

Irish News.

OUR IRISH LETTER.

(From our own correspondent.)

Dublin, October 10.

A BOUNTIFUL HARVEST.

It is wonderful what an amount of sunshine we can bring into our lives by keeping on counting our blessings and passing a-tiptoe over our woes. The recipe is a very old one, like most of our best philosophy, and I always like to record any blessings vouchsafed to Ireland and the Irish, whether by Providence direct or by the ministers of Providence. It is sometimes well even to examine our apparent misfortunes thoroughly, so as to find out their good side, on which to keep an eye while trying to mend the bad side.

As far as reports go, then, up to the present Providence has blessed the country this year with a good harvest: corn, hay, and potatoes have yielded abundantly, and so we hope that there will be less suffering this winter amongst the poor of the rural districts in general than there has been for several seasons past; what a happiness that is can only be realised by those who know our patient peasantry and how much they can bear before they cry aloud. Some ultra Radicals think that it is a doubtful good, that gift of cheerful patience in suffering with which our people are so largely endowed; still, there is no denying that it is a wonderful gift from God and should not be lightly cast away.

THE DUBLIN ELECTRIC TRAM SYSTEM.

Our citizens of Dublin are congratulating themselves upon being the pioneers of the electric tram system for these countries, and on the fact that, while London is only preparing for electric traction, Dublin will, in about two months' time, possess the most complete and most extensive electric tramcar system in Europe. A little over two years ago the first trolley line was opened; we have now a perfect net-work of well-equipped lines, by means of which the citizens and the inhabitants of the suburbs can travel in every direction at the small cost of one half-penny per mile. So highly is this convenience appreciated by rich and poor alike, that the shareholders of the Electric Tram Company look upon their property in the light of a gold mine. Already every £10 share is sold at £25 10s, and stockbrokers say that in a comparatively short time the price will go up to £50 per share: an agreeable prospect for the owners of the lucky bottled lightning. There are two drawbacks, however, to the boom of the electric system. One is the question: Will the next generation, even of the very poor, in our cities know how to use their limbs or care to exercise them in the healthiest of all ways—walking? The cost of producing bicycles must always keep them out of the reach of the many, but even street urchins can always command a half-penny for the tram-car ride, and I understand we have already half-penny fares on one or two of our lines. The second consideration is that while at present two of the large industries of our rural population are raising horses for city traffic and corn and hay for fodder, according as the electric system spreads from city to city, these two mainstays of many rural districts must greatly diminish, and thus further impoverish the greater number, in order to enrich and convenience the comparatively few of the cities, even though these latter must, indirectly, suffer from the poverty of the country. Already the trade of horse breeding shows a considerable loss, as there is a falling-off of 9963 in the number of animals reared this year as compared with 1898. Take these at the figure of £30 per head all round, and there is a loss of £298,890 to the farmers who made this trade a specialty, not counting the consequent loss to forage producers; while in cities, what with horseless traction and bicycles, two hitherto most flourishing trades—those of harnessmakers and blacksmiths—are suffering severely. However, the onward march of science and the minds of share speculators do not usually take these small matters into consideration, though it sometimes puzzles one to understand how it is that before the days of free trade, steam, machinery, high-pressure education, and all the rest of our 'modern civilisation,' this little island supported 8,000,000 of people in really far greater general comfort than it now supports less than 5,000,000.

MR. WILLIAM O'BRIEN'S NEW PAPER.

Mr. William O'Brien has started a new weekly in Dublin, *The Irish People*—a paper solely in the interests of unity amongst Nationalists of all shades of opinion—that the cause of the United Irish League may have a special organ to advocate its aims, viz., the division of the vast tracts of grass lands into farms of a size suitable to the needs of middle-class and small farmers. The journal, which professes to keep its interests quite separate from sectional party feeling, deserves a welcome, and deserves success if it can in any way further the cause of unity, but it is to be feared that it will not be easy to change Mr. T. Healy's intense dislike of Mr. John Dillon and Mr. William O'Brien, or Mr. John Redmond's and Sir Thomas Esmonde's intense love of—themselves. The Irish people are practically united and would be only too glad of either of two arrangements amongst these gentlemen: that they should sink their petty personal differences and join heartily in working for the good of Ireland, as in old days, or else retire altogether from public life. It is, indeed, a sad pity that the old British policy of 'divide, divide' (instituted some centuries ago, if I make not, by an astute and conscienceless ancestor of Lord Salisbury) should have been able to break the bonds that assuredly once united such able men as Dillon, Healy, O'Brien, Davitt, Sexton. These men, working heartily hand in hand, with the country behind them, could do anything now, especially that England's difficulty seems looming on a very close horizon. However, there is little doubt but

that a very few years will see our country quietly enjoying that which has cost so much suffering and self-sacrifice in this nearly worn-out century.

A GREAT WORK OF ART.

Truly, money can do much when it has enabled America to become the repository of two such works of art as the companion paintings to the great picture now on view in Dublin, Munkacsy's 'Ecce Homo,' that marvellous production of genius to which attaches such a sad additional interest in the fact that the gifted painter became hopelessly insane but three days after he had finished this, his last masterpiece.

Even those who have seen many of the finest religious paintings in the world hold this to be the most wonderful on which they have ever looked. Though there are 70 life-size figures on the canvas, the picture gives no idea of overcrowding, in fact the moment the exhibition is entered, one quite loses all idea of a canvas, so real is the scene represented, so do figures—living, breathing figures—start forth; so full is the colouring, so true the perspective of pillars, ground, arches, and interior that the Eastern sun shines down upon.

I have read no learned critiques upon the picture, I am not an artist, therefore I cannot speak of this great work in technical terms or as being in any way qualified to criticise, I only speak as a person keenly alive to the beautiful in nature and quick, as many ignorant of the technicalities of art often are, to detect anything that jars upon one's instinct of what is true to nature, and in speaking of Munkacsy's 'Ecce Homo' I can only say that every figure, pre-eminently those of our Lord and of Pilate, is the figure of a living person. For instance, you feel as if it was only the moment before you entered upon the scene that Pilate leaned forward to the crowd, stretched forth his hands, and exclaimed: 'Ecce Homo!' It was but then our Lord raised His eyes and His thoughts to His Heavenly Father above, beyond the angry faces before Him, the cruel suffering within Him. It was suddenly, even as you looked, that the soldier directly beneath felt his anger rising and clutched his spear in a firm grasp, ready to defend even that Man of Sorrows from such a howling wretch as the aged Jew who is clamouring and threatening in his senseless fury. It was but this moment the Blessed Virgin fainted. The Mother of Jesus had stood, calmly sorrowful, until you were just entering, and you almost saw Saint John—the beloved disciple—stoop forward to shield and support her. In truth, the whole scene appears not to be painted, but to pass before your tear-filled eyes.

The one thing that strikes an observer as at all faulty is that, while every figure is in itself perfect as to roundness, relief, colour, life, there seems to be too sudden a diminution in size in those in the background for the distance indicated. This, however, might not appear if the picture were in a vast hall, as it is no doubt intended to be. At present it belongs to a syndicate, of whom Munkacsy's wife is the principal member, and the exhibitors are well pleased with their success so far. Orders for over 600 copies of the mezzotint engraving, at prices from two to four guineas, are already booked. The picture itself is valued at £37,000.

M. B.

COUNTY NEWS.

CARLOW.—Reception Ceremony.—On Thursday, September 21, the interesting and imposing ceremonies of Reception and Profession took place at the Bridgetine Convent, Tullow, Co. Carlow. The novices who made their vows were Sister M. J. Aloysius Cronin and Sister M. J. Anthony O'Connell, and the young lady who received the holy habit, Miss Alice Dwyer. The Most Rev. Dr. Foley presided.

CORK.—The Patron Saint of Cork.—From all parts of the diocese of Cork people journeyed in their hundreds on the first Sunday in October to Gougane Barra to pay tribute at the shrine of their patron Saint, St. Finbar, founder of the See and City of Cork, or at least of the old Irish quarter, for most of the city is of Danish origin. High Mass was celebrated under a pavilion in the ruins of the church, the music for the occasion being supplied by a specially selected choir from Cork, under the presidency of Miss O'Donoghue, L.R.A.M. The celebrant of the High Mass was the Rev. P. Hurley, P.P., Inchigeela; deacon, Rev. James Brady, C.C., Dunmanway; and sub-deacon, Rev. Denis O'Driscoll, C.C., Inchigeela. Immediately after Mass the panegyric of the Saint was preached by the Rev. Father Verdon, S.J., Dublin. Taking for his text the words, "Like a tree planted by the running waters and bringing forth fruit in due season," from the third verse of the First Psalm of David, he said their minds and hearts were lifted up to-day, while their thoughts and affections lingered lovingly there round the cradle where their holy religion was first fostered, and from where it spread its genial influence over the lakes and plains, hills and valleys of the land. In the conclusion of his discourse the preacher alluded with much emotion to the sufferings of the Irish Church. 'Through years of sorrow,' he said, 'years of pain, torture, and martyrdom they stuck to that faith, and broken hearts and ruined homes and shattered shrines were monuments to the steadfast adherence of Finbar's sons to that faith and hope and love. What had been the history of their country for nigh 300 years? Had it not been a struggle for the faith of Jesus Christ for which their forefathers fought and died, and in that struggle faith to them was all in all, while fortune and riches were nothing. Although it might be said they were the poorest people on the earth, still they were rich in the Faith of Christ, which was still their dearest treasure.'

GALWAY.—Dedication of a Church.—On Sunday, October 1, at Rossmuch, the Most Rev. Dr. McCormack, Bishop of Galway, dedicated a new church in the Early English style of Gothic, which has been built by a poor congregation with the help won for them from outside by the energy of their parish priest, Father Cassidy. A special feature of the service was the sermon preached by Father John M'Namara, C.S.S.R., first in Irish and then in English.