

FIFTY GOLDEN YEARS

History of
The Gaelic
League in
Waterford

BY

MATTHEW BUTLER



Leabharlann

Waterford

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AN SÚM

Roinnt de leabhair púneamla Saeóilge

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BROLLACH

By the Minister for Education.

On the last day of July in the year 1893, a dozen comparatively unknown men met in a room in Dublin and founded a Society for the purpose of saving Irish as a living spoken language. That meeting was one of the great events in our history, for it was the occasion of the founding of the Gaelic League.

Inside a decade the movement for the revival of the Language had swept the country like a great fire, filling the towns and villages, the schools and colleges with such a flame of enthusiasm and inspiration that every alien force and agent in the country was shaken into a recognition of its power. Thus were laid the foundations of the great movement which prepared the way for that national uprising which has raised the Irish State into being and which has restored to the Irish people the government of their own land after a lapse of nearly a thousand years. It was the Language Revival that gave a fundamental meaning to the struggle for freedom and provided the background of national tradition and national faith that carried our people so far on the road to victory.

But the victory is not yet wholly won. The

greatest of the waves of conquest still lies over us, surging to submerge our native speech, our native modes of thought, all that deep and intimate national life that can be lived and expressed only through the medium of our national language. If we aim to rescue the precious heritage of the past from this hungry flood we must kindle in our hearts a love of Irish as our own language, the treasury of our history and traditions, the tongue of saints and scholars, of kings and warriors. We must realise that as citizens of Ireland it is our bounden duty to do everything in our power to foster the culture and traditions which distinguish us as a nation. We must accept the gospel of the Gaelic League that the Irish Language is the great symbol of our national individuality and that if we allow the language to go we cannot preserve our distinctive nationality.

County Waterford includes within its boundaries areas in which the Irish Language still lives, rich, vigorous and idiomatic, on the lips of the people. During all the years that have passed since the Gaelic League was founded thousands have come to Ring and Ardmore, to make acquaintance with the Ireland which an alien education system had hidden from them, to listen to the picturesque speech, the melodious songs, the tales of saints and heroes, handed down for centuries and preserved in spite of fire and sword and merciless persecution. As befits men and women who have the native speech still living amongst them, the people of the City and County of Waterford have at all times been among the foremost in the fight for the Language. Ceanntair na Déise has given its full contribution to the roll of earnest workers and skilled teachers and writers, a number of the pioneers being still with us, thank God, and I am very glad indeed that

henceforth we shall have in Maitiú de Buitléir's booklet a record of all that the patriotic sons and daughters of Portláirge have done and written to make the present and the future "a rational continuation of the past."

Guidhim bail ó Dhia ar an obair.

T. Ó DEIRG.

Iadh Bealtaine, 1944.

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Tuille eólar le fáil ó

A. C. Ó Cillín, Príom-Oifigeat

An Ceáru Sgoil Catharú,
Spáiré Párrail.

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CHAPTER I.

The Task I Have Set Myself

The intention was to produce a larger work containing a considerable amount of matter in the Irish language. That had been collected when unforeseen circumstances necessitated a drastic restriction of the original plan. In its present form it is the merest outline of the work done in the Decies for the preservation of our national language—the most distinctive symbol of our separate nationhood. Its pages record the work of many great and famous people; they tell also of some of the obstructions put in their way and, perhaps, the greatest obstruction is carelessness and apathy towards our greatest national asset.

That should not be. No greater or nobler use of our spare time can be visualised than in learning our national language if we do not already possess a knowledge of it. Despite all the false reasons alleged against it, the learning of the Irish language is not a difficult task, and having learned it, the next thing is to speak it on all possible occasions.

At the time when text books were almost unobtainable and competent teachers few, many learned the language. Hence, to-day, no adequate reason exists for not learning it. In the fol-

lowing pages can be found examples of Bishops, priests, nuns, teachers, etc., giving every help, assistance and encouragement and there is no reason to suppose that similar aid will not be forthcoming to-day.

Hence, in every parish, or church area, there should be established a branch of Connradh na Gaedhilge or similar organisation for teaching, speaking and writing the language. From Dunmore to Clashmore, from Clonmel to Ardmore, every area should have its organisation. That is the best tribute that can be paid to the great and unselfish workers of the past. Who will lead the way? Cuir Connradh na Gaedhilge sprid nua sa tir agus ba ceart an sprid sin a leathnughadh i ngac paroisde i gCondae Phortláirge. Mar a dubhairt Tomás Daibhis “ba choir do náisiun a theanga chosaint nios treise ná cosnadh sé a chriocha—is daingne d’fhal chosanta i agus is tabhachtaighe de theorainn ná dun ná abhainn.” Sin é soisgeal na Gaedhilge.

MAITIU DE BUTTLEIR.

CHAPTER II.

The Forerunners



It must not be imagined that the Decies awaited the founding of the Gaelic League in order to generate enthusiasm for the support, cultivation and spread of the use of the Irish language. From the distant days of Dr. Geoffrey Keating the Decies always held many sincere and earnest advocates of the greater use of the national language of Ireland. Even though they may not have recognised it they were at war with the encroachment of a foreign culture; they were guarding the preservation of the most distinctive of the external symbols of our separate nationhood.

Going back one hundred years, we find Dr. Abraham, Bishop of the Diocese, an earnest supporter of the Irish language. One of his successors was Dr. O'Brien, and in the Preface to the Irish Catechism issued by the Keating Society in 1863 we find William Williams of Dungarvan writing:—

“If the loving voice of the Venerable Dr. Abraham is no longer heard among us the

Dioceses of Waterford and Lismore have the good fortune of being governed by a learned prelate whose deep knowledge of our native language is only equalled by his zeal for its cultivation; a fact which finds significant expression in the existence, both in his Lordship's own College and in some of the public schools of these dioceses, of flourishing Irish classes."

In these words tribute is paid to the work of Dr. Abraham and to the enthusiasm of Dr. O'Brien. During the whole period of his occupancy of the See of Waterford and Lismore Dr. O'Brien was a patron of Irish scribes and a collector of Irish manuscripts. The latter he bequeathed to St. John's College, Waterford. The Irish classes in St. John's College, to which reference was made by William Williams, were taught by Tomas O h-Icidhe of Killenaule, Co. Tipperary, for twenty years or so before his retirement in the early fifties of last century. From the words of Mr. Williams we know that Irish classes had been continued in St. John's College after the retirement of Tomas O h-Icidhe.

Among the successors of Dr. O'Brien it is probable that Most Rev. Dr. Pierse Power (1887-1889) was most outstanding in his advocacy of the study of the Irish language. He was elected unanimously a Vice-President of the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language because of his strenuous efforts to further the work of that Society.

Of all the Catholic clergymen in the diocese who, from 1840 to 1890, gave time, effort and enthusiasm to the diffusion of a greater use of the Irish language, none has left a reputation equal to that of Rev. Patrick Meany. For over 30 years he was the most eloquent Irish preacher in the diocese.

The Ossianic Society was founded in 1853 mainly for the publication (with English translations) of Irish manuscripts. John O'Daly, then of Dublin, but a native of the Modeligo district of Co. Waterford, was the moving spirit of the enterprise. Many Irish enthusiasts from Co. Waterford were among its members. At their head was Most Rev. Dr. O'Brien, the bishop. Rev. Patrick Meany was a member, as was Rev. Gerald Meany, C.C., St. James's, Blackburn, Lancashire. Rev. Gerald was a younger brother of Rev. Patrick Meany.

Among other names of Waterford clergy to be found in that Society were Rev. John Casey, P.P., Kilrossanty and Fewes; Rev. Patrick O'Donnell, C.C., Ardfinnan; Rev. Michael Casey, C.C., Ballyknock, Carrick-on-Suir; Rev. John Treacy, C.C., Kilrossanty; Rev. Michael Walsh, P.P., Dunhill; Rev. John Dee, C.C., Carrickbeg; Rev. William B. Gibbons, O.S.A., Carrickbeg; Rev. John Joy, C.C., Dunhill; Rev. P. Morrissey, P.P., Ballyneal, Carrick-on-Suir; Rev. Francis O'Brien, St. John's College (he died P.P. of Dungarvan); Rev. Thomas Qualy, P.P., Knockanore, and Rev. William Shanahan, C.C., Ballyneal, Carrick-on-Suir.

In addition there were many other clergymen in the diocese at that period actively interested in all aspects of Irish culture. Thus in the "Freeman's Journal" of April 4th, 1860, we read that Most Rev. Dr. O'Brien had ordained Rev. Thomas Lenihan of Clonmel in the Cathedral at Waterford; we read further that while a student in Maynooth he distinguished himself by his accurate acquaintance with the history and antiquities of Ireland and by his perfect knowledge of her ancient and beautiful tongue. In the "Limerick Reporter" of August 16th, 1853, we

read that Rev. Robert Foran had been for a few years on the English Mission but had been recalled to his native diocese. While on the Mission in Newcastle-on-Tyne he had frequently preached in Irish to congregations of his countrymen. He became Adm. of St. John's, Waterford, and finally P.P. of Ballylooby. He was a nephew of Most Rev. Dr. Foran, Bishop from 1837 to 1855.

Taking a similar glance at laymen of the period resident in Co. Waterford, we must accord pride of place to Philip Barron. He was the first man in Ireland to recognise that personal scholarship in the Irish language was not sufficient; that the Irish language must become the ordinary everyday language of the people. Born in Durrow, Co. Waterford, in a large house which, as far as can be ascertained, is yet in existence, he spoke the Irish language from his infancy. As he grew up and came to a discerning age he saw that in the higher social life of the country in which he moved the Irish language and all that it connoted—Irish music, Irish song, an Irish outlook—were not regarded with favour—in fact, they were looked on as the language and customs of the lower orders, and as such a badge of social inferiority. He set himself to remedy that and anticipated the work of the Gaelic League by nearly 60 years.

Thomas Gallagher, the first National Teacher appointed in Ballygunner National School, announced in 1835 that he was prepared to teach the Irish language, without fee or reward, to all who were desirous of learning it, before or after school hours and from 7 o'clock in the morning. At the same time a Mr. Doyle carried on an Academy in Queen Street, Waterford, where students were prepared for commercial and profes-

sional life. He made a knowledge of the Irish language compulsory on those of his students who were preparing for the professions; that was perhaps the first example we possess in modern days of compulsory Irish in education.

Even though the Ossianic Society of 1853 was not primarily concerned with the study and spread of the Irish language, yet it was the most Irish society of its day and membership of it connoted a mentality favourable to the study and preservation of the Irish language. In its ranks we find many names from Co. Waterford, some of whom would not be regarded without such evidence as being in any way favourable to the Irish language or its preservation.

Thus William C. Bonaparte Wyse and Napoleon Bonaparte Wyse; Mrs. Fairholme, Comeragh House, Kilmacthomas; James Veale, Cappoquin; William Williams, Dungarvan; Thomas J. Crean, Dungarvan; John Fleming, Clonea; Michael Goff, 4 Barker Street, Waterford; Michael Kiersey, The Mills, Kilmacthomas; Patrick Kirwan, Graigavalla, Carrick-on-Suir; John O'Hannigan, Dungarvan; William Power, 116 Barrack Street, Waterford; Patrick James Power, Coolagh, Dungarvan; Patrick Williams, Dungarvan; Michael Carbery, Kilrossanty (he was introduced by Rev. John Casey, P.P.); John Healy, Mill Road, Cappoquin; Patrick Phelan, P.L.G., Rathgormac, Carrick-on-Suir, and Philip Troy, Knockanaris, Clashmore. All those were interested in the publication of manuscripts then existing in the Irish language.

Another member was Mrs. Margaret E. Mackesy. She was wife of Rev. William Mackesy, a native of the city of Waterford and from 1827 to 1847 Rector of Clashmore, Co. Waterford. From 1847 until his death in September, 1882, he was Rector of a parish in Co. Meath. Mrs.

Mackesy possessed "a manuscript of varied and interesting contents written in Irish in 1814-19 by Tomas O h-Icidhe of Killenaule, Co. Tipperary." Subsequent to writing that manuscript he was Professor of Irish in St. John's College, Waterford.

Next came the Keating Society. Nominally it was a society covering all Munster and its object was the rescuing by printing and publishing of Catholic and religious works written in the Irish language and at that date remaining in unpublished Irish manuscripts. Even though its scope covered all Munster it is very probable that the concept of the Society and its driving virility emanated from Co. Waterford and found origin and force in the actively Gaelic brains of Rev. Patrick Meany and William Williams of Dungarvan.

That Society was launched on April 23rd, 1861, and Most Rev. Dr. O'Brien, Bishop of the diocese, was one of its Vice-Presidents. Among the names on the organising committee were Rev. Michael Burke, P.P., Clonmel; Rev. Patrick Delaney, Vice-President, St. John's College, Waterford; Rev. Jeremiah Halley, P.P., Dungarvan; Rev. Patrick Morrissey, P.P., Ballyneale, Carrick-on-Suir; Rev. Francis O'Brien, St. John's College, and William Williams, Dungarvan. James O'Connor, National Bank, Carrick-on-Suir, was treasurer, and Rev. Patrick Meany, C.C., Ballyknock, Carrick-on-Suir, was honorary secretary.

It was announced at its origin that as soon as the Society had 500 members its first work would be published. That first work appeared in 1863 when a Catechism in the Irish language, written by William Williams, was published. It was the only work published by that Society and was in

use in the diocese of Waterford and Lismore until long after the foundation of the Gaelic League.

Some years passed away and in succession two other societies advocating the study, use and preservation of the Irish language arose. Their activities covered all Ireland but they found many active and sincere adherents in the Decies. In 1876 appeared the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language and the year 1880 saw the birth of the Gaelic Union. To a great extent those associated with the one were also active in the work of the other.

John Fleming of Rathgormac had been an active worker in the Ossianic Society in 1853 and from that period had laboured incessantly for the greater use and study of the Irish language. His name appeared on the Councils of both the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language in 1876 and the Gaelic Union in 1880. Among early members of the former Society can be found those of F. E. Currey, Lismore Castle; James Delahunty, M.P., Waterford; Thomas Sexton, M.P.; Patrick Kirwan, Graigavalla, Carrick-on-Suir; Edmond Leamy, 21 King Street, Waterford; Dr. J. Martin, Portlaw; Stephen P. O'Brien, Collegiate Academy, Lady Lane, Waterford; J. E. O'Halloran, National Bank, Dungarvan (and later in Cahir) and Rev. Father Sladen, P.P., Modeligo.

By 1878 John Fleming had an Irish class in his school in Rathgormac on two days of the week before school hours; not only did he teach the language but from his scanty means provided prizes for proficiency in its study. William Keating had a class of 45 studying Irish in his school in Bennetschurch; Nicholas Hayes had an Irish class in his school in Ballinamult; James O'Donnell had a similar class in his school in

Newtown, Ballymacarbery; an Irish class was in operation in St. John's College, Waterford, and on November 30th, 1877, Stephen P. O'Brien started an Irish class in his Academy in Lady Lane, Waterford, and taught it himself. In April, 1877, Napoleon Bonaparte Wyse wrote to the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language that "he had patiently acquired a knowledge of the time-honoured Irish language." He was a member of the Ossianic Society in 1853.

One of the principal aims of the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language at that time was to have the Irish language taught in the National Schools. To enable that to be done in any such school the teacher had to obtain a certificate from the Board of National Education; that certificate was obtained by examination and meant an adequate knowledge of the language and competency to teach it. In 1879 John Fleming of Rathgormac and Patrick O'Donnell of Fenor National Schools obtained such certificates, being the first two teachers in the county to obtain them. To us it may appear grotesque that John Fleming should have to undergo an examination to test his knowledge of the language and his competency to teach it. But so it was.

At that time the teaching of the Irish language in National Schools was penalised in this manner: the Board of National Education had made a rule or regulation that all pupils in a National School learning Irish should pay 2/- a quarter to the teacher. That rule operated very adversely against the study of the language in schools, especially in poorer areas—in fact that penalisation prevented many pupils learning the language. From its foundation the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language had endeavoured to have that rule removed; its efforts were directed

through Thomas Sexton, M.P., and in 1881 he was successful in having that obnoxious rule abrogated.

One of the great difficulties at that time was the absence of a sufficiency of suitable elementary, or indeed other, text books. The Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language set itself to remedy that defect. Nicholas Hayes of Ballinamult, mentioned already, was very active in endeavouring to stimulate other National Teachers to exert themselves on behalf of the preservation of the language and to provide themselves with such Irish text books as were available.

In 1880 Irish classes were taught in the Presentation Convent, Lismore, mainly through the energy and under the guidance of Rev. Peter Casey, C.C., of that town. In Modeligo Rev. Richard Sladen, P.P., was very earnest in distributing Irish books to his parishioners; many other clergymen and laymen were active workers in a dispiriting atmosphere and in far from optimistic conditions. In many parts of Ireland, and in Co. Waterford no less, some parents objected to their children being taught Irish; so deep had the iron of the slave mind entered into their souls that they looked on their native language, the language of their ancestors, as a mark of social inferiority. Most Rev. Dr. Egan, Bishop of Waterford, has left it on record that he found that mentality in Co. Clare and the Sisters of the Mercy Convent in Stradbally, Co. Waterford, had to fight against it in 1895.

In 1881 a young student of St. John's College, Waterford, organised in that College the O'Curry branch of the Gaelic Union. That student was named M. P. O'Hickey and he was ably assisted by another student named Patrick Power. On the Council of the Gaelic Union in 1882 appeared

the name of M. P. O'Hickey while still a student in St. John's. His career is stamped indelibly on the face of Ireland's history. That other student who so ably assisted in that Gaelicising work is known, respected and honoured to-day as Very Rev. Patrick Canon Power, D.Litt., M.R.I.A. When that O'Curry branch was affiliated to the Gaelic Union in February, 1882, it had 60 members in that College.

On August 15th, 1882, an Irish Congress was held in Dublin and from Waterford County there attended Michael Foley of Ring, and W. M. Veale from Tramore; the former made a powerful plea for greater efforts to save the national language. It is interesting to note that Maurice Lenihan was also present and that Edmund Harvey, The Grange, Waterford, wrote making suggestions. In 1883 the Waterford Board of Guardians agreed to give preference to Irish speaking candidates in the making of medical appointments.

In 1885 the Sisters in the Convent of Mercy, Dungarvan, were very enthusiastic in the study of the Irish language; Michael Foley came from Ring to teach them on every Saturday; to such good purpose did their studies progress that in 1886 one of the Sisters obtained her certificate of competency to teach the language. Michael Foley was also active in another direction. With the advent of the G.A.A. great athletic activity developed in Co. Waterford. A football club was started in Ring and they were taught by Michael Foley to use only the Irish language in all their games whether practising or against an opposing team. In 1889 that Ring football team took part in the County Championships and used the Irish language exclusively in all their contests.

In those early years the Christian Brothers at Mount Sion were very favourable and Celtic (as

the Irish language was called in the then Intermediate programme) was taught as an ordinary school subject from 1884, and probably earlier. In 1885 a Mount Sion pupil won a medal for first place (junior) in Celtic at the Intermediate Examinations and a similar medal for first place in Celtic was won by a Mount Sion boy (middle grade) in 1886. The same boy won both medals, he was John Drohan. From its foundation Celtic was taught also in Waterpark College. For the ten years before the foundation of the Gaelic League Irish was taught in the Christian Brothers' Schools in Waterford.

From the date of its arrival in Waterford the De La Salle Order was in favour of the teaching of the Irish language. For a period Mr. J. P. Cunningham had charge of the Irish classes in Mount Sion but in 1899 he severed his connection with that school and set up as a tutor in Waterford. In 1889 or 1890 Mr. J. L. Ahern (Waterford) was in active association with the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language. In 1893 and 1894 the question of having the Irish language taught in Training Colleges for National Teachers was discussed widely. In 1894 the De La Salle Training College, Waterford, appointed a Professor of the Irish Language and Mr. J. L. Ahern was selected for the post. That was the first such appointment in any Training College in Ireland.

There were many workers in those pre-Gaelic League days whose activities extended into the period covered by the Gaelic League. Michael Foley of Ring was one; Robert Weldon, the poet of the Comeraghs, was another; so were several of the Catholic clergymen--and they all felt the gladness of a new spring coursing through their veins as the hope and confidence generated by the Gaelic League spread through the country.

CHAPTER III.

The Gaelic League in Waterford

RUMBLINGS

The Gaelic League was founded in 1893 but its influence was not felt in Co. Waterford for a few years although the message it carried was known and appreciated in the Decies.

In April, 1895, Michael Foley of Ring announced to a meeting of National Teachers in Dungarvan that the Gaelic League would hold a meeting in Dungarvan at an early date; that was the first public intimation that the Gaelic League was carrying its gospel to Co. Waterford. In its issue of May 4th, 1895, the "Waterford News" in an editorial comment expressed its pleasure at learning that the Gaelic League was turning its attention to the Decies and promised every assistance in the work of restoring the Irish language.

Eoin MacNeill visited the city of Waterford on May 8th, 1895. He interviewed Most Rev. Dr. Sheehan, who was very sympathetic; he visited Mount Sion, De La Salle and Ursuline Convent Schools, and had Rev. P. Power, C.C., The Cathedral, and Rev. T. A. Mockler as guides and advisers on that occasion. In August of that year

Michael Foley of Ring addressed a conference of National Teachers in Waterford City on the importance of teaching the Irish language in their schools. Referring to St. John's College, he stated that "its name and fame for religion, for country and for that country's language stood out before the world."

On Wednesday, October 23rd, 1895, Dr. Douglas Hyde, President of the Gaelic League, lectured in Waterford on "The Last Three Centuries of Gaelic Literature"; that lecture was under the auspices of the Waterford and South East of Ireland Archaeological Society and Most Rev. Dr. Sheehan, President of the Society, occupied the chair. So ended the year 1895.

A conference of representatives from various local bodies was held in Waterford on January 24, 1896, to consider a letter received from the Gaelic League. It was decided to hold a public meeting and C. P. Redmond and T. Crotty were deputed to make all necessary arrangements. That meeting was held on February 11th; the Mayor presided and Eoin MacNeill lectured. Letters were read from Rev. M. P. O'Hickey, Diocesan Inspector, and Father Lonergan of Aglish. The latter stated that there was only one teacher west of Dungarvan who taught the Irish language in his school. Needless to remark that teacher was Michael Foley of Ring.

The principal resolution at that meeting was proposed by Rev. P. Power, C.C., who made a magnificent plea for a greater use of the Irish language. Michael Cusack (founder of the G.A.A.) seconded the resolution in an exclusively

Irish speech. In its issue for May 5th, 1896, the "Waterford News" stated that it was a crying shame that in the year 1895 the Irish language was taught in only two national schools in the county; those two schools were those of Michael Foley of Ring and E. Guiry of Rathgormac.

And so the time went on; conversations were held; the importance of the work was admitted; its necessity was obvious if the national language was to be saved but it was not until November, 1898, that action was taken to transmute words and ideas into deeds.

CHAPTER IV.

Half a Century's Work

THE CRIME

During the last week in December, 1896, or the first week in January, 1897, a youth named Patrick Connors came before Mr. Orr, R.M., at Dungarvan as a witness in some legal case. Patrick Connors had only a very limited knowledge of the English language; as soon as he came before Mr. Orr he proceeded to explain in Irish that as his knowledge of English was so limited he would prefer to give his evidence in Irish; before he had completed three or four sentences he was stopped peremptorily by Orr and sentenced, without another word, to a fortnight's imprisonment for the contempt of, and disrespect to, the court—shown by his speaking in the Irish language in that court.

As soon as the court was over Orr was approached by some people present who pointed out to him that Connors was merely explaining that owing to his almost negligible knowledge of the English language he could not give satisfactory evidence in that language. Mr. T. F. O'Higgins, Abbeyside, sent a full account of the incident in a letter to the Dublin daily Press; the Gaelic

League in Dublin and elsewhere ventilated the question of the right of an Irishman to give evidence in a court in his native language; the Dungarvan Town Commissioners passed a strong resolution claiming that all magistrates in Ireland should be able to conduct the business of the courts in the Irish language. That resolution was sent to the Lord Chancellor who replied that while it could not be conceded that all magistrates should be able to carry out their duties in Irish it was agreed that no obstacle should be placed in the way of any individual desirous of giving his, or her, evidence in Irish.

As a result of the explanation given to Orr, R.M., he did not sign the warrant for the committal of Patrick Connors to prison; he postponed the case to the next court day. Consequent on the publicity his action evoked that warrant was never signed but the sentence on O'Connor for speaking the Irish language in Dungarvan court remained on record.

THE WORK BEGINS

Apart from educational establishments such as St. John's College, De La Salle Training College and Mount Melleray, the first locality in Co. Waterford to hoist the flag of the Gaelic League was Dungarvan. The first branch of the League was established there in November, 1898. The parish priest, Rev. William Sheehy, P.P., was enthusiastic and he became President of the branch; Pdraig O'Daly became Vice-President; Daniel Fraher was treasurer, and T. F. O'Higgins was secretary. With many others such as Michael Beary and T. McCarthy those had been working for the inculcation of Irish ideals before the founding of that branch.

At its second meeting early in December, 1898, that Dungarvan branch appealed to Ardmore, The Nire, Aglish, Kilgobinet, Kilrossanty, Stradbally, Affane and Ring to follow the example of Dungarvan and establish branches of the Gaelic League. These were localities in which the living Irish language still existed.

SPREADING

The Gaelic idea was spreading. The Dungarvan Board of Guardians congratulated Rev. Dr. O'Hickey and Rev. Peter O'Leary, P.P., Castlelyons, on the able manner in which they had countered the attacks on the Irish language made by Dr. Atkinson of Trinity College. The newly-established Waterford County Council passed unanimously, at its first meeting in April, 1899, a resolution asking that the Irish language be taught as an ordinary school subject in all schools, primary and secondary. That resolution was proposed by James Hayes of Dungarvan (an Irish speaker) and seconded by Captain W. C. Coghlan of Dromina.

During the summer of 1899 feiseanna, or Gaelic gatherings, were held in some places in the western portion of the County. In July a feis was held in Ardmore; it was organised mainly through the exertions of that great Gaelic veteran, Michael Foley of Ring. Addresses in Irish were delivered by Rev. Dr. Henebry; Rev. Dr. O'Hickey; Rev. Peter O'Leary, P.P., Castlelyons; Rev. John Walsh, P.P., Ardmore, and Michael Foley. Shortly afterwards a similar function was held in Kilrossanty and addresses in Irish were delivered by Rev. Michl. Casey, P.P., Kilrossanty; Rev. Dr. Henebry; Rev. Dr. O'Hickey, and Padraig O'Daly of Dungarvan. Regret was expressed

at the absence of that great Gael — Patrick Carmody.

Later on in the same year a similar function was held in Modeligo and Rev. James Henebry, P.P., delivered a spirited address in Irish. In the organising of these functions great and untiring assistance was given by Rev. P. Power, Diocesan Inspector (now Very Rev. Patrick Canon Power, D.Litt., M.R.I.A.). He edited and published, through Messrs. Harvey of Waterford, in October of that year, Patrick Denn's "Aighneas an Pheacaig leis an mBas."

On December 31st of that year the greatest of the feiseanna was held in the Town Hall, Dungarvan. Competitions were held in Irish conversation, Irish recitation, Irish singing and Irish dancing. One of the test pieces for the Irish recitation was the Irish "Lament for Father John Meany" and none but Irish speakers were allowed to compete in dancing. Father Sheehy, P.P., took the chair at the distribution of prizes and a large gathering of Catholic clergymen assembled on the platform. Mount Melleray, St. John's College, Presentation Convent, Lismore, and the Convent of Mercy, Stradbally, supplied many prize winners.

STILL SPREADING

The year 1900 opened with the Waterford County Council repeating the resolution they had adopted in April, 1899. In supporting that resolution Mr. R. J. Ussher stated that the Irish language was in use before many modern languages originated. During the summer of 1900 feiseanna were held in Ardmore and Dungarvan. The former was organised by Mr. T. J. Crowley, N.T., and during the Feis Michael Foley

of Ring put a class of his pupils through a lesson in geography; that lesson was given in the Irish language and was intended to show that all school subjects could be taught through the Irish language. At a public meeting held during the afternoon Rev. Father Walsh, P.P., presided. Addresses were delivered in Irish and many clergymen, including Rev. P. Power, Diocesan Inspector, were present.

The Dungarvan Feis was held a month later and Rev. Dr. Sheehan, M.A., Maynooth, was present. Occupying a seat among the audience was Dr. Skeffington, National School Inspector. At that Feis Miss Margaret Hannigan won first prize for Irish singing. In October of that year Tomas Concannon, organiser, visited Dungarvan and formed one of a Gaelic League deputation to the Dungarvan Urban Council to ask them to put the street names in Irish. In the same month a meeting was held in Modeligo to establish Irish classes and Scart Dairy was the only available place. In the following month a meeting was held in Toor-neena to aid the progress of the Gaelic League. Father Lonergan presided and in burning words criticised those who were deserting the language of their forefathers for a foreign language of inferior beauty and strength. He had presented to the parishioners many copies of the Catechism issued by the Keating Society, then recently edited and republished by Rev. P. Power, Diocesan Inspector. Padraig O'Cadhla and William Keating, N.T's, were also present at that meeting and the entire proceedings were in Irish.

WATERFORD CITY

Efforts had been made for some time to establish a branch in Waterford City and on or

about December 1st, 1900, these efforts succeeded. The first formal meeting of that new branch was held in St. Patrick's National Schools on December 6th and 40 to 50 individuals were present. They were all adults. Professor J. L. Ahern conducted a class with O'Growney Book 1. as a text book. A Committee meeting was held when the class terminated and it was decided to establish a class for ladies. One of the difficulties the Gaelic League experienced in many parts of Ireland in those days was the objection of many clergymen to allow women and men to learn the Irish language in the same class; hence separate classes had to be established.

Mr. William Queally was the first president of that Waterford branch and Mr. J. Bonfield was secretary. Before it was a month in existence that branch gave a ceildhe to its members. In those early days a ceildhe was called a sgoruidheacht. That first ceildhe of the Waterford branch was held on December 20th, 1900, in St. Patrick's National Schools and Professor Ahern read a short philological paper. A Mr. Clarke (from Dublin) sang "An Bunan Buidhe"; Master McCarthy gave a selection of Irish airs on the violin; Master Murray sang "An Leanbh Sidhe"; Mr. Puzzaw sang an Irish song and many others contributed to that evening's pleasure.

By the following January the ladies' class was in operation; the primary class was taken by Miss Ahern and the more advanced class by Mr. J. P. Connolly. The teachers in the men's classes were Mr. Puzzaw (primary), Mr. Bonfield and Mr. J. P. Cunningham. A class for teachers was held by Professor Ahern on Saturdays. During that month Tomas Concannon visited Waterford City and was entertained to an Irish social function in Quinn's Hotel.

By February, 1901, the Waterford branch had over 100 members and the average attendance at the classes was 90 or so; those classes were taught by Messrs. Normoyle, Moroney and Bonfield, while the ladies' classes were taught by J. P. Connolly, Miss Casey and Miss Flanagan. By this time Father Furlong and Father Dowley were very active in their aid; through the efforts of Father Furlong Irish classes were started in the C.Y.M.S. and in the Temperance Hall. In the same month an Irish play was produced by the pupils of the De La Salle Schools and in addition they sang several Irish songs at a school concert.

Those enthusiastic workers of those days worked, taught and learned the Irish language because it was their own language, because it was the language of their country, because it was the most outstanding characteristic of a separate and distinct nation—the Irish nation. They were altruistic in their work; they did not learn it to pass an examination leading to a post of profit; they never expected any reward or remuneration for their work; they were Irish men and women and they knew there was something missing so long as they did not know the Irish language—the language of their own country.

In April, 1901, that Waterford branch made its first collection on behalf of the Gaelic League. In some cases the members met not only with rebuffs but distinct discourtesy; the latter came from those described in a report as “na boicinidhi agus na seoinini.” A circular was sent to residents and that circular was followed up by personal calls; it was those who called that received the discourtesies. At that period the officials were William Queally, president; J. P. Connolly, vice-president; John J. O'Mahony (Gas Works), treasurer, and J. Bonfield, Manor Street, secretary.

A CEILIDHE

A grand entertainment of Irish music, song and dance was announced to be held in the large room of the Town Hall on May 6th; it was stated that it was the first presentation of an Irish concert to be given in Waterford City for generations. The hall was filled to the door and many had to be turned away. At that concert Rev. P. Power delivered a splendid address in Irish, in the course of which he said —

An Eireannach nach bhfuil Gaedhilg
aige nil se acht 'na leath-Eireannach na
nios lugha, agus ag an aireamh ceana ta se
'na leath Sasanach na nios mo.

Those Irish concerts and festivals of over forty years ago opened a new vista of music, song, story and amusement of Irish origin to many people, all of which were hidden in the hitherto despised Irish language, music and customs. To all it was new, original and undreamt of; to some it was the realisation of a glorious dream; to most it was an agreeable and pleasurable surprise but to others it had a disagreeable flavour; the latter were those who desired the extermination of all the external evidences of a separate and distinct Irish nation.

VARIOUS

At that period Professor J. L. Ahern had compiled and published an Irish-English phrase book as an aid to the study of conversational Irish. In the same month (May, 1901) Dungarvan branch had a similar ceilidhe and it was a great success. Those responsible for its organisation were D. Fraher, F. Stuart, W. Meehan, Miss M. Griffin, Miss Dower, and Miss M. Fahy. Among the Irish songs sung was "Lairin Cheann Fhionn an

Phaoraigh." On the initiation of the Dungarvan branch a meeting of Dungarvan, Waterford, Rathgormac, Ardmore, Ring, The Nire and Kilrossanty branches was held in Dungarvan on June 2nd, 1901, to consider the formation of a Coisde Ceanntair. Two delegates were present from every branch; Waterford was represented by Messrs. Queally and Moroney and Robert Weldon was one of the Kilrossanty delegates. The branches named were, probably, all that existed in the county at that time. At that time, too, it was announced that Miss Margaret Hannigan and Robert Weldon had won prizes at the Oireachtas in Dublin—the former for her Irish singing and the latter for an original song in Irish.

By that time reports concerning the progress of the movement for the restoration of the Irish language began to appear in many Irish newspapers: the "Waterford News" was the first newspaper in the Waterford district to instal a fount of Irish type, and as often as they were received reports, songs and articles in the Irish language were published. By the end of June, 1901, a tombstone inscribed in the Irish language was completed at Keane's Monumental Works in O'Connell Street, Waterford; it was ordered by the Walsh family of Tullogher, Co. Kilkeenny, for erection in Mullinavat. It was the first Irish tombstone ever remembered to have been completed in Waterford.

At a meeting of the Coisde Ceanntair in Dungarvan in July, 1901, attended by Fraher, Landers, Kiely, Connery, Ffrench, Bonfield, O'Daly and Guiry, it was arranged to hold a series of Irish concerts in different parts of the county by "Buidhean Cheoil na nDeise." On August 11th the annual Feis was held in Dungarvan, followed

by a concert in the evening. Among those present were: Very Rev. Dr. Prendergast (New York), Rev. P. Power, Diocesan Inspector; Rev. P. Power, Clonea; Rev. P. O'Connor, Rev. F. C. Prendergast, Rev. P. Landy, O.S.A.; Rev. R. T. Casey, Rev. Bro. Meany, Irish Christian Brothers, and many members of the Waterford County Council. Shortly afterwards it was announced that Pádraig O'Daly of Dungarvan had been offered the post of Secretary of the Gaelic League of London after a competitive examination, but he declined the offer as he did not desire to leave Ireland.

WATERFORD AGAIN.

The annual general meeting of the Waterford branch was held in St. Patrick's National Schools on October 1st, 1901. The total receipts for the year were £77 11s. 1d., and there was a credit balance on the year's working of £22 18s. 11d. Professor Ahern's booklet sold very well, the sales for that realising £11 7s. 2d. The branch had then 250 members. Professor Ahern was elected president unanimously; Messrs. Normoyle and J. P. Connolly vice-presidents; J. Bonfield, secretary; P. Moroney, asst. sec.; and the committee were: P. Brett, Sean Ward, T. Dempsey, H. D. Keane, T. Henebry, Miss Butler, Miss Foley and Miss Dungan.

At that committee meeting preliminary arrangements were made for holding a ceilidhe, and it was surmised that the ceilidhe would be held in the Town Hall. Unforeseen difficulties were encountered, however, and the ceilidhe was held in the premises of the Catholic Young Men's Society on November 6th, 1901. At that festive gathering Professor Ahern, President of the

branch, explained the reasons for holding the ceilidhe in that building. He stated that the Mayor had been approached by a deputation for the use of the Large Room in the Town Hall. That was refused because there appeared to have been some arrangement that when the Theatre was occupied no other function would be permitted in the Town Hall; thus it was that because some foreign touring company was presenting "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray," "Kitty Grey," "Captain Blarney," or something similar in the Theatre the people of Waterford, the Irish people of Waterford, were prevented from hearing their own language, music and song.

Failing the Town Hall, the Committee approached Alexander Nelson, High Sheriff, for a room in the Courthouse. Mr. Nelson told the deputation that he was not aware of that agreement regarding the Town Hall; he stated also that he could not allow the Courthouse to be degraded to the level of holding an Irish function therein; he could not allow it to be utilized for a purpose for which it was never built. Holding up a handbill, Professor Ahern stated that it announced the holding of a Jumble Sale in that same Courthouse at an early date; the High Sheriff had no objection to letting the Courthouse for a jumble sale, but every objection to degrading that building by holding a festival of Irish music, song and dancing within its walls. The Courthouse was never built with the intention to hold an Irish-Ireland festival therein, but it was evidently built to hold jumble sales inside its precincts. Hence the ceilidhe was held in the rooms of the Catholic Young Men's Society.

The actions of the Mayor and High Sheriff in refusing the use of the Town Hall and the Court-

house to the Gaelic League created a major sensation in Waterford. Neither expected the wide and scathing publicity their actions would receive. For more than six months the echoes of those refusals were resounding through Waterford. Excuses were forthcoming by the Mayor, who was advised by one of the officials of the Town Hall and knew nothing personally about the agreement regarding the Theatre and Large Room. Mr. Nelson sought to tone down the virility of his language in refusing the Courthouse. The manner in which the matter was handled by the Waterford branch of the Gaelic League, its President and Committee, showed clearly that there was no middle course between the ideals of an Irish Ireland and the views of a foreign dominance in Ireland. Everyone, whether a Mayor or Sheriff, had to make up his mind between Ireland and the foreigner and to accept the consequences of his acts in the matter.

At that ceilidhe the Nuns of the Presentation Convent and the De La Salle Brothers of Stephen Street Schools were praised for the manner in which their choirs were taught to sing Irish songs for that function and for their general enthusiasm for the language in their schools.

By the end of that year it was announced that Padraig O'Daly of Dungarvan had been appointed General Secretary of the Gaelic League. He left Dungarvan for Dublin, where the remainder of his life was spent. Messrs. Brett and Ryan were then teaching an Irish conversational class in the Waterford branch; Miss Doocey (from Lismore), a teacher in one of the city schools, conducted the Irish singing class in that branch. There was some comment on the fact that it was found impossible to start an Irish class in the

Trades Hall or to introduce an Irish atmosphere into that institution. It was reported that it was immersed completely in the "coon" swamp, but an effort was being made to drain the swamp.

An Irish concert was held in the Theatre, Waterford, on January 21st, 1902. To that concert came Owen Lloyd, the famous harper (his first appearance in Waterford); other artistes were Seamus Clandillon, also a first appearance; Miss Margaret Hannigan (who afterwards became Mrs. Clandillon) and Rev. James Mockler. The latter recited an ode which he had composed specially for that occasion. It was addressed to those who were not serious students of the language and was entitled "Our Irish Language." At that concert the dress circle in the Theatre was priced at 3/-, but there were not 20 seats occupied, although the other parts were thronged. Those who usually occupy the dress circle had no interest in anything distinctively Irish—at least in the Waterford of those days.

The first public procession of the Waterford branch was held on March 16th, 1902. It was a pronounced success and was attended by many members of the Corporation; by the Barrack St. Brass Band; almost all the organisations in Waterford marched, as did 130 students of De La Salle College. A public meeting was held inside the Goff Track in the Park, at which the Mayor presided. Appeals were made for greater consistent support for the Gaelic League and for greater sincerity and earnestness in the study of the national language. The study of Irish music, songs and history was advocated also. In May of that year Messrs. Ahern, Brett and Moroney were appointed delegates to the Oireachtas.

At that time an innovation was made in an

effort to spread a greater use of the language. With the sanction and permission of Rev. T. Dowley, Adm., the members of that branch set aside one night in the week when the Rosary and prayers were said in Irish in St. Patrick's Church. Father Dowley was an ardent worker for the language revival, and to that Rosary came most members of the Gaelic League in Waterford as well as a large number of the pupils of the various schools in the city. Came also some old men and women then resident in Waterford City for many years and who had not heard the Rosary or prayers said in Irish since their childhood. Fifty, sixty, seventy or even more years slipped off their heads and they were back again as children saying the Rosary in their homes or listening to it being said in Irish in the little rural church near their birthplace. It was a revelation of a new Waterford to them. They took part in the prayers and went home happier and with a brighter outlook on life.

Rev. P. Power, then Diocesan Inspector, gave a lecture on "The Irish Language" in the Waterford Town Hall at which Most Rev. Dr. Sheehan, Bishop of the Diocese, presided. His Lordship was one of the most earnest advocates of the revival of the Irish language to be found in the Ireland of that date. Father Power's lecture was given early in February, 1902.

IN THE COUNTY.

During this time work was going on earnestly in many parts of the County Waterford. In the winter of 1899 Father Lonergan, C.C., Toor-neena, started an Irish class; he taught Irish in the evenings to two monitors in the school; as a result of that teaching they both obtained certifi-

cates of competency to teach Irish. Father O'Connor, P.P., Ballyduff Upper, was a curate some years earlier in Ballylooby (and P.P. 1902). Finding the teachers in Ballylooby did not know Irish, he went to the school daily and taught an Irish class of 40 to 50. Of the 90 from that school sent up for the Irish examination only two failed. The National Board of Education were inquisitive regarding the name of the teacher there who held the Irish certificate; finding that there was no teacher there with an Irish certificate no fees were allowed and Father O'Connor was requested to discontinue his Irish class.

In Ardmore Father Queally was very enthusiastic; so was J. T. Crowley, N.T.; there was an Irish sermon every Sunday evening and prayers in Irish daily in the school. Father O'Connor of Dungarvan taught an advanced Irish class. Father Spratt, P.P., Cappoquin, was also an active supporter. In 1901 all the Nuns in Lismore Convent were Irish speaking and were enthusiastic workers in the cause of the language revival. The Mercy Convent in Stradbally was equally good. But while that individual enthusiasm was in evidence the number of branches of the Gaelic League in the Decies was not proportionate. The slave mind was also in evidence. In some cases parents objected to their children learning Irish as it might destroy their accent; in others the parents stated: "We have Irish ourselves and what good did it ever do us?" In Killrossenty a boy was asked "Bhfuil Gaedhilg agat?" and after some hesitation he answered "Nil." In some schools the teachers alleged that they could not introduce Irish classes as the programme was overcrowded even though they were competent to teach the language.

When Gaelic League organisers began to go round strange rumours arose. It was alleged that they were Government officials and that their intentions were to brand every Irish-speaking child they would find in a school. As soon as their presence in a district was known the schools were emptied instantly. Parents simply crowded the doors of the schools to take away their children lest they be branded. That rumour and its results were strongly in evidence in Carrick-on-Suir and Carrickbeg in 1901.

In that year Most Rev. Dr. Walsh, Archbishop of Dublin, offered a first prize of £25 and a second prize of £10 for the best working of a bilingual school. That second prize was won by Laurence O'Keily of Carrickbeg National School; the first prize going to Michael O'Malley of Cornamona School, Co. Galway. At the Oireachtas in the same year in Dublin Pdraig O'Daly of Dungarvan won a prize for an essay in Irish on John Fleming; Robert Weldon won the gold medal for the best original song in Irish with chorus; while Miss Margaret Hannigan of Dungarvan won first prize for ladies' Irish singing.

In November, 1901, there was a published comment that it was time that an Irish class was started in Cappoquin, and a month later the Carrick-on-Suir branch was founded. Rev. John Power, P.P.; M. Power, M.C.; R. N. Griffin, Provincial Bank; Laurence Kiely, N.T.; M. Davin, solicitor; John and James Guiry and James Walsh were associated with its inauguration. James Walsh was secretary. In February, 1902, the Lismore branch was founded. Dr. Dennehy, Pdraig Ceoin, Miceal O Murchadha, Risteard O Domhnall, William Hearn, Andrew Hickey, Michael Troy and Sean Goulding were instru-

mental in founding that branch. By April of that year a ladies' class was in operation with 30 members and the teacher was Seamus O Muirgheasa. The latter had a magnificent knowledge of the Irish language, wrote a fair amount over the name of "An Madra Maol," and finally went to America. At that period he contributed some articles to the "Waterford News"; they were entitled "Ailneacht Leasa Mhoir" over his usual pen-name, but he wrote at least one article in that paper over the name "Seamus O Muiredheha."

A meeting of the Coisde Ceanntair was held in Dungarvan on August 10th, 1902, and D. Fraher, Dungarvan, was appointed President; Sean Goulding, Lismore, and P. Moroney, Waterford, Vice-Presidents; and T. F. O'Higgins Secretary and Treasurer. In the same month an open-air Irish concert was held in Lismore. It was organised by Dr. Dennehy, supported by Maurice Healy, Clerk of the Union; John Murphy, Assistant Clerk; Sean Goulding, Andrew Hickey, Michael Murphy, Main Street; Thomas Crotty, Thomas Quinlan and William Daly, The Lodge.

In August of that year the annual Feis was held in Dungarvan. All the local clergymen were present, as were Mrs. Wyse Power and a party from Dublin. The committee responsible for organising that Feis were: D. Fraher, T. F. O'Higgins, Michael Flynn, Thomas Veale, Frank Stuart, Pdraig MacSweeney and Liam O Miodhchain, secretary. A humorous sketch entitled "The Anglicised Schoolmistress" was produced by the pupils of Ring National School. It was founded on the remark made by a teacher who, when asked to introduce the Irish language into the teaching programme, said: "Oh, why should I do that

after taking so many years to drive it out?"

One of the Co. Waterford areas that stood out against the work of the Gaelic League was Kilmacthomas. Several efforts were made to establish a branch of the Gaelic League there, but all failed. There was then a very Anglicised outlook in the district and that was credited to the foreign operatives working in the woollen factory. Things and people having a foreign outlook were held in higher regard in Kilmacthomas than things and people peculiarly and exclusively Irish.

BACK TO THE CITY.

The annual meeting of the Waterford branch was held at the end of September, 1902. Father Furlong was elected President because of his strenuous work on behalf of the Irish language during the previous twelve months. Professor Ahern and T. Normoyle were elected V.P.'s; Mary A. Keane was Treasurer; John Bonfield, Secretary. It was announced at that meeting that henceforth the Irish language would be an obligatory modern language in Mount Sion and in all the other schools and colleges in Waterford. At the next meeting of the Committee a sum of £10 was received from Messrs. Harvey and Co. on foot of another issue of Professor Ahern's "Leabhar Mion Cainte."

On November 29th, 1902, a ceilidhe was held in the Gaelic League Rooms in George's Street, Waterford. It was announced that a class had been established for Irish speakers; that class can be looked upon as the forerunner of the modern Gasra an Fhainne. It was stated also that thirty pupils of the Presentation Convent who were taught by Miss Flanagan had passed the Irish examination of the National Board of Education.

So pleased was Canon Flynn, P.P. of that parish, with that performance that he presented every one of the 30 with an Irish prayer book as a souvenir—an example that might be considered to-day.

Father Skelly, O.P., was one of the most active workers for the revival of the Irish language in Waterford at that time. He established a children's choir in the Dominican Church and that choir sang only hymns in the Irish language. They were taught the words of the hymns by Miss Flanagan. In March, 1903, an all-Irish entertainment was held in the Ursuline Convent; there were Irish dancers arrayed in white with sashes of orange and green—an early realisation of the national flag. There were a number of Irish songs and dances; the latter included the Rinne Fada. At the Oireachtas in May, 1903, J. P. Cunningham of Waterford (who was a student of the Irish language before the foundation of the Gaelic League) won a prize for a Geography of Ireland in Irish.

Near the end of 1902 the Gaelic League set on foot an examination scheme for those desirous of obtaining certificates to teach the Irish language. The examiners were Dr. Douglas Hyde, Rev. Dr. O'Hickey, Rev. Peter O'Leary, P.P., Castlelyons, and Professor J. L. Ahern, B.A., of Waterford. In August 1903, the results for "An Cead Ceim" for Waterford were announced; the percentages obtained were 91.0, 90.9 and 90.5. The successful candidates in the order of percentages were Miss Flanagan, teacher in the Presentation Convent; Mr. J. P. Connolly, of Stephen Street Schools; and Mr. O'Connell, Ferrybank School. The examinations in Waterford were supervised by Una Ni Fhearailigh, M.A.

The first Waterford City Feis was held in October, 1903. The examiners were: Rev. Dr. Henebry, Father Bewerunge, Maynooth College; Father Fielding of Chicago; Eamon O'Neill, B.A., Kinsale; Pdraig O'Kiely, Professor Ahern and Rev. T. Mockler. Eamon O'Neill, B.A., was one of the examiners in Irish music, of which he has a splendid knowledge. In "Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge" for 1903 can be found the Irish song, "Fornocht," with music arranged by Eamon O'Neill, Kinsale. The Feis was held in the Town Hall; Father Furlong presided at the distribution of prizes and there was a great gathering of local clergy. At the concert that evening one of the Irish singers was Eamon O'Neill. Mr. Moroney was secretary to that Feis and merited much praise for the manner in which he marshalled the entire proceedings.

The annual meeting of the City branch was held in the Courthouse in November, 1903. An application was made for a room in the Town Hall, but for the second time in its short history the intentions of the Waterford branch of the Gaelic League were frustrated by some foreign company performing in the Theatre; the language, music and song of Ireland were subordinated to "San Toy" or some similar item. In his report, the Secretary (J. Bonfield) stated that the Waterford Press had boycotted completely a lecture given in Waterford to the branch in December, 1902, by Father Dineen, M.A. In February, 1903, Father P. Power gave a lecture to the branch on "Irish Placenames." Though only a learner, portion of that annual report was presented in Irish by the secretary. Father Furlong was re-elected President.

The 1904 Waterford Feis was held in the Court-

house Grounds and was opened by the Bishop, Most Rev. Dr. Sheehan. Two of the examiners in the language were J. B. Skeffington, LL.D., Senior Inspector of National Schools, and P. J. Fitzgerald, B.A., Inspector of National Schools.

An aeridheacht was held in Glenmore, County Kilkenny, on August 7th, 1904, and the cup for the best dancers of a four-hand reel was won by Maggie Boyle, Nora Ward, Anthony Ryan and John J. Ward, of the Waterford branch.

IN THE COUNTY AGAIN.

A meeting of Coisde Ceanntair na nDeise was held in Dungarvan in June, 1903, and Waterford, Dungarvan, Lismore, Aglish, Coolnasmear, Toornaneena and Killeshal branches were represented. Feis na nDeise was held in Dungarvan in August of that year, and first prize for Irish recitation was won by P. Brett of Waterford for a powerful rendering of "Aighneas an Pheacaig leis an mBas." At that Feis the dancing of Henry Beresford, then a middle-aged man, was a revelation in timing and execution. Robert Weldon recited the Feis ode, and the prize for the essay on "The Ancient Schools of Lismore" was won by Mr. Moroney of Waterford. Another meeting of Coisde Ceanntair was held in September, 1903, when the following attended: P. Brett, W. Sheehan (Waterford); M. Flynn and T. F. O'Higgins (Dungarvan); Sean Goulding and A. Hickie (Lismore), with representatives from Ballylemon, Piltown, Coolnasmear, Rathgormack and Carrick-on-Suir branches. Although Carrick-on-Suir is in Co. Tipperary, that branch of the Gaelic League appears to have been always included in the activities of Co. Waterford; it is, of course, included in the Decies. In November of that year Rev.

Dr. Henebry lectured in Dungarvan on Irish Music; he spoke to a packed audience.

Feis na nDeise in Dungarvan on July 24th, 1904, was a great success, if a magnificent attendance bespeaks success. Robert Weldon travelled from his Comeragh valley to be present. It was held in the grounds of the Christian Brothers, and the adjudicators for singing were Rev. Dr. Henebry, Eamon O'Neill, Kinsale, and E. Landers. Liam O Miodhchain, Dungarvan, won first prize in the "Barron Memorial Competition"; he also won the prize of £2 presented by Most Rev. Dr. Sheehan, Bishop of the Diocese, for the best essay on "My Parish, its History and Antiquities." At the concert in the evening an essay in Irish by Father Maurus, O.Cist., Mount Melleray, was read by James Power, Adramone.

Early in January, 1905 (or at Christmastime 1904) the Clashmore branch produced "An Doctuir," and claimed to be the first branch in Co. Waterford to produce a play in the Irish language. Rev. Thomas Power, P.P., Clashmore, was a most enthusiastic worker on behalf of the Gaelic League, as was Father Hassett, C.C. Many visitors came from neighbouring parishes to see a play produced in the Irish language. There was a concert in the evening at which all the songs were in Irish.

The Coisde Ceanntair appointed a deputation to meet deputations from Managers of National Schools and of National Teachers to discuss the introduction of the bilingual programme. The meeting was held in the Gaelic League rooms in Waterford, on January 26th, 1905. and Canon Flynn, P.P., Trinity Without, presided. Other Managers present were: Canon Power, P.P., Dungarvan; Canon Power, P.P., Clonea, and Father

M. Power, P.P., Ballyneale. The Coisde Ceann-tair was represented by Rev. Dr. Henebry, Padraig O'Daly, General Secretary, Gaelic League; Fionan McCollum, Organiser; D. Fraher, Dungarvan; Sean Goulding, Lismore; T. F. O'Higgins, Dungarvan, and Padraig O'Kiely, Organiser.

Many National Teachers were quite prepared to introduce a bilingual programme; they were convinced of its practicability; they tried to convince their fellow-teachers of the soundness of their views, but the majority advanced the reason that there was no room for it, that the programme was over-crowded already, and that to force such a programme on an already over-crowded one would, in fact could, only end in considerable damage to the language movement. These views were fairly widely spread forty years ago; they have not parted with their general use even to-day.

By this time the first flush of unreasoning enthusiasm for the revival of the Irish language had expended itself. Many were still enthusiastic provided somebody else did the learning; they did not appreciate that the saving of the language depended on every one of them learning to speak, read and write the language. Some expected to become fluent Irish speakers in six months by attending an Irish class for one hour a week. By the time they had worked through Books I. and II. O'Growney their enthusiasm was ebbing perceptibly; when they encountered Irish grammar in O'Growney Part III. they had convinced themselves that the Irish language was a most difficult language to learn. They had no knowledge, or experience, of the learning of other languages, and they got over the difficulty of seeing others persevere and obtain a good working knowledge of the language by stating that the

difficulty of learning the language was a personal difficulty and applied only to themselves. That was a generous flattery to the Ego.

At one of the first meetings held by the Gaelic League in Waterford City Rev. P. Power (now Very Rev. P. Canon Power, D.Litt., M.R.I.A.) stated that he did not learn the Irish language from his parents; he had to learn it from books, and what he had done others could do. Tens of thousands have done it since, and these are the people who made the gospel of the Gaelic League a success. They were not daunted by small difficulties; they persevered, and thus from the period 1903-5 onwards the Gaelic League branches in Co. Waterford may have had a smaller number of members but they were more reliable and more persevering. They knew that to learn the Irish language in Ireland is not a matter of difficulty: it is merely a little perseverance and determination.

CHAPTER V.

Organisers and Travelling Teachers

We now arrive at a period when the organisation of the Gaelic League in Co. Waterford required a different method to that heretofore adopted. The Coisde Gnotha, or governing committee, recognised that while enthusiasm might be generated by a local public meeting that enthusiasm was likely to be evanescent. It required, therefore, continuous efforts to induce that perseverance necessary to learn a language—even their own national language. Many of those who joined the Gaelic League in Waterford city and county had no knowledge of the language when they commenced their studies. They persevered, their enthusiasm remained and, finally, they acquired a good knowledge of the Irish language. What they did others can do.

At a very early date the Coisde Gnotha decided on appointing organisers to develop the organisation and to keep members of the branches and students up to the necessary idea of perseverance if any definite results were to be achieved. The first organiser was Tomas Concannon, more

affectionately known in those early days as "Tomas Ban." Shortly after the starting of the Gaelic League in the county and city he visited Waterford. He was in Dungarvan in October, 1900, and in Waterford city early in 1902. From there he visited some of the adjoining areas in Co. Waterford and Co. Kilkenny.

But the first organiser for the Decies was Pádraig Ó Cadhla. He was a fluent Irish speaker from "Sliabh Geal gCua" and possessed all the requisites for an organiser. Boundless energy, undaunted enthusiasm, a belief in the necessity for the revival of the Irish language that nothing could shake or dim and a determination to do all that one man could do, irrespective of the consequences to himself, in order to further that revival. No one can measure to-day what those organisers and travelling teachers did for the revival of the language. The cycle was the usual mode of transit. Travelling all day from place to place; indifferent to weather conditions because of their enthusiasm; interviewing managers of schools, school teachers or members of public bodies; organising public meetings; speaking at such meetings; teaching Irish classes wherever an opportunity offered; removing misconceptions regarding the objects of the Gaelic League; countering frivolous objections and starting branches of the Gaelic League whenever and wherever they could.

From the annual reports furnished by those organisers we obtain a pen picture of conditions in those days that are invaluable in enabling us to realise the conditions they faced, the work they did and the circumstances in which that work was performed. Pádraig Ó Cadhla began in October, 1902. At that time the people, whether they

spoke Irish or English, had very little understanding of the work of the Gaelic League or of the reasons underlying that work. He found great help from almost all the priests in the west of the Co. Waterford. They understood the question; they spoke to the people on Sunday of the necessity for the work; they urged the people to keep on studying the Irish language, songs and music; they gave the schools for the use of Irish classes, and helped in every way. Most of them were then fluent Irish speakers. Those were of an older generation or from Irish speaking districts. In his first report Padraig paid a special tribute to the Bishop of the diocese — the late Most Rev. Dr. Sheehan — for his interest in, and special efforts for, the revival of the Irish language. At the end of 1902 or early in 1903 two Coisdi Ceanntair (District Committees) were established — one for south and the other for north Decies. The former was called Coisde Ceanntair na nDeise and the latter Coisde Ceanntair an Ceifinigh. Under the jurisdiction of the former were branches at Waterford city, Lismore, Carrick-on-Suir, Dungarvan, Kilbrien, Touraneena, Cappoquin, Ballinameela, Aglish, Modeligo, Clashmore, Killeshal, and Piltown. Under the latter Coisde Ceanntair were Fourmilewater and Newcastle, and there were seven other branches not shown attached to any Coisde Ceanntair. Many of those branches had been established by Padraig himself; others were of an older date, while some were in existence only in name. He revived the latter.

In 1903 and 1904 he endeavoured to establish a branch in Kilmacthomas but that village had, then, very little interest in anything Irish; it was sunk in Galdachas. However, branches were

established around it and Diarmuid Stokes was put in charge of them as travelling teacher. He went round from branch to branch, the branches held their classes on different nights to facilitate his work; he taught classes in these branches at night up to 9 or 10 o'clock and during the day he attended to the better organising of his area or taught in a school whether it was a national school, a convent school or a workhouse school. He was from Ballylemon, outside Dungarvan; the Irish language was the language of his infancy and he was one of the sincerest advocates of the revival of the Irish language that Co. Waterford has produced. He was associated with the founding of Ring Irish College and taught there in the beginning.

Very little was being done for the Irish language in the national schools of Waterford city by the end of 1903 with three notable exceptions. Except for these and the work of the branch of the Gaelic League there "nior dhoig leat acht gur istigh i lar Lundain a bheithifea." At that time a branch was established in Dunmore East but all efforts failed with Tramore because "ta an iomarca seoininteacht a baint leis na ndaoibh ann." Branches were started also in Dunhill and Fenor but the Parish Priest would not allow the schools to be used for Irish classes.

Padraig Aghas, from Kerry, was appointed a travelling teacher for Lismore district in 1905. A class for National Teachers of the district was set on foot in the same year but little interest was taken in it. The landlord in Lismore did all he could to prevent the Irish language being taught in the schools but great work was being done in the convent schools there. To Sean Ua Guilidhe (now Senator Sean Goulding) must go

the chief credit for keeping the Lismore branch alive. "Se a choimead an frighde beo ann nuair is laige do bhi cuis na teangan aca. Anois (1905) ó ta an chraobh neamh-spleadhach, ta a chroidhe chomh eadtrom le lon ar nead." That quotation describes his work and indicates quite clearly his outlook on the work of reviving the Irish language. At the same time Sean O Floinn was doing equally enthusiastic work in Carrick-on-Suir.

The year 1905 saw the foundation of Ring Irish College. Looking back at that period, noting the conditions in which that College was founded, noting the men who founded it, the work they did, the obstructions put in their way and appraising the will to win out which animated them—it all reads like an odyssey of a far off period. The founders were Rev. Michael Sheehan, M.A., D.D., then of Maynooth College; Rev. Richard D. Henebry, D.Ph.; Padraig O Cadhla and Diarmuid Stokes. They had not even a barn or a hayshed to hold their classes; nowhere could they obtain a room or a building in which to hold an Irish class, even the use of the local school was denied them. The black board was put up against the gable end of an old house and the first classes were held in the open air, under the canopy of Heaven. Padraig O Cadhla was the teacher; when his duties as organiser called him away the classes were taken by Rev. Dr. Sheehan, Rev. Dr. Henebry or Diarmuid Stokes—all in the open air. They had no place else to go. Finally those almost insuperable difficulties were overcome by those enthusiastic pioneers.

Could Heaven send, for such an end
More worthy men than they.

In that year there were altogether 11 branches of the Gaelic League in Waterford city and county; in the following year there were 13 and the year after saw 16 branches. In 1909 Michael O Foghludha was appointed organiser. At that time there were some branches almost moribund. He revived them. There was, for instance, one such in Killrossanty and it would have expired but for the efforts of Father McGrath and Michael Power.

At that time the "spake English and be dacent" mentality was spreading in Sliabh Geal gCua. Father P. Lonergan, then C.C. there and later P.P. of Knockanore, opposed that anti-national idea vigorously. He took a plebiscite of the parish; the result killed the idea of "being dacent" by dropping the Irish language, customs, music and habits.

By 1910 a Pipers' Band was organised in Ardmore; those pipers were all Gaels. In Carrick-on-Suir, Sean O Floinn, Dr. Murphy and Miss Una Dowley were indefatigable and the schools of Waterford city had made great advances in teaching Irish since the year 1903. Michael O'Connor was travelling teacher in charge of the city and Irish was taught in all schools there except two. A public meeting was held in Tramore in 1909 and it was found that the Irish spirit was waking from its sleep. A branch was established there. Pdraig O Cadhla visited all the schools in the neighbourhood of Waterford and found Irish taught in two schools in Tramore, in Killea, in Carbally, in Castletown, Dunhill (2 schools), Fenor (2 schools); Ballyduff (2 schools), Passage East (2 schools); there was no Irish taught in Bellelake nor in two schools in the city but these latter promised to fall into line, shortly.

In Ring Irish College they were teaching arithmetic, geometry, algebra, etc., through Irish as well as Latin, French and German. There, however, the priests, the local medical officer and the National Teachers were opposed to the revival of the Irish language—and that in the most Irish district in Ireland! The wonder is that that great-hearted Gael, Michael Foley, did not rend his cerecloths and appear to denounce that perversion of his life's work. In 1910 a new Parish Priest was appointed to Ring and he was the opposite of his predecessor. In 1911 Sean O Floinn of Carrick-on-Suir and Pádraig Brett of Waterford were on the Coisde Gnotha. In that year there was no organiser in the county.

In 1911 the parish priest of Aglish would not allow the schools to be used for Irish classes nor would he permit a collection for the Irish language to be held in his parish. In Modeligo an Irish sermon was heard every Sunday and prayers in Irish as well, either by Father James Henebry, P.P., or Father O'Donnell, C.C. Many other priests were helping in a similar manner while the Lord Abbot of Mount Melleray gave a sermon in Irish every Sunday. Among public men in that district John McGrath, J.P., P.L.G., was outstanding in his Irish outlook at that period. In Lismore Sean Goulding, Andrew Hickey and others deserved equal credit.

During the next year public meetings were held in Tramore and Carbally and a branch established in the latter place where a successful aeridheacht was held.

During this period the Waterford branch was doing splendid work. There was one national school there from which the Manager (Father Fitzgerald) banished the study of the Irish

language. Pdraig Brett headed the election of Munster representatives on the Coisde Gnotha and there was not a meeting held anywhere within 20 miles of Waterford city at which he was not present to plead the cause of the Irish language. The Waterford branch at that time offered prizes to the schools in the city where Irish was taught best. St. Stephen's Schools (De La Salle); Sisters of Mercy (Philip Street); Presentation Convent; Ursuline Convent and Ferrybank Convent came out of the examination with very high marks for their teaching of the Irish language. In the central portion of Co. Waterford Father Nugent, C.C., Kill, was the best worker for the cause of the language.

By 1915 it was written of Ring parish in an official report that all the priests and teachers had then accepted the Irish viewpoint. In 1916 Eamon Waldron was organiser for Clare and was forbidden by the British Military authorities to reside in any part of Ireland except Waterford. He came and began his work as organiser in the city. He was able to restore the teaching of the language to that school in the city from which the Manager had banished it a couple of years earlier.

It was intended to hold the annual Oireachtas in Waterford city in 1916 but conditions made it impossible, so it was held there in 1917. Holding that Gaelic festival in Waterford was a great and deserved tribute to the tenacity with which the Gaels of Waterford had continued their advocacy of Irish ideals against the virus of Anglicisation. Waterford city was slightly slow in starting, as has been seen, but having put their hands to the plough they never looked back. Generation after generation has found men and women, boys and

girls to hold the fort in Waterford city for the ideal of an Ireland not only free but Gaelic, not only Gaelic but free.

The 1918 election was noted for the fact that that great Gael, Cathal Brugha, insisted on having the language of Ireland used on all his platforms. At every meeting held on his behalf Irish speeches were delivered. Conditions in Ireland for the next few years made the progress of the Gaelic League somewhat difficult. At the same time some progress can be reported. Colaiste Deuglan was set up in Ardmore mainly to cater for the surplus applicants for admission to Ring College. An interview was held with the late Most Rev. Dr. Hackett, Bishop, and he agreed to follow the policy of his predecessor regarding the possession of a certificate of competency to teach the Irish language in all new appointments of National Teachers.

During 1923 and early in 1924 only one branch in the county and city of Waterford was affiliated to the Coisde Gnotha. Later on in the latter year others affiliated. During that period Waterford city and Dungarvan branches continued their good work. In the late autumn of 1923 the Waterford branch set up a special class for Postal Officials about whom there were some severe criticisms regarding their competency to transact their business in Irish. About 20 officials joined at the start but by the following Christmas the enthusiasm had evaporated, the perseverance did not exist and so only four were attending. That class had to be discontinued. That was one of the set backs the Gaels of Waterford encountered but their perseverance and determination overcame them all. Once the Irish flag was hoisted

in Waterford city it was never hauled down.

* * * * *

The more recent years of Gaelic League activities in the city and county of Waterford have not yet passed into the region of history and so are within the memory of all now living and over the voting age. Looking at the picture broadly it will be conceded, I believe, that the Waterford city branch has had to fight for Irish Ireland ideals in the most depressing atmosphere. And yet, from the day of its foundation, that branch has carried on its activities and is, to-day, going from strength to strength.

It would be allowing a very restricted viewpoint to the Gaelic League to regard it purely as a mere linguistic organisation. There is no aspect of Irish culture — language, music, song, dance, games, sports, amusements, etc. — that it has not fostered, encouraged and taught. With Thomas Davis it regards the language as the greatest external symbol of our separate nationality, but it does not exclude from their rightful places all the other facets of our Irish culture.

To those who had the courage, foresight and determination to raise the Irish Ireland flag in the city and county of Waterford over forty years ago; to those who carried it through good and ill for those fateful years; to those who will bear it bravely and proudly in the future these few words of appreciation and encouragement.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

In the issue of the "Evening News" published in Waterford on 12th of February, 1944, the following editorial note appears:—

"Last night the announcer to Radio Eireann read out most impressively a passage from Dr. Michael O'Hickey's "Language and Nationality." The script as read out began with a slight error as to the title of the book from which the reading was taken. The title is as above. The book was published by the Waterford News Printing Works in 1918."

This note forms the base for the argument that the WATERFORD NEWS should, most appropriately, be publishers of this history of the work done for the Irish language in this city and county. Indeed a great part of that work was done, and done very effectively, by publications in the "News" and from the "News" publishing works. The first county history ever published in Irish in Ireland was Kiely's Guide to Waterford, published in 1917, the title being "Cathair Portlairge agus na Deise—A Gael's Guide to Waterford and the Deise Country." It was written by Sean O Cadhla, a native of Dungarvan. He had been Gaelic contributor to the "News,"

and it was a note of his, in Gaelic, which, in 1918, caused the suppression of the "Waterford News" by Dublin Castle. That recalls another fact, that the "News" was a pioneer among Irish newspapers in publishing a column in Gaelic to promote the love and knowledge of the native language. One of these correspondents was (and is) Sean O Floinn, noted scholar, of Carrick-on-Suir: another was a city native speaker named Cronin: and yet another was Liam Gogan, M.A., curator of the Historical Museum in the National Library Dublin. Matthew Butler and the Fear Mor have written Irish for the "Waterford News"—the latter wrote a Gaelic foreword to a "News" publication in 1940. In 1938 I was very glad when Robert F. Walsh, M.A., University College, Cork gave me an opportunity of running through my newspaper a short life of Robert Weldon, the Poet of the Comeraghs: and it was another pleasure to publish for Percy Arland Ussher his annals of modern Deise idiom, since published in book form by An Gum. Other Gaelic writers who contributed to the "News" were: Muiris O Floinn (one of the earliest Gaelic contributors), Miceul O Cinnfhaolaidh, Nioclas Tobin, (who put my novel, "Forty-One," into Gaelic for An Gum), and Tomas de Bhial, of Ring College; Arthur Gregg, author of a short history of Ring Irish College; Philip Foley, N.T., Ring, and Pádraig Millea. It was a pleasure and a pride to know that the Secretary of the Oireachtas held in 1917 was a prominent member of the "Waterford News" staff, Seamus O Dalaigh, who received a gold medal from the Gaelic League for his work on that occasion. In the following year my sister, Miss Elizabeth Downey, A.R.C.M.,

adjudicated in singing at the Feis in Portlairge, and later at New Ross Feis.

When I presented silver cups to the Faithlegge Aeridheacht in 1940, and to Tramore Feis in the following year, I noted how enthusiasm for the language was extending; and I feel sure that, when the grim distractions of the war and the emergency are gone, this now partially eclipsed enthusiasm will return again to reflect the light of Heaven on the Irish world, and to reflect it in full splendour. Already there are signs that the new dawn is breaking, such activities as those of Glun na Buidhe being evidence of that: whilst the setting up, under Government auspices, of Comh-Dhail Naisiunta na Gaedhilge (with a Waterfordman, Sean O Guilidhe, representing the Deise on it) demonstrates that a great organisation exists for co-ordinating all language societies into a united front for the years of post-war planning in the field of national culture.

During a brief spell spent at Ring College I became aware that a quenchless flame shone from there and from similar colleges; and from that perpetual fire such men as Pearse lit the torch of freedom and set the beacons ablaze.

Waterford is fortunate to have as the chronicler of the founding and work of the Gaelic League here so enthusiastic a Gael, so accomplished a historian, and so pungent a writer as Matthew Butler.

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Baile Atha Cliath,
6adh Mean-Fhómhair, 1938.

A Chara dhílis,

Cuis athais dom a fhois bheith agam an-“Waterford News” bheith ag ceileabhra an lae a cuireadh ar bun e deich mbliana is cheithre ficid o shin.

Ta comhacht thar meon chun leasa (agus chum aimhleasa freisin faraoir) ag paipear nuachta. Le n-ar linn-ne do h-oibrigheadh comhacht an “Waterford News” i gcomhnaidhe chum leas ar ndaoine agus chun an naisiúin do chur chun cinn.

Ta suil agam go rachaidh se ar aghaidh ag cur le n-a neart agus le n-a chomhacht i gcomhnaidhe.

Mise agat,

Samuel D. Valera

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