mīdher with their *dīl*s and *lober* their *gloχ-thribli*, if you *kradī*, you'll *bŭg* the *ladher thwurk*. *Grē, swŭbli, mislī mūilsha!'*

(l) *Stēsh solk*'d *gloχ*'s *lŭbba, grēd* and *mislīd od lyīmon*. *Thārīs*: '*Na havara mūilsha bŭg* your *lī* and your *gripa sragāster'*. *I bŭgd karb od nyuk* and *mislīd, stēsh* the *karb*'s *staffaris*. I'd as lief have the *mīdher*'s *staffaris* as the *karb*'s *staffaris*.

the fair, drunk. If you [play] the devil with them, and light upon their men-folk, [and] if you stay, you'll get the dirty time. Up, lad! I'm going myself.'

I took the man's advice, rose, and went two miles. He says: 'At home I'll give you your bed, and your supper [and] breakfast.' I gave the old woman twopence and went with the old woman's blessings. I'd as lief have the devil's blessings as the old woman's blessings.

III. Construction of the Language

In the first enthusiasm of the discovery of Shelta, it was claimed, by no less a scholar than Kuno Meyer, to be a relic of high antiquity, identical with the secret languages, of which we hear from time to time, in Irish literature, and, though now degraded to the jargon of itinerant tinkers and other vagrants, to have once been the freemasonry sign of the scholars and craftsmen of ancient Ireland. The disreputable vagabonds from whom Sampson acquired his knowledge of the tongue were the heirs of a state of society when masters of science and of art ranked by virtue of their attainments with nobles, and even with kings: and when those wonderful works of art were executed, which have come down to us out of the early Christian antiquity of Ireland.

Leland, writing to Sampson in 1899, said: 'It is one of the awfully mysterious arcana of human stupidity that there should have existed for a thousand years in Great Britain a cryptic language—the lost language of the bards—which no scholar ever heard of, and of which Borrow was totally ignorant: that I should have discovered it and hunted it up: that you should, with K. Meyer, have made such marvellous further discoveries, and shewed what it was: *et pour combler* and for a crowning sheaf of stupidity, that neither you nor I have ever published a book on the most curious linguistic discovery of the century. For even yet there is hardly a scholar who knows of its existence—of the fifth British Celtic tongue!'

That there is some material of great antiquity in Shelta is

unquestionable: but the following analysis will probably make it clear to the reader that, at least in its present form, it cannot as a whole be considered as a heritage from a remote past, and that in any case to describe it as 'a Celtic tongue' is hardly admissible.

PHONETICS

The present writer is partly a compiler and editor from the work of others, and has not acquired a first-hand knowledge of the Shelta language as it is spoken by those to whom it belongs. It is, however, possible to form a fair idea of how the words are pronounced, by taking the average of all the varied spellings used by different observers. In the following vocabulary, an attempt has been made to present every form in which the words appear in different collections, in addition to the phonetic spelling which those forms suggest. Those from Dr Sampson's collections, published and unpublished, are left unmarked: the others are assigned to their authors by initials (for particulars and references see the opening section of this chapter). These are as follows:

A = Arnold
C = Crofton [MS. book]
C′ = Crofton [in *Academy*]
F = ffrench
G = Greene [in *Bēaloideas*]
G′ = Greene [MS.]
K = Carmichael [pub. by MacRitchie]
K′ = Carmichael [MS.]
L = Leland [Pennsylvania list]
L′ = Leland [Aberystwyth list]
N = Norwood
R = Russell
W = Wilson

The usually obvious etymology of the words helps to determine their phonetic form; but this is not invariably trustworthy. It has been found impossible to determine the true vowels in many cases: they are given by different collectors almost at haphazard.

In the consonants, there are two outstanding difficulties. The palatalized consonants have proved a serious stumbling-block to collectors, and evidence for this Gaelic characteristic, which is taken over into Shelta, has to be carefully looked for. Thus, the word for 'bad' is usually spelt *gami*: but it sometimes appears as *gyami*, which indicates that the *g* is palatalized. A study of etymologies makes it clear that what collectors write as *ch* (=č as in 'church') or *j* are really palatalized *t* and *d* respectively. For example, the word given as *jumik* 'to swear' must be derived from the Irish *mōidighim* 'I swear'. The *-im* is the personal ending:

the *-igh-* is represented by the Shelta *-ik*: the Shelta *jum* is a reversal of the Irish *mōid* [mōd'], and the *j* is therefore not *dž*, but d' [=dy].

The second difficulty which faces the editor of these collections is that singular phonetic freelance the English *r*, which intrudes unbecomingly where it should be absent ('my idea*r* is'), and absents itself disconcertingly when it should be present ('that's *ɻaðə* [=rather] fine'). In many cases I suspect that collectors have inserted it merely to lengthen a preceding vowel—just as those who write the 'answers to correspondents' in popular periodicals shock us with such statements as, 'The word should be pronounced *sonartar'*. This letter behaves with perfect propriety in Irish, in Irish-English, and presumably also in Shelta: but it seems to deviate from the paths of rectitude when Shelta is written down by non-Irish collectors. Thus, we are told that *grimsha* [grimša] means 'time'. Obviously this comes from Irish *aimser* [ams'er]; from which it follows that the word must surely have been pronounced, and ought to have been written, *grimšer*. On the other hand, *grostar* 'satisfied' clearly comes from Irish *sāsta*, and should therefore be written *grāsta* or *gråsta*. Leland seems to have been very deaf to this letter, and he often drops it where it *must* have been present on the lips of his informants. The word 'Shelta', which owes its current form to him, is a case in point: it ought to be *Sheldrū*.

The following are the phonetic symbols used in the Vocabulary. [In the 'Connected Specimens' of the language, printed above, it has been considered advisable to reproduce the spelling followed by Dr Sampson.]

VOWELS

a Short a, as in *pan*.
ā Long a, as in *father*.
å A more closed long a, as in *awe*.
e Short e, as in *pen*.
ē Long e, as in *pain*.
i Short i, as in *pin*.
ī Long i, as in *machine*.
o Short o, as in *pod*.
ō Long o, as in *mode*
u Short u, as in *pun*.
ū Long u, as in *moon*.
ə The neutral vowel-sound.

The diphthongs are

ai or **ei**	**i** in *pine*.
oi	oy in *boy*.
au	ow in *cow*.

In the phonetic representations of Irish (not Shelta) words, nasalization is indicated by the symbol ~.

A dot is used to discriminate syllables where necessary, especially when two consecutive vowels do not form a diphthong as in *tāri·in*. A diphthong is implied by the absence of the dot between vowels.

Consonants

b, **p**, **k**, as in English.

g, always hard.

d, **t**, *always* as in Irish, the tip of the tongue being pressed against the roots of the teeth. These are the characteristic dentals of the so-called 'Irish brogue' [Irish-English phonesis]: to write them *dh*, *th* is quite misleading. The ordinary English *d*, *t* are absent, both from Irish and from Shelta.

All consonants have a second set of sounds (palatalized). This may be described as being, as it were, the normal sound *plus* a '*y*', as in the provincial English *cyow*, *cyard* for *cow*, *card*. Palatalized consonants are here indicated by a mark resembling an acute accent (*c'ow*, *c'ard*). The sounds of **g'**, **d'**, approximate sufficiently to one another to cause confusion; thus *giliχon* (=**g'iliχon**) 'a book' is sometimes written *jiliχon* (=**d'iliχon**), which seems at first sight to contradict the statement that *g* is always hard.

The sound č (*ch* as in 'church') is here represented by **c**, which is not otherwise required. But in any case it is not really a Shelta sound, appearing only in some borrowed words: the sound written *ch* by collectors should really be regarded as **t'**. In some cases, however, it seems to mean χ—by which character Dr Sampson is here followed in representing, conveniently but not quite accurately, the guttural sound ḥ (*ch* in 'loch').

The symbols *θ*, ð are used whenever necessary to represent the sounds of English *th* (in *think* and *this* respectively). The Irish *th*, which is an *h* rather more fully breathed than in English, is denoted phonetically by ḥ.

Liquid consonants (*l*, *n*, *r*), when immediately following a long vowel, tend to become vocalic (*l̥*, *n̥*, *r̥*), as in the Dublin street child's pronunciation of 'aeroplane' in five distinct syllables (*ē·r̥·ō·plē·n̥*) or 'It's going to rain' (*ətś gōn to rē·n̥*). This is why

collectors so constantly write *dī-īl*, or *dhī-īl*, and similar cumbrous forms. In the phonetic transcript here this tendency is indicated by an apostrophe (dī'l). An apostrophe is also used to denote a swabharakti vowel, which if written in full tends sometimes to obscure the etymology. Thus **munk'ri** is written instead of *monkery* 'country'.

The 'broad' (unpalatalized) liquids are pronounced in Irish rather further back in the throat than in English. This has induced collectors to insert an *h* after them in some cases (*glōrhi* 'to hear'; *rīlhu* 'mad'). It is here omitted, as being unnecessary and misleading: the liquids, like other consonants, when not distinguished with the mark of palatalization, must be pronounced in the way indicated.

The symbol š is used for palatalized *s*. Properly speaking it should be s' (=sy), but even in Irish this difficult sound has become practically indistinguishable from *ś* (sh).

The accentuation of syllables is denoted (with an acute accent on the vowel) only when it falls otherwise than on the first syllable.

For the sake of simplicity the semi-vowels **w**, **y** are used in preference to *u̯*, *i̯*.

ACCIDENCE

The Article

There is no article native to Shelta, either definite or indefinite. In Irish, the absence of an article or of any other defining word is equivalent to the indefinite article. This idiom is common in Shelta: but the English indefinite article *a* is sometimes borrowed, as in the common phrase **he bog'd a milk of his d'ī'l** 'he took hold of him'. Both usages are illustrated by *β* 80, **gloχ nīd'eš a gloχ** 'a man is not a man' [unless, etc.].

The definite article is often omitted where both English and Irish usage would require its presence. Thus *β* 8, **n'urt l'esk mwīlša tul, tāris b'ōr'**, means 'now tell me [the] price, says [the] woman'. Otherwise the Irish article ***an***, usually shortened or carelessly pronounced *in*,[1] or the English ***the***, are borrowed indefinitely. An example is **trīpus in gloχ** '**fight the** man'. The Irish article appears more frequently in the genitive case. This is *an*

[1] This cannot be regarded as a survival of the Old Irish form *in, ind*: rather is it a reversion thereto.

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