

We can readily learn the difference in sound between a Gaelic and an English consonant, by consulting, not our ears, but our tongue and lips. Our ears may deceive us, but our tongue and lips will not. A fiddler cannot produce two sounds precisely alike by touching the string in two different places. Neither can we produce two sounds similar in every respect by bringing the organs of speech into contact at different points. Let us compare for instance the sounds of English *th* in *lath*, Gaelic *t* in *at*, swelling, and English *t* in *hat*. These three sounds are quite different from one another. In saying *lath* the tongue strikes the edge of the upper teeth and is almost disposed to push itself out past the teeth; in saying *at*, it strikes against the root of the upper teeth; whilst in saying *hat*, it does not touch the teeth at all, but strikes above them.

How are we to know when *l*, *r*, and *n* have their soft or liquid sound, and when they have their hard sound?

As an almost invariable rule *l*, *r*, and *n* have their soft sound at the beginning of words. The only exceptions to this rule are *le*, with; *ri* or *ris*, to; *riamh*, ever; *roimh*, before; and *ni*, will do, as in *ni mi sin*, I will do that. *Reir*, according to, and *ris*, again, are only apparent exceptions, these words being merely shortened and improper forms of a *reir* and a *ris*. So far as *leibh*, with you, *ruibh*, to you, and *romhabh*, before you, are concerned, they are simply contracted forms of *le sibh*, *ri sibh*, and *roimh sibh*.

When *l*, *r*, and *n* have their liquid or soft sound in the middle or end of words they are generally written double; as in *balla*, a wall; *garrach*, a worthless little fellow; *bonnach*, a cake; *call*, loss; *gearr*, a hare; *tonn*, a wave.

We have now to consider another important