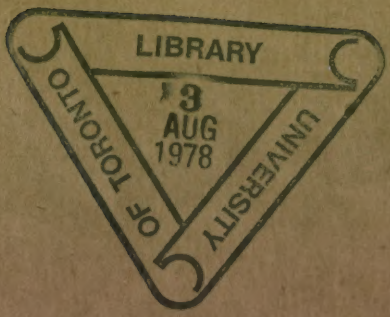

The Irish Language and Irish Intermediate Education.

I.

ANSWERS TO QUERIES.

PREFACE.

It is understood that the Intermediate Education Board, having been recently enlarged, and now numbering amongst its members the redoubtable Professor Mahaffy himself, is at present engaged on the work of reforming the system of education which it controls and administers. The reform, it may be presumed, will proceed on the lines of the Report of the Vice-Regal Commission of Inquiry.

It will be remembered that whilst the Commission sat, very much was heard about the Irish language, and about (1) the place it then held and (2) the place it should hold in Irish secondary education. Just now there is in many quarters a good deal of conjecture as to what the Board of Intermediate Education will do for the national language. Will its status be lowered? Will it remain as it has hitherto been? Or will the Board give it in future the status which it ought to have, which the Gaelic League asks that it should have, and which the nation is determined that, sooner or later, it shall have?

It needs not a prophet to foretell that, when the new scheme has been made public, the Board will have a very troublesome time, should it be found to have trifled with the people's wishes and hopes in reference to the language of their race. Things have of late been

moving very rapidly; and the Board had better make up its mind that in any scheme it may formulate, the tongue of the Gael must occupy a position in nowise inferior to that of any of the other languages set down in its Programme. Neither dead nor foreign languages shall have any advantage over it: it shall no longer have a stigma attached to it.

It has been represented to the Gaelic League from many quarters, —by persons prominently identified with Intermediate Education, as well as by others,—that a series of pamphlets ought to be published, containing, in convenient form, the evidence given during the Vice-Regal Inquiry in reference to Irish, as well as all documents furnished to the Commission on the subject, or otherwise made public during the progress of the controversy. At a recent meeting of the Publication Committee, this suggestion was considered, and a resolution that it should be acted upon was passed. The present writer was requested to prepare the pamphlets for publication.

The matter which it is proposed to publish in convenient and popular form is at present buried away in sundry nooks and corners of several large Blue-books, and in the columns of periodicals and newspapers. It may be classified under the following heads:—

(*a*) Answers to queries sent to examiners, teachers, etc., before the public sittings of the Commission of Inquiry began.

(*b*) Oral evidence taken during the sittings of the Commission.

(*c*) Memoranda sent in by witnesses and others.

(*d*) Letters and other documents handed in.

(*e*) Articles and letters in the Press.

It is no easy task to trace in the Blue-books and elsewhere, and to collect, and arrange everything that bears upon the Irish language. But the Gaelic League has decided that it must be done, and that all who are interested in the subject shall have placed within their reach in convenient form, the whole case made on behalf of the language.

Everything is given, for and against. Nothing has been withheld. The League believes that it has everything to gain and nothing to lose by the most exhaustive discussion, by going forth into the full light of day, and by allowing all sides to be heard as thoroughly as possible. Professor Mahaffy and Dr. Atkinson will not be denied a hearing any more than the President of the Gaelic League.

The present pamphlet contains all the matter, bearing upon the Irish language, to be found in Answers to Queries. Other pamphlets containing Oral Evidence, Memoranda, Letters, etc., will be published in due course.

March 7th, 1901.

Rules 36-39.

Rev. J. H. BERNARD, D.D., Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin.

38. (B) I would remove Celtic from Class B and place it in Class D. Few will be found to contend that it is a subject of equal educational importance with Greek or Latin.

39. (B) I would remove Celtic from Class B and place it in Class C.

RICHARD BIGGS, Esq., LL.D., Head Master, Portora Royal School, Enniskillen.

Delete "(6) Celtic."

Rev. Br. T. B. CARROLL, Manager, Presentation College, Queenstown.

I would suggest . . . that Irish History be made a separate subject, with at least 500 marks attached to it.

The marks in Celtic ought to be increased to 1,000

The Rev. JAMES DALY, President, Diocesan College. Ballaghadereen.

I would suggest—

(1) That the word "Irish" be substituted for "Celtic."

(2) That the number of marks attached to Irish be notably increased.

RICHARD FITZGERALD, Esq., Chairman, Town Commissioners, Middleton.

Celtic should be raised to 700 like French and German.

HENRY M. FITZGIBBON Esq., M.A., Examiner in English to the Intermediate Board.

Celtic should not count more than 500 marks in any grade.

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE GAELIC LEAGUE.

The Gaelic League has over fifty branches in various parts of Ireland, and the question of Education has been always earnestly

considered by them. The Central Committee represents the opinion of all these branches.

THE GAELIC LEAGUE,
24, UPPER O'CONNELL-STREET,
DUBLIN, *October 31st*, 1898.

DEAR SIR,

I am directed by the Committee of the Gaelic League to return the Schedule of the Intermediate Education Commission filled up by me on behalf of the Gaelic League.

It has not been thought necessary to go into any details or to give reasons for the suggestions offered at present; but the Committee of the Gaelic League wish to give evidence in support of their recommendations, and their President, Dr. Douglas Hyde, has expressed his readiness to answer all questions on behalf of the League.

It will be observed that the Gaelic League asks that as regards the number of marks, Irish should be placed in a position intermediate between that of English and that of other Modern Languages.

The Gaelic League is of opinion that Irish should properly be on a par with English and Classics, but having regard to the number of subjects included under the head of English, the League only claims for Irish that it should hold an intermediate position for the present.

I am, dear Sir,
Yours faithfully,
NORMA BORTHWICK,
Secretary.

J. D. Daly, Esq.

PART I. (2)

Alterations in System Generally.

It is desirable that a system of oral examination be adopted for all modern languages, including Irish, in all grades.

PART II., SECT. I.

Rules 1-9.

Rule 5.—Suggested: That the words "Irish language and literature" be substituted for the words "Celtic language and literature" in all grades. The word "Celtic" is a general term, applicable to Welsh, Cornish, Manx, Breton, Scotch Gaelic, and Irish, whereas the language intended is Irish alone.

That the number of marks for Irish in all grades be fixed at

1,000—that is, at a number intermediate between those for foreign languages and for English.

That Irish History be placed under the division of the Irish Language instead of under English.

PART II., SECT. III.

Rules 20-31.

Rule 25.—Suggested: That the maximum total of marks be so fixed that if Irish be selected by a student he shall not thereby forfeit any of the total marks. At present (the maximum total for a student in the Preparatory Grade being 5,400 marks) if a student takes Latin and Greek, he cannot take either French or Irish unless he takes only one mathematical subject.

In the Junior and Middle Grades, when Irish is taken, the maximum falls from 6,000 to 5,900.

PART II., SECT. VIII.

Rules 45-50.

Rules 45, 49. Suggested: To add that in awarding exhibitions, account shall not be taken of the answering of a student in the Commercial part of any language.

PART III. (1).

Programme. Preparatory Grade.

Suggested: That one text-book be used in the teaching of Irish, instead of two, as at present.

PART III. (3).

Programme. Middle Grade.

Suggested: To omit, in the Grammar Course, the words, "including parsing and analysis" for all grades.

PART III. (4).

Programme. Senior Grade.

Suggested: To omit from the Irish Course, "Names of Places," by P. W. Joyce.

To introduce an oral qualifying test for all modern languages in all grades.

Rev. THOMAS T. GRAY, M.A., S.F.T.C.D.,
and
LOUIS PURSER, D. Litt., F.T.C.D.

That serious consideration should be given to question of the desirability of retaining Celtic in any of the grades; or at all events of assigning it so large a number of marks as at present.

EDWARD GWYNN, Esq., M.A., F.T.C.D.

I suggest that "Celtic" (by which term Modern Irish seems to be intended) should be struck off the list of subjects.

The other languages find their place on the list, I take it, either (1) for their practical utility, (2) for their value as educational instruments, or (3) for the interest of their literature.

(1.) This ground cannot be alleged in favour of Modern Irish; the number of persons speaking exclusively Irish is very small, probably much smaller than the statistics available indicate, and is on the decline.

(2) In this respect it appears to me that Modern Irish has little to recommend it; its syntax is monotonous and undeveloped, and its affinities with the great European languages are (except to a trained scholar) unrecognisable.

(3) Modern Irish literature has, so far as I know, little or no value *qua* literature: it certainly possesses no general interest nor any significance in the history of European thought.

Naturally, I do not deny the high interest and value of the Irish language (but chiefly of Old and Middle Irish) from the point of view of linguistic science or the history of culture. I would even set considerable value on the older literature. But this is the province of specialists, and there is here no justification for including the modern language in a curriculum of Intermediate education. The utmost that could be looked for is that an interest in the subject might be awakened here and there in a future student. But this ground would equally justify the inclusion of Ethiopic: and as a matter of fact, after 20 years of Intermediate examinations in "Celtic" the scientific knowledge of the language in this country stands lower than it did in the days of O'Donovan or of Hennessy.

On the other hand, the presence of "Celtic" in the examinations is a positive evil: special inducements are held out to smatterers; the number of marks assigned is higher than in the case of Italian or Spanish, both languages which possess great literatures and offer practical advantages. A comparison of the passages set far translation *into* Irish with those set for translation into Italian or Spanish will show how different a standard is used.

The result of these arrangements is of course to attract candidates who merely want to make marks, (not to educate themselves), to the study of a language where the course is easy and the standard notoriously low.

Rev. R. Harvey, M.A., Head Master, Grammar School, Cork, and five others.

Italian and Celtic are easier subjects in which to score marks than most of the other subjects. This frequently tempts teachers to neglect the more necessary subject. The marks in these subjects should be considerably reduced, or the papers made more difficult . . .

Celtic, Spanish, and Italian should be omitted or made harder. *Boys* should be obliged to go in for *all* the Mathematical subjects except Book-keeping.

Miss Mary T. Hayden, M.A., J.F.R.U.I.

I would suggest that (in all the grades) Celtic should receive the same number of marks as French and German.

Rev. Michael P. O'Hickey, D.D., M.R.I.A., Professor of Irish, Maynooth College, Vice-President of the Gaelic League.

I have no suggestions to make except two: (1) "Celtic" should be changed to "Irish." "Celtic" is not the name of a language, but of a group of languages, comprising Irish, Scotch Gaelic, Manx, Welsh, Cornish, and Armoric. Neither is "Gaelic" admissible, for it includes Irish, Scotch Gaelic and Manx. "Irish" is the only correct designation for our ancient vernacular. (2) When we bear in mind that Irish was once (and not so long ago) the vernacular speech of this country, and is still the vernacular speech of more than a half-million of the people—when we bear in mind, furthermore, the interest being awakened in it on all sides—it should have proper recognition. It should, therefore, have as many *marks* assigned to it as English or the Classical languages. To put it on the same footing as foreign languages—or, worse still, on a lower footing—is unfair and an outrage.

The Irish programme, in the lower grades at least, should also be made more modern. Even in the higher grades there is need of some reform.

T. F. O'Higgins, Esq., Ex-Intermediate Student.

The marks for Celtic ought to be raised to 700 in all the grades.

Irish History should be transferred to Celtic.

Miss M. E. Hill, Manager, Boarding and Day School, South Terrace, Cork.

That Celtic language and literature be omitted from the Junior Grade.

SISTERS OF ST LOUIS, Monaghan.

To put Celtic on an equality with French or German, 700 marks.

BUNNELL LEWIS, Esq., M.A., Professor of Latin, Queen's College, Cork.

English, an easier subject, should have lower marks assigned to it than Greek or Latin. Celtic, being less important, should be lowered in value. These observations apply to all grades. Higher marks might be given for French and German, on account of the rich literature and great utility of these languages.

Rev. BR. J. P. LYNCH, Member of the Institute of the Brothers of St. Patrick, Galway.

In the literary part of the examination great care should be taken in the selection of books prescribed for study in the several grades. It is clear that books which are to be studied so long by innocent children should contain nothing contrary to morality or opposed to common sense. The French books prescribed in the several grades were admirably selected. Nothing could be more suitable than

"Les Adventures de Telemaque."
"Un Philosophe sous les toits."
"Histoire de ma Jeunesse."
"Derriere les Haies."

It is to be regretted that this cannot be said of some of the books prescribed for the Irish Classes. In "The Pursuit of Diarmuid and Grainne," and some of the stories in the "Sgeuluidhe Gaodhalach," some of the incidents recorded are of so indelicate a character and are so opposed to common sense that they should never have been prescribed for the study of innocent children.

I desire to say that I by no means wish to impugn the motives of the selectors or compilers of the books named. I am merely giving a candid opinion on a matter which I consider to be of great importance, when I say that the fact of prescribing such books for the study of the youth of Ireland tends to bring ridicule on Irish Literature and to deter the people of Ireland from the study of their native tongue.

I think that a committee consisting of some members of the Intermediate Education Board, or of competent persons appointed by them, should be chosen to select the books to be prescribed for examination in the several grades and in the different languages, and the books so selected should afterwards be submitted to the Board for their approval.

A. E. Lyster, M.A., Examiner in Mathematics to the Intermediate Education Board.

Celtic should not have more than 500 marks assigned to it.

H. O'D. Macan, M.A., Organising Secretary to the Surrey County Council.

French and German should be taught on the same lines as Latin and Greek, and therefore used in examination as alternative subjects to them.

I doubt if Italian or Celtic from the point of view of literary training are on the same plane.

Rev. E. Maguire, D.D., Examiner in Greek and Latin to the Intermediate Education Board.

Programme. Preparatory Grade.

Would strike out "German" and "Italian," and put Celtic on the same level with French by assigning it 700 marks.

Programme. Junior Grade.

Would give Celtic 700 marks and strike out Spanish.

Programme. Middle Grade.

Would make same changes here.

Programme. Senior Grade.

Would repeat suggested alterations here.

Rev. J. P. Mahaffy, D.D., Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin.

My views as to Botany, Theory of Music, and the Irish Language as courses in an Examination for practical Education, are set forth in the above-named article (*Nineteenth Century* for November, 1898).

"Celtic" should be expunged.

"Celtic" (meaning, of course, Irish) should be expunged.

The "Celtic" course is, in my opinion, mere rubbish.

[Dr. Mahaffy's article in the *Nineteenth Century* is of interest here only in so far as it enunciated the view that all Irish literature is *religious*, *silly*, or *indecent*, along with other *obiter dicta* of an equally informed and patriotic nature. He shall be heard from again in the course of these pamphlets.—Editor.]

SISTERS OF MERCY, Queenstown.

Celtic marks might be raised.

A. L. MEISSNER, Professor of Modern Languages, Queen's College, Belfast.

For Celtic, which embraces a group of languages, "Irish" should be substituted.

J. F. X. O'BRIEN, Esq., M.P.

It is to be expected that, a system of education for students from their 13th to their 18th years, conducted professedly on liberal principles, and devoted largely to languages and to literature, should bring to all who follow its course an acquaintance with the native language and literature of the country, and should require this as one of the essential items of its programme. The mere fact that Celtic is the native language of Ireland is a sufficient and conclusive reason for its being made obligatory, apart from other reasons which make the study of Celtic highly expedient for that class of students in whose interest the Intermediate system was established. I invite your attention to the following points:—

(1.) An Irishman educated under the present system, going among the people of the western side of the country, is unable to speak with them in their own tongue.

(2.) He is debarred, by the practical exclusion of Irish from the Intermediate course, from making acquaintance with far the greater part of all the literature which has been created by the genius of Irishmen.

(3.) Furthermore, the body of literature in the Irish language is of the highest value as well from a literary as from a philological point of view; and is admitted to be so by the ablest critics of the day.

(4.) A knowledge of the language is essential to a proper understanding and study of the history and antiquities of Ireland.

Now, the published results show that more than 90 per cent. of those who follow the programme of the Board are permitted to remain in absolute ignorance of the Irish language and Irish literature.

Had the Board been prevented by insuperable difficulties from requiring Celtic of all, they should at least have taken pains to promote and encourage the study of Celtic. But this has not been done. Even more, the attitude of the Board has virtually amounted to an effort to check the study of Celtic; the marks assigned to it have been such as to deter students from taking up the subject.

While Greek and Latin are allotted 1,200 each, French and German 700 each, Celtic is given at the most 600. This disparity is in itself a slur upon Celtic. But does it hinder the study of the language? It might be suggested that a student is as free to take

up Celtic as, for instance, French. This is not the case, as may easily be seen.

Anyone familiar with the management of Intermediate schools, knows that the selection of subjects lies practically altogether with the heads of the school; and that they, by the closeness of the competition, are forced to select from their course such subjects as will give the greatest number of marks with the least expenditure of time in study and teaching. Now experience has shown that Celtic requires more time than French. So that if they had equal marks, a student could, after the same time spent, obtain more marks in French than in Celtic. But as French has a higher total, he can evidently obtain much more in French than he could in Celtic with the same number of classes. In consequence, a principal looking to the success of his school, is forced to exclude Celtic from his school course; in most cases it could not be made to pay.

The Board has, therefore, imposed a serious obstacle to the study of Celtic.

On looking to the programmes of the other institutions for the furtherance of liberal education in Ireland, I find that the University of Dublin offers a special sizarship in Celtic, while the Royal University gives to Celtic not only the same marks as every other modern language, but even the same marks as English.

The occasion offered by the appointment of the present Commission would be a fitting opportunity for bringing the Intermediate system into better harmony with the sentiments of the general body of Irishmen.

Alteration suggested.—Believing as I do that the number of marks allotted to the elaborate course of English could not well be lessened, I would propose as an improvement upon the present scheme of marks that Latin and Greek should be reduced to 1,000 each, and that the 400 thus set free should be given to Celtic. Thus:—

Preparatory:—	Latin and Greek, . .	1,000 each.
	Celtic, . . .	900
	The rest unchanged.	
Junior,	Latin and Greek . .	1,000 each.
Middle,	Celtic . .	1,000 each.
Senior,	Rest unchanged.	

L. M. O'Hara, Esq., Chairman, Town Commissioners, Boyle.

Double Celtic marks, and in case of all Irish students, make knowledge of the history of a portion of Irish literature as given in O'Currry's Lectures, or some similar work obligatory.

Rev. Hugh O'Reilly, M.R.I.A., President, St. Colman's College, Newry.

Celtic should have the same marks attached to it as French or German, but the standard of difficulty in the papers should be

raised a little so that it would be as difficult to get 75 per cent. in it as in any other of the languages.

* * * * * * * *

That the marks for Celtic should be raised to 700 in *all* the Grades same as French or German, but that the standard of difficulty of the papers should be higher.

Rev. Michael O'Reilly, O.C.C., President, Carmelite College, Terenure.

The marks assigned to Celtic should be raised to 1,000 (in all grades).

C. Sheldon, Esq., D.Litt., Head Master of the English Department, Royal Academical Institution, Belfast.

It is doubtful policy to retain Celtic as satisfying the requirement that the student shall pass in a language. In districts where it is the home language, the children are instructed in this as *the language required*, and are thus sent forth into the world armed with English and Celtic only.

Rev. Br. C. Thompson, President, St. Joseph's Seminary, Galway.

O'Growney's Irish Lessons, Part IV., is too high a standard for this [Junior] grade. It is beyond the standard for Junior Grade in previous years. The number of marks assigned to this subject ought to be increased to 700.

Ferdinand Trager, Esq., M.A., Manager, Gracehill Academy, Ballymena.

Abolish Italian and Celtic in the Preparatory Grade.

Abolish Italian, Spanish, and Celtic in the other grades.

William Wright, Esq., LL.D., T.C.D., Manager, Lismore College, Lismore.

I am of opinion that to Celtic has been assigned too large a maximum of marks. I think there can be no question of the relative importance of Celtic and Arithmetic, and yet the former has 500 marks assigned to it and the latter only 600. I do not think that Celtic is absolutely essential nor of much commercial importance. On the contrary, Arithmetic *is* essential for all and of the greatest importance; 200 or 300 marks therefore would be ample to allot to Celtic, having regard to its intrinsic value relatively to other subjects. The same observations in lesser degree would apply to Italian—300 marks would, I think, be sufficient for this language. I do not wish to be considered as under-valuing the importance of the study of Celtic or Italian, but merely estimating their value from a commercial point of view in comparison with other subjects of the programme.

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The Irish Language and Irish Intermediate Education.

II.

Evidence of Dr. MAHAFFY, Dr. DELANY, S.J.; Father DEVITT, S.J.; Dr. BERNARD, *and* Father DALY.

[Prefatory Note.]

This pamphlet contains portions of the evidence of several witnesses. Only the passages in which they gave their views on the Irish Language as a subject of Intermediate Education are included. The next pamphlet of the series will contain Dr. Hyde's evidence.

Extract from the evidence of Rev. J. P. Mahaffy, D.D., F.T.C.D., Professor of Ancient History, Trinity College, Dublin.

653. Chairman.—I see, Dr. Mahaffy, that in your paper* you refer to the subject of Celtic as one of the subjects for examination?—Yes.

654. Now, Celtic is, of course, a very interesting study from a philological point of veiw?—Yes.

655. In your opinion, viewing it as a living language, has it any

* The paper here referred to is Dr. Mahaffy's article in the *Nineteenth Century*, of which mention is made in the first pamphlet of the present series. —[Editor].

educational value?—None. I am corroborated by the experts in this book, one of whom finds fault with the text-books at present used, or one of them, on the ground that it is either silly or indecent. I am told by a much better authority than any of them in Irish, that it is impossible to get hold of a text of Irish which is not religious, or which does not suffer from one or other of the objections referred to. Another specialist is the Todd lecturer in the Royal Irish Academy, Mr. Gwynn. He states that the twenty years' study of the language under the Intermediate system has, in fact, diminished the knowledge of Irish in this country, and that there is less knowledge of Irish at the present time than there was twenty years ago.

656. I don't want at all to undervalue Irish as a subject of study if studied in the proper way, but is it your opinion that its only real value as a study is in a philological sense, in such a sense as should be taught in a university, as it is taught I believe at present in some of the German universities?—It is sometimes useful to a man fishing for salmon or shooting grouse in the West. I have often found a few words very serviceable.

657. But as a subject to be seriously taken up by students whose time is of importance to them, whose condition in life, does not permit their parents to allow sufficient time for their education, so that every moment is of importance, are you or are you not of opinion that Celtic is a subject that should be entered on at all by them?—I think it is a mischievous waste of time.

* * * * * * * *

773. O'Conor Don.—As to Celtic, are you aware that Celtic was specially entered in this schedule by a motion carried unanimously in the House of Commons?—I was aware that it had been put into the Act of Parliament, and I understand especially on your motion.

774. But whether it be desirable or not, on which point I do not desire to get into a controversy with you, do you not feel that it would be practically impossible for it to be excluded from our programme in consequence of public feeling, whether right or wrong, in favour of it?—No, I think it might be impossible to exclude it owing to the Act of Parliament, but that would not prevent you from diminishing the marks. The examination, I am told, is very much easier, and the qualifications very poor, and marks are given for very little knowledge. And it is probably owing to that that we get no Irish scholars out of it. I should be content if the marks were diminished without going to Parliament.

775. This also is in the schedule, and it would be strictly and legally within our power to alter the schedule; but Parliament having included it in such a clear way, on an unanimous motion being carried through, it having so clearly appeared that it was the wish of Parliament to have this subject included in Intermediate

education, would you not admit that it would be a very strong thing for the Board to strike it out?—I should be content if they diminished the marks.

776. Would it not satisfy you if the examination were made more thorough and real than you allege that it is?—No; that would be worse, because it would introduce a greater waste of time than that now wasted on it.

* * * * * * *

865. Most Rev. Dr. WALSH.—Well, now, I suppose I have no hope of converting you upon the subject of Irish?—No.

867. In your interesting article in the "Nineteenth Century," you rather find fault with us for calling it Celtic. Are you aware that that is the word in the Act of Parliament, and that, as we are law-abiding citizens, we naturally follow the Act: you were probably not aware that it is in the Act?—I was going to say that it is an extraordinary proof of the persuasive power of the O'Conor Don, that he carried such a thing unanimously through the House of Commons.

* * * * * * *

899. O'CONOR DON.—Just one question about this much-discussed question of Celtic or Irish. Did I understand you to state that in your opinion the marks given to Celtic are larger in proportion than the difficulties of the subject would justify?—Yes.

900. That in fact marks can be earned in Celtic or Irish, whichever you like to call it, easier than in other subjects?—That is what I am very generally informed.

901. Quite apart from the utility or uselessness of the study, is it not your opinion that the marks ought to be given in proportion to the difficulty or ease of earning them?—And the importance of the subject. You must have two tests—the importance of the subject and the difficulty of the subject. You might have a most difficult subject that was of no importance at all.

902. If the subject is put into the programme at all ought it not get marks in proportion to the difficulty of answering in it?—Not unless the importance of it was equally great.

903. If the importance was nil it ought to get no marks at all?—Yes, except that in the Senior Grade it ought to be desirable to give special prizes.

904. Putting aside the question as to the utility or otherwise, if it be necessary to have it on the programme, ought it not to be treated fairly, or otherwise will it not be killed?—Fairly is what I consider it ought to be treated, and by that I mean giving it very small weight.

905. Ought it not be treated in proportion to the difficulty of the answering?—Only if it is important enough.

906. If it be not treated in proportion to the difficulty of answering will not the effect be to kill it absolutely?—I suppose the

difficulty must vary enormously according as the candidate has spoken it or not.

907. Is it not the fact with regard to these subjects that the taking up of a subject—and this is one of the evils of the system—really depends upon the number of marks that will be earned, and consequently depends upon the difficulty or ease of earning those marks?—It may not be so in the case of Irish, because the student knows the language vernacularly.

908. Is not that the case with French and German also?—that difficulty always arises.

909. Would you apply the same rule to French and German? Would you give them a less number of marks because some of the candidates may know the language without much trouble?—I should have done so except for their great importance. The importance outweighs the other considerations.

910. Will not the effect of making Irish more difficult than other subjects be practically to kill it, except in those few cases where the people have facilities for knowing it?—It may be so. I should not fret over it, you know.

911. Your object really is, as you cannot kick it out of the door, you would like to stab it to death inside the house?—I have distinctly said that I should like to turn it out altogether.

912. Would that be a dignified course for the Commission to take?—Everything this Commission does right is dignified.

Extract from the evidence of the Very Rev. W. Delany, S.J., LL.D., President, University College, Dublin.

996. CHAIRMAN.—Is there anything else you wish to refer to that was mentioned yesterday?—Indeed, there were, but they do not bear upon that point. But I might mention as matters of interest there were some things I came upon yesterday in the debates. For instance: "Lord Dunsany.—Why should not English boys come here?" And the Lord Chancellor replied in the words which his Grace brought out yesterday, "Because the Bill is to encourage Intermediate education in Ireland." Again there was the question of Celtic, and here a very strange misunderstanding seems somewhere to have prevailed about the part of O'Conor Don; it was entirely due to him, and it was on his motion, that Irish language and literature was added in the schedule to the Bill.

997. Most Rev. Dr. WALSH.—In consequence of what has since occurred, it is well to observe that this was stated here most distinctly yesterday, and that O'Conor Don's examination of one of the witnesses was directed to show the absolute necessity of retaining Irish in our programme?—I hold entirely in the strongest way educationally with him for reasons which I will give just now.

Apropos of that it may interest the Commission for a moment; the word "Celtic" was objected to by Professor Mahaffy, and I think rightly; the word "Celtic" was objected to by the Irish members most strongly, and we find that Mr. O'Connor Power on their behalf, said that no Irish member used the word "Celtic," they all called it "Irish," everyone was satisfied with the word "Irish"; the word "Celtic" had been introduced by the Government.

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1094. Rev. Dr. SALMON.—At one point of your examination, you suggested that you had something to say on the subject of Celtic?—On that subject I entirely disagree with the views put forward yesterday by Dr. Mahaffy. All the practical universities in every country in Europe have attached very great importance to the study of Celtic from a philological point of view, and have established chairs in Celtic, and where the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge have also done so, I think it would be absolutely disgraceful in Ireland if, in university or Intermediate education, we ignored it. I have also another reason. No one will deny, and I am sure Professor Mahaffy least of all, that as a branch of learning, it is very interesting, even to men who do not belong to Ireland. But, in order to have men study it, it is evident that we must provide for others than those that come from the Irish-speaking districts; it is not from the poor people of Connemara and Donegal that we shall get our eminent Irish scholars; it is from men highly educated in other languages who take it up as a matter of study. But if these men only hear of it when they go to a university, it is, as a rule, too late for them to begin it then, for during the university period they will only have got through the elements. And, therefore, I think that in order to keep up the supply, which I hope will be kept up and very largely increased, the supply of men skilled not alone in modern Irish, but in the older Irish of the ancient documents, many of which have not yet been brought to the knowledge of the world, we should have in the National education and in the Intermediate education, and going on through the university, such provision as will lead from the elementary knowledge of Irish, even in the non-Irish speaking districts, to the very highest and best attainments in the language. We have had very distinguished men who do not belong to Irish-speaking districts.

1095. There is a Professor of Irish in Trinity College?—Certainly.

1095A. And in the Royal University?—Yes; and in Stephen's Green—Father Hogan.

1096. And examinations are held in the Royal University in Irish?—Yes. The objection was made that the marks in Irish are too high in the sense that sometimes marks in Irish are more generously given than in mathematics or French. That may be true, but it is also true of German, for instance. Anyone familiar with the

marking in the Intermediate education examinations will know that German is more highly marked than French. Why, I cannot tell, except that the Germans are more generous. There is a more high per-centage in German than in French, and it may be that there may be a somewhat higher rate in Irish. But the proof that that has not led to any abuse is the fact that there are exceedingly few students in the country taking it up.

1097. You say it is in a philological sense that you chiefly regard the Irish as valuable?—Oh, no. I use that argument against Professor Mahaffy. I am an Irishman, and regard it from many other points of view. I merely said that in reply to his objection. From an educational point of view, I regard the study of Irish as very valuable. The men who are bi-lingual have, I think, a very considerable educational force acting in themselves in a certain sense unconsciously. From the fact that they are translating from one language to another, from the language in which they think to the other language in which they express themselves, they acquire a power of analysis and observation, and those other gifts which we seek to develop in the study of Latin or French. Of Switzerland and Alsatia, the observation has been made—that the fact that the country is bi-lingual leads to a very much higher intellectual condition than in those who use only one language.

1098. It exercises the faculties of reflection and observation?—Yes; reflection, observation, and analysis; for a man is accustomed to think in one's language, and he wants to convey his thoughts as accurately as he can into the other.

1099. In what course or in how many courses in the Middle and Senior Grades would you propose to put Irish?—I should leave it all through as an extra language to be selected. Along with the fixed classics and mathematics, I would leave the other two subjects to the choice of the candidates.

1100. In the classical course you would give the option of taking Irish?—Oh, certainly, and the same in the mathematical course. I would never make the whole course obligatory. I would take the characteristic of the course and make that essential, and then give a choice of the other subjects.

1101. You would make it optional to take Celtic in any course?—Yes, with German or French, or any other modern language.

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1158. About this Irish question. What I really think is that the teachers get pupils to learn the language who do not want to study it at all and in order to make up marks. There is no doubt that when it is found out that when you can get a certain number of marks in Irish that you could not get otherwise, you bribe the pupils to take up a language the utility of which as a philological subject is acknowledged, but which in real life is of no practical use. At a medical examination the other day one of the subjects

was a modern language, and one of the candidates brought up Welsh?—And no examiner to be found, I suppose.

1159. Do you mean to say that an examiner would refuse to examine a boy in Welsh. I believe they found a courageous examiner who did undertake to examine him. But I think that in those examinations you must take care that your methods are not such as to encourage people to take up useless subjects?—It is in the power of the Board if they find on the statement of experts that the system of marking is not satisfactory compared with the other courses, it is then in the power of the Board to check its own examiners.

1160. How could you check the Irish examiners when you don't know Irish?—On the report of the experts.

1161. I agree as to the advantages of the bi-lingual principle. But the number of places where the people are bi-lingual in Ireland is small. The boys who come from Connaught are not superior?—In my experience, as far as the intellectual standard is concerned, Kerry is in the forefront of Ireland.

1162. We cannot get Kerry men to come to us?—There may be other reasons for that, Provost. If you transfer the prizes to me, I think I could get Kerry men.

1163. O'Conor Don.—You don't propose that the number of marks given to Irish should be out of proportion to the difficulty of the subject?—I would place Irish on the level of a modern language. I would ask the examiner then to frame his paper so, that the difficulty of his paper would be equal to that in a modern language. But I would not begin by saying: the examination is easy, and I will lower the marks in Irish.

1164. Rev. Dr. Salmon.—Suppose there was a member of Parliament very much interested in Oriental commerce, and that he said that it was highly important that men should be given an opportunity of learning Chinese; and suppose he said they should put Chinese into the course, and that because Chinese was a difficult language, it ought to get twice as many marks as any others?—I would not give it more. As a matter of fact, I don't think the marks for Celtic are quite so many?—I don't remember at the moment.

1165. In the Royal University, the marks are not so many?—They are 700 for French and German, and only 600 for Irish.

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1192. Dr. Todd Martin.—In regard to Irish, the complaint has been made that a quite undue proportion of the exhibitioners in the Junior Grade is made up of those who have taken Celtic as the modern language?—I believe there is some foundation, in fact, for the statement that occasionally the marks given in Irish are disproportionate to the difficulty of the examination paper, and the difficulty of preparing the quantity of work required. The boys who

come up from Irish-speaking districts have a very great advantage over the other boys. The boys who have teachers who, themselves, are familiar with Irish, have an enormous advantage, too. If there be combined with that a certain general facility in the papers, it is quite clear that these boys will obtain very high marks, and under your system they get double marks for all above 75 per cent.

1193. It has been pressed upon us very much, that the present system encourages teachers to select subjects that will pay, irrespective of their relation to the future career of the student?—Certainly.

1194. Suppose we apply that to Celtic. In how far is it likely that a knowledge of the Irish tongue will assist a boy in his future career?—Not largely, certainly.

1195. So that a very large proportion of those who take Celtic are being injured so far as preparation for their future career is concerned?—Taken from another subject. But the reason is not from the nature of the subject, but from the nature of the examination paper. If a new examiner was put on, and if, instead of securing an average of 75 per cent., it was found that in Irish the boys only secured an average of 45 per cent., you would have next year a very great falling off in the number of boys who took Irish. And, therefore, it is not the fact that the subject is Irish which is responsible, but it is the fact of the comparative facility of scoring, due to the nature of the examination.

1196. I am not directing my attention to that point. Suppose you take the future of the Irish boy. He must distinguish himself probably in the English-speaking world. His knowledge of Celtic won't help him as a commercial man to any extent, or in any other avocation, unless he goes to live in a Celtic-speaking district. In these circumstances, don't you think that every boy who is encouraged to take Irish, is, in so far as that is concerned, withdrawn from the subjects that will promote his future career?—If the only purpose of education was the future utility in life, I would say that Irish would be a subject rather injurious than otherwise. But I could not admit in any sense that the object of education was wholly utilitarian. Music, for instance, does not promote the future career of a boy. It is, in fact, a temptation to go into society. There are many other accomplishments which do not add to a boy's chances of getting on in the world, but which it is still very desirable should form a part of his education. And I think that for every Irishman a knowledge of Irish may be regarded as one of those accomplishments.

1197. Then it is an ornamental subject?—Certainly, in Ireland.

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1246. Most Rev. Dr. WALSH.—I pass to another subject that you have been asked many questions about, the Irish language—Celtic, as we are more or less obliged to call it by the Act of Parlia-

ment. I fear that from what was said here an opinion may be created that the Irish language is unduly favoured by our system of marking and examination. You are not of that opinion?—No.

1247. Or that Irish gets any advantages over languages like French, German, or Italian?—No.

1248. Please read from this last published report the percentage of boys who passed in 1897 in Celtic?—82.6.

1249. In French?—82.6; exactly the same number.

1250. So far as that goes, there is nothing that shows it is easier to get on in Celtic than in French?—No.

1251. Now, the percentage of passes in German?—86.6.

1252. In Italian?—93.1.

1253. Now, take the result of the pass, and see what encouragement is given the pupils to take up each subject. You have the programme?—Yes.

1254. In the Preparatory Grade what are the marks in Celtic? 500.

1255. In German?—700.

1256. In French?—700.

1257. Now in the Junior Grade?—French 700, German 700, Celtic 600.

1258. And in the Middle and Senior Grades?—The same.

1259. Well now, is there anything in these lists of marks to show that, for instance, the German language is marked in this way on account of its commercial importance?—No. Commercial German gets 200 marks more.

1260. You have told us that the number of marks in Celtic, in each case, is lower than for French or German?—Yes.

1261. Do those higher marks for French include Commercial French?—No. Including the marks for Commercial French there would be 900 for French or German, and only 600 for Celtic; and in consideration of these marks and subjects there is only a very small number of passes.

Extract from the evidence of the Very Rev. M. Devitt, S.J., Rector, Clongowes Wood College.

5711. I would ask leave to speak on behalf of the Kildare Archæological Society with regard to Irish. I would ask to put in a letter from Lord Mayo, which he sent to me last Thursday, understanding at the time that I was to be examined on Friday. The letter is dated from Palmerstown, Straffan:—"Dear Father Devitt,—I understand that you are to give evidence before the Commission on the Intermediate education question. As a good deal has been said about the Celtic language by some of the witnesses, I think it well, as president of the County Kildare Archæological Society, to say that if Celtic were ever forgotten in Ireland, Irish

Archæology would suffer an irreparable loss. When Dr. O'Donovan was in County Kildare at the time of the survey of Ireland, he found it impossible to identify many places in consequence of the ignorance of Irish in this county. It is most important, in the interest of Irish history and archæology, that the Celtic language should be preserved, and the best way, therefore, of preserving it is to have it taught in Ireland.—I remain, yours sincerely, MAYO, President, County Kildare Archæological Society."—I may add that in the County Kildare a great deal of interest is taken in Irish archæology, and it is a subject of regret with a great many eminent members (who come from all classes and creeds without any religious or political distinction) that they had not had in their youth an opportunity of learning the elements at least of the Irish language.

5712. CHAIRMAN.—You are in favour of our continuing Celtic, as one of the subjects of examination?—Yes; or Irish, I suppose we should call it. I am keeping to the Act of Parliament.

5713. Do you wish to say anything more in reference to Celtic?—No. I agree with the witnesses who have already given evidence, and I do not wish to detain you upon that point; I merely wished to bring under the notice of the Commission that from the historical or archæological point of view a new interest has arisen, and I submit that is an additional reason for teaching the language.

5714. I suppose you know, from the history of the Intermediate Education Act, that the attention of Parliament was specially directed to the question whether Celtic should be included within the subjects of examination, and that they deliberately altered the draft of the Act in committee so as to include Celtic?—Yes.

Extract from the evidence of the Rev. J. H. Bernard, D.D., F.T.C.D.

4345. CHAIRMAN.—I observe that you suggest the removal of Celtic from Class B and to place it in Class D?—Yes.

4346. You don't think it a subject of equal educational importance with Greek and Latin, but I suppose you think Celtic a valuable subject in a philological point of view?—I have no personal knowledge of it, but from what I have heard from specialists I understand that Middle Irish and Old Irish are important in a philological point of view.

4347. You say "Irish" instead of Celtic?—Yes.

4348. Rev. Dr. SALMON.—But if you replace Celtic by Irish you should exclude Welsh and Gaelic, and in a philological point of view Irish alone would be very inadequate—you should take also the kindred languages?—Don't understand me as wishing to exclude

it altogether. I merely suggest its removal from Class B. to Class D.

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4397. Mr. Justice MADDEN.—With regard to Celtic or Irish, do you regard it as important that there should be developed in this country a succession of Irish scholars like O'Donovan and Whitley Stokes?—Certainly.

4398. That could hardly be expected, if Irish did not form an optional part of the course?—I do not think so. I do not think you can expect more students, in the proper sense, of Irish than of Hebrew. Hebrew does not form part of the curriculum of ordinary schools; yet Hebrew is studied, and I would say the same of Celtic.

4399. Do you not think the inclusion of Celtic in the course tends to keep up the study of Celtic?—Possibly. I wish to observe that I do not want its removal from the course, but I suggest that it should be removed from Class B to Class D. That is because it is not, in my opinion, of the same importance as Greek and Latin.

4400. I suppose you regard the study of the early history of Ireland as of great importance; does not the encouragement of the study of Celtic tend to encourage the study of Irish history?—Of course, the study of Irish history is desirable for every Irishman; but that can be studied without any knowledge either of the modern tongue or of the old Celtic.

4401. Does it not tend to excite curiosity on the subject?—I think it extremely important that the study of Celtic should be continued from a linguistic point of view, and I think it important to include the modern Irish in the Intermediate system; but I do not regard it as of equal importance with Greek and Latin, and therefore I would not put it in the same class.

Extract from the evidence of the Very Rev. J. Daly, President, Diocesan Seminary, Ballaghadereen.

12630. . . . With regard to the study of Irish, I would suggest that the Board deal considerately, and, I may add, reverently with the language. It is worth preserving. Here, again, will be found useful work for a small number of inspectors, skilled Gaelic scholars, to organise, and, by their presence, to encourage the proper teaching of Irish. I lay stress upon the "proper" teaching of Irish, as I consider that it would be better to let the language die with honour than to have it taught on the basis of English pronunciation.

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12736. Dr. BARKLEY.—Father Daly, you told us of a peculiar system of teaching Irish. Does that prevail in districts where Irish is a spoken language, or only in places where it is taken up as an extra subject, in order to get marks for the Intermediate?—It does

not prevail in districts where Irish is spoken, but it prevails in other districts where it is not spoken, but where it is merely taken up as a subject for gaining marks.

12737. You propose to transfer Irish history from the English course to the Irish course. Would not one result of that be, that a very large number of our candidates would have no Irish history at all in their course?—Yes, that would be a result.

12738. Is that a desirable result, do you think?—Well, that is not desirable.

12739. Mr. Justice MADDEN.—You, probably, did not anticipate that when you made the suggestion?—No; I would willingly see the extension of the number of schools that taught Irish upon a solid and scientific basis.

12740. Dr. BARKLEY.—We cannot expect many schools in parts of the country where Irish is not a spoken language, to take it up as one of the subjects they teach?—I did not anticipate that difficulty, and withdraw the suggestion.

12741. Mr. Justice MADDEN.—You have an open mind?—Yes.

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The Irish Language and Irish Intermediate Education.

III.

DR. HYDE'S EVIDENCE.

[PREFATORY NOTE.]

THIS pamphlet contains the evidence given before the Viceregal Commission of Inquiry by the President of the Gaelic League. Dr. Hyde's evidence takes account, to some slight extent, of Dr. Mahaffy's gibes and inanities, but it deals in the main with the question of the Irish language in Intermediate education on its merits. When he gave his evidence, Dr. Hyde represented some seventy branches of the Gaelic League in Ireland. Were he asked to give similar evidence to-day, he should speak as the representative of about two hundred branches.

Douglas Hyde, LL.D., President of the Gaelic League examined.

9195. CHAIRMAN.—Dr. Douglas Hyde, the Committee of the Gaelic League have stated that you will bring before us their views? —Yes; I have been deputed to do that.

9196. Will you kindly tell us what they are?—I must premise that the Gaelic League is an organisation which is a teaching body, and engaged in doing voluntarily teaching work that the Government has not done. It consists of ninety-two branches, of which seventy branches are in Ireland. The numbers in each branch vary from 50

to 400, in or about, so that it is an important body engaged in important educational work. It also conducts a monthly magazine, and, until recently, conducted a weekly paper in Irish, and on Irish matters.* It also holds an Oireachtas, or Eisteddfod, at which prizes to the amount of £100 or £150 are given away for literary excellence in poetry and prose. Wherever a branch of the Gaelic League is established it is of considerable educational importance in reaching the people, because it trains the people in oratory, in power of expression, in æsthetic appreciation of literature, and in song and in music, and it holds classes which are attended very largely by the people in the neighbourhood. All this is done through the medium of the Irish language, which—I lay importance upon this—is the only language in which the people appear to be approachable on these subjects. I desire to give evidence as to the necessity of giving Irish a far better place in any system of Intermediate education than it has hitherto enjoyed. Before I do that, I wish to describe briefly the conditions which, when the Gaelic League was founded, it found prevailing all over the country—north, south, east, and west; and to point out the work which the Gaelic League has been doing in neutralising those conditions; and to point out further that any attempt at disparaging Celtic or Irish upon the Intermediate programme will set back and neutralise the efforts that the Gaelic League has been making in an educational direction. The conditions we found were briefly these. We found, wherever we went, and we went over about ten or eleven counties of Ireland, whenever we entered a house, the parents speaking one language and the children speaking another. We found that if you addressed the children in their parents' language they hung their heads for shame, and they slunk out of the cabin like whipped hounds, as if you had pointed some blot in the escutcheon, or some crime that they had been guilty of. When we saw that, we began to think that things were not right. We found that an Irish-speaking child has a most extensive vocabulary. A friend of mine resided for three months in the Isles of Arran, and during those three months he took down the vocabulary of people who could neither read nor write, and found that they had a vocabulary of 2,500 words. I have taken a vocabulary of 3,000 words in a place where Irish is nearly a dead language, and if you go down to the really Irish-speaking places, especially in Cork or Kerry, I should think the ordinary vocabulary would be about 6,000 words, as a language actually in use in a most intimate way. I need not tell you that the ordinary English peasant has a vocabulary of only about 500 words, or, perhaps, at the most, 800 words. An ordinary English-speaking peasant is a most inferior animal to the ordinary Irish peasant, for that reason.

9197. Mr. Justice MADDEN.—You mean a vocabulary in Eng-

* Almost immediately after Dr. Hyde's evidence was given the Gaelic League founded another weekly organ, which it continues to publish.

lish?—Yes. We thought that to allow this splendid vocabulary and all the ideas it gives rise to, to lie dormant was a sheer waste of intellectual power. Then we found that the people were not only ashamed of their only language, but were ashamed of their own Irish surnames, in every possible instance translating them and changing them, and the result of the change is positively disastrous to Ireland as a country, because supposing some Irishman goes to America, and throws some bridge across some river, or makes some startling discovery, that man has changed his name, and the credit does not go to Ireland or the Irish race; but to somebody else altogether. For instance, we see that the Irish race has given a President to the Free States of America, and has given a President to France. If M'Kinley had done what so many others of his name did, and signed himself Ginly, he would have been put down as a Saxon, or if M'Mahon had changed his name, the Irish race would have lost the credit of those men. Out of 400 O'Byrnes in New York, only four of them had retained their name of O'Byrne; all the rest had become Burns. The Gaelic League thought this a great calamity. I have given instances elsewhere of the way in which about 300 surnames of Irishmen have been changed, and they were being changed every day, until the League was started in order to combat it. This Commission alone have had instances of it. Many of the name of O'Sheehan have called themselves Hydes, and I hear the M'Gaffeys, a branch of the M'Devitt in Donegal, are calling themselves Mahaffy, and the O'Crowleys have also, I believe, become Crawley.

9198. Is it through the influence of the Gaelic League that the M'Gaffeys are calling themselves Mahaffy?—I do not know whether Dr. Mahaffy, who gave evidence before this Commission is of that branch of the M'Gaffeys or not, but I have been told of a branch of the M'Gaffeys who have become Mahaffys. We find the same thing reflected in our Christian names. A clergyman, Father O'Reilly, told me when he was on the Australian mission, it was almost impossible to get Irish parents to christen the children by the name of the Irish patron saint, St. Patrick. And the Bishop of Auckland said: "Whenever I am called upon to baptise an Irish child, if they put in an Irish name at all they put it at the tail of half-a-dozen other names, for example, "Ferdinand Robert Augustus Patrick," Patrick being given in a shame-faced sort of whisper at the end. The same thing holds good with regard to a second Irish Christian name, that of the other Irish patron saint—Saint Brigid. You hear it said, "God forbid that I should handicap my child in life by calling her Brigid." It is to efface that state of things that the Gaelic League has come in. In Scotland, for instance, "Macintyre" has remained, but not a single Irish M'Intyre has remained. "Mickey Free" was really a M'Intyre; it was just a chance that he was not Mickey Carpenter, because the name may be translated that way too. Then, in the same way, with regard to songs. We never found people singing a native song, such as

"Eileen Aroon" or any of the deeply beautiful Irish songs that have elicited the admiration of almost everybody acquainted with the music of song. A lady in County Galway lately asked one of those Irish-speaking peasants, "Sing me a real Irish song for these English friends that are staying with me," and the man began to sing, "Where did you get that hat, where did you get that tile," as a typical Irish song. I am happy to say that owing to the influence of the Gaelic League I had a letter the other day from that lady saying that the workmen who are planting a wood there for her, have bound themselves together to speak nothing in future but Irish. It seems to us that no good can result to national character from such a state of things as that, where the children are ashamed of their names, ashamed of their past, of their national games, and of their national songs. No wise Government, unless it was deliberately playing the game to weaken the people, would have allowed such a tone of mind as that to have arisen, and, in connection with this, I wish to read one line from a letter from Mr. York Powell. Mr. York Powell is Regius Professor of History at Oxford. He says, "I am convinced that if the English in Ireland, and the English and Scotch settlers in Ireland, had chosen to encourage the study of Irish, they would have made things, politically and socially, much better and easier. There is still time to do much in this direction if the Government is wise and shrewd. I am not, as you know, a 'mystic' or a believer in 'Celtic glamour,' or the rubbish (good-natured fantastic rubbish, but still rubbish to my mind) that is being talked now a good deal; and I do not like it, because it is based upon a lot of idle theories that cannot hold water or fire, or any other decent element, and I am not writing to you as a politician, and I have no 'row to hoe.' It is as a scholar, and as one who has a practical acquaintance with education, and with schools and school-work, that I state my deliberate opinion that it would be a very grave and retrograde step for the Royal Commission to try to do away with the study of Celtic as a school subject. It is a good subject, a useful subject, and a subject that, far from being discouraged, should be encouraged by any who really care for education in the true sense in Ireland." Well, the Gaelic League is trying to undo that tone of mind, and I feel certain that in this real educational effort, as far as that part of its work goes, it has the sympathy of all the Commissioners. But, it may be alleged, and it has often been alleged to me, that this is all very fine and very sentimental, but that the man who translates his name from O'Brollahan into Guthrie, or from MacRory into Rogers, the man who would blush if you spoke to him in the language that his father and mother spoke, who sings "Over the garden wall" instead of "Eileen Aroon," is just as well fitted for the battle of life, and many people think he is better fitted, than the man who is true to his ancestral past. It is a matter of experience with the Gaelic League, which has ramifications over all the country, with branches in eighteen counties, that it has seen reason at every hand's turn to discredit

such a theory as that, and to disbelieve it; and a book which I happened to be reading the other day—"Beddoe's Races of Great Britain," I think is the name of it—proved by statistics that the Welsh people, when they went abroad, got on better as merchants and shopkeepers, and made more money than any of the other inhabitants of Great Britain, and yet it is the Welsh alone with whom this love for their ancestral language and ancestral customs is a positive passion. The Gaelic League believes that the principle of nationality, rightly understood, and altogether apart from politics—I lay stress upon that, altogether apart from politics—the reverence for antiquity, and the principles of patriotism in a non-political sense—we believe that not only have they a moral, but a high economic value as well. We thoroughly believe in the truth of what Mr. Gladstone once said in speaking to the Welsh: "The attachment to your country has in it in some degree the nature both of an appeal to energy and an incitement to its development, and likewise no few elements of a moral standard." In that we thoroughly concur. Now, the raising or the lowering of the status of the national language in the national education, and especially of the Intermediate Board, will have a powerful indirect influence, either in discouraging or encouraging the growth of such a sentiment as obtains in Ireland, and which we attempt to neutralise. A feeling of snobbishness, a want of national self-respect and national self-reliance—these are the great enemies of the Irish language, and the Board, by raising the national language to its proper place in the system of national education, will gain a victory over these. The study of it will create amongst Irish boys, more than any other study, perhaps, feelings of national and personal self-respect, in which they are at present so deplorably wanting, but without which we, of the Gaelic League, believe that no healthy prosperity is possible. We thoroughly believe in what Lord Farrer, Lord Welby, and Mr. W. B. Currie say, at page fifty-one of the final report of the Financial Relations Commission, where they write that "the absence of these qualities (of independence and of self-reliance) has, in our opinion, been the main cause of the backward condition which so exceptionally distinguishes Ireland from the rest of the United Kingdom." But the people who are taught to regard the language of their homes, and of their ancestors, as a thing to be ignored, or to be ashamed of, who see it degraded, not merely below English, but below two foreign languages, are they likely to possess such qualities? I now come to the national reasons for encouraging the national language. National, in a non-political sense, I repeat again. Up to the great famine of 1847, Irish was, roughly speaking, the language of the whole of Ireland, except the north-east corner of it, and it has been spoken there for 2,000 years, not only by the Milesians themselves, but by the children of every invader who gained footing in this island—Normans, Danes, Elizabethans, and Cromwellians. The history of modern Irish literature swarms with

the names of Keatings, Cusacks, Condons, Englishes, and other non-Milesians, who became Irish through the force of the national language. Irish was the language, if not of the father, then of the grandfather, and if not of the grandfather, then, certainly, of the great-grandfather, of almost every boy examined before the Intermediate Board at the present day. The very cast of their features, the expression of their faces, their laryngeal peculiarities, their accent in speaking—all this is largely the product of the Irish language spoken for hundreds or thousands of years by all who went before them. The very English which they speak swarms with Irish idioms. To these boys, Irish, though at present a lost language, is not a foreign language. To it they respond, and they respond with vigour and quickness. Now, it requires a long and tedious training to make a Celt or a Teuton read himself into the spirit of classical literature, and into the spirit of the Greeks and Romans; because he belongs to a different race from the Greeks and Romans, they are alien races, and he must read himself with pain and loss of time into their thoughts in order to appreciate their literature. On the other hand, an Irishman, even though he has lost the Irish language altogether, will yet imbibe the benefits of classical study from Irish literature in a way he could not do from any other, because every fibre of his being will pulsate and thrill, responsive to some chord in the Irish language, which was the language of his ancestors before him. I wish to put in a letter on that subject which I received from a lady, who is, at least as much identified with education in Ireland as any who have been examined before this Commission, but who does not wish me to give her name. She writes, "When I began to learn Irish, I felt as though the words were not unfamiliar to me, and my mind went out naturally to them. I felt as if they were drawing out of me something that I had not known was there. It seemed to me that till then I had not been myself, and was now finding myself; or that, underlying what I had been, there was another self with possibilities of thought, and feeling, and expression that I had been totally unconscious of. Then followed an immense regret that I am now too old to learn Irish well, and that I shall never be able to express my thoughts in my own language. I never experienced any feelings of the same kind in beginning any other language, and I have attempted a few." Indeed she has attempted many of them. "You may make any use you please of what I have written, provided you do not make it easy to identify me." In thorough agreement with that, I wish just to read a line out of a long letter—which I desire to put in, but which I will not trespass upon the time of the Commission by reading the whole of—by the author of "The Cuchullin Saga," published the other day in London. The author is Miss Hull, who is secretary of the Irish Texts Society, and who is on the Committee of the Irish Literary Society over there. Her testimony is important, because it shows the effect that the teaching of Irish

has upon the denationalised Irishmen of London. "I may say," she says, "that, personally, the study of Irish exercises over me a fascination which I have never experienced in learning any other modern tongue, and I find that it has the same immense interest for our students here. I have never seen anything to compare with the enthusiasm and earnestness with which the study of the language has been taken up. It appears to exercise both an intellectual and a moral influence over the students. Many of them are young men engaged all day in various public offices, and young women, employed in the General Post Office. Yet, after a hard day's work, they meet together to study the language with an energy and perseverance, which I have never seen applied to any other intellectual pursuit. While in their holidays they find a new and healthful field of recreation in gathering the folk-lore and songs and studying the antiquities of their own parts of the country. Surely every possible facility should be put in the way of such rational and wholesome recreations and pursuits. That all these students should become scholars of the older tongue is, of course, not to be expected; such extended studies require leisure and long-continued application. Some of them, however, are pursuing their studies further, and are making themselves practically useful in the compilation of dictionaries, the collection of MSS., and the dissemination of healthy Irish literature, to counteract the debasing influence of the cheap and unwholesome English sensational fiction that is circulated among the peasant classes in Ireland." Irish is still spoken over one-third of Ireland, and by one-seventh of its population, and besides those who habitually speak it, many thousands understand something of it, and their English is Irish idiom in an English garb. Irish is largely spoken in the Highlands of Scotland by nearly as many people who know no English as in Ireland itself; I believe, at all events, by about 40,000 people. It has taken a firm hold in Canada, and one of the pleasantest experiences I ever had was meeting an officer who was stationed in New Brunswick, who was a great grandson of a member of one of the great Scotch clans, banished after Culloden. He spoke Scotch Gaelic perfectly, and he told me that it had taken root all over Prince Edward's Island. I need not say that the fact of our both speaking Irish was of enormous value to me, they immediately put me upon the mess, and the officer showed me every possible consideration. Consequently, Irish is the living tongue of as many people as speak half-a-dozen modern languages of Europe—Greek, Servian, Bulgarian, Norwegian, or Danish. Consequently, no system of Irish education can possibly ignore its existence. I have heard it argued that there is no genuine desire amongst the Irish people to take up the study of Irish. On the contrary, there is a tremendously strong and constantly-rising tide of opinion in favour of it. During the passing of the Intermediate Education Act, a memorial, signed by forty or fifty Irish Members of Parliament, was presented in favour of including Irish among the

subjects. The result of including it, even though it has only been within the last eight or ten years that it has begun to bear fruit, has been to enormously stimulate intellectual activity in Ireland, and has amply justified the prescience and foresight of the statesmen who included it in the Intermediate course. In order to prove that, I may say that when I first came to Dublin, I used to go into the bookshop of old John Daly, in Anglesey-street, and I saw there on the shelves the four volumes of the Transactions of the Ossianic Society in Irish, which he was unable to sell. Thanks to the intellectual activity that has been developed in Ireland during the last few years, largely owing to the inclusion of Irish in Intermediate Education, every one of those books has been sold out, so that it is impossible now for love or money to get a copy of them. I printed a book of "Love Songs," which went through two editions immediately, although it is an Irish book. There are more books being printed in Dublin in Irish, outside of religious books, than are being printed in the English language. There were twenty-five books of different kinds published by the Gaelic League; I have their names here. The Commission will remember that when the Board reduced the marks for Irish in the Preparatory Grade in 1896, the Irish members immediately moved an Address, asking her Majesty to withhold her assent from the rules, and a considerable number of Welsh and Scotch members supported them. This shows that the Irish representatives, so far as they count for anything, are nearly unanimous in claiming a better place for the national language than it at present possesses. The feeling of the public has been made manifest by numerous public meetings in all parts of Ireland, attended by many of the clergy, and local representative men, claiming more favourable facilities for the teaching of Irish. At a congress held in the Mansion House, presided over by the Lord Mayor in 1894, a similar claim was put forward. I now come to another reason for the encouragement of the study of Irish. One of the most important of the secondary reasons is that you will never have university students of Irish unless you have Intermediate ones, nor Intermediate ones unless you have primary ones. Now, in primary education, Irish, so far as it is admitted as a study, is placed upon a full level with Latin, Greek, French, and German, and in the university course it is placed not indeed on a par with Latin and Greek, but on a full level with French and German, and English. Why is not the same thing done on the Intermediate Education Board? In it alone is Irish degraded to a rank lower than two foreign languages. As an optional subject for national school teachers, Irish may be taken up by Queen's Scholars and by teachers on the same conditions as French, or any other optional subject, and it scores as highly. In the examination for inspectors of national schools, which is one of the most important in Ireland, Irish counts 500 marks, exactly the same as English, French, or German. But, in the Intermediate system alone it is heavily handicapped. In the

Preparatory Grade it counts only 500, while two foreign languages, French and German, are accorded 700, and in the other three grades Irish is 100 marks below each of them. Moreover, to make things still more unfair, 200 marks are added in the commercial course in French and German, thus making these languages count just one-third more than the national language of Ireland. I know that it is provided by Rule 50 that, in awarding medals in modern languages, account shall not be taken of the answering of a student in the commercial course; but no such rule holds good with regard to exhibition and book prizes, and that is one of the things the Gaelic League wishes to call attention to. Now, by making this discrepancy between the value of Irish as an Intermediate subject, on the one hand, and as a primary and university subject on the other, the continuity of Irish education suffers, and we run a deadly risk that the race of Irish scholars, who are needed for the elucidation of our enormous mass of MSS., amounting at the least to 1,000 octavo volumes, will be cut off. "The more," says Professor Zimmer, "I studied the Irish language of the ancient MSS., the more indispensable I found a solid knowledge of the modern Irish language." "What material will you provide for your university professors of Celtic studies," writes to me Kuno Meyer, "if you freeze the fountain at the spring." "It must be kept in mind," writes to me Dr. Holger Pedersen, of Copenhagen, "that there is a connection between the elementary education and the learned studies; to advocate the abolition of Irish teaching would, therefore, be the same as proposing that Ireland should altogether leave the study of her own nationality to Continental scholars, who will always know how to appreciate the unmatched importance of the Irish language." "If," writes to me Professor Windisch, "a knowledge of the Irish language should vanish out of the educated circles of the people, and become more and more confined to a few professional scholars, then once more the doors will be thrown open wide to all kinds of wild theories such as we had in plenty at the beginning of the century." But, to keep it a possession of the educated classes, it must occupy in the Intermediate system at least as good a place as it occupies in primary education, and in the university system. And for what reason should it not? I now come to a very important part of my evidence, and that is the value of Irish as a spoken language, and the possibility of teaching it as such. Now, the possibility of teaching Irish as a spoken language is infinitely greater than the possibility of teaching French or German. Very few schools or academies in Ireland have real Frenchmen or Germans as teachers, and even where they have a Frenchman or German resident in the school, will half-an-hour's class work out of the twenty-four hours teach a child to become a bi-linguist? It is absolutely impossible. On the other hand, wherever you go throughout Ireland you will find Irish people, with whom you may, if you wish, converse, and you can become an expert bi-linguist. Dublin swarms with them; Belfast is full of them;

Londonderry and Galway abound with Irish speakers; there is scarcely a spot in Ireland where you will not find them. Now, the importance of bi-lingualism is enormous in education. It has been proved over and over again that the Welsh, who know both languages—Welsh and English—master French and German far more easily in Welsh schools than those who know English only. It must, however, be taught grammatically, and in order that it may be taught grammatically, it must be encouraged in all the three grades of education, but especially in the Intermediate. If you allow the enormous vocabulary of Irish speakers' minds to lie dormant, it is a sheer waste of intellectual power. And Irish is not a foreign tongue even to speakers of English, as I said before, because their whole speech is shot through with Irish idioms.

9199. Most Rev. Dr. WALSH.—That is, Irish speakers of English?—Yes. Then, too, it must be remembered that Irish is a very beautiful and highly inflected language, one regular, for the most part, in its declensions and conjugations; it is very subtle and accurate in its idioms, and fully as well adapted for educational purposes as any modern European language. It is now once again putting forth new leaves and buds, and day by day is assimilating fresh words to bring it into touch with the requirements of the present day. It is still spoken, and well spoken, by a large number of educated men in Ireland, and it is only about two months ago since I had the pleasure of attending a large meeting, at which the Primate of All Ireland took the chair, and beside him was the Bishop of Raphoe, and half-a-dozen monsignors, a number of priests and educated people, and not one word was spoken by anyone through the whole course of that meeting except in Irish. So that it is not a dead language. It is both the language of many of our educated men, and the language of a large portion of our uneducated men. It has an extraordinarily large vocabulary, and a grand power of word formation, so that any objections put to it by anonymous experts as a rugged or ragged language, fall absolutely to the ground, and to this I hold in my hand the deliberate testimony of nearly all the greatest scientific linguists in Europe; and I would ask permission of the Commission to hand in these letters and get them printed, because they are the last word to be said on the subject by the most eminent professors of linguistic studies in Europe. I do not intend to trouble the Commission by reading out these letters in detail; I suppose it will be sufficient if I hand them in, and if they are printed hereafter.

9200. O'CONOR DON.—Perhaps you will give the names of the writers?—Certainly, I carefully eschewed——

9201. Mr. Justice MADDEN.—You might give their names, their positions, and their qualifications for forming an opinion on the subject?—I must say first that I carefully eschewed writing to any Irish scholar, such as Dr. Standish O'Grady or Dr. McCarthy; I carefully eschewed writing to any of those, because Irish is the language

of all their ancestors and their mother language, and I thought their views might possibly be looked upon as somewhat tainted. I wrote direct to Leipsic, to Dr. Ernest Windisch, and to Professor Zimmer, of Griefswald, Prussia, two of the greatest Celticists in Europe; I wrote to Dr. Kuno Meyer, of Liverpool, who is editor of "Celtische Philologie." I wrote to Dr. Stern, of Berlin; to Dr. Holger Pedersen, of Copenhagen; to Mr. Alfred Nutt, who is one of the greatest living authorities on folk-lore—the London publisher; I went to Monsieur Georges Dottin, of Rennes. I have all their letters here. I translated the German and French ones, and I beg to hand in the originals and the translations.

9202. Did you go to Mr. Whitley Stokes?—I did not go to Mr. Whitley Stokes, for the same reason—that he is Irish.

9203. CHAIRMAN.—Will you kindly hand them in, and we will have them printed?—*A propos* of the Irish language being a valuable language for teaching, I should just like to read two lines from Professor Zimmer's letter, because I know that directly opposite evidence was put in by a person who has been at the study of Irish for about two years, while Professor Zimmer has given up his life to it.

9204. Who is the person to whom you refer?—Mr. Edward Gwynn, of Trinity College. "With regard to the Irish language as a subject of instruction in the Intermediate education system in Ireland, I know of no other modern language which, regarded purely as a language, possesses a higher educational value than modern Irish for a boy who knows English. Practically, and from the point of view of modern literature, a knowledge of French and German outside of Ireland, would be certainly more valuable; but for thorough education and schooling of the mind and of the intellect, Irish stands at the very least on a level with the above-named languages, in fact is, in many respects, superior to them, because it is more characteristic, and consequently gives more matter for thought. Through the phenomena of aspiration and eclipsis peculiar to the Celtic languages, which combine some of the principal phenomena of Indo-European speech, but which are now lost in other Indo-European tongues, all but a few fragmentary remains, Irish opens up to the growing youth, who is to be educated to think, new and highly instructive linguistic points of view." He goes on to enlarge upon that at much greater length, and says, "I can think of no modern language, which, for any Irish boy, who knows English, would be more educational than Irish, if it be rightly taught in Intermediate instruction." That is the most important part of the letter. It has been said that modern Irish possesses no literature. The truth is that modern Irish possesses an enormous literature, or did possess an enormous literature.

9205. Who says that Irish possesses no literature?—I believe that Mr. Gwynn, in his evidence, has said that.

CHAIRMAN.—I have never heard that before; I thought it was admitted on all hands that Irish had an enormous literature.

9206. O'Conor Don.—It is here; I was going to ask some questions on that?—Owing to the disgusting irreverence for the past that the Irish have been guilty of, and of which I have already spoken, that large literature has suffered immensely from the destruction of MSS. In County Clare, a friend of mine went into a cabin, and found children destroying manuscripts on the floor. In one he found a story called "The Affection of Dubhlocha for Mongan"—for which the libraries of Europe had been searched through in vain, and which was afterwards discovered in the "Yellow Book of Lecan"—a single copy of it. It was printed from that, and it was edited with all the care and skill that two such world-renowned scholars as Mr. Nutt and Dr. Kuno Meyer were able to bestow upon it; and they consider it to be one of the most valuable texts in existence, as casting a light on the anthropological views of early Ireland. If that single MS. had been lost, then my MS. would have been unique. It was over 100 years old. That tearing up of MSS., and the want of interest in their own past, has enormously affected the amount of modern Irish literature, though I should think that there is still in manuscript enough of Irish written within the last 200 years to fill a couple of hundred octavo volumes. It is very hard to know what we have and what we have not. There is nobody to delve in this mine; there is no money set apart in Ireland for anybody who will do the work; it must be done by volunteers. I know that the Royal Irish Academy catalogued about one-half of the MSS. in it, and the catalogue was contained in thirteen volumes, and fills 3,448 pages; and from looking over that catalogue, and comparing it as well as I could, I came to the conclusion that about 10,000 pieces must have been catalogued, varying from, perhaps, a single verse of a song up to a long epic. Even if modern Irish possessed a less important literature than it does, I say that a language is mightier than any books that can be written in it; and if there was never a line written in it, it is still worthy of being taught to the people who speak it. I would also wish to say that in one respect modern Irish literature introduces the student to what no other language will do. There is a most marvellous system of prosody, self-evolved, self-invented, in Irish, that no other European country possesses. Even as early as the year 750, Irish poets were making most perfect rhymes, a thing not known for at least two centuries later in any other modern vernacular; and the great Zeuss, who put Celtic studies on a sure foundation, and Constantin Nigra, have strongly urged the fact that it is to the Celts that Europe owes the invention of rhyme, and the modern poets of Ireland have carried that to a perfection, that people who have not actually read their poems cannot dream of. The modern poetry of the Irish is, in my opinion, an unique literary heritage, and I wish to read two lines *apropos* of that from this letter of Miss Hull's.

9207. Mr. Justice Madden.—For that reason it does not bear translation easily?—No.

9208. It reads better in the original?—Yes; one of the letters from Dr. Windisch says that. Miss Hull says: "The natural genius of the people can flow freely only through their own vernacular. The Irish character is highly poetic and imaginative, and the expression of strong feeling is conveyed by means of very delicate and subtle similies, which cannot be expressed at all in English, but for which the Irish tongue seems to be specially fitted. See what a number of very lovely poems have been written within quite recent times by peasants in their own language, which would certainly never have been composed in any foreign tongue. Your own inimitable collection of the 'Love Songs of Connacht,' and Dr. Sigerson's fine translation in the 'Bards of the Gael and Gall,' put it into the power of English readers to judge of this for themselves. The composer of 'The Faire Hills of Eiré' was a poor exile living at Hamburg during the penal *regime*, who, in spite of the penal laws against education, succeeded in mastering the classic tongues; the impassioned and elevated poem, 'Love's Despair,' was written by a young farmer in County Cork, in the first quarter of the present century. The larger number of these later poems are written by quite poor people, and your own collection has been gathered from peasants in the humblest station. Yet these are gems of poetry which would rank high in any collection of European lyrics. I have seen no English lyrics of recent years that can approach them in grace and tenderness and in lovely melody. Surely the language that inspires and expresses thoughts like these should be encouraged by every means in the power of the State or of private individuals." I have nearly come to the conclusion now of what I wish to say. It seems to me to be absolutely necessary for every educated man that he should know something of the language of the country in which he lives. It is positively disgraceful for any educated man not to know the meaning of the name of his own house, or his own townland, or his own surroundings, or the names of his neighbours, and what they mean; and the letters which I have put in from Professor Zimmer speak very strongly upon that point. Just one word with regard to Welsh education. There is at present a Central Welsh Board, composed of representatives from the County Governing Bodies, the County Councils, the university colleges, the headmasters of Intermediate schools, and so on. This is the Board of Intermediate Education in Wales. That Central Board inspects and examines. Each County Governing Body has its own scheme; they are nearly all the same; they are based on the same lines, but they differ in details to meet local needs and wishes. This is the point that I wish to make—that in several County Governing Bodies' schemes the Welsh language is compulsory; it is not compulsory in others. Thus, in the County of Monmouth, Welsh is compulsory in the Intermediate, while in the County of Glamorgan it is optional. The first report of the Central Welsh Board, issued last year, contained

this passage from the chief inspector:—"I am glad to find that practical teachers are beginning to recognise that a systematic knowledge of the Welsh language is a great help to Welsh children in acquiring other languages. It is not the knowledge of Welsh, but the ignorance of it, that proves a hindrance to Welsh students. Teachers invariably assert that they find that children who possess a systematic knowledge of Welsh make more rapid progress in French than those who start without such knowledge. Starting from a language which has so many distinctive features, the Welsh pupil is all the more likely to be alive to the peculiar characteristics of other languages." And in connection with that, Dr. York Powell, Regius Professor of History in Oxford, was good enough to ask Mr. Edwards, a Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford, who has an unique knowledge of the working of the Welsh system of education, to write to me. This is the letter, which I also beg to put in:—"Dear Dr. Douglas Hyde,—I have heard rumours that Irish is to be given less prominence in the secondary education system of Ireland. In the face of the wonderful impulse given to education in Wales by the utilisation of Welsh, I think that any step in the direction of eliminating Irish would be very injurious to the best interests of education in Ireland. In our Welsh schools—elementary and secondary—the study of Welsh is taken up with great enthusiasm. The results are most satisfactory. One result is a striking growth in all-round excellence—in English especially. The study of Welsh arouses the children's mind in a wonderful degree, and the standard of the school rises appreciably, and in an unmistakable way, when the boys and girls are allowed to give some time to their own language. Our inspectors of elementary schools will tell you that the standard of elementary education was greatly raised by the introduction of Welsh. Our secondary education system"—that is, their Intermediate system—"is not old yet, but the influence of the study of Welsh is already beginning to tell on the literature of the country. There is a great demand for reprints of the classics—numerous in Welsh, as in Irish—and the Press is becoming more active every day"—just as is beginning to take place in Ireland, the Press is becoming more active every day. "Within the last ten years literary activity has been doubled, and the demand for Welsh books on literature, history, science, etc., is far greater than the supply. The schools and university, by giving a more important place to Welsh year after year, have given Welsh literature an impetus, a discipline, and a spirit of progress that have exceeded our most sanguine expectations. We have gained in every direction by giving Welsh an important place in our whole system, from the infant classes to the university course. The schools themselves have become more efficient; it is found to be much easier to develop the children's minds; our popular literature has been revised and brought under inspiring foreign influence—and we have gained all this, while also gaining a greater knowledge of English and of

English literature. Before any reactionary step is taken, I hope you will call the attention of your countrymen to the analogous case of Wales, where the results are so eloquent." Now, I have concluded, except to allude to the evidence that has been laid before this Commission by Dr. Mahaffy and Mr. Gwynn. I would like to take their evidence in detail, and just say one word about it. Dr. Mahaffy said that "Irish is a perfectly useless subject." It is a far more useful subject than any other language for an Irishman, who is going to reside in Ireland. If an Irishman goes to reside in France, or in Germany, then French or German is a more useful subject for him, but very few Intermediate students do that. Ninety per cent. of them remain in Ireland for the ten per cent. that go to France or Germany. "It is out of place in any practical system of education," said Dr. Mahaffy. The really unpractical system of education is the system that ignores it. "Ninety per cent.," says Dr. Mahaffy, "of Irish parents and teachers desire its abolition." Why, it is the only subject that is studied in Ireland *con amore*, and the large increase in the number of students goes to prove it. There were more boys—excluding the girls—there were more boys lately examined in Irish than there were in German, Italian, and Spanish put together. If the parents and teachers did not wish to take it up, why should the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language have sold 140,000 books since they began, and why should the Gaelic League, within the last three years, have sold 55,000 books, not 3,000 of which went to Intermediate schools? "It is the outcry of a few enthusiasts," said Dr. Mahaffy, "at best sentimental, at worst actively employed in maintaining what separation they can between Ireland and Great Britain." Well the antagonism to the Irish language is certainly, as Dr. Mahaffy evidently shows, a political one. The attempt at its retention is non-political, and sternly non-political, and one of our best supporters in the North of Ireland, the late Dr. Kane, was also the leader of the Orangemen, and the leader of the Unionist party there. I have not known Irish to be taken up with a political reason at all, but the antagonism to it is political. "The study of Irish," says Dr. Mahaffy, "can serve no other practical purpose than to widen separation." That was not Dr. Kane's opinion, and the present president of the six branches of the Gaelic League in Belfast, Dr. Boyd, is a strong Unionist and a strong Protestant. There is not a single separatist on the Council of the Gaelic League. "It is pandering to the clamour of false patriotism," said Dr. Mahaffy. If "false patriotism" consists in trying to extract the most that can be got, intellectually and morally, out of a man in Ireland, then it is a pandering to it. "Irish," says Dr. Mahaffy, "has no educational advantages, apart from philological ones." That is more than answered and torn into shreds by Professor Zimmer's and the other letters which I am going to put in. "The more complete your study of Irish," says Dr. Mahaffy, "the greater your waste of time." That simply means the more accomplished a

bi-linguist you become, the less of a man you are, and that is contradicted by commonsense. Mr. Gwynn said that a language should be taken up "for its practical utility"—there is practical utility, and very great practical utility, in taking up of Irish, for Irishmen; or else "as a valuable educational instrument"—and Irish is such a valuable educational instrument, according to the letters of these great linguists; or else, "for the interest of its literature"—and Irish does possess a literature, and a large one, and these letters will also prove that. "The number of persons speaking Irish is on the decline; consequently, do not bother about teaching it any more." But the number of people speaking both languages is, I hope, on the increase, and will be more largely on the increase, I should think. "Modern Irish has little to recommend it; its syntax is monotonous and undeveloped; its affinities to the great European languages are, except to a trained scholar, unrecognisable."

9209. Most Rev. Dr. WALSH.—Is this the Todd lecturer at the Royal Irish Academy?—Yes, the Todd lecturer. In answer to that, I say that when the Polish scholar, Curtin, first heard the word "Is mé," "I am," in Irish, he cried out with astonishment, "God bless my soul, that is the Sanscrit 'asmi.'" What was it that made Professor Blackie of Edinburgh, take up the study of Irish with such intense enthusiasm that to the end of his life he said he read every scrap of Gaelic that appeared in the Scotch newspapers with as much regularity as he read his Bible? It was because, while sitting at his breakfast in a Highland inn one day, he asked the waiter out of sheer curiosity, "What is the Irish for a mare?" "Capall," said the man. "Why that is 'caballus,' said Blackie. "What is the Irish for 'a horse?'" "Each." "Good heavens, that is 'equus,' with the gutteral preserved." From that time he pursued the study of Gaelic. "Modern Irish literature has little or no value *qua* literature," says Mr. Gwynn. "It possesses no general interest, nor any significance in the history of European thought." Well, I simply traverse that by a direct denial. Its prosody alone is a marvel; it developed rhyme before any other European nation did, and brought it to a higher level of perfection. The old valuable literature has come down in modern transcripts, and was read in every hedge school in Ireland 100 years ago. So that Irish modern literature also possesses a great deal of what is valuable in ancient Irish literature through the medium of modern transcripts, the words being somewhat modified. "The utmost that could be looked for," says Mr. Gwynn, "is that an interest be awakened here and there in a future student." Mr. Nutt's answer to that is this. "If," said Mr. Nutt, "the Intermediate Education in Ireland only produced one O'Donovan in 100 years, it would amply have justified its existence." I do not go so far as Mr. Nutt goes, because I look upon it as far more important that every student should know a little Irish, sufficient to make him a self-respecting and intelligent man. "The scientific knowledge of the language in this country," says Mr. Gwynn, "after twenty years of

Intermediate examination, stands lower than it did in the days of O'Donovan and Hennessy." That simply means that we have no O'Donovans or Hennessys at present, but if he means that there is less scientific knowledge of Irish now than there was twenty years ago, he simply is saying the thing that is not, for there are ten people who read it now for every one who read it then, and the best living grammarian of modern Irish language in the world, Mr. John M'Neill, is a product of the Intermediate Board and the Royal University, and he it was who set to rest, by a series of letters, the great controversy on "Chum," of which I doubt whether this Commission ever heard, and of which I am convinced Mr. Gwynn never heard, but which convulsed two hemispheres, and dozens of papers, both in America and Ireland. There is far and away more interest taken now in Irish, and far and away more scientific knowledge of it, than there ever was at any previous time. And I would ask you to discount Mr. Gwynn's evidence, for this reason: he knows no modern Irish, and he himself would be the first person to confess that he does not know it; you might be talking Irish to him until you were black in the face, and he would not understand one word of what you were saying. I think that that concludes the evidence that I wish to put in on behalf of the Gaelic League.

9210. CHAIRMAN.—You have examined for us upon more occasions than one, have you not?—I have been examiner in Celtic for two years.

9211. Two years ago was the first time that you examined?—It was.

9212. You are acquainted with our programme in Celtic?—Yes.

9213. It runs through our entire course?—Yes.

9214. From the Preparatory Grade to the Senior Grade?—Yes.

9215. I do not know whether you were consulted about these courses?—I was consulted about the courses that were to come into existence two years after the time that I was consulted.

9216. And did you approve of them as they were framed?—I had to approve of them——

9217. I want to ask you some practical questions, not at all as making any insinuations against what you have said. I want to come to the practical matter with which we have to deal. Supposing now that you were wholly unfettered, would you suggest any changes in the courses?—In the course of the next two years a good number of modern books will be out, and I would emphatically suggest putting them upon the course instead of old-fashioned books like "Toruigheacht Dhiarmuda agus Ghrainne" and "The Fate of the Children of Lir."

9218. But before any new books come out. We must deal with the matter practically. I think that you approved of the course, but, of course, it may be possible to improve it from time to time when your books come out?—I approved of it because it was the best that you could get at the time. But we will be able to get much better in two years time.

9219. Do you think that in order to cultivate the Irish language efficiently we ought to have *viva voce* examination as well as written examination?—I should certainly have it as a test, but I would conduct the examination as a written examination with a *viva voce* test.

9220. There should be *viva voce* examination as well as written examination?—Yes, but I would not allow the *viva voce* to count much, or at all, in the examination. The examination should be a written examination, and a *viva voce* test ought certainly to be introduced. The language is a living language.

9221. If you approve of the courses as they have been set, do I take it that your great objection to the Intermediate system, as it at present exists, is that a sufficient number of marks has not been allowed for Celtic?—That is the great objection which I have at present to it.

9222. That is the objection that we have to deal with now?—Yes.

9223. Five hundred marks only, I believe, are allowed for it?—Only 500 in the Preparatory, and 600 in the other grades.

9224. Seven hundred are allowed for French and German?—Yes.

9225. Which are modern languages?—Yes.

9226. I put out of consideration the commercial courses for the present. 1,200 marks are allowed for Greek, and 1,200 for Latin?—Yes.

9227. Of course, you are aware that all educationists insist that the study of Celtic is of great value from a philological point of view?—I set small store by that, because philologists are very few in number.

9228. You do not attach any importance to that in the consideration of whether this subject ought to be continued in our course?—Very little.

9229. Do you know what are the arrangements for teaching Celtic in Germany?—There are professorships of the Celtic languages in I do not know how many German universities; I know that Father Henebry attended the lectures of fifteen or eighteen Germans.

9230. You do not attach any importance to the inquiries that the Germans have made largely during the last half-century in reference to old Celtic literature?—I attach enormous importance to them, but not as an Intermediate study.

9231. Must there not be something to lead up to trained philological knowledge?—I meant to have made that plain.

9232. I want to ask you some questions in reference to it to bring out your view more clearly?—I attach enormous importance to it as a philological study, but the philological study is taken up by very few people, while a knowledge of Irish as a spoken and a living language is of great value to a great many people. It is, therefore, of much more importance to them than as a philological study.

9233. I suppose you are aware that in Trinity College there is an Irish professor?—I am aware that there is a so-called professor.

9234. I will read from the Calendar: "The professor of Irish lectures on two days of the week in each term." These are miscellaneous lectures in arts. "The Professor of Sanscrit and Comparative Philology lectures in each term on Celtic Philology." Now, as well as I can ascertain, there is no examination in Celtic in Trinity College in any, at least, of the undergraduate courses. Am I right in that?—There are prize examinations.

9235. Mr. Justice MADDEN.—There are prizes given?—Yes.

9236. CHAIRMAN.—There are prizes given in Celtic?—Yes.

9237. That makes the case for Celtic a great deal stronger?—Yes.

9238. You are aware that in the Royal University Celtic runs all through the course?—Yes.

9239. Commencing with the matriculation examination and extending on to the examination for the M.A. degree?—Yes.

9240. As the cream of our Intermediate students finish their courses in either the Royal University or the University of Dublin, it would appear that we could not prepare them sufficiently for those examinations unless we had some examination in Irish?—No, you could not.

9241. Coming now to the number of marks that you think ought to be attributed to it. What number of marks do you think ought to be allowed for it?—I would unhesitatingly say between French and German and English; if French and German get 700 marks, and English 1,200, I would give Irish between 900 and 1,000, and that is the view of the Gaelic League.

9242. Have you formed any view as to the comparative value, as an educational subject, of Greek and Celtic. 1,200 are allowed for Greek?—I think that Celtic is more important than Greek in many ways to an Irishman, because he will have more opportunities of using it hereafter. Greek goes in one side and out of the other, because the interest in it finishes with the publication of the prize list, but it is not so with Irish.

9243. If you put it upon a par with Greek it would be entitled to 1,200 marks if our programme stands as at present?—It would.

9244. That brings me to a question that I want to ask you, as you have studied this subject deeply. Looking upon it simply as an educational subject, are you of opinion that it is of as great value as Greek?—I have not put it upon that par at all.

9245. You are the first witness that we have had as yet who is capable of giving us information upon these matters, and I would be glad to have your opinion, if you are capable of forming one. Do you understand the question that I asked?—You asked whether Irish is of as much educational importance as Greek.

9246. I am asking whether it is of as great value as Greek in your opinion. You have read out a great number of sentences there showing the great educational value of Irish, having regard to the antiquity of it, to the inflections in the language, to many peculiarities that you can find in Celtic languages which you cannot

find in languages of more modern origin; I desire to know your view as to its value as an educational subject, just as Greek is?—My views are these, that for an Englishman, or an outsider, Greek, on account of the more perfect form of its literature, is of higher educational value than Irish; but to an Irishman, I consider Irish, because an Irishman responds more readily to it, to be of equal educational value, or very nearly so.

9247. Then you would place it at something less than Greek, and give it something more than French or German?—Exactly.

9248. Now, supposing that we did adopt your view and gave a higher amount of marks in it, do you think there ought to be any change in the programme in those subjects; should it be made more difficult in order more adequately to represent the number of marks we allotted to it?—We have asked for that; when the Gaelic League asked that Irish history should be studied along with the Irish language, we are making it more difficult, and that is one of the reasons we ask for a large increase of marks. At present Irish history is not taught at all, because the most valuable part of Irish history is that which does not touch upon English history at all.

9249. You mean in the history of the ante-Saxon times?—Yes. Irish history is not taught at all, except as it happens to come into English literature. We ask that it should be taken out of history and put under the head of Irish language.

9250. If that were done it would be equally weighted, having regard to the number of marks that was allotted to it?—I think so.

9251. I believe that during the examination of 1898 you found that there was a distinct improvement in the students in the Preparatory Grade?—Yes; which, I think, is owing to fresh books being placed on the course, and I hope that we will have some better ones in a very short time.

9252. Although there was a distinct improvement in the character of the answering of those students, still there was a falling off in numbers?—Yes.

9253. Would you attribute that to the lowering of the marks?—Yes, to the lowering of the marks.

9254. I observe that in your report, in reference to the Junior Grade, you say there was an increase of proficiency in the Junior Grade, though not in so striking a degree as in the Preparatory Grade. You then mention this: "It is noticeable that not a single one of the students even attempted to take up Keating's difficult 'Three Shafts of Death,' all, without exception, preferring the less formidable alternative book"?—Yes.

9255. Do you not think it is rather a fault in a programme of courses that there should be alternative books, one of which is much more difficult than the other?—I may answer that. Keating's "Three Shafts of Death" was put upon the course, but, thanks to the greatly renewed interest taken in Irish, it was found that the large copy published by the Royal Academy was all bought up, and nobody expected

that such a book would have been bought up for twenty years. When it was found out, the Commissioners of Education had to substitute another book for it, because we could not possibly have reprinted it in time.

9256. Then, there is no necessity at present, for our dealing with these alternative books, one being less difficult than the other?—No.

9257. Mr. Justice MADDEN.—As we all know, you have a very extensive acquaintance with Irish literature, and, therefore, I should like to call your attention to some evidence that has been given here. I refer to the evidence given by Dr. Mahaffy, to which you have already referred. In answer to the question, "In your opinion, viewing Irish as a living language, has it any educational value," he says, "None. I am corroborated by the experts in this book, one of whom finds fault with the text books at present used, or one of them, on the ground that it is either silly or indecent. I am told by a much better authority than any of them in Irish that it is almost impossible to get hold of a text in Irish which is not religious, or which does not suffer from one or other of the objections referred to." Have you any observations to make upon that statement?—I have the observations of every one of these letters tearing that sentence to rags and flitters.

9258. That is a very strong statement. Do you understand that statement to refer to contemporary Irish literature, or to ancient Irish literature?—To ancient Irish literature.

9259. So I should infer. Before you enter upon the subject in detail, I would ask you this: Does your knowledge of ancient Irish literature bear out the statement that laying aside religious works, it is difficult to find a text that is not either silly or indecent?—Not at all; Miss Hull's book on "The Cuchullin Saga" absolutely proves that to anybody who can read English.

9260. Was your attention called to a report in to-day's paper of a lecture delivered by Mr. Gwynn?—No, I did not see it.

9261. There is a report of his lecture upon a poem, the title of which I must confess to you I cannot attempt to pronounce, and he recognises in it literary merit of a high character?—Yes.

CHAIRMAN.—That is the same Dr. Gwynn that advised that Celtic should be abolished.

9262. Mr. Justice MADDEN.—It is right to say that I have read his evidence, and it is evident that he does not refer to classical Celtic works. As in that ancient Celtic work he recognises literary merit of high character, I take it that it was neither silly nor indecent, and as it was a ballad, I conclude that it was not religious. Therefore, I think that Dr. Gwynn would, at all events, be able to lecture upon a text book that was not religious, or either silly or indecent?—He might lecture on a hundred of them if he liked.

9263. It is right to Dr. Gwynn, I think, as this matter has been made public, to say that his objection is directed against the study not of ancient Celtic literature, but of modern. He says—"I suggest

that Celtic, by which term Modern Irish seems to be intended, should be struck off the lists of subjects"—for reasons which may or may not be sufficient—but it is right to point out that these observations are not directed against the study of classical Irish or ancient Irish?—I wrote to him about his evidence, and in his reply he expresses that fully. I am very sorry I did not bring his letter with me.

9264. Is that the substance of his letter?—He said nothing against ancient Irish literature.

9265. So I understood, but he differs from you in his opinion, for the reasons he has given, as to the value of modern Irish?—I traverse his statement, because he does not know modern Irish, and he would be the first to admit it.

9266. I think it is also right to call attention to this, that the witness whose evidence I have read from states, referring here to Mr. Gwynn: "He" (that is, Mr. Gwynn) "states that twenty years' study of the language under the Intermediate system has, in fact, diminished the knowledge of Irish in this country, and that there is less knowledge of Irish at the present time than there was twenty years ago." I think that does not correctly represent what Mr. Gwynn says in his paper. What he says in his written evidence is: "As a matter of fact, after twenty years of Intermediate examinations in Celtic, the scientific knowledge of the language in this country stands lower than it did in the days of O'Donovan and of Hennessy." I gather that he means not that there is less general knowledge of Irish, but that there is not the same class of scientific Irish scholars as Hennessy, O'Donovan, or O'Curry?—It simply means that at present we have not an O'Donovan or a Hennessy or an O'Curry, but we have ten times as many smaller men.

9267. Would it occur to you that we could hardly hope to have in the future Hennessys, O'Donovans, or Whitley Stokes, unless the study of Irish was made, at all events, an optional subject in Intermediate schools?—It would be most difficult, and I would beg to say that Father Hickey, Father Henebry, and Mr. M'Neill, three of the best Irish scholars of modern Irish we have at the present day, are all products, I believe, of the Intermediate and of the Royal University.*

9268. The study of Irish that you desire to have encouraged is of modern Irish?—Yes.

9269. CHAIRMAN.—Exclusively?—Oh, no.

9270. Mr. Justice MADDEN.—I want to get that quite clear. I want to understand what programme of Irish study you think ought

* It is but right to add here that Dr. Hyde's information on this point is not correct. Neither Dr. O'Hickey nor Dr. Henebry are ex-Intermediate or Royal University students. Dr. O'Hickey completed his secondary Education the very year the Intermediate Act was passed. Mr. MacNeill is an ex-Intermediate and Royal University student; but in neither course did he take Irish.

to be encouraged in Intermediate schools; is it of modern Irish, but not of modern Irish exclusively?—Of modern Irish in the first two or three grades, as modern as you can make it, and go on to the classics afterwards.

9271. You value the study of modern Irish as leading up in the case of some students to a scientific study of the language?—Certainly

9272. And in the case of very few, to the use of the language for philological purposes?—Yes.

9273. You think that the foundation should be an introduction to modern Irish as a living language?—It should be. Professor Zimmer has himself said so.

9274. Do not understand me as questioning that; I want to develop your views. Although you would begin with modern Irish, you do not intend to end there, or that students should end there?—No.

9275. You would enlist their interest in the study of Irish by introducing them to it as a spoken language?—Yes.

9276. In the hope that you might develop a race of Irish scholars such as I have mentioned, and, perhaps, here and there, a great philologist, who may use the language for philological purposes?—Yes.

9277. CHAIRMAN.—I see that in the course for the M.A Degree examination of the Royal University, they first take up the philology in Celtic?—Yes.

9278. Mr. Justice MADDEN.—You read an interesting extract from a letter from Professor York Powell, in which he attaches importance to Celtic as a school subject. Do you understand him to refer to Celtic as a living language?—Yes, as a living language. He made that plain in a second letter.

9279. You were about to expand your answer to the question as regard Irish literature, by referring to text-books that could be used other than of the class which, it is suggested, are either silly or indecent. I stopped you, I think. Would you kindly expand your answer?—I should best expand it by reading an opinion I meant to give on literature, but I have got my papers so hopelessly mixed up.

9280. Perhaps you will put it in. If you would refer to the name of the authority, it would be sufficient to have it on the notes, and then the letter could be referred to?—I have it now. This is from Professor Zimmer: "As you see, then, I am not by any means placing myself in an attitude of blind admiration before the Irish literature of the Middle Ages. But I believe, on the other hand, after all I have said, that it is not necessary for me to lose many words over such criticism of Irish literature as Professor Mahaffy has delivered himself of. 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. Its very lack of moderation condemns it.

To desire to refute such an assertion, I would characterise as doing it undeserved honour. You will, perhaps, console yourself most easily over Professor Mahaffy's judgment when I relate to you how, something over 100 years ago, a much more remarkable man judged our German literature of the twelfth and fourteenth centuries." And then he tells the well-known story of Frederick the Great, saying that the Nibelungenlied was not worth a single charge of powder, and never deserved to be drawn out of the dust of oblivion.

9281. It is right, however, to point out that the witness seems to suppose that Professor Mahaffy is expressing his own opinion, but what Professor Mahaffy says is, that he quotes from an expert, whose opinion he evidently considers to be authoritative?—I think he might have named his expert.

9282. I think it is right to point out that Professor Mahaffy is not giving his individual opinion, but is giving the opinion of one whom he regards as an authority?—An anonymous opinion.

9283. Yes, an anonymous opinion. Now, apart from the literary value of the ancient Irish manuscripts, the state of society which they disclose, the existence of a tribal system in a very forward state of development up to a recent period of history, renders them very interesting to the students of institutions; is not that so?—Very interesting.

9284. You are acquainted, I have no doubt, with Sir Henry Maine's work on "Early History of Institutions"?—Yes; he gives nearly three-fourths of his book to that point.

9285. And one effect, no doubt, of the introduction of the study of Irish would be to excite some curiosity and interest in those early Irish institutions, and in early Irish history?—Certainly.

9286. There is rather a lack of interest in this country, is there not, in the early history of Ireland?—It runs all through Irish life.

9287. There is a very great interest taken on the Continent and in England by scholars in Irish history. Have you observed rather a lack of interest in Irish history?—I have observed, on the contrary, great interest in it.

9288. In Irish history?—Yes, and only in Ireland have I found a lack of interest in it.

9289. That is what I mean. I have observed, in conversing with foreign and English scholars, a much greater interest in the early history of Ireland than I have discovered even among well educated people in this country. Is your observation the same?—Certainly; every man's observation has been that, I think.

9290. Do you think that the optional introduction of the study of Irish might have a tendency to create a wider interest?—It would certainly have, and there is a passage in one of those letters—I think it is from Professor Zimmer, too, urging the study of Irish as an introduction to the history.

9291. Another question altogether is the degree of weight that should be attached to it as compared with other branches of study?—That is a far more difficult question.

9292. You recognise that that is a much more difficult question?—Far more difficult.

9293. But you think, at all events, that a sufficient amount of encouragement should be given to Irish as a subject of Intermediate study to attract those whose inclinations lead them that way?—That it should do much more than that, I think it should never be degraded below the rank of foreign languages as it is at present.

9294. O'Conor Don.—You have expressed your views so very clearly that I have very little to ask you. But just following up the last question of Mr. Justice Madden's, I suppose, in estimating the number of marks that we ought to give any subject, we should consider the comparative difficulty of the subject—the comparative difficulty of passing an examination in it?—Yes.

9295. Is it your opinion that the difficulty of getting up the Irish language and of passing an examination in it would be equal to, or greater than, the difficulty in regard to French or Latin?—Greater than in French, but perhaps about equal with German.

9296. About equal with German?—I think so, or even greater than German.

9297. And, consequently, putting aside altogether the question of the importance of the subject, if it was to be studied at all in an examination into which competion largely enters, it should get a number of marks that would be proportionate to the difficulty of getting it up?—Certainly.

9298. Now, it has been said in reply to that, that although the difficulty of getting up Irish may be about equal to, or greater than, some of these modern languages, yet the sort of examination that is set in it is of a very much lower character, or of an easier character, than the examination set in these modern languages?—I went carefully over the papers that were set in both languages, and I found that the Irish examination was quite as hard as the others. It is, perhaps, true that some of the English sentences set for translation into Irish had an easy look about them, but it is one thing to appear to be easy on the paper, and another thing to translate what is apparently very easy into Irish. A very easy question, or an apparently very easy question, may be set with a deep meaning behind it. "I fear that he will come, and I fear that he will not come," in French, is apparently a very easy thing, but it sticks seventy-five per cent. of the French students. I do not think that the Irish papers have been in any way easier than the French or German.

9299. You do not think, therefore, that they are of a character to tempt students to go in for Irish merely to obtain marks?—I do not; I do not think it is an easy subject.

9300. You admit that there is a certain amount of difficulty in setting examinations in Irish, owing to the want of books that would be suitable for the junior classes?—That is the one great difficulty, but we are getting over it; I expect that in a few years time we will have got entirely over it.

9301. That, up to the present, has been a great difficulty?—It has been a great difficulty.

9302. Because there are none that would be available to the great majority of students; they would be too costly to buy?—Yes. If Irish examination papers appear easier than French or German examination papers—though I do not think they do, but if they do, any disparity between them is amply compensated for by the difficulty of finding text-books to learn Irish out of—composition books and dictionaries; we have not got them at present.

9303. You have quoted from a number of authorities, and you are going to put in a number of letters from different very important educationalists in Europe upon the subject. Perhaps I might be allowed to read a letter from Professor Rhys, of Jesus College, Oxford. You are acquainted with Professor Rhys?—I am.

9304. I will just read the letter he has written, and merely ask whether you agree with it or not. He says, "I am very sorry to learn from Dr. Douglas Hyde that some educationalists, who know nothing about the Irish language and its literature, are trying to persuade your Commission to exclude both from Irish education. It would be a great pity that such subjects should be interdicted in Ireland itself, and thrown more than ever into the hands of the Germans. Irish is a highly inflected idiom, with an eminently logical syntax, which is likely to be heard a good deal of in the future in connection with the question which the early ethnology of the British Isles has to dispose of." Do you agree with that?—Entirely.

9305. He goes on to say: "It has a large literature, in which the foundations of a good deal that was developed into the romances of the Middle Ages are beginning to be recognised"?—Yes, perfectly true.

9306. "The difficulty, if there is any, would arise perhaps from the fewness of the texts which have hitherto been edited for school use; but I feel sure that once the subject is recognised by your Commission, able men will be found who will undertake to prepare handy books." Do you agree with that?—Entirely; I agree with that entirely.

9307. Do you think that Irish receives proper attention in the universities at present?—I think in the Royal University it does.

9308. In Trinity College?—In Dublin University I think it does not. Indeed, as you have asked me about Dublin University——

9309. CHAIRMAN.—You belong to Dublin University yourself?—Yes.

9310. You are LL.D. of Dublin University?—It was my alma mater, and I should not like to say anything about it; but as that has been said, and as my old and beloved Provost is not present, I think I may say——

9311. Mr. Justice MADDEN.—He is necessarily engaged in Trinity College, where I shall be obliged to go presently, in connection with the conferring of degrees?—If Dr. Salmon was here I should not say

it. Irish does not receive proper recognition in Trinity College. I do not know any more striking contrast in the history of human thought than the true literary instinct which, three years ago, urged 50,000 Irishmen in America to contribute a dollar apiece to the foundation of a Celtic chair in the university in Washington, and to choose out a suitable man and to send him to be educated on the Continent by the great Celticists of the Continent, in the hope that their labours might reflect credit on that far-off country of their birth, while all the time one of the richest colleges in their own land allows its so-called Irish professorship to be founded and paid for, not by a society for the cultivation of Celtic literature, but by a society for the conversion of Irish Papists to their own religion. I consider that Trinity College has not treated Irish fairly in that.

9312. Are you aware that the foundation of the professorship preceded by a great many years the renewed interest in the Celtic languages? Are you able to state that when the professorship was founded in Trinity College, any other university in the United Kingdom had taken up the subject?—I think that probably it was the first university in the kingdom to take it up.

9313. It was then the first university—no matter what the circumstances were—that took it up. It is right that this fact should be brought out?—Not the study of Celtic; the study of Irish.

9314. O'Conor Don.—Upon that point, I was nearly omitting a question that I wanted to put to you. You suggest that the word "Celtic" should be dropped, and that "Irish" should be substituted?—I know that that cannot be done without an act of Parliament.

9315. Chairman.—Indeed, it can, without any difficulty; it is only in the rules?—Then, of course, I wish it to be done.

9316. Mr. Justice Madden.—"Celtic" there means "Irish"?—"Celtic" is generic.

9317. "Celtic," as interpreted in our Act of Parliament, has been taken to mean "Irish"?—Yes.

9318. Then you suggest that we should simply say what we mean?—Yes.

9319. Dr. Barkley.—I only wish to ask with reference to the question of the number of marks given to Irish. Is it possible to give a course of Irish equally extensive and equally difficult with the courses in languages like French or German?—It is possible to give an equally difficult paper, do you mean?

9320. Not merely the paper, but the course prescribed?—Yes. The course may be graduated, and will be much more easily graduated when we have the text-books.

9321. At present we have to deal with things as they are. We have had the difficulty about text-books, which has always stood in the way of the Irish examination being of the same standard as the examination in other languages?—I think the examinations are of the same standard.

9322. A few years ago my attention was drawn by a teacher to the circumstance that, in the translation from English to Irish, the papers gave the Irish words which corresponded to particular English words, not merely in the Preparatory or Junior Grade, where one might expect it, but in the Middle and Senior Grades?—I have never seen any of those papers.

9323. It is only a few years since?—It has not been done since I was examiner.

9324. I do not think it has been done within the last two or three years. But the explanation that was given at that time was the want of suitable dictionaries in Irish?—That is quite true, but there are three dictionaries on the stocks at present.

9325. CHAIRMAN.—Is there any Irish dictionary actually published?—Yes, but they are very expensive.

9326. I mean within the range of the students?—Scarcely within the Intermediate range.

9327. Dr. BARKLEY.—You spoke of the advantages of Irish to men who will spend their lives in this country. Is it not often the case that they cannot possibly tell where their lives are going to be spent?—Whether they can tell or not, they remain in Ireland—the majority of them.

9328. But great numbers of Irish people have gone to other countries, to America and Australia, and elsewhere—all over the world, in fact?—But not nearly so many as stay at home. Many, many hundreds know that they will never go to foreign countries.

9329. The utility of the language in Ireland itself would be mainly a utility in the parts of Ireland where Irish is a spoken language?—And the possibility of becoming a bi-linguist.

9330. CHAIRMAN.—And its educational value?—And its educational value.

9331. Dr. BARKLEY.—The question is between the educational value of Irish and the educational value of French and German?—I consider that the educational value of Irish is a great deal more than that of French or German, because it explains his own surroundings to an Irishman, and its utility I consider to be infinitely more than that of French or German. Perhaps you will allow me to say one or two words upon that. It has been urged against the study of Irish that the study of French or German is so much more practical; indeed, somebody said that even Italian and Spanish were more practical. I do not believe it at all. I know from experience in Dublin that the number of German corresponding clerks employed in Dublin would probably not be more than six or seven, and perhaps Belfast might employ double as many, and those are the only posts in which a knowledge of German would be likely to give you an advantage. And if you go to England your knowledge of German is of no use to you, because they have German clerks who can correspond in half-a-dozen languages. So that the value of a knowledge of French and German has been enormously exaggera-

ted. But with a knowledge of Irish there are a great number of posts. If a person knew Irish he could get on exceedingly well. It is necessary to mention that Irish is compulsory on all at Maynooth, and that all the shopkeepers and the people who reside over one-third of the country would be actually benefited by it, and a great number of Inspectors of National Schools have got their positions lately through their knowledge of Irish, which counts equal to English in that examination. Then, I know that several Poor Law Boards of Guardians, notably Galway and others, have passed resolutions quite recently that no doctor need apply to them unless he is able to speak the Irish language. Then there are several other appointments which I happen to know—for instance, the Royal Irish Academy was for two years looking about for a Todd Professor before they could get him, and there was great difficulty in obtaining any one able to assist in the preparation of the Irish dictionary—they were not able to get them. There are Professorships of Irish at present in the Royal University, and also in Maynooth, and St. John's College, Waterford; St. Mary's University College, Dublin; Loreto Abbey, Rathfarnham; there is a professorship of Celtic literature in Queen's College, Cork. The Gaelic League recently advertised for two organisers, and they were only able to secure one. At present there are quite a number of posts for persons who are competent Irish scholars. The Irish Agricultural Society, in trying to establish these co-operative banks, was obliged to call in and appoint a man who was able to speak Irish.

9332. We had originally professors of Irish in each of the three Queen's Colleges, but they came to an end, partly because no arrangements were made for teaching Irish, and partly because there was a doubt as to there being classes; but I know of an attempt made to get up an Irish class in Belfast, which was discouraged on the ground that it would be inconvenient for the professor to reside there. That was Dr. O'Donovan?—Even clerks in wholesale houses like Eason's and Gill's find it necessary to read Irish, because a great number of Irish periodicals pass through their hands, and they must be able to read the date of the periodical and the name of it.

9333. Of course, where Irish is a spoken language, it is of some importance to have a knowledge, and an accurate knowledge of it?—But I wish to emphasise the actual utility of it as compared with the utility of French and German.

9334. Most Rev. Dr. WALSH.—There is just one point I would wish to bring out a little more plainly than we as yet have had it. You are aware that one of the objections made even to the position which Irish at present has in the Intermediate programme, is that the examinations in it are absurdly easy. You have heard that?—I have heard that statement.

9335. Now, I wish you to look at one of the examination papers—the Junior Grade paper for June, 1898. You will see that I have underlined a number of words there?—You have marked a number.

9336. The sentences given there for translation into Irish seem to be simplicity itself. The words I have underlined in each of them are "is" and "are," and the various parts of the verb "to be," one or other of which occurs in each sentence?—Quite so.

9337. I dare say that a person who knew nothing of Irish, looking at that paper, would say it was simply absurd to set such easy questions?—That is what I was trying to show.

9338. Yet I believe the verb "to be" is one of the special peculiarities of our language, and that one of the tremendous difficulties of a learner who has not command of Irish as a native language is to distinguish between those two forms of that simplest of simple verbs?—It is nearly impossible.

9339. So that it comes to this—that questions which seem even absurdly easy to a person unacquainted with the language, may really be questions of the very greatest difficulty?—That is what I wanted to bring out.

9340. And the people who, in their ignorance, pass judgment on these examination papers for their childishness, are simply betraying their own ignorance of even the elementary groundwork of the Irish language?—I think so.

9341. CHAIRMAN.—I want to ask you a practical question. There being a difficulty now in the Preparatory and Junior Grades in consequence of the want of text-books, and the Gaelic League being very much interested in this matter, supposing that instead of our giving one year's notice of the text-book to be used, we gave two years' notice of it, would it not be possible to bring out a moderately cheap edition?—Of the same text-book, do you mean.

9342. Of any text-book. If there is any difficulty in obtaining a text-book, and if there is any difficulty in obtaining a moderately cheap school dictionary (and there appear to be very great difficulties), I want to see how those difficulties can be obviated?—I should allow matters to take their course. Private people are doing their best. It is very expensive to publish Irish books, and I would not like to accept the responsibility of producing those text-books; but as a matter of fact, many of us are producing such books.

9343. But we are obliged to recognise any difficulties there really are, and it seems to me to be an immense difficulty in the way of teaching Irish that there is no school dictionary procurable at a reasonable price?—There are three being at present made.

CHAIRMAN.—But I mean for a student that will be learning Irish next month.

9344. Most Rev. Dr. WALSH.—Unfortunately, we have no dictionary for school purposes, but are there not vocabularies put at the end of the text-books?—Vocabularies are put at the end of all the text-books used in the Intermediate course, or, in some cases, there is an English translation on the other side of the page. Many of them have vocabularies at the end.

9345. CHAIRMAN.—Part of the great educational value in learn-

ing a foreign language is that you cannot use a translation, or cannot use a vocabulary, but must work out in your dictionary what the words are; and the very difficulty in doing that is part of the educational exercise?—Though I call them vocabularies, they are really dictionaries—lexicons—giving every word used in the text.

9346. Most Rev. Dr. WALSH.—Following up the question I asked you just now, there is a point I should wish to call your attention to, as it bears upon that very question. You were our examiner, last year, in Irish, and I think this very difficulty is mentioned in your report, the difficulty experienced by candidates of distinguishing between the two forms of the verb "to be"?—Exactly.

9347. From your experience as an examiner—not merely from your general knowledge of the language—you have found that to be a serious difficulty with the candidates?—A great difficulty.

9348. Here are the words of your official report:—"There was a distressing inability to distinguish between the use of '*ta*' and '*is*.' These are the two forms in question. That is what you found in the Preparatory Grade. Now, turning to the next grade, you see the passages I have marked in the examination paper for the Junior Grade?—Yes, I see the same question again.

9349. And here is your report on the answers:—"There was a good deal of the same inability to distinguish between the use of '*is*' and '*ta*,' that marked the Preparatory Grade; and scores of students wrote such sentences as '*tá fear maith é*,' or '*is bó ann san bpáirc*.'" All of which goes to show that there is a much greater amount of difficulty in the examination papers than people who know nothing of Irish are capable of recognising?—Certainly.

9350. I believe an interesting little treatise on this one point alone has been published by Father O'Leary?—On that point alone.

The witness withdrew.

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IV.

DR. ATKINSON'S EVIDENCE.

[PREFATORY NOTE.]

THIS pamphlet contains Dr. Atkinson's now famous evidence. Dr. Mahaffy having been made a laughing-stock, Dr. Atkinson came forward to demolish Dr. Hyde and the Gaelic League. The result proved that he himself it was who was demolished. This long-drawn-out scream is a neat specimen of the scientific mind, temper, and methods of Trinity College.

Robert Atkinson, LL.D., Professor of Sanscrit and of Romance Languages in the University of Dublin, examined.

12337. THE CHAIRMAN.—You are, I think, Professor of Sanscrit and Philology in Dublin University?—Yes, my lord.

12338. We would be glad to have the benefit of your opinion upon the question of teaching modern Irish in our Intermediate schools?—Well, I had not, of course, time to prepare any specific statement about the matter, but I have jotted down some notes.

12339. I believe it was only this morning that you were aware

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I have the first one here
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—the Greek paper—represents a
to the thing for a long time and by compe
was not capable of being disputed. In the Irish, on the other hand, I found what I could scarcely regard as a very definite body of knowledge at all—a few sentences of easy words, and the grammar of such a nature that I could not regard it as containing in itself almost any element of training. The difficulties in the one are simply out of all proportion to those in the other, and the time that would have to be spent in preparing from the beginning that Greek paper, I should think, could scarcely be calculated at less than fifty times the time that would be necessary to prepare a fair answer in that Celtic paper. But I do not wish to take up your time with detailed criticisms of these questions, with many of which I could certainly find fault, not because they are wrongly put, but because the children who have to answer them would be necessarily under extreme difficulties, partly from variations in the text, and partly from the obscure nature of the constructions. It would depend, I think, to a certain extent upon the individuality of the teacher, and the explanation he would give of certain things, and possibly there might be a good deal of contest, in the judgment even of experts, as to which was the right explanation; but it is not a matter for children to handle, nor for young people even. One of my reasons for adverting to that is because I do not regard this language as in a settled state. There are numerous *patois*, but there is no standard of speech absolutely accepted by everybody. There may be made an arbitrary standard, of the fifteenth, the sixteenth, or the seventeenth century—what you please—and it has been attempted to make an arbitrary standard by assuming some written form—some written form that has attained the dignity of print—and following that. But there is no general concurrence of opinion as to what should be the proper form, and the result is that even in this first poem which is mentioned here—the Lay of Oisín—I find serious differences in the

form of the words in two editions, the one given by the examiner here in this paper, and the other given by the examiner in his own text. I do not blame him, my lord, at all, but the facts are that in these variations the child's mind must be confused. In the case of Greek or Latin, or French, you have a perfectly definite spelling, definite declensions, definite forms, a definite syntax, and so on. But in this Irish matter that is given, it is not definite in its nature. The spelling varies. Now, the spelling is an extremely difficult thing in Irish. The graphic system—the method by which they write it—is very subtle and very excellent, I should say, and I have no sympathy whatever with the modern attempts to change it or to modify it in any way. But it needs a study of phonetics to comprehend exactly what is that method of graphic writing, and as yet the editors and examiners —teachers, broadly—have not attained to a knowledge of what precisely the scope and aim of that method is. Therefore, they cannot be in agreement upon it; and were it even so, they themselves would have the further difficulty that one *patois* differs from another. You cannot bring together the North and the South on terms of equality; their forms vary slightly. Now, that variation is not sufficiently great to make it impossible for educated people to comprehend each other, because they can allow for the play of variation; but a child cannot. If, therefore, a child from the West or from the South, were to hear a child from the North speak, they would have some difficulty in understanding each other, but there would still be more difficulty in either of them understanding a printed text written in language, let us say, of the seventeenth century, and perhaps not in his dialect. It must be to a child (I am speaking of boys and girls of 14 or 15) a circumstance of the utmost confusion to find this variation of spelling—a variation in spelling which your lordship can see in a moment on comparing one of these copies with another. It will be seen at once what a different spelling there is. But I do not want to dwell upon that. The sounds are different in the different dialects, and that also would make a difference, and therefore, of course, in reading, some children would have a difficulty, because possibly it would not be in their dialect, or would not be written by a man who spoke their dialect; it would confuse them, and the explanation would probably be misunderstood. Again, it is a very serious thing to understand precisely what these subtle marks are, of aspiration and eclipses so called. Now, the explanation of these two phenomena is perfectly clear to scholars, as plain as anything can be made; but is very difficult to make them clear to children, and I doubt very much whether, unless there was a considerable knowledge of philology beforehand, it could be explained, even with the best knowledge and with the best will on the part of the teacher, to children of 15. Therefore, asking questions as to what these aspirations and eclipses mean, seems to be of dubious gain, even supposing that the child knew by heart what the answer

was. But the difficulty is that there is no agreement in it. Now, in the case of Welsh and Scotch they have a Bible which has been very carefully elaborated through some generations, and you see it now with a fairly definite method of spelling; so that the child, whether he be a Welsh child or a Scotch child, has already a sort of definite rule which he will follow in that, and it is fairly well followed. The Irish, unfortunately, are not in that condition, and perhaps you will understand it better when I say that some years ago (in 1858) a Munster Testament was printed—a Testament was printed in the Munster dialect, because the man preaching in that dialect felt that the other Testament was not sufficiently intelligible to his people. You have the New Testament printed entirely in that dialect, and for that reason.

12340. May I ask what the other Testament was?—The other Testament is the Old Testament that was done by O'Donnell, which has been modified slightly in separate editions. But there was an edition published of the Pentateuch, by Archbishop M'Hale, which, undoubtedly, was good Irish in the sense that it was the Irish he spoke. But the print—the correction of the press—is a thing to be astonished at. The dots are wrong all over the page; it would need thirty or forty alterations, I suppose, on every page before anything like uniformity could be produced in this text. If a child, therefore, was desirous of getting an exact idea of what the forms are of the language, he could not do it. He is shut out from that, whatever book he takes, for whatever book he takes, if there is another edition of it, he is pretty certain to find a different spelling. Then the old inflections are very subtle, and as they are partially spoiled now because the people have forgotten what the beautiful forms of the old Irish were, they have been modified *ad libitum* by sciolists who had theories to enforce, and who had not the knowledge to understand the ancient forms. The consequence is that when I look now at one of these new texts, I am absolutely petrified at the variety, and cannot understand how any child can learn under it at all. And what are these texts? Old texts, written in the old language, in the dialect no doubt understood by those who wrote them, but which have been reduced to a sort of regularity by a most arbitrary principle which resembles only that story of the old robber who had a bed. I need not dwell upon it. If the forms of a verse are too short, they are made longer by putting in a syllable or a word; if they are too long, they are made short by cutting it out. Not only so, but these old forms, not being understood by the later transcribers, have been altered by them into language which they did understand, and I have given in the preface of the Book of Leinster, which I had the honour of editing for the Academy, an example of what the modern forms are when they are taken out of the ancient forms by persons who do not understand the ancient. Now, apart from these remarks on aspiration and eclipses—and really there is no agreement upon

them even yet—I cannot go into the technical details here, my lord; it would not suit; but I say it with knowledge of what I am saying that there is not any agreement of any definite kind as to where aspiration it to appear and where it is not; apart from this, the confusion is seen still more definitely in the inflections—the inflection of the nouns and the conjugation of the verbs. That, in the old language, is very complex, but very beautifully regular, with a subtlety that I can only admire the more I know it. But that was forgotten, and the result of it is that these forms have been modified by persons who—perhaps no blame to them—did not understand them. They put it into something that was to them intelligible. The inflections in old Irish are quite distinct, and you see exactly why the thing is spelt so, and why the aspirate is so and why the eclipsis is so. But when you come to the modern grammars, that is all gone. With the exception of a few nouns, you cannot tell definitely what the plural form ought to be, you cannot tell what the inflections should be under all circumstances of the adjectives in conjunction with a noun; so that as a matter of fact, even in the inflectional forms, the child cannot gain any training, because he cannot be certain that the form is the right one. Certainly he would not get it from those texts, because there they are in many cases given at random. The conjugation of the verbs is yet worse. If you take O'Donovan's Grammar, or the little condensation by Dr. Joyce, which is very good in its way, but very bad in its ultimate result, because it was taken from a grammar that was not itself adequate to the needs of the case—Dr. O'Donovan's Grammar was made partly from those older manuscripts of the seventeenth century and partly from his own speculations as to what euphony meant. Alterations have been made in order to harmonise with what they call a law of euphony, but in the older languages it was not euphony, it was inflection that conditioned the form, and it was not because a thing sounded better that a "g" was added to it, but because, according to the laws of vowel or consonant change that "g" had to receive such and such a change. Therefore I say that O'Donovan's Grammar is no satisfactory guide, and that questions could be asked upon it in many cases to which I could give no answer at all, either yes or no. The smaller grammar is yet more inadequate; children cannot tell, if they wish to write a composition, what is the plural of certain nouns—what is the form for them. Therefore, how their composition into Irish is to be tested I feel a difficulty in understanding, save by the arbitrary method—the *ipse dixit*, in fact, of the examiner himself. Now into the difficulties of the syntax I do not want to enter. Those difficulties, I think, his Grace referred to on one occasion, of the verb "to be," are indeed very serious, and I had occasion to see that in editing Keating (Three Shafts); but I never thought that children of 14 or 15 would be submitted to the task of solving these difficulties. They are difficulties for a metaphysician,

but not for a child to solve. Of course the case would be very different if we were dealing with children all of whom spoke from their childhood's days the Irish language vernacularly, because then they would know what the thing was and could explain it. But it would be exceedingly difficult—I know I should not undertake to make the attempt—to teach a child of 14 who had not a very elaborate training in Greek and Latin beforehand, and some knowledge of logic too, the complex forms of these Irish verbs. Then when we come to idioms I see a number of questions set down here about them. Now, idioms are, of course, a bottomless abyss to be examined in—you have thousands of them; but what sort of test is it of a child's knowledge that he happens to know or not to know six special idioms?—It is not a clue. Of course if they were very common idioms, then it would be shown that he had not a knowledge of the vernacular because he did not know them, but if the boy has to learn the language by study, then he ought not to know these idioms, which could have no place organically in his knowledge; they must be plastered on. He could not learn them by the light of his intellect, and the result is that they must be communicated by somebody; he must get thousands of them by heart in order to stand the chance of answering four or five questions on a matter of mere memory, and not in any way of cultivation of the intellect, which is desirable in education as such. Not only is the language, as I say, so unsettled that it is impossible for the child to get real educational training out of it, such as he can get from almost any other language I know, but there is extremely little literature that he can get to read. If a boy learns his French, or learns his Latin, he has the whole world before him in choice of what to read. But I have been surprised in seeing even now, after so many years during which the beauties of Irish literature have been talked of, how little has been done that really could be usefully or properly brought before children. Those stories, my lord, are not all fit for children. There is a story mentioned here —" Toruigheacht Dhiarmuda agus Ghráinne," it is put in there, and they are examined in portions of it. Well, passages are selected, but I assure you the book itself is not fit for children, and I can only say I would allow no daughter of mine of any age to see it. Another of the books—" The Lay of Oisín in the Land of the Young "—that, also, is not suitable for children, but not from that point of view. Of course, as folk lore, in which these things appear always in all languages, it has its value, and Irish has a specific value in this—that, if I may say so, it is nearer to the sod. It has scarcely been touched by the movements of the great literatures; it is the untrained popular feeling. Therefore, it is almost intolerably low in tone—I do not mean naughty, but low; and every now and then, when the circumstance occasions it, it goes down lower than low. I cannot, and would not here, bring forth what occurs in some of these books that are quite capable of being got hold of by children if they choose

to look a little further afield and see what there is to read. If any of the members of the Commission will honour me by coming to my rooms, at any time, there I can show to them in private what I would not dare to say now. It is not from any desire to say anything in disparagement of others that I say this, but from my strong feeling that children should not be submitted to the chances of this—Now I feel very strongly about taking the books that are put down in these examination papers. If I read the books in the Greek, the Latin, or the French course, in almost every one of them there is something with an ideal ring about it—something that I can read with positive pleasure—something that has what the child might take with him as a *ktema es aei*—a perpetual treasure; but if I read these Irish books, I see nothing ideal in them, and my astonishment is that through the whole range of Irish literature that I have read (and I have read an enormous range of it), the smallness of the element of idealism is most noticeable; and children, my lord, I contend, cannot live without ideals, and should not be brought up without them. And as there is very little idealism there is very little imagination. I owe a deep debt to Matthew Arnold, which, please God, I shall pay some day in writing, for what he has said about the subject of imagination. The Irish tales, as a rule, are devoid of it fundamentally. They have some beautiful thoughts, yes; and they repeat them, but in a very mechanical way—it is not with the real play of imagination—and no child, and hardly anyone, child or man either, would find himself stirred by what he finds in these tales of pure imagination, as he will find in the Arabian Tales, or in the fairy tales of some other nations. They have been transformed, much as Ossian was transformed—I mean the Scottish Ossian. If the original texts of Ossian had been printed in those days, very little result would have followed, but it is when they have been modified by those cultivated in European literature that they have such a wonderful effect. Then those Welsh tales, the Mabinogion, when they have been clarified in coming through our Poet Laureate, you can read them with pleasure, but if you read them in their native form they are not the same—they have not the same power and the same joy. But these Irish books stand in a very different category to those Welsh tales. And what of modern literature, my lord? I find their books (I am not attaching any blame to anyone for this) written in an *omnium gatherum* of forms—not Munster, not Connaught; and, in truth, the poetry that would be poetry to a Munster man is not felt by a Connaught man, and *vice versa.* And, let me say, that is not a difficulty that has been pointed out by me for the first time, for when studying in the Franciscan Monastery the *Liber Hymnorum*, I saw there a note of one of the provincials or chiefs of the Franciscan Order, written upwards of 200 years ago, containing a request sent to Rome that there should be two provincials instead of one. And for what reason? "Because," said he, "the people in the South mock the people in the North for their

different language or *patois*." Therefore, the difficulty is one that has been felt always. That might, I believe, be got over if there was any consensus of opinion to adopt one set of forms, but as yet that has not been obtained. Now, my lord, I do not want to detain the Commission, because I have said, I think, sufficiently what I had thought on those three grounds—the vagueness and the unsettled state of the language, the small amount of available literature which children can or should read, and also the fact that the bulk of the literature is in a form which could scarcely be brought within their notice. I think that, although it should be preserved and studied carefully, and although I have great sympathy for it in the older stages, yet for the young it is eminently unqualified, and if I had any advice to give to parents throughout Ireland I would say:—"Never let your children be brought into contact with this—not from the money point of view, not because it does not happen to be merchandise, not because it does not happen to be spoken all over the world, but because it is not fitted to give them that which promises the real development of education."

12341. Mr. Justice MADDEN.—I should like to develop and understand more fully some of your views. I understand you object entirely to the inclusion of Irish, even as an optional subject, in our Intermediate system?—Yes.

12342. Upon the ground that, in your opinion, it has not a sufficient educational value to justify us in retaining it?—Yes.

12343. But you would agree, of course, that if the study of Irish has educational value, it would be strange if it were omitted from an Irish system of Intermediate education?—If so, I should yet hold that there were objections from the ethical side.

12344. I will endeavour to elicit your views separately upon the ethical side of the question, but laying that question aside for a moment, and taking Irish as a language, if it has any educational value it would be a strange thing, certainly, if it were not included in an Irish Intermediate system of education. Perhaps you do not agree?—My lord, I have said so definitely that I do not think it should be put in, that I do not wish to even entertain the other proposition of an "if."

12345. Very well. I understand now that you have no suggestion to offer in answer to my inquiry, laying apart altogether ethical considerations. Do not understand me as undervaluing them if they are well founded; but apart altogether from those considerations, you do not wish to enter upon a discussion of this question?—No, not in that form in which you have put it, because I think the prior consideration rules it—that I do not think it a proper thing that children of 14 or 15 should spend their time in learning Irish, from the point of view that I have stated.

12346. I understand you do not discuss that question—the question of whether a language that I assume, for the purposes of the question to have educational value, and which happens to be the

Irish language, ought or ought not to be excluded from the Irish system of Intermediate education. Now, with reference to the question of its educational value, we had evidence, which I dare say you had an opportunity of studying through the means of the Press, from a number of learned witnesses, adduced here by Dr. Hyde, whose names I will give you. They are Mr. Alfred Nutt, Professor Stern, of Berlin; Dr. Ernst Windisch, of Leipsic; Professor Zimmer, of Prussia; Dr. Kuno Meyer, of Liverpool; Professor Rhys, of Jesus College, Oxford, and Professor Dottin. Are you aware that these authorities were all of opinion, rightly or wrongly, that the study of Irish is of educational value?—No, my lord, I am not aware of that—not even yet; because I know these men, and I know that it is their opinion, as it is my opinion, that it is a very useful thing for studying, but with regard to educational advantages, as I am talking of them now, for children, I am not aware that their judgment has been expressed to that effect, or that if it had, I would pay the slightest attention to the testimony of foreigners in respect to this matter of Irish children's education.*

12347. Those are two distinct questions—first, whether their opinion has been expressed, and, secondly, whether their opinion is of any value. Am I to understand that you consider their opinion to be of no value?—No, my lord. I want the question put a little more precisely, and I will give my answer to you. As I understand the paper, it was stated that there were educational advantages.

12348. I think it is better to come to the letters themselves. The letters were not all published, but those which are published give, according to my recollection, a substantially accurate idea of the nature of the others. This is a very fair specimen of the letters given *in extenso* in the daily papers of the 15th February. Dr. Kuno Meyer, of Liverpool, writes: "If Professor Mahaffy" (that is, referring to the evidence of Professor Mahaffy, which you, no doubt, saw in the newspapers), "instead of taking the opinion of two such men, had applied to his friend, Whitley Stokes——" You recognise him as an authority, I am sure?—I recognise all the names. We know each other.

12349. "Or to any of the Irish scholars whose learning and judgment are above question, he would have heard, I am sure, that Irish literature is a marvellous manifestation of the human spirit, and in its form and genius in prose and poetry is a true and unique literature. As for the value of the Irish language and literature in a programme of Intermediate education in Ireland"—and the professor goes on to give several reasons for retaining it, one of which has special reference to my question: "The Irish language, well taught, I regard as a first-rate means of mental training." Do you agree in that?—I totally object to that opinion.

* As bearing upon this point, it is interesting to recall that Dr. Atkinson is himself a foreigner.—[EDITOR].

12350. You disagree with it?—I disagree with it from every point of view.

12351. I assure you I am not setting up any opinion as against yours. I am only bringing out the fact that you differ in opinion from the Irish scholars whose names I have mentioned, and of whose evidence this is a fair specimen?—With that particular gentleman whose evidence I now hear for the first time I beg to differ profoundly. As to whether the other gentlemen are to be taken as accepting his statements or not, I do not know. I can only answer them definitely when they are put definitely to me. If the opinions of the others were given me *seriatim*, and they coincided with the one I have just read, then I should give the same reply in regard to them.

12352. I will read another. Professor Rhys, of Jesus College, Oxford, writes: "I am very sorry to learn from Dr. Douglas Hyde that some educationalists, who know nothing about the Irish language and its literature, are trying to persuade your Commission to exclude both from Irish education. It would be a great pity that such subjects should be interdicted in Ireland itself, and thrown more than ever into the hands of the Germans. Irish is a highly intellectual idiom, with an eminently logical syntax." Does this gentleman know Irish?—I have no doubt that, in a way, he does.

12353. Is he professor of Welsh?—He is professor of Welsh, and he knows Irish; and I concur with him in the last clause.

12354. I may tell you I am examining, as a matter of evidence, into a subject upon which I am quite as ignorant as Professor Mahaffy. I would not compete with him in any other respect, but in ignorance of the Irish language I can stand on the same platform as Professor Mahaffy, and from that standpoint I am inquiring into the facts: "Irish is a highly intellectual idiom, with an eminently logical syntax"?—Up to that point I thoroughly agree with him, and would have written the same myself. I have no objection whatever to that.

12355. "Which is likely to be heard of a good deal in the future"—(Well, there is some fulfilment of that prophecy this afternoon)—"in connection with the questions which the early ethnology of the British Isles has to dispose of. It has a large literature"?—Yes.

12356. In which the foundation of a good deal that was developed into the romances of the Middle Ages are beginning to be recognised"?—I do not doubt it a bit. I agree quite, so far.

12357. Then there seems to be an element of romance in this sod-begotten literature?—That is an explanation which I would not acknowledge. I am speaking of it now only from the point of view of the educational advantage of the thing, and I have said myself that I have the strongest possible estimation for the language itself and its literature, because it was nearly autochthonous,—in the study of the origins of mankind; in the study of archæology I think it is of prime importance; but I am speaking here exclusively, and I have

directed myself to that topic exclusively, of its educational advantages in reference to children.

12358. I am endeavouring to keep these two things separate—educational advantages, and the existence of a literature. I will deal with them separately. There is another gentleman, M. Georges Dottin?—I know him.

12359. Well, he says (I will not read the whole)—"From this point of view"—that is, the literary point of view—"Irish literature is almost as considerable as French literature, possessing the same qualities and the same defects—qualities of imagination and picturesqueness, defects of composition and expression." There seems to be a difference of opinion, *de gustibus non est*——?—Just so.

12360. I will not pursue this subject further, but, at all events, you recognise that on the question of the suitability of Irish for educational purposes, as well as upon the, perhaps, more interesting question of literature, there is a diversity of opinion?—I would not admit that he speaks of the educational advantages of the thing at all; he says precisely what I would say—that the study of Irish is a valuable thing towards which I have urged many men. I have said, and I say so still, that there is immense value in the study of the old Irish language, but that value is a value for scholars and not for children.

12361. The sentence I read deals undoubtedly with the literature. But, now, with reference to the other point; "You ask my opinion as to the utility and interest of teaching the Irish language in Ireland. I confess to you that I am absolutely astonished that anyone can contest the utility of it." That seems rather to point to its educational value?—Yes; for grown-up people I do not object.

12362. But he was asked about schoolboys?—He does not say so there.

12363. He would understand that Intermediate education is not applied to grown-up people?—Do we always understand what the relations of French people are? and is a Frenchman any more likely to understand the relations of the Irish people?

12364. But would not a Frenchman understand what Intermediate education meant?—If Intermediate education means education given to boys of 20, of course my argument would not be put in that form.

12365. This may be all true with reference to its utility to grown-up people, but you refuse to accept it with regard to boys?—Quite so.

12366. My reason for asking these questions is really the great interest of the subject, and in developing your views do not understand me as contesting them?—I am obliged to you for giving me the opportunity of making precise what I do feel, so that I may not be blamed for expressing what I do not feel.

12367. Now, you told us in a very interesting manner, of the large number of different dialects—*patois* they might be fairly called—that exist in Ireland. Is there no such thing as a contemporary literary Irish?—No, there is a variation of all kinds.

12368. You know of course, what the position of England is in that respect, and that there is what you might call *patois* spoken in Somerset and Dorset. In Dorsetshire there are Barnes's poems—I dare say you know them; and then there is a different dialect in Yorkshire; and yet there is such a thing as literary English?—Yes.

12369. Is there no such thing as contemporary literary Irish?—I am very glad you have asked me that.

12370. The question seems to me an important one?—The point of the thing is that, if there had been a *patois* written phonetically properly by anybody competent, I should have welcomed it most heartily. I myself have transcribed hundreds of pages in Munster *patois* for the purpose of ultimately publishing them, but unfortunately these *patois* are often mixed indiscriminately. I know of no book in which there is a good edition accurately given, of any *patois*. And of literary form, generally, there is nothing accepted precisely by everybody as a standard. Perhaps the nearest would be the standard I myself made in Keating's "Three Shafts of Death," which I published, and I think it is extremely likely that there has been an attempt to follow that edition, which I brought out according to my best judgment.

12371. Amidst all the confusion of these different *patois*, is there not being evolved what I may call a contemporary Irish for literary purposes?—Well, if it is being evolved, it is evolved to this extent—that it is making confusion more confounded, because now you have got an extra edition, and if somebody else printed the thing again, it would be different. There is not a single book that comes out but I have to say, "What is your authority for this or that form? Who is your guide?" It is all arbitrary action in following these matters, and there is no definiteness; a new edition might follow that of the seventeenth century, or it might follow my edition, but more probably some idea of their own; and in the *Gaelic Journal* are they not mixed together in absolute higgledy-piggledy, so as to make a result that not Grimm himself could get at.

12372. What was meant by Dr. Douglas Hyde and the other authorities to whom he referred when they spoke of modern Irish?—Well, God knows.

12373. Then I suppose I must leave it so?—I think so; I make that definite statement—that there is no absolute standard of correctness which can be conformed to throughout, if they were speaking of certain plurals they would not agree on them, and in the symposium they would have troubles galore. A would say "It is right," and B would say "It is wrong."

12374. There have been, in recent times, books written in "Modern Irish"—I will call it so in inverted commas. Does your ethical objection to Irish literature refer to modern Irish, or ancient Irish, or both?—Not to modern. None of the men I know now would ever write a naughty book. I thought I had made it clear that it was the older literature in which that was the case.

12375. That was what I understood you to mean, but I wanted to have it made perfectly clear. Your ethical objections refer only to the ancient literature; your objection to the modern Irish literature is linguistic rather than ethical?—Not quite that either. There is partly the difficulty of the want of a standard, but let me put this also. You mentioned Dr. Hyde. Well, he published some stories—of course, there was nothing ethically wrong about them, but so low! I do not want to know about the vulgar exploits of a dirty wretch who never washed his feet, and who put that forward ostentatiously—that he never washed his feet, and had an interview with the Pope, and married Princess So-and-so.

12376. But is not that interesting?—Interesting, possibly so; but not of a kind for children to be reading. I have read these things, and know what I am talking about.

12377. Yes, I know; and that is reason why I am asking you so many questions?—I am very glad to be questioned.

12378. Dr. Hyde has himself written books?—Yes.

12379. You would not describe, or would you describe, the language in which he writes as a *patois*?—No, it was not good enough for a *patois*. I should call it an *imbroglio*, *mélange*, an *omnium gatherum*.

12380. Would that language, whatever be its merits or defects, be understood? I suppose there is in existence a race of Irish scholars now?—Oh, we all know what he means to say; in fact, I may say in these things scholars can see what the real meaning is, and there is no difficulty; we are so accustomed to the variations in spelling that an extra one or two, perhaps, to scholars does not matter.

12381. Now, with reference to the classical or ancient Irish, Professor Mahaffy made a statement that startled me somewhat. He did not profess to give it as his own opinion, but he gave it as the opinion of some person whom he did not mention, but whom he regarded as a very high authority on the subject, that, laying aside religious books, it was impossible to find a text-book in Irish that was not either silly or indecent. Would you endorse that statement?—I do not think I am bound by Professor Mahaffy's opinion at all.

12382. Then I will put it as an abstract proposition, and leave Professor Mahaffy out of the question?—I will give you my own opinion with pleasure.

12384. I will ask you now to give your own opinion upon that point?—Then I will give you an example.

12385. Not of the latter class, I hope, but of the former—the silly?—I shall not say the name of it or anything, but there was a book published not very long ago—a large book in two volumes—in which there is an immense quantity of stories given, and there is a translation of them, too. Now, all I can say is that no human being could read through that book, containing an immense quantity

of Irish matter, without feeling that he had been absolutely degraded by contact with it—filth that I will not demean myself even to mention. Instances, no doubt, are not numerous in it, but they are there; and if you will call at any time upon me in my rooms, I will show you them, and you can get them translated by any one who would put it on paper. I have had to go through it because I am excerpting words out of it for our dictionary.

12386. I am quite content to take your word for the nature of the book; but if I were to state that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find an ancient Irish text-book that was not either silly or indecent, would I be saying the thing that is, or the thing that is not?—You would not say exactly what I should say. If I were to express an opinion about it, I would say it would be difficult to find a book in which there was not some passage so silly or so indecent as to give you a shock from which you would never recover during the rest of your life.

12387. You have read Aristophanes, I suppose?—Yes; but you see Aristophanes is one of a multitude. There is only a limited number of books that you can get to read, in this literature; even in the best, the "Book of Leinster," that is not a book for children to read. I say it most advisedly; I put it in the preface to the book, and was satirised for so doing, as if I was condemning the whole book; but I have put it that there are passages which cannot bear translation. It is not that the language itself indulges in it, and I have said again and again that it not very frequently gross and hardly ever licentious as such, but it is low down to the soil. There is an absence of any elevating ideal, and there is always the chance of coming to something that will give a modern man a shock from its crude realism, if I may say so.

12388. Could not portions of these books be set for examination? —This is what has happened in one of them: the student can get the original edition of the book, and there is the translation on the other side; and in the middle of it you get a passage with a dozen lines of asterisks, and thereby the attention of the young student is directed to that, and he wants to read the omitted passage.

12389. Books may be objectionable in either of two ways: their tendency may be immoral, or they may have been written at a time at which coarseness of expression prevailed to an extent to which, I am happy to say, it does not prevail at present. Is your opinion that the tendency of these books to which you are now referring is immoral, or is it that they contain passages of coarseness which might be cut out with a pair of scissors?—Yes, the latter is the objection. The tendency is rather licentious, but there is the difficulty that when you print this thing you suggest to the person reading it, if it is only a fragment of the thing, "Oh, but what is said in the original edition of it?"—and he goes and gets that.

12390. Your objection to these books is that they contain passages

of coarseness, and not that they have an immoral tendency?—Yes.

12391. Is not that a common element in the early literature of every country you are acquainted with?—No, it is found in some books only; but here a thing of that sort will occur even in the books the children may get hold of—just because there is such a small quantity of literature available. Are they to read that story I have mentioned there because they can get it, and will see what it is, and will attempt to explain it?

12391. Rev. Dr. SALMON.—Is it a peculiarity of the Irish folk-lore, or does it extend to other folk-lore?—All folk-lore is at the bottom abominable. You have to send your children back from India, not solely because of their health, but because the language of the people in the streets is at times so defiling in its nature that they cannot be allowed to hear it. I know what folk-lore is, and I would not allow any daughter of mine to study it. When you get the real thing, it is sometimes very different to that which is put in by the editor with a pair of scissors—the real thing which the people say, when not transformed by educational influences—though even then it can be bad enough. I know, in the folk-lore of European people, how low it is, and it is that element which I deprecate—bringing that in as a factor in education. These tales are folk-lore tales—of course they are; and it is precisely because they are folk-lore tales that I object to them. I have asked our Irish speakers "Won't you translate 'Robinson Crusoe,' or some book of that kind, and let the people have something that they can read?" but they will not do it. If there were twenty or thirty books translated—say the story of Joseph out of the Bible, or anything that is neutral, or anything that would be likely to have any elevating influence upon the children—and I have asked them over and over again to do that—if there were those books, and if there were written a good grammar by some competent person, to make it a good study, I would say—"Go on;" but at present I am bound to say to the Irish people it is not a fitting thing now for their children to study, whatever it may in the future be made.

12393. Mr. Justice MADDEN.—These ancient books should, according to you, be read or taught, if taught at all, in an expurgated edition?—Most assuredly.

12394. You would not object, I suppose, to children being brought up upon the Arabian Nights' tales?—I do not object at all, because they cannot get the expurgated edition.

12395. Have you ever happened to see Sir Richard Burton's translation of the Arabian Nights?—Yes; but that is kept under lock and key, and I think some of our books should be kept under lock and key.

12396. The objection to ancient books is, that they contain passages—as all ancient folk-lore stories do—which ought to be

expurgated. I do not suppose anyone would differ from that. Now, with reference to the "silly" division, is there any truth in the suggestion?—Silly! Well, I think my best answer to that will be to ask you to read the first portion of the first volume that was published by the Archæological Society—the "Battle of Moira," the "Feast of Dun na n-gedh," and if you read that, and come to the conclusion that it is not silly, then I shall desist from any further attempt to try and persuade you otherwise.

12397. Has it been translated?—Yes; by John O'Donovan; and I think you will find there ample reason to understand that my point of view is fully justified.

12398. Rev. Dr. SALMON.—I happened to read that book once upon a time, because Dr. Todd persuaded us of the immense treasures to be found in Irish literature, and I subscribed to an Irish Archæological Society, and that book that you have mentioned was the first book they published, and we all looked at it and said, "Is this Irish literature"?—Just so.

12399. Mr. Justice MADDEN.—Perhaps it was not a fair specimen?—It is only the preface I am talking about—the first sixty pages; then it goes into the story itself, and there is a good deal there which has a rattling fine vigour about it of a certain kind, and I am not going to say that that is silly at all; but the first sixty pages I hold to be of the order silly.

12400. Do you consider it a fair specimen of the ancient Irish literature?—Well, I shall be glad if you will get me any other.

12401. I only want to have your own opinion on the matter?—In general it is, as I have said, low. Low, of course, does not necessarily mean silly. There is sometimes a considerable amount of wit in it, which I am not capable of appreciating. But, as a general rule, I would not say that it was not permeated throughout with something that was—shall I say—silly.

12402. You recognise at once the very marked and extraordinary difference of opinion, of literary opinion, upon those subjects. Upon that particular point at issue, between yourself and the learned professors whose letters I have read to you, you recognise that there is a very great difference of opinion?—Might I add one thing also, and it is this: I recognise, also, another great difference, and that is, that I have read every one of these books for the Dictionary, and as I have read them all, and know what they contain, I have formed an opinion that is perfectly definite. Whether the others have read them I cannot say. Some of them, I am sure, have not—whether others did I am not prepared to say.

12403. Is it your suggestion that these learned professors are talking about books that they never read?—Some, some books they have never read? quite so; I should say that it is very probable. I am not going to mention any names, for I don't want to get into any hotter

water than I am already in. I don't want to be *contra mundum* in that particular.

12404. You recognise that you are *Athanasius contra mundum* in this matter?—Well, it is a good omen, for he did conquer the world.

12405. Rev. Dr. SALMON.—I find it difficult to reconcile these different opinions, and I am sure there is some ambiguity of language with regard to two words—first, as regards the word Irish, and, secondly, as regards the word utility. With regard to Irish, I want to know are we speaking of the same things, whether you mean the spoken Irish of the present day or whether you mean Irish as it existed in early times and ages, leaving a literature behind it. For instance, you describe the grammar in the old times as being exceedingly beautiful and complex, and deserving of being admired for its subtlety. But in the modern times you say the grammar is altogether vague?—Yes, and unsettled.

12406. Am I to understand that what is said about the advantage of the study of Irish relates to the old Irish; or do you deny that there are some advantages to be gained from the study of . ncient Irish?—No, sir, on the contrary, I feel that there are very great advantages to be derived from the study of ancient Irish. The glosses of the ninth century, in which the Testament was annotated, are in very beautiful form. But as you come down later that perfection of form is gradually lost in an abysmal swamp of no form, and when you get to modern times it is a mixture arising out of different periods and different dialects. Whether spoken or written it is a mixture.

12407. Do people write books in Irish now?—They do. But it is Irish the nature of which I cannot tell—one man writes in one Irish and another in another. I take it that Dr. Douglas Hyde writes one dialect, Mr. D. O'Fotharta (the author of the Siamsa an Gheimhridh) writes another, and Mr. T. O. Russell, who is also a very competent man, a third. They have got different standards, and so they have got different results.

12408. You don't condemn it as a subject of university education?—Certainly not. On the contrary, I have advocated it. In fact, I have as it were driven people by the nape of the neck to take it up and study it. It should be studied. It is a most important element in European history in that important period of the Middle Ages when Ireland stood practically in the gap. I want Irish studied. The field is there, but there are no labourers for the harvest. It is not to be got by studying modern Irish. The moment modern Irish is learned by students, they stand on the pinnacle, and they won't learn the ancient Irish. That is the point. I hold strongly the opinion that ancient Irish is a subject of great advantage when it is studied by competent persons, but not in an early stage of their education.

12409. You don't deny that it might be a good subject for university education?—That is so. I am willing there.

12410. We were talking of three courses here. Suppose that there is a utility for a commercial, scientific, and what you may call a grammar school education. Now about the commercial course. Would you think a knowledge of spoken Irish of great value to a person in commercial life?—Not the remotest conceivable value.

12411. Could a person trade in Connaught without knowing Irish?—Certainly. Knowing Irish would not help him a bit.

12412. In Dublin, could they buy and sell in any establishment without knowing Irish?—Certainly; without knowing a single syllable of it.

12413. Then Irish is not essential as a subject of commercial education?—Not in the slightest.

12414. Then with regard to a scientific course, could a man know chemistry without knowing Irish?—Of course, he could. Not only is it not necessary for science, but you could not put into Irish the terms of science. A man who wanted to talk about oxygen, should use the word oxygen or some uncouth word to represent it. There are no modern words representing scientific terms in the Irish language.

12415. I am coming to the point I want to arrive at. You admit that it would be suitable as a subject for a university education?—Yes.

12416. I want to know then how, if a person had not learned Irish at school or beforehand, he would be competent to take it up as a subject of university education?—Perfectly competent for this reason, that the proper way to begin is to begin by studying old Irish. It is a language which he could take up after he had learned Latin. Then he could come down the line with great profit and advantage, and if he learns the old Irish without the modern Irish, he will be safe. He will be so penetrated with the accuracy of the older forms that he won't be troubled by the confusion of the modern ones. If he learns the modern Irish first he is not likely to get up to the old Irish.

12417. Is it your idea that he should have some knowledge of other languages before he takes up Irish?—Yes. It is absolutely indispensable that he should know something of philology and other languages before he touches Irish, or he will spoil himself and his study in advance will be interfered with. I am satisfied about that—that the real way to begin is by studying carefully the beautiful forms of the old Irish. I only wish to goodness it could be studied in that way if there was a literature in the old Irish, but there are only glosses.

12418. Mr. Justice MADDEN.—Would you teach Old Irish in the Intermediate schools?—I think it would be perhaps too difficult, because they need to know Latin beforehand, and at least certain branches of philology, and it needs a ripe brain before they can grapple with Old Irish. It is very subtle and very difficult, but it is

most beautiful. I wish I had an opportunity of giving you a few lessons in it, just to show you what it is. If the members of the Commission would just do me the honour of coming down two or three days as a class, I could show them how beautiful those old forms are; but they are not fitted for children. I have not a bit of objection to Irish as such. On the contrary, I have a great deal of sympathy with it. But as a subject for children, I have every objection to it, and I will make that opinion felt as strongly as I can.

12419. Why should not children who are capable of learning Greek learn Old Irish?—Well, in learning Greek it will take a lot of time, and if they gave up the Greek, then they would have lost the power of handling the Irish. If they spend too much time learning Greek, it would be a serious objection to Celtic. I should not say Celtic, for Celtic means a family of languages. If you are to have it at all, let it be Irish. Do not let it be Celtic.

12420. Rev. Dr. SALMON.—Unless you mean them to learn other languages too. There is one advantage from learning Greek—that it throws open to the student a great and valuable literature. A man may learn Greek who does not want to speak it, who may never have to go to Athens, and who learns it because it opens up to him a great literature. As far as I understand, the old literature that it contained is of very mixed value, unless it has been expurgated a great deal. I have heard complaints with regard to Welsh, that though there is a great deal of Welsh spoken, if you go into a bookseller's shop and ask for a Welsh book, you will get nothing but a miserable translation of a theological tract?—That is not correct. You will get novels in Welsh. The Welsh language has been kept up through the Sunday-schools by the Welsh Bible, which is an excellent work of art. It is only in proportion as they deviate from that, that they lose their standard. There are Welsh newspapers, but I had better not state anything about them. But you know my opinion. If you spoke Welsh in the way that it is written, you would not be understood by the people. You must speak the *patois*.

12421. Mr. Justice MADDEN.—There is a literary Welsh?—There is.

12421A. If you spoke literary English in Exmoor, I may tell you, from my knowledge, you would not be understood?—Probably the same thing. The Welsh may do what they like. But I have a great deal of sympathy with Ireland. I could not be without a large love for it. I do not want to see Irish newspapers written in the mixed style of Welsh newspapers.

12422. Rev. Dr. SALMON.—Dr. Douglas Hyde spoke of what an improvement it would be if we all learned Irish and nothing else?—I don't know, Mr. Provost—but you are too old to begin, and I am certainly too old to follow it up. I don't think there would be any benefit whatever by doing that.

12423. Mr. Justice MADDEN.—I don't think there is any practical

risk of Intermediate students becoming an exclusively Irish-speaking race?—No risk. We know how many have learned French, and yet make no use of it afterwards, although they spent a large amount of time learning it in the Intermediate schools.

12424. Dr. BARKLEY.—Just one point. You know Irish is still a spoken language in some parts of the country?—Yes.

12425. Would you say that it was not desirable that children, where Irish is a spoken language, should learn it as a literary language, and know it grammatically?—I should be perfectly willing that the children who speak it vernacularly should be taught by those who speak their *patois* in the fullest and truest way. They should be taught it, and they would learn it with very great advantage, because they speak it from their childhood. But there are few of those now. My objection is with regard to those who do not speak it, and take it up now simply for the purpose of making marks. If they spoke it, then it would be right to teach them in their own mother tongue. It is a wrong to children not to teach them in their own mother tongue.

12426. What if they are bi-lingual?—Then it will depend upon which they have best knowledge of. If they know Irish better than English, let it be Irish; if the other, then the other.

12427. Most Rev. Dr. WALSH.—Mr. Justice Madden asked you practically all the questions I wanted to ask you. There is one point I should wish to have made quite definite. Do you consider that our present programme in Irish could be converted into a suitable programme by any process of amendment?—I doubt it.

12428. Then your advice is, that Irish should be excluded from the programme altogether?—Yes, from that young stage of education.

12429. And not have it taught in the schools at all?—Not in the schools at all, except in the rare cases when a child knew how to speak nothing else.

12430. Then it is only in the case of a child knowing how to speak nothing else that you would have Irish taught at all, or recognised in any way?—Yes, that is my deliberate opinion from every point of view in which I could give an opinion.

12431. Supposing the case of a child that can speak both Irish and English, but who thinks in the Irish language, what would you do?—If he thinks in the Irish language, let him be taught in the Irish language. If he thinks in the English language, or if he mainly thinks in the English language, let him be taught English. A child very rarely thinks in two languages. That is not at all a common phenomenon. If a child cannot really speak English intelligently, it is not fair to him to teach him in any language that he does not know thoroughly.

12432. Mr. Justice MADDEN.—There are very few Irish-speaking children in Ireland now that are unilingual. There are some old

people, but scarcely any children?—There is one point in respect of that. I showed three or four years ago, in a paper which was published in the "Academy," that the so-called form in all the grammars—the consuetudinal tense—does not exist at all, that it is a complete grammatical blunder from top to bottom. I have traced the course of it, and have shown that it came into the language in the present century.

12433. Most Rev. Dr. WALSH.—You know, of course, that it is frequently said that the origin of the vulgarism, "I do be," has come from that consuetudinal tense in Irish?—I know that. But it is not quite correct. The verb "to be" in Irish has several forms. One form means "I exist"—"I do be," that is, "I exist." There are two forms, *ta* and *is*, one of which represents, broadly, that which is an essential attribute, and the other that which is not essential.

12434. There are really three of these verbs in Irish?—Far more. There are seven, I think, altogether.

12435. I mean in this particular connection?—The Rev. Mr. O'Growney, whose name you know, a Gaelic scholar, told me on one occasion that in Connaught he had found some old persons who obeyed that rule of the consuetudinal exactly. In other words, the language itself has been completely transmogrified by self-styled grammarians, and the old people, who hold it from their mother, speak it rightly.

12436. Grammarians have not succeeded in formulating the principles of the language?—They have not succeeded in settling the forms of the language. All the modern languages have arisen from some man of commanding intelligence who has written the language in such beautiful form that everybody has accepted it and assented to it, and followed it as a model. If an Irish scholar does that, if Dr. Douglas Hyde can do it, I will give him my hearty welcome. I will follow him, and everybody will accept it, and then I wish him joy of the biggest victory ever won in an Irish community.

12437. On that grammatical question I quoted for Dr. Douglas Hyde a number of questions from the examination papers in Irish, and called his attention to sentences in which the verb "to be" occurred in various forms. What is your view of questions of that sort put to candidates in Irish? Is it that they are too easy, or that they are too difficult?—My view is that, so far as the external answering of them is concerned, a child of the age of fourteen may easily get the thing off by heart, so as to compel marks. But, on the other hand, the difficulty of properly answering some of those questions is so enormous, that it is probable the Provost himself would take a very long time before he understood what the drift of the question was.

12438. That is my view. They are too difficult. And yet we hear the questions on the papers criticised on the ground that they are too easy?—Both are possible. Some of those questions are per-

fectly frivolous. Nobody, for example, in a Latin paper would ask a boy how *mensa* should be declined.

12439. We are told by people of authority that that is the way we ought to examine, and not in the abnormalities of the language? —Any way there are difficulties. A grammar was published by Mr. J. H. Molloy. He there gives lists of forms of the plural of nouns which, I am sure, not a Munster man in existence would accept.

12440. At all events your opinion is, *Delenda est Carthago.* That is the end of it. The Irish language is to go?—From the programme, you mean?

12441. Yes?—If there is an Irish parent whom I can influence, I would say to him, "Don't let your children go into it." That is my idea, and I will express it whenever I can.

12442. CHAIRMAN.—Is there a Professor of Irish in Trinity College?—Yes, Dr. Murphy

12443. Does he lecture every week?—Yes.

12444. Can you tell me is it the Freshmen or the Sophisters, or what is the status of the students, who attend his classes?—That I could not say. I can only say that my first attendance at Irish lectures was at those of Professor Foley, and I was only a Junior Freshman then. I may add that the first prize I ever won in college was for Irish. That is the first and only prize I ever got until I became a scholar.

The witness withdrew.

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The Irish Language and Irish Intermediate Education.

V.

FOREIGN TESTIMONY.

[Prefatory Note.]

This pamphlet contains a number of letters referred to by Dr. Hyde in his evidence before the Viceregal Commission of Inquiry, and handed in at the close of his examination. They appear in one of the Blue-books. Some of them, as will be seen, are from the most distinguished living Celtologists. It is needless to do more than mention the names of Windisch, Zimmer, Pedersen, Meyer, and Dottin. The letters were all sent to Dr. Hyde, with a view to the evidence which he undertook to give as President and spokesman of the Gaelic League. He had asked the writers beforehand (*a*) for their opinion on the evidence of Dr. Mahaffy and Mr. Gwynn, and (*b*) for their views as to the importance of the Irish language in Irish Intermediate Education. Dr. Atkinson had not then given his *so-called* evidence; but these letters enabled the Commissioners—Mr. Justice Madden, particularly—to drive Dr. Atkinson, during his examination, from practically every position that he had taken up in his opening statement. It is interesting to compare the calm, cogent reasoning of the letters with Dr. Atkinson's verbal thunder, wild rhetoric, and reckless unsupported assertion. Drs. Windisch, Stern, and Zimmer wrote in German, and M. Dottin in French. The translations here given are taken from the Blue-book. All the others wrote in English.

DOCUMENTS put in by DOUGLAS HYDE, LL.D., President of the Gaelic League.

I.

Letter to Dr. Douglas Hyde from Professor Owen M. Edwards Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford.

Lincoln College, Oxford,
9th February, 1899.

DEAR DR. DOUGLAS HYDE,—I have heard rumours that Irish is to be given less prominence in the secondary education system of Ireland. In the face of the wonderful impulse given to education in Wales by the utilization of Welsh, I think that any step in the direction of eliminating Irish would be very injurious to the best interests of education in Ireland.

In our Welsh schools—elementary and secondary—the study of Welsh is taken up with great enthusiasm. The results are most satisfactory. One result is a striking growth in all-round excellence—in English especially. The study of Welsh arouses the children's mind in a wonderful degree, and the standard of the school rises appreciably, and in an unmistakable way, when the boys and girls are allowed to give some time to their own language.

Our inspectors of elementary schools will tell you that the standard of elementary education was greatly raised by the introduction of Welsh. Our secondary education system is not old yet but the influence of the study of Welsh is already beginning to tell on the literature of the country. There is a great demand for reprints of the classics—numerous in Welsh as in Irish—and the Press is becoming more active every day. Within the last ten years literary activity has been doubled, and the demand for Welsh books on literature, history, science, &c., is far greater than the supply. The schools and university, by giving a more important place to Welsh year after year, have given Welsh literature an impetus, a discipline, and a spirit of progress that have exceeded our most sanguine expectations.

We have gained in every direction by giving Welsh an important place in our whole system, from the infant classes to the university course. The schools themselves have become more efficient; it is found to be much easier to develop the children's mind; our popular literature has been revived and brought under inspiring foreign influence—and we have gained all this while also gaining a greater knowledge of English and of English literature.

Before any reactionary step is taken I hope you will call the atten-

tion of your countrymen to the analogous case of Wales—where the results are so eloquent.

Ever faithfully yours,
(Signed), Owen M. Edwards,
Fellow of Lincoln College.

II.

Letter to Dr. Douglas Hyde from Mr. Alfred Nutt, President of the Folk Lore Society.

London, *February*, 1899.

Dear Dr. Hyde —It is, I understand, suggested that the scanty encouragement which the educational authorities in Ireland have hitherto offered to students of Irish should be curtailed, if not altogether done away with. As a student of literature and history I wish to protest against a course of action which would constitute a serious injustice to all natives of Ireland capable of assimilating and benefiting by intellectual culture, and would further inflict irreparable injury upon studies whose importance is attracting a daily increased recognition from scholars in all departments of literary and historical research.

Of all literatures of modern Europe that of ancient Ireland—chronologically the earliest recorded—is the most archaic in subject-matter and form. Much of it has its roots in a stage of culture even more primitive than that of the Homeric Greeks, with which, indeed, it presents, as M. D'Arbois de Jubainville has just shown, most remarkable analogies. As the earliest and fullest, it is the most valuable witness to the conception and imaginative rendering of life peculiar to the barbarian ancestors of modern Europe before they came under the sway of classics and Christian civilisation. Its evidential value for the study of early Aryan culture can scarcely be exaggerated.

This literature can be traced back with certainty for over a thousand years, inferentially for several centuries further. It has exhibited during the whole of this period characteristics of imagination, presentment, and form alike enduring, significant, and of extreme interest. It contains the life history of the soul of a race, and it can best be comprehended and expounded by members of that race provided they receive the necessary training. The great continental scholars who have done so much for the furtherance of Celtic studies are the first to insist upon the value of living tradition, the first to urge the importance of the instinctive native knowledge and love of Ireland's ancient speech and literature. If Celtic studies are discouraged in Ireland springs of knowledge and right comprehension will be immediately lost. To the plea that very few Intermediate

students ever develop into scholars, it is sufficient to answer that the means of culture must be offered freely to *all* if all who *can* profit by them are to do so. The production of a single O'Donovan would amply justify the maintenance of the present system.

But, apart from the scientific value of ancient Irish speech and letters, which can only be denied by the ignorant or the prejudiced; apart from the desirability of encouraging what cannot be replaced, the native bent towards and knowledge of these studies if they are to yield their full results—I would urge the special educational value for natives of Ireland of the study which it is proposed to abolish, and would emphasise the injustice of depriving them of it. Literature in Ireland exhibits throughout its entire history a oneness of spirit and form paralleled by none other known to me. The imaginative medium used by the Gaelic-speaking peasant of to-day, sadly degraded as it may be, is that of his mediæval ancestor; the Anglo-Irish poet to whom all the culture of antiquity and the modern world is open, instinctively reverts to an outlook upon and rendering life akin to that of his bardic forerunner a thousand years ago. What more cogent proof of the adequacy of native speech and letters to the essential strivings of the Irish mind could be adduced? Has not the Irishman, denied access to a means of expression answering to his inmost needs, legitimate cause of complaint?

The educational value of Irish is impugned, if I mistake not, on account of the poverty of the literature accessible to students. This view obviously disregards the importance of mastering a rich, expressive and complete language so strongly insisted upon in the case of the classical tongues. It also disregards the importance of the more modern literature as a necessary stepping-stone to the intelligence of the older texts. Apart from these considerations, I hold the complaint unjustified, and I regard modern Irish literature as a by no means despicable educational instrument. As a rule in modern Europe literary culture is becoming more and more alien to the masses of the population, and instead of being a bond of union, is, in reality, a potent separating influence between the various classes of society. The reason is not far to seek. Modern literature is for the most part the artificial product of a small class imposed, in our present system of teaching, upon masses which it does not affect, because they cannot appreciate it. Irish literature of the last two centuries on the other hand makes up for its undoubted lack of variety and richness, by the fact that it springs from and is understanded by the people, and is thus well fitted to be a popular instrument of culture. It does not reach the heights, it does not sound the depths of the great modern literatures, but it is as a rule sound, genuine, and clear. In especial, it is free from the besetting sin of modern popular literature, vulgarity. Finally, it is well adapted to develop the imaginative and rhetorical strain prominent in Irishmen.

The last characteristic may possibly be considered no recom-

mendation. But national education must take note of the essential disposition of a nation. The Irishman will not become an Englishman because he is not taught Irish; his intellectual culture is simply *pro tanto* impoverished and stunted. Some exception has doubtless been taken to the predominantly legendary and romantic character of the literature available for Irish students; but at the present day when the importance of a romance as a permanent element of literature is recognised on all hands, the objection strikes one as a trifle antiquated; German educationists, for instance, who know the value of Grimm's Märchen, and of the Nibelungenlied, would certainly not approve it.

To sum up: Irish speech and literature offer an instrument of culture specially fashioned by the Irish people, specially adapted to its needs, specially fitted to stimulate its intellectual energies. The ancient literature of Ireland, a monument of priceless value to the student of early culture in Europe, requires for its due comprehension as full a utilisation as possible of native knowledge and native intellectual bent. To discourage the study of Irish is to impoverish the Irish mind, and to hinder scientific research of first-rate importance.

I am, Dear Dr. Hyde,
Sincerely yours,
ALFRED NUTT,

President of the Folk Lore Society, Member of Council of the Hon. Soc. of Cymmrodorion and of the Irish Texts Society.

III.

Letter to Dr. Douglas Hyde from Professor E. C. Stern, Royal Librarian, Berlin.

Berlin, *Feb. 5th*, 1899.

GEEHRTER HERR,

In your kind letter of the 31st you wish to know my opinion on the question as to whether the Irish language and literatue is a suitable subject of study for boys in Ireland.

The Irish language has, in my opinion, apart altogether from the aims and objects of comparative philology, advantages not a few, which render it deserving of study. Its treasury of words is extraordinarily rich, its syntax is graceful [fein] and characteristic. The study of it consequently appears to me to be in no way less educational than that of other modern languages. It is tolerably difficult, and incomparably deeper than, for example, Welsh. From the point of view of pedagogy, however, it signifies less *what* we study than *how*

we study it, and methodic instruction in Irish can in my opinion become an admirable exercise of the mind.

For Ireland the language has of course a peculiar signification, because there people can also learn to speak it with fluency. Whoever learns to speak a second language procures to himself a certain superiority over those who are only masters of one language. Thus, if I may venture to make the comparison, the person in Germany who speaks both Polish and German, in our eastern provinces, will get on better in the world than he who speaks only German. The knowledge of a foreign language, however, becomes a valuable mental possession only when one also knows its grammar.

Even without the possibility or the necessity of putting it [as a spoken language] into actual use, yet the learning of Irish by Irishmen appears to me a thing to be altogether recommended. The youthful Celt meets the traces left by this language at every step and turn, and he has a certain right to it, that he should not remain entirely uninstructed in the dialect of his forefathers. The Irish language is in its very basis so essentially different from the English, that the names, for example, of rivers, lakes, towns, villages, &c., in Ireland which all have a signification of their own, remain dead and devoid of all signification without a knowledge of the Celtic speech.

But who takes pleasure in what is dead and unintelligible? In all things we wish for light—more light. Consequently there is no question at all of loss of time, and even though the school should produce no great scholar, yet it is better to possess the elements than nothing—*Gerendum et sperandum.* The study of Irish ought to be pursued in the school with love and desire for the thing, and it goes without saying that politics are to be carefully kept far away from it.

With regard to Irish literature itself, it possesses an exceedingly wide range, and is, in great part, of value only to the scholar who wishes to form for himself a picture of the mental civilization of earlier centuries. The older Irish literature is, upon the whole, neither better nor worse than other literatures of the middle ages, although it has allowed no works to ripen which occupy a preponderating place in the world's literature. It is true that it is in part of a religious nature, but it is in no wise wanting in historical books. Works of fiction occupy in it a great deal of space, but they are of considerable interest since they reflect the Celtic spirit in the most faithful manner, and some of them reach back into the highest antiquity. The value of these compositions consists very largely in their form, which is always graceful and choice. The Irish fancy delights in the extraordinary, and not seldom in the impossible; their humour loves the hyperbolic, and one will find in their stories much, perhaps, that might even appear silly. But the literature of Saga and of Märchen has been fully prized in our day, and, without doubt, there are amongst them text-books which are fitted for school use. That Irish literature is more indecent than any other literature

appears to me to be absolutely non-proven. Who will weigh such things, one over against the other. Whoever reads the works of the admirable Keating will find in them neither folly nor obscenity, but most certainly as much good amusement as useful instruction.

My opinion, in consequence, is that it were to be exceedingly regretted, if instruction in the Irish language should be excluded from the curriculum of schools in that country.

E. C. Stern.

IV.

Letter to Dr. Douglas Hyde from Dr. Ernst Windisch, University of Leipsig.

To Douglas Hyde, LL.D., *Ratra, Frenchpark, Co. Roscommon, Ireland.*

Hochgeehrter Herr,—Since my views on the question which you have laid before me in no wise contain anything prejudicial to the interests of the English Government, nor of the English language, I have no hesitation in speaking out openly to you what I think.

I do not share the point of view of my otherwise honoured colleague of Trinity College. Not for mere idealist reasons alone, but in the interests of the common weal, I should deeply regret if the facultative teaching of Irish and the pecuniary support of the schools connected with it, should for the future come into disuse. I am unable to recognise any pressing reason for setting it aside. Existing regulations should only be got rid of when the universal opinion is that they have outlived their time, or when they are actually harmful. The first of these conditions is not the case, because very many people in Ireland desire the perpetuation of the present conditions. That however the study of the Irish language has proved hurtful, I shall continue to regard as excessively improbable, until ascertained and grave facts can be brought forward to prove it.

I attach great importance to this fact—that the study of Irish is only *facultative*, and that in consequence, no one can be forced into it. Whoever gives himself up to the study of Irish, so far as his time permits of it, does so for the most part for reasons of idealism. A fifteen pound prize may, for this one or that one, be an additional stimulus, but above all, it has for the Irishman the value of an official recognition that the ancient language and the past history of his land are worthy of study. And this should not be changed.

The study of Irish would be a waste of time, and consequently hurtful, only if young people gave themselves up to it, instead of, in the *first* place, preparing themselves for some calling which would promise them a secured existence in life. For actual professors of Irish language and literature there are in the whole world very few places which assure for their holders a secure existence. But, all

the more for this, it is to be desired that opportunity be afforded to, and desire instilled in the Irishman in his youth, to attain, if he wishes, a knowledge of the ancient language and literature of his country, which should, of right, possess a home interest for every educated Irishman. And here I wish to call attention to the perfectly well-known fact that in England, at all times, men in the most various walks of practical life have frequently contributed quite as much to the furtherance of art, science, and literature, as have the actual professors. The Royal Irish Society of Antiquaries may be regarded as an example of this, which is close at hand. Even for antiquarian inquirers, a certain solid knowledge of the Irish language and literature is of great value. Once more the doors will be thrown open wide to all kinds of wild theories if a knowledge of the Irish language should vanish out of the educated circles of the people, and become more and more confined to a few professional scholars.

Now as to the question whether the study of the Irish language is of value in school teaching or not. It all depends upon what one understands by the word school-teaching. We, in Germany, would certainly not introduce Irish amongst the languages to be learned in the schools. But in Ireland Irish is the ancient language of the country, which is even still spoken by hundreds of thousands, a language in which the spiritual mode of interpretation and expression of the people's forefathers is preserved. It expresses the spiritual peculiarities of the character of the Irish population, and not to cultivate the Irish language means—to close up without any necessity a well-spring of the spiritual characteristics of the people. For the Irishman the Irish language *must* possess a value as a school subject because it contributes towards the maintenance amongst Irishmen of their spiritual characteristics. The high significance which old Irish possesses in the matter of linguistic enquiry I do not touch upon here at all; because it is not impugned upon any side, and in the case before us there is no question of the education of learned linguists.

But the cultivation of Irish speech enlarges also the historical sense, and that, too, in the direction nearest to Ireland itself. The Irish language leads back into Ireland's past; but not into the time of those bloody wars which have been the forerunners of the present political relations. I, at least, have no knowledge of any works written in the Irish language a study of which could nurture political hatred. If it were a question of any such, I, for my own part, would not recommend Irishmen to do all in their power to keep alive their ancient language and literature. The old Irish literature has its roots in more ancient times, contains nothing inflammatory, but, on the other hand, a number of characteristic works of which no nation need be ashamed.

The epithets, as I hear, of "indecent" and "silly" have been applied to the older Irish literature in so far as it is not religious. This characterisation of it, which aims at defining its entirety in two

words, is, in my opinion, both wrong and unfair. With regard to the first reproach, it has been on the contrary a source of constant wonderment to me that there is in the ancient sagas so little that is offensive. Of the frivolity which breathes through a large part of our modern literature, there is not a trace to be found. Here and there a crude naturalistic expression, here and there a remarkable change in matrimonial relationship, here and there an extraordinary representation concerning the birth of uncommon personalities—further, I know nothing against it. The prurient, vulgar tone of mind which makes indecent what is indecent, is entirely absent. No man's soul can suffer any hurt through the contents of the old Irish sagas.

With regard to the reproach of being silly, that is partly a matter of taste. I know, however, many pieces which in no possible way deserve this epithet. With exactly the same justice could you call our German stories taken in their entirety "silly," although these again in their contents are of a quite different sort from the Irish sagas. Certainly, here and there, there are some not very agreeable and insignificant stories, but upon the whole we find mirrored in the Irish sagas a highly interesting phase of culture which has partly come down from times for [the depicting of] which every other literature is almost entirely failing. Fierce fighting plays in it a considerable part, but such was of course the case in ancient times. With regard to the form, one may more frequently make it a reproach that the stories are not well told, the poems especially have only seldom a poetical flight. The art of Attic prose or of the Odes of Horace is wanting; but, on the other hand, in the telling of the story and in the dialogues we find an unschooled naturalness of expression which has also its own charm and its own high value for the history of languages. We are at present accustomed to complex stories—the Irish stories have predominantly a simple action, but the same thing is true of the Comedies of Terence compared with our modern comedies.

Ireland cannot point to an ancient national lyric such as the Germans possess in the Nibelungenlied. But Ireland possesses what very well might have given the material for great epic poems, namely, a large quantity of smaller and greater stories in which are mirrored, in a tolerably unblurred fashion, characteristics of a grade of civilisation much older still. The possession of these sagas which are, in part, closely connected with their own locality, every people might well envy the Irish. The Germans and Slavs have also at one time not stood higher in the scale of civilisation, have also at one time possessed no higher interests than those of the heroes of the Irish sagas. But even should one take a different view of this point, this much at least is certain, that neither the Germans nor the Slavs are able to produce any such living pictures out of their wild-heroic pre-historic times, as can the Irish. With regard to the history of

civilisation, Ireland may be proud of her ancient sagas. It would not be difficult to put together out of these for Irish youths a book interesting and attractive. To the texts which have a national signification belongs the "Accalam na Senórach," that remarkable work which has lately been made known by Mr. Standish Hayes O'Grady, in which, it is true, Cuchulain is no longer the hero, but in which other heroes of Irish antiquity are brought into ingenious and poetic relations to St. Patrick.

About the glosses made by the ancient Irish monks of the 8th and 9th centuries, I should also like to say a word. To me they are venerable, and venerable they ought to be for every Irishman. They speak the language of the immediate followers of St. Gall and of the other old Irish missionaries who brought abroad with them out of Ireland to the Continent the Christian religion and Christian learning. The effects produced by these monks is a fact in the history of the world, one whose glory should live on in the minds of Irish youths. If the Irishman, as Irishman, is to feel himself happy in his home, this ennobling thought may well conduce to it, that his land also may be proud of its past and of the remains of its past. The making-little of Irish characteristics and of the Irish language most certainly does not conduce to the rendering happy of the Irish people, and of the cultured classes who are planted amongst them. Englishmen, too, should recognise in Ireland that which is deserving of recognition. My late father-in-law, the political-economist, William Roscher, was a great admirer of Sir Walter Scott. He used to say that Walter Scott had contributed in no mean degree to the inner reconciliation of Scotland and England, because, even for Englishmen, he made dear and valued the Scottish Highlands, their characteristics and their history. I mention this only as an example that even an idealistic point of view may possess a very real value.

In saying, that I wish for Ireland that the remembrance of her past be hallowed and preserved, I must be understood as saying once more that also the modern Irish language should be accorded a certain amount of cultivation, because it is the only expression of Irish nature which has been maintained in an unbroken continuation down to the present day. To follow the laws of linguistic change in their development, down to the modern written language which has arisen since Keating, and into the spoken dialects of the present day, is for the linguist an attractive task.

To take from Irishmen an opportunity of gaining a firm foothold in the Irish language, and through it in the Irish past, would be, in my opinion, unjust and unwise. Such an act would produce in wide circles in Ireland a well-justified feeling of dissatisfaction, without, in other respects, furthering in anywise the prosperity of the country.

Hochachtungsvollst,

Ihr sehr ergebener,

Professor Dr. Ernst Windisch.

V.

Letter to Dr. Douglas Hyde from M. Georges Dottin, Professor of French Literature, University of Rennes.

Rennes, *Feb.* 1, 1899.

DEAR SIR,—You ask my opinion as to the utility and interest of teaching the Irish language in Ireland.

I confess to you that I am absolutely astonished that anyone can contest the utility of it. It is certain that the intelligence of people who speak more than one language is singularly developed, and it is only natural that in Ireland one should study Irish in addition to English—a study which, in certain cases, has a practical utility. In Brittany the free schools teach their pupils Breton, and the University of Rennes includes Breton amongst the languages which one can take up for the degree examination.

But, in addition to this, Irish, as a language, has a great superiority over Breton, because it has remained a synthetic language, and because it has preserved the cases and personal terminations, all grammatical characteristics which English has lost, and a comparison between these two so different languages is certainly an excellent exercise.

As to the interest of Irish literature itself, that is evidently a question of appreciation. Certainly, if one compare Irish literature with Greek literature, one is somewhat shocked by the inferiority of the former in point of form and expression. But then it is not with Greek that Irish ought to compared, it is rather with the literatures of the Middle Ages—French, Germanic, and the rest. From this point of view Irish literature, almost as considerable as the French literature of the Middle Ages, possesses the same qualities and the same defects—qualities of imagination and of picturesqueness, defects of composition and expression. Nobody has ever contested the interest of the French literature of the Middle Ages, and I cannot believe that anyone could dream of seriously denying the qualities possessed by the ancient literature of Ireland.

Certain it is, that if that literature offered nothing but what was silly or indecent, men like Whitley Stokes, Windisch, Kuno Meyer, or D'Arbois de Jubainville, would never spend their time in translating and commenting on the Irish texts, and that Chairs of Celtic would never have been founded at Paris and at Rennes, and that neither editors nor purchasers could be found to produce and to buy the numerous publications of Irish texts which are now at the disposal of workers. All this appears quite clear to me, and if the

Commission on Intermediate Education will take upon this point the opinion of the principal Celticists they will be unanimous.

Bien à vous,

GEORGES DOTTIN.

VI.

Letter to Dr. Douglas Hyde from Professor H. Zimmer, Professor of Sanscrit and of Celtic Languages, University of Greifswald.

Greifswald, *6th February*, 1899.

SEHR GEEHRTER HERR DR.—It is an observation which you may make in all conditions of life, that people in many ways attach to things which they have inherited from their fathers and forefathers, a value which a stranger cannot see in them. This is for the most part the way with nations in respect to their own particular past, and not least with regard to their literary past, since the native natural piety of every man who has not succeeded in becoming a cosmopolite allows that which is *good* in the literary past (of his people) to come into stronger prominence, and that which is *defective* to drop out of sight, in a greater degree than is objectively justified. To this universal law are the Celts of the present day, Irish and Cymri, also subjected. And indeed to me personally, it would appear that with the Irish and the Cymri—under the influence of the, in many ways, unsatisfying present—the tendency to overrate their own literary past is much stronger than elsewhere. I must consequently confess that I am unable to ascribe to the Irish literature of the Middle Ages that *absolutely* high value which at the present day is accorded to it year in, year out, by patriotic Irishmen. Further, I find it unjust of the Irish that they continually harp so strongly upon the mass of Irish literature contained in MSS. from the 12th to the 15th century. This quantity of MSS. does all honour to the intellectual life of the Irishmen of that period, but yet for the appreciation of literature from the standpoint of the present, another measure must be employed.

Furthermore, this is to be remarked: the modern student of literature who has cultivated his literary taste by a study of the Antique, that is of the Greeks and the Romans, as well as by a study of the literatures of the Romanic and Germanic peoples which are in many respects only a continuation of theirs, will upon his first acquaintance with the literature produced during the Middle Ages by the Island-Celts find himself at first unpleasantly impressed by the observation that both in the Irish and Cymric literatures there is, *for his taste*, a *disproportion* between *form* and *matter*. In those

sorts of literature where both in Ireland and Wales they used verse, the form predominates far too much for his taste over the matter, whereas, on the other hand in the texts relating to the heroic sagas and all that belongs to this group, he gains the impression, remembering Homer, Virgil, the Nibelungenlied, or Beowulf, that the prose of the Irish and Cymric does not clothe the matter with a garment that is its suitable match.

For the student, however, whose mind does not remain thoughtlessly fixed on the surface, the fact soon reveals itself that in this literary form used by the Island Celts in epic matter, we have before us an important stage in Indo-European culture-development, which has its parallels in the oldest Indian and the oldest Iranian literatures; and then when one reads oneself into the older texts of the Irish saga, which are in the subject-matter in many respects highly interesting and valuable, one soon remarks that although the external form is prose, yet a language and representation of poetical power and of poetic intuition is there. A translation of these texts into German, French, or English prose can only render the subject-matter, but it obscures and blots out most completely the poetic form. In order to grasp this, one must read the texts in the original.

As you see, then, I am not by any means placing myself in an attitude of blind admiration before the Irish literature of the middle ages, but I believe, on the other hand, after all I have said, that it is not necessary for me to lose many words over such a criticism of Irish literature as Professor Mahaffy has delivered himself of. If Professor Mahaffy really gives 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 the literature, beneath any criticism. Its own very lack of moderation condemns it. The desire to repel such an assertion would be doing it undeserved honour. You will, perhaps, most easily console yourself over Professor Mahaffy's judgment, when I relate to you how something over a hundred years ago a much more remarkable man judged our German literature of the 12th-14th centuries. About the year 1750, the people began in Germany to turn away from Frenchiness and French tastes, and to turn themselves towards our German literature of the Middle Ages, and after an oblivion of hundreds of years to bring the old texts once more to the light. As a consequence of these efforts, the master of a gymnasium in Berlin published, in 1782, a "Collection of German Poems of the 12th, 13th and 14th Centuries." He sent the first volume, in which was contained the Nibelungenlied, to Frederick the Great of Prussia, and received from him a letter of thanks, which ran: "You judge the poems of the 12th, 13th, and 14th centuries far too favourably. In my opinion *such things are not worth a single charge of powder*, and never deserved to be drawn out of the dust of oblivion. I, at least, would never permit *such pitiable stuff* amongst my collection of

books, but I would *fling it out*." This letter is dated Potsdam, the 22nd of February, 1784, and the original is now in the library of Zürich, under a glass case. This was the opinion of the Prussian King, who by his actions in the last century did more than anyone else for the awakening of German national feeling, but who in his literary tastes was still only on a level with the French culture of the day. For over the last thirty years that "pitiable stuff" has been read in the upper classes of German Gymnasiums, and in all the German-speaking universities professorial chairs have been established for its study. *Tempora mutantur.*

With regard to the Irish *language* as a subject of instruction in the *Intermediate education system* in Ireland, I know of no other modern language which, regarded purely as a language, possesses a higher *educational value* than modern Irish for a boy who knows English. Practically, and from the point of view of modern literature, a knowledge of French and German to him, outside of Ireland, would be certainly more valuable; but for *thorough education and schooling of the mind* (*i.e.* of the intellect) Irish stands at the very least on a level with the two above-named languages; in fact it is in many respects superior to them, because it is more characteristic, and consequently gives more matter for thought. Through the phenomena of aspiration and eclipsis peculiar to the Celtic languages, which continue some of the primeval phenomena of Indo-European speech, phenomena which are now, all but a few fragmentary remains lost in the other Indo-European tongues, Irish opens up to the growing youth who is to be educated to think, new and highly instructive linguistic points of view. That dependence of the pronunciation of a consonant upon the vowel which still follows it, or once did follow it, which is so very marked a feature in Irish, can, in course of teaching, be made a source of instruction and illumination for the phenomena of the French, English, and German languages. For these reasons, and for many others to be drawn from declension and conjugation, I can think of no modern language which, for an *Irish* boy who *knows English*, would be more *educational* than Irish, if it be rightly taught in Intermediate instruction. Further, I should think that so long as all Irish towns, villages, streams, rivers, mountains, hills, valleys, plains, remain un-rebaptised—it were a thing to be desired for *every educated man* who passes his life in Ireland to understand at least some Irish, since, without this, he is unable to enter into any inner relationship to the country either in the past or in the present. A real furtherance of the voluntary study of Irish in the Intermediate education of Ireland is quite certainly calculated to gradually promote another after-growth from amongst the Irish themselves of deeper scientific knowledge of the Celtic languages, even as such effects of it are already visible in Wales.

Ag ro mo dearbhadh-sa. Gabh mo leithsceul gur sgríobhar ann mo theanga féin é.

(*I.e.*, This is my opinion. Excuse me for having written it in my own language.)

Mire le meas mór,

Dr. H. Zimmer.

VII.

Letter to Dr. Douglas Hyde from Professor F. York Powell, Regius Professor of Modern History, in the University of Oxford.

Christ Church, Oxford,
9th February, 1899.

Dear Dr. Hyde,—The matter is clear to me, and for these reasons I venture to write to you though I am not a skilled Gaelic scholar.

First.—It is indubitable that it is a great help to children to be bilingual. We find it so in Wales, and I don't think anyone would wish or try to hinder the teaching of Welsh.

Secondly.—It is not true that there is any difficulty about finding or making good *Readers*. There is plenty of good verse and there is no lack of prose suitable for the purpose, neither "indecent" nor "silly." We had no good "Readers" in English till quite lately it must be remembered.

Thirdly.—It would be a thousand pities if a wise and reasonable effort to bring culture to the children through their mother tongue should be stopped on the ground that it is a "waste of time." The *discipline* and the *education* is the same whether a child learns in Gaelic or English. We want it to learn both, and we know by the experience of the past that a bilingual child will learn English better and more readily, if its own tongue is not tabooed in the early years of its life.

To say that Irish should not be taught or allowed in Irish schools is a very strong and very unreasonable measure. I do not understand that you wish to enforce the study of Irish on any that do not wish to learn it, but simply to have it allowed as a subject, and in this I am of course heartily with you.

I need not tell you that the older Irish literature has an enormous value for historians and linguistic students, and its study has been largely hampered by the fact that there has been such great difficulty in getting the modern spoken Irish properly taught in the face of the ill-judged discouragement (in the last century) of Irish by the clergy, a discouragement that led to great and deplorable destruction of Irish MSS. of all ages. If the teaching of Irish as a subject were permitted and encouraged as it should be, we should look forward pretty surely to getting educated men who would care for and advance

the study of their country's literature and culture in the past, a study which is of high importance to scholars everywhere. This importance is acknowledged everywhere out of Ireland. Within the last few months two important periodicals have been founded for the study of Celtic literature and language —*Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* and *Archiv für Celtische Lexicographie*. Just at this moment, when things Celtic are becoming more and more important in the field of Science, it would be pure folly to try and stop up a little wicket-gate through which a good deal of real knowledge (knowledge that if lost could never be replaced) might be brought into this field. We study, and rightly study, the manners, customs, and speech of foreign peoples, there is my reason for not neglecting such a province of interest as Celtic Ireland, even to-day, affords.

I am convinced that if the English in Ireland and the English and Scots settlers in Ireland had chosen to encourage the study of Irish, they would have made things, politically and socially, much better and easier. There is still time to do much in this direction if the Government is wise and shrewd.

I am not, as you know, a mystic or a believer in "Celtic glamour," or the rubbish (good-natured fantastic rubbish, but still rubbish to my mind) that is being talked now a good deal, and I don't like it because it is based upon a lot of idle theories that can't hold water or fire or any other decent element, and I am not writing you as a politician and I have no "row to hoe." It is as a scholar and as one that has a practical acquaintance with education and with schools and schoolwork, that I state my deliberate opinion that it would be a very grave and a very retrograde step for the Royal Commission to try and do away with the study of Celtic as a school subject. It is a good subject, a useful subject, and a subject that, far from being discouraged, should be encouraged by any who really care for education in the true sense in Ireland.

You are at liberty to use this letter, and I hope you will do so if you think it likely to do any good.

I will ask a friend of mine here who is one of those who have studied the bilingual question in Wales to write to you. His words should at least command respect. The Basque bilinguists are certainly not the least forward and energetic of the Spaniards. The Provençal, Alsatian, and Breton bilinguists have produced some of the greatest Frenchmen. The Scots Highlands have sent us many of our best administrators, merchants, men of leading. The bilinguality of the Jew is certainly not an element of failure or a hindrance to him.

I don't understand why a man like Dr. Mahaffy should discourage Irish studies when he is, rightly, so eager that every scrap of Greek should be minutely studied. The problems to which advanced Irish studies bring light are of a highly technical and scientific order, and there is perhaps no living European tongue that we may expect to

give us more help in elucidating the broken history of the Indo-European tongues than Celtic, and of the Celtic tongues especially the Irish.

I write in haste. I wish there was time for me to write more briefly and more incisively, but I hope I have made my opinion plain.

I am, yours faithfully,

F. York Powell,

Regius Prof. Mod. Hist. Univ. Oxford.

VIII.

Letter to Dr. Douglas Hyde from Professor Kuno Meyer, University College, Liverpool.

57, Hope-street, Liverpool,

Jan. 24, 1899.

Dear Dr. Douglas Hyde,—You can hardly expect me to take seriously the extraordinary paradox of Professor Mahaffy. It reminds me of the recent utterance of a Catholic Lord Rector of a Scottish University that a Chair in French was unnecessary as there was no French literature.

However, the statement was made, you tell me, by the learned Professor before a Viceregal Commission on Education, and on the authority of two unnamed Irish scholars. If Professor Mahaffy, instead of taking the opinion of two such men, had applied to his friend Whitley Stokes, or to any of those Irish scholars whose learning and judgment are above question, he would have heard, I am sure, that Irish literature is a marvellous manifestation of the human spirit and, in its form and genius, in prose and in poetry, is a true and unique literature.

As for the value of the Irish language and literature in a programme of Intermediate education in Ireland, I can but say:—

(1.) To refrain from teaching it to Irish youths, who talk it as their mother tongue, I must regard as a grotesque educational blunder.

(2.) The Irish language, well taught, I regard as a first-rate means of mental training.

(3.) Why deprive in their education for life, and all it means, the youth of Ireland of such intimate touch with the literature of their past as they can thus acquire?

(4.) What material will you provide for your university professors of Celtic studies, if you freeze the fountain at the spring?

In answer to those who assert that modern Gaelic is a degenerate daughter of old Irish, of the nature of a corrupt jargon rather than of

a language, I should like to point out that this erroneous view, so far as it has any rational basis, is founded on the exploded theory of "phonetic decay" taught in philological text-books of forty or fifty years ago. The large proportion of English loan words, which are naturally employed by Irish speakers in colloquial language, may also have helped to confirm such a mistaken view.

It is clearly wrong to draw any conclusion as to the character and nature of a language from its conversational use alone. As used by educated speakers and writers, and as it appears in the oral and written literature of Ireland, the modern Gaelic language is a natural and healthy development of the old Irish, remarkable alike for the raciness and wealth of its vocabulary and for its idiomatic construction. It affords, therefore, an excellent means of linguistic training.

Wishing you every success in your endeavour to combat such false and ignorant charges against a literature to the study of which I have devoted my life,

I am,

Yours sincerely,

KUNO MEYER.

IX.

Letter to Dr. Douglas Hyde from Professor Holger Pedersen, University of Copenhagen.

Svanemosegardsvej, II., iii.,
Copenhagen V.,
30*th January*, 1899.

DEAR SIR,—As you ask me my opinion as to the importance or non-importance of teaching Irish children Irish, I wish to state that the teaching of Irish seems to me to be imperiously commanded by the simple circumstance that one-third of Ireland [in area] is still Irish-speaking; for Irish-speaking children, even if they know some little English, cannot acquire a satisfactory intellectual and moral development, if they are not taught to read and write their mother tongue. The neglecting of the mother tongue of the pupils is always and everywhere a barbarity and an injustice that should not be allowed in our century.

You ask me if I approve of the opinion of a certain gentleman who declares that he is told that it is impossible to get an old text-book in Irish which is not either religious or silly or indecent. I am glad to say that I do not approve of that opinion. The old Irish literature is one of the most interesting, and far superior to most other mediæval literatures of Europe. If anybody takes a pleasure in terming this literature silly, it ought to be remembered that this term has been applied even to the national literature of other coun-

tries, and has been refuted afterwards by this literature exercising the most wholesome and regenerating influence on the modern poesy of these nations. So, for instance, has been the lot of the Danish mediæval songs.

Every nation in Europe is anxious to contribute as much as possible to the study of their own language and literature. The only exception might be Turkey. Now it must be kept in mind that there is some connection between the elementary education and the learned studies. To advocate the abolition of Irish teaching might, therefore, be the same as proposing that Ireland should altogether leave the study of her own nationality to the Continental scholars, who always will know how to appreciate the unmatched importance of the Irish language.

The opinion of the gentleman mentioned above may be excused by some one-sidedness of his mind. But to repeat and approve of this opinion would be, indeed, silly and indecent, though, I must admit, not religious.

Very sincerely yours,

HOLGER PEDERSEN.

X.

Letter to Dr. Douglas Hyde from Miss Eleanor Hull, Hon. Sec. of the Irish Texts' Society.

20, Arundel Gardens,
London, W.,
February 8th, 1899.

DEAR DR. HYDE,—I am glad to hear that you are giving evidence before the Intermediate Education Commissioners, and that you will have an opportunity of rebutting some of the ignorant and unscholarly statements made by other witnesses on the subject of the value of the Irish language and literature. When, a short time ago, the members of the French Academy were asked, through the columns of the *Morning Post*, to express an opinion on the comparative merits of the chief English poets and writers, a large number of them replied that their opinion was valueless owing to their ignorance of English, which obliged them to read English literature in translations. It is a pity that a similar modesty does not restrain our own savants when called upon for an opinion on a subject to which they have given neither thought nor study, and upon which their ignorance of the Irish tongue precludes them from forming an enlightened opinion. I understand that Professor Mahaffy was one of the witnesses called to give evidence. It is certainly an unusual course to take evidence upon the value of any language or literature from one who does not know the language, and who therefore has not

read the literature. We take leave to doubt whether Dr. Mahaffy, whose prejudices in this matter are well known, has even, like the French Academicians, read translations of the literature he presumes to condemn. His statement that it was "silly and indecent" could only have been made in reliance on the ignorance of the public and their incapacity to check the truth or error of his opinion; but this is not an enviable position for a scholar to take up. The harm done by such reckless and false assertions extends far beyond the limits of the question immediately under discussion; they leave an embittered feeling that it is not easy to heal, and they damage a study, the effect of which at the present moment is one of the pleasantest marks of intellectual awakening that our age and country has seen.

I understand that one of the points on which you will give evidence is the value of the language as a course of study for students, in reply to Mr. Edward Gwynn's opinion that it was "worthless" for this purpose.

Now, the objects with which the study of any language may be entered upon seem to be three—(1) Its commercial and practical usefulness; (2) its value as a logical training of the mind; and (3) its capability of providing a fresh vehicle for the expression of ideas.

With regard to the first point, in which the choice practically lies between the study of Irish and the study of French or German (Latin would probably be acquired in either case), I should say that if a knowledge of a modern European tongue were required by a student to fit him for his future career, and if he have the opportunity of mastering such a language thoroughly by residence abroad, he had better learn the language he will most require. But unless he has this inducement and these opportunities of perfecting his knowledge, he will probably gain far more by the study of Irish than by the study of any other living language. The educational value of a language depends entirely upon the thoroughness with which the technicalities of the tongue are mastered. I cannot conceive that any study can be less truly educational than the imperfect smattering of French or German with which the large majority of youths and girls taught at home retire from their studies. How many of them can write an idiomatic French or German business letter? How many can hold an intelligible conversation in the tongue they have spent so many years in acquiring? How many can even read with ease a modern French or German novel? Hardly one in a hundred of the students who pass the Intermediate examinations perhaps. This arises neither from the stupidity of pupils or examiners, but from the impossibility of completely mastering the idiom of a foreign tongue apart from association with the people who speak it. The idiom of a language can only be learned and applied *in conversation*; its genius can only be grasped by mingling with the people to whom it is the natural and native mode of thought and expression. In learning Irish the students have the good fortune to be able to study the

written and the spoken tongue side by side. In some parts of the country, at least, he can still practise himself by word of mouth in the language he is acquiring by means of books; and this fact, combined with the natural lie of the voice and tone, and the natural sympathy which draws an Irish student towards the idiom of his native tongue, enables him to gain a mastery over the language with great rapidity and correctness. He has it at command in a far shorter time than that in which he would be able to use with the same familiarity any other tongue.

I do not understand what is meant by saying that the language is worthless as a training for the mind, nor have I, on enquiry, found any other linguist who has studied Irish in addition to classical and other modern tongues who can explain the statement. The Irish grammars are, we all admit, capable of improvement, and, no doubt, will be improved as the demand requires it, but the language itself seems to me to afford quite as good a mental training as any other modern tongue with which I am acquainted. It is a highly inflected language, forming its cases by regular internal and external change for both nouns, adjectives, and pronouns; certain interesting forms, such as the so-called "prepositional pronouns" (compounds of the preposition with the pronoun) and the synthetic form of the verb (in which the persons are expressed by inflections or terminations)—which do not exist or have disappeared in English, are retained in Irish, and give its study a special interest. All these things you know far better than I do. I may say that, personally, the study of Irish exercises over me a fascination which I have never experienced in learning any other modern tongue, and I find that it has the same immense interest for our students here. I have never seen anything to compare with the enthusiasm and earnestness with which the study of the language has been taken up. It appears to exercise both an intellectual and a moral influence over the students. Many of them are young men engaged all day in various public offices, and young women employed in the General Post Office. Yet, after a hard day's work, they meet together to study the language with an energy and perseverance which I have never seen applied to any other intellectual pursuit, while in their holidays they find a new and healthful field of recreation in gathering the folk-lore and songs, and studying the antiquities of their own parts of the country. Surely every possible facility should be put in the way of such rational and wholesome recreations and pursuits.

That all these students should become scholars of the older tongue is, of course, not to be expected; such extended studies require leisure and long-continued application. Some of them, however, are pursuing their studies further, and are making them practically useful in the compilation of dictionaries, the collection of MSS., and the dissemination of healthy Irish literature to counteract the debasing influence of the cheap and unwholesome English sensational fiction that is circulated among the peasant classes in Ireland.

But to me the strongest argument for the preservation of the Irish tongue is the fact that in their own tongue alone can the higher thoughts and sentiments of the people find a suitable channel of expression. The natural genius of the people can flow freely only through their own vernacular. The Irish character is highly poetic and imaginative, and the expression of strong feeling is conveyed by means of very delicate and subtle similes which cannot be expressed at all in English, but for which the Irish tongue seems to be specially fitted. See what a number of very lovely poems have been written within quite recent times by peasants in their own language, which would certainly never have been composed in any foreign tongue. Your own inimitable collection of the "*Love Songs of Connacht*," and Dr. Sigerson's fine translations in the "*Bards of the Gael and Gall*," put it into the power of English readers to judge of this for themselves. The composer of the "Fair Hills of Eirè" was a poor exile living at Hamburg during the Penal régime, who, in spite of the penal laws against education, succeeded in mastering the classic tongues; the impassioned and elevated poem, "Love's Despair," was written by a young farmer in County Cork in the first quarter of the present century. The larger number of these later poems are written by quite poor people, and your own collection has been gathered from peasants in the humblest station. Yet these are gems of poetry which would rank high in any collection of European lyrics. I have seen no English lyrics of recent years that can approach them in grace and tenderness, and in lovely melody. Surely the language that inspires and expresses thoughts like these should be encouraged by every means in the power of the State or of private individuals. Shall we force the Irish youth to adopt the mental pabulum of our London clerks' "Scraps" and "Ally Sloper," instead of feeding their imagination upon the old tales of their own tongue, which hearing (as a Scotch Gael recently has said of the similar West Highland tales), "Old men take off their caps for reverence." Shall we take from them the power, not only of reading, but of creating a worthy Irish literature, and give them instead the English news sheet and English cheap sensational fiction? If we want to retain the simple virtues, we shall endeavour to retain the old tongue.

I hope you will remind the Commissioners that Welsh has been placed as one of the optional or alternative subjects upon the Cambridge Local Examination list. Some such reasons as the above must have weighed with the examiners in retaining a tongue that occupies a similar position to that of Irish.

Any unbiassed man will see that to attempt to sum up the whole literature of any country in two or even three adjectives, as Dr. Mahaffy appears to have done, is, on the face of it, absurd. It is still more absurd in the case of Ireland, where the literature extends over a space of twelve centuries, including every variety of style and subject.

There are, I believe, in the later or decadent period of Irish literature of a few satires and poems that might be called "indecent." They are of a strong Rabelaisian cast. A distinguished Irish scholar is my authority for this statement, and one or two of these have, I believe, been transcribed and edited, though I have not myself met with them. But the older literature—say from the 8th to the 16th centuries—apart from a few naturalistic expressions and a simpler and plainer mode of regarding natural functions than modern taste allows, and a few legends of anthropological interest, is astonishing in the purity and elevation of its tone. The early romance of Ireland cannot fail to inculcate the highest ideals of honour, generosity, and manliness. They cannot fail to imbue the mind of anyone who studies them with lofty and generous thoughts, and the true chivalry of a man of honour. This is not my own opinion alone; it is the opinion of a scholar whose wide knowledge of the ancient literature of Ireland gives his word the weight of authority. French literature is not condemned *en bloc* because Rabelais wrote satires unsuited to general reading; or English literature, because the Elizabethan playwrights and the Restoration dramatists wrote plays that we would not put into the hands of the young. All old literatures contain passages of doubtful tendency, not excluding Greek and Latin literature, or even the Old Testament. Shakespeare is not faultless in this particular. In looking over the books suggested for the reading of Intermediate and university students, I cannot imagine to which of them exception could be taken. They include romance, history, and law. Of the romance we have spoken; the history of Ireland is universally admitted to be of the highest importance in determining such questions, still unsettled, as that of race distribution, besides the intrinsic interest which the history of Ireland must always have for her own sons and daughters. The importance of the Brehon Laws may be gathered from the large place given to their consideration (fully three-fourths of the whole book) by Sir Henry Maine in his "Early History of Institutions."

From the point of view of decency all these books are immaculate.

There is at present some difficulty in naming suitable books for the study of young people, owing to the comparatively small amount of the more modern literature which has been published in an accessible form. It is one of the primary objects of the recently established Irish Texts' Society to supply suitable books for students, and we feel that the contemplated publication of a complete edition of Keating's "History of Ireland," and of other works of importance of a comparatively recent date (so far as the language is concerned), will facilitate the labours of the Board.

I remain, very truly yours,

ELENOR HULL.

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The Irish Language and Irish Intermediate Education.

VI.

DR. HYDE'S REPLY TO DR. ATKINSON.

[Prefatory Note.]

This pamphlet contains a memorandum forwarded by Dr. Hyde to the Viceregal Commission of Inquiry, after the close of its public sittings. It is the reply of the President of the Gaelic League to Dr. Atkinson. The Trinity Professor of Sanscrit was hardly worth so much powder and shot.

In the body of the memorandum Dr. Hyde refers to, or quotes from, letters he had received from Professor York Powell, M. Dottin, and Dr. Zimmer, from whom he had requested an expression of opinion on Dr. Atkinson's evidence. These letters were appended to the memorandum, as sent in to the Commission. They are here given in an appendix. M. Dottin wrote in French, and Dr. Zimmer in German. The translations given are taken from the Blue-book.

Dr. Hyde's Reply to Dr. Atkinson.

I desire to express my thanks to the Commissioners for allowing me to supplement my oral evidence by a written statement. I asked leave to do this because a witness at the very close of the sittings for oral evidence addressed himself to certain points, on the question of the Irish language, which the evidence of the Gaelic League had not touched, and this rendered it necessary for it to supplement its evidence by dealing with the points thus raised. These are principally the alleged unsettled state of the modern Irish language and grammar, some points concerning the modern Irish literature, and the reiteration of the charge of indecency, which was the only one upon which the evidence of the Gaelic League had already touched.

Before answering objections in detail, I wish to make it clear what it is that the Gaelic League desires to see placed upon the Intermediate programme. It does not desire a study of old Irish. It desires a study of the Irish of the last three centuries. What is that Old Irish whose exquisite inflexional system has excited the warm admiration of nearly every philologist in Europe, and caused more than one to say that for philological purposes it ranks near to Sanscrit? The answer is—it is the language of the pre-Danish period, the language of the early missionaries who evangelized and taught so large a portion of the Continent. But this exquisite language practically perished during the cataclysm of the Danish wars. There remains not now one single book written in it. All have perished, and the literature that was written in it has, so far as it has survived, come down to us in Middle Irish transcripts. The surviving remnants of it, which have excited the admiration of grammarians and philologists, are mostly glosses written in the margin of Latin books preserved on the Continent, and some pages in the Book of Armagh. A German estimates that the surviving Irish literature written prior to the year 1600 would fill a thousand octavo volumes. If they would, then the whole of what survives of Old Irish would not run into two, and it possesses no interest as literature. Besides this, Old Irish is abnormally difficult, and is not only infinitely beyond the powers of a school boy, but beyond those of any except a determined philologist, for whom alone it possesses interest; therefore all talk of teaching it in schools is absolutely idle, and the Gaelic League fully agrees with the evidence given that this is a university subject, and even in a university a subject only for one in a thousand. It quite understands the objection to approaching the beautiful pre-Danish language through the medium of the modern one, just as it understands how a scholar of the Latin-speaking races could read himself into the forms and spirit of Anglo-Saxon, all the better for not having his attention distracted by an acquaintance with the corrupt forms of many words

of modern English. But if such a scholar began on Anglo-Saxon with the intention, through it, of becoming acquainted with English literature, and working with advantage down the line, the Gaelic League would hold he was a fool; believing that not one would become acquainted with English literature in this way to the hundred who become acquainted with it by starting on the language of this century. Of the 998 remaining volumes—to adopt the German's calculation—only the small percentage that are in the oldest form of Middle Irish could profitably be approached from the Old Irish side, while the great bulk could be approached from Modern Irish, as Chaucer is from Modern English, and many of the later ones would be little more difficult to one who knew Modern Irish than Spenser would be to one who had learned Modern English. Then there is the language of the last 300 years, the language of generations of poets and transcribers, the language that was spoken up to the gates of Dublin, and taught and written in almost every hedge-school a hundred years ago, and is to-day taught and written in every one of the seventy or eighty branches of the Gaelic League in Ireland, and that is the language which we want to see taught in the Intermediate course. We desire to see modern books by modern writers in the first two grades, and to progress to classics like Keating or to modernized editions of the Sagas in the third and fourth. I shall now take the objections against this language and literature in their order.

The first is, the alleged unsettled state of the language and grammar. Strong statements have been made about this, and an apparently strong case has been made out, but a moment's consideration will show that not one single point has been brought forward against the Irish language and grammar, the exact counterpart of which might not be urged with as much, or even much greater force against the English language and grammar also. It is perfectly easy for anyone who condescends to be a special pleader to make out an apparently specious case against any language. "There are numerous patois," we are told, "there is no standard of speech absolutely accepted by everybody." With a great deal more justice the Gaelic League might allege that—even excluding Scotland altogether—the English-speaking people inside England itself, speak not two, but many different patois. I have heard people speaking in Yorkshire who would have been absolutely unintelligible to an American, an Australian, an Irishman, or a Londoner. I have heard others using the west-country dialect, which flourishes with slight variations in Devonshire, East Cornwall, and parts of Somerset, and I am convinced that no Yorkshire child would have understood them. There is no dialectic difference in Ireland so widespread as that which makes one half of England pronounce words beginning with a vowel or with the letter *h*, in a manner exactly opposite 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, yet who would advise a foreigner not to study English for that reason? Nobody except some one who hated the English, or deliberately cast round for reasons against learning it.

But Irish is pronounced differently by different people, it is said. This may be, but there is less uniformity of pronunciation amongst even educated Englishmen, and that, too, of the very commonest words, than there is amongst Irishmen of common Irish words. Lord Byron would have said, "Let him *neether* sit nor *lay*," while others of equal fame and name, pronounce "let him *nyther* [or even *nayther*] sit nor *lie*." Indeed, in my English dictionary (Funk and Wagnall, 1895) there is a list of close upon 2,000 words whose pronunciation was regarded as so unsettled that the Advisory Committee, consisting of fifty-seven of the foremost English scholars, including Professor Dowden, could not decide upon the right one, so that these words are given in a special appendix, with the names of the members of the Advisory Committee who voted for each different pronunciation attached.

But, it is said, there is in Irish no definite standard of orthography. This, I am afraid, is true of many languages. It is not twenty years since we saw all governmental Germany spelling one way and all private Germany another. Certainly, the orthography of English is not settled, not even in the universities. What Dr. Dowden makes "rhyme," Dr. Mahaffy makes "rime." What Dr. Dowden writes as "brooch," Goldwin Smith writes "broach." What Dr. Dowden writes as "briar," "cheque," "harbour," "guild," "enclose," "fulness," "fagot," "farther," a score of other university professors of English will write "brier," "check," "harbor," "gild," "inclose," "fullness," "faggot," "further," and so on. There are at least 800 words of this kind, upon the spelling of which the very best English scholars differ amongst themselves. Are we going to advise foreigners not to learn English because of these differences of spelling and pronunciation, or pretend to them that they constitute "serious difficulties"? Certainly we are not. Again, I would observe this, that a great deal of the apparent laxity of Irish spelling is illusory, because there are constantly recurring combinations of letters, of which two forms have always been used in Irish, even by the same person on the same page, as *éa* or *eu*, *sc* or *sg* [as in English we write sceptic or skeptic] *uigh* or *aigh* at the end of verbs, and *as* or *us* at the end of nouns, etc. Even at this moment the same person will, perhaps, use both of these combinations in the same word on the same page, but if—and the thing is even now in process of being done—an arrangement were arrived at to finally adopt one set of forms, ninety per cent. of the apparent irregularities of Irish spelling would disappear. At the same time, I absolutely deny that they constitute any stumbling block or hindrance whatso-

ever, for the child who could not learn them in a few hours would be incapable of learning anything.

Of a like character is the objection that a child from the West or the South would have "difficulty in understanding a printed text written in language, let us say, of the 17th century, and perhaps not in his dialect." I waive here the fact that dialect was not written during the 17th century at all, but I will say that if a German child were made to attack a German text of the 17th century, the same thing might be said of him, and if you set an English child face to face with the folio edition of Shakspere, he will find it extremely difficult. The very name of Shakspere was, in his own day, spelt in three different ways. The variation in Irish spelling during the last three centuries is not, I should think, at all as great as that between the folio Shakspere and the modern editions. As for the assumption that the writers of modern Irish do not comprehend the exquisite and subtle system of Irish orthography, which they themselves employ, and which their forefathers invented—I think I had better pass it by in silence. It never emanated from anyone conversant with the written and spoken language of Ireland. If Irish orthography were like English, if, for instance, a single combination of letters such as *ough* might be pronounced in any one of half a dozen different ways, then, indeed, we would have a difficulty in meeting the howl raised against our barbarism. But as our system of orthography is unimpeachably logical and ingenious, we are told, in absence of any other argument, that we do not understand it ourselves! While protesting against this, we admit of course that it is true, that, as in England, the sounds of certain words are, amongst the uneducated, different in different parts of the country, but the inference sought to be drawn from this is most erroneous. The inference is given thus, "in reading some children would have a difficulty because possibly it would not be in their dialect"—up to the present year there has been no single book examined in, which is even bordering on dialect—"or would not be written by a man who spoke their dialect"—no good Irish speaker speaks dialect at all —"it would confuse them, and the explanation would probably be misunderstood." What is the meaning of all this? If it means anything except an attempt to convey something disparaging, it points to what has never occurred, and I hope never shall occur, a *vivâ voce* examination conducted by an ignoramus.

But it has been said that so widely do the Irish dialects differ that it has been found necessary to print an edition of the New Testament in "Munster Irish." It is, unfortunately, true that a man called, I think, Keane, published in the sixties, a New Testament which purported to be written in Munster dialect, though I doubt if the people of Munster understood it much better than the standard edition of O'Donnell, published in 1602. But the fact has absolutely no significance. The book, published, I believe, by a

proselytising agency, has had no influence whatsoever, no more than the unutterably bad translations of the "Pilgrim's Progress," and other works emanating from a like source. I doubt if one Irish scholar in fifty has even seen it. With just as much truth might it be alleged that the English people do not understand the English Bible, because it has been seriously proposed by Mr. Stead and others—indeed, I am not sure that the design has not been carried out—to translate it into the modern lingo of the working man. The Irish translation of the New Testament is older than the English authorised version or than the Douai edition of the Old Testament, and if certain words and forms in it have grown unfamiliar, it is not to be wondered at, but it has no bearing upon the subject of Intermediate education, any more than Dr. MacHale's Pentateuch, which, with its printer's errors, is foreign to our question.

Certain of the books upon the Intermediate course like "Deirdre and the Children of Lir," are modern versions of old texts written hundreds and hundreds of years ago, and gradually modified by transcription, as generation after generation re-wrote them in their own language—not dialect—but in the literary language of their own day. In these books, certain antique forms have naturally survived, and I understand that they, too, have been made a stumbling stone of offence. But the worst that can be said of them is that they require an extra note to explain them. That done, there is nothing to complain of, any more than one might complain of meeting the Anglo-Saxon symbol-verb "weoran" masquerading in Sir Walter Scott as "worth."

"Woe worth the chase, woe worth the day."

An English student might just as well complain of this and the scores of similar survivals to be found in Spenser and in Shakspere. It is, of course, a fact—a parallel one is incidental to all literatures—that the later scribes continually mistook and mangled the older forms which they had themselves ceased to understand, and the "Book of Leinster," the beautiful transcript of which, by O'Longan, was seen through the facsimile process for the Royal Irish Academy by Dr. Robert Atkinson, affords abundant evidence that this process was in full swing 800 years ago. But corruptions or survivals, like "woe worth the day," or, "in other plight than forth he *yode* returned Lord Marmion," could only be complained of if the books containing them were edited without notes, and this is not the case with a single one of the Irish Intermediate texts.

There has also been a great deal said upon the uncertainty of Modern Irish grammar. There are fourteen or fifteen grammars, but the one Intermediate students use is Dr. Joyce's. The best existing grammar is O'Donovan's, but it is not wholly satisfying. Philology has made considerable strides since O'Donovan's day, but these points are for very advanced scholars. So far as Dr. Joyce's excellent little work goes it is concise, definite, clear, and

regular, and its forms are those followed in speaking and writing all over the country. If the philological progress of the last forty years has pointed out omissions or mistakes, they were inseparable from the nature of the case, and such things are for the very advanced student; but for Intermediate students Joyce's Grammar, pending the production of something more perfect, is itself so good, that were it superseded by an actually perfect one, not in a thousand children would recognize the difference. I believe Dr. Atkinson stated that questions could be asked upon O'Donovan's Grammar, "to which he could not give an answer at all, either yes or no," and that he further said that the difficulty of answering the questions was so enormous that it would tax the ingenuity of the Provost of Trinity College; that the difficulties of Irish syntax were too great for children of 14, or 15, to attack, because they were difficulties rather for a metaphysician than for a child to solve. This style of argument is as delusive as it is unfair, because once an inquirer plunges into the more abstruse points of grammar in any language, he is bound to encounter difficulties. The grammarian will be merged in the metaphysician, and he will find hundreds, if not thousands, of points to which it will be difficult to answer yes or no with certainty. There is nothing to which a subtler and more refined logic is applied than to grammar. But Irish grammar, though it contains difficult and unsettled points, is logic and simplicity itself beside the intricacies of English grammar. The lengthy work on points of English grammar, by Dr. Alford, Dean of Canterbury, called "The Queen's English," and the scathing book called the "Dean's English," in which it was answered, will be in the recollection of the Commissioners. In the controversy which followed the publication of these works, we find the leading English grammarians engaged in different camps, and taking different views, not of dozens, but of hundreds of the most ordinary phrases, as "it is me," or "it is I," etc. But it is not moot points of intricate grammar upon which an examiner asks questions, but upon the broader, bolder, and more vital points of speech, and not one single question has been asked out of Joyce's Grammar which can possibly be objected to. Because difficult or unsettled points exist in Irish, as in other grammars, is it alleged that it should not be taught at all? In my opinion, the mistakes in O'Donovan are trivial compared with the mass of errors in Lindley Murray. No child on the Intermediate has been asked in any of the papers I have seen to solve any metaphysical difficulty, or to answer any question more difficult than Dr. Joyce's little hundred-page grammar contains.

If an observer comes to the consideration of any subject with a preconceived or impossibly high ideal standard, devoting his attention to all that falls below that standard, he is almost sure where a whole broad question is concerned, to carry away an impression wholly erroneous. And certainly the impression sought to be pro-

duced in this case, that there is not a regular standard Modern Irish language, written and spoken in almost the same way by all educated people, is one peculiar to a particular English witness, and is not shared with him by any Irish scholar—except, possibly, Mr. Edward Gwynn—or by any continental scholar. I would remark, however, that while their individual opinions must be treated with all respect, their value is, to my mind, somewhat impaired by the fact that they are quite ignorant of what is being done in the modern Irish-speaking world, do not subscribe for the monthly journal, or the Irish weekly papers, and have never once attended any of the meetings of Irish speakers held in Dublin or elsewhere, or heard specimens of Irish song, oratory, or debate, nor have they, like so many of the continental authorities, purposely resided in the west or south of Ireland to study the spoken speech, consequently on matters relating to the modern language they are naturally and inevitably in the dark, and their views are not shared by the men who are conversant with Modern Irish, and have learned to speak and write the language, which they have not done. One of the foremost living authorities upon the ancient Irish language and literature is Dr. Kuno Meyer, Professor of the Teutonic languages in the University of Liverpool, who has edited many Irish texts, some for the University of Oxford and others privately. He is, I suppose, one of the foreigners to whom this Commission has been asked not to pay the slightest attention, but he is no more a foreigner to Ireland than he who gave this advice. He writes in English, and knows Ireland perfectly well from actual observation, and from frequent visits. He has taught Irish classes in Liverpool, he has rescued poetry and folk-lore from the mouths of natives, he is a constant contributor to the *Gaelic Journal*, and has resided in the West of Ireland to master the spoken language, and he is perfectly acquainted with it and with our school system. He is at present, unfortunately, in the Madeiras, so that I have been unable to procure at first hand for the Commission an expression of his opinion upon the points raised; but immediately upon his reading a newspaper account of Dr. Atkinson's evidence he expressed his strong dissent in a letter to the Dublin *Daily Express* from which I beg to quote the following passage:—

"The truth is that the standard of speech is as well defined in Modern Irish as it is all other languages that have had a long literary development. The writings of Keating, the versions of the Bible, the prose and poetry contributed to the *Gaelic Journal*—all conform to one and the same standard, the grammatical rules of which have long been established. It is true that within the limits of these rules a certain amount of variety is possible, a variety which is mainly based on dialectic differences. But this is the case also of most other languages, *e.g.*, my native German, where similar varieties of expression will at once betray the Saxon, the Bavarian, the

Suabian, etc. Indeed, as is but natural in the case of a language that spreads over a far larger area, these dialectic differences of individual writers are far more pronounced in German literature than in Irish. I may mention that I have received letters written in Irish from all parts of Ireland, in which the standard is entirely the same, though correctness and ease of expression naturally vary with the education and taste of the writer."

Dr. Christian Stern, of Berlin, joint editor with Kuno Meyer of *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*, expresses himself to the same effect that "Modern Irish has, upon the whole, a firm grammatical form and a regular orthographical system." Dr. Holger Pedersen, of Copenhagen, in a letter, a portion of which I desire to put in as evidence, while admitting "that in the contemporary literary Irish there is more freedom and more uncertainty" than in the great literary languages of Europe, yet, upon the whole appears to agree with Dr. Kuno Meyer. A valuable letter upon the same subject by Dr. Windisch, Professor of Sanscrit in Leipzig, I have unfortunately mislaid and am unable to quote from, but in general terms it coincides with the other authorities quoted. It would be perfectly easy to adduce a mass of evidence upon the essential uniformity of modern Irish literature, but not to weary the Commission, I will confine myself to one single instance. Dr. Atkinson was good enough to mention one of my books before the Commission. It was the first one I ever wrote, and, possibly, the only one of mine he had ever seen, for I sent him a copy of it. The language of this book, he appears to think, and I believe has said, is an invention of my own, and "not good enough for a patois." In this he is quite wrong. This book, containing between two and three hundred pages of Irish stories, appeared just ten years ago, and in it I simply wrote the ordinary language of Connacht, and employed the orthography universally observed over all Ireland. It happened that the late Mr. Cleaver, of Dolgelly, North Wales, distributed a number of copies of this book on its publication, to various schools in Ireland where the masters taught Irish. He afterwards sent me some of the letters which he received from the teachers, two of which, from the extremest points of Munster, the furthest possible geographically from myself, I quote here. The first is a letter from John Daly, Vicarstown National School, Dingle, County Kerry, written August 16th, 1889:—

"I distributed the books to all the students of Irish, and I must say they are really *cherished* by *young* and *old* throughout the school district. Such expressions of regret for not being able to read the books by a few old people who have never learned to read the Irish language, you would be surprised to hear. The great majority of the folks in this school district are thoroughly acquainted with the language of their forefathers. You would not require further proof of this fact than by seeing how they go from village to village asking

for the loan of the books. In fact, they are seen everywhere in the fields reading them in groups of no less than twenty or thirty seated together. Every story in the book is devoured alike by young and old, who are always reciting them with the greatest possible interest."

The second letter is from Michéal O'Follugha, Mulanahorna, County Waterford, written November, 1889:—

"Dr. Hyde's book is now far and wide from mountain to sea here, and I am glad to tell you that I have made inquiries that the Irish and the style of expression are so familiar that the people would hardly believe but that the gifted author was not born 'in Ring' [in the County Waterford]. I would like to give an evening's reading to the grown people from this book. It would be as good as a play. May God increase Dr. Hyde's (not his English or classic) Irish intellectual powers (*sic*) in bringing out more charming stories."

I quote these letters unwillingly, and only do so because, being written privately ten years ago to a clergyman not living in Ireland, and by people whom I had never seen or heard of, they afford the strongest possible proof that could be brought forward of the unity of Irish speech. They show that the language of far-off Roscommon and Sligo, bordering on Ulster, was not only intelligible to, but produced a powerful effect on, children in the furthest corners of West and East Munster, counties in one of which, at least, I had never even set foot, and with whose dialect and people I was utterly unacquainted. As for the difference between the language of Donegal and that of Connacht, it is infinitely less appreciable. I think it only justice to myself to add here the testimony of Dr. Holger Pedersen, a philologist whom I had never met, nor even corresponded with prior to this inquiry. "Though your work," he writes, "has only a practical and not a strictly scientific scope, you are in this respect a better linguist than Dr. Atkinson, for you have understood that in writing Irish now-a-days one must keep nearer to the living language than the standard of Keating. I am thoroughly acquainted with all your works, and I find them meritorious and good. I have made use of them in teaching modern Irish in the University of Copenhagen, and I shall continue to do so."

As to the reproach that there is little to read in modern Irish, I answer that not one-twentieth of our modern Irish manuscripts are published, but they are being brought to light every day, and a monthly and two weekly papers are publishing Irish stories, songs, and articles, and reprinting Irish Sagas and poems from the older literature. These papers find their way all over Ireland, even into the most backward towns. If a child learns Italian or Spanish—and Mr. Gwynn says that they will be more useful to him than Irish—where will he get any literature to read in them? I know from personal experience that unless one corresponds with foreign book-

sellers, which of course for children is impossible, you cannot in Ireland procure, outside of one or two classics, a Spanish or Italian book at all. Mr. Thomas Concannon, the organiser of the Gaelic League in Connaught, an Aran islander, who speaks Spanish better than English, hunted through the Dublin bookshops for a copy of Don Quixote to bring home with him to Aran, and was obliged to return without being able to find one. The same to a large extent holds good of German, and even French. Is there, in any country town in Ireland, a bookseller's shop where an Intermediate child could procure foreign books? There is not, and even in Dublin, in the couple of bookshops that sell foreign books, the supply is wretched and scanty beyond description. On the other hand, Irish publications are scattered all over the country, and boys and girls go up to the Intermediate examinations from eighteen different centres, situated within the Irish-speaking area. Of what advantage is it, on mastering a Continental language, to have "the whole world before you what to read" unless you proceed to read it. On the other hand, two weekly papers and a monthly magazine are placing, week after week, and month after month, fresh literature in the hands of the Irish student. Is this to be disregarded?

But, it is urged, the tone of this literature is intolerably low, there is nothing in it a person can carry away as a κτημα ἐς αἐι. In answer to this, I would simply point to a book published the other day, a translation into English verse of a long line of poetic creations, a vista of song stretching back from the present century into the twilight of prehistoric times, an unbroken stream of verse such as no country in Europe outside of Greece possesses—I mean the collection made by Dr. Sigerson, F.R.U.I., called "Bards of the Gael and Gall." Yet in this book, considerable in size though it is, there are only given a few specimens of the different styles and eras of Irish verse, out of the great mass of existing material. Now, of this very Irish verse, Dr. Atkinson, writing in the calmness of his own study, expressed himself as follows: "I believe," he wrote, "Irish verse to have been about the most perfectly harmonious combination of sound that the world has ever known. I know of nothing in the world's literature like it." I know that for my own part I have carried away many a κτημα ἐς αἐι from it, although I acknowledge that certain things may affect people of Irish blood in a manner that to an Englishman is perfectly incomprehensible. The Rev. Father Sampson, Redemptorist, borrowed for me some months ago three little books of Irish poems from an old man named James Power, of Cappagh, County Waterford, who, as I had delayed returning them, wrote to me within the last three weeks to return him his three books, "The Poems," as he expressed it, "by one Patrick Denn, who lived in Cappoquin, some years ago, and was a poet. One of the books was a manuscript, the dialogues between Oisien and St. Patrick, the other two books were, viz., 'The Advice

to the Sinner,' in prose and poetry, the other 'The Sinner's Guide,' in poetry. I am most anxious to get back these books at once, as I now require them, and have not them off by memory. I am a very poor old man of the labouring class, and am greatly downhearted after them, as they were my chief comfort, and will be on the look out for some other book of Irish poetry." Surely these poems were to this man a precious possession.

Another remarkable instance of the way in which the poetry which an English professor cannot understand affects an Irish-born person, came under my notice since the opening of this Commission. An old peasant named Gibbons, near Claremorris, in the County Mayo, had through some accident become possessed of the early edition of "Ossian in the Land of the Ever-young," which was published when that book was, years ago, first placed upon the Intermediate course. He had taught himself, unaided, to read Irish, and he repeated for me by heart the whole 608 lines of this poem. He assured me that he constantly repeated it in the neighbours' houses, who were ravished by it. The Hon. Mrs. Blake, of Brook Hill, near Claremorris, was present when he repeated this poem, and can substantiate this. I have never seen this man before or since. Now, Dr. Atkinson has, I believe, desired the Commissioners to strike this poem off the course, but I hope and trust they will do nothing of the kind. This unselfish æsthetic appreciation of poetry and literature, as poetry and literature, is exactly the thing we desire to see propagated amongst the people: it is the one side on which Intermediate education is usually acknowledged to be weakest, and to strike off the course poems, which can produce an effect upon a whole country side, we would regard as calamitous.

I do not myself find a low tone in these poems, nor do I find that lack of idealism and imagination of which Dr. Atkinson, who owes to Matthew Arnold so deep a debt for what that poet has said upon the subject of imagination, complains. On the contrary, I find the appeal to Matthew Arnold a peculiarly infelicitous one, seeing that this graceful defender of the Celts has picked out for laudation the very qualities which Dr. Atkinson denies them. "The Celt's quick feeling," writes Matthew Arnold ("Celtic Literature," p. 132, last ed.), "for what is noble and distinguished, gave his poetry style; his indomitable personality gave it pride and passion; his sensibility and nervous exaltation gave it a better gift still—the gift of rendering with wonderful felicity the magical charm of nature. The forest solitude, the bubbling spring, the wild flowers, are everywhere in romance. They have a mysterious life and grace there; they are nature's own children, and utter her secret in a way which makes them something quite different from the woods, waters, and plants of Greek and Latin poetry. Now, of this delicate magic, Celtic romance is so pre-eminent a mistress that it seems impossible

to believe the power did not come into romance with the Celts. Magic is just the word for it—the magic of nature; not merely the beauty of nature—that the Greeks and Latins had; not merely an honest smack of the soil, a faithful realism—that the Germans had; but the intimate life of nature, her weird power, and her fairy dream." "The Celts," writes Matthew Arnold again in a sentence, upon which Dr. Atkinson does not wish the Commissioners to act, "are to be meliorated rather by developing their gifts than by chastising their defects."

The third great objection urged against the teaching of Irish literature is the allegation of its indecency. This charge, brought against the literature of a population which is universally acknowledged to be one of the most decent and sensitively moral in Europe, is unexpectedly sensational, and is at first sight a paradox. But it appears to be arrived at thus: first, all the Irish literature is ranked as folk-lore; second, all folk-lore is branded as indecent; hence, all Irish literature is also indecent. But a high-wrought literature of saga and poetry is not folk-lore any more than the Odyssey is folk-lore. Irish saga literature is shot through and through with most elaborate verses, and the sagas are epopees rather than anything else. But supposing the thousand or fifteen hundred volumes of surviving Irish literature (which treat of all kinds of subjects) were all only folk-lore—is that folk-lore indecent? On this particular point I have, I think, as much experience as anyone in Ireland, for with the expenditure of a great deal of time and trouble I have written down in Irish close on a hundred stories from the mouths of the peasantry. I have got all kinds of stories and taken them as they came and where they came, yet of all these only one was of a character which I would not care to publish, and in all the rest there were not more than four or five isolated expressions which would be the better for suppression. Mr. Larminie, who has also published a volume of Irish folk-lore, and collected materials for a couple more, will fully bear me out in this statement. If Dr. Atkinson means to imply that the folk-lore or unwritten literature of the Irish people is abominable, he is quite wrong. As he does not understand the spoken language, he cannot be speaking from his own observation, but must be either particularizing with regard to Irish folk-lore from a pre-conceived notion relating to folk-lore in general, or else he has been misinformed by some third party. The way, too, in which Dr. Atkinson states his case is open to grave objection, because to have two strings to his bow, he mixes up the people's every-day language with their folk-lore. "All folk-lore," he says, "is at bottom abominable. You have to send your children back from India not solely because of their health, but because the language of the people in the streets is at times so defiling in its nature that they cannot be allowed to hear it. I know what folk-lore is, and I would not let any daughter of mine to study it." In going out of his way to say this about the

people of India, he apparently desires to draw a parallel between their alleged indecency in their native language, and the indecency of the Irish natives in their own. The parallel, if it is meant to be such, is an audacious one, and scarcely deserving of serious refutation before an Irish Commission. My own experience is, that the Irish-speaking population are infinitely more clean and less ribald in their language than the English-speaking population. The same is the opinion of everyone I know, who is qualified to judge, and several of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy have expressed themselves lately in the highest terms on the morality and religion of the Irish-speaking population. The following quotation from a letter by the Bishop of Raphoe, written only a month or two ago, may suffice upon this subject:—"Before pronouncing the Celtic (*i.e.*, Irish) tongue as guttral in sound, go first and hear it as it is spoken with unschooled poetic tongue, and the salt of proverb, by one of those fine old Irishmen that are still to be found in the mountain valleys of our land, nature's gentlemen: Yes, and true gentlemen by the blood of a Milesian pedigree that perhaps cannot be reckoned through all the generations, but that certainly can be seen in every gesture of the hand, in every expression of the countenance, in every word of welcome, and in every act of hospitality. They have an education, a refinement, even a wise, far-seeing judgment of men and things that books will never bring. You will find, too, in the most remote parts of Ireland tall, venerable women of deliberate bearing and queenly mien, who never, perhaps, left their native parish, who would not be considered out of place if transported to the lofty halls of a lordly castle. They speak a beautiful language, and they speak it beautifully."

To insinuate that these people tell indecent stories or use indecent language is grotesque, and could only be done by an ignorant man, who does not know the conditions of life about which he speaks. I know those conditions much better, for I have been born and bred amongst them, and I am bringing up my children to speak Irish, and they shall be welcome to listen to all the folk-lore they may be told by Irish-speaking people, in whose absolute purity and even delicacy I have, from long experience, an implicit confidence. "It is a well-known fact," wrote Cardinal Logue, about two months ago, "that nowhere in Ireland is faith stronger, religious feeling deeper, innocence of life more conspicuous, than in those districts where the Irish language still lingers and is lovingly cherished."

The Commission has been told that the "Book of Leinster" is not a book for children to read. This is an example of the kind of evidence given to influence the Commission, for the "Book of Leinster" is an enormous MS. of about the year 1150, published only in facsimile, at a cost of, I think, six guineas, containing nearly 800 different pieces of literature, mostly the debris of the pre-Danish

period gathered up during the lull that succeeded Clontarf, and it would be a matter of sheer impossibility for any child whatsoever to either read or understand it. It gives, in fact, more than they can do to the best European scholars, and the man who could give an accurate translation of the whole book does not live. I do not at all deny that out of these 800 pieces or so, many of them dating in substance from a very primitive period, there are several that will not bear translation. Who denies it, or who has satirized Dr. Atkinson for saying this? Nobody that I know of; but how is all this even remotely pertinent to the quention of teaching Irish in the Intermediate course to students who may desire to learn their national language? The Book of Leinster has been mentioned to back up the vague charge of indecency brought against the language and literature in general. The Gaelic League was very sorry to see that the English comic papers took up this charge of indecency with gusto, and drew comic pictures of Irishmen hastening to their grammars and dictionaries to learn to read their mother tongue, now that an English professor had made them aware of what ribaldry it contained. No impression could be farther from the truth than the one thus unfortunately created in England, as the testimony of every scholar—except the one who gave this evidence—abundantly and amply proves. Should the status of Irish upon the Intermediate course suffer, the impression about Irish indecency will certainly be confirmed, although every scholar whose opinion I have asked throughout Europe is unanimous in denying it.

The definite instance of a large book in two volumes, containing Irish stories, has been cited by Dr. Atkinson, but the story to which, if I conjecture rightly as to the book itself, he alludes in these volumes is, in the first place, not an Irish story at all, nor about the Irish people, but is only translated into Irish from either Greek or Latin; secondly, this story, the language of which is too difficult to be understood by any but trained scholars, is *not* translated into English, and thirdly, it occupies only two pages out of the 416 of Irish text. As to the whole question about the alleged indecency of this book, I desire to quote the following portions of a letter from the President of the Folk-lore Society, Mr. Alfred Nutt, a society which numbers amongst its officials such names as Professor Sayce, Andrew Lang, Sir John Lubbock, and Professor Tylor. "What was the book," writes Mr. Nutt, upon reading a newspaper report of Dr. Atkinson's evidence. "What was the book 'which no human being could read without feeling that he had been absolutely degraded by contact with it'? Respect for Dr. Atkinson's attainments, gratitude for his past achievements in the field of Irish scholarship, would make silence only too welcome to the present writer. But the matter cannot be allowed to rest here. The more deservedly high Dr. Atkinson's reputation as a Celtic philologist, the greater his authority upon questions of Celtic scholarship, the more necessary

is it to show, once for all, how baseless is the grave accusation to which he has given the weight of his name. It is one calculated to do the utmost injury to Celtic studies; it is the one accusation which has any influence upon vast bodies of English and Irish opinion—ignorant as regards the literary and educational, but sensitive, and rightly so, to the moral aspects of the question. Had Dr. Atkinson confined himself to instituting unfavourable comparisons between Greek and Irish as instruments of culture, nothing more would have been heard of his evidence. The sting lay in the charge of indecency. The calumny which he uttered has been taken up and repeated all over the country by persons who, three weeks ago, did not know that such a thing as Irish literature existed. Painful as is the task, the exact truth has got to be stated. That the result should be damaging to Dr. Atkinson's reputation will be profoundly regretted by all students of Celtic antiquities. But the reputation of no man, however eminent, can be allowed to prevail against the interests of truth. The book to which Dr. Atkinson is believed to have referred is Mr. Standish Hayes O'Grady's 'Silva Gadelica,' a work which, when it appeaerd six years ago, was hailed by every Irish student as a worthy crown of the editor's long and valuable services on behalf of Irish literature. To show that I am perfectly well aware of certain things in the Irish text (omitted in the English version) which are not intended virginibus puerisque, I may be allowed to quote from my notice of the work ('Folk-Lore,' Vol. IV., p. 326)—'Some of Mr. O'Grady's omissions seem due to a mistaken standard of delicacy. The few naturalistic touches of the original might well have been left entire, considering the bulk and cost of the work." The editor of the *Revue Celtique*, if I recollect rightly, chaffed him mildly on the same score. If any one could feel degraded by coming into contact with 'Silva Gadelica,' that person would feel degraded by coming into contact with the Bible. I make this comparison, not because I wish to shock or by way of emphasis, but because the analogy is a real one. 'Silva Gadelica,' is a literature covering a range of many centuries; its contents are partly mythical history, partly legendary history, partly hagiology; its subject-matter is often drawn from a primitive, an almost savage state of society. In all these respects it has points of likeness with the Bible, and we should expect to find in the one as in the other traits and incidents which do not accord with our present standards of taste or conduct. The proportion of actual words or phrases which one would not care to place before a child's eyes is, I should say, smaller in 'Silva Gadelica' than in the Bible. In either case the man, or woman, who, having read through either collection, feels at the end a sense of 'degradation,' must possess such an abnormally 'nice' mind as to utterly unfit him or her from any concern with literature or, let me add, with life. We have all heard of the lady who was shocked

by Dr. Johnson's dictionary, and we know what Dr. Johnson said to her.

"This, it may be said, is your individual opinion. Well, I should be perfectly prepared to submit an absolutely faithful rendering of every word of Irish printed in 'Silva Gadelica' to Dr. Creighton, Dr. Barry, Dr. R. F. Horton, and Mr. Stopford Brooke, as representing various schools of Christian though, and I am absolutely convinced they would agree with me that Dr. Atkinson's description of the work is utterly unwarrantable—nay more, that it constitutes a gross outrage upon veracity and decency.

"I must further labour the point. 'Silva Gadelica' costs £2 2s., and access to the majority of the texts contained in it could only be obtained otherwise by an expenditure of some £15. The Irish child is thus to be denied the right of studying his native tongue because, in a two-guinea book, containing some 800 pages of closely-printed Irish text, there are a few passages of a 'primitive' character. But what language is the unfortunate Irish child to be allowed to study? Greek? Why you can buy all Aristophanes for 3s., and the erotic poems of the Anthology for 1s. 6d. Latin? Martial and Juvenal can be had unexpurgated for a few shillings. Italian? When an entire Decameron can be picked up for the same sum. French, and Rabelais or La Fontaine, Zola or Maupassant may be picked up at every corner. In fact, no matter what the other language is, the Irish child will obtain by the outlay of a few shillings, access to more printed "indecency," and that indecency of a positively corrupting and deleterious character, than he would get knowledge of from the entire mass of Irish literature printed and in manuscript.

"No. If Dr. Atkinson has urged that Irish literature was altogether too simple, too unsophisticated, to be a useful medium of culture for us moderns—if he had said, Irish literature! why where is your Aristophanes, where your Rabelais or your Swift, where your Zola or your Maupassant? I could, as a student of literature and history, have understood, however much I disagree with his attitude. But to damn it on the score of indecency! Really, it requires one of the great masters of the indecent—it requires an Aristophanes or a Swift to do full justice to this grotesque assertion. The Irish parent may make himself perfectly easy. His children stand far less chance of injury to their morals in studying Irish than in studying any other language."

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After pointing out that no one can possess the "Sprachgefuehl," or instinct for elucidating the older speech like a native accustomed to the modern one, unless it be contended that Irish is in this respect different to all other languages, Mr. Nutt proceeds to put the case for the retention of Irish so cogently that although this part of his letter has no bearing upon the subject of the alleged indecency

of the literature, I cannot forbear from bringing it before the Commission.

"But over and above all these questions of detail is a great question of principle. Has not the Irish child a right to be taught the tongue in which his forefathers for countless generations have expressed their heart and soul? Is not the mode of expression still congenial to Irishmen? I never take up a new translation from the older Irish literature but I am once again delighted and amazed to note traits of resemblance in feeling, in mood, in utterance, in form, between the Gael of a thousand years ago and the Gaelic-speaking peasant of to-day. The quality of the language influences and is influenced by the quality of emotional feeling and intellectual thought. Surely, this is a sign that the speech which the Gael has evolved throughout the centuries is an instrument which answers, as none other can, to his capacities, and that he is entitled to further develop and perfect it as men of every other European speech have within the last century developed and perfected theirs?

"The Bohemian a hundred years ago was told that his speech was a barbarous patois, which he should forswear in favour of German. Scholars and professors protested, and their protest was fruitful. Schafarik and Palacky have shown that the despised patois is available for the purposes of historical and critical science. Roumanians, Servian, and Norwegians have in turn been implored to disregard their own in favour of rival dialects. They have refused, and rightly refused. But, perhaps, the strongest instance I can cite is that of Russia. She entered the comity of civilised nations barely two hundred years ago, and at that time had behind her far less rich, interesting, or valuable literature than that of Ireland. Suppose the man of genius who knouted her into the paths of progress, had been ill-advised enough to insist upon abandonment of the native idiom in favour of German or French! He might have achieved it; who knows! But would Pushkin and Turgenieff, would Dostoieffsky and Tolstoi, forced to utterance in an alien tongue, have given us their revelation of the Russian temperament, which is, perhaps, the chief event of nineteenth century literature?

"As an Englishman I plead the right of the Irishman to study his native tongue. As the citizen of a free State, I urge that it is the duty of the Government to give every facility for the exercise of that right. As a student of history and literature, I believe humanity would be the poorer by the loss of a distinctive, a delightful mode of utterance.

"'All folk-lore is at bottom abominable,' says Dr. Atkinson. This abominable study has been my chief intellectual pursuit and recreation for twenty years. I venture to believe that Dr. Atkinson's opinion respecting it is of as much, or as little, value as his opinion respecting 'Silva Gadelica.' I believe the study to be a humane and humanising one. It exhibits, as none other, the essential similarities

of the human mind throughout all ages and all lands; it shows how the most advanced cultures have their roots in, their affinities with, the past; it is the best of antidotes against the spirit of contemptuous hatred which one race of civilisation so easily develops against another. If Dr. Atkinson had grasped the spirit or appreciated the results of the study he was maligning, he would never, I think, have testified as he did before the Education Commission."

Although tempted to adduce more proof of the unreal nature of Dr. Atkinson's charge of indecency, proof which could be piled up to any extent from the dicta of other scholars, both Irish and Continental, with whom I have corresponded, I will, not to weary the Commission, content myself with what I have adduced. I wish only to call the attention of the Commission to the fact that Dr. Atkinson's evidence is not only unsupported, but is contradicted flatly, by every other scholar, Irish and Continental, with whom I have corresponded, and I will only add that I have fifty or sixty books printed in Irish on my book-shelves, and with the exception of the story from a foreign source above mentioned, some passages in the Fragmentary Annals edited by Dr. O'Donovan, and a poem of about 1,000 lines called the Midnight Court, there is nothing in them that could be called coarse or indecent.

I wish now to briefly answer some of the lesser statements made by Dr. Atkinson; and I shall take them in their order.

(1.) Dr. Atkinson has said that in comparing the Greek papers for any year with those set in Irish, the difficulty of the Greek papers is out of all proportion to the Irish, that in the Irish papers he found what he "he could scarcely regard as a very definite body of knowledge at all—a few sentences of easy words, and the grammar of such a nature that he could not regard it as containing in itself almost any element of training"; he calculates that the time spent in preparing from the beginning, that Greek paper "could scarcely be calculated at less than fifty times the time that would be necessary to prepare a fair answer in that Celtic paper."

I thoroughly dissent from this opinion of Dr. Atkinson's, and I believe that he is almost alone in holding it. If he were backed up in this opinion by other scholars it would be very serious, and would prejudice the case made by the Gaelic League. I consequently despatched hurriedly to several scholars of world-wide reputation, the Preparatory papers in Irish for 1897, the year for which I was myself responsible, and of which I had extra papers lying by me, along with the Greek paper for the same year, and the answers I have received differ entirely in their view of the case from Dr. Atkinson's opinion. Through a most regrettable mistake, however, which, as I do not wish to delay my evidence, I cannot now rectify, I sent along with my Irish paper only one—I do not know which—of the two Greek papers set, and of course this mistake of mine

impairs the value of the following evidence, which, however, I think still sufficiently important to bring before the Commission.

"I don't want," writes Dr. York Powell, Regius Professor of History at Oxford, "to make this matter a personal one, and I have kept all names out of it, but I must emphatically contradict the statement of Dr. Atkinson, as far as his comparison between the Greek and Irish papers produced, 1897, and my opinion is based upon considerable experience in the examination of schools and in the methods of class-teaching." . . . . "Now the paper that I have seen proves that for examination purposes Irish is quite as good as Greek or English, and it is mere absurdity to suggest that because Homer and Plato wrote in Greek, that Greek is necessarily, for *examination of children in grammar*, a better instrument of education. As it happens Irish is singularly well-fitted for an instrument of education, as far as grammar, syntax, analysis," etc.

Oxford is, in these islands, the home, par excellence, of Celtic studies, and the evidence that comes from it cannot be impugned on the one side as self-interested, or on the other as that of foreigners unacquainted with our school methods; hence I desire to quote another opinion from the same seat of learning, that of Mr. Edwards, Fellow of Lincoln College, who writes as follows:—

"Dr. Atkinson's evidence—the small portions of it I have seen —is almost inexplicable to me. In my opinion the first paper set in 1897 is very much more difficult than the Greek paper set in the same year. The Greek paper questions are the well-known stock ones, and test a knowledge of a very elementary Greek grammar. The Irish paper questions test a wide knowledge of idiomatic Irish —a knowledge obtained either from speaking Irish at home or from a very laborious course of study."

Dr. Norman Moore, the translator of Windisch's Irish grammar, writes:—"The grammatical questions in [the] two papers seem to me of about equal difficulty, the same is true of the sentences for composition—the Irish paper seems to me a good one, likely to discover what a candidate knew, and indicating, if well answered, a good elementary knowledge of the language."

Dr. Zimmer, having compared the Preparatory Grade examination papers for 1898, writes as follows:—"With regard to the two examination papers for 1898, the Greek, in my opinion, certainly requires a longer preparation on the part of the scholar than the Irish does, in saying which, however, I do not associate myself with the widely-exaggerated assertions of Dr. Atkinson."

Dr. Holger Pedersen, of Copenhagen, writes:—"You ask me my opinion as to a paper for Intermediate Board Examinations, 1897. As I am not conversant with the particulars of such examination, I wish only to state that on the whole the paper seems to me very reasonable and good. I have examined the Intermediate Board examination papers of Greek which you sent. I fail to see

that the Greek paper is considerably more difficult than the Irish, and I do not find the Irish paper open to criticisms which could not with the same right, be applied to the Greek paper."

Dr. Stern, of Berlin, writes:—"The paper for the examinations of 1897, Preparatory Grade, in Celtic, seems to me judicious and suitable. I cannot assert that it is either harder or easier to prepare an answer to the Irish paper than it is to the Greek paper which you sent me for the same Preparatory Grade. Irish grammar and phraseology have difficulties of their own."

Professor J. Strachan writes:—"Unfortunately I am in entire ignorance about the examination to which the papers refer, and I see all the Greek papers you sent are marked Second Paper. If the candidates are required to do two Greek papers, one would need to see both before one could judge of the relative standard. But if the paper that you sent is all the Greek that candidates are required to do, then it is of the most elementary description. Putting aside the history, the only thing that could give a candidate trouble would be the translation at sight. The examination on the prescribed book is of the simplest character. Suppose a lad had to learn the Greek and the Irish from the beginning, then Dr. Atkinson's statement seems much exaggerated, the two would not be very far from being of the same difficulty."

When it is remembered that the Irish paper only counts 500 marks, and the Greek paper 1,200, I trust that this evidence will be sufficient to show that Irish papers were properly set and of sufficient difficulty. As to the papers set by Irish examiners in former years, I consider them to have been much more difficult.

The impression sought to be produced is that the Irish examinations have been made unfairly easy, but I believe evidence has been given before the Commission to show that the percentage of passes in German, for instance, was as great or greater than in Irish. To that I wish to add the important evidence of a teacher who has prepared students in all the various languages upon the Intermediate course, the Rev. J. MacErlean, S.J., of Clongowes Wood College, who writes to me as follows:—

"I have been teaching for four years at the Intermediate, here, in all languages, Greek, Latin, English, French, German, Italian, and Celtic, and I say, from whatever experience that has given me, that I would undertake to get a boy pass or honours in any one of these languages more readily and easily than in Celtic. I certainly hold that it requires both more work on part of the master and pupil, and also more time for the latter to get a given knowledge in Celtic than in anyone of the other languages. This shows, I maintain, the relative difficulty of the different languages, when considered from the practical standpoint of the master teaching and of the pupil studying these languages, and after all it is practical experience like this which ought to be considered"; and he adds that in the case of a boy

who had no predilection for one language more than another, Celtic would never be taken up, "if he has known others who took up Celtic, seen the amount of study they found to be necessary, and observed the marks that they got at the end of the year as a reward for their industry."

I trust the evidence here adduced as to the fairness and real difficulty of the Irish papers will dispose once for all of the idea that they are unduly easy.

2. Dr. Atkinson objects to a paper having been set out of a particular edition of the "Lay of Ossian" because of the differences of text existing between it and a former edition. With regard to this point, he gave very careless evidence, for he says the examiner (Mr. Flannery) examined in his own edition. He did nothing of the kind. I find he used Mr. Comyn's edition of 1880. It was I who used Mr. Flannery's edition, and I was perfectly right in doing so, for the other edition had been utterly out of print long before his was published, and it is doubtful whether any child prepared the Lay from it at all. But supposing that they had done so, what are the "serious difficulties" they would have had to face. Leaving out commas and dots, which would affect the text in the same way as writing *its* for *it's* in English, I find a liquid twice doubled in one text—as though one wrote "fullness" for "fulness" in English; a *c* put in place of a *g*, as though one wrote "sceptic" for "skeptic" in English; the preposition meaning "on" written *ar* for *air*, as is now always done; the genitive of *rós* made *rós* not *róis*; two easy adjectives, *geal*, "bright," and *lán*, "full," which occur elsewhere in the text, and the meaning of which every child, even an Anglo-Irish child, knows, substituted for different adjectives which occurred in the older edition; and I find only one word, *eala*, a "swan," which seriously differs from the older text, which, perhaps through a misprint, has dropped the initial *e*. Only in the case of the last word could there have arisen the smallest difficulty for any child who studied from Mr. Comyn's book; but as that book had been out of print for eighteen months previously, it is very unlikely that anyone did so. A case like this has not occurred before or since, and it ought not to have importance attached to it.

3. Dr. Atkinson has objected to asking questions in idioms. "A boy," he says, "must get thousands of them by heart in order to stand the chance of answering four or five questions on a matter of mere memory." If Dr. Atkinson really believed that these were the kind of idioms asked, does it not seem strange that he should have dubbed the examination paper fifty times easier than the Greek? The fact is, that any idioms asked—certainly by me, and, I think, by my predecessors—are taken from Joyce's grammar, which is the book used by every student, and which contains only a limited number of the most absolutely necessary idioms of the language. Questions on idioms are asked in every language, and I am completely at a loss to

know what Dr. Atkinson means. Does he mean to say that the paper is unfairly easy, but the questions on it unfairly difficult?

4. The "Pursuit of Diarmuid and Gráinne" is objected to as unfit for children. If the Board think so, it will be easy to substitute another book or to cut down the book itself. This book was put on the course in the paucity of texts which existed when Irish was placed on the Intermediate programme. It will be perfectly easy to substitute another if the Board wish it; but I object entirely to the attempt to discredit the other excellent books on the course because this contains a passage which, after all, is not nearly as bad as a child will get in even Horace. There is not any other book upon the course against which even the shadow of an objection can be urged, and the attempt to magnify and distribute the shortcomings of this one is most unworthy.

5. Dr. Atkinson objects to teaching Irish because "it has scarcely been touched by the movements of the great literatures." That is the very reason we are so keen to retain it. Ireland had a great mediæval literature before any other country in Europe, absolutely free from Romanised influences, and, consequently, perfectly unique. If this were not so, if Irish literature were, like the Continental ones, only to a great extent a reflex of the Roman, we would not be so desirous of its cultivation and preservation.

6. "I find their books," says Dr. Atkinson, "written in an *omnium gatherum* of forms, not Munster, not Connaught," and he makes this a reason for disparaging it. He could not have paid it a greater compliment. The true literary language, the language I have heard from the lips of the Cardinal Primate or the Catholic Archbishop of Tuam, the language spoken and written by all educated persons in all parts of Ireland, is not Munster, is not Connaught, it is the true literary standard, partaking equally of both, and about half way between them. When the poets of Northern and Southern Ireland wrote against each other in the 17th century, producing the great volume called the "Contention of the Bards," the language used by both sides was so precisely similar that, turning over the volume, it would be absolutely impossible to guess to which part of the island any one of the poets belonged; and I strongly suspect the letter of the Franciscan friar to Rome was prompted, not by difference of dialect, but by the long-standing jealousy between Conn's Half (Connacht and Ulster) and Owen's Half (Munster and Leinster).

7. Dr. Atkinson was not certain whether M. Dottin's letter and those of the other Continental scholars referred to children of from ten to seventeen, or to grown-up people. In every case I made plain the ages of the students examined, and I have received confirmatory letters from some of the writers to reiterate that they perfectly understood the case.

8. Dr. Atkinson says:—"The point of the thing is, that if there had been a *patois* written phonetically properly by anybody compe-

tent, I should have welcomed it most heartily." In that the professor differs from us. We may say, once for all, that it is not our object to write phonetic *patois*, and the Gaelic League has not countenanced it, except in the case of folk-song and folk-story. The many thousands who have learned to read and write Irish within the last few years from O'Growney's books and Joyce's grammar, have learned one standard, uniform language, that spoken by the upper classes a century ago all over Ireland, that spoken to-day by all educated Irish speakers. It is it we want to see taught, and not *patois*. Supposing we had asked for the teaching of a phonetic *patois*, can anyone doubt what Dr. Atkinson would have then said?

9. Dr. Atkinson delivers himself in the following curious language:—"There is not a single book that comes out *but I have to say*, 'What is your authority for this or that form, who is your guide?' It is all arbitrary action in following these matters, and there is no definiteness."

I know the weakness of the "argumentum ad hominem," and though tempted here to use it, I will not do so, but shall put in, instead, a passage from a letter of Dr. Holger Pedersen, of Copenhagen, who is on this point a much better authority than Dr. Atkinson, because he understands, speaks, and writes Modern Irish, which Dr. Atkinson cannot do.

Dr. Pedersen writes as follows in English:—"As you ask for my opinion as to Dr. Atkinson's evidence on the last day of the Commission, I shall be obliged to say some truths which will deprive me of the friendship of Dr. Atkinson, to whom I have stood hitherto in good personal relations. But I do not hesitate, for the cause of the Irish people and common justice is dearer to me than the friendship of this scholar. Two things in Dr. Atkinson's evidence are to be greatly disapproved of: first, his intolerable boasting, his speaking with the utmost contempt about everyone and everything in the world except himself, his manifest tendency to try to crush us all under the weight of his authority; and then, the statement he made referring to the testimony of the Continental scholars. 'For educational advantages for children,' he said, 'I am not aware that their [our] judgment had been expressed to that effect; and if it had, he would not pay the slightest attention to the testimony of foreigners on this question.' . . . In all the letters of the foreign scholars, at least in my letter, the educational advantages for children were expressly mentioned. And why will he not pay the slightest attention to the testimony of foreigners? He is himself a foreigner . . . an Englishman. But perhaps he is bold enough to assert that he knows the modern Irish language and the Irish people better than we. I must reply that, if I had not known the modern Irish language a hundred times better than Dr. Atkinson, I would never have written a single word on this question. In all the works of Dr. Atkinson we find two or three sentences in Modern Irish written 'phonetically.' This is

not much, but it is quite sufficient to show that Dr. Atknison has only a very unsatisfactory idea of the Irish pronunciation, and that he is quite unable to write anything down phonetically. And, now, the grammatical works of Dr. Atkinson! He has written a little essay on the so-called consuetudinal present tense in Irish, showing very well that this tense is no consuetudinal present; but his own opinion as to the nature of the tense was recognised immediately to be only half the truth. . . . In this essay and in another essay on the relative ending ar, the author betrays clearly that he does not recognise as correct Irish anything considerably younger than Keating. The firmly established rules of the living language are, according to him, 'quite wrong' and 'a mere *patois*.' These judgments do not prove anything but the strange fact that Dr. Atkinson, in spite of his other scientific accomplishments, has not the slightest idea of one of the most elementary principles of the science of language. No living language can stagnate, and the mere fact that the modern Irish language has established a good many rules which, according to the antiquated point of view of Dr. Atkinson, are 'perfectly wrong'—this mere fact is the best proof that Irish is indeed a living language. One could not, therefore, pay the slightest attention to the opinion of Dr. Atkinson, as to the character of the modern Irish literary language. Nothing could be more unjust than his remarks as to your books. . . . Dr. Atkinson states that there is 'no contemporary literary Irish,' and that there is 'no standard of correctness.' The language Dr. Hyde writes in he will call 'an *imbroglio, mélange,* an *omnium gatherum.*' Dr. Atkinson seems not to be aware that there could be no worse *imbroglio, mélange, omnium gatherum* than the great literary languages—English, French, German, etc. . . . . In this century the Englishmen have nearly succeeded in killing the Irish literature; hence the uncertainty in the literary language. But if you, on this account, will blot out the Irish language of the educational programme, you are committing not only an injustice but an act of barbarity, of cruelty, of murder; you are murdering a nation. I know what I am talking about, for I have sojourned half a year in Ireland, and I have taken down phonetically 400 pages of Irish folklore, and I have been conversing the whole day with Irish-speaking peasants, and in my printed works I have given large evidence that I know the modern Irish language. But I know that the Irish-speaking population can derive no good from the English language. I found some individuals who boasted of their knowledge of English, but they were the most stupid people I ever met with."

10. Dr. Atkinson, in a brief preface of his prefixed to the great fac-simile Book of Lecan, a huge repertory of ancient sagas and poems, expressed himself thus of the contents three years ago:—"*They do not often sin by grossness of speech, and probably never by licentiousness of thought.*" Before the Commission, on the other hand, he said—"*I would say it would be difficult to find a book in which*

there was not some passage so silly or so indecent as to give you a shock from which you would not recover during the rest of your life!!!" I pass this without comment.

11. Dr. Atkinson mentions the ridiculous "Feast of Dún-na-ngedh" as a specimen of a silly story. We do not quarrel with his characterisation of it. It is an absurd preface, of late workmanship, prefixed to the "Battle of Magh Rath;" and this absurd story he calls a fair specimen of ancient Irish literature! It is also a fair specimen of the nature of his own evidence. Does he seriously think that, if we had no other sort of literature than that, we would take all this trouble about it? I hope that anyone who looks into my "Literary History of Ireland" will find we have something better.

12. Dr. Atkinson mentions Domhnall O'Fotharta, Mr. O'Neill Russell, and myself as writig different kinds of Irish. We do not. We all write one and the same Irish. There may be, on account of the orthographical laxity which prevails in Irish (as it prevailed in English in the last century), an occasional difference of spelling between us, and in cases where two grammatical forms are possible one of us may use this, and the other that; but to say, as Dr. Atkinson does, that we have different standards and arrive at different results, is to produce an entirely false impression. If the three of us translated a page from some foreign language into Irish, I doubt if any-one could tell which of us was the author of his own particular translation.

I have now to apologise to the Commission for the length of this evidence; but there was such a host of objections to be replied to, that, without passing some of them by, I could not do it more briefly, it is so much a shorter work to start an objection than to answer one, and in the evidence to which I am replynig almost every possible objection had been raised by Dr. Atkinson to both language and literature. I hope that I have made it clear that Dr. Atkinson stands alone in his opinions. His general contention is that only Old Irish (which possesses no literature) is worth study, that Irish literature is indecent and of no value, and that the modern language is a *patois*. In this he has the support of not one single scholar, of all those with whom I have corresponded, behind him. His opinion is to be placed in one scale, and those of *all* the native Irish scholars, except possibly Mr. Gwynn, and all the Continental scholars to whom I have applied, in the other. From Dr. Atkinson's opinions on the value of the literature, Mr. Gwynn has, by the way, taken an opportunity to expressly dissociate himself; for he is reported, in the papers for April 27, as having now come to the following conclusion, "As regards the value of the literature in Irish, it was quite wrong to say, as some had said, that it was exceedingly small. He could not, of course, place it on a par with the great literatures of the world—with the literatures of Greece, Rome, or England, for instance. Amongst them, however, it occupied a unique and distinctive place

of its own. *This from the point of view of pure literature.* In other respects its value and interest were extremely great." It will be remembered that Mr. Gwynn objected to Irish partly because "its syntax was monontonous and undeveloped," while almost the only good point that Dr. Atkinson concedes to it is his saying that he "thoroughly agrees" with Dr. Rhys that "Irish is a highly intellectual idiom, with an eminently logical syntax."

As the Commission may be surprised to find Dr. Atkinson alone in taking up the position which he occupies, I may add, as a matter of history, that differences of opinion between him and the cultivators of the modern speech are of long standing. They began so far back as 1884, when Dr. Atkinson, in a little treatise on metric, found fault with the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language for editing a certain line of poetry. This line he himself constructed as he thought it ought to be. It was alleged on the other side that, while the original line contained certainly a foot too much, yet the amended line was far worse, for it was a grammatical monstrosity. In 1890, when the Academy published Keating's "Three Shafts of Death," no doubt a displeasure was felt by the moderns because the name of the late John Fleming, then editor of the *Gaelic Journal*, was not even mentioned in it; but to him many people, rightly or wrongly, attributed half the credit of the work. Again, on the publication of the facsimile edition of the Yellow Book of Lecan, an official of the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language moved before the Academy a resolution in some sort condemnatory of the preface which Dr. Atkinson had written, and an official of the Gaelic League seconded it. In addition to this, the moderns protested against what they, rightly or wrongly, regard as Dr. Atkinson's policy of spending all available Government money upon a dictionary, which may not see the light for twenty years, while no money is expended upon the purchase of the MSS. of the last couple of centuries, because they are modern, and as these are not bought up, it is alleged that they are perishing in hundreds, leaving the last two centuries open to the reproach that they have produced no literature. In all this Dr. Atkinson may be perfectly right, and the others perfectly wrong; but as a mere matter of history, this disagreement has existed, and, unfortunately, a like disagreement in views has arisen before this Commission.

DOUGLAS HYDE.

APPENDIX.

LETTERS REFERRED TO IN THE FOREGOING MEMORANDUM, AND APPENDED THERETO.

I.

Letter to Dr. Douglas Hyde from Dr. F. Powell, Regius Professor of Modern History in the University of Oxford.

Oriel College, Oxford,
5th April, 1899.

MY DEAR DR. HYDE,—If anything I can say is of any use, pray make use of it. We are fighting shadows, but apparently they have to be fought by throwing more light on the matter still.

In the first place: the example of bilingual Wales is not to be got over. It is proved clearly and unmistakably that it is better to teach children the English through their own tongue; *i.e.*, that they must be taught their own properly—how to read and write it correctly, and then, having acquired so much, they are able to learn how to read and write English well, much quicker and better than if their own tongue were tabooed in the brutal and needless fashion which certain of the T.C.D. people press for. Now, if this is true, and the Welsh example, I think, is acknowledged to prove its truth, what more does your case need?

However, there are two points your adversaries have tried to make —one that one cannot teach and examine, because papers cannot be set, and because reading books cannot be supplied. Now, the papers I have seen, prove that for examination purposes Irish is quite as good as Greek or English, and it is a mere absurdity to suppose that because Homer and Plato wrote in Greek, Greek is necessarily for the *examination of children* in grammar, &c., a better instrument of education. As it happens, Irish is singularly well-fitted for an instrument of education as far as grammar, syntax, analysis, &c.

As to the reading books, I am confident that you yourself could at once supply (and I hope that, setting aside other work for the present, you will print such a work at once) a thoroughly good reading book in prose and verse, without anything "silly, superstitious, or indecent" in it. There is plenty of poetry, such as children should learn by heart, plenty of fine stories, and plenty of anecdotes that, put into simple modern Irish out of the older tongue, would please and enrich the mind of the child, naturally curious about the past of his own people; and about the great men of the past he hears talked about. I found plenty of good Irish and Welsh and Scottish stories, as well as English, to put into my Readers for elementary schools.

There are saws and proverbs, too, children's ditties and jingles, and a whole lot of available matter that we in England use in our elementary Readers, existing in abundance in Irish.

Lastly, I come to a point I have not touched on before, but which, to me, is of high importance. It is a sad and bad thing to cut away a whole nation from its past by blotting out the tongue that enshrines so much that is dear, and deservedly dear, so much that is sacred, and deservedly sacred. If Irishmen are to forget the tongue of their fathers, do not let us of this generation bring on such a catastrophe, for catastrophe it would be. All the charm of the old peasant life, the accents that gave voice to its joys and sorrows, the simple wisdom of the poor man's experience, the inherited mental culture that an Irish peasant has, and that gives him in his poverty that acute appreciation of the real things of life (the things that are worth more than gold or silver, or even lands and cattle)—these will be largely destroyed by the destruction of the old tongue, and they cannot be replaced. This is a serious matter, as it seems to me.

You could put this last point better than I can, and it ought to be put very strongly. I am sure that there are men of all parties, thoughtful and far-sighted men, who can see and feel the danger of this obliteration of the past. I would willingly see much forgotten in Ireland that Irishmen choose to remember. Old feuds, old prejudices, old lies, and old pieces of cant and charlatanism that are immortal as *struldbrugs*, but for Irishmen to consent to forget what is best for them to remember—the cradle song of their mothers, the hymns their grandmothers sang, the wise, quaint talk of the elders, the joyous verse and the sad mourning verse of their own poets, and the whole fabric of their folk-lore, their folk wisdom, their own names, and the names of the hills and rivers and rocks and woods that are so dear to them—seems to me incomprehensible.

To keep all these things, one would pay a price; but one can keep them for nothing, for as it is known, by keeping the old tongue, the task of learning the necessary English is not made more difficult, but actually easier.

I don't want to make this question a personal one, and I have kept all names out of it, but I must emphatically contradict the statement of Dr. Atkinson, so far as his comparison between the Greek and Irish papers produced—1897—and my opinion is based upon considerable experience in the examination of schools, and in the methods of class teaching.

The point as to difference of Irish dialects may be met by the example of Greek, the "Greek" of to-day, of the New Testament, of Plato, of Homer, of the dramatists, of Sappho, of Theocritus, of Herodotus—all differ widely in dialect and grammatical forms; but who makes that an obstacle to Greek teaching?

As to "lowness of tone," all that is mere prejudice, as far as I can see. We all know that the New Testament, because it was in a

provincial vernacular, was regarded as "low in tone," and vulgar Greek. It has, however, real beauties of its own, as the most rigid scholars would now admit.

The Koran was not in the fine tongue of the poets of the days of darkness, but it has become like Jerome's low Latin and Paul's low Greek, a standard of culture.

All this talk about "lowness" is a piece of special pleading, an appeal to personal feelings, and not to any standards of criticism. I don't think that a distinguished scholar is necessarily an infallible literary critic, and just as I should follow Wallace or Crookes in biology or physics, and refuse to accept their judgment in the case of "mediums," "table-rapping," "visitations," and the like, so, while bowing to Dr. Atkinson on questions of Sanskrit or Old Irish, I should not be disposed to take his verdict as final in matters of criticism of school teaching, or the ethical value of phrases in Modern Irish.

I am not writing to raise or maintain controversy, but simply because I feel that an injustice and a real wrong will be done if the properly inspected and properly regulated study of Modern Irish is to be discontinued in Ireland. I am not a Roman Catholic, or an Anglican, or a Presbyterian. I am not urging this matter because I hope or fear that the teaching of Irish will injure or help any political party. I am not an Irishman, but an Englishman, and I have no private quarrel with any one concerned in this question. If I were an Irishman by blood I think I should feel the stupid absurdity of this plan of killing Irish even more acutely than I should a plan for extirpating whole country-sides of Irish, for it is a plan the success of which will irreparably injure a number of people without compensation being possible.

I am, yours faithfully,
F. York Powell.

II.

Letter to Dr. Douglas Hyde from M. Georges Dottin, Professor in the University of Rennes.

Rennes, *23rd March*, 1899.

Cher Monsieur,

I ask nothing better than to explain what I wanted to say when I wrote that I was absolutely astonished that anyone could deny the utility of teaching Irish in Ireland. I believe—and I am not alone in doing so—that ideas and words being inseparable, every language carries in it a certain number of conceptions which are peculiar to itself. This is why a translation is never anything more than an approximation. To suppress, then, a language which has formed and furnished, so to speak, the minds of numerous generations of men, seems to me to be a return to barbarity. It is certain that an Irish

child has not the same ideas as an English child, and that these ideas, consciously or unconsciously, are due to this, that up to the 17th century the ancestors of the Irish child spoke Irish. If you teach such a child Irish you are only going back to the source [of his intellectual life], and assuring a normal development—otherwise you stunt and sterilize him, you suppress one of the original forms of the human mind, which the Celtic mind is, or at all events you run the risk of suppressing it. How is it you have in Ireland the chance of having two languages, very different in genius, and the comparison between which is extremely useful in the formation of youthful minds, and you wish to deliberately eliminate one of them? Such an attempt could only be made for political reasons (about which I do not want to say anything as I am a foreigner), but certainly not for pedagogic ones. They say that political considerations excuse everything: they would have more than enough to do to excuse that crime of lèse-humanité which would consist in suppressing the teaching of Irish, and in trying to stop the admirable movement of linguistic renaissance which is manifesting itself in our days in Ireland. It would be interesting also to take note of what English literature owes to Celtic inspiration. Can anyone believe that inspiration will last much longer if we completely dry up the spring, that is to say, the language?

The objection is made that the language of our day is only a horrid patois. I assure you that I do not know what a patois is. There are languages which have the chance of becoming literary languages for reasons absolutely foreign to anything connected with linguistics or literature, from reasons of political supremacy; there are also languages which have not that chance. It is said that modern Irish is invaded with English words. In the Middle Ages Anglo-Saxon was invaded by French. The purity of a language does not imply the entire absence of all foreign loan-words. If Irish were more and more spoken and written by educated people, it would not be long in eliminating the useless elements, and in retaking under the pen of professional writers, the qualities of the Irish style of the 16th century. Whatever it is, is a [real] language. Its difficulty for foreigners comes from its very richness of idiom. It has in fact rather too much originality. It is not a mere question of considering the pedagogic utility of a literature, almost any language, even one without a well developed literature has its pedagogic utility. If one translated into modern Irish the ancient literature of Ireland, and if one added the stories gathered through the country, one would have very sufficient reading books.* What literature is really useful to youths? In French, Racine is immoral, Molière often coarse, La

* This is what is actually in process of being done, and what will be much more done in the near future. Most of the old literature has been translated into modern Irish by the men of the last two centuries.—D. H.

Fontaine cynical. In order to teach children German we make them translate Grimm's stories. Is that a literature much more educative than the Irish stories?

Bien cordialement à vous,

G. DOTTIN.

III.

Letter to Dr. Douglas Hyde from Dr. H. Zimmer, Professor of Sanscrit and Celtic Languages, University of Greifswald.

GREIFSWALD, *4th April*, 1899.

SEHR GEEHRTER HERR DR.

For the "Simple Lessons" you sent me and for the Ceiċne Sgeulċa I express to you best thanks. I was well acquainted with them both since I possess and have read pretty nearly everything which has appeared in the Irish language—modern school included—during the last twenty-five years.

I must openly confess to you that I now see myself very unwillingly entangled in a polemic discussion with Dr. Atkinson, both for personal and actual reasons. Dr. Atkinson has often, when I wanted to know something out of Irish MSS in T.C.D. and the R.I.A., procured me all desired information in the most obliging manner, and put himself to personal trouble for me, so my thanks are due to him. I esteem him as a thoughtful inquirer to whom Celtic studies owe enduring thanks.

We have been now for years, reciprocally exchanging our works. From all this it follows that in an affair where I am not personally engaged and am not attacked I can only in the most extreme case come forward against Professor Atkinson. And to this subjective point of view is added an objective. I need not assure you these I do *not* share Dr. Atkinson's extreme views. These views I do not regard as the outcome of quiet, scientific reflection, but yet a little grain of truth lies for the most part at the bottom of them. Now it is difficult to show in *few* words that this little grain of truth does not in any way justify the extreme conclusions which Dr. Atkinson draws. The fact that Dr. Atkinson puts his views so abruptly, without confirming them, does not give me the right to set up against him different views, without basing them and without refuting his—or rather, I do not like this method of procedure, and I have never practised it. To my mind no one has a right to come forward as an authority *in public* without adducing his reason and proofs.

How colossally one-sided is the standpoint from which Professor Atkinson judges modern Irish, as to whether it is a literary language or not, will be best elucidated if one applies this standard of his to other territories of the Indo-Germanic language-stem. Take, for

instance, the language of the Greek epics, of the Homeric poems, and of the whole epic literature of the Greeks, which is nevertheless a literary language. Now, this language clearly bears the imprint of Ionic dialects, quite shot through with the peculiarities of the Æolic dialect; and as far as forms go, old forms and new forms —(τοιο : τον) formations due both to phonetic laws and to analogy (τιθεμεναι, τίθεμαι, τιθειναι, δόμεναι, δομεν, δοῦναι; Ἀτρέιδαο, Ἀτρειδεω, βουν : βοα, εὐρύν : εὐρέα. Acc. plur. πόλους : πολεας; ποληας, γοῦνα : γουνατα, γουνεσσι; γουνασι) and hundreds of other forms of declensions and conjugation are confusedly mixed together. Where is the "absolute standard of correctness"? What would Atkinson, from his schoolmaster standpoint, call the epic literature of the Greeks? "Not good enough for a patois"; "an imbroglio, mélange, an omnium gatherum"? From his point of view that would be the proper answer, and yet—as everyone sees—an absurdity!

As for the two examination papers of 1898, the Greek would indeed, in my opinion, require a longer preparation on the part of the scholar than the Irish, in saying which, however, I will not assent to the widely-exaggerated assertions of Dr. Atkinson.

Your apprehensions that the Commission may allow itself to be induced to strike out "Irish as a facultative subject" from the programme of the "Intermediate Education Board for Ireland," I am unable to share. No matter how much weight the Commission attaches to Atkinson's authority, this much at least they must see, that Atkinson has not come forward in the matter merely as an impartially judging authority, but as a partisan, who in his judgments pursues, consciously or unconsciously, certain aims.

The greater the resistance to the language movement in Ireland on the part of the powers that be, so much the more quickly and decisively must it be known whether the movement has a living strength. That will justify it and push its way through victoriously.

Hochachtungsvoll,

Ergebenst,

H. Zimmer.

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VII.

DR. O'HICKEY'S REPLY TO DR. MAHAFFY, MR. GWYNN, AND DR. ATKINSON.

[Prefatory Note.]

A few words from me may not be amiss to explain why the present pamphlet should have been included in this series. All the previous pamphlets of the series consist of re-prints of matter extracted from the various Blue-books containing the official record of the proceedings of the Viceregal Commission of Inquiry on Intermediate Education in Ireland. This pamphlet is of quite a different kind. It is merely a reprint of a letter which appeared on March 1st, 1899, in the *Freeman's Journal*, *Daily Nation*, and *Daily Independent*. Two questions then suggest themselves:—(*a*) Why was the letter not sent, like others, to the Commission of Inquiry? (*b*) Why is it now included in a series consisting of reprints from the official records of the Commission?

The first question is easily answered. Dr. Atkinson was examined towards the close of the sittings of the Commission. Just when the question of replying, before the Commission, to the Professor's extraordinary vapourings was being considered, the public sittings of

the Commission terminated quite suddenly and unexpectedly. Thus it fell out that, so far as the Commission was concerned, a public reply had become impossible.

Whilst others were thinking mainly of the effect that the Professor's evidence, if not noticed, might produce upon the minds of the Commissioners, I was much more concerned with the effect it might have upon the public. So far as the public were concerned a reply sent to the Commission would have been useless. It could not have been made public, until the Commission had finally reported; and then the reply would have appeared in a Blue-book, in which very few would have troubled to look it up. Knowing as I did that others were dealing, for the benefit of the Commission, with the Professor's wild and groundless statements, it occurred to me that they ought to be dealt with (a very easy matter) for the benefit of the public. Consequently, I addressed to the metropolitan daily papers the letter which is now reprinted.

The second question, it is not for me to answer. I may, however, state that the Publication Committee of the Gaelic League consider that, side by side with the evidence of Dr. Atkinson, ought to appear the various replies made to him, through the Commission or otherwise.

I may add that Father O'Leary and Father John O'Reilly also dealt, in the daily Press, with the Professor's pretensions to pose as an authority on modern Irish, and convicted him of gross mistranslation and of gross ignorance of some of the most elementary questions of Irish syntax. These points have also been brought out by Father Dineen and Mr. John MacNeill in the Memoranda which they sent to the Commission, and which will be found in one of the pamphlets of the present series.

For the first time since my letter appeared, I have just now looked through it. Beyond correcting a few misprints, I find nothing which I wish to change. Dr. Atkinson, I hold now, as I then held, deserved what he got. If the language is not quite as calm as some might desire, it pales from that point of view before the language employed by Dr. Atkinson. On other issues I am content to let the public judge between us.

M. P. O'H.

Letter by the Very Rev. Michael P. O'Hickey, D.D., M.R.I.A., St. Patrick's College, Maynooth.

Not very long ago I was present at a public meeting, at which a very distinguished past student of Trinity, not Dr. Hyde, it may be well to point out, although a co-religionist of his, spoke these words: "Poor old Trinity! It's case is sad, very sad. What a pity that during its entire history it has never been able, even for one brief moment, to regard itself as an Irish institution." In the attitude, which through some of its representatives, it has taken up towards the national language at the Intermediate Inquiry, Trinity has been true to its antecedents. What a sorry figure it has, from every point of view, presented. Dr. Mahaffy and Mr. Gwynn first stepped into the arena to wage war to the death against the language of their country, but both retired from the field, whereon they had hoped to gain such inglorious victory, utterly discomfited, and amidst a chorus of mocking laughter. This campaign was carefully planned, and the redoubtable Professor Mahaffy (I beg Dr. Hyde's pardon, MacGaffie) was the first doughty knight to appear in the lists. In the pages of the "Nineteenth Century," he had made a brave show. He whirled his shillelagh, whooped, and disported himself generally in thoroughly characteristic fashion. He wished his readers to carry away with them the notion that he was a great authority on the Irish language, and everything appertaining thereto. At all events, he carefully refrained from giving a hint that he knew absolutely nothing about the subject. Indeed, it was unnecessary at that stage that he should know anything about it. Most of his readers were in a state of equally blissful ignorance. And whilst in other departments of knowledge some familiarity with the subject under discussion is regarded as a necessary qualification for one who would pose as an authority, it is a matter of notoriety that the supreme qualification required to form and pronounce judgment on the Irish language and on Irish literature is utter ignorance of both.

This qualification Dr. Mahaffy undoubtedly possesses to perfection. Before the Commission, however, he had to descend from his lofty pedestal. Wild, reckless, sweeping assertion, supercilious airs, ignorant vapouring and buffoonery could not be expected to dispose of the Irish language there. The Professor was examined. He had to condescend to explain and enter into detail. Lo! the house of cards toppled over, and the fragments lay strewn all around. His ignorance was self-confessed. He knew nothing about Irish. The Commissioners should not hold him responsible—really "it was the other boy" that did all the mischief. Poor old Professor! How could he be expected to know anything of subjects so common-place and vulgar as the Irish language or Irish literature? Scaling

Parnassus, communing with the gods of the ancient Greeks, and sneering at his country and countrymen, occupy all his time and absorb all his energies. He conveniently forgot to say who "the other boy" was. Kings of old had their licensed jesters; why should not Trinity College? The public, when the genuine article is not forthcoming, has a sneaking regard for a fourth rate, or even a fifth rate, Grimaldi; why should the Elizabethan foundation that fronts College Green not have its funny man, if it is so minded? Exit Dr. Mahaffy!

Mr. Gwynn, who, although he did not appear to give oral evidence, sent the Commission beforehand a statement of his views, has also been heard of during the public sittings of the Commission. He, too, would exclude Irish from the Intermediate programme. He knows a great deal about it. At present he is Todd lecturer to the Royal Irish Academy. The following facts sum up the case as far as he is concerned:—(1) He does not speak Irish, as we know from Dr. Hyde; (2) he has given no attention to modern Irish, as the same authority informs us; (3) if the Press accounts of the proceedings on the occasion may be relied on, he began his first Todd lecture by practically admitting that he knew very little about old Irish, and then proceeded to give irrefragable proof that his modest estimate of his own attainments was but too well founded. Exit Mr. Gwynn!

The Trinity case against the Irish language was in a sad state of collapse before a single witness had been examined, or a single word spoken, on the other side. When Dr. Hyde had given evidence, the Trinity case was blown sky-high. Himself a very high authority, Douglas Hyde read or handed in letters from Zimmer, Windisch, Dottin, Pedersen, Kuno Meyer, and many others—all of them scholars of the first rank, all of them Celtologists of recognized standing and world-wide fame, all of them conversant with vernacular, as well as with Old Irish, all of them free from the faintest suspicion of bias or partisanship; most of them, to put it as mildly as possible, standing vastly higher in the world of learning than the Trinity College champions. Trinity had been routed, and its champions had become a public laughing-stock. This, of course, would never do. An effort should be made to redeem the situation, for otherwise Trinity in matters bearing on the Irish language could never be taken seriously again. And so—enter Robert Atkinson, LL.D.! The only Trinity Professor possessing any claims whatever to be regarded as an authority on questions affecting the Irish language now appears before the Commission. How curious, what a significant commentary on the ways of the institution, that Trinity's "expert" in this department should be an Englishman!

Dr. Atkinson's appearance at the inquiry was well timed. He came forward just as the Commission was about to conclude its

sittings, and when it had become impossible to reply to him from the witness chair. He appeared, too, it would seem, by special privilege, for he had not sent in a schedule of written evidence. Were it possible, I should wish very much to avoid severity in dealing with Dr. Atkinson's evidence. But for me the interests of the Irish language—and, I may add, of truth and justice—predominate over my anxiety to deal tenderly with one to whom students of our language certainly owe something. The Professor is a trained philologist. He has a respectable knowledge of Old, Middle, and early Modern Irish—a philologist's knowledge chiefly, for on questions of syntax he is very often completely at sea. On questions affecting the meaning of Irish idioms, those who are not Irish scholars at all could easily and promptly set him right. His editions of the "Passions and Homilies from the Leabhar Breac," and of Keating's "Three Shafts of Death," are very useful to students. His glossaries to these works contain a great amount of raw material for the study of Irish syntax, but his deductions based on the study of the materials thus accumulated are just as often as not wholly and hopelessly wrong. It would be difficult to find anywhere a more slip-shod or misleading piece of grammatical work than his treatment of the so-called Infinitive in the Appendix to the "Three Shafts of Death." Perhaps his works would not be even so good as they are, had he not had a good Irish scholar—one cradled in the language, one who had made it a life-long study—almost continually beside him when preparing the works referred to. Had he more frequently deferred to his judgment I have no doubt that he would have blundered less frequently. It is well known that Dr. Atkinson does not speak Irish. He knows and cares nothing about the language as actually spoken. Indeed, his sole interest in Irish is that of a comparative philologist, and it is useful or valuable in his eyes only in so far as it affords a promising field for philological investigation. Of literary interest in it he has none. I do not blame him; he cannot be other than nature and training have made him. But, then, he should not run amuck and strike about him so wildly and recklessly. From a National point of view, he could not be expected to care about the Irish language. He is an Englishman, and so is free from blame on this head—unlike his fellow-champions of Trinity. "Dr. Atkinson," observed to me recently, an old Trinity College man, who knows the Professor well, and is an admirer of his, "Dr. Atkinson is simply a philologist and nothing more. He revels in the science of language. But of literary sympathy or insight he has not got a single shred." The criticism was shrewd and just, and put the whole case in a nutshell; it is suggestive and instructive too, and throws light on things which should otherwise be inexplicable.

Dr. Atkinson appeared before the Commission. He indulged in one of those wild, tempestuous, cyclonic outbursts with which fre-

quenters of the Academy meetings are not wholly unfamiliar. It is not so very long ago since " the man in the street " was attracted by an item in the newspaper placards, " A Breeze at the Academy." In the scene which on that occasion disturbed the usually quiet and serene atmosphere of the Academy, Dr. Atkinson was a central figure. Indeed, he is the stormy petrel of the place. In his examination, Dr. Atkinson talked in the wildest and most excited fashion of dirt and indecency and grossness, and all sorts of abominations. There is an old proverb which says: " If you throw dirt enough, some of it will stick." This would seem to have been the Professor's policy. He had to make out a case against the Irish language somehow, and certainly his methods were not over-scrupulous. Old-fashioned people may, however, be excused for doubting the decency and honour and morality of indiscriminate and wholesale mud-flinging. In his opening statement at the Commission, the Professor said that " Irish literature was unfit for children," " that if the Commissioners would only come to his rooms" he would show them perfectly awful things, etc., etc. When examined later on, our Professor having flung mud to his heart's content (and thereby done all the harm he could) gave up practically his whole case step by step. He ran away from his charges of abomination, dirt, indecency, licentiousness, grossness, and so on. All that he adhered to finally was that whilst Irish literature is not licentious, an odd passage or piece may be met with once in a while which is somewhat coarse, whilst the general tone was low. Pressed still further, the Professor still continued the process of climbing down. He succeeded in accomplishing more climbing down within the time at his disposal than almost any other human being could accomplish in a similar interval. When he was done, all that remained was this:—(1) His strictures applied only to the folk-lore; (2) it was " too near the sod "; (3) its general tone was low; (4) it lacked idealism and imaginativeness. When I read this last statement I could not help muttering to myself the rather trite verses:—

" Do I dream, do I sleep,
Do I wonder in doubt.
Are things what they seem,
Or is visions about? "

Our Professor is assuredly flying in the face of all experience, of all authority, and even of all common sense. Celtic literature not ideal! Celtic literature not Imaginative! I do not believe that outside of Bedlam, anyone else claiming to be an authority could be found so foolish, so lacking in all sense of the ridiculous, as to advance such a statement. The effrontery and absurdity of the allegation are enough to take away one's breath. It is, at all events, quite clear that the idealism, imaginativeness, and subtle magic of Gaelic literature are quite beyond the grasp of such as he.

For more than twenty years I have been a close student of the Irish language in all its forms. I have read almost every published scrap of Gaelic literature. I have read a large quantity of its unpublished literature in manuscript. I was brought up in contact with the language, heard it spoken from my earliest years, and speak it myself. Of modern Irish and of the literature enshrined therein I have made a special and prolonged study. I am quite certain that I know modern Irish better than Dr. Atkinson can ever hope to know it, and I am equally certain that my familiarity with modern Irish literature is vastly more extensive than his. Furthermore, I have for many years past devoted some attention to some of the languages and literatures of Europe, both ancient and modern. When, therefore, the Irish language and Irish literature are under discussion, I think that I may without presumption claim a hearing.

As Dr. Atkinson has run away from his charges of indecency and licentiousness, and all but run away from his charge of coarseness, I do not think I need dwell upon them. Perhaps I may make one remark. On reference to the "Dublin University Calendar" I find that Robert Atkinson, LL.D., is not alone Professor of Sanskrit and Comparative Philology, but also of the Romance Languages. We may then presume that he has heard of the Decameron, of the Heptameron, and of La Fontaine. As an Englishman he must have heard of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Fielding, and Smollet. As he is Professor of Comparative Philology we may assume that he is not an utter stranger to the ancient classics, and must have heard of the Greek dramatists, as well as of Ovid, Juvenal, and Horace. He might, then, have discreetly remained silent about indecency, coarseness, and such like things. There is no literature in which there is not something which one would be better pleased not to find there, but, taking the immense body of Irish literature as a whole, it can be confidently affirmed that it is singularly free from what could be fairly set down as really objectionable—far more so, *pace* Professor Atkinson, than any other literature he can point to.

But Irish literature—that is to say, the folk literature, is low in its general tone. This is a mere pious opinion of the Professor's. To estimate its value aright we have to bear in mind that he considers "all the folk-lore of Europe coarse, vulgar, and low." He offers no opinion, it will be observed, on the folk-lore of Asia, Africa, America, and Oceanica! Evidently the poor Professor is at present suffering from an acute attack of Anti-Irish Language and Literature delirium, and hence he is found uttering all sorts of grotesque absurdities. The Irish language, we are told, is an "imbroglio, an olla-podrida, an omnium gatherum." Where on earth are we? Think of a statement of this kind coming from one whose mother tongue is a medley of the *disjecta membra* of half the languages of the world, whose native speech Thomas Davis—a far greater Trinity man than our sapient Professor—justly described as

" that mongrel of a hundred breeds called English." Irish literature is also " too near the sod." What on earth does he mean? If his statement has any definite meaning at all, what he seeks to convey is, that latter-day Irish literature is essentially a peasant literature. This is, doubtless, true. As I happen to be of the peasantry (I wonder if Dr. Atkinson was nurtured in a mansion) I may be pardoned for thinking that it is none the worse for that reason. It is, however, quite intelligible that a Trinity College Don should regard such a literature with disdain. We know what he thinks of all folk literature: not unlikely his opinion of the folk themselves is precisely the same. If we have had only a peasant literature in recent times the Professor's countrymen can enlighten him as to the cause.

But, waiving this point, I tell the Professor—and I know modern Irish literature far better than he does—that this same peasant literature which he despises is the most vigorous, the most imaginative, the most playful, the most healthy, the most graceful, the finest and most perfect literature of its kind that the world has ever seen—vastly superior to any literature ever produced under similar conditions—a perfectly marvellous emanation of the mind, intellect, and imagination of the Gael during a period of enforced illiteracy. If the Professor has neither eye nor soul for its beauties, if he cannot appreciate its many remarkable qualities, the fault is his own, and cannot by any means be laid at the door of the literature. It seems he has recommended that " Robinson Crusoe should be translated into Irish," and he complains " that it has not been done." Now, apart from the fact that a translation is rarely, if ever, literature in the true sense, a translation of " Robinson Crusoe " would certainly not be Irish literature. We thank the Professor for his kind thought for us, but it is Irish literature we want—literature drawn from native sources and informed by the native spirit, not English literature with an Irish veneering. We have English literature in abundance, and when we turn to it we shall probably prefer to meet it in its native garb. But if the Professor is so anxious to see " Robinson Crusoe " translated, I venture to suggest that he undertake to make a translation himself. Should he accept the suggestion, I shall await the appearance of the Irish Crusoe with intense interest and curiosity. And on my first visit to my native Waterford mountains, after it has been published, I shall take a copy with me to give readings therefrom to Irish speakers down there. How vividly I can picture the amused and mystified faces of my audience! But I fear that I shall have long to wait.

The Professor will not accept my suggestion for the best of all reasons. He could not translate a page of " Robinson Crusoe " into idiomatic or intelligible Irish, though he should consecrate the remainder of his days to the task; and if he attempted to do so the result, if read to an Irish-speaking audience, would throw them into convulsions of laughter; for any one of them could teach him more

Irish idiom and more practical Irish syntax than he is ever likely to master.

Dr. Atkinson's strictures on the language, as distinguished from the literature, are more definite, and therefore more easily dealt with. He has graciously condescended to say some complimentary things of old Irish, partly, I suppose, because it is old, and partly because denunciation of it would expose him to the ridicule of the learned world. But modern Irish is anathema to him. He would have us believe that in recent times the language has literally fallen to pieces. Old Irish is most valuable, but latter-day Irish is worthless—no grammar, no syntax, no forms, nothing, in a word, but chaos and confusion everywhere. Although it does not appear in the newspapers, I understand that Dr. Atkinson in his examination referred to a paper which he read at the Academy on some points in the Irish verbal system. That paper, which I know well, proves nothing except that in some small details Irish does not stand now exactly where it stood over two centuries ago—that it has grown somewhat in the meantime. Surely, a comparative philologist ought to know something about the growth of language, and might fairly be expected to make some allowance for it. It is the easiest thing imaginable to take one's stand at a certain point in the development of a language, and to say that everything that went before is growth and everything that followed after is corruption. This is Dr. Atkinson's position exactly, but I hope there are not many upon whom empiricism of this kind will impose.

Is the English of Tennyson exactly the same as the English of Chaucer or Spenser? Is the French of Racine, Bousset, or Victor Hugo precisely the same as the French of the Troubadours or of the Chanson de Roland? Has the Lengua Castellana undergone no change since the days of the Cid. It certainly is vastly amusing to hear one whose native tongue has become as analytic as sea-sand talking of the loss of forms in Irish. It seems, furthermore, that we are all at sixes and sevens. North, south, east, and west we speak different dialects or patois, and we are wholly unintelligible to one another. Really, even a Professor of Trinity, or a comparative philologist, should not talk such utter nonsense. I am well aware that the professor would not undertsand two words from the lips of any Irish speaker—north, south, east, or west. But if he could be induced to overcome his aversion to the folk, and would condescend to turn in to one of the weekly meetings of the Gaelic League, he might hear there, on any Wednesday evening, addresses delivered by Irish speakers from all parts of the country, every speech quite intelligible to the audience. Only last Wednesday evening, had he been with us, he would have heard speakers from Waterford, Cork, Clare, Galway, Mayo, Roscommon, and Antrim. I am sorry to be obliged to repeat that the Professor's remarks about the language are all simple rubbish, his views the veriest chimeras. But, of course,

when one has a pet theory, the facts must be made somehow to fit into it and give it colour.

Now here are the exact facts about the Irish language. To the philologist certainly, old Irish is more valuable than modern Irish. Is there anything wonderful in this? Is Hindustani as valuable to the philologist as Sanskrit? Is the language spoken in the streets of Athens to-day as valuable philologically as the language of Homer, the Greek dramatists, or Demosthenes? The farther you follow any language towards its source, the more valuable it becomes as a field for philological investigation. So much may be conceded to Dr. Atkinson, and he is very welcome to such advantage as the admission may bring him. If he regards languages as mere philological quarries, and values them in exact proportion to their philological output, that is no affair of mine.

I hope he will admit that languages have other than merely philological uses, and may be studied with profit and pleasure for purposes other than that of resolving them by merciless analysis into their primal elements, and ascertaining how much they have in common. No doubt Irish has lost many of its earlier inflections; its verbal and declensional systems have been somewhat modified; and the spelling has been somewhat altered. But what of this? If Dr. Atkinson hopes by these bogies to impose on the public—especially upon trained students of languages—he must entertain a very low opinion of their intelligence. Now I say unhesitatingly that for all the ordinary purposes of language, the spoken and written Irish of the present day—that is, Irish as spoken in the thoroughly Irish-speaking districts, and written by such men as Dr. Henebry, Father O'Leary, and many others not so well known—is just as perfect and beautiful a language as any Irish, or any language he can find me. Nay, more: from any point of view it is a language as consistent, as expressive, as subtle, as powerful, as precise, as finely-shaded in meaning, as logical in its syntax, as delightfully subtle and philosophical in its idiom, as copious in its vocabulary, as adequate to discharge all the functions for which speech has been intended, as any language of the present or past. This is no mere declamation; it is a rigid statement of fact. If Dr. Atkinson did not despise modern Irish so, if he knew modern Irish even tolerably well, if his knowledge of it were not a mere eye-knowledge in the main, if he knew it as a living speech, and not merely as a dead language, if its music and melody and rhythm were not in the clouds for him, if he could only escape from his philological shackles, he would soon realise all this as well as I do. But a man whose knowledge of Irish is acquired in his study, who has never been in contact with the living speech, whose outlook is vitiated by his philological training and environment, whose knowledge is at best the half-knowledge so nearly allied to ignorance, will inevitably be cocksure and dogmatic, and will tolerate no dissent from his immature, ill-informed, obstinately entertained views.

This is Dr. Atkinson's position exactly. Keating's Irish is his ideal and standard. Anything that diverges from the style of Keating in the smallest degree he will not tolerate. No doubt, Keating's Irish is admirable—correct, stately, and impressive. But to set it up as a standard, no departure from which is to be tolerated, is simply absurd. The simple fact is that Keating's style is formal, stiff, and rather monotonous. It bears distinct traces of his foreign training and of the influence of his unquestionable classical scholarship. It stands to Gaelic generally in a relation very similar to that in which Samuel Johnson's style stands to English style generally. There are books written since Keating's time in which (while the language is just as good) the style is immeasurably lighter, freer, more rhythmical, more limpid, more picturesque, and of livelier and more varied movement. But what can Dr. Atkinson know of these things? He won't trouble to learn anything of them. But I may ask him a question—Are the various styles of Addison, Hume, Burke, Macaulay, and Newman bad and vicious because they do not resemble in every minutest particular the style of Dr. Johnson? The Irish of "Silva Gadelica" is much better, more musical, more picturesque than that of Keating, and, nevertheless, if Dr. Atkinson will but take the trouble to institute a comparison he will find much more in common between Father O'Leary's recently published story and "Silva Gadelica," than between "Silva Gadelica" and "The Three Shafts of Death." I mean as regards style, idiom, construction, and syntax generally. If he does not, then it is because the true inwardness of Gaelic speech is so far a sealed book for him.

There have been changes, no doubt, since Keating's time, and still greater changes since the various pieces in "Silva Gadelica" were written. But the conservatism of the Irish language is amazing. Under the conditions that have surrounded its development for the past three centuries no other language could have so marvellously preserved its identity, and only a very perfect language could at all have stood such an awful test without hopelessly going to pieces. But there it is substantially, and all but literally, the same to the present hour. Such changes of form as have taken place are slight and have worked out with almost as much regularity as a law of nature. The grammar is as consistent as ever. The declensions are clearly marked. The verbal system is a marvel of consistency and regularity. The idiom, the construction, the syntax, remain intact. Not a particle of the vigour, the power, the strength, the expressiveness, the flexibilty that belonged to the language in its literary heyday is wanting. It is at the present moment as fine and as perfect a language as has ever been spoken on earth. It requires but to be cultivated a very little to become an unsurpassable literary medium.

Keating has proved that it is fully equal to the demands of historical narrative. Keating, O'Mulloy, Rev. Daniel O'Sullivan and

others have conclusively shown that as a medium for the treatment, scientific or popular, of theology and kindred subjects it is more than equal to any demands that can be made upon it. Again and again has it been made in recent times to serve, with the amplest success, the purposes of biography and fiction. And this, forsooth, is the language that has gone to pieces! A visit to the Irish-speaking country—to him a *terra incognita*—would do Dr. Atkinson all the good in the world. If, like much more eminent men, with whom he at present finds himself hopelessly in conflict, like Zimmer, Pedersen, Dottin, for example, he could be induced to make a long prolonged stay in Arran, Connemara, Kerry, or West Cork, if he could be got to study seriously the living speech of the people, he would return to Trinity College a much humbler and wiser man, and certainly a much better Irish scholar, and he would not in the gaiety of his heart, and out of the exuberance of his half-knowledge, venture to express publicly the foolish and absurd opinion that modern Irish is of no literary, educational or practical use whatever. He would allow Dr. Mahaffy an absolute monopoly of such ignorant absurdities.

Irish literature apart, the Irish language is, for an Irishman at all events, as fine as as perfect an instrument of education, culture, and intellectual development as can be found. It lacks no quality of a perfectly equipped and developed language. But surely heredity counts for something in the matter of language, as in other matters; and even though in a particular district Irish should not have been spoken for a generation or two, the language which our ancestors spoke for ever so many centuries, which expressed their ideas and formed their minds, cannot have wholly passed out of our intellectual being. As a matter of fact it has not done so. The English of the average Irishman has in it much more of Irish than of English idiom. Indeed, even the most highly educated Irishman—with the possible exception of those who spend many years out of the country—never succeed in getting wholly away from the Irish idiom. It is an undoubted fact that the study of Irish is capable of leading the average Irishman to a much higher intellectual plane, and so is for him a more perfect instrument of culture than any other study whatever. I have proved it, and I am perfectly willing to submit it to any test that can be devised.

We are told that Irish is of no practical value. For the majority of Irishmen it is of much more practical value than any other language save English. The advantages of bilingualism are too universally conceded to admit of discussion. It is only by teaching Irish on the most extensive scale possible that more than an infinitesimal number of the Irish people can ever be made bilinguists. English and Irish apart, of what earthly practical use is any other language to nine Irishmen out of every ten? Many learn a little French or German at School. How many ever make any use, practical or otherwise, of these languages? How many have an opportunity of doing so? The

very little of either that is learned at school is quickly forgotten. Not one in a hundred ever advances far enough to obtain a fair colloquial knowledge of either language. When they leave school they have no opportunities of speaking them. They have no incentives to study them, and so they are completely forgotten in a very short time.

With Irish it is quite otherwise. Most of those who might learn it would have many inducements to continue its study; many opportunities of acquiring a colloquial knowledge of it, or of perfecting the colloquial knowledge already acquired. Environment, a spirit of broad and enlightened patriotism, their own names and the place-names of their localities, would all stimulate them to advance; they would have papers, journals, and books to help them along.

But why labour the point further? If we want a bilingual population, it is along the lines of the cultivation of the Irish language alone that we can hope to secure it.

Doctors in many localities would find Irish useful. Indeed some Boards of Guardians in the West have bound themselves by resolution not to appoint any but Irish-speaking medical officers to certain dispensaries. Many lawyers would find it useful. It would be useful in many cases to shopkeepers, for I am personally aware that in Irish-speaking districts shopkeepers who do not know Irish have to specially secure the services of at least one shop-assistant able to speak the language. It would be useful to commercial travellers and to holiday seekers. So much for the alleged practical uselessness of the Irish language.

To conclude an article already too long, the real objection in Trinity to the Irish language is its national significance. If it were dead and buried as a living speech, it would be taken up there readily enough, and studied, paraded, talked about, and lauded to the skies; but as long as it is a living speech they will have none of it. Well, no matter what the West Britons of Trinity, or the snobs and West Britons outside its walls, may think or say or do, I do not believe that the national significance of our native tongue will tell against it in the minds of men of broad Irish sympathies, of men who look with affection to this island as their cradle-land, no matter what their creed or politics may be. Profoundly convinced am I that there are men of all creeds and of all political schools—yea, thousands and hundreds of thousands of them—who are at heart warm, earnest, generous, high-minded Irishmen, who love our country's past, and have no desire that we should break with it irrevocably. For the language of our race such men will ever keep a warm corner in their heart of hearts. There is little danger that any genuine, right-thinking, broad-minded Irishman, be his religious tenets or political opinions what they may, will be affected by the recent Trinity outcry.

It would be an insult to the intelligence of the Commissioners to even suggest a fear that they may be even in the smallest degree influenced by it. In view of Dr. Hyde's evidence, and still more in view of the letters read or handed in by him during his examination, the gentlemen who constitute the Commission cannot afford to heed the Trinity clamour. Were they to do so, they should make themselves ridiculous before the world. As for Trinity College, its case seems utterly hopeless. "The leopard does not change his spots."

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The Irish Language and Irish Intermediate Education.

VIII.

FURTHER REPLIES TO DR. ATKINSON, AND MISCELLANEOUS DOCUMENTS.

[Prefatory Note.]

This pamphlet, the last of the series, contains (*a*) Mr. John MacNeill's reply to Dr. Atkinson, (*b*) Father Dineen's reply to same, and (*c*) other documents, extracted from the Blue-books, some of considerable interest and importance, as the most cursory perusal will show.

I.

Memorandum by Mr. John MacNeill, B.A.—A Statement in reply to Dr. Atkinson's Evidence before the Intermediate Education (Ireland) Commission on 22nd February, 1899, with reference to the subject of Irish ("Celtic").

I am an honours graduate of the Royal University: have gone through the Intermediate Grades, taking an exhibition in each grade, a gold medal in English, and respectively the third, second, and first place in each grade in three successive years. In the Royal University I held a Scholarship in modern languages, and obtained the highest honours in Greek and Latin throughout my course.

I know modern Irish well, both as a spoken and as a literary language. I have been for five years editor of the *Gaelic Journal*, which is entirely devoted to the cultivation of Irish as a literary tongue. I have been appointed examiner in Celtic for the Intermediate Board for the current year.

Of the older forms of Irish I have a considerable knowledge. I have read the greater part of all the literature of Irish, ancient and modern, that has been printed, and a great deal in MS. As editor of the *Gaelic Journal*, I have had unequalled opportunities of learning how Irish is written at present. With the language as spoken in north, west, and south, I am perfectly familiar, and can converse at ease with native speakers of any district.

The first point I take is that Dr. Atkinson is not, and never has been, recognised by any person as an authority on modern Irish. The only fact known of him in connexion with modern Irish is that he has published one text, written in the early part of the seventeenth century, to which he has added several grammatical appendices. The work bears abundant evidences of the slightness of its editor's acquaintance with modern Irish. As Dr. Atkinson's evidence is only relevant in so far as it deals with the teaching of modern Irish, weight should be attached to it only in proportion to his credentials.

As to the standard of the Intermediate papers in Irish, and the labour necessary to prepare for them, I can only directly traverse Dr. Atkinson's statement. The marks obtained by students in Irish, compared with the scoring in other languages, are the best test.

As the papers are printed from extracts cut out of the books prescribed, the complaint about textual variations is unintelligible.

It is true that "there is no standard of speech absolutely accepted by everybody." Very few languages, if any, have such a standard. There is, however, a well-defined standard of *writing*, accepted with practical unanimity by all who have had an opportunity of making a systematic study of Irish.

Dr. Atkinson represents Irish as a conglomeration of *patois* or dialects rather than a language. In this he is quite mistaken and evidently does not speak from his own knowledge. The fact is that the *patois* are a mere incrustation, and the language beneath them presents a substantial unity. Even in its colloquial form there is a substantial unity in the accidence, and a still more perfect unity of idiom and syntax.

Being a native of the extreme north-east of Ireland, I have often had occasion to observe that the common people of that district and of the south-west have great difficulty in making themselves mutually intelligible in speaking English. The same is true of Irish-speaking people of opposite extremes of the country. The difficulty is one rather of accent than of usage. But if extremes are avoided the difficulty does not exist. A native of Kerry and a native of Antrim may find some difficulty in conversing in Irish. But a native of Waterford and a native of Mayo, or a native of Galway and a native of Donegal can converse with ease, each speaking only his native *patois*. I say this from personal and familiar observation.

What Dr. Atkinson states of these difficulties being increased in the case of printed Irish literature is quite the reverse of the fact. When it comes to printed matter, the difficulties almost wholly disappear. An Irish folk-tale, taken down verbatim from the lips of a native of Ulster or Connaught, and written in the ordinary orthography, can be read and perfectly understood by any speaker of Irish who knows the values of the Irish letters. The only *patois* which affords any difficulty to other Irish speakers, when written, is that of the extreme south-west, which district has been noted since the time of Cormac mac Cuileannain for its fondness for old forms.

With regard to the spelling of Irish, I note with pleasure Dr. Atkinson's high praise of the system in use. Dr. Atkinson knows well that this system, though "very subtle and very excellent," is not and never has been an absolutely rigid system. It often admits of alternate spellings. Beginners and unsympathetic people sometimes make a complaint of this. But people who have made the least progress in the reading of Irish know that the complaint is a much exaggerated one, and I think all who know anything of the matter will be much surprised that Dr. Atkinson should have sought to make so much "capital" out of this point, as out of the other points most emphasized by him. From a large experience in teaching Irish, and from what I know of its teaching by others all over the country,

even in the primary schools, I can say that this difficulty is a mere bogey, and should never have been raised by Dr. Atkinson.

It is hard to understand why such matters as the origin of "eclipsis" and "aspiration" should be introduced into this inquiry. In all the other languages on the Intermediate programme, the inflections, etc., are studied without troubling about their philological origin. If examiners have asked questions of this nature, it certainly cannot be said that in doing so they have favoured Irish at the expense of Greek.

Dr Atkinson's method of criticising the forms of modern Irish accidence is entirely arbitrary. He approaches modern Irish from the side of old Irish. The old inflexions, to his philological mind, are things of beauty. The modern departures from them are therefore barbarous. Judged in this way English and French are far more barbarous than Irish. In fact, Irish preserves an enormous number of forms just as they were used one thousand years ago. To condemn the language because it has not preserved all the old forms is a most extraordinary course.

Dr. Atkinson is simply in error when he says that a child cannot get definite teaching in the Irish declensions. The modern Irish declensions have been dealt with by me in Parts IV. and V. of the series of *Simple Lessons in Irish* commenced by Rev. E. O'Growney and continued by me. It can easily be judged whether these instructions lack definiteness.

Dr. Atkinson says that "the conjugation of the verb is yet worse." On the contrary, the verb forms are clearly and well defined and present no difficulty whatever. On the whole question of forms, Dr. Atkinson seems to mix up the forms in use with the obsolete forms of old or middle Irish, on which he is an authority. If evidence of this kind were presented about English or French it would incur nothing but ridicule.

It is quite true that O'Donovan's Grammar is not suited for Intermediate students of modern Irish, for two reasons—it does not deal with any definite period of the language, but with a range of five or six centuries; and secondly, it is out of date, being compiled before the modern scientific study of Irish began. Naturally, any grammar based on O'Donovan's has the same disadvantages. The Rev. Dr. Hickey is now completing a grammar, in which I have collaborated with him, which I hope will leave little to be desired in point of clearness and definiteness. But we will not undertake to restore the obsolete forms of old and middle Irish to satisfy philologists.

The metaphysical and logical distinctions of certain Irish verbs have supplied Dr. Atkinson with another bugbear. Dr. Atkinson cannot speak Irish, but many persons who know nothing about logic or metaphysics have learned how to use these forms correctly. In his appendix to his only edition of a "modern" Irish text—(it is

really a rather archaic text, the work of an antiquary of the early part of the 17th century)—Dr. Atkinson shows that he does not at all grasp the use of these forms, and incidently he makes gross blunders in regard to the use of the modern Irish pronouns, a very simple matter. In a critical "emendation" of the same text he makes an elementary blunder in the use of the Irish verb "to be." He makes just the same mistake in another "emendation" in his treatise on "Irish Metric." These errors are evident to anyone who can speak Irish.

Dr. Atkinson's views as to the ethical tendency of the study of Irish are so grotesque and exaggerated that it is impossible to treat them seriously. Their chief value is that they are evidence of animus, however strongly disclaimed, and of the character of special pleading in which his whole statement is conceived. The same may be said with equal force of his views on the literary characteristics of Irish writings. His statements suggest that his authority is to be taken as that of an eminent philological anatomist whose sympathies are entirely engrossed with the study of languages on the dissecting table and under the microscope, who thinks more of the dead than of the living, and knows or cares nothing for the beauty of life in action.

One who follows Dr. Atkinson's evidence will often have to complain of vague expressions which appear meant to censure, but are capable of a different explanation. It often requires the different explanation to make one believe that the evidence in places does not aim at taking an advantage of a supposed want of information on the part of those to whom it is addressed. How are we to grapple with such elusive phrases as "We cannot bring the North and South together on terms of equality;" "These Irish books stand in a very different catagory to those Welsh tales," and so on?

"And what of modern literature? I find their books written in an *omnium gatherum* of forms—not Munster, not Connaught . . ." Here we have a grievance against writers for not writing dialect. Does not this largely contradict other portions of the evidence. If it were proved that neither Munster nor Connaught accepted the "*omnium gatherum*" it would be something. The absence of such proof shows the weakness of the case made against community of usage.

Again the quotation from the letter written two hundred years ago about the Franciscan provincialat appears to prove just the contrary of what is intended. I have often heard Southerns ridiculed for their pronunciation in the North, and *vice versa*, when they were speaking English. I have heard Irish-speaking people, who are very keen on linguistic matters, ridicule the manner of speaking of people in the other end of their own parish. But the fact cited by Dr. Atkinson stands along with the fact that two

hundred years ago Irish was one of the most cultivated of languages, with an immense literature, which was held on all hands to be common to the whole nation. It is true that the difficulties of the times caused this literature to be circulated not in print but in MS. But at that time there was no argument as to the suitability of Irish as a subject of study for Irishmen in any grade of education. Spelling varied. Pronunciation varied, as Dr. Atkinson's quotation shows. Grammar was in a state of "go as you please." But Irish was none the less studied as a literary language and very highly valued.

"The poetry that would be poetry to a Munster man is not felt by the Connaught man, and *vice versa*." This is also a mis-statement. It is based on the fact that there is an artificial school of Munster poetry. This poetry is not popular poetry at all, and is not "felt" in any place. There is no more remarkable fact than the common popularity of really popular Irish poetry, notwithstanding the differences of dialect. For example the poems called "Ossianic," which are beautiful in expression, highly imaginative, and inspired by very high ideals, are popular from one end of Ireland to the other. They are an instrument of popular culture, too, which it will be found hard to equal among the same class of people in any other language. Indeed, I hold that the whole mass of the oral folk literature of Irish has been a means of preserving the high moral and intellectual character of the people during several centuries, and is reflected in their quickness of intellect, their courtesy, their taste, their love of music and poetry, their appreciation of literary beauty—in all which they strikingly excel those peasantry who have been brought up speaking English only.

Dr. Atkinson entirely ignores the great revival of interest in the Irish language among all classes, but most of all among educated people in Ireland. So far as Dr. Atkinson's pleas have any force, their force must have been apparent to the very large numbers of educated people—people who have had the advantage of intermediate and higher education. These people, nevertheless, have found attractions in the study of Irish that have over-ruled the views on which Dr. Atkinson bases his stand against Irish. Such a widespread tendency—it is a matter of public notoriety—is good evidence, and in the face of it, any discouragement of the study of Irish or diminution of the opportunities to study it, would seem almost an act of violence.

It is the almost universal testimony of students of Irish that its study is full of the keenest intellectual pleasure. There could be no better test of its educational value—its value in developing the mental faculties.

Another circumstance is lost sight of in Dr. Atkinson's evidence. Irish is very frequently selected by students of their own motion. As Dr. Hyde has said, it is the one subject on the curriculum that is

studied *con amore*. That is a mental attitude which is often very difficult to evoke in young students. We should be loth to oppose or prevent it where we are certain to find it. Monsignor Molloy has objected to certain sordid tendencies ascribed to certain phases of study. Irish, so far as it is studied, is an undoubted antidote to any such tendencies.

In reply to a question, Dr. Atkinson states that there is no such thing as a contemporary literary Irish. I have already traversed that statement. There is a greater freedom of selection in Irish than in languages which have become stereotyped—and by that means to some extent sterilized—by lexicographers and grammarians, who have often legislated in the most arbitrary and pedantic ways. But within this large inclusiveness, there is beyond doubt a sufficiently defined standard to give real unity to a literature. It is quite incorrect to say that "it is all arbitrary action."

In a further answer on the subject of *patois*, Dr. Atkinson says: "And in the *Gaelic Journal* are they not mixed together in absolute higgledy piggledy, so as to make a result that not Grimm himself could get at?" The interogative form of this statement suggests one thing to me—that Dr. Atkinson does not read the *Gaelic Journal*.

With regard to Dr. Hyde's Irish, Dr. Atkinson says, "It is not good enough for a *patois*. I should call it an *imbroglio*, *mélange*, an *omnium gatherum*." This to my mind is merely a way of avoiding the issue: Can modern Irish be written without *patois*? If it is meant that Dr. Hyde's Irish is made up from several *patois* the statement is wholly inaccurate. I have read all Dr. Hyde's published Irish, and can testify that it conforms to a definite grammatical standard.

I entirely differ from the view of Dr. Atkinson that the proper way to approach the study of Irish is to begin with old Irish. Modern Irish is much simpler and forms an excellent stepping-stone to old Irish.

With regard to the educational value of Irish, I would point out that in the South and West of Ireland, especially in the South, a custom has sprung up of holding local literary competitions in Irish. The people take the keenest interest in these competitions, because of the literary traditions and facility of the language. It would be quite impossible to hold such meetings anywhere in the English speaking world for the cultivation of English. Of course it is not necessary, but my point is that English requires a long educational course to give it a grasp on the higher faculties. Another evidence of the intrinsic worth of Irish is the enormous vocabulary used even by the most illiterate. In Aran, Dr. Holger Pedersen, of Copenhagen, found over 3,000 words in use. In Cork and Kerry the vocabulary is believed to be much more extensive. It is to be borne in mind that illiterate speakers of English can only use a few hundred words. This shows that the use of Irish makes one partake in a highly intellectual continuity.

On the point of utility there is one ascertainable fact worthy of note. The use, study, and cultivation of Irish will always tend to create a feeling of healthy rational, and legitimate self-respect and self-reliance in people of Irish birth or origin, and that is exactly the frame of mind that conduces most to sound material prosperity. The Flemings, Welsh, Finns, Czechs, are all prosperous and progressive races, and have all, contrary to apparent utility, attached the highest importance to the cultivation of their respective languages. These languages were all mere popular dialects without literature a century ago, and are all now very highly cultivated.

In conclusion, whatever weight attaches to Dr. Atkinson's pleas —I do not contend that they are mere inventions—whatever force they have is daily diminishing, and is now far less than when Parliament inserted Irish on the Intermediate curriculum. Suitable books are gradually increasing in number and improving in quality. The number of those capable of writing Irish in conformity with such a standard as I have described is rapidly increasing. Within a few years it will be impossible for anyone using Dr. Atkinson's arguments to escape ridicule—perhaps even to go at large.

Summary.

Dr. Atkinson summarizes his objections under three heads :—

1. The vagueness and unsettled state of the language.

The foundation for this is, that owing to the want of encouragement of the proper study of Irish, a number of dialect forms have come into prominence. But these forms are mere excrescenses. The body proper of the language is by no means vague or unsettled in its accidence, idiom, or syntax, and its orthography, from the historical standpoint taken by Dr. Atkinson, is far more correct than that of English, French, etc.

The dialects are not written except where it is intended for specific purposes to reproduce the *ipsissima verba* of local usage. The literary form of Irish as actually written by Dr. Hyde and others is in no way a *patois* or a *mélange* of different *patois*, but conforms to a well-recognised standard.

If this literary form is open to any general criticism, it is that it too often shows a tendency to be influenced by English forms of expression, but this fault, which has escaped Dr. Atkinson, is not grave in its extent.

2. The small amount of literature that children can or should read.

Dr. Atkinson's ethical objections have created nothing but astonishment or amusement.

The object of learning a language is not to gain access to children's literature. By far the greater part of Irish literature yet published is quite suitable for general reading, and every year sees fresh publications of the most interesting description. That Irish literature is not better represented in print is mainly due to the fact that those who edit Irish texts are either compelled to follow their livelihood during the day or live in remote places, and thus cannot get access to the great collections of Irish MSS., and have to take whatever comes to hands. The multiplication of students of Irish is certain to remedy this drawback.

3. The best forms of Irish literature are old forms which cannot be brought under the notice of young students.

If Dr. Atkinson's objections fail in regard to the forms of literature which can be made accessible by the study of modern Irish, it matters nothing how much the old forms do or do not excel the modern forms.

In sum, Dr. Atkinson's evidence is largely made of opinions. Among eminent Celtic scholars there is an absolute consensus of opinion against him. He has only produced a few colourable facts, and he has highly coloured them in producing them. About Irish as now spoken and written his remarks are wholly misleading and misinformed.

JOHN MACNEILL.

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II.

Note by the Rev. Edmund Hogan, S.J., F.R.U.I., D.Litt., in reference to the foregoing Memorandum.

If Dr. Atkinson said in his evidence what Mr. MacNeill quotes him as saying, I disagree with Dr. Atkinson in everything; and I agree with Mr. MacNeill, except on one or two points. One is that Dr. Atkinson does not speak Irish, or know modern Irish literature —of this I have no personal knowledge. The other is that Mr. M'Neill "can converse with ease with native speakers of any district." This I do not know from personal knowledge; but as I know him I believe it. It is certain that a native of Mayo and a native of Clonakilty could converse together freely in Irish. I was at a mission given at Lislee, which is not far from Clonakilty: the Rev. P. Corcoran, S.J., of the diocese of Tuam, preached in Irish every day and was well understood—so I was told by Dr. O'Hea, the Bishop of Ross, by Dr. Molony, the Vicar-General, who both preached in Irish during that mission. When I asked one of the people what differ-

ence he found between the preacher's Irish and his own, he said: "Connaughtmen have a short trot, and we have a long stride."

As Dr. Douglas Hyde sent Mr. MacNeill's paper to me, asking me to give my opinion on it, I have done so.

EDMUND HOGAN, S.J., F.R.U.I., D.Litt.,
Professor of Irish for fourteen years,
Todd Professor, etc.

University College, Dublin,
April 12th, 1898.

III.

Memorandum by the Rev. P. S. Dinneen, S.J., M.A., Clongowes Wood College, Celtic Professor, with reference to the evidence of Dr. Atkinson.

I have taught Celtic in the higher grades of the Intermediate, and taken the degree with honours in Modern Literature (including Celtic) in the Royal University. I speak Irish as it is spoken in Munster, and write it with facility. From personal experience even within the last month, I know that the charge of *patois* brought by Dr. Atkinson against modern Irish is cruelly unjust. I conversed with natives of the county of Galway and of Mayo, and of the Aran Islands, even with some of the remotest fastnesses of Connemara, in the month of February, 1899, and there was not the slightest hitch or difficulty on either side, and this not with scholars conversant with dialectic peculiarities, but with illiterate peasants, who never read a line in any language. But this charge is more unjust still when made against the written language. I affirm without fear of contradiction that the written Irish language has been more uniform in spelling and in grammatical forms for the past three hundred years or so than written English has been for the same period. "Spelling in Hooker's time," says the distinguished editor of *Ecclessiastieal Polity*, "*and for long afterwards* was not only anomalous as ours also is, but anomalous with the apparent unconsciousness of the possibility of regularity." Hooker died in 1600. Milton's "Tractate on Education" (1644) is less in harmony with modern English than the "Three Shaftes of Death" (the author of which died about 1644), is with modern Irish. Dr. Atkinson says of the "Three Shafts":—"There is hardly a line in this book which an Irish-speaking native will not at once get a grip of." I do not fear to affirm that the same cannot be said of any English classical prose work written before the Restoration with respect to an English-speaking native.

Dr. Atkinson has edited, *but not yet translated* Keating's "Three Shafts of Death," and so gross and palpable are his errors that, I respectfully submit, he has not claim to be accepted as an authority on modern Irish. I do not speak of course of points that may be disputed between scholars and which are not clear, but of mistranslations of words in everyday use, of his utter failure to grasp idioms that go to the very root of the language, of the specious display of scholarship by which he strives to wriggle out of difficulties which nothing but his ignorance of the language has created. These statements I am prepared to substantiate in detail. I give here a solitary instance:—the word *iniuchadh* means "looking closely or attentively at," and is a word in everyday use. It occurs even in the Senior Grade course for the current year. I ask is it reasonable in this age of accurate scholarship to accept as an authority in modern Irish the Professor who, in a book of pretension to learning, translates this word "act of smelling (?)" and that, too, in a passage where the true meaning is plain even from the context. This is one instance of many gross blunders in this book which have afforded me much amusement, and which I should pass over in silence did not the author pose before a distinguished Commission as an authority on modern Irish. Still, this book is but plain prose: what would his blunders have been in dealing with modern Irish poetry? I can quite understand how its beauties escape him; but I am pained at his being accepted as an authority in what he does not understand.

As to the charge of indecency brought against Irish literature, I wish to say that Irish literature for the last three hundred years is not only not indecent, but it is notably pure and chaste, far more so than English or German or French literature. As regards coarse passages in ancient manuscripts, it should be borne in mind that language which is considered coarse in one generation is not so considered in another. There are works written by very classic authors in modern English whose *very titles* cannot now be pronounced in decent society. There are passages in the Authorised Version of the Bible which sound insufferably coarse to modern ears, and if we go back two centuries more to the age of Chaucer and Langland we find that language which in modern workmen's clubs would be considered obscene is addressed to mixed assemblies of ladies, gentlemen, and learned critics with scarce a suspicion of impropriety. Even the English authors most commonly read in schools, have written things that are grossly indecent. No one would put an unexpurgated Pope or Swift, or Prior or Gay, or Byron or Spenser, or Shakespeare into the hands of boys. There is nothing in modern Irish literature half so gross as many passages and whole pieces which could be quoted from such a general favourite as Pope, to say nothing of Prior or of the Restoration Dramatists.

As to the charge brought forward by the learned doctor, that Irish literature is "near the sod" (no doubt he is thinking of Irish

Folk Lore), perhaps it affords an explanation of his ignorance of it, he " did not look so low."

P. S. Dinneen, S.J., M.A., R.U.I.

Clongowes Wood College.

IV.

Memorandum by Rev. John C. MacErlean, S.J., Celtic Professor, Clongowes Wood College, with reference to Examinations in Irish.

I have taught for four years under the Intermediate system, and have prepared boys for examination in all the languages in the course, both classical and modern. I have no hesitation in saying that the statement that Celtic is examined easier or marked easier than any of the other languages is utterly untrustworthy. On the contrary, the difficulty of this subject (Celtic) and the great amount of study and time required for it are notorious, and have deterred many students from taking it up, however anxious they may be to learn it. Celtic is about the only subject in the course which I have found children naturally desirous of acquiring. Yet it is found that fewer candidates present themselves in it now than some years ago. Certainly, if the Irish papers were easier than those set in the other languages, the number of students studying it for the examination would not be diminishing from year to year. The sole explanation of this decrease of students is to be found in the difficulty of the papers, the severity of the marking, and the small total marks assigned to Irish. It is hard to imaigne anything more ridiculous and absurd than the statement that the Greek paper is fifty times harder than the Celtic paper. But it comes from one who has never taught nor examined in both these subjects under the Intermediate, and whose ignorance of the most elementary idioms and of some of the most simple ordinary words has become almost proverbial, and has been censured by the highest scholars, foreign and native.

Rev. John C. MacErlean, S.J.

Clongowes Wood College.

V.

Extract from a Letter of Mr. R. J. O'Mulrenin, M.A., making certain Suggestions for the consideration of the Commission.

To the Members of the Commission of Inquiry into Intermediate Education in Ireland.

Gentlemen—Having been informed by your Secretary in answer to my request to give oral evidence before you, " that the Commis-

sioners will be happy to receive and consider any written statement you desire to make on the subject matter of the Inquiry," I beg to offer the following few suggestions and remarks on one or two branches of the question of Intermediate Education in Ireland. Though I have been engaged in teaching other subjects besides languages, yet having directed special attention to linguistic study and teaching, I shall restrict my remarks to that branch of education. Moreover, I shall confine myself to my own experience and to facts that have come under my own personal observation.

Some of my qualifications for giving expert evidence on this subject I may state to be the following:—I spoke two languages in my childhood, Irish and English. Afterwards I taught languages in schools, colleges, and to private pupils in Ireland, England, and on the Continent, prepared pupils for public examinations successsfully, and wrote matter for publication in various languages. I passed a Civil Service Examination successfully, and won several first prizes in modern languages at the University of Dublin, where I took out my degree.

My suggestions will be included under two heads—1st, the teaching of modern languages in general; and 2nd, that of the Irish language in particular.

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2. And now I come to the subject of the study of the Irish language. I have conducted Irish classes, and am at present teaching the advanced class of the Gaelic League. I was Secretary of the Gaelic Union, and I edited for a time the *Gaelic Journal*, and contributed much matter to it, both in Irish and English. I am a member of the working committee of the Gaelic League. I consider, therefore, that I have some right to deliver an opinion on this subject. I consider that Irish, being the native language of Ireland, a beautiful and regular idiom in itself, with a by no means small modern literature, and from its present condition requiring some nursing, the marks assigned to it should be equal to those for Latin and Greek, and that it should not be put on the same footing as Italian, or even on that of French and German. Its system of orthography is, in my opinion, admirable, combining as it does regard for all the sounds of the language, together with regard for derivation and etymology. In this respect it is far superior to the phonetic system of Welsh. One advantage of its study arises from the great difference between its vocabulary, construction, and idiom, and that of English, making its acquirement the revelation of a new mental world to the student. I have found a knowledge of Irish in a pupil most useful in teaching him Russian, inasmuch as the slender and broad sounds of the consonants, and the thick and hard l's and n's exist in both languages. Irish is, therefore, for many reasons, an excellent subject to learn as a preparation for the general study of languages, and on this point I can speak from experience. It has been said that modern Irish is a confused assemblage of dialects, the speakers of which are mutually

unintelligible. Those who emit this opinion show a complete ignorance of the spoken language. I have at different times been in thirty-one of the thirty-two counties of Ireland. I have conversed with Irish-speaking peasants in Donegal, Connemara, Kerry, Clare, Cork, Limerick, Kilkenny, Waterford, and they all understood me and I understood them. I am myself a native of Roscommon. Of course there are dialects as there are in every language, but they differ much less than the dialects of English. The Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Lowland Scotch dialects are much farther from the tongue spoken in London than that of the glens of Antrim from that of Ivreagh. There is a well-established literary Irish language, of which the models can be found in the works of Donagh Mor O'Daly, Keating, Donlevy, in Bedell's Bible, in Dr. MacHale's Pentateuch, and in O'Donovan's Grammar. The Rev. Eu. O'Growney's elementary books explain both this and the few slight variations of the dialects. These variations are not so numerous as those in Ionic, as compared with Attic Greek, and offer no difficulty to the student. The existence of the dialects is due to the following causes—the educational disabilities formerly established by the penal laws, the absurd system adopted by the National Board of ignoring the native language in the Irish-speaking districts, the want of communication between the Irish-speaking districts, and the natural tendency of all languages whose speakers do not read or write them, except in small numbers, to branch out into dialects. But this tendency has had less effect on the modern Irish language than on any other that I know. The literary language is founded on the dialect of Connaught.

Some books have been published in the Munster dialect, but in books there is very little difference. The principal difference is in the pronunciation, the words in nearly all cases being spelled the same, and the Connaught pronunciation approaching nearest to the spelling. Therefore the objection by persons ignorant of the language as it is spoken, to its dialectical variation, is not of the least consequence. It appears to me an extraordinary fact that the qualification for judging of the educational value of the modern Irish language seems to be an ignorance of it. I should imagine that Irish scholars who are native speakers, would be the best judges in this matter. I consider the study of the modern Irish language most valuable to Irishmen, as a training for the mind, as an introduction to the study of other languages, as a means of communicating with our Irish-speaking population, as an introduction to the study of ancient Irish, and as an accomplishment which no Irishman who sets a value on the history, antiquities, local names, and nationality of his country, and who aims at educating himself, should be without. For these and other reasons, I again express my opinion that the marks for Irish should be increased, and I think it was a most ungraceful and anti-national act to diminish them. A rational Inter-

mediate course of Irish studies, not the present one, would raise up a new generation of Irish scholars to succeed O'Donovan, O'Curry, and O'Reilly, and to assist a Windisch, a Zimmer, and the other Continental Celtists. The Irish has a great advantage over the Welsh language in not having lost its declensions of nouns and adjectives and in the more primitive forms of its vocables. My remarks on the necessity for including in the examinations the requirements of speaking languages, apply particularly to Irish. For the rest I agree in every particular with the opinions expressed by the Rev. Michael Hickey in his letter to the daily press. Ireland is a poor country, but possesses plenty of talent, much of which is wasted by bad methods of education and afterwards by the lack of opportunity. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that defective methods should be corrected, and this applies particularly to the teaching of modern languages. I have endeavoured to point out wherein these methods are defective, speaking all the time from my own experience, not from hearsay, or in ignorance of the subject of which I have treated. In my opinion some of the time of the Commissioners has been wasted by persons not fulfilling these conditions as oral witnesses, and, seeing this, I was desirous of presenting myself for oral examination. But such examination was suddenly stopped without, as far as I can understand, any previous notice, leaving rash and absurd statements unanswered. Having very little spare time on my hands, I have hastily jotted down these observations on receiving the communication of your Secretary. Had I more leisure I might have given them a more systematic form, and perhaps added something useful, but I think I have written enough on the subject at present. Such as these observations are, I present them for what they are worth, with the hope of contributing my mite to the improvement of Irish Intermediate Education.

I remain, Gentlemen,
Your humble servant,
RICHARD JOS. O'MULRENIN, M.A.

VI.

Letter on the value of Celtic in Intermediate Education from J. St. Clair Boyd, M.D., President, Belfast Branch of the Gaelic League.

To the Intermediate Education (Ireland) Commissioners.

GENTLEMEN,—I thank you for your kind permission to place before you this communication on the value of "Celtic" in Intermediate Education.

I beg to claim that the Irish language is entitled to the same

number of marks at the Intermediate Examinations as either Greek or Latin, because of its antiquity and its literary and philological value (these are recognised by the leading Continental Universities which are giving the Celtic languages a prominent place in their curricula), and by the ever-increasing facilities for its study which are being introduced into English and American Universities and Irish Colleges and Schools.

The literary value of Irish may be judged from the fact that there are unpublished manuscript materials, variously estimated to fill from one thousand to four thousand volumes, awaiting the research of qualified Irish scholars. These manuscripts deal with a wide range of subjects, many of them belong to remote periods of antiquity, so that their publication cannot fail to be of interest to scholars generally.

Apart from its philological and literary value, Irish possesses an educational value superior to that of either French or German, and for this reason alone it should receive more recognition than either of those tongues. The construction of Irish and its modes of thought are so entirely dissimilar from those of English that the exercise of writing and thinking in both languages is a mental training of the highest character. As regards commercial value, one of the weakest points in the British educational system is foreign languages, and the experience of certain Welsh colleges has shown that the bilingual Welsh people make much better progress in learning foreign languages than English people who know only one language. Prominent Highland gentlemen have also testified to their personal experience of the value of their native Gaelic, which is practically the same language as ours, as an aid in acquiring French and also some of the languages of India, and it is safe to say that a speaking knowledge of Irish would enable its possessor to overcome with ease the phonetic difficulties of all the most useful of the continental languages.

Irish being our national language, and a living tongue, is much more easily acquired and less easily forgotten by an Irishman than any other language, either living or dead. Fluency in speaking French or German cannot, in my opinion, be attained without residence in France or Germany, and a fluent speaker of either having ceased to hear them spoken for a few years, loses his fluency if not his knowledge of them. I state this from practical experience, having spent five years of my school life in France and Germany for the purpose of acquiring these languages. Gaelic having other than literary claims on Irish people, may be used as an important stimulus towards greater intellectualism in the country. We know that peasants and artisans who would not dream of learning classics or science will take up the study of Gaelic, but if they learn Gaelic it will stimulate them to other intellectual pursuits.

At present Irish is not treated in any of our educational systems as other than a foreign language of *subordinate value.* It is surely a reproach to our systems and institutions, that when an Irishman was

appointed to the Gaelic Chair in the Catholic University at Washington, he was obliged to proceed to the Continent to complete his studies in that language under foreign literary men. I further claim that the present revival of interest in it merits proper recognition by educational and examining bodies.

If there were elected School Boards or popularly controlled universities in Ireland, there is no doubt that Irish would get that position in our systems of education which we claim for it. Nominated Boards ought to yield somewhat to popular wishes if their work is to bear its best fruit. We have in this city of Belfast, which has the reputation of being un-Irish, seven branches of the Gaelic League, all conducting Irish classes, in addition to two private classes, all taught by gentlemen, who receive no remuneration for their services. I notice in last week's *Irish Weekly*, reports of the West-End and North Belfast branches, stating that 115 pupils attended for instruction in Irish at the former, and 125 at the latter branch during the week.

In the Belfast branch (Central), three students of the Royal University attend, one of whom, Mr. J. J. Kelly, obtained first honours in "Celtic," Senior Grade, at one of the Intermediate examinations. Many National and other teachers attend these classes, and one of the private classes mentioned above is conducted specially for teachers.

I enclose a list of patrons of the Belfast Gaelic League, from which you will see that all denominations are interested in the movement here.

A weekly newspaper in Irish was started in Dublin last year, and the *Gaelic Journal*, which was published quarterly for some years, is now issued monthly; a monthly paper in Irish is also published at New York, U.S.A., and a Scottish Gaelic newspaper weekly in British Columbia, while the number of books in Irish published is constantly increasing. Members of Belfast branch expect to bring out three during the present year.

JOHN ST. CLAIR BOYD, M.D.,
President, Belfast Branch Gaelic League.

VII.

List enclosed in the foregoing letter.

BELFAST GAELIC LEAGUE.

FOR THE CULTIVATION AND PRESERVATION OF THE IRISH LANGUAGE.

President.—J. ST. CLAIR BOYD, M.D.

Patrons.

Most Rev. Dr. Henry, Lord Bishop of Down and Connor.
Right Rev. Dr. Welland, Lord Bishop of Down, Connor, and Dromore.
Most Rev. Dr. O'Donnell, Lord Bishop of Raphoe.
Boyle, Rev. H., President, St. Malachy's College.
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Crozier, Right Rev. J. B., D.D., Lord Bishop of Ossory.
Clarke, Henry, M.A., T.C.D.
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Ward, Francis D., J.P., M.R.I.A,
Walkington, Miss, LL.D.
Young, Miss Rose M., Galgorm Castle, Co. Antrim.
Young, Robert, J.P., C.E.

GAELIC LEAGUE ROOMS, 49, Queen-street, Belfast.

VIII.

Letter from P. W. Joyce, Esq., LL.D., with reference to Irish Literature.

Lyre-na-Grena,
Leinster-road, Rathmines,
25th Feb., 1899.

To J. D. DALY, Esq., *Secretary, Intermediate Education Commission.*

DEAR SIR,—Professors Mahaffy and Atkinson are utterly wrong in their estimate of the value of Irish literature. To take only one

branch: the Romantic Tales. I published a translation of twelve of them some time ago in a book, of which I give below the Title page and a short extract from the Preface. A glance through the book itself will convince anyone of the truth of my estimate of the literary style and tone of these Tales.

Will you kindly make this letter official.

Faithfully yours,

P. W. JOYCE.

Title Page and Extract referred to in the foregoing letter.

OLD CELTIC ROMANCES.

Translated from the Gaelic

By P. W. JOYCE, LL.D., T.C.D., M.R.I.A.,
Author of
"The Origin and History of Irish Names of Places,"
"A Short History of Ireland,"
etc., etc.

"I shall tell you a pretty tale."
—Coriolanus.

SECOND EDITION, REVISED AND ENLARGED.

London: LONGMANS. Dublin: GILL.

Extract from Preface.

Scraps and fragments of some of these tales have been given to the world in popular publications, by writers who, not being able to read the originals, took their information from printed books in the English language. But I am forced to say that many of these specimens have been presented in a very unfavourable and unjust light—distorted to make them look *funny*, and their characters debased to the mere modern conventional stage Irishman. There is none of this silly and odious vulgarity in the originals of these fine old tales, which are high and dignified in tone and feeling—quite as much so as the old romantic tales of Greece and Rome.

IX.

Extract from a Paper by Maurice C. Hime, M.A., LL.D., sometime Head-Master of Foyle College, Londonderry.

But is it not a ridiculous thing making Irish one of the subjects?

Certainly not. To remove Irish from the programme would be, in my opinion, a serious blunder, alike from a sentimental, an educational, and a national standpoint. This is, assuredly, the only conclusion at which any one could arrive who has read with unprejudiced mind the letters on the subject that have recently appeared in the *Daily Express* from the pens of Dr. Hyde, Miss Eleanor Hull, Miss O'Brien, and Mr. Alfred Nutt, not to speak of some others who, adopting the same views as they, have written to the same effect. I am assuming that the Irish courses prescribed in the several Grades be sufficiently long and difficult, the examiners sufficiently strict in their marking, the total number of marks obtainable not too large, and that the Irish be taught with the same amount of skill, care, and attention as Greek or Latin, or French or German. For, obviously, if it were easier for a candidate to obtain, with the same amount of reading, higher marks in Irish than in any other subject, the non-Irish candidates would be placed at a disadvantage, which would be unfair to them. Nor if the teaching of Irish were not thorough, would the educational advantages follow that one might hope for from the thorough teaching of any language. But, all reasonable grounds for complaint on the above score being removed, Irish should certainly, in my opinion, be continued as one of the subjects in the programme for all who desire to learn, whether for uncommercial reasons or not, the language and literature of their own country.

X.

Resolution with reference to the Teaching of Irish, passed at a Meeting of the Youghal Branch of the Gaelic League.

GAELIC LEAGUE, YOUGHAL,

January 11th, 1899.

SIR,—We have been directed to forward you herewith a copy of a resolution passed at our last Committee meeting, and which you will kindly lay before your Commissioners.

Yours truly,

M. H. BOWEN,
JOHN LOUGHLIN, } *Hon. Secs.*

To the SECRETARY, *Intermediate Education Ireland Commission, Dublin.*

RESOLVED.—"That we, the officers of the Youghal Branch of the Gaelic League, representing the views of the people of this district, strongly urge upon the Intermediate Education (Ireland) Commission the great importance of the study of Irish—the national language of the country—in any system of public education in Ireland. In view of the wide and growing interest now being taken by the Irish people in the spread and cultivation of their own language, and having regard to its literary, philological, and educational value, we earnestly request the Commissioners to make favourable provision for the teaching of Irish in any modification of the present system which they may recommend."

(Signed),

D. KELLER, P.P., V.G., Dean of Cloyne. } *President,*
JUSTIN C. CONDIN, *Treasurer.*
M. H. BOWEN, JOHN LOUGHLIN, } *Hon. Secs.*
D. DOYLE, *Vice-President.*

Note by Secretary:—Resolutions similar to the above were received from the following Branches of the Gaelic League:—Kilfarboy, Galway, Belfast, Belfast (North), Belfast (West End); Innishmain, Kilkenny, Millstreet, Eyeries, Kilmihil, Farney, Ballyvourney, Newport, Camlough, Cork, Ballyshannon, Cullin, Dungarvan.

Resolution of the Irish Committee of the Pan-Celtic Congress, Dublin, 1900.

3, WESTLAND-ROW, DUBLIN,
Dublin, 14*th February*, 1899.

SIR,—I am instructed to communicate to you the following resolution which was unanimously adopted at the meeting of the Irish Committee of the Pan-Celtic Congress of the 10th inst., Lord Castletown presiding:—

"That this Committee, in view of the increasing importance of the cultivation of the Irish Language, and of those studies to the efficiency of which a knowledge of Irish is essential, urges upon the Commissioners of Intermediate Education in Ireland the necessity for maintaining and improving the position of the Irish Language as a subject in their curriculum, both for its philological and historical

value, and on account of its being the original language of the Irish nation."

I am also instructed to request you to consider this resolution in your report.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
E. E. Fournier D'Albe,
Hon. Sec.

The Secretary, *Intermediate Education Ireland Commission.*

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The Irish Language and Irish Intermediate Education.

IX.

FATHER O'LEARY, DR. HENEBRY, AND FATHER O'REILLY ON DR. ATKINSON.

[Prefatory Note.]

When the preceding pamphlet of the present series went to press, it was understood that it would conclude the series. Since then, however, it has been decided to add two others. Most of the pamphlets hitherto published consist, as has been explained, of matter reprinted from the Blue-books of the Intermediate Commission of Inquiry. Not so the present pamphlet. Its contents are the following:—

(*a*) A Letter addressed by Father O'Leary to the *Freeman's Journal*.
(*b*) Three Articles contributed by Father O'Leary to An Claidheamh Soluis.
(*c*) A Letter addressed by Dr. Henebry to the *St. Louis Star* (U.S.A.).
(*d*) A Letter addressed by Father John O'Reilly to the *Freeman's Journal*.

Without the re-publication of the above documents the series could hardly be said to be complete.

I.

DR. ATKINSON AND THE IRISH LANGUAGE.

[From the *Freeman's Journal* of February 27, 1899.]

DEAR MR. EDITOR,—I have just read in the columns of the *Freeman's Journal* the evidence of Dr. Atkinson regarding the Irish Language.

Dr. Atkinson's name is one for which I have entertained the very highest respect since I first began to read his works in the field of Irish literature. The feeling has been a good deal more than respect; it has been a feeling of sincere gratitude to Dr. Atkinson on account of the great labour and length of time which he has so generously and so persistently devoted to the interests of the language in which I was reared.

There is, however, one fact connected with those labours of his, and I have been fully aware of it since the first time I read any of his works, but I have not spoken of it—at least publicly. It is the fact that Dr. Atkinson, really and truly, does not know Irish.

I am forced to mention this fact now in order to prevent his evidence from doing the enormous mischief which the influence of his name must cause it to do, unless that influence is counteracted before the public by letting the public see plainly that Dr. Atkinson does not know Irish.

I take it for granted that a person who does not know the use of the English verb "to be" may be at once set down as not knowing English. I take it for granted that the evidence of such a person regarding any phase of usefulness in the English language would be looked upon *a priori* as worthless. The English verb "to be," and its various uses, constitute, in the English language, an element so fundamental, so all-pervading, that it goes, I think, without saying that a person who is ignorant of the nature and uses of that verb is *ipso facto* ignorant of the English language.

In the Irish language there are two words for the one English verb "to be, and it is a well-known fact that those two words are essentially different in meaning and in every department of their application. One of them can never by any possibility be used instead of the other without either destroying the sense of the sentence or essentially altering it. Just as the English verb "to be" constitutes an all-pervading element in the English language, the distinction between the two Irish verbs "to be" constitutes an all-pervading element in the Irish language. There is, however, this difference between the two cases: a

partial ignorance of the English verb "to be" may cause only a partial ignorance of the English language. Ignorance of the difference between the two Irish verbs "to be" means utter ignorance of Irish. It must necessarily cause a person to be constantly saying the opposite of what he means, or something entirely different from what he means.

In order not to occupy too much of your space, I will just explain one little point.

If I say Is adhmad clár, my meaning is that "a board is wood." Here the bit of information given is contained in the word "wood." The predicate of a sentence is the word, or words, conveying the information which the speaker intends to convey. In an Irish sentence that information always comes immediately after "is." When tá is used the subject comes before the predicate; *e.g.*, tá sneachta fuar—"Snow is cold." When is is used the predicate comes before the subject; *e.g.*, "Is uisce fuar sneachta." Now, that is a rule to which there is no exception whatever. There is no exception to that rule in any sentence of Irish that has ever been spoken or written. The most ancient specimens of the language observe that rule. That rule is observed to-day by every person who speaks Irish as his native language. If a person wishes to give information about a certain thing, the moment he says is the information must immediately follow, and the thing about which he gives the information, *i.e.*, the subject, must come after the information.

But why could not a person say "Is sneachta uisce fuar" as well as "Is uisce fuar sneachta"?

Of course, he can say one or the other; but they mean entirely different things. "Is uisce fuar sneachta"—"Snow is a cold thing." "Is sneachta uisce fuar"—"Any cold thing is snow." The first is one thing, and it is true; the second is a different thing, and it is not true.

The essential order of the Irish sentence is—1 (is); 2 (predicate); 3 (subject). That order is so unalterable that the moment the subject is put into the predicate's place it becomes, by the very fact, the predicate.

Such an arrangement as, 1 (is), 2 (subject), 3 (predicate), is an absolutely impossible arrangement. It is not merely a wrong arrangement; it is not merely an absurd arrangement; it is an impossible arrangement.

The moment the subject is put in the second place in the sentence, and the predicate in the third place, they at once change their nature. That which was subject is now predicate, and the sentence is an essentially different sentence.

Now, I will ask any of your readers to take up Dr. Atkinson's edition of Keating's *Three Shafts of Death*, and to open it at page 5 of the Appendix. He will see there what seems to be a

carefully arranged table of examples. In that table there are twenty-seven examples. In every one of those twenty-seven examples Dr. Atkinson has laid down as the law of the language this very arrangement, which is impossible. He has placed the subject next after ıṛ, where no subject can possibly stand, and he has placed the predicate last, where no predicate can possibly stand.

It is quite easy to test the matter. The examples are all taken from the text. The very first example is taken from page 2, line 15, of the text. Let us look back and see what Keating himself has to say about the matter.

Here we see that Keating wishes to give to his readers a certain piece of information. Now, about what does he wish to give this information? About a certain rider. What is the piece of information which he wishes to give concerning that rider? That he is death. The thing Keating says is: "I believe that that rider is death." Hence, in Keating's mind, "an marcaċ úd" is the subject and "an báṛ" the predicate, the very opposite of what Dr. Atkinson says! Every one of the twenty-seven examples can be tested in the same way, and with exactly the same result.

Those twenty-seven examples are selected from the entire range of the text. I will ask any sane man whether a person can be relied on to translate a sentence correctly who calls the subject of it the predicate, and the predicate the subject? The inevitable inference is that Dr. Atkinson cannot be relied on to translate correctly a single sentence of this text of Keating which he has edited. This may appear an astounding inference to persons who possess no evidence regarding the matter but Dr. Atkinson's great name as a Celtic scholar. But I can assure your readers that to the leading members of the Gaelic League the inference is not by any means astounding.

Now, if a person cannot tell the subject from the predicate in a simple Irish sentence taken from Keating, how is it possible for him to tell the subject from the predicate in a sentence taken from Irish a few centuries older? By what sort of name are we to designate a man's philological knowledge of a sentence in which he cannot tell the subject from the predicate?

Dr. O'Donovan, in his Irish Grammar, makes a certain statement. He says, regarding the two Irish verbs "to be," that, "although a well-trained scholar must use the strictest principles of logic in order to avoid making mistakes in the use of those two Irish verbs, it is a curious fact that the most illiterate Irish peasant never experiences the slightest trouble in avoiding similar mistakes." This shows very plainly that the every-day use of his native language is able to give to the mind of the illiterate Irish peasant a more perfect mental training, in this one matter at least, than his skilfully conducted collegiate

course is able to give the scholar. This is the language which Dr. Atkinson, in his evidence, calls "a dismal swamp." This is the language which he tells the Irish people is not "a fitting language for children."

Dr. Atkinson belongs to a class of students of Irish who imagine they know all about it, but who, as a matter of fact, are utterly ignorant of its inner nature and of its greatest beauties. Up to the present they have had a high old time of it constructing fancy Irish, acting the "Celtic scholar;" driving furiously through all the mazes of "Sanscrit" and "comparative philology" some innocent Irish phrase which an illiterate Irish peasant could explain to them in two words, if they would only have the common sense to ask him; putting the most absurd interpretations upon our language before our very eyes, and telling us coolly that we know nothing about it; doing all this without the slightest dread of criticism from any quarter. That high old time is gone, gentlemen. The Gaelic League is abroad. It is about to bring a strong light to bear on all your hazy lucubrations. Before you are allowed to descant in future upon the philological merits of an Irish sentence you will have to parse it correctly first. What on earth put it into your sapient heads "that it is easier to acquire a knowledge of old Irish than of living Irish!" You will very soon find out what a mistake you have made. You will soon find out that what you imagine to be a knowledge of old Irish is a mere figment of your imagination.

There is only one effective instrument by means of which the older forms of the Irish language can be interpreted. That instrument is the living Irish language. To talk of mastering "the beautiful forms of ancient Irish" without the help of the beautiful forms of living Irish is a species of madness of which only those who know the living Irish, and have used it for this purpose, can have even a remote conception.

Dr. Atkinson, in his evidence, has expressed very strong, very "deliberate," very sweeping opinions. I have to tell your readers that those opinions are exactly as valueless as all the other strong, "deliberate," and sweeping opinions which have, for many a day, been thrust upon us, in regard to our own business, by people who have never, never understood it. I will ask your readers, therefore, to pay no attention whatever to the opinions of Dr. Atkinson regarding Irish.

Yours very sincerely,

PETER O'LEARY, P.P.

II.

THE "DISMAL SWAMP."*

[From An Claidheamh Soluis].

I.

See Keating's *Three Shafts of Death*, edited by Robert Atkinson, M.A., LL.D. Appendix, page 1, line 9. "Hence whenever a notion other than the verb is to be brought into prominence, the important word is brought up to the beginning of the sentence under cover of a proclitic unipersonal verb. . . . but in Irish the verb used is a special verb confined to this purpose."

Now, let the reader just look straight at that sentence and see what he can make of it. First, there is question of some notion "*other* than the verb." This notion is "brought into prominence" by means of a verb. In Irish the verb used is a special verb confined to this purpose. (Let us pass by for a moment the hints at a profound knowledge of "old Ir.") As far as there is any meaning in the sentence, it says that the Irish verb is has the function of bringing the emphatic word to the beginning of the sentence, and that its use is confined to this purpose. Both these statements are false. No matter how emphatic or how prominent an idea may be, unless that idea is the predicate of the sentence it cannot stand near is at the beginning of the sentence. No matter how *unemphatic* an idea may be, as long as it *is* the predicate of the sentence it *must* remain near is at the beginning of the sentence. For example :—

Is ainmhidhe bó. A cow is an animal.

Is ainmhidhe capall. A horse is an animal.

Is ainmhidhe duine. A human being is an animal.

In these sentences the words bó, capall, duine, are the emphatic words.

Now, let us suppose that a student has to translate the three English sentences into Irish. He takes up Dr. Atkinson's work and he reads the words quoted above. He at once makes up his mind that bó and capall and duine must be "brought to the beginning of the sentence under cover of the proclitic unipersonal verb is," and so he writes his Irish as follows :—

* In his evidence before the Intermediate Commission Dr. Atkinson said that as we came down later from the "ancient Irish" "the perfection of form was gradually lost in the dismal swamp of no forms."

"Is bó ainmhidhe, agus is capall ainmhidhe, agus is duine ainmhidhe."

He happens to read his Irish for an Irish audience in any part of Ireland from Fair Head to Mizen Head. The meaning conveyed to them, as far as any meaning at all is conveyed to them, is :—

"An animal is a cow, and an animal is a horse, and an animal is a human being."

He is rather surprised when he finds that the people give a certain peculiar look at him—that peculiar look which they are accustomed to give at a person when they think he is not "all there." He cannot understand it. He looks again at Dr. Atkinson's words. He feels convinced that he has not misunderstood them. Then he writes to me. I write back to him, correcting the sentences and giving him the RULE—a rule which is a fundamental principle of Irish, and which has no exception whatever, viz. :—

"The predicate must come next after is."

He refers me to Dr. Atkinson. My answer is : "Dr. Atkinson has led you into a dismal swamp."

"In English a similar expedient is adopted." Similar to what? To this bringing of the important word to the beginning of the sentence? But there is no such thing. Unless the important word happens to be the predicate of the sentence, there is no possibility of bringing it up to the beginning of the sentence, near is."

But listen. There is an element of truth in what the Doctor says here ; but it is manifest that he had no conception of the nature of that truth.

The function of is in the Irish language is twofold. It can link a substantive to a substantive, as predicate and subject, or it can link a mode (of something) to a mode, as predicate and subject. For example :—

"Is fear é." "It is a man."

Here é is the subject, fear is the predicate, and is is the copula, or *link*.

Now, let us suppose there was question not of what the object was, but of the particular state it was in ; someone wishing to give information as to the state would say :—

"Is ag siubhal atá sé." "It is walking he is."

Here "atá (sé)" is the matter about which information is given, "ag siubhal" is the information given about it, and is is

the link as before. Here we see with what splendid clearness and distinctness the Irish defines those three members of the sentence, no matter whether they consist of substantives linked by ıṛ, or of the modes of some substantive linked by ıṛ.

In both instances the idea which is the predicate *must* stand next to ıṛ, without the smallest regard for emphasis. For example :—

"ıṛ aʒ ṛıuḃal aṫá Ṫaḋʒ, aʒuṛ ıṛ aʒ ṛıuḃal aṫá Aṛṫ, aʒuṛ ıṛ aʒ ṛıuḃal aṫá Ḃṛıan." "It is walking Thade is, and it is walking Arthur is, and it is walking Brian is."

Manifestly the emphatic ideas here are "aṫá (Ṫaḋʒ)," "aṫá (Aṛṫ)," and "aṫá (Ḃṛıan)." The idea "aʒ ṛıuḃal" is common to the three sentences and absolutely unemphatic. Still it must remain near ıṛ, because it is the predicate in each of the three sentences. Let any person just try to follow Dr. Atkinson's guidance in these examples, which are exact parallels of his "similar English expedient," and he will find how very dismal and how very deep the swamp is.

Now, here is a thing which has puzzled me. Dr. Atkinson has shown that he has an utterly wrong idea of the functions of the Irish word ıṛ. He does not know its function as connecting two *substantive* ideas in the relation of the predicate and subject. He gives no trace of his having ever heard of its function as connecting two *modal* ideas in the relation of predicate and subject. Then where did he find his "English expedient"? It is certainly an *expedient*, but not in the sense in which Dr. Atkinson uses the word. It is an attempt at translating into English an Irish sentence in which ıṛ discharges the *second* of its functions—*i.e.*, the function of which Dr. Atkinson seems to have never heard :—

"ıṛ aṛı a ṁaḷaıṛt ᵭo níḋ aṫá ṛé aʒ caınt." "It is of a different subject that he is speaking." "Aṫá (ṛé) aʒ caınt" is the phrase which gives the modal idea about which information is given—*i.e.*, the *subject*. "Aṛı a ṁaḷaıṛt ᵭo níḋ" is the phrase which contains the information, and it is information as to mode. "ıṛ" is the link. "Aṛı a ṁaḷaıṛt ᵭo níḋ" is the predicate. "Aṫá (ṛé) aʒ caınt" is the subject.

Where did Dr. Atkinson get this English sentence? I never was able to answer this question to my satisfaction until I read Dr. O'Hickey's letter upon the Atkinson evidence before the Commission.

It appears there was some person who did know Irish coaching the Doctor while he was editing the *Three Shafts of Death*. It also appears that the Doctor did not accept the

coach's guidance, except when he was in the humour. There were, it appears, things turning up from time to time which the Doctor could not possibly understand. Such things, of course, *must have been wrong*. So the Doctor defied the coach, and boldly rejected the mysterious matters. Alas, poor coach! And alas, poor Doctor! As the result of your united exertions we have got a veritable "dismal swamp."

Looking over the vocabulary of this book, my eye lights on the word "néata;" I see given as English for it "indecent," with a note of interrogation. Now, this is simply outrageous. I have been listening to the word "néata" all my life. It is neither more nor less than the English word "neat," "nice." "A nice man," "fear néata." "A nice shoe," "bróg néata."

I look back to Keating's text, and I find that "Alexander is surprised and asks Diogenes why he has been examining those skulls, go néata, so *closely—i.e.*, with such *nicety*." Well may Dr. O'Hickey cry:—

> "Are things what they seem
> Or is visions about!"

Learners of Irish, beware of Dr. Atkinson's book, especially of the Appendix. The Appendix is one of the most extraordinary productions I have ever met with. I have never seen an amount of error so large, so varied, so far-reaching in its effects, crammed into so small a space, and at the same time so jumbled and intermixed that a person does not know where to come at it in order to unravel it, while the parenthetical hints about the author's profound knowledge of "old Ir." are enough to frighten a student from daring to question the author's knowledge of modern Irish. When I read through, consecutively, any portion of the matter of this Appendix, and ask myself what the author actually means, I am vividly reminded of the state of mind in which the American humorist found himself when he was making frantic efforts to follow the sense of the language in which certain mysterious mining operations were being described to him. He failed utterly to follow the sense because *there was no sense*. The unfortunate listener thought it was all the *cocktail*.

2.

[See Appendix to *Three Shafts of Death*, p. iii, note.]

Here we have the sentence, is mé ar aspal Gentse, set down as "old Ir.," and translated, "It is I that am an apostle of Gentiles." This translation is wrong. It should be—"It is I who am *the* apostle of *the* Gentiles." The error *seems* a small one, but it is not a small one. It involves a most important principle. The principle is this: In Irish the definite article cannot be used before a substantive which is *otherwise defined in*

the sentence. But, of course, when such a sentence is translated into English such a substantive *must* be defined in the English by means of the definite article, because, as a rule, there is no other means of defining it in English. Above all, such a substantive must *not* have the *indefinite* article before it in the English. "Is mé is fear tig annso," is *not* "It is I who am *a* man of *a* house here," but "It is I who am *the* man of *the* house here. In any house there can be only one "man of the house. "Mé" also means a strictly definite person. A definite idea is predicated of a definite idea. In the Irish the *sense* together with the *construction* produce the same effect which the definite article produces in English. Hence, no article can be used in Irish, and the definite article must be used in English. The construction is set down in the note as "Old Ir." It is just as young and as fresh to-day as it was when that sentence was first written. Here are some examples of its use :—

"Fear an tige"—"*The* man of the house."
"Lár an bóthair"—"*The* middle of the road."
"Tosach na bliadhna"—"*The* beginning of the year."
"Brígh mo chainte"—"*The* sense of my speech."
"Fead bliadhna"—"*The* space of a year."
"Neart capaill"—"*The* strength of a horse."
"Fothram cóiste"—"*The* sound of coaches."
"Faobhar sgine"—"*The* edge of *a* knife."
"Faobhar na sgine"—"*The* edge of *the* knife."
"Béal na tuaighe"—"*The* edge of *the* hatchet."

Here are a few examples in which the definite article may or may not be used in Irish, but *must* be used in English : —

Do b'é céad duine tháinig é, } He was *the* first person
Do b'é an chéad duine tháinig é, } that arrived.
Is é fear is fearr dhíbh é, } He is *the* best man of
Is é an fear is fearr dhíbh é, } them.

Both these forms are common, but *I* prefer the form which has *not* the article. Here, again, are some further constructions in which the definite article cannot be used in Irish but *must* be used in English :—

"Is é duine do bí ann 'ná Taidhg"—"*The* person who was there was Tim."
"Is é rud do bí 'n-a láimh aige 'ná slat"—"*The* thing he had in his hand was a rod."

This construction is also quite common both in old and living

Irish. In the old Irish the "ná" is written ".i." usually. In these constructions the word ir é fully defines duine and fer, hence the definite article cannot be used in the Irish. The words must be translated into English as *defined* words, hence the definite article must be used in English.

It *does* happen, even in English, that the context, or the construction, or the sense, can so define a substantive as to permit the omission of the definite article—*e.g.*, "At that time Henry II. was King of England." But see how completely the sense is destroyed if a person says—"At that time Henry II. was *a* King of England!"

There is exactly where the Doctor made his blunder. Now, if he had said, "It is I who am apostle of the Gentiles," it would not be so bad.

I know what led him astray. His guide told him there was no *indefinite* article in Irish, and, consequently, that when an Irish word was found without the definite article, it should, as a general rule, be taken as indefinite, and translated into English with the indefinite article before it. The guide could, no doubt, have given the Doctor the explanation which I have given here. But the Doctor could not understand, and, therefore, would not listen. So when he saw aspal Genide *without* an article, he could see no possibility of any English except "*an* apostle of Gentiles." This English, even as English, is nonsense. But that did not matter in the least. It never crossed the Doctor's mind that the fact that his English is nonsense is the surest indication that it is not the translation of the Irish. Oh, no. A nonsensical translation is good enough for Irish. Dr. Atkinson is not the only person who thinks so. There are several others of as high repute who seem to take to the notion quite complacently. It is almost time that they should be set right, even at the risk of disturbing their equanimity. I do not see what right any man has to give a nonsensical translation of an Irish sentence, any more than of a Latin sentence or of a Greek sentence.

Now, where is Dr. Atkinson's boasted knowledge of "old Ir."? He "really and truly" does not know the living Irish, and he knows, really and truly, just as little about "old Ir." He does not know the difference between the two verbs *to be* either in living Irish or in "old Ir." He does not know the subject from the predicate either in living Irish or in "old Ir." He does not know definite from indefinite either in "old Ir." or in living Irish. In the name of common sense, then, what exactly does he know? He knows really nothing about the Irish language, old or new. The glamour which shone around that mystic symbol of his, "old Ir.," has vanished.

"What do you mean, sir? How dare you speak so irreverently, so ungratefully! How could he have edited that splendid

book but that he is a master of the Irish Language, both old and modern?"

I mean what I say. I have no reverence for ignorance, no matter how many letters there may be after its name. I feel no gratitude towards a person who rescues me from drowning, and then turns round and tries to cut my throat! As regards the "editing of the splendid book," it is quite true that since the starting of the Gaelic League a person could not well attempt to edit an Irish book without some knowledge of the language. But *before* the advent of the Gaelic League, the less a man really knew about Irish, the more splendid the Irish book he could edit. In fact, the less he knew the less hampered he was, and the more nonsensical his notes and translations were, the more interesting they were to a certain class of his readers. Then, you know, there was no one to ask inconvenient questions. Now it is different. The Gaelic League has an ugly system of "wanting to know, you know."

This Appendix is a curious production. If you go on reading without "wanting to know, you know," the impression creeps in upon your mind that all is quite clear and plain; that an immense amount of information is being given in a small compass; that the writer must have thoroughly understood his work even to the most minute details. But when you look into your mind after a time to see how much you have got, you find you have *got absolutely nothing!* You are surprised and disheartened. You try again; you find that matters are only getting worse. Still, all the time the words you read seem as plain and as clear as daylight. At last you close the book in despair—"No," you say, "it is no use trying, I could never learn Irish."

I have reason to know that this Appendix has within the past ten years frightened away from the work of learning Irish more people than have been frightened away by any other cause. It presents to the first look of the learner all the appearance of the most fascinating *order*. System appears to be its chief characteristic. When you look closely you find that the order and the system are merely apparent. There is no system. The subject-matter is a heap of disjointed fragments. The most difficult of Chinese puzzles would be nothing to the puzzle of trying to put those fragments together *as a language*. They are divided into sections just as broken stones are divided into sections on a road. But each section is but a section of the confusion. Each section is as great a maze as all the sections together are.

Then we have the author going around from section to section, picking up a little fragment here and a little fragment there, and regaling us somewhat in the following fashion—"Now these two fragments might be said to belong to each other, but probably they do not, since either of them does not

bear any resemblance to those other *three* fragments, which although found very near each other are entirely different in their nature . . . " and so on, and so on, until one's reason threatens to give way,

Oh ! what a dismal swamp ! ! !

3

[See *Three Shafts of Death*, Appendix, page vii, line 1.]

"This," *i.e.*, tá . . . "is never used as a simple copula-verb." That is a fine sweeping statement. It is a statement to catch the eye of a student and to fix his attention. "Here, at least," the student says to himself, "I have something tangible —here I have a beautiful guiding principle. I shall now know at least that when I am dealing with a 'copula-verb' I am not to use tá nor any part of it."

As he proceeds with the work of learning he is constantly coming upon such equivalents as the following :—

Tá fé fuar = It is cold.

Tá fé te = It is hot.

Tá an fear óg = The man is young.

Tá fneacta geal = Snow is white.

Tá ór buide = Gold is yellow.

He proceeds to apply his principle. There is nothing to keep a student from error like the application of a principle. "Tá is never used as a simple copula-verb. Therefore I must apply to it the rule which is applied to all other verbs. I must look upon it as a *part of the predicate.* I must analyse those sentences just as I have been taught to analyse such English sentences as 'John walks.' Logicians have told me that 'John walks' is the same as 'John *is* walking.' That is to say, the predicate 'walks' *includes* the copula. The copula is *understood.*"

So the poor student proceeds to supply the *understood* copula thus :—Tá fé ir fuar, or tá ir fé fuar, or ir tá fé fuar. The moment he shows his work to a person who knows Irish he is told that he has driven every particle of sense out of the language ! He is told that there is no possibility of introducing ir into those sentences.

"What ! " he says, "do you mean to tell me that half the Irish language consists of sentences which can have *no copula at all*, either expressed or understood? I have been told that the Irish ir is the copula of logicians. If I wish to turn tá fé fuar into

a logical proposition, must I not get the copula in by some means?" You cannot get ıṛ in by any means without destroying the proposition. Not only that, but the true Irish of your English "logical proposition," *John is walking*, is not ıṛ Seaġán aġ ṛıubal, but Tá Seaġán aġ ṛıubal.

"Then the exact Irish equivalent of the English copula in 'John is walking' is tá? Then why on earth does Dr. Atkinson say that tá is never used as the simple copula-verb?"

I am sure I don't know. We must wait for him to explain. He fights in the manner of a badger—gives one savage bite, and if it fails he runs into his hole and stays there. I have been a long time waiting for the badger to come out of his hole, and he won't come. He is like one of Owen Glendower's "spirits of the vasty deep." They may be called, but they "won't come."

Come out, Dr. Atkinson, come out, and let us see you. Tell us what you mean by the term "simple copula-verb." Tell us what you mean by the term "predicate," and what you mean by the term "subject." Take, for example, the three sentences :—

George was king.
George was king.
George was *king*.

Will the Doctor tell us where the subject is, where the predicate is, and where the copula is, in each of those three little sentences? Too simple! They are not so simple as you think them. Here they are in Irish :—

Ba ṛí Seóıṛṛe.
B'é Seóıṛṛe an ṛí.
B'é an ṛí Seóıṛṛe.

Or thus :—

Bí Seóıṛṛe 'n-a ṛíġ.
Seóıṛṛe do bí 'n-a ṛíġ.
'N-a ṛíġ do bí Seóıṛṛe.

The Doctor is at liberty to answer the question either from the Irish or from the English. The sense is exactly the same in the English version and in the two Irish versions. The only difference is that the beautiful variety of expression does in Irish what must be done in English by means of modulation of the voice. In fact it does more. The English sentence, "George was king," may mean that it was *George*, not *John*, who was king; that George was *king*, not heir-apparent; that he had *become* king; that *he*, not *John*, had become king; that he had become *king*, not *prime-minister*; or, simply, that he was king. The English sentence, "George was king," cannot express

those six meanings without the help of voice or of context. Each of the six Irish sentences is an exact translation of the one English sentence, when it has that particular one of the six meanings.

Now, Doctor, I ask you again to point out the subject, the predicate, and the copula, in that simple English sentence :—

"George was king."

You will not! You remind me, Doctor, of a certain celebrated character who "would give no man a reason on compulsion —not if reasons were as plentiful as blackberries!" It was not exactly the "compulsion" that hindered Sir John from giving the reasons. No; it was the fact that he had not the reasons to give. Then why in the name of common sense did *you* go to lay down a general principle regarding a matter which you did not understand?

"Perhaps you would not be able to explain the matter yourself."

Come out of the hole, Doctor, and we shall see. I wish to tell you what I have not told you as yet, that I have, lying just outside the mouth of the hole, the *nicest* trap you ever put your foot in. I am really most anxious to see the efficacy of it tested. It is a *neat* instrument.

peadar ua laoghaire.

III.

THE REV. DR. HENEBRY ON TRINITY COLLEGE.

[From the *St. Louis Star.*]

Catholic University of America,
Washington, D.C, *April* 26, 1899.

Sir,—I noticed a small paragraph in a recent issue of the *Star* recording the active opposition of Trinity College to the spread of the Irish language in Ireland. It is as follows :—

"The Knights of St. Patrick and other local Irish sympathisers will learn with regret that the movement for the study of the Irish language in Ireland has met with opposition from a number of prominent Irish educators, among whom are Dr. Mahaffy and Dr. Atkinson, both of Dublin University. Dr. Atkinson is regarded as the greatest living authority on the Irish language, and might have been expected to favour the proposed measure. But he takes the surprising ground that the mass of extant Irish

literature, including the modern folklore, is too indecent for popular teaching."

That is a much too condensed presentation of the case, and one that must leave on the minds of many persons a feeling that there is something of the inexplicable about the item that would be all the better for a word or two of explanation

The gentlemen concerned in this condemnation, Drs. Mahaffy, Atkinson, and another, are professors in Trinity College, Dublin. Trinity College was established in the time of Queen Elizabeth for the purpose of converting and educating the "Irishry" to Protestantism and educating them as Englishmen. It must be admitted that in the whole period of its history Trinity shows no single lapse from the spirit of its charter. It has ever conducted itself as an alien institution, eager to promote the good of a foreign nation, opposed with a bitterness that was demoniac to the best interests of the folk whose soil it has more than encumbered these three hundred years.

As evidence of its activity may be cited the existence of the Orange Brotherhood in Ireland, a society which foments and accentuates religious differences in that country to a pitch of fiendish hatred only exceeded by the worst conditions of former times, and certainly without parallel in ours. Trinity may be looked upon as the motive-centre of a system having manifold sinuosities and ramifications whereof the sole object is the thwarting and nullifying of all striving of the native population for social or political betterment. It stands for and incarnates party ascendancy, disunion, race hatred, bigotry, and disloyalty to the country from whose vitals it has been drawing a fat sustenance since the day of its more or less wise and beneficent institution. Having had always a good deal of far other work on hands, it naturally cannot be classed as eminently successful from an educational standpoint. On the folk of the country it has never exerted the slightest influence for good. It is a foreign body, representing foreignism, and striving ever to render the Irish people foreigners to themselves and to their race traditions.

Some few years ago a number of young men, recognising the force of the plain truism that language is nationality, conceived the notion of rehabilitating the Irish language in order to save the Irish nation, already swamped by the incoming flood of Anglicisation. Amidst unheard of difficulties and disappointments they kept hammering away, and finally gained the ear of the people. They instituted an energetic propaganda, started a press in the native language, and despatched teachers to the country districts to spread a knowledge of the real significance and scope of the movement. So long as their efforts were unavailing Trinity could afford to let them pass, but, having attained success so far beyond their hopes that they acquired

the power and dignity of a national party, Trinity decreed that they should be snuffed out. Ireland had practically become England, all except the three seaboards on the north, south and west, and the College could point to something in justification of its three hundred years of existence.

Anybody attempting to undo that work of centuries might reckon on the hostility of Trinity.

But here was a set of young fellows, some of them even students of Trinity itself, doing exactly the very thing among the quotable possibilities which was calculated to undo it. The opportunity for action came, and Trinity struck sharp, sudden and envenomed The Commission to overhaul the programme of Intermediate Education in Ireland was sitting.

The place of the language of the Irish people on that programme was being considered. Now came along the professors of Trinity and testified that all Irish literature was indecent, religious, or silly. Further examination revealed the fact that two of the learned professors could not read a word of Irish, and their testimony was entirely based on the opinion of Dr. Atkinson and their eagerness to forward the interests of their college. Here, then, note that the Doctor used some skill in selecting his list of suppositious attributes descriptive of Irish literature. The Commission was made up of Catholics and Protestants. In the eyes of the latter "religious" could only mean one thing, "indecent" would tell with the ecclesiastics on the Board, and "silly" would do for all. But the most unexpected thing happened.

Some of the best Gaelic scholars of the world nowadays are to be found in England. The bare mention of names like Whitley Stokes, John Strachan, and Kuno Meyer, to say nothing of many others, will establish the fact for all in any way familiar with modern Keltic research and workers.

At once those saw through the miserable policy of the college, and straightaway expressed very blunt opinions upon it. Alfred Nutt, of London, the greatest living folklorist, in a scathing letter to the Dublin *Express* of March 20, 1899, says:—"But to damn it (Irish literature) on the score of indecency! Really it requires one of the great masters of the indecent—it requires an Aristophanes or a Swift to do full justice to this grotesque assertion. The Irish parent may make himself perfectly easy. His children stand far less chance of injury to their morals in studying Irish than in studying any other language."

The *Manchester Guardian* (Non-Conformist), the most influential provincial paper in England, if indeed Lancashire be not the real metropolis of that country, says: "Not for the first or the hundred and first time has that institution (Trinity College) exposed itself as a foreign unassimilated body, differing only from great institutions abroad in its intense desire to belittle all

things Irish. . . . Three hundred years have passed over Trinity College and it can boast that no one can lay to its charge that it ever gave the least encouragement to any one who wished to know how the people of this country (Ireland) lived and thought. A chair of Irish was established in Trinity for the express purpose of teaching modern Irish to Protestant missionaries bent on the evangelising of the unenlightened Papists."

As a matter of fact, Irish literature holds no indecent material. As the Irish people were and are pure, so is their literature pure in its persistent spirit.

This, however, does not exclude the occurrence of certain expressions which modern taste would classify as coarse, for instance, the like of certain passages from the Bible or Shakespeare. But the presence of those may be taken as proof of innocence and purity, just as a studious nicety in avoiding them may be regarded as a suspicious symptom. Poor Robert Louis Stevenson once said: "This Anglo-Saxon world is a pisen-bad world." Anyhow, it is a very different one from the world we find delineated by Irish literature.

Now, it is manifestly unfair to judge a simple state of society that had nothing to conceal by the public standards of morality that are in force now. All the conditions are diagonally opposed. For instance, at this present day several words apparently innocent in themselves are sacrificed to the idol of a brazen prudery the while we live in a din of tumult about "wide open" towns and the appalling prevalence of impurity. Thus by a substitution of standards and a consequent falsification of data the professor has made it appear that the very evidence of a robust morality are damning proofs of lechery. In that he has acted wisely for the gaining of his ends, because the mere bringing of such a charge against an individual, or a literature, or anything, never fails to injure in the present public temper of society regarding those things. He wanted to hang the dog, and merely took heed to give him a very bad name first, according to orderly precedent. Perhaps that is enough for that heading.

The charge that Irish literature is religious cannot be so triumphantly refuted. A great deal of it is wholly religious. But, on the other hand, the best part of it is frankly pagan. And surely that is an advantage, for everyone can regulate his selections to his humour. I pass over the charge of silliness. The leading universities of the world are intently engaged in the study and analysis of that literature, and of the language which is its vehicle; those people are not investigators of the domain of Church history. We can hardly say that their interests are exclusively pornographic; therefore we must conclude that the motive of being silly is the motive of fascination in the material —a plain absurdity.

You say: "Dr. Atkinson is the greatest living authority on

the Irish language." I can easily imagine that assertion causing a smile to ripple over the map of Europe. Now, I dislike belittling Dr. Atkinson's work, for it has often been a help to me in my own studies; but, as the assertion has unfortunately been made, it is perhaps as good to oppose to it the real state of the case. His latest book is the Irish *Liber Hymnorum*, edited for the Henry Bradshaw Society. Persons wishing to see a discussion of its merits should read what Dr. Whitley Stokes finds to say about it in the coming number of the *Revue Celtique* (Paris: Emile Bouilion, 67 Rue de Richelieu). This Dr. Stokes, and not Dr. Atkinson, is the greatest living authority on the Irish language. Thurneysen admits that he is the best read of Keltic scholars, and everybody in those studies knows him to be both the veteran and the pioneer of Keltic philology. In reviewing the Professor's treatment of the celebrated Amra Choluimbchille, *op. cit.*, p. 31, he says: "Professor Atkinson's edition is blamable in bisecting, and thus turning into nonsense" —nine words, of which he gives a list. As specimens of Professor Atkinson's work in translation, he cites eleven instances, from which I cull the following:—"May He not leave me in the track where it is shouted owing to its smoke." "Alive his name; alive his unstitched." (!) "For credulous chariots." At sight of such things my conscience begins to admonish me that I have been rash in attributing certain motives to the Professor; for in bringing his charge of silliness his action was, perhaps, at least *bona fide*. Therefore, while deploring the fact that his inability to understand the language should furnish him with material for an extra charge, we must hold him free from moral guilt on the point.

Dr. Atkinson has edited certain easy texts and done some valuable index work. Strangely enough his edition of Dr. Keatynge's *Three Shafts of Death* (by the way, he should have translated the title "Three Stings of Death"), has contributed largely to making the present language revival possible. The technical work on that book was done by poor John Fleming, an old-time neighbour of mine. He lived in a garret in Dublin, on a pittance of 10 shillings a week, contributed by Dr. Atkinson. In the preface to that book the name John Fleming does not occur. Perhaps the Doctor thought his 10 shillings a week entitled him to pick the brains of the old man without acknowledgment. There may be differences of opinion as to the literary probity of the transaction, but surely we could hardly doubt which side would be taken by one possessed of such a fine sense of the righteous as was exhibited by Dr. Atkinson before the Dublin Commission.

Those interested in the movement for the study of the Irish language in Ireland should know that since its inception nothing has contributed more to its advancement than this

attack delivered by Trinity. Opposition from that quarter has spurred the people into action; it has enabled them to grasp the importance of the movement as Trinity did, but with a different resolution. It has hinted to them that the preservation of their language means their existence as a race; it has filled some of them with wonder to know they possessed a literature of their own, and with curiosity to see and examine it for themselves. Where this activity may stop nobody knows.

One thing is certain, if the people by any chance get a taste of their own literature, if they learn to know the fair hosts of the books of Erin, the repertories of Keltic spirituality and Keltic truth, the thought-records of a folk that enjoyed prehistoric culture: if they feast their eyes once on the Keltic cosmos encompassing all things as with a mosaic empyrean, bejewelled and multifarious, they will never pass the enchanted gates to dwell in the cold and grey commonplace of a rationalistic civilization. They were torn from their language and literature at a period when foreign power enjoyed unlimited opportunities for working its will upon them, but the parting was hard, and was effected only by disruption and by methods as ruthlessly savage as any ever employed by a triumphant and bloodthirsty people upon a weaker race. For centuries they were bred in enforced ignorance of their history and their civilization, while they were made to batten on the intellectual provender of their conquerers. Any but a race of ingrained individuality and native toughness of fibre would have yielded to the assimilating forces of ages. But the Irish did not. The tradition of their civilization is still preserved in their language, their literature exists and out of both young Ireland has constructed unto itself its nationality. The movement has spread as a prairie fire, and has already achieved success. It is a force that will have to be seriously reckoned with in the Ireland of the future, and one also that cannot fail to reflect an influence on Irishmen in other lands.

I believe the professors of Trinity are sorry now that they said anything, because they have been caught by the whole world in panting eagerness to do a mean and a miserable thing, and must look and feel very much like fools, especially when it is known that some of their energy, properly directed, might, with hope of profit, be employed in wiping off that name of reproach, "The Silent Sister," a tag by which their institution has been distinguished among university men for many a day.

Yours sincerely,

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University of America.

IV.

DR. ATKINSON ON THE IRISH LANGUAGE.

[From the *Freeman's Journal.*]

SIR,—It is a matter of genuine surprise to me that nearly all the answers to Dr. Atkinson's attack on the Irish language centred on his observations about the indecency which the Professor professed to find, and to be so horrified at, in its literature. Of course, it was well and good to confute him on that point; and he has been so plainly and so finally confuted on it that anything more in that direction would be wholly superfluous.

But I cannot help wondering still that none of his critics but one took him up on the far more fundamental and far more effective ground of his ignorance—his real, true, unquestionable ignorance of Irish. I can think of no explanation for this, unless it be the terror of that awful name—the greatest living authority on Irish. Juliet was right enough in theory, but in practice there is a very great deal in a name.

Father O'Leary pointed out that there was one fact connected with Dr. Atkinson's labours in the field of Gaelic studies—the fact that Dr. Atkinson, really and truly, does not know Irish. I heartily endorse that statement, and, moreover, I must add that so glaring are the proofs of that ignorance of his—of the Irish language—that I am amazed he was not taken to task about it directly his *Three Shafts of Death* appeared. Father O'Growney wrote to me, in Sydney, at that time, and requested me to look over the above work, and to send him any remarks I might have to make on it. I read it over carefully; but before I had got to the end I had concluded that to point out all the errors in it would make up a new book larger than the *Shafts* itself. I have never altered, and can never alter, that opinion.

If you, therefore, kindly accord me a little space I will set down a half-dozen or so specimens of his blunders in that book—for, apparently, it is by that book he has got the name of the greatest living authority on Irish—but, be it remembered, they are only specimens out of hundreds just as bad, which may yet be given.

1. Page 92, line 7—Le cairt an chreidim agus le bulla an baistio, Professor Atkinson translates—"by the charter of faith, and the bowl, or cup, of baptism." Now, what sort of a thing is a bowl of baptism? Bowl, because it looks like bulla, I suppose. I wonder he did not translate cairt by quart, because it

looks like it; and then the whole would run—"by a quart of the faith and a bowl of the baptism." Bulla is the Latin *bulla* = seal; and the words mean, "by the charter of faith and the seal of baptism."

2. Page 127, line 11—Sgaoilte uadha féin, he translates "different from themselves." The phrase means, "sent from themselves," "sent by themselves"—*à seipsis missi*—unauthorised vagabonds. This mis-translation is the more inexcusable as the Professor had before him the word sgaoileadh = mission, in the compound, lámh-sgaoileadh = manumission, which occurs on page 142, line 5 from bottom.

3. Page 218, line 28—Here is an astonishing specimen of blunder. He says, liġe = "lying down," "bed"; reilg-liġe = "sick-bed." I go to reilg-liġe in the vocabulary. There is but one instance, one occurrence, of the word in the whole book; so that the context is the same, the very same page 218, the very same line 28. And what do I find? Why, that what meant "lying down" and "bed" and "sick-bed," on page 218, line 28, means only "consumption" on the same page, and in the same line, the same thing being the Professor's one and only context, from which to extract those very different meanings. Now, liġe does mean consumption, and is still a living word in the west, where its most frequent application is to a sort of blight which afflicts young geese in summer; and reilg means *wasting*, *withering*, and is joined here to liġe as a strengthening word. But liġe or reilg-liġe never yet meant "bed," or "sick-bed," or "lying-down." The Doctor made this blunder because he never mastered the pronunciation of the Irish "l." Its broad and its slender sounds were all one to him, and so liġe was luiġe, and luiġe was liġe. But luiġe means "lying down" and liġe "consumption." Therefore "consumption" and "lying down" are one and the same thing.

4. Page 254, line 6—Ciontuġadh, the Professor translates, "act of sinning against—transgressing." The word means "accusing," and the context makes this translation imperative. The poor prodigal had returned home, and was not now "sinning against" his father or "transgressing," but "accusing" himself to him.

"5. Page 276, line 6—Is leis an Tiġearna an talamh agus a luċt, the Doctor translates, "The earth is the Lord's, and the people, folk, crew, thereof"—because luċt does mean "people" sometimes. This translation is not a bit better than "a cow in the box," for "a cough in the chest." Luċt is a perfectly living word, meaning the full of a vessel, &c.; it is the word, in the west, for the cargo of a boat. The translation is—"The earth is the Lord's and the *fulness* thereof" (*i.e.* all it contains, all that is on it).

"6. Page 284, line 3 from bottom—cunnail = "discreet," according to the Professor. The word means "tidy," "tight," "well gathered together," and the context itself makes it plain that this is the only possible meaning in the passage.

"I look down a page of my notebook. Alas! When would they be all told? For brevity's sake the six must do, and I protest they are not the most glaring specimens either. They happened to be the six first I noted down, and so I have taken them. I respectfully submit they are enough to show how absurd it is to regard Professor Atkinson even as a middling editor, to say nothing of his greatest living authorityship.

"One remark more. It ought not to need any exposure of his ignorance to see that he could not be an authority. Authority never speaks as Dr. Atkinson spoke before the Intermediate Commission. Anything so fatuously brutal as his attack on Gaelic literature I have never heard of. He was asked to show that book which he keeps chained like a wild beast in his room. He would not. He was asked to give its name, and he would not. He was exposed as wholly ignorant of the nature—the innerness—of the Irish language, and he had nothing to say, and yet he is the greatest living authority on it?

I have seen it stated by a certain "V." that "Dr. Atkinson is a scholar whose acquaintance with the literatures of the world is singularly deep and comprehensive." If the men native to those literatures got sufficient provocation from Dr. Atkinson to examine his deep and comprehensive acquaintance with them, I firmly believe that there would be nothing left for the Doctor but to change his name and seek out some desert island. But with us Irish he has this one great advantage—that those of us who know his ignorance can go on refuting him and refuting him for ever, and most of our Irish audience is on his side thus far—that they do not know in the world whether we are refuting him or not.

I am reminded, too, of a celebrated case where the defendant felt the enormous advantage his opponent had over him, because the opponent had a scurrilous mind and tongue and party at his back—the intelligible side of the case for most people—while poor Demosthenes had to go into the deep and less attractive matter of the facts and merits of the case.

Dr. Atkinson is not without a good deal of this sort of advantage also on his side. I do not like to make any reflection on the nation which is so very ignorant and *incuriosa suorum* that when an attack inferentially so damning to its past, present, and future is made by an ignorant Englishman; when a race renowned throughout time and space for social and spiritual purity is characterised as the progeny of writers whose works have to be chained up in Trinity—in Virgin Queen's Trinity—for their filth and their unspeakably degrading brutality—I do not

like to make any reflection on a nation which, when told all this about itself, has nothing to say but to ask is it true, and goes on believing that this ignorant Englishman is still the greatest living authority on Irish.—Apologising for length, Sir, I am, yours faithfully,

JOHN M. O'REILLY, C.C.

Achill.

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The Irish Language and Irish Intermediate Education.

X.

FURTHER MISCELLANEOUS DOCUMENTS.

[Prefatory Note.]

In this concluding pamphlet of the Intermediate Series have been brought together a number of Letters and Articles from the *Daily Express* and An Claideam Solus. The concluding article appeared in An Claideam Solus, April 8th, 1899; the remaining articles, and all the letters, appeared in the *Daily Express* between February 25th and April 1st of the same year. The following writers are represented:—Dr. Douglas Hyde, J. F. Lynch, Miss Charlotte Gracé O'Brien, Miss Eleanor Hull, Dr. Kuno Meyer, Alfred Nutt, W. B. Yeats, William Larminie, and two writers who sign themselves respectively, "V.," and "C. A." Two things will be perfectly clear to all who read these pamphlets through: (1) that rarely, if ever, has such a grotesque and pitiful spectacle been anywhere witnessed as that presented by the self-constituted spokesmen and champions of "Ireland's only University," in the controversy which arose as to the position the Irish language should hold in Irish Intermediate Education: and (2) that never was a clearer and more conclusive case made for anything than that presented in favour of the Irish language before the Commission of Inquiry. That it should, from every standpoint, be assigned a most important position in the Intermediate Programme and in

Intermediate education in Ireland, was overwhelmingly established. To describe the case sought to be made against it, as having broken down, would be to describe in language very mild indeed, what actually took place. The Reformed Programme of the Intermediate Board has not yet appeared. When it does appear we shall see the result. The public can then judge how far there is any use in making out even the clearest case for reform, on national lines, in any grade of Irish education. It may be well to add here that the Commission of Inquiry began its sittings on January 11th, 1899, and that the final sitting was held on February 23rd, of the same year.

I.

Dr. Atkinson on Gaelic Literature.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "DAILY EXPRESS."

SIR—I was very glad to see by Thursday's *Express* that Dr. Atkinson has at long last come into the open, and that we have unearthed our anonymous expert. His exuberance of expression, now that he has appeared, leaves nothing to be desired. Only he protests too much. The wild combativeness and exaggeration which characterised his evidence, as you reported it, have hitherto been regarded as mere-Irish traits. It is highly amusing, and not a little instructive to find that a protracted residence on this side of the Channel, coupled with "the very deep sympathy for the study of Irish" which Dr. Atkinson, according to himself, possesses, are sufficient to turn even a scion of sturdy and phlegmatic Yorkshire into a Berserker who is in this respect, *Hibernis Hibernior*. It certainly is a curious thing that this exaggeration runs through all the evidence given by the experts of Trinity College; and Dr. Atkinson's "all folk-lore is at bottom abominable" is, in the plane of thought, on an exact parallel with Dr. Mahaffy's "M. Dottin shows that he knows nothing of French" in the domain of fact. The answer to the one is that folk-tales from the Brothers Grimm down to Andrew Lang, have taken a recognised place in the history of literature, and these abominable books are at present placed in the hands of children in every country in Europe. The answer to the other is that M. Dottin happens to have been for the last seven years, of all things in the world, professor of early French literature.

As to folk-lore, it will generally be conceded that "the nearer the sod," as Dr. Atkinson expresses it, the greater the distinction of the style. Perhaps it was this which helped to make Mr. Jacob's *Celtic Tales* and *More Celtic Tales* two of the most popular Christmas book

of recent London publishing seasons. Campbell, of Islay, the greatest folklorist of Great Britain, published four large volumes of West Highland folk-lore which are generally considered to be a precious national possession, and Mr. Larminie and others, as well as myself, have published large collections of Irish folk-lore. Now, I ask, where is there anything abominable in any of these stories? I will undertake to make any wager with Dr. Atkinson that the very worst of them he can pick out could be published in the literary pages of the Saturday *Express* without exciting a comment. As for the folk-lore tales of the Brothers Grimm, why they are at this moment on the Intermediate Education programme as the medium through which to make acquaintance with German. Why does not Trinity College raise its voice against these? Is it because they are not Irish? But, indeed, so extraordinary is Dr. Atkinson's whole evidence upon this point—one luckily upon which the public can form its own judgment—that we may well be pardoned for doubting in the future whether he can be seriously regarded by sane people as an authority upon literature at all.

But, after all, I was wrong in saying that Dr. Atkinson's exuberance left nothing to be desired—it does. Once more we are face to face with the anonymous! First, Irish was to be degraded on the Intermediate course because of an anonymous expert; now the same thing is sought to be done on the strength of an anonymous book. What is this book, this unmentionable book, containing "an immense quantity of stories" which "no human being could read without feeling that he had been absolutely degraded by contact with it"? What is this book "the filth of which I won't demean myself even to mention"? The Commission, unfortunately, is now closed to the taking of oral evidence, and Dr. Atkinson has had the last word before it; but there is the public, which now desires—and will, no doubt, insist—to be let into this secret. I have run in my own mind through all the Irish publications of the last ten years, and cannot make the cap fit. Is it Mr. Larminie's stories he objects to? or is it Kuno Meyer's *Hibernica Minora?* or is it Dr. Whitley Stokes' *Lives of the Saints?* or Dr. Standish Hayes O'Grady's *Silva Gadelica?* or any of my publications? Perhaps he objects to them all! Can it be—I ask the question in all seriousness—that Dr. Atkinson is a prig, and one of the first water? Either he is so, or there is some great secret, or (but, seeing he is a son of Yorkshire, I could hardly believe this) there is some great practical joke behind it all. From a moral point of view, I must say there is much left to be desired in the utterly reckless way in which Dr. Mahaffy and Mr. Atkinson fling about, with such wanton indiscriminateness, the words, "filth" and "indecency," throwing plenty of dirt in the hope that some may stick, as though they desired to bury the oldest vernacular literature of Europe under a load of obloquy, and give people the idea that it was a leprous and unclean thing, and that this is the reason that Trinity College will have so little of it. It looks as if

they desired some such excuse for their neglect of a subject which English and Continental scholars have appreciated, and on which Trinity, as the national University of Ireland, might have won European fame. And this is the more utterly reprehensible because we know it is not Dr. Atkinson's deliberate opinion. Of course, allowance must be made for his excitement in the witness chair; but even that will not avail him, seeing that in the calmer atmosphere of his own study he wrote, so recently as 1896, about the pieces of Irish literature contained in that great mediæval collection, the "Yellow Book of Lecan"—"They do not often sin by grossness of speech, and probably never by licentiousness of thought; but there is an utter absence of any elevation of thought or dignity about them." Now, the first of these statements is a statement of fact; the second, a statement of opinion, in which, by the way, Dr. Atkinson differs from nearly every every competent authority in Europe. But with regard to the matter of fact, the point to be noted is this: Dr. Atkinson, struck by the purity of Irish literature, as exemplified in the great "Yellow Book," actually goes out of his way to give it a good character in 1896; but in 1899, apparently terrified lest the spoken Irish language, which he does not understand, should be taught in our schools, he rushes forward with the words "filth" and "indecency" upon his lips. Is this political or is it racial, or is it both combined? Oh! politics, politics, how much you have to answer for in Irish life! I invite Dr. Atkinson, now that he has come out into the open and left his anonymity behind, not to do things by halves, but to let the public know, first, what is this dreadful book which is all so bad; and secondly, how does he make his language in the "Yellow Book of Lecan" fit with that which he has just been using? Is it possible that the already over-worked Gaelic League must add another item to its programme—to teach the professors of Trinity College how not to be unscrupulous?

Yours truly,

DOUGLAS HYDE.

II.

The Irish Language.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "DAILY EXPRESS."

SIR—I have read with much interest Dr. Atkinson's evidence on the Irish language in your issue of February 23rd, which will probably attract considerable attention, but there are many who will differ from his views. One of Dr. Atkinson's chief objections against the study of Irish is on account of the silly and indecent things contained in the literature, but as he has not endorsed the opinion of the "anonymous authority," quoted by Dr. Mahaffy, that a text-book free from such defects could not be found, may we not suppose that there

are such text-books to be had. Many Greek and Roman books are full of things silly and indecent, and there are such books as expurgated editions of the Classics. Every literature with which we are acquainted contains things silly and indecent, and is Irish alone to be banned for being silly and indecent? Dr. Atkinson says that Irish folk-lore was "near the sod," it had "scarcely been touched by the movements of other literatures," and "was almost invariably low in tone;" and then we have the sweeping assertion that "all folk-lore was, at the bottom, abominable," and yet Dr. Atkinson values Irish from the philological and archæological side. I am afraid that Dr. Atkinson does not understand Irish folk-lore. Such tales as these against which Dr. Atkinson tilts in Ireland are to be found in Greece, Rome, India, Egypt, Assyria, and other lands. Some are silly and indecent, and some are not. Dr. Atkinson thinks lightly of the Irish tales, because they are "near the sod," and "scarcely touched by the movements of other literatures." Therein consists their real value. They are "near the sod" because they are so old; they are the tales of the men of Ara, who fought with the cave-bear and lion in Ireland when Homer slept in the womb of time. These tales are untouched by the movements of other literatures, and hence when we wish to know who the Queen Mab, Lear, Puck, and other "creations" of English literature really are, we have to find who Queen Medb, Lear, and Puca, etc., of Ireland were, who are near the sod. These tales have come down to us from primal times, pure from foreign elements, and so the Irish tales may now be compared with the similar stories told in the oldest periods of Egypt and Chaldœa. The names which occur in the old tales of the Dinnshenchas are beyond all value for purposes of comparison. Dr. Atkinson tells us that he has spent a large portion of his life over the philological and archæological side of the Irish language, and consequently he ought to be fully aware of the value of the Irish names, but I am afraid that Professor Atkinson has somewhat misunderstood the bearing of ancient Irish folk-lore which contains these names. It is somewhat more important than he considers, and that he has not the remotest idea of the meaning of some of the tales I shall now prove by an example taken from the Dinnshenchas. In the Bodleian Dinnshenchas, translated by Dr. Whitley Stokes, there is a tale explaining that Dubthair, or "Black Land," was so named because Guara killed his brother, Dara Donn, and then a wood and a dark thicket spread over the land. Professor Atkinson proceeds to identify Dubthair with some place in Connacht, but not a word as to the meaning of the tale, and the original application of Dubthair. I wonder why it did not occur to Professor Atkinson that this tale was the Irish variant of the slaughter of Baldur by his brother Hodur, when the shadow of death covered heaven and earth. This is one of the "abominable" tales of Ireland, and yet this tale is not so "abominable" after all, if properly understood. If Professor Atkinson would compile a preparatory grammar of ancient Irish, he would confer a great boon on education

in Ireland, for Irish children will take a far greater interest in Irish than in any other language. I well remember the time myself how delighted I felt when I was able to repeat a sentence in Irish.

Yours, etc,

J. F. LYNCH.

III.

Irish Literature.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "DAILY EXPRESS."

SIR—"When doctors differ the patient dies." The public, knowing nothing of Irish literature, may well be puzzled in this word-war between Dr. Atkinson and Dr. Hyde. A word, then, from an unlearned woman may be of use. Some forty years ago I, a girl-child, as ignorant of evil as other girl-children, found my way, unknown to my elders, into my father's collection of Irish books—Ossianic Society's publications, etc. They caught my fancy in the rude translations then, and I went on. From that date to this I have never studied, but I have read up and down histories, translations, folk-lore, anything that came in my way relative to ancient Ireland. I can now say, as a girl-child I never had a conception of evil out of what I read. The Bible itself and Shakespeare threw more light on hidden subjects than anything in Irish literature that came before me. Grand ideal thoughts of chivalry, justice, courage, loyal affection, every high and noble virtue were suggested to my mind by that Irish literature. I place first the Bible as a suggestor of noble thought in my life. I place second Ireland—from the speech of Amergin, spoken as he landed on the shores of Ireland with the other sons of Milesius, down to my own father's terrible sufferings for his country and passionate sympathies for his people; I place this Ireland second in its educational influence. Then English literature takes its place. When Dr. Atkinson makes his astounding statements, I think of Dr. Samuel Johnson's answer to the lady who objected to his having "bad words" in his dictionary, "Madam, if you have seen them, you must have gone to look for them." It is inevitable that a literature so ancient and barbaric as ours should occasionally be plain spoken, but there has been more licentious writing in the last fifteen years of English and French literature, more gross suggestiveness, hardly veiled within legal bounds, in the books girls read now (which my father would have pitched into the fire), than I, at least, have found in Irish literature. When I had the great pleasure and honour of receiving Dr. Hyde here in my house some years ago, he and I talked for a week on end about that "abominable" Irish literature. I fear we must both fall very far

short of Dr. Atkinson's standard, for it did not occur to either of us to feel ashamed of our knowledge, or anything but the keenest sympathetic admiration for noble thought and wonderfully interesting historical matter.

Yours faithfully,
CHARLOTTE GRACE O'BRIEN.

IV.

Has Ireland no "decent" Ancient Literature?

I.

I have been following with the deepest interest, in company with others here, to whom the study of the Irish language and literature is a matter of importance, the evidence on these subjects given before the Intermediate Commissioners.

The question has been obscured by the (apparently intentional) indefiniteness of some of the witnesses as to what really exists in Irish literature and what part of it is modern and what is ancient. Dr. Mahaffy, relying, no doubt, on the general ignorance that prevails, especially among otherwise well-educated Irish people, on the subject, undertook to dispose of the literature of a whole nation, written continuously through over ten centuries, in a couple of neatly satiric adjectives; Dr. Atkinson talks of the "Book of Leinster" as being "not a book for children to read." Why Dr. Atkinson should speak loosely and inaccurately when he begins to talk of Irish literature is difficult to understand. To the public this loose talk is misleading. To speak of any of the great collections of mediæval manuscripts as books in the ordinary sense of the term is erroneous. They are libraries rather than books. To say that this particular compilation is unfit for children to read is equally misleading. If any child could read it, which is absolutely impossible, because it is written in what is called Middle Irish, which requires study, leisure, and great application to master, the child would have a selection made for him, as a selection would have to be made for him in any collection of literary work comprising a large number of subjects, and written by a great variety of authors. One tract from the "Book of Leinster" would certainly be inadvisable for a child's education, some excisions would have to be made in others, but there remain a great number of tales which, so far from injuring any child, would fire his imagination, stir his mind to chivalrous and heroic ideals, and set before him a fine type of generosity and honour which, though pagan, would do infinite good to the modern schoolboy.

Dr. Atkinson says that there is very little imagination and very little with an ideal ring about it in old Irish writing. This is the

kind of criticism most difficult to meet. It is the sort of argument Wordsworth has indicated in his famous lines—

> A primrose by the river's brim,
> A yellow primrose was to him,
> And it was nothing more.

But it is an opinion in which few will agree who have read any part at all of this fine old romance literature. In the first place, its range is immense. Of the Conchobar-Cuchulainn, or "Red Branch" cycle alone there are between ninety and one hundred distinct tales, most of them existing, many of them to be found in the "Book of Leinster." Then there are the tales of the Tuatha de Danann, a few of which fortunately still remain, though a number have perished. The literature of Visions alone is of great extent. It begins in point of development with the purely pagan Visions, such as the "Voyage of Maelduin," which Tennyson has adapted (robbing it of much of its antique brilliance in the modern dress), the "Voyage of Bran," the songs and stories of Tir na nOg, the land of perpetual youth and blessedness; it gradually becomes associated with Christianity in the "Voyages of St. Brendan" and "Mac Rialga," and it culminates in the purely Christian conception of the "Vision of Adamnan," the most beautiful of all mediæval dreams of the other world. Dante, when he described Paradise, hardly surpassed the delicate grace of this Irish vision, which occupies in the literature of mediæval dreams of the other world the place occupied by Fra Angelico in the history of the development of Italian painting. Besides these cycles of tales, we have numberless isolated stories, some of deep interest and pathos; we have numerous poems, and we have the great mass of Ossianic tales, which, beginning at an early epoch, were continued sometimes as heroic saga, sometimes as folk-tale, down to the present day. Surely, in remembering these hundreds of tales, many of them of great length and full of poems, we cannot say that the Irish bards were lacking in imagination. The great epic of the Tain Bo Cuailgne fills many pages of the "Book of Leinster." A great part of it is taken up by single-handed contests between Cuchulainn and his foes. Yet its variety and force are extraordinary. From the playful and quaint conversation with which it opens, and the gay detail of the hero's boyish feats, it moves on to its powerful close through a series of events in which the humour and pathos never fail. The subject is managed in a masterly manner. The side-play and back-waters, which do not retard but lift the onward rush of the main topic; the well-defined climaxes, the terrific conclusion, show a masterly conception of form strange at so early a date.

But are these tales unreadable? Are they nearly all indecent and unfit to be put before the young? Let me quote a very eminent Irish scholar, one whose right to an opinion on such subjects could not be disputed. In a private letter to myself, he says—"As to the older literature—say from the eighth to the sixteenth centuries—I

have always been astonished at its purity, apart, of course, from plain speaking about natural functions and a few legends of anthropological interest." Those tales come down from a very archaic period; they represent a pagan civilization. The conditions of life were simpler and more barbaric than ours. In every ancient literature are some ideas repugnant to modern taste, not necessarily evil, but arising from a more primitive condition of life and society. But the myths of an old mythology and the customs of an early stage of civilization do not argue grossness in the mind of the writers, and, as Dr. Hyde has noticed, Dr. Atkinson once allowed as much when he said in his preface to the "Yellow Book of Lecan": "The Irish writers do not often sin by grossness of speech, probably never by licentiousness of thought." In general purity of tone Irish literature compares very favourably with the mediæval literatures of the South of Europe. Beside the spirit of many of our modern novels, the spirit of the old Sagas is cleanliness itself. Moreover, the whole tone of the old romance is lofty and refined. So far from being mechanical and deficient in idealism and elevation of thought, it is stirring and vitalising in the highest degree. Surely, the story of the chivalry of Cuchulainn and Ferdiad is one never to be forgotten by a young man. Surely, the tale of the fearless going forth to death of the hero would stir the manliness of the most torpid youth. Surely, the lament of Deirdre would touch the coldest heart. The spirit of the hero breathes through these tales; the courtesy of the gentleman refines them. French or Latin literature will show him nothing more ideal, and it will be no harm for himself and his companions if he endeavours to follow it.

Dr. Atkinson, in his preface to the "Yellow Book of Lecan," said that the Irish mediæval writers were utterly ignorant of classical authors. It would be easy to prove that they had the same acquaintance with them as the mediæval writers in England. They knew something of Virgil, Horace, of Statius, and Lucan. Boethius' works were well known, and there are Irish copies of Marco Polo and Mandeville.

No one before the revival of learning knew Greek. No one was acquainted with Lucretius before the discovery of Poggio. If Dr. Atkinson is capable of grossly blundering in matters of fact we are the less bound to accept his dictum in matters of taste without careful examination.

We have only touched upon the romance, because it is to this that the evidence has chiefly referred; but romance by no means exhausts the contents of the oldest literature.

It includes hagiology; to our mind the fund of material to be found in the earliest lives of the Saints has not yet been properly recognised; they present us with a unique picture of life in this country at the critical moment when Christianity and Paganism meet. It includes history: the important tract on the wars of Munster about the time of Brian Boru, called "The Wars of Thomond," was

composed in 1459. It is now being edited for the Cambridge Press by Mr. S. H. O'Grady. The most valuable existing record of the Settlements of the Norsemen in Ireland, ending with the "Battle of Clontarf," first compiled shortly after that event, and probably from eye-witnesses, is preserved to us in full in a manuscript of the fourteenth century.

It includes large numbers of law tracts. The Brehon Law Commissioners have made use of manuscripts dating from the fourteenth to the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries in compiling their great work. The Brehon Law ran in parts of Ireland till the reign of James I., and the Brehons wrote of what they saw still going on around them. The importance of these tracts is shown by the great space (fully three-fourths of the entire volume) devoted to their study by Sir Henry Maine in his "History of Early Institutions."

Of homilies, of astronomical, and especially of medical treatises, there were an immense number. Science and religion have alike been revolutionised since the Elizabethan period. Yet even these treatises cannot properly be described as worthless. They have the same value as English mediæval work of the same date.

2.

From the end of the sixteenth century a series of heavy blows befell Irish literature. First came the dissolution of the monasteries. In Ireland, strange as the fact appears, it had generally been the monks who had preserved and transcribed the pagan romances. So great was their reverence for them that anyone who died upon the Book of the Dun Cow—a book which contained nothing but pagan stories and poems—was supposed to be certain of Heaven. The destruction of the monasteries meant the dispersion of the MSS., which had been preserved in them with reverent care.

Close on the heels of this check followed the great rebellion of 1641, with all the miseries that preceded and followed it. It was not a period conducive to the production of a fine original literature. Then came the Penal Laws, which forbade not only the exercise of his religion, but all education to a Catholic. Catholic schoolmasters were forbidden to teach at home, and a Catholic parent was not permitted to send his children abroad for education. With the overthrow of the Catholic gentry came the downfall of the bards and the gradual extinction of the Irish language, which had survived the efforts of centuries to extinguish it. It had been the fixed policy of England to discredit everything Irish; and from the fourteenth century down the language was forbidden to the people.

But the laws against education were more serious still, and it is not wonderful that with the absolute denial of education, a decadent wave swept over the literature of the country. The great "Book of Lismore"—concealed for, perhaps, two hundred years in the walls

of the Duke of Devonshire's castle, and only discovered eventually in 1814 by workmen breaking through the wall, may fitly stand as an allegory of the conditions under which Irish literature was produced and preserved during at least three hundred years. The really astonishing thing is that any literature should have been produced at all. Yet from the early portion of the seventeenth century date the most important historical works in the language. It is the Era of the Great Histories. The Annals of the Four Masters, compiled by four learned monks in the Convent of Donegal, was begun in 1632, and it traces the history of Ireland down from pre-historic times to 1616. Keating wrote his history of Ireland and his ecclesiastical works concealed in the caverns and fastnesses of his native Galtee Mountains between 1628-1640—a period of great political and social disturbance. The "Chronicum Scotorum" was written by Duald MacFirbis, of Sligo, about 1660, and the great Latin compilations of Colgan date from the same period. Nevertheless, though works of great importance hail from this period of disturbance, a visible decadence can be remarked in the character of the romance. The old romance was not extinct; in spite of disabilities from without, it was carefully guarded and transcribed; and to the later period we owe many interesting additions and expansions of the old themes. Many of the modern recensions of the pagan tales are exceedingly fine, and, doubtless, a large number of these might well be used for instructing the young; they are elevated, poetic, and full of high thoughts and the true spirit of chivalry. The great mass of Ossianic pieces and poems belong to this period. A few are grotesque and bombastic, but many are fine and spirited, while others are harmless fairy tales. For these same tales—which linger yet in the Highlands of Scotland—it was said not long ago that such reverence was felt that "old men, hearing them, took off their bonnets for reverence." This feeling is not created by any foolish or bombastic romance, but by the recitation of the deeds of heroes.

To this period belongs a mixed romance literature, and doubtless, some parts of it are silly and a few parts indecent. Mr. S. H. O'Grady has edited and translated a number of these tales in "Silva Gadelica." Doubtless, had he been writing for children, which he was not, he would have omitted one or two, and expurgated some others. I have been told by widely-read scholars of this literature that a number of satires of a Rabelaisian cast exist, which have literary force and acuteness, but which would be unfit for re-publication. But what I wish to contend is that the whole of the literature—even of the modern literature—is not to be condemned *en masse* because these pieces exist. We do not condemn English literature because of the indecencies of Elizabethan and Restoration playwrights, or French literature because Rabelais wrote in French. Shakespeare is not immaculate in this respect; but we select and expurgate our Shakespeares, and teach our children to learn the good and leave the evil. In all literatures, especially mediæval litera-

tures, the same principle must be adopted. Later Irish literature shows the effect of the deadening influences to which it was subjected.

For spontaneous creation we must turn to the people. And here we are met by a strong argument for the preservation of the Irish tongue. For we find that in spite of all disabilities the love of song has not died out. The poorest peasants, even to the present day, produce in their own tongue songs and lyrics worthy of being preserved and read. Beginning with the Jacobite songs, many of them of fine colour and spirit, there has been a continuous output of passionate and tender song in all parts of the country written by peasants who could have never expressed their thoughts in any but the native idiom. "The Fair Hills of Eire" was written by an exiled bard of County Clare about 1730, banished under the penal regime. The passionate love-song which Dr. Sigerson, in his "Bards of the Gael and Gall," entitles "Love's Despair," was written in Irish by a young Cork farmer on his desertion by his betrothed for a more wealthy suitor about 1740. The "Dark Rosaleen" and the "Lament over the Ruins of the Abbey of Timoleague," which have been rendered familiar in Mangan's and Sir Samuel Ferguson's English settings, are songs of the people, dati[illegible]om the seventeenth and present centuries.

The exquisite songs published in Dr. [illegible]e's "Love Songs of Connacht" were written over the turf fir[illegible]f the poorest peasants. Yet these lyrics would be gems of song [illegible]nerever they were found. It is surely worth while preserving to the nation a vehicle in which such thoughts can be expressed.

Dr. Mahaffy says:—"If there is a literature why is it not published (in translations)?" Yet, at the same mo[illegible]nent, he would cut off the public on whose support publications of this sort must depend, by stamping out the study of the Irish language. It is because there has been practically no public to which to appeal that the work of publication has proceeded slowly. A reading public is being formed, and the Irish Texts' Society has come immediately into existence to meet the demand for good modern literary models, which shall be free from the linguistic varieties of folk-lore tales gathered in different districts by word of mouth. But if the fresh and really astonishing impulse towards the study of the language is crushed out, such societies cannot exist. Books cannot be published for nothing, and editors, even Irish editors, cannot always give their labour at a financial loss. From Mr. Mahaffy's point of view, he ought to liberally support the Irish Texts' Society, especially as all the volumes will contain translations with the texts. When the language was interdicted to all but a few peasants in outlying and isolated districts, it was inevitable that spelling and pronunciation should become varied, though not so much so as Dr. Atkinson leads us to suppose. I doubt whether any Munsterman would not understand a Connachtman, or a speaker from Donegal one from Clare.

A friend of my own, a Munsterman, read last summer a number of Dr. Hyde's Connacht tales to some peasants of Kerry. They appreciated every phrase of them. The idiom of the language is the same in all districts. It is surprising that folk-lore "near the sod," as Dr. Atkinson well styles it, should be a chief literary product of this class of Irish speakers.

The literary instinct is not extinct in Irishmen; and a familiarity with their own idiom, in which alone thought flows freely, will doubtless call forth some worthy literature. Besides, there is no nobler sentiment than love of one's country, with which love of her language and literature is, in the educated mind, inseparably mixed up. Shall the love of country be forbidden a legitimate and ennobling outlet, and forced back by Englishmen into the disturbing whirlpool of political and party strife? For centuries England prohibited the Irish language, and discouraged the production of Irish literature; they now turn round and say—"Your language has become the dialect of peasants, and your literature is 'near the sod.'"

To-day, among a people torn by conflicting creeds and politics, a common ground of brotherhood has been found in the revival of their tongue and literary inheritance. Here Catholic and Protestant, Unionist and Nationalist, can work, and are working in perfect harmony side by side. Prejudice is giving way in a common unity of race and blood. To check this impulse will be the most fatal mistake that educationalists, prescribing to-day for Ireland, could possibly make. It would be a mistake were the difficulties that have to be overcome by teachers and students fifty times as great as they really are, or were they as great as they have been represented to be. I would add, that it is the persistent misrepresentation by responsible persons of all things Irish, good and bad indifferently, that keeps agape the sores that time might heal, and that alienates the sympathies of all right-thinking Irishmen and women who love their country. This is a sort of evil that reaches far outside the limits of the Education Commission Chamber, and that stirs up again those feelings of hopelessness and distrust which it should be the most earnest desire and aim of all who truly love Ireland to allay.

ELEANOR HULL.

V.

Dr. Atkinson and the Irish Language.

The study of Celtic has, within the last forty years, assumed such importance in the eyes of scholars that we in Ireland, who live in the country where that language is still, to some extent, spoken, and where vast quantities of manuscript and other material are stored and ready to hand, can least of all afford to neglect or disparage it.

On the Continent many eminent scholars have devoted to it, and are still devoting to it, the energies and labours of their lives, and if Dublin University was at first slow to welcome this new branch of learning, she is now hastening with a great deal of goodwill to make up for lost time. And what, it may be asked, is the value of this study, which has directed the eyes and learning of Europe to the ancient records of this out-of-the-way island? Is it expected that diligent research will at last discover some great epic poem or other literary production so notable as to repay scholars for their vast expenditure of time and labour? I think not. The interest which Continental scholars take in Celtic, and particularly in Classical Irish, is mainly philological, archæological, and ethnological. Its literary interest occupies with them only a secondary place. In the old Irish Saga they see not monuments of literature, but beautiful myths; not the creations of great poets, but the sublime folk-lore of an imaginative people, often, indeed, obscured or debased in its literary setting. Its importance in this point of view, no one who is competent to speak—and amongst those competent to speak we must reckon Dr. Atkinson—will be disposed to deny. Its importance when approached through modern Irish as a subject for the education of children, or even of grown-up persons, is quite another matter, and it was on this point that Dr. Atkinson was asked and courageously gave his opinion before the Intermediate Commission. His opinion was briefly this—The subject, in the first state—that of modern Irish—does not furnish an adequate mental training; and, in the second, the tone of the literature to which the student will afterwards have access, is "low," and, consequently, not likely to produce "culture" in the proper sense of the word. For his first conclusion he gave reasons which are generally known and accepted, namely—the lack of teachers, of text-books, of definite grammars; in fact, the want of some common and settled standard in modern Irish. For his opinion as to the "tone" of Irish literature, it must be remembered that, while it is purely a personal one, it has nevertheless the weight and authority of a scholar whose acquaintance with the literatures of the world is singularly deep and comprehensive. This amplitude of survey may have given his estimate of the general standard of Irish literature, an unnecessary harshness and severity, but still the fact remains that a competent authority has given it as his opinion that true culture is not to be obtained from the study of Irish literature. He used the epithet "low" as we might apply it to the standard of taste in our popular newspapers and magazines, and in spite of its severity his censure amounted to little more than this: that a person educated on Greek alone can obtain culture, while a person educated on Irish alone cannot.

As regards the study of ancient, or to speak more accurately, classical, Irish, it must be remembered at the outset that the science is only in its infancy. A great deal of work has been done, work whose value cannot be over-estimated, since the publication of the

"Grammatica Celtica," in 1853. But in the main, it is tentative work, the guess work of pioneers who desire rather to clear the way than to advance themselves. In this work Dr. Atkinson himself has done services for which he has been repaid by the approbation of those few men who can at all claim the right to give an opinion on the subject. He was entrusted by the Royal Irish Academy with the editing of the Books of Leinster, of Ballymote, and of Lecan. To the task of arranging and describing the contents of these enormous cycles of miscellaneous literature Dr. Atkinson brought an amount of learning and scholarship which at once established his reputation as a Celtic scholar. But his chief contribution to the study of Celtic, and that upon which his fame as a Celtic scholar mainly rests, is his edition of the "Passion and Homilies," from the Leabhar Breac. One of the chief difficulties which the beginner has to face in the study of Irish—a difficulty practically unsurmountable to those who do not bring, besides natural abilities, a special kind of training and knowledge to the study—one of the chief difficulties in studying this most intricate and complex language is the want of a dictionary. With the exception of a few short vocabularies and lists of glosses, by O'Curry and others, until recently the student had access to nothing which resembles that which is the easiest road to the learning of other languages, namely, a lexicon. Even now, though much is being done to systematise our knowledge of the vocabulary of classical Irish, the difficulty has not by any means been overcome. Every student has, in some sort, to make a dictionary for himself, and in the present condition of the study of Irish every student becomes, in a sense, a pioneer. The fact is, that as yet comparatively little is known of classical Irish. Even in those works which have been translated, countless passages have received no interpretation, hundreds of minor difficulties of construction and meaning are left unexplained, or are explained by guesses pure and simple, which make no pretence to be anything else. The old poems in O'Grady's "Silva Gadelica" are treated somewhat after this manner, although in this case it is doubtful if we shall ever know enough of very early Irish to be able to translate them with any approach to accuracy. For the purposes of grammar it may be well to state that a great deal of confusion still exists with regard to forms and inflexions; that the manuscripts themselves are not always to be trusted; and that before a grammar with any pretensions to finality can be written, a great deal more must be known about the forms and vocabulary of classical Irish. One of the most important contributions to the lexicography of the language is the glossary which Dr. Atkinson has appended to his edition of the "Passions and Homilies" from the Leabhar Breac. In this glossary every word is examined wherever it occurs in the text, and its meaning carefully investigated. The glossary occupies 500 double-column pages, and is an extraordinary example of industry and scholarship. It may be looked upon in some sense as one of the foundation-stones of Celtic lexicography. This work of arrang-

ing the vocabulary of ancient Irish is being carried on in the same lines by Messrs. Zimmer and Windisch and other distinguished scholars, and if Dr. Hyde pleases, he can find out from these gentlemen how high their opinion of Dr. Atkinson's scholarship is, and what assistance they have derived from his elaborate glossary, as well as from his restorations in the text of the Leabhar Breac.

I mention all this to show, first, what an admirable field for original investigation this subject still offers to adventurous students; and, secondly, how utterly impossible it is for anyone who has not the necessary training to grapple with its difficulties, or, as things are at present, to enter the field at all, without hopelessly floundering and losing himself. As Dr. Atkinson said before the Commission, the subject is a most important one in the curriculum of a University. But without a thorough knowledge of the classics, or some special linguistic training, it can scarcely be studied with satisfaction or success. Its interest then will be chiefly anthropological; it will not be studied for the form but for the matter of its literature. And here I may remark, by way of digression, that neither in his preface to the "Book of Lecan" nor in his evidence before the Commission did Dr. Atkinson assert that the Ancient literature of Ireland is "indecent," that is to say, immoral. If Dr. Hyde will take the trouble to read over, in a calm and impartial spirit, Dr. Atkinson's evidence before the Commission, even in the very imperfect form in which it appeared in the newspaper reports, he will have little difficulty in reconciling what he said on that occasion with the opinions which he formerly expressed. By the epithet "low," which he then used, he was repeating his censure about the "lack of dignity or elevation of thought" which characterises for the most part the compilers of ancient Irish literature. Besides the fact that it is the expression of his personal opinion—an expression which Dr. Atkinson did not volunteer before the recent Commission, but which he was asked to give—this opinion of his is a little discredited when we reflect that not half the Irish literature which we possess has been read, much less translated. From what we have, however, we may fairly conclude that no people, with the exception, perhaps, of the Greeks, ever possessed such a splendid quarry of materials for the poet's art. It was from such a quarry that Homer built his magnificent poems; it was from such a quarry that in a humbler way Burns drew the material and inspiration of his songs. The vast epic and traditionary literature of Ireland contained episodes as noble, adventures as wonderful, and thoughts as full of beauty as any that were translated by Æschylus and Sophocles into living works of art. But in Ireland no Homer or Sophocles, nor, as far as we can see, even humbler singer like Burns, appeared, to inspire by a breath what was so nearly inspired already, to add life by a touch to what was trembling on the edge of being. This, I say, appears to have been the condition of Ireland; there was all the material for a poet or even a cycle of poets, but none appeared. Instead, we have dexterous rhym-

sters, who carried the art of mere versification to an astonishing perfection, uninspired chroniclers, and, finally, and in great number, common-place narrators or transcribers. But in one way ancient Irish literature must be owned to be unique. It owned—we speak of poetry—no perfection appears to have been obtained in prose—nothing to foreign models. Tradition speaks of the great erudition that was common in Ireland from the sixth to the tenth century—but what that erudition was, or even whether it really existed, is now impossible to tell. No evidence of it can be found anywhere, not even in Irish literature. Some faint and insignificant traces of the Bible we may detect in that literature, but of classical or other models it has received no impression. It owed, like ancient Irish art, everything to itself.

As for the study of modern Irish, we may take it for granted that, owing to its unsettled forms, the absence of a recognised standard, and, above all, its want of any literature of value, its study in our elementary schools, where it ousts other subjects more valuable from an educational point of view, is a sinful waste of time. Very few of those who take it up will ever succeed in making their way to the literature of the older language, and those who take it up from sentimental reasons do not reflect that they might achieve their patriotic purposes and save their time as well by the medium of the many excellent paraphrases and translations which have already appeared. The boy or girl who begins to learn Greek is introduced at once into an enchanted world—to the poems of Homer, or to one of the most fascinating prose works in literature, the "Retreat of the Ten Thousand." These works are read with comparative facility, and the pupil is introduced by easy gradations to the other masterpieces of Greek literature. Irish is far more difficult and complex as a language, and, after the pupil has spent an enormous amount of time on the common-place tales to be found in elementary text-books, he is introduced to what? Unless he now braces himself for the still harder task of mastering ancient Irish, he will find little sustaining power or intellectual food in the literature which he is able to read. And if he have ability and patience, such as very few of us possess, to push on and gain even a small acquaintance with ancient Irish, will the reward in culture or in anything else be at all commensurate with his labours? Would not his time have been far more profitably spent on Greek or French, or on a subject which is quite neglected by the Irish people—namely, the economic condition and problems of Ireland?

V.

VI.

The Standard of Modern Irish.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "DAILY EXPRESS."

SIR,—In his evidence before the Intermediate Education Commission, Professor Atkinson is reported to have said of modern Irish that "he did not regard the language as being in a settled state; there was no standard of speech absolutely accepted by anybody—no general concurrence of opinion as to what should be the proper forms." I observe that Dr. Douglas Hyde, in his excellent letter to you on Professor Atkinson's evidence, does not oppose and traverse this erroneous opinion, though it would have been an easy thing for him to do.

The truth is that the standard of speech is as well defined in modern Irish as it is in all other languages that have had a long literary development. The writings of Keating, the versions of the Bible, the prose and poetry contributed to the "Gaelic Journal"—all conform to one and the same standard, the grammatical rules of which have long been established. It is true that within the limits of these rules a certain amount of variety is possible, a variety which is mainly based on dialectical differences. But this is the case also with most other languages, *e.g.*, my native German, where similar varieties of expression will at once betray the Saxon, the Bavarian, the Suabian, etc. Indeed, as is but natural in the case of a language that spreads over a far larger area, these dialectical differences of individual writers are far more pronounced in German literature than in Irish. I may mention that I have received letters written in Irish from all parts of Ireland, in which the standard is entirely the same, though correctness and ease of expression naturally vary with the education and taste of the writer.

Yours, etc.,

KUNO MEYER.

VII.

Irish Literature.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "DAILY EXPRESS."

SIR,—In his evidence before the Intermediate Education Commission, reported in your issue of February 23rd, Dr. Atkinson is stated to have made the following assertion:—"There was a book published not very long ago in which there was an immense quantity of stories, and there was a translation of them, too. All I can say

is that no human being could read that book without feeling that he had been absolutely degraded by contact with it, of the filth that I won't demean myself even to mention."

I understand that Dr. Atkinson has been asked to give the title of the work in question, but that up to the present he has refused. All I can say is that I have purchased and read through every scrap of Irish text with English translation that has been publicly issued during the last twenty years, and that I know of none to which Dr. Atkinson's words could by the utmost stretch of the most extravagant exaggeration apply for one moment. Are we to conclude that Dr. Atkinson has access to some privately printed collection of Irish Κρυπτάδια which has remained unknown to myself and to every Irish scholar of my acquaintance (and I know most)? I think Dr. Atkinson owes it to the noble institution of which he is an official, to state definitely what work he was referring to.

I am, dear Sir,

Faithfully yours,

ALFRED NUTT.

9th March, 1899.

VIII.

The Teaching of Irish and the Study of Irish Literature.

I was allowed last week to make a fresh appeal to Dr. Atkinson to state publicly the evidence upon which he had brought a most serious charge against a whole literature and against the race which has expressed itself in that literature, as well as inferentially, against living scholars whose honourable feeling and refined taste have hitherto been impugned by no one. That appeal has shared the fate of Dr. Hyde's. No answer has been forthcoming to the plain question—What was the book "which no human being could read without feeling that he had been absolutely degraded by contact with it"? Respect for Dr. Atkinson's attainments, gratitude for his past achievements in the field of Irish scholarship, would make silence only too welcome to the present writer. But the matter cannot be allowed to rest here. The more deservedly high Dr. Atkinson's reputation as a Celtic philologist, the greater his authority upon questions of Celtic scholarship, the more necessary is it to show, once for all, how baseless is the grave accusation to which he has given the weight of his name. It is one calculated to do the utmost injury to Celtic studies; it is the one accusation which has any influence upon vast bodies of English and Irish opinion—ignorant as regards the literary and educational, but sensitive, and rightly so, to the moral aspects of the question. Had Dr. Atkinson confined himself to instituting, as does "V.," unfavourable comparisons

between Greek and Irish as instruments of culture, nothing more would have been heard of his evidence. The sting lay in the charge of indecency. The calumny which he uttered has been taken up and repeated all over the country by persons who, three weeks ago, did not know that such a thing as Irish literature existed. Painful as is the task, the exact truth has got to be stated. That the result should be damaging to Dr. Atkinson's reputation will be profoundly regretted by all students of Celtic antiquities. But the reputation of no man, however eminent, can be allowed to prevail against the interests of truth. The book to which Dr. Atkinson is believed to have referred is Mr. Standish Hayes O'Grady's "Silva Gadelica," a work which, when it appeared six years ago, was hailed by every Irish student as the worthy crown of the editor's long and valuable services on behalf of Irish literature. To show that I am perfectly well aware of certain things in the Irish text (omitted in the English version) which are not intended *virginibus puerisque*, I may be allowed to quote from my notice of the work ("Folk-Lore," Vol IV., p. 326)—"Some of Mr. O'Grady's omissions seem due to a mistaken standard of delicacy. The few naturalistic touches of the original might well have been left entire, considering the bulk and cost of the work." The editor of the *Revue Celtique*, if I recollect rightly, chaffed him mildly on the same score. If anyone could feel degraded by coming into contact with "Silva Gadelica," that person would feel degraded by coming into contact with the Bible. I make this comparison, not because I wish to shock or by way of emphasis, but because the analogy is a real one. "Silva Gadelica" is a literature covering a range of many centuries; its contents are partly mythical history, partly legendary history, partly hagiology; its subject-matter is often drawn from a primitive, an almost savage state of society. In all these respects it has points of likeness with the Bible, and we should expect to find in the one as in the other traits and incidents which do not accord with our present standards of taste or conduct. The proportion of actual words or phrases which one would not care to place before a child's eyes is, I should say, smaller in "Silva Gadelica" than in the Bible. In either case the man, or woman, who, having read through either collection, feels at the end a sense of "degradation," must possess such an abnormally "nice" mind as to utterly unfit him or her from any concern with literature, or, let me add, with life. We have all heard of the lady who was shocked by Dr. Johnson's dictionary, and we know what Johnson said to her.

This, it may be said, is your individual opinion. Well, I should be perfectly prepared to submit an absolutely faithful rendering of every word of Irish printed in "Silva Gadelica" to Dr. Neighton, Dr. Barry, Dr. R. F. Horton, and Mr. Stopford Brooke, as representing various schools of Christian thought, and I am absolutely convinced they would agree with me that Dr. Atkinson's description of

the work is utterly unwarrantable—nay more, that it constitutes a gross outrage upon veracity and decency.

I must further labour the point. "Silva Gadelica" costs £2 2s., and access to the majority of the texts contained in it could only be obtained otherwise by an expenditure of some £15. The Irish child is thus to be denied the right of studying his native tongue because, in a two-guinea book, containing some 800 pages of closely-printed Irish text, there are a few passages of a "primitive" character. But what language is the unfortunate Irish child to be allowed to study? Greek? Why, you can buy all Aristophanes for 3., and the erotic poems of the Anthology for 1s. 6d. Latin? Martial and Juvenal can be had unexpurgated for a few shillings. Italian? When an entire Decameron can be picked up for the same sum. French? And Rabelais or La Fontaine, Zola or Maupassant may be picked up at every corner. In fact, no matter what the other language is, the Irish child will obtain by the outlay of a few shillings, access to more printed "indecency," and that indecency of a positively corrupting and deleterious character, than he would get knowledge of from the entire mass of Irish literature printed and in manuscript.

No. If Dr. Atkinson had urged that Irish literature was altogether too simple, too unsophisticated, to be a useful medium for us moderns—if he had said, Irish literature! why, where is your Aristophanes, where your Rabelais or your Swift, where your Zola or your Maupassant? I could, as a student of literature and history, have understood, however much I disagree with his attitude. But to damn it on the score of indecency! Really, it requires one of the great masters of the indecent—it requires an Aristophanes or a Swift to do full justice to this grotesque assertion. The Irish parent may make himself perfectly easy. His children stand far less chance of injury to their morals in studying Irish than in studying any other language.

It is a pleasure to turn from Dr. Atkinson's assertions—assertions with which it is almost impossible to deal in any but an extremely "unparliamentary" spirit—to "V.'s" letter in your issue of the 11th. But I feel bound to point out that the case is most unfairly stated by him. "A person educated on Greek alone," says "V." "can obtain culture; a person educated on Irish alone cannot." But who wants to educate "on Irish alone"? Who wants to banish Greek? Is it not rather the fact that those who, keenest in claiming recognition for Irish, are also the foremost advocates of literary education in its widest sense? It has been said that the acquirement of a new language is equivalent to acquiring a new soul. There need be no fear that the students of Gaelic will be among the partisans of an illiberal, a utilitarian, an unidealistic scheme of education.

With much that "V." says respecting the older language and literature I am in complete accord. Their interpretation is beset with difficulty. All the more reason to secure all the light we can possibly throw upon it. Is it contended that Irish differs from every

other language, that the living tradition contains nothing to elucidate the earlier stages, that the native "Sprachgefuhl" (I am bound to use a German expression) is of no aid in unravelling the intricacies of the speech? To cripple the study of modern Irish is practically to restrain the study of the ancient tongue to an infinitismal minority. How few would pursue the study, says "V." Quite true; but how few pursue any study! Of the thousands who spend years over Greek and Latin, how many, at 25, could construe half a dozen consecutive lines in either language? If the intermediate examination system were the means of bringing to light once in a generation an O'Donovan or an O'Curry, it would be amply justified.

But over and above all these questions of detail there is a great question of principle. Has not the Irish child a right to be taught the tongue in which his forefathers for countless generations have expressed their heart and soul? Is not the mode of expression still congenial to Irishmen? I never take up a new translation from the older Irish literature but I am once again delighted and amazed to note traits of resemblance in feeling, in mood, in utterance, in form, between the Gael of 1000 years ago and the Gaelic-speaking peasant of to-day. The quality of the language influences and is influenced by the quality of emotional feeling and intellectual thought. Surely, this is a sign that the speech which the Gael has evolved throughout the centuries is an instrument which answers, as none other can, to his capacities, and that he is entitled to further develop and perfect it as men of every other European speech have within the last century developed and perfected theirs?

The Bohemian 100 years ago was told that his speech was a barbarous *patois*, which he should foreswear in favour of German. Scholars and professors protested, and their protest was fruitful. Schafarik and Palacky have shown that the despised *patois* is available for the purposes of historical and critical science. Roumanians, Servians and Norwegians have in turn been implored to disregard their own in favour of rival dialects. They have refused, and rightly refused. But, perhaps, the strongest instance I can cite is that of Russia. She entered the comity of civilised nations barely 200 years ago, and at that time had behind her far less rich, interesting or valuable literature than that of Ireland. Suppose the man of genius who knouted her into the paths of progress had been ill-advised enough to insist upon abandonment of the native idiom in favour of German or French! He might have achieved it; who knows! But would Pushkin and Turgenieff, would Dostoieffsky and Tolstoi, forced to utterance in an alien tongue, have given us their revelation of the Russian temperament, which is, perhaps, the chief event of nineteenth century literature?

As an Englishman I plead for the right of the Irishman to study his native tongue. As the citizen of a free State I urge that it is the duty of the Government to give every facility for the exercise of that

right. As a student of history and literature, I believe humanity would be the poorer by the loss of a distinctive, a delightful mode of utterance.

"All folk-lore is at bottom abominable," says Dr. Atkinson. This abominable study has been my chief intellectual pursuit and recreation for twenty years. I venture to believe that Dr. Atkinson's opinion respecting it is of as much or as little, value as his opinion respecting "Silva Gadelica." I believe the study to be a humane and humanising one. It exhibits, as none other, the essential similarity of the human mind throughout all ages and all lands; it shows how the most advanced cultures have their roots in, their affinities with the past; it is the best of antidotes against the spirit of contemptuous hatred which one race or civilisation so easily develops against another. If Dr. Atkinson had grasped the spirit or appreciated the results of the study he was maligning, he would never, I think, have testified as he did before the Education Commission.

ALFRED NUTT.

IX.

The Academic Class and the Agrarian Revolution.

There are opinions and manners so memorable as indications of movements of thought that one longs to put them into some shape in which they may be read after the dicussion that gave them birth is forgotten. I would gladly give such permanence to certain literary opinions of Dr. Atkinson and to a certain violence of manner in his expression of them. He has said, "All folk-lore is essentially abominable," and of Dr. Hyde's imaginative and often beautiful stories, "they are so very low," and of "the whole range of Irish literature" (including those tales of Cuchullin which "made an epoch" in the life of Burne-Jones, and many tales that are the foundation of much in contemporary Irish literature), that it has "very little of the ideal, and very little imagination"; and, in what one must conclude to have been a paroxysm of political excitement, that there was a book of Irish tales "with translations" published the other day which "no human being could read without being absolutely degraded by contact with it, of the filth which I won't even demean myself to mention"—a book which every folk-lorist knows to have no existence outside the imagination of Dr. Atkinson. "All folk-lore is essentially abominable." If a Professor at an English University were to say these things in any conspicuous place, above all before a Commission which he hoped would give his opinion an expression in action, he would not be reasoned with, but his opinion would be repeated with a not ill-humoured raillery and his name remembered at times with a little laughter. Dr. Hyde has understood, however,

and perhaps rightly understood, that the conditions of Ireland are so peculiar that it is necessary to answer Dr. Atkinson, lest, as I should imagine, some imperfectly educated priest in some country parish might believe that Irish literature was "abominable," or "indecent"—to use another favourite word of Dr. Atkinson's—and raise a cry against the movement for the preservation of the Irish language. I prefer principally to inquire how a philologist and archæologist of eminence comes to hold and to express violently such opinions upon matters that are neither philological nor archæological, and which he would under ordinary circumstances have approached with some modesty and timidity. I remember repeating to William Morris some twelve years ago an opinion of Dr. Atkinson's about Irish literature very like his present opinions, and William Morris answering: "People who talk that way"—or some such words—"know nothing of the root-thoughts of literature." I do not think this is the explanation; for a certain lack of fine literary instinct, a certain lack of real understanding of the ideas and passions that give a literature importance, is common among men who spend their lives with words rather than ideas, with facts rather than emotions; and yet I do not think there is a Professor of any eminence at any English University who would not be as incapable of Dr. Atkinson's intemperate opinions as of his quaint manner of expressing them.

The true explanation is that Dr. Atkinson, like most people on both sides in politics of the generation which had to endure the bitterness of the agrarian revolution, is still in a fume of political excitement, and cannot consider any Irish matter without this excitement. If I remember my Bible correctly, the children of Israel had to wander forty years in the wilderness that all who had sinned a particular sin might die there; and Ireland will have no dispassionate opinion on any literary or political matter till that generation has died or has fallen into discredit. One watches with an irritation, that sometimes changes to pity, members of Parliament, Professors, eminent legal persons, officials of all kinds, men often of great natural power, who cannot talk, whether in public or private, of any Irish matter in which any living affection or enthusiasm has a part without becoming bitter with the passion of old controversies in which nobody is any longer interested. When the ideality of the National movement, as "Young Ireland" shaped it, faded before the inevitably imperfect ideals of the agrarian revolution, those streams of fruitful thought, which had begun to flow in Nationalist Ireland under "Young Ireland," became muddy; but the class, among whom Dr. Atkinson lives and from whom he takes his emotions, dried up the springs of all streams that had any sweet water for human thirst. The academic class in Ireland, because the visible enthusiasm of the time threatened its interests or the interests of the classes among whom it dined and married, set its face against all Irish enthusiasms in the first instance, and then, by perhaps slow degrees, against all the great intellectual passions. An academic class is always a little

dead and deadening; and our political rancours may long have made our academic class even quicker in denial than its association with undeveloped minds, and its pre-occupation with words rather than ideas, with facts rather than emotions, made unavoidable; but I am persuaded, from much that I have heard and read, that it only came to its full maturity of bitterness in the agrarian revolution.

One would be content to wait in silence the change that must already have begun within itself, had it not in part destroyed, and was it not still destroying, the imaginative life of the minds that have come under its influence. An American publisher of great experience said to me the other day: "I have noticed that quite a number of young men, who have come to the States from your Dublin University, try literature or art, but that they always take to commerce in the end. They are very clever—smart, we say—and they make a pot of money; but why do they do it?" I answered, so far as I remember, "Trinity College, Dublin, makes excellent scholars, but it does not make men with any real love for ideal things or with any fine taste in the arts. One does not meet really cultivated Trinity College men as one meets really cultivated Oxford and Cambridge men. The atmosphere of what is called educated Dublin is an atmosphere of cynicism—a cynicism without ideas which expresses itself at the best in a wit without charm." I might have said that our academic class has had the educating of the great majority of Irishmen who are educated at all, and yet that almost all Irishmen who have any fine taste in the arts, any gift for imaginative writing, any mastery over style, have come from beyond its influence, or have a fierce or smouldering anger awaiting to thrust it to its fall. It might have opposed the often narrow enthusiasm of nationalism with the great intellectual passions of the world, as I think Professor Dowden would have preferred; but it chose the easier way, that brings the death of imagination and at last the death of character.

"All folk-lore is essentially abominable": in that mood it has lived and worked, and of that mood its influence is dying. Fortunately for its country it has raised up powerful enemies, perhaps the most powerful of all enemies. "Imagination," as an old theologian has written, "cannot be hindered because it creates and substantiates as it goes." Imagination and style are the only things that can, as it were, root and uproot the heart and give men what loves and hates they will; and our academic class understands in some dim way that its influence is passing into the hands of men who are seeking to create a criticism of life which will weigh all Irish interests, and bind rich and poor into one brotherhood; and a literature which will bring together, as Homer and Dante and Shakespeare and all religions have brought together, the arranging and comparing powers of the man of books, and the dreams and idealisms of the man of legends. Our academic class has worked against imagination and character, against the mover and sustainer of manhood; and eternity is putting forth its flaming fingers to bring its work to

nothing. It understands that a movement which has published and sold in seven years more books about Ireland and of all kinds than were published and sold during the thirty years before it began, and that has published and sold fifty thousand Gaelic text books in a single year, must be taking away the attention, and perhaps the respect, of all young minds that have a little literature and a little ideality. Our academic class has hated enthusiasm, and Irish enthusiasm above all, and it has scorned the Irish poor; and here is a movement which has made a religion of the arts, which would make our hills and rivers beautiful with memories, and which finds its foundations in the thoughts and the traditions of the Irish poor. Hence that angry voice, sounding so strange in the modern world, and crying that "all folk-lore is essentially abominable," that a charming and admired book "is so very low," that an old literature, which has inspired many poets, has very "little of the ideal and very little imagination," and that a book of folk tales, which no folklorist has ever heard of, is full of "filth," which he will not "even demean himself to mention." Nor is this a solitary voice, for one finds the same violence of petulance, or a brawling or chuckling cynicism, which is perhaps worse, at many tables and in the mouths of Judges, Professors, and politicians. Until the young have pushed these men from their stools or have come to think of them as many, younger than I, do already, and as I perhaps am too deep in the argument to do, with the good-humoured indifference with which one remembers Jacobins and Jacobites, we shall not have a natural and simple intellectual life in Ireland.

W. B. Yeats.

X.

Folk-Lore as Literature.

When I had somewhat recovered from my astonishment and dismay at the terrible things uttered by our great linguist, Professor Atkinson, concerning folk-tales in general and Irish folk-tales in particular, I set myself to consider what it could be that had moved a quiet and worthy gentleman to condemn so fiercely a branch of literature to which I had myself devoted a share of attention, even going so far as to publish a volume of this "abominable" stuff, without any consciousness of its real nature, and rather with the impression that I was doing something rather more deserving of praise than blame. It is known to many that a society exists in these islands—there is another in America—which studies folk-tales as one of the most important branches of folk-lore, chiefly with a view to the extraction from these relics of the past of whatever scientific results they can be made to yield concerning the history

of human beliefs, customs, and institutions. To this use of the folk-tale Professor Atkinson would not, I suppose, object. But there are some members of the societies referred to who have not scrupled to avow that their interest in the tales is even more literary than scientific; and two of them have made themselves responsible for volume after volume of selected Fairy Tales. Have they both been engaged in corrupting a whole generation of the young? The point is perhaps too absurd to discuss seriously. I should not have thought of doing so had it not occurred to me that our Professor's strange mental perturbation was due to a characteristic of Folk-Tale literature of which he has failed to catch the significance, while the general interest of it is considerable in connection with a problem often earnestly debated in more august connections. The characteristic in question is this. Art for art's sake is the dominating principle in Folk-Literature, and the conditions of this literature are such as to afford an admirable exemplification of the merits of this principle and of its limitations. The Folk-Tale moves in a purely fantastic region, in which very few of the laws that ordinarily restrain human actions prevail. Now—and here I refer particularly to the Gaelic Branch of these compositions—it is obvious that the violence which sometimes prevails, and the only thing that occurs to me as affording a shadow of a suggestion as to our Professor's meaning, cannot have the same significance as in a story of actual life. The bloodshed we are made to witness, the prodigious slaughters that take place on the smallest provocation have really no effect in making any of us indifferent to suffering or causing us to delight in cruelty. If people are easily killed they are just as easily brought to life again. When a man can lose his head three times and get it fixed on again successfully in one series of adventures, the taking of life obviously is a much less serious matter than when it is impossible

"To lift from the dust that has drunk it a man's ruddy life-blood by charming."

The consequence of this indifference to violence, which, if the conditions were actual would revolt us, coupled with the suspension thereby made possible of moral law as regards one of its branches, is equivalent to the reign of "'art for arts' sake" pure and simple. That is to say all the incidents that take place are chosen with but a single object—literary effect. But in order that this freedom from moral restraint may not offend, another principle which also serves a second purpose comes into play. Marvel succeeds marvel with the utmost rapidity. One is no sooner flashed upon the screen with dazzling distinctness than it is withdrawn to make way for another. None are allowed to remain long enough before us to admit of a minute inspection. Otherwise we might become impertinently critical of the anatomy of the giant with the three heads or of the dragon's tail. Moreover, the suspension of moral conditions is far from universal. There are good characters as well as bad. The list of

virtue exemplified is far from mean. Courage, fidelity, affection, gratitude, charity, are all shown in action. And from this we learn how impossible it is to set art wholly free from moral bonds. The most extreme modern advocate of license is obliged to select which restraints he will set at defiance, and which he will respect. It is, perhaps, needless to point out that in our own days the laws most frequently chosen for defiance are those of sexual morality. An endeavour is usually made to restore the balance by the ascription of other virtues—courage, honesty, and so on. For utter wickedness can rarely be endured. This fundamental truth has long since been recognised in the Folk-Tale. Yet Professor Atkinson can only describe it as "abominable." "Too near the sod!" This seems an unlucky utterance. What highest thing is there in the visible world from the forest tree to the body of man that in their decay the sod receives not to cover over their corruption and restore their elements to purity? Too near the sod! A misfortune that is also common to the daisy and the whin that cloaks the hills with gold.

Has the peasant then rendered us a service in preserving these tales or not? He is, sometimes, no doubt, a coarse person as well as an ignorant one. But it is singular, on the whole how clear his narratives are. For the dirt in Dr. Hyde's stories Professor Atkinson has been obliged to go to the feet of a certain unwashed hero. It would have been far more to the purpose if he had found it on the lips from which it is assuredly absent. Of my own stories, I am still unashamed, and I have many more unpublished which might appear to-morrow without offence. It is, by the way, somewhat singular that the Professor should have praised so unreservedly the Arabian Nights, for he must be well aware that it has been necessary to cut out of them the most sickening and revolting indecencies to fit them for general reading.

I may, in concluding these remarks, perhaps, venture to point out how the literary attraction of the Folk-Tales is enhanced by the scientific interest that underlies them. I am, indeed, by no means sure that our folk-lorists have at all found the right key to unlock their significance. Relics of old savagery they doubtless contain. But civilisation is old also; and it may yet turn out that the wonders, impossible in our opinion, which crowd the stories, are but distorted recollections of forgotten realities. Already it has been conjectured that the animal monsters which occur so frequently are dim survivals in the memory of the race of the strange extinct creatures, which once, as we know, existed. What other human documents can take us back to the epochs recorded in the dumb rocks? What other literature carries within it such a burden of immemorial knowledge combined with infantine simplicity of aspect? As an illustration of this let me quote a little Irish tale which runs to the following effect:—A woman dwelling by a wood which went by a name indicating that it grew where once had been a treeless plain, sent her child to the house of a neighbour to ask for the loan of a sieve. When the

youngster entered the house he was sent to, the woman was out, but a child was lying in the cradle. "My mammy," said the messenger, "has sent me for the loan of the himmedje-ham-medge," which was a childish name he gave the sieve, pretending he could not pronounce the right word. The occupant of the cradle burst out laughing: "It's easily you could have said 'sieve,' before a tree in the wood outside was planted." Seeing himself detected, the first child, who was really a fairy, joined in the other's laughter, and both at once vanished. And so do these tales of the people come lisping to us in the language of childhood as if they were little innocents only born yesterday, when all the while

They are old and gray.
Oh! so old:
Thousands of years on thousands of years
If all were told.

WILLIAM LARMINIE.

XI.

Irish in Intermediate Schools.

The recent controversy touching the teaching of Irish in the Intermediate Education system has called forth a lot of most interesting correspondence in the *Express*, and it is a pleasing feature that even in this Conservative organ only a single letter, and that an anonymous one, written I should say by Mr. Gwynn, has in any way attempted to take the part of the Professor of Sanscrit. The last crowning blow struck by that steady friend of the Irish, Mr. Alfred Nutt, I hope you will be able to reproduce in your columns. The letter of "V.," Dr. Atkinson's only apologist, makes it desirable to say a few words more upon the subject, and what so fitting a medium as the "Claidheamh" to give them utterance. After the virulent unscrupulousness of Dr. Mahaffy, and the wild and whirling words of Dr. Atkinson, it is pleasant to find Trinity College through its advocate "V." adopting a more chastened tone. His letter, however, simply begs the issues that have been raised. A great deal of it is taken up with an eulogy on Dr. Atkinson's Homilies from the "Leabhar Breac." Now, nobody ever assailed Dr. Atkinson as a foremost scholar in Middle Irish, and I gladly admit that his Homilies with the appended glossary is a splendid piece of accurate and painstaking work, for which I and all Irish scholars willingly acknowledge our indebtedness. There has not been manifested, either by Dr. OHickey, Fr. O'Leary, or Dr. Hyde, the slightest inclination to underrate or belittle Dr. Atkinson's work as a lexicographer. Still I utterly object to such loose statements as those made by "V.," that "with the exception of a few short vocabularies and lists of glosses

by O'Curry and others, the student until recently had access to nothing which resembles a lexicon," seeing that O'Reilly's dictionary alone contains about 50,000 words, and has been in existence for seventy years. I also take exception to such a statement as this:—"The work of arranging the vocabulary of ancient Irish is being carried on in the same lines (as Dr. Atkinson's book) by Messrs. Zimmer and Windisch and other distinguished scholars," when every Irish student knows perfectly well that Windisch's "Wörterbuch," containing 532 double pages, appeared in 1880, and Dr. Atkinson's, containing 435 double pages, only appeared seven years later, and that while Windisch has tackled the most difficult texts in saga and poetry from the oldest MSS., Dr. Atkinson has confined himself to the late Middle Irish of the "Leabhar Breac," and to texts which are merely ecclesiastical. But to come to the arguments in this letter; I think "V." is laughing at us, if he pretends that one of the reasons for abolishing Irish from the Intermediate as furnishing an inadequate mental training, is—lack of teachers! Who ever thought that Irish was compulsory? Are the good teachers not to teach because, forsooth, they are not more numerous! Is Irish not to be taught at all because everyone is not able to teach it! I presume that it is with Irish as with every other subject, that where there is no teacher it will not be taught. "V.'s" letter winds up by coolly reasserting the very things that have been all along denied, and which it makes not the very slightest attempt to prove. "As for the study of modern Irish," it says, "we may take it for granted"—why, may I ask, take it for granted when so many of the best authorities deny it?—"that owing to its unsettled forms, the absence of a recognised standard, and above all, its want of any literature of value, its study in our elementary schools"—observe that the present inquiry is about our secondary schools—". . . . is a sinful waste of time." Well, much as "V." may dislike to hear it, I assure him we have not the very slightest intention of taking these things for granted, or of believing that a literary subject which is compulsory upon every student in Maynooth, is not a fit one to teach in our secondary schools, much as Trinity College hates the very sound of it. The last item in this letter which requires an answer is the assertion that "Dr. Hyde will have little difficulty in reconciling" what Dr. Atkinson said in the "Yellow Book of Lecan" with what he said before the Commission. Let us see. Dr. Atkinson writes thus of the Old Irish sagas contained in the "Yellow Book of Lecan." *They do not often sin by grossness of speech and probably never by licentiousness of thought.*" This is Dr. Atkinson, the Irish student, in his study. We are asked to reconcile with this the statement "*it would be difficult to find an ancient Irish book that would not give his Lordship a shock*" (through its indecency or coarseness) "*from which he would not recover for the rest of his life.*" This is Dr. Atkinson, the English politician, in the witness chair. Let who can

reconcile these statements. Dr. Hyde apparently could not. I am sorry I cannot either.

Now, Dr. Atkinson is, as "V." tells us, "a scholar whose acquaintance with the literatures of the world is singularly deep and comprehensive," but he is a scholar who takes not the slightest interest in Irish literature except as a grammatical and etymological study, and consequently he has never published a single Irish poem, epic or saga. He has confined himself to studying the religious books simply because they offer the easiest vocabulary for lexicographical purposes. Outside of his prefaces to some of the fac-similes produced by the Royal Irish Academy, his work has been confined to editing and glossating Keating's religious book, the "Three Shafts of Death," the Sermons from the Leabhar Breac, and the Book of Hymns. The only other things he has done are a little treatise of 32 pages on Metric and some short papers on grammatical subjects. Consequently, Dr. Atkinson cannot for one moment be placed on the same high level of literary scholarship with Dr. Zimmer, Dr. Windisch, Dr. Whitley Stokes, Dr. Kuno Meyer, or Dr. Standish Hayes O'Grady, who have all investigated the literature from a literary point of view, and have rendered accessible to us the things which have for us a real human interest peculiar to the Irish race alone, that is the sagas, epics, and poems, of which, if we were dependent on Dr. Atkinson, we would know not one single page—in fact could scarcely even guess that such things existed. The opinion of any one of these men is preferable to that of Dr. Atkinson upon any matter concerning Irish literature as such, and I am certain that he himself would acknowledge it. By the by, it is worth remarking that in view of the opinion of the Dr. Atkinson of the witness chair, as to the unworthiness and general low tone of Irish literature, that the other Dr. Atkinson—Dr. Atkinson of the study—had already written as follows in the little tract on Metric above referred to:—"I believe Irish verse to have been"—I add—and still to be—"the most perfectly harmonious combination of sound that the world has ever known, I know of nothing in the world's literature like it." This, of course, is also reconcilable with the evidence given before the Commission, but it is worth quoting, for the public would hardly believe it.

But the point to which I really wish to call attention is, that, as upon Irish un-ecclesiastical literature, so upon modern Irish Grammar, Dr. Atkinson is no authority whatsoever. To judge from his exploits in the appendix to Keating he could not write a correct letter in it to save his life. I suppose, in fact, he has never attempted it, for the only compositions of his that I know of are a few short sentences in his grammatical appendix to Keating, page vi., to exemplify an idiom on which he comically remarks—"the modern usage is hardly ascertainable from the grammars." He then constructs his own sentences to exemplify this idiom, and in almost every one of them he makes the completest hash and muddle imaginable. He

absolutely—I appeal for the truth of this to every Irish scholar living —confounds the predicate with the subject, and the subject with the predicate, violating entirely the grammatical construction of the language, and showing that no matter what his study of it may have been, he had not got the grasp of it that a gossoon in a Connemara bog has. On the very next page, page v., as Father O'Leary has already pointed out, his twenty or thirty examples of the use of the copula "*is*" are utterly and hopelessly wrong. Well, the only other sentence that I know of Dr. Atkinson's composition, is an attempt to reconstruct a verse published by the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language some years ago in the "Children of Lir." Dr. Atkinson first lectured the Society in an aggravating superior and supercilious manner upon publishing so bad a verse, and then he reconstructed it himself. He found the verse perfect except that it contained one foot too much; he left it a grammatical monstrosity. Imagine a man who can translate "my bed shall be a wave," by "beidh mo leaba tonn," for this is practically what Dr. Atkinson does, posing as an authority upon Irish grammar. He has in fact, shown clearly, and over and over again, that the mysteries of "*is*" and "*tâ*," of subject and predicate, are still as much mysteries to him as to a child in the Intermediate.

The Gaelic League knew all this long ago. I have often heard Dr. Atkinson's mistakes discussed by its members. But no one ever dreamt, even for one moment, of calling any attention to them in our published organs. The general feeling was that they were only too glad that the Royal Irish Academy had at last used some of the money—granted by Government for the prosecution of Irish studies in publishing something useful to and within the reach of the people like Keating's "Three Shafts," and in getting the aid of a ripe Irish scholar, like my friend the late Mr. John Fleming, to assist in it. Mr. Fleming was probably the one man in all Ireland who had made almost a life study of Keating, of part of whose work he, with that fine Irish scholar, Mr. Williams of Dungarvan, had made in his youth a transcript for the press. He worked, I believe, for months upon the "Three Shafts" for the Royal Irish Academy, explained the modern words and idioms which are not in dictionaries, and I hear the glossary is in great part his work. O'Longan's labours had been previously dismissed with the curt remark, "a meritorious scribe;" Mr. Fleming's were not even judged worthy of mention. Yet it is in consequence of this book that Dr. Atkinson is able to pose as an authority upon modern Irish grammar. Of course the Gaelic League knew these things well, but not a word would they have said had not Dr. Atkinson seen fit to fling about at us such words as "filth," "patois,' "indecency" &c. It is too good a joke that one so ignorant of the niceties of modern Irish as Dr. Atkinson has shown himself to be, should lecture us upon our patois. However, the answer to what he says is clear, and it is this: we all learn one absolutely uniform standard language from the books in vogue,

from which every Irish student learns to write and spell—e.g., Joyce's grammar, and Father O'Growney's books. It is quite true, however, that in two or three particulars, as Dr. Atkinson has himself shown, and I acknowledge well shown, in his monograph on Inflexional Forms, the modern usage in Irish verbal terminations has departed slightly from the more logical usage of Keating and his contemporaries. This, however, only means that perhaps once in a dozen pages we meet in a particular collocation a particular form of the verb which would not have been used by Keating. But every language undergoes changes in the course of 250 years, and the only wonder is that those in Irish are so little. Dr. Atkinson being an Englishman of course does not know, but he will allow me to tell him that at no time has Irish ceased to be written and spoken according to one true cultivated standard. I find the Irish I speak absolutely identical with that of every educated man I have ever met. Why? Because we all speak and write the cultured language that has never been for one moment lost or even endangered. It is only people who can neither read nor write who are in danger of anything even approaching patois. Are our efforts to learn to read and write our own language to be frustrated by three professors of Trinity College who cannot speak a word of it?

There is one other point and I have done. There are several hundreds of MSS. of modern Irish literature still existing, and included amongst them are modified versions of many of the best ancient sagas, which were read in every hedge school in Ireland a hundred years ago. Dr. Mahaffy asks, "Well, why don't you publish them?" Our answer is—"You have sixty thousand pounds a year, we have not as many pence, the public looked to you, not to us." Still, if we progress in the future at the same rate as during the last three years, it is certain that we shall.

To conclude:—Dr. Atkinson when he uttered his sensational statements must have known perfectly well that he would be challenged about them; his own words were a direct challenge and could not be passed by. I now feel constrained to believe that Dr. Atkinson has refused to speak because he finds himself utterly unable to justify his statements. As for that book of translations from the Irish which he says is full of filth and indecency, I can understand his silence on that point, because—the book does not exist. I have read every Irish book published in the British Isles for the last fifteen years, and I say again that this book is an emanation from Dr. Atkinson's own brain, heated perhaps by the horrors he tells us he has accumulated in his study, but as a concrete fact, I repeat again—that book does not exist.

C. A.

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