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A PAN-CELTIC MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

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"We have what we claim rightly, and in no arrogant spirit, to be a splendid national inheritance . . . The wave of enthusiasm which is now stirring the Celtic world to its depths is, I hope, the augury of a happier future. The Celts of these Islands and the Continent are learning to understand and appreciate each other's efforts to keep alive their best racial traditions. Slowly, but surely, the brothers separated for so long are drawing together for a common effort in that highest form of patriotism—the cultivation of the spiritual heritage of the nation. Just think with me for a few moments of what that spiritual heritage really means. Think of the dominant note which rings above all others in this our complex, long-inherited nature—it is the passion and the love of all things beautiful, and, since all things beautiful are sad, sad with the yearning of unfulfilled desire, so we of Celtic race are sad—sad with unfulfilled desire, with hope gone o'er, with longings for the Infinitude, born of solitude amidst the wild hills and bogs. And with this longing and solitude there comes power to commune with that which is unknown to the less imaginative races, who, through that ignorance, will ever misunderstand us. This, then, in part is our inheritance, and this in part our pain—to be misjudged, and yet to rise above it all with the eager elasticity of free-born men."

LORD CASTLETOWN

(Mac Giolla Phadruig.)

13th March, 1899.



"Is it even too bold a vision of far-off years to dream of a time when, passing the stormy Moyle once more into the Scottish isles and glens, the children of the Irish Gael might draw closer even than recent events have drawn those bonds of blood and elanship which once bound us to our Scottish soldier-colonists who conquered with Angus and knelt to Columkille? Nay, spreading still further afield and amain, discover new nations of blood-relations in our near cousins of the Isle of Man, and our further cousins among the misty mountains of Wales and the old-world cities of Brittany; and combining their traditions, their aspirations and genius with the ever-growing Celtic element with which we have penetrated the New World, confront the giant, Despair, who is preying upon this aged century, body and soul, with a world-wide Celtic League, with faith and wit as spiritual, with valour as dauntless, and sensibilities as unspoilt as when all the world and love were young."

WILLIAM O'BRIEN.

1892.

"Y Gwir yn erbyn y Byd."

The opening of the twentieth century finds the Celtic race in the beginning of a new phase of existence. From John-o'-Groats to the banks of the Loire, and from Galway Bay to the Welsh Marches, the racial instinct is asserting itself in manifold forms, all tending in one direction—the preservation of those characteristics which distinguish the Celtic nationalities from their more powerful neighbours. Chief among those characteristics is the Celtic language, which, in its two dialects, Gaelic and Brythonic, has survived to the present day in Ireland, the Scottish Highlands, the Isle of Man, Wales, and Brittany. In all these five countries the native

language is being cultivated with increasing assiduity, and in three out of the five at least it may be pronounced as practically out of danger of extinction for many centuries to come.



As regards volume and value of vernacular literature published per annum, Wales stands easily first with its 2 quarterlies, 28 monthlies, and 25 weekly papers, one of them with a circulation of 23,000 copies. It is estimated that the Welsh people spend annually over £200,000 on literature in the Welsh Language. Welsh is now spoken by 1,200,000 people,

which is more than ever spoke it before. The American Welsh retain their language, and even organise Eisteddfodau in the New World on the pattern of the home festivals. The embodiment of Welsh nationality is the annual National Eisteddfod, held in some Welsh town at a cost of £6,000, and assembling some 20,000 people every year for literary and musical competitions. At the head of its literary section stands the Welsh Bardic Fraternity called the Gorsedd, which is presided over by the venerable Arch Druid, Hwfa Mon.



Brittany has the advantage of the largest and most compact Celtic language area, with its 1,300,000 Breton speakers, only half of whom speak French at all. The Breton language movement has, however, only comparatively recently taken up a prominent place in the national life and aspirations of the hardy Bretons. The process of Gallicisation—a ruinous policy for France as well as Brittany—has been going far and fast of recent years. The policy of centralisation bids fair to sap those springs of vitality which might save France from that “painless death” so lugubriously prophesied for her. But there are signs that Brittany will have her own say in the matter. The vigour of the new language movement, the constant stream of new vernacular literature, the spirited fight for recognition of Breton in the schools, and the steadily-increasing number of distinguished adherents of the Breton cause—all these elements make us believe that the future of Breton language and nationality is safe.



In the Highlands of Scotland, too, the Gaelic movement is making steady progress, though it has not achieved the results visible in Wales, nor has it been taken up with that irresistible force and enthusiasm which characterises the Irish movement. The quantity and quality of Gaelic literature annually turned out in Scotland is quite up to that of Ireland, at present at all events, though the number of Gaelic speakers is only a third of the number that Ireland can boast. The extensive use of Gaelic in religious worship, the excellent dictionaries available,

the high pitch of perfection to which Gaelic singing has been brought in Scotland, and the uniform and consistent character of Gaelic grammar and spelling are all elements in favour of the survival of Gaelic. The national language of Highlanders will probably survive as long as there are a reasonable number of Highlanders in Scotland. But “there’s the rub.”



Passing by the island of Manannan MacLir, where a young and struggling language movement has begun to show its head, we come to Ireland, the largest of the Celtic peoples, both in numbers and territory. There was a time when the importance of preserving that “chief badge of nationality,” the Irish language, was lost sight of over the disabilities of Catholics, the land question, or the question of legislative independence. But the movement which has recently grown up, mainly under the influence of the Gaelic League, has assumed such vast proportions, and is being prosecuted with such unexampled energy, that Ireland will undoubtedly soon take a leading position among the Celtic nations, not only in the boldness and ambition of her national aspirations, but also in all those activities which go to make a nation in the proudest sense of the word.



It is in these language movements that we see the salvation of the Celtic race. And not that alone, for the stimulus to intellectual endeavour which is brought to bear upon a nation in its effort to restore and develop its national language is of supreme educational value. That stimulus will carry the Celtic nations further than any monoglot nation can ever be carried. The smallness of their numbers will be outweighed by the strength of those subtle moral and intellectual forces which gave the Greeks their victory at Salamis. The Celt will have to prepare himself, not merely for a leading position in his own country, but also for a great mission in the world at large, where his intense spirituality, combined with a keen sense of justice generated by centuries of suffering, will make him the advocate of the oppressed and the representative of moral force in the affairs of mankind.

Our own special task, and that to which this Journal will be steadily devoted, is that of fostering the mutual sympathy between the various Celtic nationalities. The task is not without its difficulties. Politics and religion have made wide gaps between the Celtic sister nations. Mutual prejudices, sedulously fostered by English writers, have grown up between them. The Anglicisation of the insular Celts, proceeding as it does by degrading everything Celtic, has degraded also the Welshman in the eyes of the Irishman, and "Paddy" in the eyes of "Taffy." This result was unavoidable. It was the logical outcome of taking their opinions from London. For it is natural that "Paddy," while endeavouring to escape Anglo-Saxon sneers at himself, should take to English doggerel concerning his brother Celt with less aversion, and that English opinions concerning the Irish should be imported into Wales in the wake of the English language.



But all those prejudices are rapidly disappearing, swept away by the enthusiasm with which each Celtic nation greets the struggles and successes of its neighbour in the fight for national existence. The intellectual alliance between the five Celtic nations is as good as established. It is found to be perfectly consistent with the jealous preservation of the different national ideals which the various peoples have put before themselves. In religious and political matters there is mutual toleration. The racial feeling is strongly and broadly based upon the innate feeling of kinship—a kinship which has its roots in the remote past, before questions of Church or State had presented new problems for solution. And now that the race is becoming conscious of a great and proud destiny, the necessity for an exchange of counsel and information, and for an active collaboration in vital matters, is also becoming increasingly apparent.

To foster such sympathy and collaboration will be the special object of the Celtic Association and of this paper. The first great enterprise to which the activity of the Celtic Association will be devoted is the organisation of the Pan-

Celtic Congress, which is to be held in Dublin in August next. The exchange of delegations between the various Celtic festivals, which was begun in 1897, and has since then grown into a permanent feature of the festive gatherings in all the countries concerned, has prepared the ground for a more important and business-like development of Celtic co-operation. The various workers must be afforded an opportunity of comparing their experiences, exchanging information, and deliberating upon future action. Such an opportunity will be afforded by the Pan-Celtic Congress. That Congress will, it is hoped, provide—probably for the first time in the history of the race—a common platform upon which the leading minds of the five nations can take counsel together concerning all questions of common interest. Whatever its outcome, it will mark an important epoch in the annals of this Western Race, and its effects will be felt throughout the length and breadth of those beautiful lands which the Celt can still call his own. And it would be strange if this visible symbol of Celtic union did not put new heart into the gallant fighters of all the Celtic nationalities.



There is other work to be done also—less showy, perhaps, but quite as important. It is that of bridging the linguistic gaps which separate the five sisters. We shall endeavour to bring the Breton into touch with Welsh literature, and to enable the Irishman to read Highland Gaelic, and the Highlander to read Manx. This is a surer means of fostering sympathy than any number of congresses and resolutions. And mutual sympathy will bring about united action, and united action will make the Celt absolutely irresistible. It will undo the evil of centuries of strife and consequent disaster, and will bring into action that unswerving fidelity to high ideals which distinguishes the Celtic race from its less endowed contemporaries. And thus the fifteen millions of unabsorbed Celts will become a formidable force to be reckoned with in the affairs of a world which they did so much to civilise.