

**SEADNA. AN DARA CURO.  
WITH  
TRANSLATION AN T-ATAIR  
PEADAR UA LAOGAIRE**

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Seadna. An dara curo. With translation an t-Atair Peadar ua Laogaire by Peter O'Leary & Peadar ua Laoghaire

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**PETER O'LEARY & PEADAR UA LAOGHAIRE**

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Gaelic League Publications.

# SEADNA

AN DARA CUID.

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WITH TRANSLATION.

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AN T-ACAIR PEADAR UA LAOIGAIRÉ.  
DO SAOTHUIG.

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1898.

THE First Part of SEADUNA appeared in the *Gaelic Journal*, Nos. 56 to 84. The vocabulary which was to have accompanied this Second Part is being embodied in the Dictionary now being compiled by the Irish Texts Society.



## PREFACE.

IN the following pages the story of SEADUNA is continued from the point at which it ceased to appear in the "Gaelic Journal."

Throughout the entire story there is not a single word, nor a single turn of expression, which has not been got directly from the mouths of living people *who knew no English*. There has been no *word-building*. Not a single phrase has been either *invented* or *introduced from any outside source*. The reader can rest assured that while reading the story he is reading *the actual speech of living Irish people who knew no English*.

In the spelling the use of double letters is avoided as much as possible. It is, of course, impossible to avoid it when the double letter is *heard* and makes a difference in the sense. For example—"an"="the," "ann"="there," "gan"="without," "gann"="scarce." In the spoken language this difference is distinctly expressed by the pronunciation. *The double letter should not be written except when it is heard.*

"What about the authority of the past?" some one will ask.

Those double letters were written in the past *because they were heard then*. This is proved by the fact that "nn," and "no" were written one for the other, and that "pp" and "pt" were written one for the other.

The word "ατá" means "*who is,*" or "*which is.*" It never means "*is*" *simply*. What it may have meant 300 years ago has nothing to do with the present time. To write "ατá an tá breáξ" now, as Irish for "*the day is fine,*" is utterly intolerable to *me*.



What has been called the "Rule" *caot te caot* is not a rule. It is a phonetic fact or truth. It arises from the nature of Irish speech. In English speech the consonants are the *bones*. The vowels are mere *filling in*. Sometimes the vowels are mere intervals between the consonants. In Irish speech the vowel is the principal element. It is in it all the force is. The consonant is constantly made to yield to it. The consonant has to become *slender* or *broad* according to the effect on it of the vowel which comes into contact with it. That is not a *rule*. It is a *truth* which belongs to the nature of Irish speech. It is a natural characteristic of the spoken language. It is not a matter for the *eye* primarily, but for the *ear*. The only reason why it is written is *because it is heard*. Hence it has nothing to do with orthography properly so called. The word *rlat* and *-in* are the orthographical component parts of the word *rlatín*. The "i" which has been introduced before the "c" has nothing to do with the orthography. The "c" of "rlat" is a broad letter. The "c" of "rlatín" is a slender letter. In order to sound it slender the voice has to introduce a slight "i" sound between it and the "a," in order to fit it for the "i" of "-ín." That is in order to make it *caot te caot*. The word "cuio" has the "o" naturally slender. Hence the slight "i" sound is already between it and the "u." In the plural of it we have "cuoa." That is the voice has to drop the slight "i" sound in order that the "o" should be sounded broad to fit it for the broad vowel "a" which follows it. That is, *teatán te teatán*.

If the Irish Language were the *sole* speech of the people, these *phonetic changes need never be written on the paper at all*. Every reader would read the language as he spoke it. He could not dream of reading it otherwise. No person dreams now of marking on the page, for English readers, the phonetic differences between such words as "rough," "cough," "plough," &c. Apart from peculiar instances of that sort,

it is a general truth that the powers of the *same letters* are entirely different in different languages. The changes in Irish consonants from broad to slender and from slender to broad are, to the foreign ear, unknown changes made in unknown elements. Who knows now what Roman articulate sounds were like? Who has any conception of the modifications which they suffered in Roman speech? It has been a most fortunate thing for us and for our language that our ancestors, when they saw the encroachments of a foreign tongue, took the precaution of putting those phonetic effects down upon the page for us. It is a most beautiful system; but it is a purely *phonetic* system. It should be used as such, and as such alone. For example: I have never heard "buaitpeap," nor "bainpeap," nor "ciöpeap." I have always heard "buaitpap," "bainpap," and "ciöpap." Why should I write into the word a phonetic effect which I have never heard? "Oh, but," some one will say, "I can perceive no phonetic difference between your 'buaitpeap' and your 'buaitpap.'" You cannot! Well, I can. And the difference is so glaring, that the utmost rapidity of utterance cannot hide it from me. The sooner you turn your attention to recognising, *by the naked ear*, the difference between a *broad* Irish consonant and a *slender* one, the better. Then you will find this much-abused, and still more misunderstood, caot te caot—one of the most exquisite guides to pronunciation that human beings have ever adopted.

Of course in order that the guide should be useful it must be consistent. It will not do to show you a consonant written as if it was slender and pronounced broad into your ear.

In the following pages you are to pronounce *slender* every consonant which you find *in contact at all* with "i," or *placed before "e."* You are to pronounce *all other consonants broad.* There is one solitary exception—the "r" of "ir" is broad.

By far the most important matter for consideration in

connection with the revival of our language is the SYNTAX. If the syntax be good, we have good Irish, even if half the words were foreign. If the syntax be bad, the language is not Irish at all, even though each separate word may be the purest Irish. The most beautiful as well as the most subtle element of Irish syntax is that which has its existence around those little words which express relation. They are called by the general name of *prepositions*—a word which has no particular meaning.

Our grammarians seem to know very little about those small words—at least they give very little information concerning them. Even our "classic" prose writers appear to have contented themselves with mastering a *few* of the relations expressed by those small words, and throughout whole volumes they hold on to those few with unvarying tenacity. Keating almost always says the same thing in the same way.

Our lyric poets understood well the syntax of the small words, and they used it with great dexterity and effect. But poetical usages are too subtle for students whose childhood was not steeped in Irish.

In the spoken language of the people it is that this element of Irish syntax gets full scope. There, it is off the stilts of the prose writers and free from the fetters of poetry, and the people revel in its subtlety, variety and beauty. These characteristics of it, together with its long, continued use, give to the spoken Irish an exactness, a vigour, a combined strength and liteness unknown in English speech.

The language of the story of *Seána* has been framed specially for the purpose of giving learners an opportunity and a means of becoming acquainted with this particular element of Irish syntax. That is why the story consists almost entirely of dialogue.

PEADAR UA LAOĞAIRE.