TRIBUTE

to

THOMAS DAVIS

by

W. B. YEATS

With an account of the THOMAS DAVIS centenary meeting held in DUBLIN on November 20th, 1914, including DR. MAHAFFY'S prohibition of the "MAN CALLED PEARSE," and an unpublished protest by "A.E."

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD

THE lecture on Thomas Davis which is here published in connection with the centenary of the Young Ireland movement was delivered by Mr. W. B. Yeats at a public meeting in the Antient Concert Rooms in Dublin on November 20th, 1914. It had been perpared as an address to the Gaelic Society of Trinity College, Dublin, who had intended to hold a meeting to commemorate the centenary of the birth of Thomas Davis. But the meeting in Trinity College had to be abandoned when the Gaelic Society was suddenly suppressed by Dr. J. P. Mahaffy, who was at that time Vice-Provost and was soon afterwards appointed Provost in succession to Dr. Traill who had recently died.

The Davis Centenary in 1914 had inevitably been overshadowed by the exciting public events during the earlier part of that year. The deepening conflict over the Home Rule Bill, which was then approaching its final stages, had produced a prospect of open collision between the Ulster Volunteers and the Irish Volunteers who had been rapidly called into being to defend the nationalist movement. The gun-running at Howth, with its tragic sequel on the Dublin quays, was followed within a few days by the outbreak of war in Europe ; and in the ensuing months of excitement and suspense and divided views, there was little scope for reflection upon the influence and achievements of Thomas Davis.

Nevertheless, most appropiate arrangements had been made for celebrating his centenary in Trinity College, where Davis had first given proof of his genius and public spirit as auditor of the Historical Society. The Gaelic Society, a more recently established students' society, was to devote its opening meeting to commemoration of his centenary, and had

persuaded Mr. Yeats, as the greatest Irish poet of his generation to deliver an address. Dr. Mahaffy, the Vice-Provost, accepted their invitation to preside at the meeting. And, in order to include on the same platform some representative of the Sinn Fein movement, which was at that time openly organising opposition to recruiting for the Irish formations in the British Army, the society had invited Patrick Pearse to speak. His acceptance of the invitation had been brought to Dr. Mahaffy's notice a few days before the meeting was to be held, and it was represented to him that Pearse had been prominently connected with the anti-recruiting campaign. He at once wrote to the auditor of the society demanding that the invitation to Pearse should be withdrawn. His reference to the "man called Pearse," of whose existence he was previously unaware, has since become so celebrated that his letter, dated November 10th, 1914, must be reproduced in full:

> My Dear Sir — I am informed that a man called Pearse is set down among your speakers at the opening of the Gaelic Society.
>
> I am also informed that he is a declared supporter of the anti-recruiting agitation, as it appeared in the *Irish Volunteer* and other such publications. Unless these assertions, which I have on very good authority, are disproved to me, I cannot permit him to appear as a speaker in any such College meeting.
>
> I cannot be here to meet you at 4 to-day, as I have to take the chair at the King's hospital, but would gladly be present at 5.30. Why do you put me to this unpleasant necessity ?
>
> I am, yours sincerely,
>
> J. P. MAHAFFY

An interview accordingly took place between the auditor of the society, Mr. Fisher, and Dr. Mahaffy; and the correspondence secretary Mr. (now Judge) Charles Power,

was instructed afterwards by the committee to write a formal reply. It stated that:

> Our Auditor informed us that you took exception to Mr. Pearse's appearance on our platform on account of the views which you have heard he holds in reference to recruiting in the British Army.
>
> The Committee regret that any unpleasantness should exist in the matter and would be glad to relieve you of any embarrassment by not pressing on you their invitation to take the chair on the occasion, should you not desire to do so. The Committee also wish to state that Mr. Pearse's name has been on the speakers' list for this meeting for some considerable time past, and that posters, tickets, and invitation cards for the meeting have been printed and circulated, on all of which his name appears.
>
> The Committee presume that, should you not take the chair at the meeting, you would not wish in any way to interfere with the discretion of the Committee in their choice of speakers. As the matter is rather urgent, I should be glad of a reply at your earliest convenience.

To this request Dr. Mahaffy replied next day:

> Dear Sir — Just as the late Provost objected to Captain White addressing a College meeting last year, though the Provost was not in the chair, so I, as Vice-Provost, object to Mr. Pearse speaking at your meeting, unless he assures me (through you) that he has said nothing against enlisting in the Imperial Army.
>
> I regret that his name should have been published in your notices, but the information on which I act only reached me two days ago, and I will not allow a speaker with these, to me, traitorous views to address a meeting in College.
>
> I am, yours sincerely,
>
> J. P. MAHAFFY.

The committee met again on the following day, and the correspondence secretary said in his reply:

> I have been directed to inform you that the committee have sufficient confidence in the discretion of those who promise to speak at our meetings to know that such speakers will not make any references irrelevant to the subject under discussion. May I remind you that the meeting at which Mr. Pearse is to speak is one concerned with the life and work of Thomas Davis ?
>
> Furthermore, it would be quite impossible for the committee to investigate the individual opinions of those who speak at our meetings, and, under the circumstances, the committee regret that they cannot see their way to make any alterations in their plans for the Davis Centenary.

Dr. Mahaffy's reply, written on the same day, was a definite prohibition:

> Dear Sir — I am sorry to announce to you that I forbid the opening meeting of the Gaelic Society, announced for next Tuesday, 17th inst. (or any other day) to be held inside Trinity College.
>
> I am, yours sincerely,
>
> J. P. MAHAFFY, *Vice-Provost*

Another meeting of the committee was held on the same evening, November 12th, and the following letter was sent to Dr. Mahaffy:

> Dear Sir — I have yours of to-day's date, and note that you are sorry to announce that you forbid the Gaelic Society to celebrate inside Trinity College the Centenary of the birth of Thomas Davis.
>
> My committee consider that they have made it quite clear to you that this was a Davis Centenary meeting, and that the matter of the present European War could not be introduced thereat in any way.

> My committee particularly regret that the teaching of Thomas Davis, which at least represented the gospel of free speech and liberty of conscience, should have borne no fruit in Trinity College. Such would your action go to show.
>
> In the circumstances, the committee are of opinion that they have no option but to publish all this correspondence immediately in the Press.
>
> Yours truly,
>
> CHARLES POWER.

The whole correspondence was accordingly published in the Dublin newspapers of November 14th. To those who had looked forward to the meeting, and particularly to hearing the address which Mr. Yeats had prepared, it seemed as though the Thomas Davis Centenary might pass without any formal celebration in Dublin. It would have been invidious for any students' society of the National University as such to take advantage of the excellent preparations which had been made by the Trinity College Gaelic Society. However, there was in Dublin a body known as the Students' National Literary Society, open to all students whether members of a University or not. The present writer happened to be its president at the time, and I was authorised at once to approach Mr. Yeats and ask if he would deliver his lecture under our auspices at a public meeting. We extended a similar invitation to Patrick Pearse, and both accepted immediately. Having secured the Antient Concert Rooms for the purpose, we also invited Professor T. M. Kettle, who was one of the principal promoters of the Irish Volunteers, but who had been as active in appealing to Irish Nationalists to join him in enlisting in an Irish regiment as Pearse had been in trying to discourage recruiting. We also invited Professor Mary Hayden of University College, Dublin, and Miss Louise Gavan Duffy, whose father had been the most intimate associate of Thomas Davis when they founded the *Nation* newspaper. All efforts to find a suitable chairman at short notice resulted in failure, because

Dr. Mahaffy's suppression of the Gaelic Society had caused a political controversy into which his friends or former associates preferred not to be drawn. Dr. Douglas Hyde, Sir Horace Plunkett, and Canon Hannay each sent messages of regret that they could not accept the invitation; and as president of the society, I had to take the chair. The meeting was in fact largely attended by Pearse's supporters, some of whom attempted to shout down Professor Kettle in disapproval of his recruiting speeches. But we had determined that the proceedings should be centred upon the memory of Thomas Davis, and to avoid any discussion either of current politics or of the suppression of the Gaelic Society by Dr. Mahaffy. We even carried this austere attitude to the length of refusing to read out a long letter which the poet A. E. had addressed to Mr. Yeats, expressing his indignation at the suppression of the society. By the kindness of Mrs. Yeats, who has preserved the letter, it is reproduced at the end of the present pamphlet.

Some six months afterwards Mr. Yeats generously allowed me as editor of the weekly *New Ireland*, to print in full the typescript which he had used as the final version of his address. It is now republished in this more permanent form by the kind permission of his widow, to whom the publisher and the present writer desire to acknowledge their cordial gratitude. Numerous notes made while the address was being prepared, and several less finished drafts of it, are preserved among his papers; but the version here given is, I believe, substantially that which he delivered at the centenary meeting. The letter from A. E., like the opening remarks made by Mr. Yeats, reveals the strongly anti-German attitude which was generally shared in Ireland at the outset of the war. Some of its assumptions — as that British policy would not tolerate any interference with free speech, or that Pearse's political activities would only "explode in talk" if they were not prohibited — read strangely in the light of later events. But his letter certainly deserves publication as a memorable protest against the restriction of free speech in an Irish university.

Dr. Mahaffy's action had defied precisely those principles of tolerance and co-operation in cultural matters for which Thomas Davis had striven as the chief mission of his public life. The newspaper reports of the meeting, published on the following morning, show that this point was emphasised by almost every speaker. It is much to be regretted that the reports contain no more than a mention of Pearse's speech, which (as Mr. Desmond Ryan records in his *Remembering Sion*) developed a comparison of Davis to the gentle gospel of St. John in contrast with the more militant gospel of John Mitchel. He expanded the thesis of his brief speech soon afterwards in his essay on Davis which is one of his four pamphlets called *Tracts for the Times*. It is a remarkable sidelight on the rapidity of events during this period of Irish history that, even within less than eighteen months before the Rising of Easter Week, 1916, the Dublin newspapers did not yet consider Pearse to be of sufficient interest to justify more than a few bare lines to report his speech; although the whole report occupied several columns and it was well-known that the meeting had been arranged to provide a platform where Yeats and Pearse could appear together.

But the newspapers were much more interested in the topical references to Dr. Mahaffy and in the attempts to shout down Professor Kettle who had recently accepted a commission in the Dublin Fusiliers, with whom he was afterwards killed in action during the battle of the Somme. Kettle faced a storm of angry heckling with his usual courage and resource in repartee; and even the confused newspaper reports preserve a record of his tribute to Davis as the champion of free speech for his opponents as much as for his friends; and also of his emphatic and necessary protest against what he described as "the exaggerated condemnation by Mr. Yeats of the exaggerations of Daniel O'Connell."

DENIS GWYNN

University College, Cork, 1947.

THOMAS DAVIS

I AM very sorry Professor Mahaffy is not here to-night. I am not more vehemently opposed to the Unionism of Professor Mahaffy than I am to the pro-Germanism of Mr. Pearse, but we are here to talk about literature and about history. In Ireland above all nations, where we have so many bitter divisions, it is necessary to keep always unbroken the truce of the Muses. I am sorry the Vice-Provost of Trinity should have broken that ancient truce. It would have been a great pleasure to have stood on the same platform with Dr. Mahaffy, who has done so much good service for English literature, and with Mr. Pearse, who has done such good service to Irish literature.

Fifteen or twenty years ago, when I was helping at the foundation of the Irish Literary Society in London, we were violently disparaged by newspapers and private persons for having praised Oliver Cromwell and the Danes, while we dispraised Thomas Davis. Was it possible to be a good Irishman and not remember the curse of Cromwell and churches the Danes had burnt? And how could it serve one's country to deny that Thomas Davis was the first among lyric poets? I cannot reproach myself for any liking for Oliver Cromwell or the Danes, but I believe that it was I alone who found certain flaws in Thomas Davis. I was of a new generation, and the new generation is but little merciful to the old. To-day I have no thought but for his virtue and his service. He was not, indeed, a great poet, but his power of expression was a finer thing than I thought. Yesterday as I turned over his pages I noticed how many thoughts could not have found more concise expression or in a more immediately telling way. He had poetical feeling, but he saw that he had a work

to do which would not set him in that road, and he made himself the foremost moral influence of our politics. One ballad * of his, however, moves me always, and by its poetical feeling, *The Lament for Owen Roe*. It has the intensity of the old ballads and to read it is to remember Parnell and Wolfe Tone, to mourn for every leader who has died among the ruins of the cause he had all but established, and to hear the lamentations of his people.

"Did they dare, did they dare, to slay Eoghan Ruadh O'Neill?"
"Yes, they slew with poison, him they feared to meet with steel."
"May God wither up their hearts! May their blood cease to flow!
"May they walk in living death, who poisoned Eoghan Ruadh!"

"Though it break my heart to hear, say again the bitter words."
"From Derry, against Cromwell, he marched to measure swords:
But the weapon of the Sasanach met him on his way
And he died at Cloch Uachtar, upon St. Leonard's day.

"Wail, wail ye for the mighty one! Wail, wail ye for the dead!
Quench the hearth, and hold the breath — with ashes strew the head.
How tenderly we loved him! How deeply we deplore!
Holy Saviour! but to think we shall never see him more.

"Sagest in the council was he, kindest in the hall!
Sure we never won a battle — 'twas Eoghan won them all.
Had he lived — had he lived — our dear country had been free:
But he's dead, but he's dead, and 'tis slaves we'll ever be.

* In an earlier version of his lecture Mr. Yeats wrote: "I feel in it a deep personal emotion and I can never hear *The West's Awake* without great excitement."

" O'Farrell and Clanrickarde, Preston and Red Hugh,
Audley and McMahon, ye are valiant, wise and true ;
But — what, what are ye all to our darling who is gone ?
The rudder of our ship was he, our castle's corner-stone !

" Wail, wail him through the Island ! Weep, weep, for
our pride !
Would that on the battlefield our gallant chief had died !
Weep the Victor of Benburb — weep him young men
and old ;
Weep for him, ye women — your beautiful lies cold !

" We thought you would not die — we were sure you
would not go,
And leave us in our utmost need to Cromwell's cruel
blow —
Sheep without a shepherd, when the snow shuts out the
sky —
Oh ! why did you leave us, Eoghan ? Why did you die ?

" Soft as woman's was your voice, O'Neill ! Bright was
your eye,
Oh ! why did you leave us, Eoghan ? Why did you die ?
Your troubles are all over, you're at rest with God on high,
But we're slaves, and we're orphans, Eoghan ! Why
did'st thou die ?"

When I compare it with *O'Hussey's Ode to the Maguire*, or with any good poem of Allingham's, the best poet of our next generation, I see at once that Mangan could have given it a more personal rhythm, and that Allingham would not have used those words of newspaper rhetoric " living death," but that neither could have been so poignant. Davis is mourning, not as poet, but as man over the sorrows of Ireland. Had he been born in the time of Elizabeth, he would, I believe, have been a great poet, for while the common language was still so little spoilt that deep emotion created its own speech, a man visibly moved could not but speak nobly. Men of the camp and of the council board, like Raleigh and like Sydney,

could be great poets, but when the language is worn down to mere abstraction by perpetual mechanical use, nobody can write tolerably, unless by some momentary accident without exhausting continuous sedentary labour. He may have soldier or stateman in his blood, but all must be put away, for his work is to make a laborious personal language that the heart may still speak. I know, indeed, one Irish poem that seems to be the emotion of a gallant unsedentary man and has yet an altogether living style. It begins "On the deck of Patrick Lynch's boat," and it had two men for its making—one an exile who gave all his thought to life itself, and a bookish man who turned it from Gaelic into English. Nobody, no not Sir Walter Raleigh, could have beaten that. It seems as much alive, body and soul, as a mountain hare.

One understands the work Davis set his hand to when one remembers that he began it in the meridian hours of O'Connell. The policy of O'Connell had brought great reforms, but his personal influence had been almost entirely evil. His violent nature, his invective, his unscrupulousness, are the chief cause of our social and political divisions. He was accustomed to defend his manners by saying that such means alone could put spirit into a race dispirited by penal law; everybody knows his saying : "The verdict is the thing," but his exaggeration and his hectoring have corrupted client and jury after the verdict has been given. When at the Clare election, he conquered the patriots of a previous generation by a slanderous rhetoric, he prepared for Committee Room No. 15 and all that followed. In his very genius itself, there was demoralisation, the appeal — as of a tumbler at a fair — to the commonest ear, a grin through a horse-collar. We have copied all that, but have not copied his simplicity,, his deep affectionate heart.

The first public event of Davis's life showed how different was his nature. The Royal Dublin Society was in trouble with government and people. Founded by the Irish Parliament, it had done much to develop the material resources of Ireland, but more and more it became a party club. Nationalists were refused admission, and it was accused of

spending its money upon a political news-room and library for the opponents of the national cause. An English government sympathetic to Ireland, that is to say, sympathetic to the party of O'Connell, was in power and thought to please Ireland by compelling the Royal Dublin Society to put off the partisan, and this it attempted roughly and brusquely, dealing as it believed with a provincial assembly. Davis led a movement in favour of the Society. Mischievous as he thought its political activities, he would not have its services forgotten nor see it reformed by foreign Law instead of Irish opinion. He asked in letters to the Press and carried public opinion with him would England deal so with any of its own institutions or would an Irish government? Dublin was a capital and could not renounce the rights of a capital. To affirm national right, he gave up a party advantage.

He had taught the like in songs and in ballads and would teach it in the few years of life that were yet to come. All who fell under his influence took this thought from his precept or his example: we struggle for a nation, not for a party, and our political opponents who have served Ireland in some other way may be the better patriots. He did not, as a weak and hectic nature would have done, attack O'Connell, or parade with a new party; no venomous newspaper supported his fame or found there its own support. When the quarrel came it was O'Connell's doing and his only, and the breach was so tragical to Davis that in the midst of the only public speech he ever made, he burst into tears. It is these magnanimities, I believe, that have made generations of our young men turn over the pages of an old newspaper as though it were some classic of literature, but when they have come as some few have, to dream of another "Nation," they do not understand their own lure and are content to copy alone his concentration and his enthusiasm. During the thirty years that have passed since my boyhood I have seen five or six movements founded by young men who might have changed their generation had they copied his magnanimity.

His writings, whether in prose or verse, are little, indeed, but commentary on what he did in the matter of the Dublin Society, or upon what he felt in that quarrel with O'Connell, or one may turn it about the other way and say that he expressed in two or three simple unmistakable actions and in a small book of verses, tuned for the largest number of ears, certain, necessary, virtues.

Sometimes when I am discouraged by our quarrels, our jealousies, the intemperance of our speech, I remember this man who was so empty of peacock talent, having neither wit nor oratory, who put money into no man's pocket, whose only achievements were in the moral nature; and that his generation dimly understood and mourned him as conquerors are mourned. Those who mourned him and understood him have had, however choked the channel was, a capacity like his own. Lady Wilde once told me, in that darkened room of hers where no ray of light was admitted to shew where time had withered, that once when she was a young girl and walking through some Dublin street, she came upon so great a crowd that she could go no further. She waited in a shop that it might pass, but it seemed unending. She asked of the shopman what brought so many people into the streets and he said: "It is the funeral of Thomas Davis." And when she answered: "Who was Thomas Davis? I have never heard of him," he said: "He was a poet." She was so struck to find so many people honouring a poet and one she had never heard of, that she turned Nationalist and wrote those energetic rhymes my generation read in its youth. It was not personaal charm, though charm he had, that made thousands that had not spoken with him mourn for him. John O'Leary has told in his memoirs how once when he was sick and bedridden, somebody changed his life by putting into his hand the poems of Davis. It was their influence, he believed, that made him endure his years of unrewarded dangerous work, his five years in prison, his fifteen years in banishment, neither repining nor looking backward.

Davis could shew forth the service of Ireland as heroic service worth a good man's energy, because he had in his

words and in his actions a moral quality akin to that quality of style which can alone make permanent a picture and a book. Two men will paint a country scene or write out a story or expound an argument, and both may be alike as to their facts and all but alike in thought and yet the work of one is immediately forgotten while that of the other seems everlasting. The arguments in Milton's pamphlet on divorce may no longer help us in the controversies of the hour, but there is something in the motion of his sentences, or in his few brief moments of self-expression that has made us live with a deeper and a swifter life. But certainly it is not style, for all its likeness, that gave permanence to what Davis said or did. If O'Connell had a greater practical gift, Mitchel had a more vivid, more musical style, and yet the political influence of Mitchel, as I see it, has been almost wholly mischievous. The temper of his books, mixed with the habits that were settled by O'Connell, together with the denial of University education to the majority of the Irish, is the cause why there has not arisen in Irish public life a tradition of restraint and generosity that would have made impossible the ignominy of public manners which in our own generation has weakened national feeling among the generous and the young. Mitchel played upon international suspicion and exalted the hate of England above the love of Ireland that Davis would have taught us, and his gaping harpies are on our roof-tree now. How could we learn from the harsh Ulster nature, made harsher still by the tragedy of the famine, and the rhetoric of Carlyle, a light that is the discovery of truth, or a sweetness that is obedience to its will ?

I might have spared myself the trouble when I was so anxious to show what was lacking in the gift of Davis. I should have remembered that reaction is a good ploughman, who never waits long before he readies the field for a new crop, and that he would not have failed to bring out his old tackle while I slept. To-day it is easy to understand all that and not merely because I am older, but it seemed then as if our new generation could not do its work unless we

overcame the habit of making every Irish book, or poem, shoulder some political idea ; it seemed to us that we had to escape by some great effort from the obsession of public life, and I had come to feel that our first work must be to close, not knowing how great the need of it still was, the rhymed lesson book of Davis. I might have remembered Goethe's phrase that great care is taken that the trees shall not grow up into the sky. The folk poetry of the Gaelic revival (for the folk mind is never really political) the work in English and Irish of the new generation, was bound to find once more a speech for our private griefs and sorrows.

When the other day I read *The Demigods* of Mr. James Stephens, I felt that he alone by himself — and he has the Abbey Players to help him, the early lyrics of A.E. and much else — could take care of the future of Irish literature, till the next reaction comes.

W. B. YEATS

AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER

The following letter from Mr. George Russell (A.E.), was not read at the meeting but has been preserved among the papers of Mr. Yeats:

My dear Yeats,

I refused a few days ago to speak at the meeting which the Gaelic Society in Trinity were organising in honour of Thomas Davis, not because I do not honour Thomas Davis but because I face the ordeal of public-speaking with something of the trepidation of a martyr anticipating his torture on the rack. But since then not only has the meeting in Trinity been suppressed but the Gaelic Society has also been suppressed, on the grounds, it seems, that Mr. Pearse, who was asked to speak about Thomas Davis, had somewhere else said things wholly incompatible with the views of the Board of Trinity College upon recruiting. Now, though I cannot speak, I wish to express to you how antagonistic to all my instincts of what ought to be high public policy this suppression of the Gaelic Society in Trinity upon such grounds is.

I can see cogent reasons why Mr. Pearse should not be allowed to make an anti-recruiting speech in Trinity College. It is a State endowed university, and it is its honour to be faithful to the State which created and supported it. I can see no reasons why Mr. Pearse should not be allowed to accept the invitation of the Gaelic Society to speak in honour of Thomas Davis. The denial of this freedom is all the more indefensible because I understand the high authority of Trinity was assured that the matters on account of which Mr. Pearse was reprobated were not to be discussed at all. Culture or literary criticism, no matter how admirable in themselves, are not to be permitted publicity, it seems, unless the

critic in other respects has conducted his life in harmony with the views of the censors. If such principles are allowed to permeate Ireland, a Protestant would equally be forced to refuse to hear a Catholic lecture on mathematics, and Catholics must insist that no Protestant shall shock their religious susceptibilities by speaking to them on chemistry or physics.

Where is the line to be drawn ? Is culture to become sectarian or a matter of political partisanship ? Are we to have national mathematics and imperial chemistry ? It there to be a Tory criticism of poetry and a militarist censorship over letters ? To admit this is to degrade culture. We cannot give honour where honour is due or dishonour when it is deserved. A man's scholarship may be decried on account of his politics, or his bad scholarship be supported for the same reason. We are to condemn the whole of a man's thought on account of some part of it, or approve it all because of some flashing of truth in it.

I have not followed Mr. Pearse closely in those political utterances on account of which he has been thought an unsuitable critic of Thomas Davis. But I gather that, just as Mr. Asquith said of the European war that it was a conflict of spiritual ideals, so Mr. Pearse stands for the good old British ideal of personal freedom, and the right to say what he thinks, and the Board of Trinity stands for the German policy of imprisoning or suppressing all that savours of *lèse majesté*. I am pro-British with Mr. Pearse. I concur heartily with the British policy of allowing anarchists unhindered to explode in speech in Hyde Park rather than in bombs at Westminster. I think it is wise in permitting treason itself to declare what it stands for openly in St. Stephen's Green rather than to be made aware of political disaffection by the unexpected explosion of a charge of dynamite. It is a choice statesmen have to make between unpleasant speech and unpleasant action, for they are, as University men abroad are, though seemingly, not here, aware of the doctrine of the

indestructibility of energy, and they know that since a certain kind of political energy exists it must be allowed to operate. It will not explode in rifle fire if it is allowed to explode in talk. This kind of energy, like all other kinds, follows the line of least resistance.

Mr. Pearse illustrates this aspect of British policy. He and his friends are harmless political energies while they are above ground. Suppressed by the State, this political energy will be as dangerous as a submerged mine in the North Sea. I agree with British policy in this matter of freedom of speech and I disagree with the German policy of the Board of Trinity, because as a literary man I wish to see all human energies transmuted into intellectual forces, and if the policy of the Trinity authorities were adopted by the State it would drive all those energies into the dark underground and make them form material alliances with bombs and rifles and other brute forces which I as an idealist detest. If free speech is prohibited we have the secret society. Normally no citizen, if liberty of speech is allowed, will join a secret society unless to carry on shameful actions, unless he wants the aid of others to get a job by the dishonest manipulation of votes which he could not honestly attain by merit. That is the basis of the secret societies existing in Ireland at present. They love darkness rather than light for the old God-given reasons.

I do not desire to see honest political thought, however mistaken, driven into the darkness to form alliance with the more poisonous elements in Irish life, and I wish to associate myself with any protest which may be made against the suppression of the Gaelic Society in Trinity College on grounds which might indeed appeal to the Prussian military spirit, but which are altogether out of place when adopted by a University endowed by the British Government to diffuse British culture and British ideals of liberty of speech.

Yours sincerely,

GEO. W. RUSSELL