during the seventeenth century was thrown nearly a couple of hundred years out of the world's course, by having to use manuscripts instead of printed books."

The first fount of Irish type in Ireland was made at Queen Elizabeth's order, and a small Irish grammar was printed for her. The first Irish printing, on a large scale, was the translation of the Scriptures by Bishops Daniel and Bedell. Thus printing in Irish was early associated with proselytising; there

was no chance for the native literature to see the light in printed form in Ireland.

As learning formed but a small part of the education of a gentleman in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the majority of the Irish gentlemen, though they spoke Irish, did not make any effort to have books printed for themselves. The small number who took any interest in books were contented to read Latin or English. That is to say of the Anglo-Irish and those of the Irish who had come under their influence. The Irish still had traditions of learning, but the devastating wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries made it difficult for any Irishman to publish books.

There was a revival of learning in Ireland at the beginning of the seventeenth century, when Keating's *History* and the *Annals of the Four Masters*, two of the most important works written in Ireland, were compiled. There was also a revival in poetry, but nearly all in manuscript and not printed until a much later date. Many of the manuscripts perished before their contents could be saved.

In the government of Ireland from Dublin, English was the language used, though in Dublin itself Irish was very commonly spoken. Practically the whole staff of permanent officials were Englishmen. A strenuous effort was made to Anglicise the

heads of important Irish families. Thus Hugh O'Neill was educated as a hostage in England. He lived to be one of the greatest of Irish leaders, but he had first to learn Irish, which he had almost forgotten. The great Duke of Ormond was also educated in England, and never spoke Irish with ease, though he could understand it.

When the Irish and Anglo-Irish Chiefs assembled in 1642 at the Confederation of Kilkenny, both Irish and English seem to have been used indifferently. Some of the members, for example Conor Maguire, Bishop of Clogher, could not speak English with ease; but it is noticeable that Castlehaven, an Englishman, in his memoirs makes no mention of finding it difficult to make himself understood, or of the Irish language at all. This may have been because Irish was so accepted a tongue that it was not necessary to mention it. All the printing done for the confederation was in English. Rinnucini, the Papal Nuncio, mentions that he spoke and was spoken to in Latin, but some of his staff learned Gaelic.

Though Irish was much spoken by all classes in Ireland up to the middle of the seventeenth century, the invasion of Cromwellite and Williamite planters and adventurers soon altered this. A great proportion of the old landowners were dispossessed of their property and English and Scottish

settlers put in their place. Irish speaking ceased among the upper classes until, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, it was the rare exception for a member of them to know Irish.

Still, Irish was the tongue of the majority of the population, though a large number of the Irish speakers could speak some English also. It is in the last century that the great decay in the Irish language took place. This must be ascribed in a measure to Daniel O'Connell. The great democrat never realised the importance of Irish to Ireland. He himself was born and brought up in a district where Irish is still freely spoken. He spoke to audiences nine-tenths of whom were accustomed to speak Irish as their language of daily intercourse. He could have carried on his whole movement for Catholic Emancipation in Irish had he chosen to do so. But he did not. Though on a few occasions he spoke in Irish, he chose not to give a Gaelic trend to Irish thought. He perhaps regarded English as the more aristocratic language.

The materialistic school of philosophy and political economy was at the height of its influence in Europe during O'Connell's lifetime and doubtless had much to do with his neglect of Irish.

Except Davis, the men of the Young Ireland movement took small interest in Gaelic.

Mangan, it is true, adapted some Gaelic poems into English, but he himself did not know Gaelic and simply wrote adaptations of Irish poems translated to him word for word by John O'Daly and O'Curry.

Thomas Davis, on the other hand, was one of the first to realise the importance of Gaelic to Ireland. It is worth while to quote a few lines from his essay, "Our National Language."

"What business has the Russian for the rippling language of Italy or India? How could the Greek distort his organs and his soul to speak Dutch upon the sides of Hymettus or the Head of Salamis, or on the waste where once was Sparta? And is it befitting the fiery, delicate-organed Celt to abandon his beautiful tongue, docile and spirited as an Arab, 'sweet as music, strong as the wave'—is it befitting to him to abandon this wild liquid speech for the mongrel of a hundred breeds called English, which, powerful though it be, creaks and bangs about the Celt who tries to use it?

"A people without a language of its own is only half a nation. A nation should guard its language more than its territories—'tis a surer barrier, and more important frontier, than fortress or river. . . .

"What! give up the tongue of Ollamh Fodhla and Brian Boru, the tongue of McCarthy and of the O'Nials, the tongue of Sarsfield's, Curran's, Mathews' and O'Connell's boyhood, for that of Strafford and Poynings, Sussex, Kirk and Cromwell!

"No, oh no! the 'brighter days shall surely come' and the green flag shall wave on our towers, and the sweet old language be heard once more in college, mart and senate."

Davis went on to advocate bi-lingual newspapers and the teaching of Irish in the

schools of the Irish speaking parts, in his day a very large proportion of the country. But the brightest spirit of the Young Ireland movement did not live to continue his teaching. His followers were many, but this side of his teaching they seem to have missed. The "young husbandman of Erin's fruitful seed time" was taken from his country before he could do more than scatter the first seeds of his creed of nationality, and some of them fell on barren ground.

Before passing from Davis it should be mentioned that his vivid imagery and style are curiously akin to that of Hyde, as all who have listened to Hyde's speech must see.

The Fenians also neglected Irish as Irish, though they printed a small manual of pike drill in Gaelic.*

It is curious and lamentable that the revolutionary bodies in Ireland did not make more use of Gaelic, as it was, until the middle of the nineteenth century, generally spoken in most counties in Ireland. The idea of the value of a language as a national asset seems, except for Davis, not to have been thought of even by the most intelligent persons.

Neglected and despised by those who should naturally be expected to foster it, the Irish language was attacked in the most

* I can find no definite information about this manual, and only speak of it from hearsay.

ruthless manner by the system of teaching introduced into Ireland under the control of the "Board of National Education," a body in whose name the word "Board" was the only appropriate one. Anyone who has followed the language movement in Ireland even in the most perfunctory way is familiar with the attitude of the Board towards nationality and education. It is hardly necessary to refer to Bishop Whateley's proscribing Scott's

> "Breathes there a man, with soul so dead,
> Who never to himself hath said,
> This is my own, my native land!"

as being too national in spirit to be permitted in the Irish schools.

The schools controlled by this Board were spread all over Ireland, and formed the only means of education possible to the unfortunate Irish. In the "National Schools" children were beaten for speaking Irish. They were taught to despise and hate their native language, and their parents, never taught to value it themselves, looked on the introduction of English and the destruction of Irish as a sign of progress and culture. Honour should be given to the memory of Archbishop McHale, who would not allow this system to be introduced into his diocese because it was against the Irish language. But what can one man, even an Archbishop, do, unsupported by public opinion?

The Irish language, thus attacked with determination, and unsupported by those to whom it should have looked for support, was not able to withstand these attacks; in the half century from 1840 to 1890 the language was reduced from the general tongue of the people to that of a few peasants in obscure parts of the land.

What a mine of historical and literary jewels was lost to Ireland with the decay of her language! There are rich remains of all ages, from the fifth century of this era, down to the last century, but these can only be a tithe of what was written. It is not possible to throw the whole blame for this loss on the English Government. The Government undoubtedly had the will to destroy every vestige of Irish civilisation and literature, but if the Irish people themselves had stood by their language as they stood by their faith it would have been impossible for any Government to destroy it. But the value of a National language to a people was not appreciated until recent years. It was not appreciated by the mass of Irishmen until the very end of the nineteenth century. How they came to appreciate it is the history of An Craoibhin.

. . . . . .

As has been said, there were societies devoted to the study of the Irish Language from a purely scholarly point of view long

before the movement for the revival of Irish as a spoken language. It would be ungrateful not to give some slight sketch of these societies which undoubtedly did some good work in the way of publishing Irish manuscripts.

Among these one of the most important was the Ossianic Society, which was formed in 1853, and which published six volumes. It is interesting that Mr. Smith O'Brien, on his return from exile, though he had seen the failure of his hopes for Ireland, saw in the language a means of serving his country. Urged by O'Donovan, he learnt Irish and became president of the Ossianic Society. But though Smith O'Brien learnt to speak and write Irish, the Ossianic Society, or the other smaller societies formed for similar purposes, did not attempt to preserve or help the spoken language of Ireland. It was considered enough to edit and publish manuscripts.

The first Society formed for the purpose of saving the spoken language was the "Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language," founded in 1876. The early members of this Society included Father John Nolan, David Comyn, and T. O'Neill Russell. Both Cardinal Logue and Archbishop Walsh were supporters of the Society.

This Society did a great deal of hard work for the Irish Language, and actually suc-

ceeded in inducing the Boards of National and Intermediate Education to put Irish on their programmes in 1878, the year Hyde joined the Society.

A fee of 10s. was allowed for each Pass in Irish, and the Irish revivalists of that day thought that they saw the beginning of the revival of the language. Why did nothing come of all this ? At the very moment when the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language seemed to be in a fair way to achieve its ends dissensions arose.

There was a sharp division among its members on the point of whether Old, Middle, or Modern Irish should have the chief attention of the Society. In 1878, when the dissensions came to such a pitch that the members were no longer able to work together, a number seceded and formed a new Society called the Gaelic Union.

The Seceders included the most active and energetic members, Father Nolan, David Comyn, O'Neill Russell, and Hyde. The new Gaelic Union gave its whole attention to Modern Irish, so that it more deserved the title of " Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language " than did the Society of that name.

The years 1878 to 1893 were not the most favourable for starting a new Society. Ireland was torn with the bitterest political struggle since the Fenian days. The time of

the Land League, the Home Rule Bills, and the Parnell split was not a time when men could give their attention to the Irish Language, which must then have seemed of small importance to all but the most far-sighted.

The members of the Gaelic Union, despite the unpropitious times, were able to do some good work for the Irish language. They started a monthly magazine called the *Gaelic Journal*, the first periodical paper printed in Irish, which was of much service in the work of providing accessible literature for those who wished to learn Irish, and an opportunity for those who wrote it to publish their writings. The *Gaelic Journal* had a hard struggle to keep alive, and could never have done so without the help of a few subscribers, principal among whom was the Rev. Maxwell Close.

Mr. Close was one of the most disinterested of Irishmen, and one who always shunned any public recognition of his works. He was a rich man, and devoted the whole of his time and money to serving the interests of his country. As well as being a scholar and deeply interested in the literature of his country, he was a distinguished astronomer and geologist. Without his help the *Gaelic Journal* would have come to an end many years before it did, and much Irish literature that is now accessible would not have been

published. His efforts for the Irish language did not terminate with his life, for the Irish dictionary which is being slowly published by the Royal Irish Academy is paid for from a legacy left by him for this purpose.

When the struggle over the Home Rule Bill and Parnell had subsided, there came a period of calm over Irish affairs. Then for the first time for years Irishmen of different political opinions could take breath and think of other things than hatred and rivalry.

By this time the Gaelic Union had become moribund, though its organ, the *Gaelic Journal*, was still doing good work. Accordingly a new society was formed, this time under the title of the Gaelic League.

Before considering the foundation of the Gaelic League it would be well to take a passing glance at some of the chief figures of the older society.

John Fleming, who had all his life been a devoted scholar of Irish, was, in succession to David Comyn, editor of the *Gaelic Journal.* He also published the first volume of Keating's *History of Ireland*, a work which, written in the seventeenth century, may be said to have formed the groundwork of "Modern" Irish as distinct from "Middle" Irish. Fleming's great ambition was to write good modern Irish, but it was not for many years that the demand for modern Irish writings became sufficiently great to

reward its writers. Now such authors as Hyde, O'Conaire, and Pearse are read by hundreds where they would have been read by tens had they lived twenty years earlier.

Fleming edited the *Gaelic Journal* until 1891, when ill-health forced him to resign. His place was taken by Father Eugene O'Growney. Father O'Growney was born near Athboy in 1863. It was while a clerical student that he first became interested in the Gaelic language. He studied the lessons in Irish published in a periodical called *Young Ireland*, and by hard work became a most accomplished scholar of modern Irish. He was for some years Professor of Irish at Maynooth, but the work for which he is best known is two series of Gaelic primers called *Simple Lessons in Irish.* Though now to some extent superseded by the "direct method" of teaching, his primers formed the basis of teaching in the Gaelic League for many years. His health broke down after some years of very hard work, and he died in California at the early age of forty.

One of the most picturesque figures of the early societies was T. O'Neill Russell. He had lived for some time in America, but at the close of his life returned to Dublin His tall, spare figure, his pointed white beard and flashing eyes were seen at every Gaelic meeting. He was an enthusiast among enthusiasts, and used to evangelise all with

whom he came in contact. There is one anecdote of his life, perhaps not generally known, which brings out the high character of the man. A farmer in Co. Sligo found a gold ornament, which he sold to O'Neill Russell for the small sum of ten shillings. O'Neill Russell did not know the value of the find, but on coming to Dublin he offered it to the Royal Irish Academy, and received £15 for it. Russell was very far from rich, and his friends were glad of the unexpected stroke of luck which had come to him. O'Neill Russell, however, did not think of it in this light, but sent the whole balance, £14 10s., to the man from whom he had bought the ornament. A friend remonstrated with him for what was considered a quixotic act; but Russell was incensed at being spoken to about what he thought a piece of common honesty. It is of such simple-minded men that apostles are made, but like many enthusiasts he was difficult to work with.

O'Neill Russell was one who deserves a corner in the memory of all Gaelic Leaguers.

In the autumn of 1893 the Gaelic League was founded; its first and until 1916 its only president was Hyde. Mr. Eoin MacNeill, now President, was Hon. Secretary. Hyde at last had an opportunity to display his talent for organisation. Hitherto the Gaelic and Irish Societies had confined themselves to single units, but now Hyde

aimed at making a vast organisation, spreading all over Ireland, which would at once undertake the work of teaching Irish in those districts where the language had died out, and of preserving the language where it still remained a living tongue.

The Gaelic Union, though it had succeeded in getting Irish on to the National Board's programme, had not succeeded in getting any grip on the country. True, over a hundred students had qualified in Irish in one year, but the movement was still small.

The Gaelic League was built on broader lines. It aimed at having branches in every town and village in Ireland linked together in a central organisation in Dublin. It had the benefit of having men at its head who had worked in the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language and in the Gaelic Union. These men, who had met with many difficulties and discouragements in their work for the Irish language, were necessarily those who were the keenest and most steadfast in the cause, and therefore the most fitted to carry on a movement with success. Hyde, now in control of the movement, was enabled to give full play to his ability. MacNeill was second only to him in energy and enthusiasm.

Very soon after the foundation of the League, Father O'Growney, at that time Professor of Irish at Maynooth, published

his Irish primers, which were of incalculable service to the language.

Hyde by this time had attained high fame as an Irish scholar, which, added to his genius for attaching others to him, made him eminently suited by reputation as well as by ability for leader. A later chapter will deal with his work in Celtic studies and with his literary and poetical work in general; it is sufficient here to say that he was by 1893 a recognised scholar and author.

But before considering his work after the foundation of the Gaelic League, it is well to hear from his own lips his views on the Irish revival in general. Fortunately for this purpose in the winter of 1892 Hyde delivered a lecture to the National Literary Society, of which he was president, which lecture is especially interesting as expressing his views at the very beginning of his great campaign for the revival of Irish.

As has been seen, Ireland had never shown such clear signs of losing her national individuality as she did in the latter half of the nineteenth century, when the great effort to de-Anglicise Ireland and to stop the rapid decline of Irish life and thought was nearing its birth. It is thus that Hyde speaks of it :—

"When we speak of the necessity for de-Anglicising the Irish Nation we mean it, not as a protest against imitating what is best in the English people, for that would be absurd, but rather to show the folly of neglec-

ting what is Irish and hastening to adopt pell mell and indiscriminately everything that is English simply because it is English."

This was and is Hyde's guiding principle. It is true that in guarding Irish nationality it is sometimes necessary to guard against adopting English customs and thoughts, even when they are good, because the overpowering influence of England in Ireland is such as to force Ireland to resist or at least scrutinise all Englishry if she is to retain her individuality at all. It is a healthy sign that some of Hyde's followers have gone further than their leader in rejecting English influences. Hyde's rational and sane view will triumph in the end, but Ireland has gone so far on the road to de-nationalisation that she must now draw back beyond what is ultimately to be desired if she is to draw back at all. The passing of a few years will bring the proper adjustment. A sentence further on in Hyde's lecture brings out the necessity for this. Though not so true now as when it was spoken, it is still regrettably true.

"If we take a bird's-eye view of our island to-day and compare it with what it used to be, we must be struck by the extraordinary fact that that nation which was once, as everyone admits, one of the most classically learned and cultured nations in Europe is now one of the least so; how one of the most reading and literary peoples has become one of the least studious and most unliterary, and how the artistic products of one of the quickest, most sensitive, and most artistic races on earth

are now only distinguished for their hideousness. I shall endeavour to show that this failure of the Irish people in recent times has been largely brought about by the race diverging during this century from the right path and ceasing to become Irish without becoming English."

Hyde then proceeded to point out what Ireland had lost by giving up her Irish characteristics, names, customs, games, and language, and how this had brought her down in character and had almost made her cease to be a nation. "I wish to show you," he said, "that in Anglicising ourselves wholesale we have thrown away with a light heart the best claim which we have upon the world's recognition of us as a separate nation." He shewed, what is commonplace knowledge to Irishmen, that they do not make good Englishmen. They are prepared to adopt some of the habits of Englishmen without becoming English. "They always stop halfway on the road."

"But you ask," he continues, "why should we want to make Ireland more Celtic than it is—why should we de-Anglicise it at all?

"I answer, because the Irish race is at present in a most anomalous position, imitating England and yet hating it. How can it produce anything good in literature, art or institutions as long as it is actuated by motives so contradictory! Besides, it is our own Gaelic past which, though the Irish race does not recognise it, is really at the bottom of the Irish heart and prevents us becoming citizens of the Empire."

Hyde then referred to the way in which

Ireland absorbed layer upon layer of invaders, Danes, Normans, Saxons, and yet preserved her national characteristics and life and gave her language almost unaltered to thousands upon thousands of strangers. The Irish people resisted all these attacks upon their nationality.

"But, alas, *quantum mutatus ab illo!* What the battle-axe of the Dane, the sword of the Norman, the wile of the Saxon were unable to perform we have accomplished ourselves. We have at last broken the continuity of Irish life; and just at the moment when the Celtic race is presumably about to largely recover possession of its own country it finds itself deprived and stript of its Celtic characteristics, cut off from the past yet scarcely in touch with the present. It has lost since the beginning of this century almost all that connected it with the era of Cuchulain and of Ossian, that connected it with the Christianisers of Europe. . . .

"It has lost all that they had in language, traditions, music, genius and ideas. Just when we should be starting to build up anew the Irish race and Gaelic nation—as within our own recollections Greece has been built up anew—we find ourselves despoiled of the bricks of nationality. The old bricks that lasted eighteen hundred years destroyed; we must now set to make new ones if we can on other ground and of other clay. Imagine for a moment the restoration of a German-speaking Greece!"

These long quotations from Hyde's lecture in 1892 are of intense interest. They show the ideas which filled his mind just when the Gaelic League was about to start its work of reviving Irish language and traditions.

To-day his views are unaltered. Much has

been done towards realising his ideals, far more remains to be done; but Hyde has been given the pleasure of seeing, in a measure at least, his work bearing fruit. If much remains undone, if many have made mistakes in the work that was done, yet there has been a great awakening in Ireland to Irish ideas. The Irish language, if not generally spoken, is generally respected. The will to be Irish is kept alive in the country. To Hyde must be ascribed the lion's share in this work. If any man can claim to have built up a national ideal it is he.

CHAPTER III

THE GAELIC LEAGUE.

In the early nineties of the last century political feeling reached a high pitch of intensity. Irishmen of different political views found it difficult to work together for any object. "Felons and gaolbirds" were words flung freely at the Home Rule Party, which had just come through the fiercest struggle of the "Plan of Campaign"; "traitors and parasites" were the replies of the Nationalists. Internal strife rent the Nationalist party. Parnellites and Healyites were ready to kill one another.

A debating club called the "Contemporary Club" had been started in Dublin, largely by graduates of Trinity College, with the object of exchanging views on Irish problems. The club was formed of equal numbers of Unionists and Nationalists, and members were only admitted in pairs, but this was soon found to be a failure. Before long the members of one political body ceased to attend. After some years a solitary Unionist remained to shew what the club had once been.

The men who founded the Gaelic League saw the evils wrought by political hatred poisoning every form of national effort. They saw every attempt to improve conditions of life in Ireland made into a political

move of one party or the other. They, therefore, determined that they would do their best to keep the movement for the revival of the Irish language free from all political colour.

The Gaelic League was started as a body, to preserve and revive the Irish language literature, music, dancing, and games, to encourage Irish art and industries, and was declared to be non-political and non-sectarian. The effort to start the Gaelic League as a non-political and non-sectarian body (a phrase which has been run to death in Ireland) was singularly successful. Though no doubt the vast majority of those who wished to revive the Irish language were and are Nationalists of one shade or another, a considerable number of Unionists joined the League, either from linguistic motives, or because they saw in the Gaelic League a means of meeting their Nationalist compatriots on a neutral ground. The speeches and writings of Hyde and the other leaders of the movement were all moderate in tone and carefully explained that the Gaelic League was not under the control of any political organisation. They welcomed into the Gaelic League all who had any interest in a distinctively Irish culture, and their appeal met with a good response. Men's minds, numbed by the political strife of the previous decade, revived to an interest in the

intellectual as apart from the political life of their country. It was in this spirit that quite a large number of Unionists sympathised with the objects of the League. That body of Unionist opinion which, while upholding the principle of Union with England for commercial reasons, still holds that Ireland is a nation, was decidedly sympathetic to the Gaelic movement. Such Unionists were especially welcomed by the Gaelic League, which aimed at being an all Ireland movement, wholly Irish, but rejecting nothing that is Irish.

To the great distress of those Unionists who had no sympathy with the Gaelic League it was soon found that no sooner did a Unionist come into close contact with the movement than his unionism began to weaken. This was the result of gaining a more intimate knowledge of the Irish people and from reading Irish history. Lecky's *History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century*, a book which is said to have made a Home Ruler of nearly everyone who read it except its author, formed a groundwork on which a knowledge of Irish history was based. The Gaelic League in encouraging the study of Irish history brought many to read that book, the standard work on the later period of the history of Ireland. The result was that a number of Unionists became Home Rulers. This, of course, caused a great

fluttering in the Unionist dove cotes, especially in the North of Ireland. The Gaelic League was looked upon as one of the most insidious weapons of the Nationalists. Any attempt to introduce the teaching of Irish was regarded as "the thin end of the wedge." It was further looked on as a weapon for the destruction of Protestantism. One gentleman who saw in the Gaelic League the direct instrument of Satan in the overthrow of religion wrote to the *Derry Sentinel* :—

"It will be hardly necessary to warn Protestant Loyalists against the soft soaping efforts of individuals . . . . championing the society known as the Gaelic League . . . . The short and the long of the whole matter is that the Gaelic League and its kindred societies are all covered with the same coat of Home Rule tar and are at bottom little better than Fenian ; any unwary Protestant getting mixed up with them being played as a decoy duck for all he is worth."

Another, writing in the same paper, said that the Gaelic League was a society for "the wholesale desecration of the Lord's Day," and ended, "let all good men and true repeat the words of the prayer, 'Good Lord deliver us from all these abominations.'"

No doubt these worthy gentlemen were right in their fears. The learning of Irish undoubtedly had the effect of making Unionists waver in their convictions ; while the majority of Gaelic Leaguers, being busy

all the week, and belonging to a Church which does not teach the Jewish doctrine of the Sabbath, made Sunday the usual day for Gaelic meetings and games. (Irish Protestants are usually extremely Low Church in their religious views.)

It was natural that the political party which bases its doctrines on the English connection should be hostile to a movement which aimed at preserving Irish characteristics. Undoubtedly the strongest elements in the Unionist party wish to make Ireland into a glorified English county, and take their views of life altogether from England. There are, of course, large numbers of Unionists who are thoroughly Irish in feeling, but these are not of the real strength of the Unionist party.

Thus, though the Leaguers kept politics out of the League to a wonderful extent, they were from the beginning opposed by the more violent members of one political party.

The Nationalist politicians, on the other hand, did not trust a movement professedly non-political. "Non-political" movements in Ireland have generally meant movements designed to wean the people from politics into an apathetic acquiescence in the state of things as they are. "Give up thinking about Home Rule and give your attention to this or that" has been the watchword of

many a man who wanted to break up the Nationalist party in Ireland. But the Irish people have always been intensely interested in politics where they concerned self-government or the land problem, and completely indifferent to all other political questions. Thus "Give up politics" meant and means "Give up Home Rule." It is always the party which is satisfied with the *status quo* which dislikes politics.

The official Nationalists dreaded a movement which had this dangerous watchword, and were inclined to be hostile to the Gaelic League; but it was soon found that the League did not attempt to interfere with any man's politics or to stop men, other than officials of the Gaelic League acting on the League's business, from being as political as they liked on either side.

A rampant Orangeman was as welcome to the League as a Fenian, and no one tried to convert either. Of course the number of Orangemen who were members was very small; in fact only one prominent Orangeman joined.

The League attracted to its ranks many persons who were or who afterwards became prominent in the political and industrial life of the country though not associated with any bigoted party views. Lord Castletown and the O'Conor Don both took an active part in Gaelic League propaganda, and Capt.

the Hon. Otway Cuffe did as much as one man can do to further it in Kilkenny, where, helped by his sister-in-law, Ellen Lady Desert, he founded a number of industries and by means of lectures and plays awakened a new interest in Ireland in that city. His early death was a great loss to Ireland and to the Gaelic movement, but Lady Desert carries on his work.

The Nationalist party found that the Irish revival had behind it the sympathy of Ireland, and that the Gaelic League was spreading rapidly over the country. Many members of the party were Gaelic Leaguers, and soon the distrust of the official Nationalists for the League was conquered. Several members of the party took an active interest in the movement, and Mr. O'Donnell made a speech in Irish in Parliament, to the astonishment and disgust of the English members, who took prompt measures to prevent a repetition of the outrage. The leaders of the party, though not very enthusiastic supporters of the Gaelic movement, gave it some aid, and both Mr. Redmond and Mr. Dillon occasionally appeared on Gaelic League platforms. Both in the House of Commons and outside they worked to safeguard the interests of the language in Irish education, and with the exception of a difference of opinion on Mr. Dillon's part on the question of compulsory Irish in the

National University they have consistently continued to give it their support. Mr. Redmond, at a St. Patrick's Day dinner in London in 1904, publicly asked Hyde to take a seat in Parliament, an offer which was appreciated but declined.

At the close of the nineteenth century a new element arose in Irish politics, the Sinn Fein movement. As the Gaelic League became to some extent saturated with Sinn Fein ideas, and gradually the Central Committee of the League became largely composed of Sinn Feiners, it is well to give a few words about the movement. (In parenthesis it may be said that Sinn Feiners is a mongrel word; Sinn Fein being two Irish words meaning "we, ourselves," to add the termination "ers" on to this is disgusting to the ear; but it has now become so common that the reader must forgive its use.)

The Sinn Fein movement is very old. Dean Swift defined it in the clearest and simplest terms when he wrote "burn everything English except her coals." It simply means use everything Irish, Irish clothes, Irish food, Irish manufactures generally, rely on yourselves, do everything for yourselves, resist and ignore all foreign influence. This policy was first put in concrete form before the Irish people at the end of the nineteenth century, though it had often been advocated in a vague way from Swift's day downwards.

Thomas Davis in his essays said many things that might be called Sinn Fein. The "Hungarian policy" was another name for the movement, based on an alleged but misleading similarity between the condition of Ireland and that of Hungary. Besides these important doctrines about using Irish goods, there was also a bold political policy, namely, that the Irish members should boycott the English Parliament, have an assembly of their own in Dublin, and make the Government of Ireland impossible without their co-operation.*

The industrial semi-protective policy was widely taken up. The more intelligent among Irishmen saw that it would be a good thing from many points of view to encourage Irish industries in every way in their power, and the Sinn Fein policy influenced and influences all political parties in Ireland; the Unionist party has some strong industrial Sinn Feiners in its ranks.

Mr. Edward Martyn was the first president of Sinn Fein as a party, and spent much time preaching its doctrines. Mr. Arthur Griffiths,

*The political policy never took a strong hold in Ireland, but while I am writing this the Sinn Fein policy seems gaining ground in the country, but it is not possible, as yet, to say that the policy of abstention from Parliament has been generally adopted. It is difficult to say to which of three reasons the recent successes of Sinn Fein candidates is due, namely, to dislike of the present Nationalist party, to a desire to show sympathy with the rising of 1916, or to a genuine adoption of Sinn Fein views.

an able journalist, was editor of a paper called Sinn Fein, which was the organ of the party. Mr. Griffiths, it may be said, continued to edit Sinn Fein both as a daily and as a weekly paper until its suppression under the Defence of the Realm Act during the present war. He then edited the paper under different names until the outbreak of the Rising of Easter Week (1916).

In its beginnings Sinn Fein was a purely intellectual movement. It worked through preaching its ideas on platforms and in the press. As is natural, a movement advocating that Ireland should completely ignore the connection with England, should boycott the English Parliament, and should behave as though she were an independent country, was much drawn towards the Gaelic League. It must be emphasised, in view of recent events and the modern inaccurate use of the words Sinn Fein, that the Sinn Fein movement did not contemplate physical violence. A gigantic boycott was its programme. In its early days Sinn Fein was not a party but simply a policy preached to those who wished for Irish self-government; it was not antagonistic to the Nationalist party.

If it were natural for Sinn Feiners to be drawn towards the Gaelic League from the standpoint of resisting English influence in Ireland, it was equally natural for Gaelic Leaguers to be attracted by Sinn Fein. The

Gaelic League was professedly for the development of the Irish language, thought, literature and customs, and many Gaelic Leaguers readily embraced those Sinn Fein doctrines which were not already included in their programme.

Under the presidency of Mr. Martyn the Sinn Feiners devoted their attention largely to non-political matters such as the encouragement of Irish industries. They, of course, preached the doctrine of boycott of England politically as well as industrially, and tried to keep this idea constantly before the people. As a result there was a great spread of Sinn Fein views. It became a common boast of Irishmen that they did not wear foreign made cloth or use foreign made goods when it was possible to get those of Irish make. This doctrine is still held by Nationalists and by many Unionists also.

By degrees Sinn Fein ceased to be a purely intellectual and economic movement and became a party hostile to the Nationalist party. As is inevitable, some took up the ideas more readily and vigorously than others and wanted to force the pace ; a fair number of converts were made, and the Sinn Feiners determined to test their strength in the country in an open stand against the Nationalist party at the polls. Mr. Martyn was bitterly opposed to this. He contended that the Sinn Fein movement should continue to be

a preaching movement, and should leave it to the country itself to decide whether it wished to adopt the policy or not. He was overruled by the majority of Sinn Feiners and resigned his presidency.

A Sinn Fein candidate fought the Nationalist candidate in North Leitrim. The Sinn Feiner was heavily beaten, and since then Sinn Fein never attempted to fight an election until this year, 1917.

This dissertation on Sinn Fein leads up to the influence of that political policy on the Gaelic League. Many Sinn Feiners had joined the League; many Gaelic Leaguers had become Sinn Feiners; there was, apart from politics, a general sympathy in policy between the two organisations. On the other hand, there were (and are) many Gaelic Leaguers who thought that the policy of Sinn Fein was unwise; there were (and are) Sinn Feiners who thought the language movement could be carried on better were it kept strictly away from political parties.

The Gaelic League had converted Ireland to support its views. At the time of the Commission on Intermediate Education in Ireland the whole country was roused to protest against the virulent attacks of Professor Mahaffy and Dr. Atkinson on the Irish language. In Parliament and out of it the Nationalists rallied to the support of the language. Then when the University ques-

tion came to be settled the question of the position of Irish came forward. Compulsory Irish or voluntary Irish was the question of the day. The matter was hotly taken up by the County Councils, elected bodies. County Councils refused to provide money for scholarships in the New University unless Irish were made a compulsory subject. They fought tooth and nail on the side of the Gaelic League. Archbishop Walsh was in favour of compulsory Irish. The Gaelic League won.

All through these fights the League had kept itself free from the taint of party politics. It had relied on the support of all sections of Irishmen, and it had got that support. To run down the Irish language or the Gaelic League was a thing that no Irish politician dared do in a Nationalist constituency of any shade.

Meanwhile, after its defeat at the polls in North Leitrim, the Sinn Fein movement had become greatly narrowed. As was natural the official Nationalists attempted to destroy the movement. Those of them who had at one time supported it felt that they had nursed a viper. Ink flowed freely. A party fight of this nature always breeds intense bitterness. When two parties, both seeking the same ends, fight as to means, they nearly always become worse enemies than either is with their common enemy. The Sinn Fein

party was largely composed of men who were quicker at taking up new ideas than their fellows. They became drawn more closely towards each other in the fight with the Nationalist party, and though diminished in numbers, they became more firmly attached to one another than ever they had formerly been.

A small party, such as was the Sinn Fein party, particularly when largely composed of quick-witted men, tends to become very narrow in its views. The Sinn Feiners were probably on an average more intelligent than the average of the country, and when drawn into a close party tended to despise those who would not follow them. They soon began to look upon themselves as the only people with the welfare of Ireland at heart; it was not a long step from this to regard themselves as the only real Irishmen.

Now it must be remembered that these men were many of them Gaelic Leaguers. The mere fact that they took an actively opposite side from the official Nationalists in politics showed a certain mental energy, thus it was that some of the most active Gaelic Leaguers were Sinn Feiners. The next step was for Sinn Fein to attempt to capture the Gaelic League and, to use an expression of one of its own members, to make the Gaelic League declare itself on the side of Ireland. Mr. Griffiths openly ex-

pressed the view that the Gaelic League should ally itself with the Sinn Fein party.

Hyde had started the Gaelic League upon a non-political basis, profoundly convinced that the best hope of reviving the language lay in having a body devoted to that object and to that object only. A feeble attempt, not countenanced by the leaders, on the part of the official Nationalists to get control of the League had been stopped. Hyde, and those who thought with him, including Eoin MacNeill, P. H. Pearse, and P. O'Daly, Secretary of the League, were successful in keeping the League apart from politics. Though MacNeill seldom attended meetings of the Coisde Gnotha after the first few years, as he was occupied in publishing Irish manuscripts, he used his influence on the non-political side. Non-political in name, though principally formed of Irish Home Rulers of one shade or another, the Gaelic League was non-political also in fact.

Before proceeding with the attempt of the Sinn Feiners to draw the League into politics on their own side it is perhaps as well that the present writer should state briefly his own views on the matter in order that the reader may make due allowance for the writer's prejudices, that is, of course, if the writer have any prejudices. He thinks he has a clear view of the facts of the case, and that, as he has to write largely about " might

have beens," his deductions, where he makes any, are right. This, however, may also be prejudice.

It seems clear to the writer that there were only two possible courses open to the founders of the League. One, to have a rigidly non-political society as they had. The other, to have thrown themselves in with the predominant national party; to have worked with that party and assisted it in every possible way; to have formed themselves on that party's lines, and to have tried in their turn to influence it in the direction of making it take up the Irish Language and other objects of the League as one of the main points in its propaganda. There is much to be said for the latter course. Ireland has always had an overwhelming majority of Home Rulers. The Home Rulers include Sinn Feiners. Since Parnell's day the vast majority of those Home Rulers have supported one party, the Irish Nationalist party. This party had a complete organisation all over the country, and so strong was it that except in Cork and parts of Ulster attempts to contest its supremacy have seldom succeeded. The Gaelic League by what it has done has clearly proved that it is a movement which appeals to Irishmen. To have united these two movements might have added immensely to the strength of each, and they might have aided each other

materially in the attainment of their objects. All national effort would have moved in the same channels, and much wasted energy would have been saved.

On the other hand it must be said that the movement for the revival of Irish has so universal an appeal to Irishmen that it would be shameful to confine it to one political party, however strong. The Unionist has as much right to support the Irish language as the Nationalist, so has the Sinn Feiner. The political fight is one which must involve recriminations and hatreds. The Gaelic movement need be hostile to no one. Educate and preach is all it says. Create the desire to preserve the language and the language will be preserved, no matter how. It does not require the assistance of any political party.

In its early days, in fact until this year, the Sinn Fein party only represented a small minority of the Irish people. The Gaelic League, had it allied itself with Sinn Fein, would have encountered the open hostility of three-fourths of the country, so that even though Sinn Fein represented a minority with high ideals it is the opinion of the present writer that an alliance between Sinn Fein and the Gaelic League would have been disastrous to the latter, though there might have been something to be said for uniting the Gaelic League

with the political party of the majority. Whatever might have been wise fifteen years ago, the whole situation has been changing so rapidly within the last year that it is impossible even to guess at what will happen in the end. It is, however, time to return to the main thread of the narrative.

As has been said, the Sinn Feiners in the League were nearly always among the more active members of the organisation, and, as the more lethargic members got pushed quietly out, the committees of the League became filled by enthusiastic extremists with a large amount of ability but little balance or appreciation of the realities of a situation. If the Gaelic League could be blended with the political associations of Ireland, most of which are controlled by men who have too great an appreciation of the solid facts of the moment and too little enthusiasm for the idealistic side of politics, a splendid whole might be created. As things are, the Gaelic League and the political societies each in their own way represent the different aspects of Irish life.

To sum up the position of the Gaelic League with regard to the political situation. At the beginning of its career the Gaelic League occupied a unique position in Ireland, a position which had not been attained by any organisation since the disruption of the

Volunteers of 1780. It was supported by the chief political party in Ireland and at the same time embraced a large number of the political minority. Though attacked by extreme Unionists, the average member of that party, even if he did not sympathise with the objects of the League, regarded it with benevolent indifference.

Having thus described the atmosphere in which it was founded, it is time to turn to the organisation of the Gaelic League itself. The organisation of the League consisted and consists of a number of branches in various parts of the country; each branch as a condition of affiliation to the League must have a certain number of members attending Irish classes. Besides these classes the branches organise Irish plays, Irish dances and lectures on subjects of Irish interest. Each branch elects a representative to a central assembly called the Ard Fheis, or High Assembly, which meets once a year and decides on subjects of general interest to the League. The Ard Fheis also elects a president and Coiste Gnotha, or Executive Committee, to manage the affairs of the League. Hyde was unanimously elected president each year from the foundation of the League in 1893 until his resignation in 1915. In some cases there are district committees called Coiste Ceanntair, which in

large towns such as Dublin have some control in local affairs.

By means of the Ard Feis every branch is kept in touch with the whole organisation and is able to compare its work with the work of other districts. At the time of holding the Ard Feis it is usual to hold competitions and games; the Oireachtas, as the festival is called, usually lasts for several days and thus gives Gaelic Leaguers from the extreme ends of Ireland an opportunity of meeting one another. On the whole the organisation has worked well, though there has been a section which is in favour of more local control and the establishment of County Committees. County committees exist in some counties, and in Ulster there is a body called the Dail Uladh, which, though not officially connected with the League, exercises an efficient control over the teaching of Irish in that province.

A description of a typical branch of the Gaelic League is much as follows :—There are from a hundred to three hundred members of all ages, from seven to seventy, and from all strata in society. The branch, if rich, has a house or several rooms of its own where its meetings and classes are held; if poor, it meets in the local schoolhouse or hall.

The most important matter is the teaching of the Irish language. This is divided into three or four classes, each meeting once or

twice a week. The classes may have from ten to a hundred pupils, and here the extremes of age and youth often meet. It is not at all rare to see old men and women working beside boys and girls. The spirit of the class is very democratic, and the teacher, having no authority over his or her pupils, is obliged to rule by tact alone. He generally keeps up a running fire of chaff in Gaelic with his class, who answer according to their fluency. In the beginning of the League the text books of Father O'Growney were universally used, but of late years the so-called "direct method" is more common. It is often amusing, when it is not pathetic, to see greyhaired men and women stumbling through the first rudiments of the language while children solemnly correct their mistakes.

The very young, though often learning amongst their elders, generally have classes to themselves, as most of the grown-ups who are learning Irish are busy during the day and can only attend classes at night. The teachers are often native speakers of Irish. As the language has died out from among the richer classes of the community, and is only generally spoken in the wilder parts of the land, the teachers bring into the class an element of the wild sea or mountain breezes in which they have been reared. For the same reason agriculture tends to predominate

in the subjects discussed in the lessons. Often a city bred child can say in Irish that the cow has broken into the wheat, or that the horse is going to the well, long before he can talk of any of the things which affect his own life. This last fault is disappearing as the number of teachers increases and the text-books are brought up to date.

Besides the classes there are ceilidhthe. A ceilidh is a sort of evening entertainment, including dancing, singing and recitations. At ceilidhthe only native Irish dances are permitted. These dances are all either step or figure dancing. As a result the number of single performances at a ceilidh is large as compared with the number of dances. Sometimes there is tea at a ceilidh, sometimes not, but strong drink is very much discouraged. The step dancing is often very good, but the figure dances are the more amusing. These dances with their picturesque names, such as "The Waves of Tory," "The Bridge of Athlone," or "The Walls of Limerick," are easy to learn after a fashion, but they are sometimes complicated, and then there is both confusion and amusement when there are several beginners dancing.

The ceilidhthe form one of the best features of the Gaelic League. They bring people together as no other form of amusement in Ireland does. They are free from ostenta-

tion or vulgarity, and are one of the few means of bringing variety and liveliness into the lives of the great mass of the people.

Besides the ceilidhthe, there are often open-air excursions, or "turas," when all members of the branch are invited to go to some place of interest or beauty. The turas sometimes ends with a ceilidh in the open air.

Thus a branch of the Gaelic League forms itself into a social as well as an intellectual centre. It would be hard to exaggerate the importance of the part played by the League in the smaller country towns, where before the advent of the cinematograph any means of amusement was practically unknown, and where since the cinematograph has spread over the country the source of entertainment is only varied as between the broad comedy of Charlie Chaplin and the maudlin sentiment of the "strong love interest."

In the past twenty years the Gaelic League has been a most potent factor in the life of Ireland. It has broadened the outlook of the country and has raised the standard of intellect wherever it has taken root. Such a change is difficult to estimate. It is barely recognised; so much does its influence pervade the minds of the people that they are generally unaware that they have altered. It is only by looking back over a long period that the effect is seen, and it is still too soon to appreciate it to the full.

CHAPTER IV

EDUCATION

THE Gaelic League had shewn Irishmen a new channel through which their love of Ireland could express itself, and not only those who were learning Irish, but many who avoided that labour, wished it to be made part of the education of the youth of the country. In the primary or "National schools" the local manager has a large control, and where the managers favour Irish, Irish is taught; where they don't, it is not. The manager is usually the Parish Priest or clergyman. By degrees the National Board was induced to provide money for the teaching of Irish, but the matter is still in the control of the manager. The Gaelic League by its general propaganda has induced many managers to have Irish taught in their schools, but, sad to say, in the majority of national schools the language is absolutely neglected.

The system of secondary education in Ireland known as "Intermediate" education had long been unsatisfactory, and in response to popular agitation the Government decided to make some reform. Accord-

ingly in the year 1900 a commission was appointed to enquire into the question and to suggest alterations.

It would take another book as large as this one to write a tithe of what could be written about commissions, Royal and Vice-Regal; but it may be said that as a rule they do little active harm. Their reports may not be of great value, but they often contain much interesting evidence. If they do little else, they provide a means by which many can air their opinions at small expense.

Hyde and his colleagues determined that the question of the position of Irish in Irish education should be discussed fully before the Commission. In this they had the support of a large body of opinion strengthened by the Irish Parliamentary Party. Those who feared the Irish Language as only another manifestation of Irish Nationalism were not less anxious to state their views. The latter included many well known persons in Ireland. Dr. Mahaffy, Dr. Atkinson, Mr. Bernard, and Mr. Edward Gwynn, with varying intensity, urged upon the Commission the evil it would do in recommending that Irish should be given an important position in the Intermediate examinations.

Before considering what Hyde said it is as well to give a brief account of the evidence put forward against Irish. Dr.

Mahaffy, who has never lacked the courage of stating his opinions boldly, began by saying that though he thought Irish interesting from a philological point of view, he regarded the living language as of no educational value, and then, quoting Mr. Edward Gwynn, stated that the twenty years during which Irish had been an intermediate subject had diminished the knowledge of the language, a point none would contest, though the causes were far other than was implied. Dr. Mahaffy then made the statement that an expert, whose name he would not give, but who was in all probability Dr. Atkinson, said that it was impossible to find a text in Irish which was not either religious, silly or indecent, a remark which brought forth indignant replies from Irish scholars in all the countries of Europe.

It is sad to think that Dr. Mahaffy has so low an opinion of the moral character of the ancient Irish as that which he often expresses. Not only does he say the Irish texts are indecent, but his view of the behaviour of the Irish sixteenth century chiefs is also depressing. The story of O'Cahan's " naked squaws " is often quoted by him from the account of a Bohemian traveller. It may be of interest in this connection to quote a few words from Gibbon where he deals with the visit of the Byzantine Chalcondyles to

England in 1402, who said "But the most singular circumstance of their manners is their disregard of conjugal honour and female chastity. . . ." Gibbon's comment is—"Informed as we are of the customs of old England, and assured of the virtues of our mothers, we may smile at the credulity or resent the injustice of the Greek, who must have confounded a modest salute with a criminal embrace. But his credulity and injustice may teach us an important lesson: to distrust the accounts of foreign and remote nations, and to suspend our belief of every tale that deviates from the laws of nature and the character of man."

To complete this subject, a few words may be quoted from Prof. Zimmer, one of the greatest of Celtic scholars. "If Professor Mahaffy has really given it as his judgment that Irish literature, in its bulk, possesses only texts which are 'either religious or silly or indecent,' then such a judgment is for everyone who is practically familiar with Irish literature beneath any criticism."

Dr. Mahaffy's evidence did not rest there, for he was subjected to a severe cross-examination by the O'Connor Don and Archbishop Walsh on points of detail, important points, such as the number of marks to be given to "Celtic" (the word inserted by Act of Parliament), but it would be tedious to enter into details; the broad

principle was whether or not Irish was to have an important place in Irish education.

Dr. Mahaffy's views are broadly indicated above as they appeared in 1900. It would seem that he has modified them somewhat during the last sixteen years, but unfortunately they may still be taken as typical of much uninformed opinion in Ireland.

Dr. Atkinson, himself a Celtic scholar, wound up the attack on Irish. He renewed the accusation of indecency, lack of grammar and of importance. He stated that the different "patois" were each as a foreign language outside their own particular districts. Dr. Atkinson seems to have carried his objection to Irish to the point of absolute detestation; he would hardly allow a single merit to the language until pressed by the evidence of English and continental scholars, he was compelled to admit that here and there some interest was to be found therein. Referring to Hyde's researches in Folklore, he said, "Well, he published some stories—of course, there was nothing ethically wrong about them, but so low!" and of his language, "No, it was not good enough to be called a patois. I should call it an imbroglio, melange, an omnium gatherum." It would seem that it took three foreign languages to supply words sufficiently forcible to satisfy Dr. Atkinson's loathing of the Irish language in general and Hyde's Gaelic in particular!

Cross-examined by Judge Madden, he was asked—"What was meant by Dr. Douglas Hyde and the other authorities to whom he referred when they spoke of modern Irish?" "Well, God knows," was his only reply. When pressed on the point of the indecency of Irish as compared to other folk-lore he took refuge in the remark, "All folk-lore is at bottom abominable."

It would be pleasant to spend a few pages considering the remark that "all folk-lore is at bottom abominable," but Atkinson has passed from human controversies, and it is better to refrain from facile criticism.

Archbishop Bernard and Mr. Provost Mahaffy are still with us and have to a large extent altered their hasty judgments, which seem to have been arrived at from such a train of reasoning as the following:—

The Irish are a beastly people.

We represent a civilising influence in Ireland.

If the Irish had ever been civilised, the English are largely responsible for their present beastliness, and, therefore, we are not a wholly civilising influence.

This is impossible.

Therefore the Irish always were a beastly people.

Having arrived at this conclusion, it was useful to have Atkinson to back it up.

Mr. Gwynn, though at the time of the Intermediate Commission opposed to the general teaching of Irish, has since given it practical support. He was largely instrumental in having Irish placed on the pass course of Trinity College, and as president of the Dublin University Gaelic Society gave encouragement and support to the undergraduates in the study of Irish and kindred subjects.

Hyde replied to Atkinson, and as his reply was contemporary with the attack, and is also a valuable illustration of his ability in controversy, it is not amiss to indicate its tenor here. As it would take at least sixty pages of this book to reproduce the whole, only a very small portion can be given, but if the reader be not already familiar with it he should study the report of the Commission, which he will find a mine of interesting information. Hyde's reply to Atkinson was reprinted by the Gaelic League (Pamphlet No. 16).

Hyde swept aside Atkinson's charge that Irish was not a language but only a series of patois spoken by groups of peasants, each patois incomprehensible to one who spoke a different dialect. "There is no dialectic difference in Ireland," he said, "so wide as that which makes one half of England pronounce words which begin with a vowel or the letter 'h' in a manner exactly oppo-

site to the other half. In fact England, being a larger country than Ireland, the differences in the dialects spoken over its area are far and away greater than any that exist in Ireland."

Continuing in this strain, Hyde shewed that Irish is at least as accurate and fixed a language as English; indeed the balance of opinion on the subject would shew that Irish is the more accurate and fixed.

He then pointed out that there was much more accessible literature for Irishmen in Irish than in any continental language. That was true when he said it; it is as true now. No one can go the round of the Dublin bookshops without being struck by the fact that there are no books to be had in French, Italian, Spanish or German except a few school books and an occasional French novel.

Hyde refuted the charge of indecency at length. It is not necessary to repeat his defence. Such a defence was needed at a time when educational bodies were concerned with the question of teaching Irish, for educational bodies seem always to see indecency lying in wait for unsuspecting youth at every corner. Writing for persons, not "educational bodies," it is sufficient to say that Irishmen are much like other Europeans, except that with one exception the modern Gaelic writers are almost morbidly proper.

The support of Sir John Rhys, Owen Edwards, Alfred Nutt, E. C. Stern, Windisch, Dottin, Zimmer, York Powell, Kuno Meyer, Pederson, and others from the scholastic and linguistic point of view, and that of the Irish Party in the House of Commons, overbore the opposition of a few prejudiced Irish educationalists.

The upshot of the matter was that Irish was given a prominent place in Intermediate education. This was a big step in the direction of the universal recognition of the language.

Hyde of course was not alone in his labours. He was ably supported by a number of scholars, Eoin MacNeill, Dr. O'Hickey of Maynooth, Father Horgan, Father Dinneen, and others joined in the fray and helped in the victory.

The success gained was of immense tactical importance. It brought the question of Gaelic into Irish politics as an immediate issue. Many who in their hearts cared as little about Gaelic as they did about Kamskatka were forced to do the language lip service.

The skirl of the Irish pipes and the waving of Irish banners heralded the dawn of a re-Galicised Ireland, and around them rallied the Irish people in defence of a position the value of which they had not realised until it was nearly lost.

The ravens' voices and the swaying bellies of the "representative men" may also be

taken as a symbol of victory, for like chaff blown before the gale they clearly shew the direction of the wind.

The really astonishing thing in the whole controversy is the amazing ignorance shewn by such men as Mahaffy, Bernard, and others of the literature of their own country. It is all summed up in the remark of a Fellow of Trinity: "I would rather have one line of Homer than the whole Book of Kells." The Book of Kells is an Irish illuminated manuscript of the four Gospels in Latin!

The Irish language has been the subject of study of numbers of the first scholars in France, Germany, and Scandinavia. It is impossible to spend ten minutes in the Irish Antiquaries section of the Dublin Museum without being convinced of the existence of a great civilisation in Ancient Ireland, all contact with which was being lost with the language. The name of every mountain and river teems with Irish story and romance, a romance to be closed for ever if the language dies. Where but in Ireland could a number of educated citizens be found to oppose the teaching of the national language and to advocate its extermination if possible?

This book is not the place to refute arguments against Irish. Happily it is no longer necessary to attempt to do so. The Irish

people have awoken to the value of their own tongue, and the matter rests with them. They have heard the arguments, and they have decided that Irish shall be known by all who seek education at their hands.

There are persons who object to Irish being made a compulsory subject, and who say that by doing so, as has been done in the National University, the spontaneity passes out of the movement, and that once it has become compulsory the virtue has passed from it. But these persons do not see that here there is a spontaneous desire for compulsion. It is spontaneous in that the persons who enforce it are the persons who must live and work under the rule. It is no more compulsory than to insist on being educated. Without the desire to be educated, a country would have no education. Once the desire is there spontaneously, the means of effecting it relate back to the spontaneity of the desire.

It is the almost universal desire of Irishmen that Irish should be spoken once again all over Ireland. Not to the exclusion of English, for it is necessary for a small country to know a language other than its own, but in Ireland it is now, owing to the work of the Irish revivalists, generally desired that Irish should be the tongue of "college, mart, and senate."

Therefore it is interesting to speculate as

to how far they can succeed in their determination. Bohemia and Wales have each revived a dying language, and therefore it is not an impossible task. But Irish has been allowed to die out over six-sevenths of the country. It practically only survives as a generally spoken language on the coast from Waterford to Derry, in the Glens of Antrim, and in a few isolated places elsewhere. Those who live in the Irish-speaking district and speak Irish are nearly all peasants who do not travel. Therefore each district tends to speak its own dialect, to use slightly different pronunciation, and a few phrases peculiar to itself. The difference in dialect is not very great, not nearly so great indeed as the difference between the speech of Somerset and Lancashire.

As things are, it will be some time before Ireland becomes generally Irish-speaking, if that day ever arrive. Assuming that it will, then the language will be spoken by a population that was six-sevenths English-speaking. It is inevitable that they will speak differently from the native-speaking peasant of Mayo or Waterford. In all probability, the language as spoken will be largely unintelligible to a native speaker of the present day. But it will none the less be Irish. It will be as Irish as English is English or French French, possibly more so, as the Irish language lends itself to the formation of new words more readily than English or French.

If Irish is ever to be revived, it will be done through education. In this revival the towns will play a more important part than the country as learning tends to spread more quickly in thickly populated districts. It is not outside the range of possibility that a revived Irish will be spoken in the towns of Ireland when Irish has died out in the Irish speaking parts, and that it will spread over the country again from the towns. This language will be written as Gaelic is written now, though there may be some simplification in spelling. The words will be the same, but it is likely that the pronunciation will be greatly altered. This alteration would have been spread over the last three centuries had the language developed along its natural lines. As it is, the alteration will be, in the life of a language, sudden, and in all probability drastic. Still the Irish language will have been saved and Ireland will be an Irish speaking country, her language part and parcel of her history.

Whether or not Irish will ever be revived as a generally spoken language in Ireland is another question. A very large number of persons started learning the language in the end of the nineteenth century. 100,000 copies of O'Growney's first book were sold in a few years. But Irish is one of the most difficult of European languages. Dutch is supposed to be a hard language to learn,

but Hyde has said that were Irish as easy as Dutch the whole of Ireland could be made Irish speaking in a year. The difficulty of learning Irish makes it a very valuable language as a medium of education. The man who has mastered Irish will find other languages a comparatively easy study. But there is the compensating disadvantage that learners are apt to become discouraged. That this is so is demonstrated beyond doubt by the fact that while the first book of O'Growney's had an enormous sale, that of the second and third books respectively was very much smaller. It is certainly true that great numbers of those who started to learn Irish have given it up in despair. On the other hand, the foundation of the "Summer Colleges," or schools to which students go during the summer holidays, has in an admirable manner helped those who are really keen to learn. There are eighteen of these schools, with an average of over 100 pupils yearly in each college, or a total of over 1,800 a year. Over 14,000 pupils have attended these schools since they were founded. The system of education is very good, and it may be taken that the majority of the students who have been passed through them have a fair working knowledge of Irish.

The colleges are curiously like what the Irish Universities of the sixth to the twelfth

centuries must have been. They are usually in a wild part of the country, planted in the midst of an Irish speaking population. The "college" consists of a schoolhouse with one or more classrooms. The students live in the cottages surrounding the "college." They have thus the double advantage of hearing Irish spoken at all times of the day as the usual medium of intercourse and of getting lectures on the language, grammar, and poetry. The lectures are nearly always in Gaelic, as all the colleges teach on what is known as the "direct method." These little communities of students form an interesting feature of Irish life. They fit in well with the Irish nature and are a remarkable example of the survival of racial characteristics.

When the early Irish scholars founded their schools they did not build elaborate buildings. The scholar simply built a lecture hall, and, if the fame of the teacher were great, students flocked to him from all parts of the country and from the adjacent lands of France, England, and Scotland. There were no prepared hostels; the majority of the students built themselves wattle huts around the master's house and there lived in the greatest simplicity. So now the students stay in peasants' cottages and live on the simplest and coarsest of food, but there is never a lack of pupils.

The "colleges" are not run for profit; in fact the majority of them could not exist were it not that a grant is given by the Department of Agriculture for each teacher who obtains a certificate in the language. The lecturers are nearly all enthusiasts for the language, who are either not paid or else paid so little that their pay hardly covers their expenses. All is done for love of the language.

The Irish colleges have no official connection with the Gaelic League but are entirely independent bodies. Besides the "colleges" there are the numerous branches of the Gaelic League, which have each their classes in Irish. The classes are generally held in the evenings and are attended by men and women who have other work to do during the day, but who give up several evenings a week to learning Irish.

There was not a country town in Ireland without one or more branches of the Gaelic League. There are many branches in Dublin. Thus, besides the students of the "colleges," there are numbers who are learning Gaelic in the League branches. There are also many learning outside the League, and besides these there are about 7,000 intermediate and 100,000 national school children learning Irish each year.

As long as the students of Irish are as numerous as they now are it is impossible to

say that the chance of reviving the language is gone. The first rush to a new movement is always the greatest rush. Then comes the time when those who are fainthearted drop out and only those who are really determined to carry out their object remain. At a low estimate there are 5,000 persons learning Irish every year who, but for their own efforts, would not know a word of the language. It is not possible to say how many there actually are; there may be 20,000, but it is safe to say 5,000. This is not enough to keep the language from declining, but it must be remembered that a large number of these enthusiasts will marry and will have their children taught Irish. Then Irish is now compulsory in the National University of Ireland. That means that a large proportion of the more educated young men and women of the country have at least a smattering of the language. The fashion among a large section of the country has set towards learning Irish, and it is to be expected that the next generation will have a far greater proportion of bi-lingual children than the present one. The facilities for learning Irish have enormously increased. It will be comparatively easy for the next generation to learn.

Last, but not least, there has been a great change in the attitude of the Roman Catholic clergy to Irish. The majority of parish priests

now are men who passed through Maynooth before the Irish revival had taken hold of the people and before it had penetrated into Maynooth. It takes a long time for a clerical student to become a parish priest, a still longer time before he can become a bishop. But there is a change apparent. The older type of priest was often hostile to Gaelic. He was too old to learn it himself, and he did not want to be bothered with the language. This at one time led to a considerable wave of anti-clericalism in the League. Happily the younger priests are more often sympathisers with Gaelic and not only do all they can to encourage others to learn, but learn it themselves.

Some of the bishops also are devoting more attention to securing Irish speaking priests for the Irish speaking districts. Notable in this work is the Bishop of Galway, Dr. O'Dea. Dr. O'Donnell, Bishop of Raphoe, has done a very great deal towards keeping Gaelic alive in his diocese. He employs one priest whose principal duty is travelling over the diocese making parents promise to speak Irish to their children, and doing everything he can to encourage the people to speak Irish. Unfortunately there are some bishops who do not take any interest at all in Irish, and one or two who even go so far as to discourage it; but with the passing of a few years the old spirit will

die out and the new spirit will have far greater influence in the Church.

The Protestant Episcopalian Church, though on the whole hostile or indifferent to Irish, is shewing signs of a change. For many years Irish services have been held on St. Patrick's Day in Dublin, and latterly Evensong has been held once a month in Irish in St. Patrick's Cathedral.

With a determined body, gradually increasing in numbers, who are learning Irish, with the sympathy of the vast proportion of the country behind it, even if that sympathy is not so much active as passive; with the support of the Church of the majority of Irishmen and a growing spirit of tolerance in that of the minority, it is not too much to expect that the speaking of Irish will gradually increase. Once that is so, it is not at all impossible that there may be a real return to Irish speaking and that Ireland may become a bilingual nation in the course of the present century.

CHAPTER V

AMERICA: THE UNIVERSITY QUESTION.

THERE are nearly five Irishmen in the United States of America for every one in Ireland. Thus every movement in Ireland is sure to find support in America. The Gaelic League had spread to America, several branches were formed in American cities, and Gaelic Leaguers on both sides of the Atlantic kept in touch with each other.

When money has been needed for political propaganda in Ireland, the Irish Americans have never failed to subscribe largely; they have never forgotten that they are Irish and always take a keen interest in everything affecting the land of their origin. Gaelic Leaguers in America were not to be outdone by members of political institutions, and in the winter of 1905-6 Hyde was invited over to tell the Americans about the League in Ireland and to collect money for increasing its field of work.

In New York Hyde was received by Mr. John Quin, who planned a large tour of lectures and speeches. He visited cities and towns from New York to San Francisco, and was everywhere welcomed with enthusiasm. In San Francisco he had what

was perhaps the most successful of all his visits and collected a large sum of money. Father Yorke and the Hon. Frank T. Sullivan worked wonders and subscribed freely. Nothing could have been better than Hyde's treatment. He left with full pockets, but when the earthquake of 1906 ruined the greater part of San Francisco, he gave the money that had been subscribed there to the relief fund. The inhabitants did not forget this, and when the prosperity of the town was restored they sent back the money to the Gaelic League. Hyde returned to Eastern America through Canada, and was able to revisit the places he had known while teaching there.

The American tour was a great success; more than £11,000 was collected and the number of Hyde's personal adherents was largely increased. The Americans have brought the art of interviewing up to a high pitch of perfection, and several of the interviews which American reporters got from Hyde are very amusing. It is impossible to do more than indicate the impression he made on Americans, but the following lines from Milwaukee give an American view of him: "Dr. Hyde is a man of sturdy build and countenance. His voice is fine and mellow, his manner quick and alert. An understanding of the great strides he had made is found in the virility the first

glimpse of his personality gives. He is Gaelic head and heels. No other language is spoken in his household, although his English is prime. He is genial, gentle, and withal tireless. These qualities have helped him work his seeming miracles with the Irish nation."

Hyde made an innovation as a collector of money for a cause. He published a balance sheet shewing exactly what he had collected. This had never been done by anyone on a similar mission.

The £11,000 collected in 1905-6 was of immense use to the League. In a way it may be said that the present position of Irish in Irish education is due to the support of the American Irish. A condition was attached to the gift that not more than £2,000 should be spent in any one year; thus from 1905 to 1910 the Gaelic League had an extra fighting fund of £2,000 a year. This just carried the League through the struggle about Irish in the National University of Ireland, a struggle on which depended the ultimate success or failure of the Gaelic revival.

It is a pity to dismiss Hyde's tour in America in so brief a space, but it is not possible here to give it an adequate account. This book is concerned with his work in Ireland, and his work elsewhere is only touched on where it directly concerns his

Irish work. His American work here leads up to the biggest effort yet made by Hyde and the League—the fight over Irish in the National University.

. . . . . .

IRISH was now a recognised subject on the programmes of National and Intermediate education in Ireland. This had been brought about by the successful agitation of the Gaelic League, with Hyde as its leader. But the crown yet remained to be placed on the work.

University education in Ireland had for years been a burning question. The Roman Catholics felt much aggrieved that they had no University. Dublin University, of which Trinity is the only college, was regarded as a purely Protestant institution. It had undoubtedly been an absolutely Protestant University, but by degrees the sectarian rules have been relaxed until the only distinctively Protestant marks that remain are the Divinity School and the College Chapel. Nevertheless the Catholics of Ireland felt that the atmosphere of Trinity was not desirable for their children and that they must have a more distinctively Catholic University. An attempt had been made in the founding of the "Royal University" to supply higher education of a non-sectarian character; but the Royal University was more an examining body than a University,

and did not in any way satisfy the wants of the Catholics. Their regard for its religious position may be gathered from the nick-name given to its constituent parts—" the Godless colleges."

The British Government at last decided that a new University should be set up in Ireland which was to provide higher education for those who for one reason or another did not go to Trinity College. As is usual in such cases a commission was set up to enquire into the best means of doing this. But the commission, of which Hyde was a member, did not attempt to dictate the educational programme of the new University. It was far more concerned with whether there was to be a new University or a new College under Dublin University. The violent opposition of Trinity to the creation of a new College under Dublin University, an opposition which it may live to regret, made a new University the only solution, and accordingly an Act of Parliament was passed to that effect. To the Senate of the new University was left the settling of the education to be given therein.

At first it was assumed by Gaelic Leaguers that some knowledge of Irish would be made compulsory on all students in the " National University," as it was decided to name the new body. This assurance lasted a considerable time, and Leaguers were rejoiced

at the idea that they would see the national language hold a high place in the new centre of Irish education.

Into this atmosphere of calm confidence Dr. Delaney of the old Royal University threw a bombshell which in a moment fired the country to a blaze of controversy. In the course of a speech the Reverend Doctor asked why the uneducated language of the peasant should be a test for University education. It would be difficult to imagine a sentence more calculated to arouse the indignation of patriotic Gaels. The fury awakened by the evidence of Dr. Mahaffy and Dr. Atkinson at the Intermediate Education Commission had but served to spur many unthinking men into enthusiasm. Now the ground had been prepared; the voices of Irish and foreign scholars had already been raised to refute the charge that Irish was an uncultured tongue. The weapons were ready to the hand of the Gaelic League, and the spirit was ready in the people to fight in its battles.

But this time the challenge had come almost from within the pale of the League. It seemed as though the church to which Irishmen had clung through centuries of persecution was about to turn against the ideals of the people. Such an antagonist would be more formidable than a host of alien foes.

The challenge was taken up, and the League collected its forces at a meeting in the Rotunda. The Rotunda is the largest public Hall in Dublin, and has been the scene of many of the most stirring incidents in modern Irish history. Built as a house of recreation in the days when Dublin boasted a rich and luxurious aristocracy, it had first been used for balls and routs. Then as a place for political meetings it had heard one of Parnell's last speeches when his followers in Dublin rallied to the support of their doomed leader. Now it has once again changed with the times and is the home of a cinematograph exhibition.

But in the winter of 1908 it was still used for public meetings, and here it was that Hyde met his adherents to tell them of the new danger which threatened the Irish language and to call on them to fight for it once more. As it was the opening of the campaign, those who thronged the room were anxious and uncertain as to what plan their leader would adopt. Would he advise a moderate and conciliatory reply to the challenge, or would he return blow for blow ? An Craoibhin answered the unspoken question in the following words—" There will be a fight." he said, " as there was a fight in the days of the Confederation of Kilkenny between the old Irish and the new Irish, between the Marquis of Ormond and Owen

Roe O'Neill; and if anyone wants to know on which side I shall be, I'll be on the side of Owen Roe."

From that moment the supporters of the League threw their most desperate energies into the fight; so fierce was the struggle, so intense the spirit which animated the protagonists that many of the League's most devoted members seriously injured their physical health by the labours and exertions they undertook. The opponents of compulsory Irish also gathered together, and the controversy ran riot through the land. The Catholic Hierarchy on the whole favoured those who wished to make Irish only an optional subject, but the sagacity of the Cardinal Archbishop of Armagh and the Archbishop of Dublin prevented the question becoming an openly clerical and anti-clerical dispute. Both the last mentioned prelates have stood by the Gaelic League, and Cardinal Logue, a fluent Irish speaker and sometime professor of Irish at Maynooth, has frequently spoken both in Irish and English on behalf of the Irish language. The Bishops declared that the matter was "a question for fair argument."

Hyde and MacNeill led on the fight for the language. Dillon was the secular chief of the opponents. Dr. O'Hickey of Maynooth was the most determined clerical supporter of the League. Careless of his position, he

wrote a series of letters in which he denounced the opponents of compulsory Irish in scathing terms. Of some he said that if they needs must find an outlet for their superfluous energy, " why not address themselves . . to the task of making London University German . . . to that of making Victoria University Japanese." Again he wrote—" Let the men of Ireland pause and ponder before they commit themselves to a policy which cannot fail to be a fatal blunder. Before them lies the primrose path of expediency, adown which the voice of the siren invites them, but whose end is national damnation, as also the thorny and doubtless less alluring path of National duty leading onward to national salvation." But the climax of this daring priest's audacity was reached when, at a lecture to some students at Maynooth, he spoke of the clerical members of the Senate of the University ; having praised Archbishop Walsh for his invaluable services, he said, " As for the other clerical senators, I shall say nothing further than to recommend them to your earnest prayers."

The courage of the remark is intensified when it is remembered that among the clerical Senators was Cardinal Mannix, then President of Maynooth. The breach of discipline, for so it was regarded, was not readily forgiven, and Dr. O'Hickey was removed from his chair and thenceforth

debarred from that career which he would otherwise doubtless have enjoyed. It is to Dr. O'Hickey's words that much of the success of the fight must be attributed. In 1916 he passed away, leaving Ireland to mourn the loss of a courageous son, the Church to regret a fearless priest, and the language movement to remember a most faithful champion.

Eoin MacNeill also spoke and wrote vigorously on the subject. His pamphlet on "National Education in Ireland" had a large circulation and considerable influence. Others less well known but not less ardent worked with might and main. Mr. O'Daly as Secretary of the League, had an immense burden thrown on his shoulders. Not only had he to organise the campaign, but he had also to supply information to enthusiastic supporters whose enthusiasm was greater than their knowledge of the facts and arguments which should have aroused it.

Meetings were held all over Ireland to advocate compulsory Irish. It would be tedious to mention them. A series of big meetings is wearisome to describe. The enthusiasm of the orator is frozen as it passes into print, and it is difficult to melt it again into a semblance of life. It is enough to say that meetings were held in each city and big town in Ireland. Hyde attended many, and nearly wore himself to a shadow by his constant speaking and writing.

The Irish Nationalist Party had not taken any definite side in the matter. Some members were in favour of, some against, compulsory Irish. The atmosphere of anti-clericalism that hung around those who were for Irish frightened some members, others from genuine conviction were in favour of purely optional Irish. Of these Mr. John Dillon was leader. Mr. Boland was the most prominent advocate of compulsion.

The Irish Party was accustomed to hold a "convention" once a year, at which its mandate to represent the Irish people was renewed and at which it gave an account of its work in the past session. A convention is formed of delegates from all nationalist political organisations, together with priests and representatives of local government bodies. In February, 1909, one of these conventions was held, and here the question of the party's attitude was to be decided. Much hung on the decision, and it was felt that the result of the meeting would show which side was to carry its point.

Mr. Boland moved—"That this convention approves of the inclusion of the Irish language among the compulsory subjects for matriculation at the National University of Ireland." There never had been any question as to the proposer, but to find a seconder was a matter of some nicety. It was thought wise to have a priest as seconder

of the resolution, but Father O'Hickey was not a member of the convention, and it was difficult to ask a priest to undertake a work which would almost certainly deprive him of all chance of future promotion in the Church. The matter had been for days one of anxious consideration, but no one had stepped forward to the post of danger. At the eleventh hour the Rev. Malachi Brennan came to the offices of the Gaelic League and, at Hyde's request, undertook the task.

Mr. Boland moved his resolution in a temperate speech. Father Brennan seconded ably and without abuse or rancour. It should be added that his adherence to the cause of the Irish language did not escape its predicted consequences. He was forbidden to take any further public action in the matter. He undoubtedly risked his whole future when he seconded the motion. The students and professors of the National University who rejoice that Irish is the foremost subject in their colleges should honour the clerical martyrs who suffered that they should benefit.

Mr. John Dillon opposed the motion. He spoke long and, it need not be said, ably. But even the ablest speaker cannot convert a hostile audience unless right is so overwhelmingly on his side that Justice herself seems to force conviction on the unwilling hearers. Mr. Dillon was constantly inter-

rupted, his hearers had made up their minds, and after a courageous but useless struggle he had to give up the fight. An Craoibhin, though not a member of any political organisation, and not entitled to be present at the convention, had been asked to come. He was called upon by Mr. Redmond to speak as soon as Mr. Dillon sat down. When he rose the whole room burst into tumultuous applause. He said that both he and Mr. Dillon were agreed in welcoming the intense interest shewn by the country in education. "Why are the people taking such an interest in education," he asked? "It is because the Irish language has galvanised into life the latent love of the people for learning."

The chairman put the resolution without expressing any opinion, and had no hesitation in declaring it carried. The political as well as the language organisations of Ireland had decided that Irish must be learnt by all who sought education at their hands.

It need not be said that the decision of the convention was received with disgust and dismay by the English element in Ireland, but the matter was not yet decided. The Senate had full power to decide as they chose, and they had strong backing from the *Irish Times* and the other Unionist papers, which had always opposed Irish in any form.

On each St. Patrick's Day it was custo-

mary for the Gaelic League to organise a procession through the streets of Dublin. This procession was also a sort of pageant in which were displayed scenes from Irish history or tableaux representing points in the situation which, while they amused the spectators, would at the same time arouse in their breasts feelings of patriotism or awaken them to new points of view in current matters affecting the Irish language. These processions were of considerable size, and had usually ended in a meeting in some open space in the city, generally Smithfield Market. Though the St. Patrick's Day processions were large, in the September of 1909 a procession was organised, the largest that had ever been seen in Ireland.

On this occasion Gaelic Leaguers did not march because they wished to make a mere display of their strength and enthusiasm, but to shew the multitude that they were determined to have Irish a compulsory subject in the new University. It seemed to the onlookers as though the passing throng of Gaels would never cease. Banners and placards displayed above the procession called on the spectators to join also in defence of the language of their fatherland. Tableaux old and new delighted their eyes, and short plays of perhaps three minutes' duration, acted on the tops of large lorries, alternately aroused their fury or their derisive laughter

as they saw the representatives of Anglicisation attempt to stay the national movement, or reduced to a position of ridiculous humiliation. The procession, which in actual fact took three hours to pass any one point on its route, ended in Sackville Street, and one of its most significant sights was a band of many thousand schoolboys, chiefly from the schools of the Christian Brothers. In Sackville Street platforms were erected at intervals, so that by having many speakers there might be some chance of reaching the ears of all the assembled crowd. The hope was vain, for from one end to the other the street was packed with an unbroken body of men, women, and children. Not one half of those present can have heard the speeches, but those that heard were able to pass on the points made to those who could not hear, and the shouts of the host showed that to the common citizen of Dublin as well as to the enthusiast who had joined the procession, the cause of the Irish language was dear.

On the platforms were many of those who had founded the League, and of those who had worked for it during the battles for Irish in the schools, but there was a new element present which represented a force capable of bringing powerful and practical support to whichever side it chose to assist, the County Councils of Ireland.

Representatives from nearly all the County

Councils attended the meeting, and shewed by their presence that in the country as well as in the Capital the Gaelic movement had mastered the people. In the construction of the new University, the Senate of which was deciding on the position of Irish, it had been considered advisable to afford a means of enabling students too poor to pay for their own education to do so with the aid of public monies. To this end the County Councils had been empowered to provide funds for scholarships. The County Councils were further empowered to attach conditions to their scholarships. Now this power was used as a means of ensuring that the popular will should be reflected in the teaching of the University. Many County Councils declared that unless Irish were made a compulsory subject they would make it a condition that those who held their scholarships should enjoy them at Trinity College. When the Senate came to decide finally upon the matter, the wisdom of those who wished to make Irish an optional subject was tempered by the thought that by doing so they would deprive colleges of a fruitful source of income. The representatives of the County Councils at the meeting in Sackville Street shewed that the Senate would have a strong opposition to fight against.

The speakers were Hyde, MacNeill, and

many others well known as Gaelic Leaguers. Sir Joseph Glynn also spoke, and he uttered a warning which should be remembered by any body which attempts to throw Irish from the place that has been won for it. "Some think that if they defeat the cause of Irish in the University their troubles are at an end, but they will find that it is only then that their troubles begin" was the gist of his speech.

Those who walked in the procession or attended the meeting did so with the feeling that they were taking part in a great battle for a national ideal. They left with the sensation that the battle was won and that there was no force in Ireland great enough to withstand their assault.

The crowd in Sackville Street might be regarded as only representing the enthusiasts. The wise might say that the great mass of the people, untouched by the fire of the Gaelic Movement, would look with cold eyes on the cause and would prefer the musical jingle of coins in their pockets to the tones of the Irish speech. But the Irish speech proved more attractive to the Irish people than the thought of money. The pathetic spectacle of English Catholics standing at the doors of their University purse in hand beseeching admission, while a stony hearted janitor refused, in a language which they did not comprehend, to admit them or their money,

was suggested to the imagination of Irishmen. They were not affected by the sad picture, but maintained that the University was for Irishmen and that they only must be considered.

A deputation from the General Council of County Councils was received by the Senate with that courtesy and consideration which those who can give or withhold money ever command. The deputation was headed by Mr. Ennis, who told the Senate that the Irish County Councils, through their general Council, wished to have Irish placed on the course for matriculation as a compulsory subject.

The Senate bowed to the demand of the Nation, and by a narrow majority decided that Irish should be compulsory on all Irish students, thus permitting those who from foreign birth were not able to speak Gaelic to pass in other subjects alone.

The University has now been open for some years. The number of undergraduates justifies the assertion that compulsory Irish has had no effect in keeping students away. The Gaelic Society of the University is thronged with members who debate and converse in Irish. The University has become a centre of all Irish activities.

CHAPTER VI

HYDE AS AN AUTHOR

HERE and there throughout the earlier chapters reference has been made to Hyde's scholarship and learning, but in the description of him as a man of action his character as an author has hardly appeared in its true light. It is safe to say that had the Gaelic League never been founded, and had there been no movement for the revival of Irish, Hyde would, from his writings alone, be regarded as one of the foremost Irishmen of his day.

Before he came to Trinity College he had written poems in the Irish tongue, the true medium of his thoughts. Since then he has published many books both in Irish and English. When we remember the extent of his work in other fields, we are amazed at the amount of his literary work.

Some of his Irish poetry first appeared in the *Dublin University Review*, which, edited first by Mr. T. W. Rolleston and then by Mr. George Coffey, was published monthly from 1884 to 1887 by a number of young men chiefly from Trinity College. This magazine published the writings of many men who were then or who have become famous. Amongst the contributors are

found Standish O'Grady, W. B. Yeats, Michael Davitt, C. F. Bastable, and John Todhunter, to take at random some of the better known names. Hyde was a contributor to the review, both in Irish and English. One of his early Irish poems published therein is a lament for the disappearance of the Irish people from their land, called "Smaointe Bhroin" (sad thoughts). This appeared in August, 1886. In the same year an article on the unpublished songs of Ireland appeared. Hyde's first book was a collection of Irish stories called "Leabhar Sgeuluigheachta," which came out in 1889. From that year to the present he has written books of poetry and history. Scarcely a year has passed without seeing one or more of his works published.

It would be out of place in this book to give lengthy extracts from his writings in Irish, but it is impossible to appreciate Hyde's work without some quotations from his Irish as well as his English works. As his earliest writings were in Irish and his whole life has been devoted to the Irish language, it is right to speak of his Gaelic work first and of his English work later.

Hyde's early publications in Gaelic consist of a few original poems, such as that published in the *Dublin University Review*, and of many folk tales and poems which he collected from the peasantry in the West of Ireland.

His Irish poetry is sonorous and full of depth and feeling. A few lines quoted are of far more value as an appreciation than any description. For those who know no Irish it is impossible to show the beauty of the lines; a translation of a poem is a mockery unless made by a poet. They may, however, console themselves in that Hyde has also written verses in English which, though they have not the same richness as his Gaelic poems and do not seem to come truly from his inmost nature, at least can give the reader a wholesome feeling of self pity for what he has lost in not knowing Irish. In an Irishman the feeling of self pity may be lost in one of shame.

Here are some lines :—

Is dorċa anoċt í an oiḋċe, ni ḟeicim aon reult amáin,
Agus is dorċa trom atá smaointe mo ċroiḋe-se tá
sgaoilte ar fán.
Ni'l torran air biṫ ann mo ṫimċioll, aċt na h-éanlaiṫ
dul-ṫart os mo ċeann
Na filbáinide ag bualaḋ na speire le buille fad-
ṫarraingṫe fann.
Agus tagann an ḟeadóg mar ṗilléir, ag gearraḋ na
h-oiḋċe le fead,
Agus cluinim na gaeṫe fiaḋáine is áirde 's is gairḃe
sgread,
Aċt aon ṫorrann eile ni ċluinim is é sin do
ṁeudaiġ mo ḃrón
Aon ṫorrann eile aċt sgriot agus glaoḋaċ na n-eun
ar an ṁóin.

. . . .

Ó d'imċiġ na daoine ḃí dílis, na daoine dá dtug mé mo ġráḋ
Ó raiḃ siad díbirċe sgaoilte ó'n dtír ann ar tógaḋ mé tráṫ ?
Ag iarraiḋ fasgaḋ a's didinn ó'n mboċtanus agus anró
Ann san tír ann a raiḃ siad suiḋte ní'l anois aċt an ċaora 's an ḃó.
Tá an ḃó a's an ċaora ag innḃeur air luirg na ndaoine, mo leun !
Ann áit gáire na bpáisteaḋ 's na leanḃ ní ċluinim aċt glaoḋaċ na n-eun,
Do múċaḋ gaċ coinneall a's solas do ḃiḋeaḋ i ndorsas gaċ tiġe
Is é bás agus díbirt na ndaoine do ṁeuḋaiġ mo ḃrón ann mo ċroiḋe.

. . . .

The remainder of his early publications are folk tales. These, not calling upon the imagination or taste of the transcriber, call for qualities of a different but high nature. Patience, tact, and a good memory are essential in the first instance, then scholarship. The clear crystal of Hyde's transcriptions proclaim them the work of a poet as much as of a scholar.

Hyde gives a few directions to the seeker after folk tales which may be quoted here :—

"There are considerable difficulties," he says, "in the way of collecting old songs and legends, especially if the collector cares to be accurate and to take down things verbatim, for we fancy that all pursuers of folk-lore have found how the appearance of a paper and pencil acts immediately as a species of wet blanket

which overawes the reciter. . . . He hates, moreover, to be questioned about words or phrases, and probably ends by becoming irritable if you insist on the explanation of some archaism which you do not understand, and to which he possibly had never attached any meaning.

" Of course as it is impossible to trust one's memory to retain a song of any length, and as the time at which one first hears it is generally no time for taking it down, one must only be content to make a mental note of how many verses were sung and comfort oneself with the hope of getting them at some future time. . . . It is generally from the old men and old women in the chimney-corner that one draws the best things. Sitting over the smoke of a turf fire, and discussing a piece of twist tobacco, which you share with the 'ban á tee,' you can pretty easily sound her as to her knowledge about the Fianna Eireann, as to the songs and 'bubberos' (spinning wheel songs) which she used to sing as a girl ; and often she will feel rather flattered than otherwise at your noting down her verses."

These words were written in 1886. Then there were few collectors of Irish folk tales, and therefore the apparition of a student, notebook in hand, no doubt had a very terrifying effect on the old men and women. Nowadays it is hard to find any corner of the country where hundreds of fishers for folklore have not come, and the shanachies have become quite accustomed to having their stories written down by strange people of wild appearance and curious tongue. It is not unusual for a well dressed stranger speaking Gaelic to be asked " Are you a German ? "

But in the old days when story hunting was still a more or less unknown art Hyde was at work. It is difficult to imagine one who could more quickly put a shy shanachie at his ease and draw him out.

As for the old women, like Paudraig Crohore, "there isn't a girl from ninety-five under, no matter how cross, but he could come round her." One can see him as a slim youth entering a cabin and sitting down by the old woman of the house, lamenting the hard times, praising the children, and gradually softening the old woman's heart, until, sitting in the chimney corner, puffing at her pipe, now and then stopping to scold a too obstreperous grandchild, she would tell him her store of tales and poems. Or again, mixing a brew of punch to open the lips of some old man who with cracked voice and scant breath would tell interminable stories or sing endless songs. Meanwhile Hyde, with guileless face, playing with a child or a puppy on the hearth, would be storing up in his memory the tales which he would write down that night, and publish with learned notes next year. Given one man or a thousand, Hyde at once creates a sense of fellowship between himself and his audience.

The results of his labours as a collector of folk tales first appeared in the "Leabhar Sgeuluigheachta" mentioned above. It was followed by a publication of translations of

Irish tales called *Beside the Fire*, in 1890, and in 1891 an Irish version of the same, *Cois na Teine*. Then in 1894 came *The Love Songs of Connaught*, a book of originals and translations of Irish poems which attracted a good deal of attention in Ireland and elsewhere.

In 1895 appeared *The Story of Early Gaelic Literature*. This small book, one of a series called the "New Irish Library," published by Fisher Unwin at 1s. each, was hailed with delight by Irishmen and with a mixture of pleasure and astonishment by Englishmen. It is perhaps worth while here to say a word about the "New Irish Library," which was published at the instigation of Sir Charles Gavan Duffy. In his editorship he was aided by Hyde, T. W. Rolleston, and Barry O'Brien. This series contained a number of books of great value to Irishmen, of which two at least have passed into Irish classics. Standish O'Grady's *Bog of Stars* and J. F. Taylor's *Owen Roe O'Neill* are each masterpieces in their line, and should be read by all who are interested either in Ireland or in fine writing. Alas! both are out of print, but it is likely that new editions will come out. Ireland owes a heavy debt to Gavan Duffy if for nothing else for two series of books published under his direction. The first published by Duffy contained Father Meehan's *Confederation of Kilkenny*, Gavan Duffy's *Bird's-eye View of Irish History*, *The*

Prose Writings of Thomas Davis among a number of valuable books. The second, in which Hyde's *Story of Early Gaelic Literature* appeared, besides Standish O'Grady's and J. F. Taylor's books, includes the *Life of Sarsfield* by Todhunter, *Swift*, by R. Ashe King, and *A Short Life of Davis* by Gavan Duffy.

To return from this digression—and attractive digressions offer themselves in every direction to the writer of Hyde's life, the *Story of Early Gaelic Literature* gave for the first time, in a popular and accessible form, an account of the early literature of Ireland. The works of O'Curry had been published for years, but besides the formidable size of his books, their yet more formidable price terrified the casual reader. It was easy to talk about the treasures of ancient Irish learning, but not one in ten of those who boasted of their country's learning could name half a dozen of her works of scholarship. Hyde now supplied a key to early Irish literature which opened for Irishmen the portals of that long-inaccessible land.

In 1899 Hyde followed up the *Story of Early Gaelic Literature* with his *Literary History of Ireland* (also published by Fisher Unwin in a series of "Literary Histories.") The name *Literary History of Ireland* is somewhat misleading, as the reader who expects to find the names of the great

Anglo-Irish authors is disappointed; a more accurate title would be *A History of Gaelic Literature in Ireland.* This book first covers the ground of the *Story of Early Gaelic Literature* in a fuller way, and then carries on the history down to the eighteenth century. In it he gives a clear and concise account of the writers of Ireland, and amplifies it with many translations both in prose and in verse. If we except Dr. Sigerson, no one has succeeded as does Hyde in reproducing in English verse the complicated Irish metres bristling with alliteration, internal rhyme and assonance.

It is well to give a few examples:—

OSSIAN AND ST. PATRICK.

Long was last night in cold Elphin,
More long is to-night on its weary way,
Though yesterday seemed to me long and ill,
Yet longer still was this dreary day.

And long for me is each hour new born,
Stricken, forlorn and smit with grief
For the hunting lands and the Fenian bands,
And the long-haired, generous Fenian chief.

. . . . . .

Ask, O Patrick, thy god of grace,
To tell me the place he will place me in,
And save my soul from the Ill One's might,
For long is to-night in cold Elphin.

ST. COLUMCILLE'S LAMENT.

Too swiftly my coracle flies on her way,
From Derry I mournfully turned her prow,
I grieve at the errand that drives me to-day
To the Land of the Ravens, to Alba, now.

How swiftly we travel ! there is a grey eye
Looks back upon Erin, but it no more
Shall see while the stars shall endure in the sky
Her women, her men, and her stainless shore.

. . . . . .

O bear me my blessing afar to the west
For the heart in my bosom is broken ; I fail.
Should death of a sudden now pierce my breast,
I should die of the love that I bear the Gael !

This is perhaps the most beautiful of all :—

How happy the son is of Dima ! No sorrow
For him is designed.
He is having this hour, round his own cell in Durrow,
The wish of his mind.

The sound of the wind in the elms, like the strings of
A harp being played,
The note of the blackbird that claps with the wings of
Delight in the glade.

With him in Rosgrencha the cattle are lowing
At earliest dawn ;
On the brink of the summer the pigeons are cooing,
And doves on the lawn.

or a quotation which illustrates the purely technical difficulties of Irish verse :—

> Would I were in Collavin,
> Where haunteth Teig O'Higinn,
> There my lease of life were free
> From strife in peace and plenty."

These verses are only given by Hyde as illustrations of the difficulties of Irish verse, but in themselves they show his skill as a translator and versifyer.

It is from the point of view of scholarship that the two books on Irish literature are to be considered.

The *Literary History* at once impresses the reader as being the work of a scholarly mind. In the early chapters this is shown in a careful analysis of the earliest writing from the point of view of historical accuracy. Hyde does not take anything for granted, but works carefully from step to step in his enquiry as to how far it is possible to rely on the early authorities and as to how much of the legendary history of Ireland is founded on fact. His critical attitude towards Irish literature is maintained all through, in places he almost seems to be unduly cautious, and, following too many other Irish historians, to reject as unproved episodes, which if they were related in the history of any other land would be readily accepted as true. All this is extremely interesting in the light it throws on Hyde's character. The leader of a popular

movement seldom shows moderation and restraint in his writings on subjects akin to his movement. It is not easy to imagine Mr. Lloyd George in the middle of his late campaign against the House of Lords writing with moderation about the Enclosure Acts. Hyde, however, in his *Literary History*, quite throws over the attitude of the propagandist. It is hard at times to realise that the man who is urging men to preserve at all costs their national thoughts and tongue is at the same time writing a careful criticism, sympathetic no doubt, of the very source from which the national thoughts and tongue are to be taken. This is, of course, a superficial view, for it is by the careful study of Irish Literature that Hyde has come to see how important it is that Irishmen should learn to value and treasure it. It is by knowing and appreciating both its merits and defects that Irishmen should appraise their literature. Damning with overpraise has killed many an author and might kill a literature.

Hyde as an author comes in a group of distinguished Irish writers who have each given to and taken from the others and have built up a literature distinct from that of their predecessors. Standish O'Grady, W. B. Yeats, George Russell (Æ), and a group of Abbey playwrights all owe something to Hyde and Hyde to Yeats and O'Grady.

Edward Martyn seems to stand outside this group. He is more part of the Continental spirit of the end of the nineteenth century, tempered with the strength of the early eighteenth century. His little known satire, "Morgante the Lesser," written before he came in touch with the Irish literary revival, shows a mind which has been formed on quite other lines than those of the Celtic tradition. It is only Irish in that there has been no book of the sort written since Swift which shows such strength and directness.

Yeats, however, owes much to Hyde. He has been by him introduced into a realm of literature which has profoundly influenced his writings. In "The Lake Isle of Innisfree," a poem which has been so much quoted as nearly to have become hackneyed, there is a feeling akin to that of the early Celtic church as seen in the writings of her monks. Yeats fell under the enchantment of the movement for the revival of Irish, and for some years used to appear on Gaelic platforms. Lady Gregory, who may be regarded as a disciple of Yeats, but who has undoubtedly influenced his writings, knows some Irish and has translated and published literary, as distinct from purely scholarly, translations of Irish tales. Thus Hyde may, without detracting from Yeats' genius as an author, be said to have left a mark on his writings. Yeats also has helped Hyde's

work. He has always been a consumate debater, and in words and writings has supported the Irish language movement. He also, in conjunction with Edward Martyn, created the Irish Literary Theatre, from which the present Abbey Theatre grew. At one of the earliest of the performances of the Irish Literary Theatre "Maeve," by Edward Martyn, "Diarmuid and Grania," a curious and unsuccessful collaboration by Yeats and Mr. George Moore, and Hyde's first play, "Casadh an tSugan" (The Twisting of the Rope), were produced. This short comedy was the first play in Irish to be acted at one of the bigger Dublin theatres, the Gaiety. Hyde himself acted in the principal part, and did so with success. Since then he has several times acted in his own plays, notably in "An Tinceir agus an tSidheog," in Mr. Moore's garden in Ely Place, acted to a chorus of howls from Mr. Moore's next door neighbour, with whom he had a desperate quarrel, and in "An Posadh," at the Rotunda. In the last he had to eat an egg on the stage. This he did in so natural a manner that a member of the audience commented on his good acting. Hyde replied that he had no dinner and that was the reason why he ate so well.

Out upon these digressions! The real point is that Hyde in the literary movement was to some extent helped by Yeats. Edward

Martyn's influence is more noticeable in the active part of the Gaelic movement, and need not be considered here.

Standish O'Grady is himself an Irish historian and owes nothing of his work to the Gaelic Revival, though he helped the movement in his paper, *The All Ireland Review*. He, somewhat earlier in time, paved the way for a revival of interest in Ireland. Beyond comparison the greatest master of prose in Ireland to-day, his books, *The Gates of the North*, *The Coming of Cuculain*, *Red Hugh's Captivity*, *The Flight of the Eagle*, and *The Bog of Stars*, must have fired the imagination of many a youth who is now a keen student of Irish history and language.

In Æ's writing, on the other hand, there are clear traces of the influence of Hyde's work. Russell is not an Irish speaker, yet in part his work may be said to be the comparing and unifying of Irish mystical ideas with those of other nations. In doing this he is of necessity much indebted to the labours of Hyde, possibly sometimes as interpreted by Yeats, for Hyde is not a mystic. On second thoughts it is wrong to say "as interpreted by Yeats," as the man who can week after week write imaginative articles, always high in tone and expression, on a foundation of co-operative banks does not need any interpreter between the hero legends of Ireland and his own thoughts.

It appears that the Irish literary movement owes much to Hyde's work for its basic ideas. It also owes much to him in that his movement for educating Irishmen in a knowledge of their own country has prepared an audience for the present generation of Irish writers. When this has been said, how far is Hyde identified with the Irish writers of to-day ?

On the whole the answer seems to be that Hyde is not to be regarded as one of them. He stands quite apart. He does not base his reputation on his writings or his literary work ; he is associated by environment and friendship with many of the literary men, but he does not seem to belong to them. His writings are all more scholarly than literary. This does not mean that he is a dry, pedantic writer ; his writing is living and virile and shews that had he chosen to devote himself to writing he would have been among the leaders of the literary men. But Hyde has not written a single book of pure literature. All his writings are associated with the Gaelic Revival. He has published folk tales, but not as did O'Grady in *Finn and his Companions* or Yeats in *Irish Fairy Tales*. These are clearly the writings of men who hear a fine story and feel impelled to tell it in a beautiful form. Hyde's publications are as clearly those of a man whose first object is to give the tale in its original

and archaic form. When he publishes in Gaelic he gives word for word the traditional rendering of the story. If there are two or three renderings, he compares them from the point of view of their antiquity or style. If he writes a translation, the translation is intended to shew the spirit and, as far as possible, the form of the story in translation. The fact that Hyde is a fine writer enables him to do this with singular success, but this is accidental to the main object.

Besides his Irish poetry, of which Hyde has published little, his only writings which are not directly concerned with the Gaelic movement are his plays. Even these were partly written to give some short plays for Irish-speaking actors. No one of them is more than one act, but they all show dramatic power. To non-Irish speakers the best known is "Tigh na mBoct," which has been very happily adapted into English as "The Workhouse Ward" by Lady Gregory. "An Tinceir agus an tSidheog" (The Tinker and the Fairy), "An Posadh" (The Marriage), and "The Lost Saint," also short plays, are still the best of their kind in Irish.

Mention should be made of a play written during the height of his controversy with Trinity College Pleusgadh na Bul-goide (The Bursting of the Bubble). It is a satire on the attitude of the Trinity professors towards Gaelic, and is one of the few things Hyde has

written which could be considered malicious. The different professors are brought in under thinly disguised names and have a terrible curse pronounced against them which makes them able to speak no language but Irish. It is the day a visit is expected from the Lord Lieutenant, and the dismay and misery of the professors, who find themselves talking a "vile jargon," is cleverly brought out. It also shows Hyde's capacity for amusing mischief. When he was reconciled to T.C.D. he had some regrets at having written this somewhat savage satire; but it is so humorous that it has been produced several times, though the edge has somewhat worn off the satire as some of those satired are dead and others have modified their views.

Even Mystery and Morality plays were never written by the earlier Irish writers. The nearest approach to drama found in Irish literature are dialogue poems such as that between St. Patrick and Ossian. These dialogues are very far from drama, and obviously were never intended to be acted in even the most rudimentary way. Hyde, however, wrote what is probably the first Mystery play in Gaelic, the "Drama Bhreithe Chriost" (Nativity Play).

The "Nativity Play" was first acted at the Ursuline Convent, Sligo. It was afterwards translated into English by Lady

Gregory, and has since been acted on several occasions.

Hyde's latest publication is a collection of tales in prose and verse called *Legends of Saints and Sinners*. It consists chiefly of stories of the early Irish saints translated into English by Hyde.

But of all Hyde's work, that which is at once most attractive and interesting is his publication of two collections of poetry, the first "Love Songs of Connacht" and the second "Religious Songs of Connacht." Both consist of poems with critical notes in Irish, and on the opposite page an English metrical translation. They contain much that is beautiful, and no one who wishes to learn anything of Irish thought, religious or secular, should fail to read them. It is impossible to read them without seeing that they were both written and translated by poets.

CHAPTER VII

RETIREMENT

THE last phase of Hyde's connection with the Gaelic League is one of which it is difficult to write. Of those who figured in it as protagonists not a few fell in the recent rising or were shot or imprisoned afterwards. But it is not of their actions in the sterner branches of politics that it is necessary to speak. It is only of their connection with the Gaelic League and through it with Hyde.

As time went on the Gaelic League, like all human institutions, changed somewhat with the changing times. There can be no doubt that as it developed from the life-spring of a national movement into a society which aimed at helping and protecting that movement it tended to grow narrower. In its early stages the Gaelic League was the only body teaching Irish; its classrooms were thronged with young and old, men and women, who learnt within the League a new ideal of nationality, new in the sense that it had not been brought into actual touch with their lives before; old in the hearts and thoughts of Irish scholars from the Four Masters to Thomas Davis.

But as time went on and the League won battle after battle, Irish began to take its place in the minds of all Irishmen. The child at school, even though Irish were not taught in his own school, could not avoid learning that such a language existed and was taught in others. If he were an "Intermediate" child, he knew that Irish was one of the subjects which helped to pass the Intermediate Examinations. Thus, when he came to an age when he could think for himself, the Gaelic League did not present itself to him as a fountain of inspired learning and a new interpretation of his own country, but simply as a body which encouraged the teaching and speaking of a language of whose existence he was already aware, and which, according to the goodness or badness of his teachers, he already possibly liked or disliked.

So it is not to be wondered at that the Gaelic League should have changed somewhat in the first twenty years of its existence. In the first flush of enthusiasm, with a large membership of all classes, it was an all-embracing body, with broad general views. As time went on many of those who joined at first dropped out; it takes more than average persistence to learn a language after the age of sixteen. As the League became smaller, those who remained tended to become more intimately acquainted than is

possible in a very large body, and therefore naturally to influence and be influenced by each other in many ways not purely linguistic.

In any body of men, however inspired by an ideal there will always be found some who have their own small aims and who put themselves before the work in hand. Then there is the tendency for the members of any organisation to regard the organisation as of more importance than its professed object. Both these types were found in the Gaelic League. A number of men and women for various motives, personal and provincial, or merely from disappointed vanity, banded themselves into a left wing in opposition to Hyde and the responsible heads of the League.

Though possessed of very little actual influence and with but a small following, this left wing made up for these deficiencies by a genius for intrigue. Intrigue by itself is sufficiently contemptible to be neglected, and Hyde did not trouble much about this insignificant group. He had around him in the League a devoted band of loyal workers. It may be invidious to mention names, but Mr. P. O'Daly, for years Secretary of the League, a man who devoted energies and talents to the reviving of Irish which had they been directed to self-advancement would have brought him much worldly success,

was one of his staunchest supporters. P. H. Pearse, for some years editor of the *Claidheamh Soluis*, the weekly journal of the Gaelic League, was another. His talents as a writer of Irish are already known to all who are interested in Gaelic writing. They show a depth of feeling and sympathy rarely to be met. Until he opened a boarding school for Irish boys on purely Irish lines he remained editor of the *Claidheamh*, and always consistently supported Hyde's policy of no politics in the League His loss was much felt when he gave up the editorship, and inducements were held out to him to continue, but he preferred to work at his school, which gave promise of opening up a new field in education.* In the end his fiery zeal for all things Irish led him to a death which will cause his name to be longer remembered in Ireland than his many years of work for the Irish language.

Another who should be mentioned was The O'Rahilly, who for years devoted his energies to the work of the Irish revival. He taught himself to speak Irish better than is usual for a non-native speaker. He was much liked by all who knew him, and had some degree of influence in the League. He also was carried by his convictions into

* The School, "St. Enda's," is being carried on, and may yet show the possibilities of Pearse's educational theories.

a position in which he seemed faced with certain death or dishonour. He chose the former. Pearse and O'Rahilly once again illustrate the tragedy of Irish history, which has seen time and again men who in a free country would be pre-eminent for their virtues and patriotism, brought to the scaffold.

These last two men are mentioned, not because they were the only strong and influential supporters of Hyde, but because after events made it appear as though they were opposed to the non-political attitude of the League, though in fact they were not. It would be unjust to mention Hyde's supporters without referring to Miss O'Brien, for whose work the Gaelic League has good reason to be grateful, or Miss O'Farrelly, one of his colleagues in the League and in the National University ; but it is impossible to give a complete list, so it is better to go no further.

Eoin MacNeill's attitude, however, must be specially mentioned. He also was against the introduction of politics into the Gaelic League, but for many years he had devoted himself to writing and study and had not come near the Coiste Gnotha or interfered in League affairs, though when Hyde consulted him on different matters he gave sound and sincere advice.

Hyde's fault has always been that he is too kind-hearted. He seems to have a dislike

almost amounting to weakness of hurting people or offending them. The small number of malcontents were intriguing hard to form a party against Hyde in the League. Hyde, however, despising the attempt, made no effort to crush it. That he could have crushed it with hardly an effort is evident. Pearse, MacNeill, and a host of other prominent Gaelic Leaguers would have been delighted to help in the work; but instead of stamping them out, Hyde treated them with civility and their efforts with contempt. Besides the malcontents there were a number of Gaelic Leaguers who sincerely thought that the League should take up an openly political policy in favour of Sinn Fein, and who inclined towards the extreme left, owing to discontent with the rigidly non-political attitude of the executive. On a number of small matters opportunities arose of making it appear that the Gaelic League by being non-political was sacrificing the interests of the language. Questions bordering on politics were mooted, and every effort was made to shew that the proposed non-politicians were really timid or venal. The left wing gradually spread its influence into country districts. Any Leaguer with a real or imaginary grievance tended to join them and the number of the "left wing" increased at each successive Ard Fheis. The one thing they lacked was a leader who could command the

smallest respect. The party had many clever men, but none who could be trusted as a leader, or with reputation enough to make a figurehead.

The Ard Fheis consists of delegates from each branch of the League, and, as many of the branches in country districts cannot afford to send representatives to meetings in Dublin or Killarney or Dundalk, or wherever the Ard Fheis may be held, the practice arose for many of the poorer branches to appoint as delegates persons who lived in Dublin or some other central place and were easily able to attend the sittings. This developed to such an extent that sometimes one man came from a large district with several proxies in his pocket from the surrounding branches. It is easy to see that this practice, though innocent in itself, might easily lead to grave abuse.

By degrees the extreme party gained the majority in the Ard Fheis, but it had not the nerve to unseat Hyde or to force its views on the League against his wishes. But Hyde felt his position grow more difficult as year succeeded year. "Let us come out on the side of Ireland" was the party cry of the extremists. "The side of Ireland" meant simply their own particular views, which, however good they may have been, were, beyond all question, only held by a very small minority of the population of Ireland.

Motions to bring politics into the League were occasionally proposed at the Ard Fheis, but the extremists were afraid to press them, and they were either withdrawn or defeated. One of the reasons they were not pressed was that the country as a whole had its eyes fixed on the Home Rule Bill, which was going through its various stages in Parliament and the majority of Irishmen were determined to let nothing interfere with the progress of the Bill. Had the Sinn Fein party definitely attacked the Bill the country could have turned on them and wiped them out. In justice to the Sinn Feiners it should be said that they did refrain in a wonderful way from criticising the Irish party during the fight for the Bill, especially as there was plenty of room for honest criticism of the Bill itself.

The formation of the Ulster Volunteer Force may be regarded as that which finally gave the Sinn Fein party the strength to push Hyde out of the League, thus to rid themselves of a president who had guided the League from its very foundation, and who had consistently and firmly refused to assume a political attitude. When the Unionists of Ulster, with Sir Edward Carson at their head, were openly preparing for armed resistance to Ireland and calling on Germany for help, it was difficult to restrain the rest of Ireland from arming

against them. It became impossible when the British troops at the Curragh mutinied when ordered to go to Ulster. The Irish Volunteers were organized, with Eoin MacNeill as their president, and soon a formidable volunteer army was formed by Nationalist Ireland.

The birthplaces of the Volunteers are nearly as numerous as those of Homer, but the first big meeting was held in the Rotunda Rink in the late autumn of 1913. The left wing of the Gaelic League threw itself with enthusiasm into the Volunteer movement, but it must be understood that they did so as private individuals, not as Gaelic Leaguers. The official Nationalists were doubtful as to the wisdom of Volunteering. MacNeill, however, threw his whole energies into the work and so did Pearse and O'Rahilly. They found themselves working with a body which was largely formed of the "left wing" of the Gaelic League. They had to form a provisional committee, and here they were again thrown upon the "left wing" for members. Volunteering thus made some strange bedfellows. Men who in the Gaelic League were the bitterest opponents found themselves thrown together in working the Volunteers. At last the members of the "left wing" had some prominent names to give them an air of responsibility. In this manner the Gaelic League, though

not connected with the Volunteers in any way, was influenced by them to a large extent.

Redmond was opposed to volunteering, but when he saw the number and spirit of the Irish Volunteers it became clear that he would lose his influence with the country if he did not come into the movement. Accordingly a compromise was made between the Redmondites and what may loosely be called the Sinn Feiners, and a joint committee was formed for the Volunteers. Though the Volunteers' president was Eoin MacNeill, the committee, composed of many divergent elements, did not follow any one leader. The control was divided between MacNeill, Colonel Maurice Moore, and one or two others. Colonel Moore has political sense and great ability, and he was the one man on the combined volunteer committees who had any idea of what an army was, what it could do, and how to deal with large bodies of men.

Hyde wisely kept out of the Volunteers. They may have had his sympathy, but he did not give them his name. On occasions he welcomed their existence as a manifestation of Irish spirit, but he took no active part in their formation.

The volunteer movement spread like wildfire. Rifles were landed at Howth at the end of July, 1914. On the very day they were landed large bodies of the Ulster

Volunteer Force were marching unmolested through Belfast with rifles on their shoulders, yet an attempt was made by the military and police authorities to seize the rifles of the Irish Volunteers. This attempt was followed by the murder of a number of citizens, men and women, in the streets of Dublin by the King's Own Scottish Borderers.

These murders inflamed Irish opinion to the last degree, and those who witnessed it will ever remember with amazement the change of opinion when the European War of 1914 broke out.

At the outbreak of the War there were nearly 200,000 Irish Volunteers crying for vengeance for the victims of the Dublin murders. In a few days nearly the whole of Ireland was in favour of the side on which England was fighting in the European War.

There were, however, a few men who did not join in this feeling. Of these P. H. Pearse was the most prominent. Whatever his feelings as to the merits or demerits of the war, he profoundly mistrusted the the British Government. MacNeill shared his view. The stupidity or malice of the English Government by degrees showed Irishmen that in the cause of small nationalities Ireland was not to be considered, and Ireland gradually changed back to its normal condition of hatred to England.

It is difficult not to write politically of

events subsequent to August, 1914. At the Ard Fheis held in Killarney in 1914 Hyde was again elected president of the Gaelic League, but he found the post more than ever onerous.

In October, 1914, the Redmondite and the Sinn Fein members of the committee of the Volunteers found that they could no longer work together, and the Volunteer movement was split. The whys and the wherefores of the split do not matter here. There probably were faults on both sides. In the resulting split the great majority of Volunteers followed the Redmondites, but the majority of the Gaelic League members of the Volunteers followed MacNeill. As far as volunteering is concerned the split had the effect of damping the ardour of the country, and from that moment numbers began to decline in both sections. As far as general politics are concerned, it threw the Sinn Fein party once more into active hostility to the Redmondites. Hyde was not in any way concerned in this; he was above all political factions. This was clearly shewn when he was received in Cork by an armed guard consisting of both Irish and National Volunteers.

The split was followed by a persecution of the Irish or MacNeill Volunteers by the Government. Several of their organisers were arrested or deported, and efforts were

made to prevent their arming; as time went on they became exasperated.

In 1915 the Ard Fheis was held at Dundalk. At this Ard Fheis the question of politics and the Gaelic League had to be thrashed out again. At this Ard Fheis also the scandal of delegates nominated by one man reached its climax. It is said that one member of the Ard Fheis had no less than fifty delegates' cards to distribute.

The fight came up on a resolution that to the objects of the Gaelic League should be added a clause saying that the Gaelic League was working for an " Independent Ireland." This seemed a clear issue, and it is unknown whether the motion would have been carried or not; many who were there think it would have been lost. The issue was obscured by substituting the vague word " free " for the definite word " Independent." In this form the motion was carried, and next day Hyde resigned.

His position with the new rule in force would have been impossible. The word " free " is absolutely incapable of interpretation between two bodies, one wishing to be political, the other non-political.

Hyde's resignation, when it came, was a great blow to the Gaelic League. MacNeill, the Vice-President, did not want to oppose Hyde in any way, and would not become President. Then it was decided not to elect

a President for some time, and to try to induce Hyde to come back to the League. In 1916, after the rising, MacNeill was elected President. As he was in prison at the time of his election, in spite of the fact that he had tried to stop the rising, and is still in prison, it is impossible to say whether or not he wished for the Presidency.* From his former conduct it is likely that he did not want to appear as supplanting his old friend Hyde.

It must have been a great sorrow to Hyde to resign from the League, of which he had been President for twenty-two years and to which he had devoted his life's work. On the other hand, he cannot but have felt relief at being freed from the unending work it entailed. He has the satisfaction of looking back on his life's work and seeing that he has done more than any one other man to alter Irish life and Irish ideals. He found a country apathetic to everything but pure politics; he has brought it to a pitch of intellectual activity undreamed of twenty years ago. The movement which he started has had a very great measure of success. The Irish language, which was despised and dying, is now regarded as a precious treasure by those who have it, and is eagerly sought

* MacNeill has since been released (June 16th, 1917), but this book must go to press before he will have time to make a public statement on the point.

after by thousands who have not. There is no public man in Ireland on the Nationalist side who dares to speak disrespectfully of the Irish tongue. As Miss Mitchell, in her book on Mr. George Moore, says of Hyde, he is—

"The man who drew out of the gutter where we ourselves had flung her the language of our country, and set a crown upon her; who by sheer force of personality created the movement in Ireland for the revival of Gaelic, blowing with a hot enthusiasm on that dying spark of nationalism and recalling it to life. Those who know *The Love Songs of Connacht* will not need to be told that here was the soul of a poet. The movement he blasted out of the rock of Anglo-Irish prejudice is his epic. . . . We know what Ireland owes to Hyde's fiery spirit, his immense courage, his scholarship, his genius for organisation, his sincerity, his eloquence, and the kindness of his heart."

The work of Douglas Hyde will live after him. It is not now possible that Irish can die, as but for him it would most assuredly have died. Even should it become extinct as a spoken language, reams of Irish literature have been preserved which but for Hyde would have perished.

But the language as a living tongue will not die. There is still in Ireland enough of patriotism and national pride to keep it alive. Some there are who fear that an Irish Government, should such come soon, will not cherish and care for the language, that it will devote itself to the material interests of the country and neglect her intellectual welfare. This is

not really likely, and even if it were so, the material prosperity of the country will never kill her intellectual life. It was said that land purchase would kill Home Rule, but such is not the case. The peasant proprietor, proud in the possession of his land, is prouder than ever of his country. The movement for Irish self-government is as strong as ever it was, and everything that makes Irishmen more independent in their material life makes them wish the more for independence in their intellectual life. What was once the most cultured country in Western Europe must have some seeds of her ancient culture left which, like seeds taken from an Egyptian tomb, will after a thousand years of barrenness quicken again with the pulse of life when they feel the clasp of congenial soil.

Most assuredly the more independent in spirit Irishmen become, the more they will value their independence; and as they see that clothing their thoughts in the tongue of their conquerors binds them more truly to those conquerors than would chains of steel, they will throw off the yoke and, with their own language to clothe their own ideas, reawaken the spiritual life of Ireland until she is once again a leader of world thought. When that day comes men in Ireland and out of it will realise more strongly than is now possible Hyde's service to his country and to mankind.