

THE POLITICIAN IN THE GAEDHEALTACHT.

By Pádraig Pearse.

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During last week the politician was rampant in one of the most important Irish-speaking districts in Ireland. Eloquent speeches in English were delivered to Irish-speaking audiences at Bearna and elsewhere. Election literature in English was scattered far and wide. The fact that Irish was the sole home language of a large part of the constituency and use of the home languages of the other part, was completely ignored by one side in the contest, and all but ignored by the other. True, Stíophán Mac Fhinn, whom Gaelic Leaguers of every shade of political opinion will congratulate on his election as the representative of the most Irish city in Ireland, spoke once or twice in Irish during the course of the week. Irish speeches were also delivered on his behalf by Tomás Ó Domhnaill. We feel quite certain that could the national language have been assigned a more prominent place in the campaign it would gladly have been assigned such a place by one side at least. We are attacking no one. We are simply pointing out two lamentable facts: first, that last week a descent was made on an Irish-speaking countryside by a crowd of English orators; and secondly that, as a result of that descent, vernacular Irish in the district has received a blow from which it will reel for many a long day. All this may have been inevitable; if so, more's the pity.

However, such descents, deplorable and harmful as they are, are of comparatively rare occurrence. Perhaps we must tolerate them for some time to come as necessary evils. After all, these incursions are less menacing and symptomatic than the fact that the business of what we may call local politics is almost invariably conducted in English even in the most Irish-speaking parts of the country. Is a grabber to be denounced? He is denounced in English. Is a Co-Operative Society to be inaugurated? It is given a send-off in English. Is an address to be presented to a priest returning from the Holy Land or from

America? It is written, read, and replied to in English. Is a dispensary doctor to be elected? The canvassing, the intriguing, the bullying, the 'warm interchanges' in the Boardroom, are all carried on in English. And so on in almost every department of human activity.

An astonishing and perplexing fact is that in these various acts of public life and social intercourse Gaelic Leaguers often play a prominent part. Nay, in many cases the U.I.L. Committee, the I.A.O.S. Committee, and the G.A.A. Committee in a parish, all consist of substantially the same individuals as the local Gaelic League Committee. Irish speakers who in their capacity as Gaelic League committeemen punctiliously speak Irish, will in their capacity as U.I.L., I.A.O.S., or G.A.A. committeemen, habitually speaking English. This is only one instance of a failing so common among Gaelic Leaguers as sometimes to suggest the fear that the whole movement is a sham. How many of us act or appear to act on the assumption that Irishism is a thing to be professed and paraded at Gaelic League demonstrations, at Feis and Committee meetings, and in letters to the press, but a thing which no sane man would ever dream of carrying into his daily life!

Unfortunately, the dweller in the Galldacht must for some time to come continue to use English. He must use it almost exclusively in his hours of business, and very largely in his hours of recreation. 'Tis true, 'tis pity, and pity 'tis, 'tis true.' Not so, with the Irish-speaker living in an Irish-speaking district. For him only one course is consistent with *bona fide* membership of the Gaelic League: it is to SPEAK IRISH ALL THE TIME.