A Few Notes About "Tar Éis"

In our thrilling Dúnmharú tale, we're seeing this phrase tar éis quite a bit. We have encountered the following construction a few times:

- Bhí sé tar éis impresean maith a dhéanamh ar Biggles …
- Bhí sé tar éis a rá léi ag am suipéir gur …
- Bhí sé ar nós duine a bhi tar éis druga a thógáil.

In Hiberno-English you'll sometimes hear an expression like, "He's after having made a good impression …" where we would say, "He had just made a good impression." Similarly, "He had just said to her" or "He was like a person who had just taken drugs."

Basically, in these sentences, tar éis = "just", but often with a sense of a perfect tense -- he had just made -- which is interesting and useful, because there are no perfect tenses in Irish, that is, no way to conjugate the verb so the form of the verb itself conveys a perfect sense.

Éis?

There is no use of the word éis by itself. At one time it may have referred to a track or a trace, and in the plural, to reins, but it is no longer a stand-alone word. It is very widely used in this tar éis construction, but it is also sometimes found in other combinations (never on its own).

I'm used to saying théis rather than the separate words tar éis, I know that happens in the west, but I'm not sure how that plays out in the other regions. (Thar éis is also very common.)

Other Uses

Another way to use it in a perfect sense is with the preposition do, and this pops up in our story:

- …chuaigh sé timpeall an chúinne go dtí an stáisiún, agus tar éis dó cúpla ceist a chur air …

Similarly, tar éis a titim dó, "after he had fallen", tar éis do na doine imeacht, "after the people had left."

In our story, we also saw this phrase used in time expressions to mean "after" or "past":

- Bhí sé a leathuair tar éis a hocht … Bhí sé tar éis a dó ar maidin …

Some other uses of tar éis:

- Tar éis an lae, "at the end of the day"
- Tar éis an tsaoil, "after all"
- Tar éis a dhéanta, "after it was done", "after its completion"
- Tar éis sin, "after that"
- An bhlian dá éis, "the following year"
- Tar m'éis, "after my time"
- Tar éis a bháis, "after his death"
- D'éis a chéile, "one after another" or "by degrees"