



The Psychology of a Volunteer

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Mughdhorn has challenged my psychology as un-Irish. At least, he has challenged as un-Irish the psychology of any man that holds the view that it has not been merely for the sake of saving the Irish language we Leaguers have been working all these years. That is a view which I hold and have promulgated. Hence I take it there is question here of my psychology. It is a little embarrassing to a shy person to have his psychology discussed in public. One feels inclined to protest indignantly with the old lady whom the doctor suspected of appendicitis, explaining to her that it meant inflammation of the appendix. 'Why, I haven't got such a thing!' She thought he meant a kind of tail. I really shrink from a public investigation into my psychology.

Let me see how Mughdhorn will like a very tender examination of this.

I formally challenge as not only un-Irish, but as diseased, the psychology of the man who holds that Parnell's declaration to the people of Connacht that he would not have taken off his coat to the land question but that he saw in it a means to rouse the people of Ireland to assert their right to self-government, betrayed the 'Palesman addressing the mere Gael', and that it was 'supercilious' at that. The declaration in question was one of those four or five illuminating and unforgettable sentences of Parnell's which prove him to have been the one really great Nationalist of his time; the true successor of Tone and Mitchel, though working with such different means. The sentence betrays not the Palesman (whatever that may mean) but the Irish Nationalist. I hold its Nationalism to be authentic, and, further,

that there is no other Nationalism than the Nationalism therein implied, i.e., that the nation is more important than any part of the nation. A national leader in a struggle for self-government could not have turned aside from the main issue in order to take up even temporarily any other issue, however important, than the national one, except with the object of strengthening his forces for the main fight---the fight for nationhood. Parnell, as leader of the Irish in their struggle for nationhood, would not have been justified in devoting one hour of his time or one penny of his funds to the land war except as a means to an end. Had Parnell had his way the land war would not have been fought out until the national war had been won; and it is a pity that Parnell had not his way, as we and our children may realise full soon.

I challenge again the Irish psychology of the man who sets up the Gael and the Palesman as opposing forces, with conflicting outlooks. We are all Irish, Leinster-reared or Connacht-reared; your native Irish speaker of Iveragh or Ennis is more fully in touch with the spiritual past of Ireland than your Wexfordman or your Kildareman, but your Wexfordman or your Kildareman has other Irish traditions which your Iveraghman or your Errisman has lost. It is a great thing to have heard in childhood the songs of a Tadhg Gaedhealach or to have seen a Raftery or a Colm Wallace; it is an equally great thing to have known old men who fought in Wexford in '98, or to have been nursed by a woman who made bullets for the Fenians. All such memories, old and new, are part of Irish history, and he who would segregate Irish history and Irish men into two sections---Irish-speaking and

English speaking--- is not helping toward achieving Ireland a Nation. Am I a Palesman and is Lord O'Brien of Kilfenora a Gael? I propose that in future we reserve the term Palesman for those who uphold the domination of the English in Ireland. I propose also that we substitute for the denominations Gael, Gall, and Gall-Gael the common name of Irishman.

I do not know who among the Gaelic Leaguers that have joined the Volunteers has been foolish enough to suggest that he 'cares for the language merely as a sort of stimulant in the fight for nationhood'. Certainly not I. I have spent the best fifteen years of my life teaching and working for the idea that the language is an essential part of the nation. I have not modified my attitude in anything that I have recently said or written; I have only confessed (and not for the first time) that in the Gaelic League I have all along been working not for the language merely, but for the nation. I now go further, and say that anyone who has been working for the language merely (if there be any such) has never had the true Gaelic League spirit at all, and though in the Gaelic League has never really been of it. I protest that it was not philology, not folklore, not literature, we went into the Gaelic League to serve, but: Ireland a Nation.