

THE LAW AND THE LANGUAGE.

I.

From *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 20 May, 1905.

On Tuesday last the language movement marched boldly into the King's Bench Division of the High Court of Justice in Ireland, and for five hours counsel discussed with the Lord Chief Justice, Mr. Justice Andrews, and Mr. Justice Gibson, various questions ranging from the origin of the Irish alphabet to the position of the Pan-Celts with regard to the language movement. Large as was the issue involved – being nothing less than the attitude of British law towards the language of this country – the legal argument turned on the interpretation to be placed on the words “legible letters,” occurring in 14 and 15 Vic., cap. 92, s. 12. As judgment has not been given up to the moment of going to press, we withhold further comment on the proceedings.

II.

From *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 17 June, 1905.

At its meeting last week the Coisde Gnótha protested against the grotesque decision of the Court of King's Bench in the case of Naill Mac Giolla Bhrighde, “by which it was in effect decided that Irish is a foreign language on the same level as Yiddish.” The Coisde went on to invite the people of Ireland to meet this outlawry of the National Language by making more strenuous efforts to secure that it shall become the spoken and written tongue of the whole Irish people. The best answer which Ireland can make to the judges of the King's Bench is to strengthen the language movement at every point. The more vindictive British Law shows itself, the more aggressive and stubborn must the movement become. It is no more within the power of the Court of King's Bench to stay the language revival by a hostile decision than it was in the power of Dame Durden of old to turn back the incoming tide with her broom.

Let the enforcement of the ludicrous law which requires Irishmen to describe themselves on their carts by names not their own for the benefit of the illiterate police constables be opposed by every legitimate means. It looks as if numerous opportunities will be given. As we go to press, Seaghán Ó Ciabháin appears in a Petty Sessions Court near Tralee to answer a charge of non-compliance with 14 and 15 Vic., c. 92, - albeit he has had his name painted on his cart in Irish only for the past four years. On the 16th inst. Pádraig Ó Cearbhaill, T.C., Black Lion, Inchicore, appears in the Southern Division of the Dublin Police Court on a similar charge. All such incidents should be utilised to display the force and passion behind the language movement. The fact that the decision is bound to go against the Gael is immaterial. Every appearance in a court to answer a charge which calls into question the legality of Irish serves to advertise the movement and to hasten the day when British Law must either recognise the national language of this country or give place to a law which does.

III.

From *An Claidheamh Soluis*, September 23, 1905.

Last week a tribunal of British Law in this country sentenced a member of the Gaelic League to a week's imprisonment *with hard labour* because he had painted his name on the cart in the Irish language. It is hardly necessary to point out that this sentence is illegal. Even British law as ordinarily administered in Ireland does not impose imprisonment with hard labour as an alternative to the payment of a money fine. Tomás Mac Seoinín, of Béal Atha na mBuillí, was on Wednesday week last dragged before the monthly petty sessions' court at Rús-gach (Rooskey) at the instance of one Hogg, a policeman, the charge being that his name and residence, being painted on his cart in Irish, were not painted in legible letters as required by British Law. The Bench, the presiding genius of which was one Browne, R.M., fined him one shilling, with one shilling and sixpence costs. Tomás very properly refused to pay, and was instantly sentenced to a week's imprisonment with hard labour. We have not

seen the matter referred to in any metropolitan newspaper. If a Pole or a Finn had been sentenced to an illegal punishment by a Russian tribunal, for the crime of using his own language, the facts would be blazoned in every British and West-British organ in Ireland.

We learn that the fine has since been paid by a friend on behalf of Tomás though without his consent. Accordingly, as we gather, no imprisonment has taken place. However, Tomás has been again summoned to appear in court to-day (Thursday) on a precisely similar charge. We are only carrying out the spirit of the resolution of the Ard-Fheis when we advise all Gaels to simply ignore the British Law which makes it penal for them to use their own language to the exclusion of English. If they are summoned and fined, let them refuse to pay; if they are sent to prison, let them go to prison. The question can be brought to a head no other way.