

Irish News

THE CRISIS IN AGRICULTURE.—OUR FUTURE NUNS: A PLEA FOR THE MISSIONS.—BEET GROWING IN IRELAND.—LAYMEN'S RETREATS.

Many people, who realise the stern fight that is before the farmers of this country not only to recapture that dominant position in their markets which they have already lost, but even to maintain their present precarious footing in them, will welcome the formation of an Agricultural Society in connection with University College, Dublin, which took place this week (says the *Wexford Free Press* for December 13). Time was when Irish agricultural produce had little to fear from any competition, for its proximity to the best market in the world gave it an advantage that made it secure from all attack. But those fine times have slipped away. England, impoverished by the war, with her industries disorganised and not running at top-speed as they were in the old days, and with her millions of skilled workers mostly idle or only half employed, is to-day far from being the valuable customer that she once was. And other countries, not by any means so favorably situated to supply her as Ireland is, have called in science to help them and with its aid have so organised and developed the production and transportation of food that the English market is no longer the preserve of the Irish farmer that it once was, for our new rivals are meeting us and beating us in the competition to supply its requirements. This is the situation the country has now got to face and it is a serious one. If we are to recover our hold on our markets we, too, must adopt modern methods. The happy-go-lucky days are definitely a thing of the past. We must increase the quantity of our agricultural exportations and improve their quality if we are not to be left behind in the race for trade, and even for national existence. In such an emergency we can only rely on our scientists and our economists to point the way. The up-to-date farming and organisation of other countries have ousted us from our pre-eminence and by similar methods must we meet the menace. There must be, as Professor Drew pointed out in his inaugural address to the University Agricultural Society, a great development of agricultural research. Every problem of the farmers must be submitted to the specialist and his advice must be acted upon. Only by such a re-organisation of the industry will the situation be retrieved. It is well that we have our Universities to fall back on, for we have to rely on them to produce our experts. Their practical value to the Nation is a much discussed topic, and one about which there has been a vast amount of scepticism amongst the people; but if at this crisis they demonstrate their worth that doubt will not long remain.

During the last few years Ireland is showing herself more and more true to her missionary traditions by sending forth her daughters in large numbers (says the *Irish Catholic*). We are all familiar with the great

work of the Irish Mission to China and the African Mission Colleges in Dublin and Co. Cork for the supplying of priests to bring the truths of our holy Faith to the heathen. Our nuns, too, are doing a valiant work in co-operating with these good Fathers in the schools and hospitals. St. Brigid's Missionary School, Callan, takes a foremost place in this, for since its opening, forty years ago, it has trained and sent 802 postulants to convents all over the world. The institution was founded to meet the pressing demands of foreign convents, badly in need of subjects, but who do not wish to run the risk of bringing out girls straight from their homes without any preparation. This want St. Brigid's supplies, as it gives a good education, as well as a preliminary training in the duties of the religious life. We may say in passing that this good work has more than realised the expectations of its founders. Postulants from St. Brigid's are proving themselves successful missionaries in all parts of America, Australia, New Zealand, India, South Africa, Ireland, and England. During last year aspirants entered in Mercy, Presentation, Charity Orders, etc., and at present there are a number in training in the Missionary School.

St. Brigid's Apostolic School, Convent of Mercy, Callan, Co. Kilkenny, the only one of the kind in Ireland, is under the patronage of Most Rev. Dr. Brownrigg and Most Rev. Dr. Downey, and is conducted by the Sisters of Mercy. Expenses need not necessarily deter candidates that are suitable, provided they are willing to enter convents abroad.

The British Sugar Beet Society, Limited, London, have circularised the various members of Dail Eireann, at the request of Lord Ffrench, urging the establishment of the sugar beet industry in Ireland. It would seem that the present consumption of sugar in Great Britain is nearly two million tons annually. The two existing factories at Kellam and Cantley produce about 15,000 tons of sugar annually, or less than three days' supply. It is estimated that the world production of sugar is 3,000,000 tons less than the requirements. Already it has been established in Britain that in weight per acre and in sugar content the beet grown there is equal, if not superior, to the beet grown on the Continent. Its great advantage to the farmer is in its by-product of cattle food which is excellent for the production of milk and meat. In the growing of beet the farmer has no anxiety about the fluctuation of prices. He grows at a fixed contract price. In addition to chemists, clerks, engineers, and foremen, each factory gives employment to about 600 men, and that during the winter months, when the demand for agricultural labor is lowest and when the weather is unsuitable for work on the roads. The work at the factory is carried out in

November, December, and January, the three wettest months in this country. With the possible development of electric power Ireland could manufacture all the sugar it requires without importing an extra ton of coal. It would take over fifteen factories employing 600 men each to supply the wants of the *Saorstát*. In addition this would largely increase the number employed directly in agriculture. Lord Ffrench is interested in the starting of a factory in Limerick. All the firm in which he is interested require is a guarantee from the landowners that they will grow enough beet to keep the factory supplied. He is a well-known Catholic nobleman and a financial expert of very high standing.

The practice of making enclosed Retreats is spreading among the Irish laity. In 1874 the first House of Retreats for Laymen in Dublin was opened by the Jesuits at Milltown Park, near the city. Until quite recently it was the sole house of its kind in Ireland, but lately the movement towards Retreats for laymen has received a great impetus. In 1921 Rathfarnham House of Retreats was founded. About that time the commodious castle at this place, three miles from the centre of the city, was acquired by the Jesuits. Since then, more has been done toward popularising periodical enclosed Retreats than anything heretofore accomplished.

A description of the work accomplished at Rathfarnham has attracted much interest of late. In these Retreats a man has a standard by which he may judge everything he uses or with which he has occasion to come in contact—money, pleasure, companions, abilities and talents, life itself; a rule by which all his desires and seekings after material prosperity are rightly measured. "The enclosed Retreat is a social work of the highest order," says one commenting on them. "It penetrates to the moral evils which underlie the social difficulty. It helps to bring rich and poor together, to make them of one mind so that the rich man becomes just and tolerant, the poor man hard-working and conscientious. It puts a new coloring on their lives by taking the true spirit of ancient Christianity from the region of theory and re-introducing it to practical everyday life. Men who have made Retreats become men of grit and no longer the victims of their environment."

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