

# Scots in the Community.

A mind as a laddie at the scuil, mony a year syne noo, that A aye haed twa different weys o speakin. In the hoose, outside wi ma freends an in the playground at the scuil A aye juist spoke ordinary but in the cless-room or when A wis speakin tae ony important weel spoken person, A aye haed tae mind ma mainners an try tae speak proper. Sae, like gey near awbody o ma generation, A grew up wi thae twa languages in ma heid, that A aye kent as 'ordinary' an 'proper'.

Ilka Januar in the scuil we aye haed tae read, lairn an recite some o the poems o Robert Burns an tae sing his sangs along wi ither Scots sangs. A wad recognise maist o the words as bein the same as the anes we uised when speakin ordinary but we war nivver allowed tae uise thae same words for ilka-day communication in the cless-room. A cuid nivver unnerstaun the logic o this an jaloused ower time that whaur, accordin tae the teacher, Burns uised the Scots dialeck, whit A spoke maun hae been somethin different; aiblins an inferior form o bad moothit English or e'en a kinna local slang. This consait anent language that wis drummed intae us, whiles wi a wee bit help frae the tawse, gied us a richt fause vizzie on life an in particular, oor perception o strangers that we met for the first time.

Bairns that wantit tae sook in wi the teacher or dae weel at the scuil makit a richt maucht tae learn tae speak proper an efter a while it wis the clivver anes that wis best at speakin proper an the mair donnert anes that didna bother ower muckle if they spake proper or no. This gart maist fowk tae judge a stranger's level o education an intelligence bi hou weel they cuid speak English. A wis nae different, till ae day durin the war, an English laddie cam intae oor cless. His faither wis in the RAF an wis stationed at Drem doon in East Lothian. This laddie cuidna speak ocht else nor English an, e'en tho it wis wi a strang Midlands accent, it wis the best English A'd ivver heard an A jaloused richt awa that he wad be shuir tae be at the tap o the cless efter the neist exams. It taen me a guid nummer o years tae work oot whit wey he didna git tae the tap o the cless at aw efter oor exams but wis, in fack, aye doon aboot the fit. An him sic a guid English speaker tae.

Anither guid exemplar o hou wir consaits anent language wis deliberately thravn bi the wey we war educatit, taen place in later years efter A wis weel on ma wey as a Scots language upsteerer. Ma sister, like masel, a Scots speaker aw her days, wis speirt whit she thocht aboot the campaign tae sauf the Scots language. She fair got up on her high horse an said, "Thon's naethin but a piece o nonsense. A'v nae time for aw thon broad Scots rubbish. A'v spoken Fisherraw aw ma days an A'm no gaun tae chynghe noo!"

As for masel, it wisna till A'd gotten haud o a copy o the Pocket Scots Dictionary durin a holiday on the Isle o Mull an, wi plenty time for reading, A read whit it said aboot the history o the leid an recognised a wheen o its words as the anes A uised when A wis speakin ordinary. Jings! An aw the time A'd been speakin Scots an haednae kent it. A wis e'en mair roused when A fund oot that aw this swither haed cam aboot cause Liberal politicians haed taen it on thirsels tae pass the Education (Scotland) Act in 1872. Frae then on, the only language allowed tae be spoken in Scottish schuils wis tae be English. Frae then on, the Scottish teachers, that cuidna ban Burns cause o the wecht o his verse an his world-wide renown, cuidnae accept that speakin 'ordinary' wis the same language as that uised bi Burns or they wadna been able tae ban its uiss in the scuil as the law o 1872 dictatit. It wis the passin o this Act that gart the breardin o new derogatory names for the Scots language, an for the "inarticulate Scot" an the "Scots Creenge".

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