

THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING TRADITION.

By Pádraig Pearse.

From *An Claidheamh Soluis*, December 15, 1906.

Our leading articles for the past three months have been devoted to an examination of the actual situation in the Irish-speaking districts, and to the suggestion of remedies for the deplorable state of affairs revealed by that examination. We have seen that, speaking generally, vernacular Irish continues to die in its home; that it continues to die in spite of the fact (we again speak generally) that the public opinion of the Gaedhealtacht, so far as such a thing exists, has been converted to the view that it ought not to be allowed to die; that it continues to die, in other words, primarily and chiefly because *the habit* of speaking English has become ingrained in Irish speakers and that the eradication of that habit has so far proved a task beyond the strength of the language movement.

We have seen the habit in full force in the home, in the school, in the church, on the political platform, in the public boardroom. We have seen that it imposes its tyranny on teachers who spend themselves in the effort to impart a reading and writing knowledge of the language to their pupils; on priests who are thoroughly convinced that the maintenance of the language, is essential to the spiritual, intellectual, and material welfare of their flocks; on politicians who subscribe to the full programme of the Gaelic League; on League workers known throughout the length and breadth of the land as eager and effective writers, students, teachers, or propagandists. In theory, we all admit that Irish should be spoken; in practice we all – or nearly all – go on speaking English. In the Galldacht this is only ridiculous; in the Gaedhealtacht it is not ridiculous.

The unchecked continuance of the English-speaking tradition for another ten years will mean the death of the Irish language.

Let the tradition, then, be attacked on every League platform, in every League classroom, in every newspaper and periodical which the

Gaelic League can influence. Let it be attacked from the pulpit, from the political platform, in the boardroom, in the schoolroom. Let it be attacked directly and indirectly, in season and out of season, night, noon, and morning.

This is a programme in which every Gaelic Leaguer can take part – it is a programme in which every Gaelic Leaguer *must* take part. It was by adopting a strenuous and utterly uncompromising attitude in a similar crisis that the Czechs succeeded in saving the spoken tongue in Bohemia. At the present day a Czech will reply to a foreigner who addresses him in German, but he will not reply to a Czech who does so. In Poland a hundred thousand children strike from school because they are required to repeat the Catechism in German. In Wales the audience at a political meeting storms the platform because it is addressed in English by the member for the constituency. We want a little of the Czech's, or the Pole's, or the Welshman's thoroughness, stiffneckedness, and contempt for 'respectability.'