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FÍORADH NA FÍSE GAELAÍ?

BUNÚ CHOLÁISTE THAMHAIN 100 BLIAIN Ó SHIN: STAIR CHORRACH¹

Nollaig Mac Congáil

OILEÁN THAMHNA

Úna Bean a Diosca²

*Go h-Oileán Thamhna i lár an t-samhraidh
Ó'n gcathair amhgarach seadh bhí mo thriall,
'S dá bhfuighinn mo rogha féin 'dir áiteachaí an domhain
Is in Oileán Thamhna seadh chaithfinn mo shaol.*

*Tá na daoine béasach deas córtha néata,
'S ní fhaca mé i n-aon áit a shamhail le fagháil,
Le croidhe na féile sa gcaint bínn bréithreach,
'S a bhféachaint aereach gan smúit gan smál.*

*Bíonn soinnean go Samhain ann gus an t-aer go toghtha
San fhuiseógín a labhairt le breac an lae
Tontracha domhaine ar an gcladaigh ag amhstraigh
'S dar m'fhocal gur feabhas duit lá ann led' ré.*

Curfá:

*Ó Oileán Thamhna an áit is toghtha
Dá bhfuil sa domhan thoir nó thall,
Ní bhíonn ann cleamhsán acht spórt is damhsa
Is thógfadh sé an croidhe ionnat fanamhaint ann lá.³*

Le cúig bliana anuas táthar ag ceiliúradh bhunú na gColáistí Gaeilge amach is isteach ar chéad bliain ó shin. Cuid de na Coláistí céanna is mó a gcáil ná a chéile ach caithfear cuimhneamh gur chuidigh siad uilig go náisiúnta agus go logánta le cur chun cinn na Gaeilge ar bhealaí éagsúla. Chuidigh siad, mar rud amháin, le múinteoirí a oiliúint i dteagasc agus i modheolaíocht theagasc na Gaeilge, leis an Ghaeilge a theagasc do dhaoine idir mhúinteoirí den uile chineál agus den uile chúlra agus eile, le clár teagaisc Gaelach a chur os comhair daoine, le blaiseadh a thabhairt do dhaoine ar chultúr na Gaeilge i *milieu* Gaeltachta an uair ab fhéidir sin, agus le bolscaireacht a dhéanamh ar son na Gaeilge, an Ghaelachais agus idé-eolaíocht Chonradh na

Gaeilge.⁴ Cuirtear síos go gonta i leabhrán de chuid an Chonartha ar stair agus ar aidhmeanna na gColáistí céanna.⁵

One of the great obstacles to the spread of Irish in the schools is the lack of properly qualified teachers. Amongst the primary teachers not very many, until lately, had a literary knowledge of the language, and even those who had this were not always able to teach it. All their training had been conducted on the assumption that they were to teach only through the medium of English, and that this and this alone, was the mother tongue of their future pupils. When confronted with a class who knew little or no English, they naturally were puzzled and hampered. Nor were those of them who, being appointed to schools in an Anglicized district, desired to teach Irish as an Extra Subject, in much better case; they had received no instruction in modern methods of language teaching.

To meet this difficulty the League, within the last few years, established Gaelic Colleges.

Of these Colleges there are now eighteen – six in Munster, six in Connacht, four in Ulster, and two in Leinster. The Leinster College in Dublin and Coláiste Chomhghaill in Belfast are open during the winter and spring. The other colleges are in Irish-speaking districts and are in session only for the months of July, August and September each year. Though open to all students of Irish, and attended by men and women of many different callings, not a few of whom are foreigners, they are chiefly intended for teachers, and the Board of National Education gives facilities to its teachers who wish to attend the courses. Instruction is given, not only in the Irish language and literature, but also in phonetics and above all in the most up-to-date methods of language teaching. Other subjects, such as mathematics and Latin, are often taught through the medium of Irish, to show how, in bilingual schools, this can best be done.

Bhain na Coláistí seo cáil mhór amach sna chéad bhlianta, an t-am ba dhéine feachtais phoiblí Chonradh na Gaeilge sa chóras oideachais agus i sochaí na hÉireann i gcoitinne. Ar na Coláistí ba mhó i mbéal an phobail i gcoitinne céad bliain ó shin bhí Coláiste na Mumhan i mBéal Átha an Ghaorthaidh, Ollscoil na Mumhan sa Rinn, Coláiste Chonnacht i dTuar Mhic Éadaigh agus Coláiste Uladh i nGort an Choirce. Na daoine ba mhó le rá i ngluaiseacht na hAthbheochana – agus sa ghluaiseacht mhíleata ar thoradh moille - bhí baint ag a mbunús le ceann éigin nó níos mó de na Coláistí sin.⁶

Bhí Coláistí eile ann, áfach, a bunaíodh i ndiaidh na gceann thuasluaite nár bhain an cháil chéanna amach ach a rinne a gcion féin ar son na Gaeilge agus an Ghaelachais i gcaitheamh na mblianta. Orthu sin bhí Coláiste Gaeilge Thamhain i gContae na Gaillimhe,⁷ ceantar iomráiteach Gaeltachta céad bliain ó shin ach nach bhfuil iomrá ar bith air ó thaobh na Gaeilge de le blianta fada. Ní miste cloch a chur i gcarn leachta an

Choláiste sin mar chuimhneachán ar iarrachtaí mhuintir Thamhain ar son na Gaeilge i luathstair an Chonartha.

Bhí Coláiste Gaeilge eile bunaithe cheana i gCúige Chonnacht, mar atá Coláiste Chonnacht i gCo. Mhaigh Eo, ón bhliain 1905. Ní raibh aon cheann i gCo. na Gaillimhe gur bunaíodh an ceann i dTamhain sa bhliain 1909 agus an ceann ar an Spidéal an bhliain dár gcionn. Cuirfear an cheist, gan amhras, cén fáth ar lonnaíodh an chéad Choláiste Gaeilge i dTamhain seachas i nGaeltacht mhór fhairsing Chonamara ná i gceann d'oileáin Árann a raibh teist na Gaeilge agus an dúchais Ghaelaigh orthu le fada roimhe sin?⁸ Mar fhreagra air sin, tá sé ar shlí a ráite go raibh cáil bainte amach ag muintir Thamhain roimhe sin maidir le feachtais éagsúla a chuir siad ar bun ar son na Gaeilge, feachtais arbh fhiú le Conradh na Gaeilge agus leis na meáin chlóite náisiúnaíocha úsáid a bhaint astu agus iad ag tochas ar a gceirtlín féin.⁹ Luadh é sin go sonrath mar bholscaireacht agus an Coláiste á oscailt.

Tawin, as all Irish-Irelanders know, has taken a leading place in the revival movement. Few villages, if any, have accomplished its work. Seven or eight years ago scarcely a word of Irish was spoken by the villagers, and the children were growing up absolutely ignorant of the language. Now Irish is practically the only language of the village. Old and young speak it alike. This revolution was worked in a short space of time by a few strenuous Gaels, who succeeded in instilling such enthusiasm into the people that many of them absolutely refuse to speak Béarla to their children. Here is a place surely to learn Irish.¹⁰

Ní miste cúlra Gaelach iomlán agus stair phoiblí an cheantair a fhiosrú ina iomláine le fios fátha an scéil a fháil. Níor dhíol sonraithe an ceantar seachas aon cheantar tuaithe eile sa tsean-am ar chúis ar bith.

Tawin is an island in Galway Bay, about 14 miles from Galway by road, but only about half that distance by boat. It is now joined to the mainland by a bridge, under which a strong current flows when the tide is running. During the famine the bridge was built as Relief Work. Hay and seaweed were then carted to Galway...

Tawin was occupied from pre-historic times, a Court Carin visible in Tawin West townland showed – until the turn of the 19th century. It is the earliest record, in stone, of man's presence here. Red Hugh O'Donnell plundered Galway Bay from a base here after the sack of Athenry. People from the Burren settled on Tawin Island during the latter half of the eighteenth century...

While farming was the main source of income the collection of periwinkles and carrageen was also very important as there was a ready market for them. Carrageen was collected in Summer and sold to Galway buyers. Periwinkles were collected all the year round, but most intensely in Summer when they were more plentiful. Revenue from the sale of dried seaweed was once a major source of livelihood. There was a time when seaweed was sold as far as 35 miles inland in North Galway and South Mayo. It was delivered by horse and

*cart, accompanied by the hardy young men who made light of the long journey and enforced absence from home. They travelled in convoy and whiled away the time with jokes and stories...*¹¹

Sa bhliain 1902 bádh ochtar taobh le Tamhain¹² agus bhí alt faoi ar an *Galway Express*¹³ agus, ag deireadh an phíosá sin, an litir seo a leanas ó James F. O'Beirne,¹⁴ mac léinn leighis san ollscoil i nGaillimh a raibh a ainm ceangailte le scéal Thamhain ina dhiaidh sin, chuig eagarthóir an nuachtáin:

The great loss of life in Galway Bay on Sunday last has already cast a gloom over the whole country around, but the saddest point in the affair is the thought that at least five of the eight lives would certainly have been saved only for the rotten state of affairs that existed near the scene of the accident. I have seen accounts in all the Dublin papers of the sad catastrophe, but not one of them gave the exact things, so many of your readers will doubtless wish to hear the words of an eye-witness.

The village of Tawin (near which the accident occurred) is a narrow peninsula jutting out into the centre of Galway Bay, and terminating in a long rocky point, Kilcolgan Point. This point is the dread of all boats and vessels in the bay, for again and again there has been loss of life there. At one o'clock on Sunday last the people were just (sic!) from Mass. They noticed the pookawn making directly for the village and passed no further remarks. Five minutes later they looked again and the boat had gone down, and instead there appeared the heads of five men above water, all this happening within a quarter of a mile from shore. The people were horrified; nothing could be done in the line of rescue; not a single boat, great or small, was within miles of them. One man tried to signal to Galway by raising a flag, three others went in another direction to secure a boat, but all to no avail. Thus, before the eyes of the whole village, within a quarter of a mile of land, the five drowning men underwent the slow torture until 2.30 p.m. when, utterly exhausted, they dropped off one by one, the last man being washed ashore dead. An old man of 70 years who was looking on, said he never saw or heard of such an awful scene. Had there been a boat available the five lives could have been saved in about fifteen minutes. But why was there not? Are the villagers to blame? No, they are not. Twenty years ago every man in the place had two boats, but as there was no quay or place of refuge the boats were being continually broken, and finally had to be abandoned. Several times since have the people begged for a pier but as often have been refused. Such a scandal as this, I believe, would not be allowed to exist in any other part of the British Isles. Fancy a place in the centre of Galway Bay, with abundance of fish at all times of the year within forty yards, with boats and vessels passing on every side, and not a pier, nor a lighthouse, nor a coastguard station in it. A couple of years ago fourteen fishermen were drowned in the bay, but had there been a quay in Tawin they could have saved themselves by taking shelter there. Yet this is only one of the numerous incidents within the last few years. It was not fate, therefore, that was to blame on Sunday last for the loss of eight lives. It was the people in authority who refuse to make a small pier in Tawin and prevent such fatal occurrences.



Bhí níos mó ar intinn an Bheirne Óig ná droch-chaoi mhaireachtála mhuintir Thamhain amháin.¹⁵ Is léir ó na chéad tagairtí poiblí¹⁶ dó gur dhíograiseoir cruthanta Gaeilge a bhí ann nach raibh fuar ná falsa ag nochtadh a chuid barúlacha faoi chúis na hAthbheochana agus, lena linn sin, thuig sé go maith tábhacht agus éifeacht na meán clóite sa treo sin.

Seamus F. O'Beirne writes us a letter in which, from the standpoint of an Irish speaker, he criticises the working of the Gaelic League in the Irish-speaking districts, and criticises it, we believe, too harshly. Our correspondent speaks of whole countrysides he is acquainted with in Clare and Galway where nothing but Irish is spoken, and yet no branch of the League exists. A partial remedy for this state of things will, we presume, be found when the League appoints its additional organisers,¹⁷ and adopts the excellent suggestions our correspondent makes. He pictures the visit of an organiser to a district in his neighbourhood:- 'Some Sunday the local parish priest tells his flock that they should really begin and learn Irish. The people assent and wait with wonder to see the Dublin gentleman who is going to address them next Sunday. The day comes and so does the organiser. The people assemble in their thousands – enthusiasm and love of Irish is the order of the day. A Gaelic League branch is started and everything goes on well for a month or so, and what do we find then? No branch – no enthusiasm – no hundreds learning Irish; all, everything departed, and the Beurla quietly in possession once again. Nay, worse, still there is created in that place a contempt for Irish following on the failure to revive it. 'Why is this the history of so many branches?' asks our correspondent. 'Why can't they live, flourish and transform the West-British neighbourhood into a part of Irish-Ireland? Herein lies the question, and its solution will put a new aspect on the progress of the Irish revival. The secret lies in the fact that Gaelic

*League classes as at present carried on are too dull and monotonous. Will any person, no matter how intense his love of Irish, go to a classroom twice or thrice a week and spend his time there over an Irish grammar, the greater part of which is all Greek to him? No, it lacks variety, he soon gets tired of it, and stays away one night, then another, and finally stays away altogether. Can it be expected that a man working hard all day will spend the precious evening hours over an Irish grammar where there is no variety, no pleasure, no fun? I will show a simple method, and I commend it to all earnest Gaelic Leaguers, whereby Irish could be made the spoken language in Irish-speaking districts in less than two years. Let us have the facts. Up to, I might say, last year, a certain village in County Galway – Tawin – was doing its mighty best to become West British. Manners, games, language, everything was English, although the old people had Irish as their mother tongue. **Some time ago a few of us came together and formed a village club with the general object of making the people more Irish.** It was a new venture, an experiment, and its success is marvellous. With the kind assistance of our priests and that excellent Irishwoman, Lady Gregory, we got a hall and procured Irish copybooks, Irish histories, grammars, papers etc. We meet every night except Sunday. We devote half an hour to the copybooks, an hour to O’Growney, and the rest of the time is spent in papers, stories, conversation, each according to his fancy. One important rule we enforce is the use of Irish as much as possible, the result being that it is quickly becoming the language of the place. The local teacher, marvellous to relate, has now started to teach Irish in the National School! What a change! Now draw the moral. If every village in Connacht followed Tawin’s example, brought pressure on the local teacher, had a league branch in every club, combined pleasure with instruction, Irish would go ahead.¹⁸*

Thuig an Beirneach an tábhacht a bhí le gníomhaíocht phraiticiúil ar son na Gaeilge. Mar shampla léiríodh a dhráma *An Dochtúir* den chéad uair i dTamhain sa bhliain 1902.¹⁹ Thuig sé fosta an gá a bhí le bolscaireacht láidir ar son na Gaeilge ag iarraidh daoine ar neamhchead dá gcreideamh, dá seasamh polaitiúil ná dá ndúchas, a mhealladh ionsuirthi. Mar shampla, bhain sé duais as cuntas criticiúil a scríobh faoin *Galway Express* sa bhliain 1903.

The Winning Paper

Whilst thoroughly disagreeing with the political principles of the Galway Express, like many other Galwaymen I am forced to admit it is the only paper we have.

Protestant and Conservative, it gives too much prominence to its principles in a city that is Catholic and Nationalist – therefore, as a first suggestion, let it become a little more Catholic and show less of the political bias.

I would not urge so much the religious point as, indeed, the Galway Express is very liberal in that respect but I would certainly do away with the sneering and often times unjust remarks about the Nationalists. Every man in Galway has his own particular creed, then let the Express, while adhering to its own and giving vent to it when necessary, not disparage that of its neighbours if it wishes to become popular.

From a commercial standpoint, the Express does not need much change, but could it not fall in more with the Industrial Revival? We would welcome a column now and then advocating the support of home industries, the introduction of new ones, however small, into our midst, and the purchase of homemade (and Galway-made) articles whenever possible.

Could not the Galway Express (that annoys you with talk of the Red Book until you have seen it) start a campaign against the tons of foreign-made stuff brought into Galway every year?

Could it not agitate our moneyed merchants to invest a little to introduce and teach various industries to the crowds of idle men and women in our streets?

How many pounds a year do we send away for foreign-made toys alone? Multiply that so many times for other foreign-made items and I'm sure the figure will come to thousands; and fancy thousands disappearing from a place like Galway, all for the want of a comparatively small initial outlay and a man to show the road. The Galway Express has it in its power to show the road if it wills. We shall see.

The Express need not bother itself about emigration – pages of rhetoric advising people to stay at home won't have the slightest effect if there is nothing at home for them. Let them get work to do and money to earn and then emigration will cease – an additional reason for the Express agitating for the introduction of new industries.

The Galway Express has no Irish and why? It, so enterprising and go-ahead in other matters, has not yet got its Irish language column every week. Does it not see that the Language Revival is no passing fancy, that it has come to stay, and that Galway has the best chance of becoming the capital of Irish Ireland? That the movement has adherents of every creed and opinion; that it brings in its train self-reliance and, what's badly wanted in Galway, self-respect; that it engenders new vigour and new enterprise; that the language revival and industrial revival go hand-in-hand.

So get Irish type and an Irish column at once – I'm surprised at the Express being so much behind time re the Irish language.²⁰

The number of theatre goers in Galway is on the increase as evidenced by the many concerts and plays produced this winter. Would the Express keep a critical eye on all such performances and see that nothing unbecoming or disrespectful to Irishmen is produced? More than once have I seen performances that should not have been allowed in any Christian community – but perhaps the Express man was not there.

The Galway Express should undoubtedly set aside one corner for sports. Connaught surely provides material enough between Harriers, Footballers and, last but not least, Hurlers, to fill a readable column.

The above are some features of the Express conspicuous by their absence and which, I think, if introduced, would be favoured by the community at large. There are others but then – the Express man would give me a 'quare eye' if I told him to exclude all foreign advertisements etc.

I would therefore have the Express not the organ of one party particularly, but of the people of Galway – tolerant towards all! I would have it represent the interests, not of any individual clique, but those of Galway alone.

I would have it take an active part in the regeneration of our industries and our national language; I would have it endeavour to create a healthy national opinion amongst us; teach men of all creeds to approach and understand each

*other and thus bury our common legacy of bigotry; teach us all in our dealings with one another to forget the names of Catholic and Protestant and substitute in their stead that of Irishmen.*²¹

Finally, I would have it the censor and exposé of everything unjust or unfair in our public bodies, an Irish paper in the real sense of the word – the organ of all classes in Galway and Connaught.

*James F. O'Beirne,
1 Fort Eyre, Shantalla, Galway.*²²

Níor bhriathar gan bheart a bhí ar siúl ag an Bheirneach agus a lucht leanúna i dTamhain. An bhliain roimhe sin chuir siad tús le *Feis* san áit.

Tawin is an Irish-speaking village in County Galway. If you look for it on the map the chances are that you will not find it, as the powers that be know it by a genteeler name. South of Oranmore you will observe a peninsula jutting into Galway Bay. The metropolis of that peninsula is Tawin. Two years ago Tawin was passing swiftly from Gaeldom to Galldom. The old people had little English. The younger folk had plenty both of Irish and English. The children had little Irish. Tawin had a tiny feis last summer. The outside world heard nothing of it, but the feis, nevertheless, was the symbol of a revolution which is going on in Tawin – a passing back again to Gaeldom. Most revolutions have their dramatic moments. There was a dramatic moment in the Tawin revolution. Our readers may remember an incident which took place in a Co. Galway church some time ago, when a string of stalwart countrymen refused to hand in the customary 'dues' unless their names were put down in Irish. Those stalwarts were Tawin men.

*Tawin is to have another feis this summer. It will be small and purely local; all the better, say we. The syllabus is a delightful document. It is divided into a number of sections. Section 1 is for men over the age of thirty; Section 2 for women over the age of 30; Section 3 for men and boys between 16 and 30; Section 4 for women and girls between the same ages; and so on down the ladder till the youngest children are reached. The subjects for the various sections are selected with rare discrimination. The older men, for instance, are to tell a Fenian tale, the older women a story about some Irish saint; girls between 10 and 16 are to chat about 'How to Mind the House' and children under 10 about 'Braukies' (we wonder whether all our readers know what a Galway child means by a 'braukie'). Literary competitions are not forgotten. The prizes are most sensible, and include such useful things as 'an Irish-made pipe with something to fill it,' 'an umbrella,' 'a pair of camáns' etc. We believe that small, local feiseanna on the lines of Feis Tamhain are amongst the most effectual ways of tackling the Irish-speaking villages. Let other villages follow Tawin in starting a little revolution of its own, without waiting for a Gaelic League Timire to come round. Spontaneity is always a happy omen.*²³

Leanadh den Fheis an bhliain dár gcionn agus leanadh den phoiblíocht.

THE TAWIN FEIS

by
a correspondent

The village of Tawin is situated on one of the numerous promontories which jut out westward into Galway Bay. At high tide the promontory is an island, the entrance road being submerged. On a fine day the view from Tawin is delightful. Right opposite, at the mouth of the bay, Aran of the saints lifts its head from the bosom of the Atlantic and in the shifting lights reminds one of the mystic Hy-Brazil. On the left are the purple mountains of Clare, and to the right three miles away, Galway City sleeps peacefully in its level bed. But the beauties of nature are cold and irresponsive and it is not on these I wish to dwell but upon the human sympathetic scenes that a few Galway friends and myself were privileged to see in Tawin, Sunday 26th ult.

Until a year ago Tawin, like all Irish villages, had been travelling along the steep descent that leads to what people are pleased to call modern civilization. The young people were growing up ignorant of the language spoken by their fathers and mothers. They were learning to consider the Irish speech as a badge of vulgarity and to look upon their parents with contempt. Their good manners were being corrupted, and that instinctive politeness which is inborn in every Irish-speaking peasant was being replaced by the gloomy boorishness of the Lancashire man. They were falling into that discontented restless state of mind which, engendered at the national schools and fostered by contact with the gentlemen and ladies of the nearest country town, is responsible in a great degree for the emigration of our young men and women. That was a year ago. Today all that is changed and the introduction of the Gaelic movement has been the magician's wand that wrought the transformation.

*About a year ago my friend **Jim Byrne**, well known to the people of Galway, called together the natives of Tawin, pointed out to them the dangerous path they were pursuing, showed them the evils that would result if they let things go on as they were going, and suggested that they should form a village club to combat those evils. This suggestion was acted upon; the club was started and well has it done its work.*

The crowning of its labours was the Feis held this Sunday in the local schoolroom. The whole population of the village gathered there – babes-in-arms, boys and girls, young men and maidens and, happiest and most enthusiastic of all, the old men and old women. It did one's heart good to see them so bright and so earnest, the ancient Gaelic on their lips and deep love of Caitilin Uallachan (sic!) in their hearts. No one who has not beheld such a scene can imagine what joy and hope has come into the simple monotonous lives of these peasants since the Gaelic ideal has taken root among them.

Fr. Keane presided. Fr. Considine, Mr. O'Malley, Gaelic League Organiser, Mr. Richards and Mr. Grehan were there from Galway. The 32 competitions were keenly contested and some of the talent displayed was admirable. Some of the young men and women can write well in Irish, much better than they can in English. Yet they have been taught English for years and they have been scarcely a year at Irish. This is a remarkable fact. In order to learn English, they have to fight against the genius and traditions of their race; their own language comes natural and easy to them.

After tea the prizes were distributed and great was the enthusiasm of all as each successful competitor stepped out shyly yet triumphantly to receive his or her

reward. There were many good instructive books among the prizes and many useful and artistic articles for the women. Mr. O'Malley and Mr. Grehan made short speeches; the prize-winners sang a few songs. We had a small dance outside and then, alas, too soon! all was over and we had to say good-bye to the country of the Gael and set out once more to the rotting-place of the gall. I had never spent such a delightful day and I am sure that no one who was there will ever forget it.

There is too much said in the Gaelic League and too little done. Too many speeches in English from platforms and too little learning of the language even by the speech-makers. **If, in every parish in Ireland, one man could be found with the intelligence and energy of Jim Byrne, Ireland would soon be Irish in speech and sentiment. To him, to his open-hearted mother, and to the people of Tawin generally, my Galway friends and myself are deeply grateful for their kindness and Irish hospitality.**

- Tomás Breathnach²⁴

Anuas air sin ar fad, scríobh an Beirneach a dhráma cáiliúil *An Dochtúir*²⁵ agus earcaíodh muintir Thamhain mar aisteoirí sa dráma.

*Readers of An Claidheamh will remember Tawin as the plucky little place on the shores of Galway Bay which twice showed the men of the West how to do things – first, when on a memorable morning a string of stalwart country boys refused before a whole congregation to hand in the customary Easter dues unless their names were taken down in Irish; and, secondly, when on purely local initiative, and without outside help of any kind, it organized and carried through a delightful little local feis. Since these two exploits, Tawin has added to its reputation by bearing off something like half a dozen prizes at Feis Chonnacht. Tawin is now projecting a very audacious undertaking, even for it. One of its young writers has produced a two-act comedy entitled **An Dochtúir** which has already been acted privately with huge success. ‘Everyone was in roars of laughter from beginning to end,’ we hear. ‘The Tawin lads take their parts quite naturally. The piece is most humorous and the characters are everyday ones.’ Encouraged by this success, Tawin is going to produce its play in the Galway Town Hall on Oct. 19th. It is a bold venture for a country village, and we like it for its boldness. An Irish concert will follow the play. **An Dochtúir** will form a welcome successor to *The Geisha* which, we notice, has just been performed (with ‘ai-claw’ as a Galway lady told us) in the Court Theatre. It will be interesting to see whether **An Dochtúir** will command as many admirers as *The Geisha*: were we of sporting inclination we would back Tawin against Japan – even in Galway.²⁶*

Má bhí aithne mhaith ó thaobh na Gaeilge de ar mhuintir Thamhain roimhe sin, chuir an dráma go mór lena gcáil ar son na Gaeilge mar is léir ó na cuntais chomhaimseartha seo a leanas.²⁷



Foireann *An Dochtúir*, *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge*, 13:159 (Nollaig 1903), 453.

An Dochtúir

Dráma Gaeilge i nGaillimh

Tá drámaí Gaedhilge ag teacht amach go fairsing anois. Bhí ceann ar an gclár i nGaillimh an tseachtmhain seo a chuaidh tharainn i Seomra an Bhaile Mhóir. *An Dochtúir* is ainm dhó - ceann nua a sgríobh fear óg as Tamha[i]n, baile beag atá taobh thoir de Ghaillimh. Píosa an-ghreannmhar é, ag 'spaint gur seafóideach an rud dochtúirí nach bhfuil aon eólas ar Ghaedhilg aca a chur isteach ar cheanntair Ghaedhealacha ar fud na tuaithe. Bhí sé ar siubhal dhá oidhche i ndiaidh a chéile & bhí teach maith daoine ann 'ch-aon oidhche aca.²⁸

Dráma na nGaedheal

Is maith an mhaise orainn é, má thig linn, deagh-dhrámanna a léiriughadh. Taisbeáineann sé go bhfuil uaisleacht ár sinnsear gan bheith imthighthe asainn fós, cé go mb'fhéidir go bhfuil sí ag dul i léig ó lá go lá. Acht, adéarf, céard é dráma? Níl ann acht go samhaluighítear an gníomh; acht, má dhéantar go maith é, is beag nach gcorróghadh sé thú chomh mór is dá ndéantaoi an gníomh. Bíonn duine fá'n gcumhacht atá 'n-a thimcheall - má tá droch-dhaoine timcheall air is baoghalach go rachaidh sé chum uile tráth éigin, acht má's daoine árd-aigeanta, meanmnach iad, ní baoghal ná go mbeadh seisean mar an gcéadna. Sin é dála an árdáin - má léirighítear drámanna 'n-a ndéantar gníomhartha laochais, árdóghaidh sé sin meanma na ndaoine agus cuirfidh sé árd-smaointe 'n-a gcinn. Ní hamhlaidh é go ró-mhinic annso i mBaile Átha Cliath againn nó bheadh a mhalairt de dhaoine óga ag fás suas 'ná mar atá. Tá a fhios ag an saoghal nach mar a chéile saoghal na nÉireannach & saoghal na Sasanach, & dá bhrígh sin, gur éigean do dhrámanna an dá thír bheith gan cosamhlacht ar bith aca le chéile. Foillsighítear saoghal na Sasanach ar an árdán annso i nÉirinn, acht is annamh a fhoillsighítear saoghal na nÉireannach. Dá ndéantaoi aithgheineamhaint ar an árdán annso i nÉirinn, is mór an maitheas a dhéanfadh sé dhúinn. Is minic a léirighítear drámanna annso & deirtear linn go bhfoillsighid beatha & caitheamh-aimsire na nGaedheal, acht is gnáthaighe a leithéidí seo ag tarraingt ar phótaireacht agus ar bhillí dealuighthe na gcúirte dlighe. Bíd a d'iarraidh a chur 'n-a luighe orainn, dá mbadh i mbáireach é, go dtuiteann na rudaí seo amach i n-Éirinn gach aon lá. Támuid chomh dall soin nach dtig linn a fheicsint gurab ag nochtadh saoghail na n-allmhurach a bhíd.

Tá feabhas mór ag teacht orainn le bliadhain nó dhó, agus táimid tar éis beagán de shoblach na nGall a chur amach le fuinneamh. Ba bhreágh ar fad mar léirigh muinntir Chraoibhe an Chéitinnigh “Tadhg Saor,” ag Cuirm Cheóil na Samhna. Ní rabhadar ag déanamh aithris ar na cleasaidhthe Gallda i n-aon chor, acht dheineadar é fé mar dhéanfadh Gaedhil é - go nádúrdha. An oidhche fé dheireadh bhí “Pléasgadh na Bulgóide” againn sa Molesworth Hall, agus go deimhin ní misde a radh ná go ndearna an fhuireann a ngnó go maith. Tabharfaidh an t-árdán congnamh mór dúinn le hÉire a dhéanamh Gaedhealach, acht amháin é d’oibriughadh. Ní sos fós dóibh. Seo chugainn “An Dochtúir” arís as Tamhan. Ní bheadh breall ar an té [a] dhéarfadh go gcuirfidh “An Dochtúir” muinntir Bhaile Átha Cliath i riocht a sgoilte le gáire. Samhail de shaoghal i nÉirinn is eadh é seo, gan gó. Chífar atharrughadh mór fé chionn i bhfad.²⁹

*The Tawin players appear to-morrow (Friday), Saturday and Sunday nights in the “Banba,” or Grocers’ Hall, North Frederick-street, Dublin, in **An Dochtúir**. The play, which is in Irish and English, is full of fun and satire at the expense of the seoiníní, and is well worth travelling far to see for its own sake, but the Tawin players are men and women whom Irish-Irelanders should journey from the furthest corners of the metropolis to support on this occasion. For they are Irish-speaking people who, while they retained their language, did not lose their pride in it. All around their village dwell people who, like themselves, are Irish-speaking, but who unlike them, are ashamed of their language. Against all scoffers and jeerers the Tawin people clung to the old tongue and gloried in speaking it. If their spirit had been the prevailing spirit elsewhere, we would not need an Irish language revival movement to-day, for the Irish language would be spoken throughout the greater part of Ireland. The wondering neighbours of the Tawin men have heard with astonishment that the people in Dublin think so highly of the spirit of Tawin that they could not rest until they brought them up to enact their play in the capital of Ireland. The story of crowded attendances at the performances this week will travel back to Irish-speaking Galway - and it will influence for good every man in it. Galway peasants, long taught to despise their language, will have food for reflection when they find that Dublin esteems it so highly that she singles out for honour the one little spot in Galway where the people always professed pride and love for their native tongue. And no one who knows how much the influence of fashion has had to do with destroying respect for Irish in the Irish-speaking districts, will doubt how powerful a magnet fashion can now be made to draw the people back to respect that which genuine national education would have taught them never to regard otherwise than with respect.*

*P. Mac Amhalghaidh writes to us of the play: - ‘Hearing that the Tawin drama, **An Dochtúir**, is coming to Dublin, the idea occurs to me that a few notes on the play by one who has seen it acted in Galway may interest your readers. Let me confess, first, that I have no experience as a dramatic critic, and secondly, that as a Galwayman, I am intensely proud of Tawin, and possibly, therefore, not strictly impartial. If Ballyvourney be the capital of Ireland, the little village on the shores of Galway Bay may fairly claim the title of capital of Connacht. And who knows but at some Oireachtas in the near future Dr. Lynch and his Ballyvourney battalions may find themselves called on to defend their city’s title*

against the assaults of the Tawin legions, led on by Dr. Seumas O'Beirne (not quite a doctor yet, but next door to it). Now, as to the play. It is a short piece, in two scenes. I do not know whether the fact that even a non-Irish speaker can get a fair amount of fun out of it will act as a recommendation with your readers, or the reverse. It is so, however. If the Dublin audience enjoy it as well as the Galway ones appeared to do, its success is assured.

The first scene is laid in Ballindonas Dispensary situated in an exclusively Irish-speaking district. The newly-appointed doctor has not a word of Irish in his head. The humorous side of this situation is well worked out, but its more serious aspect, is also suggested (a very serious aspect indeed, it would be in real life). The hopeless bewilderment of the poor be-fogged doctor, as one patient after another enters and discourses volubly in Irish, would draw a laugh out of a dying man. The seoinín also makes his appearance in this scene, in the person of Mr. O'Higgins, lately returned from one of the nation-killing colleges. He can 'ploy eve'y goime, speak enny language,' but not of course the 'beastly Oi'sh.' The second scene is in Tadhg O'Clunain's house. Tadhg's wife has fashionable aspirations and speaks English. The doctor, who is a suitor for the hand of Tadhg's daughter, is expected and Mrs. O'Clunain is discovered drilling her husband and the servant-boy in what they are to say and do when the visitor comes. A great deal of fun is made out of this. The doctor arrives, and later on the seoinín. Mairin, just back from the convent, makes her appearance, and is found to be much too Irish in her tastes to please the mother. The climax of the latter's fury and of the seoinín's disgust is reached when Mairin, on being asked for a French song, gives instead the 'Spailpín Fánach.' 'The denouement of the play is very abrupt indeed, and I fancy it would stand lengthening out a bit more, and be all the better for it. The part where one of the characters attempts to appropriate the doctor's hat and stick should be left out or modified in some way. It is not true to nature. The acting in Galway was all round suprisingly good. The actor who sustained the part of Tadhg O'Clunain deserves to be singled out for special mention. The beggarwoman and her son, and the patient who compounds his own prescription, were all excellent. The 'Doctor' made the most of a part which did not present so many opportunities. The part of Tadhg's wife, which was presumably intended to hold up to ridicule the ignorant peasant-woman who tries to ape gentility, was too much 'idealised,' if I may be allowed the term. It should have been made much more unattractive. The seoinín was a little weak in the accent, but they have not many opportunities of studying that peculiar animal in Maree peninsula. I did not find Mairin quite as satisfactory as most of the others. She was evidently nervous, and I expect to see her do much better next Friday night, le connadh Dé. Her singing, too, was inferior to what it was at the last Connacht Feis. On the whole, Tawin has right good reason to be proud of itself, and Connacht to be proud of Tawin." Dr. Hyde has written expressing the hope that every Gaelic Leaguer in Dublin will support the performances this week. It is a hope we join in.³⁰

SCOIL NÁISIÚNTA THAMHAIN – CÚLRA NA CONSPÓIDE

Nuair a bunaíodh Scoil Samhraidh i dTamhain sa bhliain 1909, tharla sé sin ar an ábhar go raibh cáil na Gaeilge agus an Ghaelachais ar an cheantar le blianta roimhe sin agus gur aithníodh é sin go fada leitheadach ar fud na tíre. Breathnaíodh ar

Thamhain mar cheantar a sheas an fód ar son na Gaeilge, a d'éiligh a chearta ó thaobh na Gaeilge de agus a bhain amach iad. Rinne na meáin chlóite Ghaeilge agus náisiúnaíochá Bhéarla a gcion féin le scéal Thamhain agus a sheasamh ar son na Gaeilge a reic mar mhaithe le haidhmeanna bolscaireachta chomh maith le haidhmeanna idé-eolaíochta.

TAWIN – AN EXAMPLE AND A REPROACH

*It is regarded almost as an axiom within the Gaelic League that it is the English-speaking districts which must rouse the districts, where Irish is still the spoken language, to a sense of their duty. With this idea before it and also, of course, because it is the most urgent work within the League, the Coiste Gnotha devotes its staff of organizers almost entirely to the Irish districts. It is by no means easy to restore the language to esteem in the districts where it has been trampled upon and despised for generations. But some of the Irish districts have awakened and with their awakening have shown us that they can lead the way for all Ireland. The island, or should we now say the peninsula, of Tawin has made its name in the League by its production of Séamus Ó Beirne's propagandist play **An Dochtúir**.³¹ But it has done much more of which Gaelic Leaguers have not heard. A few years ago English was rapidly supplanting Irish amongst the people, and it looked as if in a few years the language would be dead in Tawin. No one cared for Irish; it was the language of the poor and the ignorant; its day was gone. Why should a few islanders on the shores of Galway Bay still cling to it? This was the way matters stood when news of the Irish revival reached Tawin. The news brought a great joy to the hearts of the men and women of the island; they lifted up their heads again and said to one another that they would stand up and do their part for Irish Ireland. The grown-up people had Irish but the young children were growing up without it. The parents in Tawin began with the children. The Béarla was dropped and the language of Ireland was made the language of the home. Though everyone now speaks Irish in Tawin, you can see the proofs that a revival has taken place. The children of five and six years of age are better Irish speakers than those of ten and twelve. But though they do not take such drastic measures, the Irish people of Tawin tolerate English as little as Red Hugh did when he carried his army into Connacht three hundred years ago. The parents of Tawin also said that, while they would do their duty in the home, the language of Ireland must get its proper place in the school. It did not get its proper place in the school and nearly all the parents withdrew their children. There is no National School in operation in Tawin today. There is an Irish Summer School this year but no National School. But the Tawin people were not going to have Irish frowned down in other directions either. During the Christmas times some years back, they went to Mass bringing with them their usual Christmas dues. Some laymen were making the collection of the dues. The Tawin men went up with their contributions and gave their names in Irish. The collectors objected and said they would have to give their names in English. 'All right,' said the Tawin men, 'Irish is our language; if you refuse to take our names as we wish, we will keep the dues.' The parish priest, however, appeared on the scene. He took down*

the names and afterwards read them out in Irish to the congregation. All this is being done down on the shores of Galway Bay, and no talk or fuss has been made about it.

We heard this story very recently and it set us thinking. In fact, it set us examining our consciences. Have we, we asked ourselves, when put to the practical tests which occur in everyday life, have we proved ourselves as consistent Gaelic Leaguers as the men and women of Tawin? How many Gaelic Leaguers can say truly that they have? How many prominent Gaelic Leaguers are there, for example, who speak Irish habitually, or even generally, to their children? How many prominent Gaelic Leaguers are there, who see that their children are taught Irish in the schools – taught it, not merely as an extra subject for a couple of half-hours in the week, but taught it thoroughly during the day as a subject of the first importance? The League is now a vast organization. Are the Branches making their force felt to the full in the schools? Are its members acting up to the principles of the League in their homes? More than half the schools are un-Irish still. A very large portion of the remainder are only playing with the teaching of Irish. A couple of half-hours a week after three or half-past three o'clock, when the children are tired out, is only playing at teaching Irish, and it is enough to make the children hate the subject as well. What are the thousands of Gaelic Leaguers doing? We ask the question. Will someone give us an answer? To Tawin we take off our hat. It has not talked; it has acted.³²

Ábhar iontais a bheadh ann mura dtapódh Conradh na Gaeilge an deis bholscaireachta seo. Rinne an Conradh agus bodaigh mhóra an Chonartha *cause célèbre* de Thamhain agus den scoil náisiúnta ansin.³³ Chuir an Craoibhín an litir seo a leanas ionsar *An Claidheamh Soluis*.

THE TAWIN SCHOOL

An Appeal from An Craoibhín

A chara,

*I forward you a most interesting letter from Mr. Roger Casement, H.M.'s Consul at Lisbon, in which he tells at considerable length exactly what met his eye in his recent tour through the West – of the pitiable Anglicisation of Kilronan and the coast south of Galway, and of the one little unaided community which he found struggling for their nationality against such tremendous odds. I have never been in Kilronan myself, but I know other parts of the coast, and my own experience entirely corroborates that of Mr. Casement. I made it my business to enquire particularly into the circumstances under which Tawin lost its school, **which finally broke up owing to the schoolmistress's inability to instruct the children in their own language,**³⁴ which the Tawin people insist upon having taught. The school is now a wreck*

and must be rebuilt. It may seem odd that I should write to you in favour of rebuilding a 'National' School seeing how the 'National' system has lain like lead upon the heart of the West crushing out of it its very life and soul. But now with the introduction of the bilingual system there is a chance for rational education once again, and Father Kean has guaranteed that if the school be rebuilt no one shall be appointed to it henceforth except someone who will conduct it upon bilingual and rational lines.

*I have been so much touched by Mr. Casement's letter that I beg you to print it. We must not allow Tawin to go under in the struggle, or to sink into a Kilronan. I would ask you if you would not open a special fund to rebuild Tawin's school. If you do, please put my name down for two guineas, and I would appeal to your readers to give what help they can. The admirable actors of **An Dochtúir** have placed us all under an obligation, and the Tawin people are no strangers to our Dublin branches. I am convinced we shall soon have their school up again for them, and that Tawin will remain one of those places from which we shall draw future inspiration.*

Mise, le meas mór,
An Craoibhín.

The following is Mr. Casement's letter:

Sligo, 4th October, 1904.

I am very sorry to miss you at Ratra. I have been in Galway and on Inismór, and then at Tawin on Galway Bay, and coming north yesterday I wired you from Claremorris to say I should go to Ratra tomorrow to see you; later I wired again from Sligo to ask if you were at home, but the telegram came back to say you were in Dublin.

*I much wished to see you and talk about Tawin – and indeed about Aran, too. There is so much to be done there – much to fight against, and some to cheer up and strengthen. Tawin above all needs a helping hand, and it is of Tawin I would speak and get your advice. I heard of it first from the article which appeared some weeks back in **An Claidheamh**, praising its brave stand for the language, and then when steaming to Aran I saw its desolate promontory and handful of houses stretched out into the bay. As good luck would have it, on getting back to Galway I found the play **An Dochtúir** was to be given by the original Tawin Company, with the author himself in the title role, so I stayed over Friday and saw it and met S. O'Byrne and all the Tawin men.³⁵ Next day, Saturday last, I went out to Tawin and stayed the night there, the guest of O'Byrne at his mother's house, in the midst of them, and the following day went to the chapel, at Mass, and met the priest, Father Kean.*

Well, I heard from Tawin of the loss of its schoolmaster (or mistress rather) through its very stand for the language. The school is empty now, and in shocking repair, and the Board will not send a master until the schoolhouse is put into a fit state. It will grant two-thirds of the cost of repairs, but Tawin (or some other source) must make good the third. Father Kean says that means about £60, the Tawin men think nearer £80, from them. I have not anywhere seen or heard of such a brave true spirit as beats in that handful of poverty-

stricken Irishmen and women. They are Irish to the heart, and it did me more good than all else I have seen in Ireland to find them so fiercely trying, in the face of the uttermost difficulty, to keep their own language. They are setting a splendid example to all the rest of the country round, where, although the Irish language lives on the lips of the old, it is not being given by them to their children.

Only in Tawin, in all that coast strip, do the parents insist on the children having the language, and they are often being jeered and laughed at by the bigger neighbours round. The loss of their schoolmistress was due to this attitude of theirs and their determination to have the language taught; so that if Tawin goes under in this fight for its own tongue, for my part I see clearly that the days of Irish-speaking in that bit of Galway are numbered.

I think every effort should be made to help Tawin – as an object-lesson for the surrounding district. If it gets its school started again the people all around will know that it is due to ‘the Irish’ and to that alone, and Tawin’s brave stand for it, that it has succeeded.

The village itself cannot find the sum required. The old men offered, and signed a declaration, to give free labour to help build the school instead of a money grant, but the contractor would not accept that. Father Kean says whenever the sum is subscribed he can start the work, and he can and will insist on a competent Irish teacher going (sic!).

As things are today the Tawin children are a good four miles from a schoolhouse, and the few that now attend school have to be sent to live near the school, away from their own homes, and when they come home their Irish is going or gone.

The mothers and fathers want their own school; where the children will be every day and hour within sound of the old tongue. The young men too hold an Irish school of their own, but in the present wretched building it is a poor business.

I have omitted very much I had wished to tell you, but it would be impossible in a letter. I want you to try and help Tawin. I told the people and Father Kean I should do my utmost, for it is a clear case of a community worthy of help.

For my own part, I have promised Father Kean to subscribe £20 myself to help the school fund. Could the League not also give Tawin a helping hand?

My visit to Galway convinces me (beyond a shadow of doubt, I am sorry to say) that the only hope of the language is in such groups as this of Tawin. The general mass of the Irish-speaking parents have kicked the language out of doors. In Kilronan I heard the fathers and mothers speaking a vile attempt at English to their children – and they with a rich, splendid speech of their own. But there it is! Nowhere did I find the language cared for and, with the exception of Tawin, every Irish-speaking home I entered tabooed the tongue of the parents to the children. It is shameful and almost inexplicable to a man who has travelled as I have among peoples who each and all respect and love their own language. My own countrymen alone are contemptible! For it lies with the people themselves, and if they wished or cared for their country really they could keep her language here in the West, where it is still known and spoken.

Although I nearly despair of the future (I hope I am wrong and only temporarily depressed) of the language, still I feel the very urgency of the situation calls for all the braver effort, and I should be a traitor (like those I am upbraiding) if I allowed my fears to stay my hand or chill my heart. It is only by concentrated

action and unremitting and increased effort can any impression be made on the dull, apathetic, dead heart of the Irish-speaking Ireland I have lately seen. I hope the training college at Ballingearry is going on well – it is so badly needed. I fear not very many of the school teachers are the best Irish teachers. There must be better trained teachers. I will send my subscription next year to Ballingearry, please God. But although the schools are a problem, and a stiff one, they are nothing to the homes! It is there in the homes in the West that I fear the cause is lost. The people have no spirit, or knowledge of their past or any hope save ‘to go to America.’ I heard that on all sides. Tawin – poor, brave, fighting little Tawin – is going there too. Some of the young men of **An Dochtúir** are soon to go – there is nothing for them to do at home. However, the 30 Irish children of Tawin are still at home and to be cared for, and they have the Irish and love it. I saw one thing in a cradle – an infant in arms – and its first intelligible speech is – ‘Speak Irish!’ (in the Gaelic, of course. I cannot spell it, or I would put it in its right form). Indeed I heard that injunction in Tawin again and again – it is their motto – their battle-cry all through the countryside – ‘Speak Irish!’ Some of the young men are actually sworn on oath not to speak English, and they go all through the country round by Oranmore and Kinvarra, refusing to answer in anything but Irish. But they are only a handful; and therefore I say we should strengthen their hand – and soon too. Well, I have troubled you enough. Do what you can for Tawin – my £20 is ready to help the fund. Surely we can get the £40 to £60 more needed and send it to Father Kean and get the work started. There is ever so much more to be done, but I am not rich, and already I have subscribed to so many things this year I am getting poor! I think were I to live in Tawin or Kilmurry in Aran for three months I should be able to speak the language a bit, and certainly to read it. I can pick up fairly quickly, and in Tawin I found myself able to follow something of what was said around me. Oh, if it could only be made again a living tongue!

Roger Casement³⁶

Ba ghearr go ndearna *The Leader*³⁷ a chuid féin de chuntas Casement thuas.

In the Course of a letter which Mr. Roger Casement, British Consul at Lisbon, wrote to Dr. Douglas Hyde, there is a pretty picture of the Irish-speaking slave:

My visit to Galway convinces me (beyond a shadow of doubt, I am sorry to say) that the only hope of the language is in such groups as this of Tawin...³⁸ For it lies with the people themselves, and if they wished or cared for their country really they could keep her language here in the West, where it is still known and spoken.

The language movement, as we have before pointed out, has sprung from an Anglo-Irish conviction. The Irish speaker has been kicked into slavery and, unfortunately, as far as we can see, the statesmanlike thing to attempt is to kick him out of it. We wish that some competent men would deal in Irish with the Irish-speaking slave, as we have dealt in English with the English-speaking Seoiníní, Sourfaces and nation killers and monstrosities of various kinds, and

let the Irish-speaking slaves hear it. That would be an effective way to waken them up. They prefer to speak English, or what they call English because, poor, bruised remnant of a battle that has raged for centuries, they in their ignorance think it respectable. They are to be pitied of course but they also want a good cuffing for their own good until they are driven into feeling that Irish is more respectable. We must save the language, and these slaves have got it, and they must be made to disgorge it for the benefit of the nation to which it belongs. They have the custody of this vital national possession by accident. It is not that they possessed any inherent virtue over and above that of the battalions of us who were born to the English tongue; they have Irish because of their geographical position. Supposing that a great army at the end of a period of campaigning, found itself in the position that the artillery of a large part of it was captured whilst a part of it, not so exposed to the fighting lines, kept its artillery intact but fell out of conceit of it, and did not wish to use it though the enemy was still pursuing its campaign of attempted extermination! What would the portion of the army that had no artillery think of the other remnant who had it – because they were under more cover during the campaign – but who refused to use it? They would not be allowed possession of it very long; and it is a pity that language, unlike artillery, cannot be transferred mechanically from one set who skulk, to another set who would use it like men. Language is being transferable like ordinary chattels, the only thing for those who lost the language in the fight of centuries to do is to compel those who have retained it to use it. They must be made to feel that their not using a weapon that they retained owing to their geographical position is treachery to the nation. We hear a lot of talk about the ‘Irish-speaking districts.’ This, as a correspondent in the course of a communication to us very pertinently points out, is a misuse of terms. He very precisely refers to them as ‘the districts where Irish is known but not spoken.’ Perhaps they might be called the Irish slave districts or the Irish-killing districts.³⁹

Na cuntais sin le Casement agus de hÍde a foilsíodh ar *An Claidheamh Soluis*, foilsíodh iad arís ar an *Galway Observer* ar 12.11.1904, 3 agus spreag sé an litir seo a leanas ó John F.S. Costello Sheppard a foilsíodh ar an *Galway Observer* ar 19.11.1904, 3. Mar eolas, i ndaonáireamh 1901 tá fear agus bean luaite, mar atá, na Sheppards agus é ráite gur mhúinteoirí scoile iad.

TAWIN SCHOOL QUESTION

Maree Oranmore,

Nov. 16th, 1904.

To the Editor of the Galway Observer.

Sir,

As an appreciative reader of your valuable paper, I wish to enter my protest against the false accusations contained in the respective letters of Dr. Hyde and Mr. Casement, appearing in the Observer of last week. As Mr. Casement is now

appealing to the public for aid to rebuild the Tawin School, I deem it proper to put forth the real facts of the case about the breaking-down of that school.

I am deeply interested in this case and am fully acquainted with the true facts of the matter ever since its commencement.

To speak with justice, I would say this letter from Mr. Casement is, for the most part, a string of falsehoods, and I am certain that the 'bigger neighbours,' as he terms them, will agree with my views. He speaks in such praiseworthy terms of these 'Tawanees' that one would be convinced that Tawin is the real home of the Irish language, that the Tawin people are model patriots, and that the teacher is some imported traitorous wretch, bribed and paid to Anglicise these people, but she has failed, and she is now (D.V.) cast ruthlessly aside by those brave few. These are the bold assertions contained in Mr. Casement's letter, which states that the loss of the Tawin school was due to the noble endeavours of the Tawin people to stay Anglicisation, to uphold the Irish language, and that the ruin of the schoolmistress there was due to her own inability as a national teacher.

Perhaps he never heard the real origin of the case. The breaking down of the Tawin school was the outcome of the bad work of a Society, organized there about three years ago, a Society headed by a 'flunky' who under the guise of the Irish Revival, endeavoured by intriguing and plotting to effect the dismissal and ruin of their teacher – the teacher that laboured strenuously for twenty-two years removing ignorance and savagery, spreading education and religion in this pestilential island, educating and enlightening the Tawin children, eradicating vices and ill-doing, and undergoing much privation and misery while earning her honest living; and yet, after so many years of honest toil and hard living, and after having rendered such good services in this lone and backward island, to be maltreated, to be boycotted, to be insulted, to be degraded, to be ruined, to be deprived of her living, and to be hunted like a wild beast. But such is not to be wondered at in the least, for the same fate befell all her predecessors – in fact there was not even one exception; and any of them will be only too glad to give Mr. Casement or any other person the true history of the Tawin clan. Are these Irishmen?

This is the Society so much praised by Mr. Casement that left Tawin without a National School today, for when acts of violence, threats and intimidation failed, the club wrecked the school rendering it in such a state that the Commissioners of National Education could no longer recognize it as a National School, and consequently the teacher was obliged to leave, deprived of her salary and living by the ungrateful, barbaric and vicious few. Such are the real facts of the wrecking of the Tawin school, and I defy contradiction.

Moreover, he speaks of the inability of the teacher and he endeavours to mislead the public by his unfounded statements. But truth is truth and the reports of the National Inspectors cannot be denied. Her school has been examined annually during the past thirty years and each report proves her meritorious service.

In 1895, although teaching in a school-room unfit to shelter beasts in winter, she scored 95 at the Annual Results Examination, a record which has not hitherto been held by any island school in Connaught. As an Irish teacher I need not speak. Her seed, breed and generation are the real Irish blood; she has been born and reared with the Irish language, and in that district – Turloughmore where the true Nationalists are to be found, not the spurious

patriots, not of the Carey type. She has been teaching Irish for upwards of thirty years, and in her early teens when 'Tawinees' would scorn to speak Irish, this teacher was energetically teaching the native language in other districts of Connaught. But in Tawin – that pestilential, corrupt and unsanitary island she spent twenty-two years where she exceeded her duty as a teacher with honesty, zeal and energy, she was good and kind, honourable and forgiving, well fitted to conserve the interests and further the desires of her pupils, she did her utmost to spread politeness, culture, urbanity, fraternal care, and Christian charity.

Mr. Casement states that there are thirty children in Tawin while the school statistics show that ten is the average attendance. Hence three times the correct number is given to mislead the public. He also says that the nearest National School is four miles away, while I know as a fact that it is only three miles; and children come farther from other districts to this school. Why could not the few from Tawin come? Now the public can readily understand the object of Mr. Casement's letter.

By all means let the Irish language be received and I have done my utmost to help every Irish movement. I have contributed as far as possible to the support of every Irish Association. I am an energetic and zealous worker for the welfare of the G.A.A. and throughout Connaught I have always been a kind supporter.

Yours respectfully,

John F.S. Costello Sheppard.⁴⁰

Tá difríocht an tsaoil idir an leagan sin agus leagan an Chraoibhín agus Casement, mar ba léir do chomhfhreagraí ar foilsíodh comhfhreagras leis faoin scéal ar an *Galway Observer* ar 26.11.04, 2.

To the Editor of the Galway Observer

Dear Sir,

*In your issue of the 12th you reprinted two long letters, one from An Craoibhín and one from Mr. Casement, the latter being His Majesty's Consul at Lisbon, and the former – well, everyone knows who he is – the leader of the Irish Ireland Movement. Now, Sir, I have no desire to question the statements contained in these letters. I desire only to direct attention to the fact that you specified the source from which the reprint was made viz. **An Claidheamh Soluis**. Therefore it follows that criticism of the letters in question should have been addressed to the editor of that paper – the address is 24 O'Connell Street, Dublin.*

If Mr. Sheppard's statements are correct it throws a new light upon Tawin, and I am sure the public will be glad to read the views of others acquainted with 'the bone of contention...'

Slanthago H-Erin.

Ar an drochuair agus ar mhaithe le fírinne an scéil níor tugadh freagra ar bith ar a raibh le rá ag an Uas. Sheppard agus is trua linn sin. Is iontach linn fosta nár

bréagnaíodh a chuid ráiteas ó tharla go raibh sé sásta a bharúlacha láidre féin a chur os ard.

Cibé faoi fhíricí an scéil, áfach, fuarthas an t-airgead agus cóiríodh an scoil agus gabhadh buíochas le pobal na tíre as a gcuidiú.

THE TAWIN SCHOOL FUND

*Rose Cottage, Oranmore, Galway,
December 26th, 1904.*

Dear Sir,

I hereby acknowledge through your widely circulated paper the sum of £10 towards the Tawin School Fund given to me by the Lord Bishop of Galway, Dr. Mac Cormack.

This subscription, I am sure, would have been at the head of the list of subscribers, but his Lordship had been away in Rome when the fund was started. I have also to acknowledge the sum of ten shillings towards the same Fund sent to me by Miss Ellen Naughton and her sister, Runkerry, Bushmills.

I take this opportunity of returning my most sincere thanks to the Most Rev. Dr. Walsh, Archbishop of Dublin, for his very generous subscription of £20 towards the Tawin School Fund.

And I also thank very sincerely, on behalf of the poor people of Tawin, all who have subscribed towards the Fund to enable them to have a school erected for the education of their children which otherwise could not possibly be erected by the Board's grant.

The plans of the building are now in the hands of a competent contractor, and hope to see the work of building the school started very soon.

James J. Keane, P.P.⁴¹

THE TAWIN SCHOOL FUND

A Chara,

I am forced to write in Béarla as a good many for whom the contents are meant are not yet conversant with Irish.

I am commissioned by the people of Tawin to speak to the Gaelic League through the medium of your paper, and can best fulfil my mission by acting as reporter and describing events as I have seen them myself.

Recently in Tawin I attended a meeting of the village people – old and young were there, Irish the language. The people wish me to convey to the many friends who subscribed towards the School Fund their heartiest thanks, and to make that thanks more acceptable, they wish it to be known that henceforth Irish is to be the language of Tawin. They wish to convey their special thanks to

Mr. Casement, Dr. Hyde, yourself – and those friends who initiated the movement.

The meeting next elected a village committee, on which are Fr. Keane, Dr. Walsh and myself. Should Dr. Hyde so wish (I have not yet informed him of it) this committee intends looking after, first, the erection of the library, and then the making of Tawin not only a thoroughly Irish village, but one worthy of the great Revival movement which has made the change possible.

With the Tawin people I heartily unite in thanking each and every one who helped in the erecting of our Irish school.

Do chara,

Séamus Ó Beirn⁴²

Gan amhras, *cause célèbre* a bhí i scéal na scoile i measc an tsaoil Cheiltigh ar fad mar is léir ón chuntas seo a leanas ar *An Claidheamh Soluis*:⁴³

THE TAWIN SCHOOL FUND

We regret that we have not space to publish the numerous encouraging letters that we have received. Mr. John Sweetman, in forwarding £1 from himself and £1 from Mrs. Sweetman, writes that the Tawin Irish School will have an educational effect on, amongst other institutions, the diocesan seminaries. Father O’Flanagan, C.C., writes that the success of this effort in Tawin will mean that the Gaelic League has accomplished in at least one district what it has not hitherto accomplished anywhere – it will have restored Irish as a vernacular to a district from which it had all but disappeared. Craobh Ghlaschú – which, by the way, has been the first Craobh of the League, as such, to come to the rescue of Tawin – sends £3 3s, and a spirited letter. Miss Mallt Williams, one of the leaders of the Welsh language movement writes:- ‘Tawin is setting a splendid example not only to Ireland but to the Celtic world in general, and I have much pleasure, as a Welsh Nationalist, to help place a brick in that schoolhouse in the West that will be dedicated to the teaching of the native tongue – for ever, I hope. Surely also Ireland will see to it that the young men of Tawin are not lost to her through that terrible evil, emigration, and some rich patriots will offer them employment and a living wage in their own land. Ireland never wanted her Gaelic-speaking children more than to-day. Well done, Tawin!’

Síleadh go raibh deireadh le scéal Scoil Náisiúnta Thamhain agus go leanfadh muintir Thamhain orthu ag cothú na Gaeilge agus an Ghaelachais feasta. Tharla cor amháin eile sa scéal, áfach.

A Correspondent writes to us:

A strange story has reached me from Tawin. The name is familiar to your readers in connection with an appeal to Irish-Irelanders for the erection of a new school there. A sum of close upon £140 was realized, and the school was built. It seems that the people of Tawin wanted an Irish inscription upon the slab instead of the, to them, unintelligible English inscription, too often met with

outside our schools. The sturdy Gaelic Leaguers of Tawin have on more than one occasion insisted upon being regarded as residing in an Irish-Ireland parish, and not in an integral portion of West Britain. They did so in the education question and in many others. It is stated now that their demand for an Irish inscription was not, for some reason or other, complied with, and the usual 'Tawin National School' was displayed in foreign characters. But the slab mysteriously disappeared one night, and has not since been found, leaving a hole in the wall which has not as yet been filled. The terrible 'outrage' created quite a sensation in the district, and the police are busy investigating it. So the rumour states in any case. Can it be true?⁴⁴



Photo: Breandan Ó Riordáin

Chum Séamus Ó Beirn dráma *Obair!* Mar gheall ar an eachtra seo agus seo a leanas an réamhrá a cuireadh leis an dráma.

RÉAMHRÁ

*The play **Obair!** is founded on the following: - In 1903 the old Tawin National School was closed up for several reasons, one of which was that the people*

wanted the use of the school for the study of Irish. Such an extraordinary request met with opposition. The trouble finally ended with the closure of the school - a serious loss to all concerned. This state of things lasted for three years, and would have continued since were it not for the generous action of the Gaelic League.

That body, on the initiation of Mr. Roger Casement and through the medium of **An Claidheamh Soluis**, collected the necessary money, with the result that the present new school was erected.

That such a school in an Irish-speaking district and started under such circumstances would give Irish due recognition was only to be expected.

The people wished it. Those concerned with the establishment of the school promised it. What happened? On the 25th November, 1905,⁴⁵ the school was nearing completion. Two flagstones were procured, one inscribed in Irish, the other in English. For some unknown reason the Irish flagstone was discarded and the English one fitted into place over the entrance door. No greater insult could be offered to the people of the village. That night the English flagstone disappeared from the new school and has not since been recovered. Its extraction necessitated some injury to the school building, besides arousing a storm of indignation against the village people for such a dastardly act.

All kinds of inspectors and officials flocked to the village seeking information as to the 'ruffians' who had dared to interfere with the English flagstone.

Reprisals were threatened on a large scale. 'The village would never have a school now.' 'The country would see what their Irish did for them' etc. Still the people remained steadfast, confident they had done what was right and honourable. They were prepared to lose even the new school rather than compromise, when such compromise meant the degradation of their language.

Things looked very black for them when, all of a sudden, a light shone forth. A venerable and high-placed personage, hearing the whole story and sympathizing with the people in their struggle against Anglicization, ordered an Irish-inscribed flagstone to be erected over the school entrance. His order was carried out amidst the rejoicings of the Tawin people.

Today the Irish flagstone greets the eye, and the little school offers a typical example of what can be achieved by determined action on the part of the people.

- S. Ó B.

Ní raibh ceantar Gaeltachta ar bith eile ann ag tús an chéid seo caite a raibh a ainm in airde chomh agus a bhí i gcás Thamhain maidir lena seasamh ar son na Gaeilge agus an Ghaelachais. Cá hionadh mar sin gur bunaíodh Coláiste Samhraidh ansin sa bhliain 1909 agus go raibh dlúthbhaint ag Éamon de Valera leis sna blianta tosaigh?

¹ Tá mé buíoch de na daoine seo a leanas as a gcabhair agus an taighde seo ar siúl agam: an tOllamh Thomas Bartlett, An Dr. Diarmuid Ó Cearbhaill, Michael Burke, Breandán Ó Ríordáin, Marie Boran, Loretto O'Donoghue agus Síle Ní Mháille.

² Maidir leis an bhean seo ba chúis le bunú Choláiste Thamhain, féach Diarmuid Breathnach agus Máire Ní Mhurchú, *Beathaisnéis a Naoi: Forlíonadh agus Innéacsanna* (An Clóchomhar, 2007) 144.

³ *The Gaelic Churchman*, May 1923, 127. Is minic a bhuaíl galar na filíochta iad siúd a bhí i mbun na gColáistí Gaeilge ar fud na tíre nó a rinne freastal orthu céad bliain ó shin.

⁴ Féach, mar shampla, Timothy G. McMahon, ‘*To mould an important body of shepherds*’: *the Gaelic summer colleges and the teaching of Irish History*’ in Lawrence W. McBride (ed.) *Reading Irish Histories: Texts, contexts, and memory in modern Ireland* (Four Courts Press, 2003) 118-39.

⁵ ‘The Gaelic Colleges’ in *The Irish Language Movement and the Gaelic League* (Conradh na Gaedhilge, g.d.) 21-2.

Seo a leanas cuntas ar na Coláistí Gaeilge a eisíodh ag an *Conference of Irish Colleges* sa bhliain 1916: *The Colleges for training teachers of Irish were established to meet the great demand for qualified teachers of the National Language, and to remedy the defect in our educational system which made no adequate provision for the training of such teachers.*

During the past 12 years 14 of these Colleges have been founded. The majority of them are Summer Colleges, whose sessions are carried on during the Summer and are situated in Irish-speaking districts in the Counties of Louth, Antrim, Donegal, Mayo, Galway, Clare, Kerry, Cork and Waterford. The Winter Colleges are situated in the Cities of Dublin, Belfast and Cork, and in Mullingar and Navan. Since their establishment the Colleges have been attended by an aggregate of over 13,000 students, and during the past two years the annual total attendance was over 1,500 yearly. The great majority of the students were teachers in Primary and Secondary Schools. The others included prominent men and women in intellectual and public life, not only from Ireland, but from Great Britain, America, France, and many other countries. Nearly every Nationality in the world has been represented amongst the students.

The Colleges were the spontaneous development of a notable constructive educational movement. They were founded and administered by voluntary effort.

Ní miste a lua anseo gur aithris a bhí sna Coláistí Gaeilge seo ar a macasamhail sa Bhreatain Bheag ón bhliain 1903. Féach, Proinsias Mac Aonghusa, *Ar Son na Gaeilge: Conradh na Gaeilge, 1893-1993 Stair Sheanchais* (Conradh na Gaeilge, 1993) 122-3.

⁶ Breathnaigh, mar shampla, ar a bhfuil scríofa agam faoi chuid de na Coláistí seo sna haistí seo a leanas: ‘Coláiste Chonnacht: na Blianta Tosaigh i dTuar Mhic Éadaigh’, *Feasta* (Meán Fómhair, 2005) 19-22, (Deireadh Fómhair) 19-23; ‘Stair na gColáistí Gaeilge agus Bunú Choláiste Uladh’ in Seosamh Ó Ceallaigh (eag.), *Coláiste Uladh 1906-2006* (Coiste Cuimhneacháin Choláiste Uladh, 2006) 110-40; ‘Bunú Choláiste na gCeithre Máistrí’, *An tUltach* (Deireadh Fómhair, 2006) 10-4; ‘Bunú Choláiste Laighean 1906: Deireadh le Tús na gColáistí Gaeilge’, *Feasta* (Eanáir, 2007) 23-7; ‘Stair Bhunú Scoil an Daingin’, 1908. *Irisleabhar Mhá Nuad* (2008) 9-37; ‘Bunú Choláiste Chomhghaill, Béal Feirste 1905’ in Micheál Mac Craith & Pádraig Ó Héalaí, *Diasa Díograise. Aistí in Ómós do Mháirtín Ó Briain* (Cló Iar-Chonnachta, 2009) 109-27.

⁷ Cuireadh Coláiste Gaeilge Thamhain nó Scoil Ghaeilge Thamhain ar bun i mí Iúil 1909. Bhí Éamon de Valera mar ardmháistir ar an scoil ar feadh trí bliana ag an tús. Féach, Tomás Ó Néill, Pádraig Ó Fiannachta, *De Valera I* (Cló Morainn, 1968) 27-9.

⁸ Bhí lucht na Gaeilge ag tarraingt ar Árainn blianta sular bunaíodh Conradh na Gaeilge agus ba iad oileáin Árann ba rogha leis an chéad ghlúin de lucht an Chonartha. Mar shampla, thug Eoin Mac Néill a chéad chuairt ar Inis Meáin sa bhliain 1890. Féach, Brian Ó Cuív, ‘Mac Neill and the Irish Language’ in F.X. Martin & F.J. Byrne (eds.), *The Scholar Revolutionary: Eoin MacNeill 1867-1945 and the Making of the New Ireland* (IUP, 1973) 4.

⁹ Féach, Lucy McDiarmid, *The Irish Art of Controversy* (Cornell University Press, 2005).

¹⁰ *Sinn Féin*, 19.6.1909, 4.

¹¹ Kay Davis, *Oranmore in Days of Yore* (2008*) 62-5.

Tá an cuntas seo a leanas ar Thamhain foilsithe in *A Portrait of Maree* (Maree Community Development Association, 1986) 29:

This is an island of about two hundred and fifty acres, off the western seaboard of Ireland. Sixty per cent of it is arable and the remainder is made up of creggs, shores and commonage. The commonage is owned by the farmers who send their animals to graze there. Tawin by sea is three miles to Galway and twelve to Ballyvaughan, by road it is fourteen miles to Galway and twenty seven to Ballyvaughan. The name Tawin is supposed to have originated a long time ago. No one is sure of its real origin, but there are many local legends which tell of it. One legend is of a tribe called the ‘Firbolgs’ who came from Clare. They were very adventurous and wandered around the coast of Ireland in their boats. On one of their journeys they came to an island. The leader of the tribe was called Touin and the other members of the tribe decided to honour him by naming the island after him.

¹² Tá cuntas faoin tubaiste sin ar *The Irish Times*, 5.5.1902, 5 agus ar an *Freeman’s Journal*, 6.5.1902, 7.

¹³ 10.5.1902, 2

¹⁴ Séamus Ó Beirn (1881-1935). Rugadh é i dTamhain agus fuair sé a chuid bunoidreachais ansin. Cé go raibh a thuismitheoirí ina gcainteoirí dúchais, tógadh é le Béarla. Fuair sé a chuid meánoideachais i gColáiste na nÍosánach, i nGaillimh. Is cinnte nach raibh cáil mhór Ghaeilge ar an Choláiste chéanna in aimsir an Bheirnigh.

REPORT OF DEPUTATION OF GAELIC LEAGUE (GALWAY BRANCH) ON THE TEACHING OF IRISH IN LOCAL SCHOOLS

<i>Schools</i>	<i>No. on roll</i>	<i>No. learning Irish</i>	<i>No. of hours per week</i>
<i>Bohermore N.S.</i>	90	30	3
<i>Claddagh (Male) N.S.</i>	90	40	2
<i>Claddagh (Female) N.S.</i>	60	16	2
<i>Convent of Mercy N.S.</i>	594	40	4
<i>Dominican Convent</i>	88		
<i>Erasmus Smith (Gram. Sch.)</i>	5		
<i>Galway Union (Male)</i>	36	27	4
<i>Galway Union (Female)</i>	26		
<i>High School (Ladies)</i>	25		
<i>Industrial School</i>	200		
<i>Model Schools</i>	88		
<i>Monastery Schools</i>	370	94	2
<i>Presentation Convent</i>	500	64	4
<i>St. Ignatius Coll., S.J.</i>	73	23	2
<i>St. Joseph's Seminary</i>	195	102	6
<i>St. Nicholas' (Female) N.S.</i>	200	140	2
	2690	576	

An Claidheamh Soluis agus Fáinne an Lae, 26.1.1901, 728.

Tá mé den tuairim láidir go raibh an Beirneach ina bhall den *Irish Fireside Club*, eagraíocht do pháistí a reáchtáil an *Freeman's Journal* ag deireadh an naoú haois déag agus ag tús na haoise seo caite agus a d'imir tionchar ollmhór ar lucht na Gaeilge ó thaobh na Gaeilge agus an náisiúnachais de. Mar shampla, ar bhaill an *IFC* bhí Tomás Ó Concheanainn, Seoirse Ó Muanáin, Éamon de Valera, Énrí Ó Muirgheasa srl. Luaitear ar 11.5.1895, 11 de *The Weekly Freeman's Journal* go raibh James Beirne ina bhall den chlub, *Member Number* 53434. Aithnítear cur chuige an *IFC* sna barúlacha a nochtann an Beirneach faoi chúrsaí Gaeilge agus Gaelachais. Maidir leis an *IFC*, féach, Ríona Nic Congáil, "Fiction, Amusement, Instruction": The Irish Fireside Club and the Educational Ideology of the Gaelic League' in *Éire-Ireland* Vol. 44: 1&2 (Earrach-Samhradh, 2009) 91-117.

Tá cuntas cuimsitheach ar shaol an Bheirnigh le fáil in Diarmuid Breathnach agus Máire Ní Mhurchú, *1882-1982 Beathaisnéis a hAon* (An Clóchomhar, 1986) 48-9 ach tá an cuntas is fearr le fáil ag an Dr. Seán Ó Beirn faoi in *A Portrait of Maree* (Maree Community Development Association, 1986). Is fiú cuid den chuntas a thabhairt anseo ó tharla nach bhfuil fáil réidh ar an leabhar seo:

Seamus O'Beirn was born James Fahy Byrne on the 18th July, 1881 in Tawin, just across the bay from Galway City. The people of Tawin are descendants of a group of farmers-fishermen who came there about 150 years previously from Finavara, Co. Clare, and they were a closely-knit community. There were four boys in the Byrne family – Dan, Michael, James and Bartley, and two girls, Margaret and Delia. James or Jim as he was called from an early age, had a flair for writing, play acting and organisation. He started and edited a school magazine at the Jesuits' and during his holidays never seemed to tire of playing pranks to liven up village life. Some of the pranks were quite elaborate, and needed the enthusiastic help of others for success. On one occasion he got lads to show lights at the western end of the village (Bár an Aird, or Kilcolgan Point) late at night. He then persuaded some gullible characters that German submarines were coming up the bay, and in short order had the whole village wildly excited, so that the old women were kneeling down saying the Rosary; on another occasion he and some friends simulated a thunderstorm so well that they achieved the same result. A more elaborate deception needed a more sophisticated build-up, and heralded things to come. He dressed a friend up as a Connemara bádóir, heavily disguised – moustache and all, sat him down against a wall near the Pier, with a stone jar full of clear spring water by his side, a card with the prices, and a dire warning not to open his mouth. He then spread the report that a Bád Mór had landed a Bádóir to sell Potheen, and would be back to pick him up soon. The Bádóir, just as however, deaf and

dumb, but had a card with the prices. Soon men and women were slipping down and filling their bottles, and all went well until a cautious woman first tasted the brew before she would buy. The fat was in the fire, but good humour was restored when the proceeds plus a little extra were used as planned to buy a half barrel of stout, so that a good night was had by all.

In 1898 Jim entered the Queen's College University Medical School at Galway. Jim, now Seamus O'Beirn, at least to Irish speakers, had become converted to the Irish Language Revival Movement after he had read an article in An Claidheamh Soluis, and had determined to make Tawin, where the Irish was dying out amongst the people, an Irish-speaking village once more. His idea easily took fire amongst a people well disposed towards it. In 1904, (one year before he qualified as a Doctor), he, like many others became disgusted with the folly of appointing Doctors, who had no Irish, to Irish speaking Dispensary Districts. With the idea of focussing public attention on the problem, having a bit of fun, and perhaps (always a consideration with Medical students) earning some cash, he wrote a bi-lingual two-act play An Dochtúir about just such a doctor in just such a Dispensary – not only that but he created the Tawin Village Company of Players from his friends and neighbours, and coached them in their roles, after the technique of the Fay brothers, whom he had studied while doing part of his medical course in Dublin. Youthful pranks were bearing fruit, and the dumb Bádóir had very vocal successors. The Play was produced by the Oireachtas of 1904, twice during the week of August 1st to 6th in the Rotunda, Dublin, and after that in the Town Hall, Galway, where it was seen by Roger Casement. Casement was so impressed that he drove straight to Tawin afterwards, and stayed with the O'Beirn family for a time. Trouble was brewing there; the people needed a new school, but by now wanted it to be Irish speaking (as much as possible) to teach Irish as a subject of course, but also to be an Irish Centre for study. The Authorities refused to build the school. Casement stepped in, wrote a letter to An Claidheamh Soluis asking that a subscription be started to build the school and gave the sum of £20 himself to start, the fund grew, and so the school was built.

But... the authorities now put up the name plaque in English only, and refused to use the Irish version and would not allow the school to be opened unless the people changed their tune! Still stalemate until a sensible Higher Authority (not named) ordered the Irish stone erected, but only after the English stone had mysteriously disappeared one night. In the midst Michael O'Beirn, brother of Seamus, aged 25, died on 26th November, 1904 from Tuberculosis following a bad wetting during his travels. Seamus thought the world of Michael, whose untimely death hit him hard, and it was certainly a factor in directing some of his formidable energy in fighting the disease later. On the 14th January, 1905 a letter signed by Seamus O'Beirn to An Claidheamh Soluis, now edited by P.H. Pearse announces the formation of a Committee 'to make Tawin a thoroughly Irish Village.'

Seamus qualified in November, and worked as a doctor in Spiddal, where he had first-hand contact with tuberculosis which was widespread there. From 1906 he worked in Clonbur and while there he started his health, Anti-Tuberculosis and Hygiene Education campaign, by giving talks to people from all over Connemara. He educated them on the main cause of Tuberculosis and the ways in which the disease spread. The campaign was a tremendous success. Eventually the Tuberculosis Act 1908 was passed, and Tuberculosis Officers were appointed – his brother Bartley becoming the first one for Co. Galway.

While carrying out his duties in Clonbur District, however, he managed to return to his first love, Writing and the Theatre. He wrote a child's book on Hygiene in Irish, and a child's book of short stories called Páistidheacht, that was illustrated by Jack B. Yeats. He then wrote the play Obair! Based on the School Plaque incident in Tawin in 1904. He worked in Athenry from sometime in 1912 to September 1913, when they moved house to Dublin. While in Dublin he wrote a play about an imaginary German Invasion of Ireland through Killary Bay, called the Naval Base. This caused repercussions later, as it was so close to the start of the First World War. When his friend Prof. T. Walsh was caught with a copy of the play in his possession, it was sequestered by the British Authorities and only returned after the War. Prof. Walsh was sent to Frongoch prison in Wales. Seamus returned to Galway in 1915, and in 1924, because of continuing demand (it had been played over 400 times) he set about re-editing the play An Dochtúir, with the help of Miss Mary O'Toole, a noted Irish scholar from the Irish College in Tourmakeady, Co. Mayo. At this time also, he and many friends both in the business world, and in the University were interested in starting an Irish speaking Theatre in Galway. He was looking for a suitable name for the projected theatre, and naturally called in the help of Professor Thomas Ó Máille, then Professor of Old, Middle, and Modern Irish, and of Philology U.C.G. The outcome was 'Taidhbhdhearc.' I can remember quite well how delighted all three were with the suitability of the pleasant two-syllable word. Seamus could not resist going one step further and made a new verb 'Taidhbhdhearcadh' the equivalent of 'it was played' in the introduction to the new (1924) edition of An Dochtúir. He died in November 1935, in Dublin.

¹⁵ Níl a bheag á dhéanamh agam anseo den obair iontach tairbheach agus ceannródaíoch a rinne an Beirneach ina dhiaidh sin maidir le cothú sláinte i measc phobal na Gaeltachta. Féach, mar shampla, an sliocht seo a leanas:

Mr. P.J. O'Malley, Maam, Co. Galway. Chairman of the Oughterard District Council, has written to the editor of An Claidheamh Soluis saying that having learned that the Gaelic League contemplates taking up the fight against tuberculosis in South Connemara and that it intends putting into practical shape Dr. O'Beirne's suggestion with that object, he has pleasure in sending £1 1s to assist. He states his belief that Dr. O'Beirne's plan is the surest and most feasible way of getting rid of the plague in those districts of which Dr. O'Beirnes says [sic!] the writer has had the pleasure of hearing his lectures in Irish on the treatment of consumption understood, and followed with the keenest interest by young and old. Mr. O'Malley says:

By giving Dr. O'Beirne leave of absence so that he can give a series of his lectures in Lettermullen, Lettermore, Carraroe and Rosmuck, attended by a Tuberculosis exhibition on a small scale, I see nothing to prevent any man and women in these parishes becoming educated enough to avoid contagious diseases and to become proof against consumption.

He believes the Oughterard Guardians would be willing to give every assistance in their power to Dr. O'Beirne's efforts consistent with their obligations to the ratepayers. Sliocht as The Galway Observer, 7.12.1907, 4.

¹⁶ Tá a fhios againn gur tosaigh sé ar a chúrsa céime sa leigheas san ollscoil i nGaillimh sa bhliain acadúil 1899. Seo a leanas cuntas faoi a foilsíodh in *Queen's College, Galway, Calender 1899-1900* (1900) 103:

*Faculty of Medicine, Junior Scholarship, 1st year literary division James Byrne.
First Examination in Medicine, Summer Pass James Byrne.*



Ní miste breathnú ar stair Ghaelú na hOllscoile le linn dó a bheith ina mhac léinn ansin óir is cinnte go raibh sé féin sáite go mór san obair sin.

Tuairiscíodh ar *The Galway Observer* ar 10.2.1900 gur bunaíodh ‘*The Queen's College Keltic Society.*’ *Irish in Galway Queen's College*

A number of the students of the Queen's College, Galway, have a society for the cultivation of the Irish language. It is called the Celtic Society. Celtic is not a good name. It is the name adopted by shoneens of weak Irish fibre, who cannot stand on things Irish as Irish, to cast a glamour over language, literature, ancestry and so forth. It is like the Brigids who blossom into Delias, the name of 'the Mary of the Gaeidhil' not being good enough for them. This society meets once a fortnight while the college is in session. It is scowled at by some of the professors and scoffed at by a section of the students, especially those from the North who batten on the cheap learning which the people of Ireland buy dear, and against their wills, for the special benefit of the West.

The students of the society, like Tennyson's poet, should dower themselves with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn, the love of love. They should make it a point to answer ill-bred scoffs with remarks in Irish, at which they can laugh their fill and leave the scoffers to discover the point of the joke. But the best answer is an independent spirit and an indomitable perseverance, such as a great ideal should inspire. These arms will in time conquer both North and South...

Young Irishmen, in Galway and everywhere, this country is yours. Take possession of it. Be just and courteous, as your forefathers were, but never yield an inch you hold nor fail to gain an inch that you can grasp. You are better stuff and have a better cause than any that seek to down you or thrust you aside, if you but recognize it. With God's help stand together and press forward and all opposition and contumely will melt before you. Tuairisc ar An Claidheamh Soluis, 4.8.1900, 331.

*'We announce with pleasure the establishment of the Celtic Literary Society of Galway. From the Queen's College of all places in the historic city has come the new society, and we are glad to learn that the vitality and earnestness of the members have already succeeded in getting placed in the reading room of the college all the organs of Irish opinion that make for an Irish Ireland. We learn that there was considerable trouble in getting the college authorities to consent to allow ourselves into their sacred precincts, but firmness prevailed, and accordingly the students of Galway, gathered from the four ends of Ireland, and anything but sympathetic to our views, have now an opportunity of reading our side of the question. If they have any grievances against our ideas or if they desire the conversion of our readers, we shall be glad to give them the hospitality of our columns. We are no way averse to the light being let in on all phases of the Irish question. We take it that the starting of this society. With aims identical to those of the National Societies now spring up all over the country, is but the commencement of a campaign making for the entire Gaelicising of the 'Citie of the Tribes.' We learn that Professor French of the College is with the new idea, and we look forward to a healthy change in a very short time. An Irish class is about being initiated inside the walls and lectures of an Irish nature are being delivered. Now, this is excellent work, but we trust our friends will not confine their efforts merely to the students. Will they not join hands with those outside the walls and try to bring about the same change of spirit amongst the young men and women of the town as they have among their own class? It is a sign of the times to see the students of our educational establishments adopting the movement, but let us do all that is possible to interest the people of every town and village in our work. The Irish educationalists at any time could have led the people along the right road if they had chosen, but they did not.' An cuntas sin ar *The United Irishman*, 22.12.1900, 1.*

*Luadh fosta ar *The Galway Observer* ar 3.3.1900, 3 gur scríobh 'a mere medical student' ... 'an English farce.' Ní mé arbh é an Beirneach a bhí i gceist?*

*'At a meeting of the Celtic Society... a very interesting paper was read by Dr. Pye, in which he showed the impossibility and uselessness of a general revival of the Celtic tongue... Jim O'Byrne came forward with the startling suggestion that all medical books should be written in Irish. The lecture was also criticised by O'Beirne...' Luaite ar *The Galway Observer*, 16.2.1901, 4.*

*Tá cuntas tugtha ag Breandán Ó Madagáin ar stair na Gaeilge mar ábhar léinn ina alt 'Irish – a Difficult Birth' in Tadhg Foley (ed.) *From Queen's College to National University: Essays on the Academic History of QCG/UCG/NUI, Galway* (Four Courts Press, 1999) 344-59.*

¹⁷ Féach, Colm Ó Cearúil, *Aspail Ar Son na Gaeilge: Timirí Chonradh na Gaeilge 1899-1923* (Conradh na Gaeilge, 1995).

¹⁸ *The United Irishman*, 13.9.1902, 1.

¹⁹ *Dráma bolscaireachta a bhí ansin inar cáineadh galldú agus seoiníneachas na hÉireann. Féach, Éadaoin Ní Mhuirheartaigh agus Nollaig Mac Congáil, *Drámaí Thús na hAthbheochana* (Arlen House, 2008) 255-89. Nuair a foilsíodh eagrán úr den dráma seo sa bhliain 1924 dúradh sa réamhrá gur 'taidhbhdhearcaidh é os cionn 400 uair – ní i nÉirinn amháin, acht i Lundain Shasana agus i Nua Eabhrach.'*

²⁰ Féach, mar shampla, Dorothy Ní Uiginn, 'Tréimhseacháin agus Colúin de chuid, agus a bunaíodh faoi thionchar, Chonradh na Gaeilge sa Chéad Fhiche Bliain den Fhichiú hAois' in *Feasta 2009* (Beal. 40-3, Meith. 9-13, Iúil 19-23, Lún. 19-23, M.Fómh. 21-4, D.Fómh. 19-23, Samh.).

²¹ Is léir gur soiscéal Chonradh na Gaeilge atá á chraobhscaoileadh gan scáth gan náire aige sa litir seo.

²² *The Galway Express*, 21.2.1903, 2. Níorbh é sin deireadh a chuid comhfhreagrais leis na nuachtáin.

The Express Critic again Successful

In a competition started by The Gael newspaper, inviting suggestions tending to improve its circulation, extend its influence, and increase its circulation, the prize has been awarded to Mr. James Byrne, of Tawin, Oranmore, a nephew of Mr. John Fahy, of the Commercial Buildings, William Street, Galway. Mr. Byrne is a medical student of the Galway Queen's College, and was a prizewinner in a competition of a similar kind offered by the Editor of the Galway Express some months ago. The following is a copy of the acknowledgment received by Mr. Byrne:-

New York, July 6th, 1903.

*Mr. James J. Byrne,
Tawin, Oranmore, Co. Galway.*

Dear Sir,

It affords us much pleasure to inform you that you have been awarded the first prize (ten selected volumes by Irish authors) offered by The Gael to the person sending a letter containing the most useful suggestions and most practical ideas tending to improve its pages, extend its influence, and increase its circulation.

There were 753 letters received. Yours has been considered the most valuable.

Kindly accept our good wishes.

The books have been shipped to your address via the American Express Company (all charges paid.)

Sincerely,

The Gael.

[As *The Galway Express*, 25.7.1903, 5].

²³ *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 20.6.03, 4.

²⁴ *The Galway Observer*, 7.8.1903, 4.

²⁵ Baineann an scigdhrama dátheangach seo le ceapadh dochtúra i gceantar Gaeltachta agus gan aon fhocal Gaeilge aige. Níorbh éigean don údar dul rófhada ó bhaile le hábhar an dráma a aimsiú mar is léir ón chuntas seo a leanas ar *Fáinne an Lae*, 16.4.1898, 9:

GAELIC LEAGUE – GALWAY BRANCH

..... The following resolution was proposed by Mr. Naughton, and seconded by Mr. Deely, and passed unanimously: Resolved – That this Branch of the Gaelic League call the attention of the Guardians of the Galway Union to the palpable absurdity of appointing Dispensary Doctors to Irish-speaking districts who have not a knowledge of the Gaelic tongue. And that we express our thanks to Mr. James Morris for bringing the question so prominently before the Union Board on Wednesday last. It may often happen that the life of a patient may depend on the doctor or nurse understanding what he may wish to say, for the same rule applies to the appointing of nurse as doctor.

Mr. Deely in supporting the resolution referred to remarks made to him in hospital by a nurse who was attending an Irish-speaking patient that she was 'annoyed with that man's pesty Irish.' He (Mr. Deely) thereupon rebuked her and told her that it was the patient who was being annoyed by her. He hoped that the different branches of the League would give this matter their full consideration...'

Nó arís, ina mbaile féin:

IRISH SPEAKING DOCTOR WANTED

*At a meeting of the people of Tawin held on Friday, October 14th, 1904, it was proposed by W. Brennan, seconded by Michael O'Fahey, and passed unanimously: 'That in the coming election of medical officership for the district of Oranmore, a candidate with a knowledge of Irish be given preference, as Irish is the only language in common use among the people of Tawin.' That copies of this demand be sent to the chairman of the Board of Guardians, An Claidheamh Soluis and the local press. An cuntas sin ar *The Connaught Champion*, 22.10.04, 1. Títhean anseo arís gurbh ábhair chonspóide iad na ceapacháin sin.*

At a recent meeting a majority of the Galway Guardians elected an Irish-speaking doctor, Tomás Breathnach, to the dispensary at Oranmore. It was a lively meeting and the Irish movement was very much a live thing in its relation to this particular appointment. There were two candidates and one, an Irish speaker, sent in his application in Irish. In addition to the Guardians, sixty out of sixty eight of whom were present, a large number of the public helped to overcrowd the room. The Chairman, Mr. P. Cannon, was an Englisher on this occasion, and apparently behaved as rudely as any Englisher might be expected to behave, and Mr. Murray remarked to him: 'Irish will be here after you.' Why there should have been any commotion, or even a division over the appointment, it is hard to see in face of

the fact that the advertisement stated that preference would be given to an Irish speaker, and we presume that the medical qualifications of the two candidates were about the same. The Clerk of the Board was unable to read the Irish application of the Irish-speaking doctor; and ?? Mr. Griffin proposed that anything that was not in plain English should not be read. This utterly anti-Irish remark, we read, caused a renewal of commotion and indeed we are not surprised that it did so. Mr. O'Toole, the Workhouse Master, was asked to read the application of the Irish-speaking doctor, and the reading of it was interrupted by various exclamations, principally in Irish, and, we read, occasionally with such select English remarks as 'Shut your mouth there.' The application was as follows:-

Tuaim, Oíche Shamhna, 1904.

A dhaoine uaisle,

Leis seo cuirim isteach ar an áit dochtúra atá anois folamh in Órán Mór. Tá mé ag cur chugaibh mo pháipéir & mo cháilíocht. Ón am a chuaigh mé tríd mo scrúdú déanach bhí mé i mo dhochtúir i nGort & in ospidéal Chontae na Gaillimhe. Tá mé in ann Gaeilge a labhairt go maith & tá súil agam nach ndéanfaidh sibh dearmad air sin nuair atá sibh ag cur an dochtúir isteach.

Mise le meas mór,

Tomás Breathnach (Thomas Walsh)

At the conclusion of the reading of the application there was great applause. On a division Dr. Walsh was elected by 32 votes to 27, one of the sixty Guardians present declining to vote.

Tá an cuntas sin ar *The Leader*, 12.11.1904, 180-1.

²⁶ *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 17.10.1903, 5.

²⁷ Gan amhras, traidisiún na drámaíochta i dTamhain agus ról an Bheirneigh san obair sin sa taobh sin tíre ba chúis go hindíreach le lonnú na Taibhdheirce i gcathair na Gaillimhe lá ab fhaide anonn. Féach, Seán Stafford, 'Taibhdhearc na Gaillimhe: Galway's Gaelic Theatre,' *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, Vol. 54 (2002) 183-214.

²⁸ Buachaillín Tuaithe, 'Dráma Gaedhilde i nGaillimh,' *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 31.10.1903, 2.

²⁹ Eagarfhocal, 'Dráma na nGaedheal,' *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 14.11.1903, 4.

³⁰ *The United Irishman*, 14.11.1903, 1.

³¹ Seo ceann de luathdhrámaí na Gaeilge a bhí ar na drámaí Gaeilge ba cháiliúla riamh. Séamus Ó Beirn, fear óg as Tamhain, a scríobh é sa bhliain 1903 agus foireann as Tamhain a bhí mar aisteoirí. Tá an dráma féin agus tráchtairacht chomhaimseartha faoi le fáil in Éadaoin Ní Mhuircheartaigh agus Nollaig Mac Congáil, *Drámaí Thús na hAthbheochana* (Arlen House, 2008) 255-89.

³² *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 17.9.1904, 6-7.

³³ Féach, mar shampla, *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 19.11.1904, 7.

³⁴ Liomsa an cló trom agus aithneofar cén fáth gan mhoill.

³⁵ *The Galway Express*, 1.10.04, 2:

The above play will be produced this (Friday) evening at the Court Theatre, Galway, by the members of the Tawin Dramatic Company. Readers who attended the play the last time it was produced in Galway know the success which the Company achieved. It has also been very successful throughout the country amongst Gaels, and a bumper house tonight is expected.

[Casement] saw the play on Friday, 30 September, travelled to Tawin on Saturday and attended Mass in the chapel on Sunday, where he met Fr Kean. Luaite in Séamas Ó Síocháin, *Roger Casement: Imperialist, Rebel, Revolutionary* (The Lilliput Press, 2008) 551 no. 41.

³⁶ *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 5.11.1904, 6.

³⁷ Cuireadh an nuachtán rínáisiúnaíoch seo ar bun sa bhliain 1900 agus D.P. Moran a bhí mar eagarthóir air. Féach, Robert Welch (eag.) *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature* (Clarendon Press, 1996) 377-8.

³⁸ Mar atá sa chuntas thuas.

³⁹ *The Leader*, 12.11.1904, 178.

⁴⁰ Chuir an fear seo isteach ar phost múinteoireachta sa *Workhouse* sa bhliain 1907 agus maíodh ar an ócáid go raibh Gaeilge aige de réir tuairisce ar *The Galway Express*, 9.2.1907.

⁴¹ *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 7.1.1905, 9.

⁴² *Galway Observer*, 26.11.1904, ?

⁴³ 19.11.1904, 6-7.

⁴⁴ *United Irishman*, 16.12.05, 1.

⁴⁵ Níl aon iomrá air seo thart ar an am sin in *The Galway Express* ná in *The Galway Observer*.