

What was the cause of this? There were many causes. One was that the Irish people thought that their mission was to catholicise England and America; and that the Ireland of the future was to be the guide and ruler of English civilization. This mission the Irish exiles accomplished in part; they would have accomplished it better if they had kept more of what was their own. However this mission abroad, surely gave no reason for the Irish at home accepting a debasing form of the civilization of England. Another reason for the Anglicising was that the aristocracy of rank and wealth was English, or aped the English; the masses, with some of the servility in their souls of their long period as helots, considered English civilization (because the richer classes followed it) to be superior; and they proceeded to imitate it. Another cause was that, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Irish nation lacked nothing except good government. This the nation determined to have; and all its efforts were turned to this and this alone. The Irish fell into the fatal error of supposing that politics was nationality; while it is at the most but a very small part of it: thus they allowed themselves to lose much of the heritage of their fathers, in their struggle for good government. The nation found that for this struggle, as well as for commercial intercourse, the English language was necessary. In their desire to learn English better, they let themselves forget their wonderful command of the Irish language and love of truly great Irish literature. Peasants, artisans, merchants, priests, politicians—all were alike, in this singular craze for forgetting their Irish; not knowing evidently that when they lost their Irish language they lost their Irish nationality.

Some may be disposed to deny this last statement, but it is only too true. The Irish forgot the Gaelic language. There was no Gaelic press, for a very good reason, during the penal times; now, they did not care to set up one. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the whole people, or at least nine-tenths of them spoke Irish; hardly anyone read it; they wished to learn English; they asked for schools. The English, ever kind to the Irish, gave them a system of national education, or more properly anti-national stultification. The undoubted purpose