

Agricultural Co-operation In Ireland

By CLARENCE POE

III.—The Twofold Problem of Business Organization.

"Making business men of farmers"—this is what I first called this series of articles on rural co-operation in Ireland because this title seems to suggest the most notable result of the movement.

And our farmers must become business men if our rural civilization is not to lose pace helplessly with world movement and our country districts become centers of stagnation instead of centers of hopeful progress. Organization and co-operation have re-made our city industries; they must now re-make our rural industries also.

Town Industry Organized; Rural Industry Must Be.

A century ago, for example, most shoes were made by individual shoemakers, each man working for himself; now they are made in great factories where the use of modern, elaborate, labor-saving machinery, the most scientific and economical methods of production and the most carefully planned systems of distribution and selling, all go to increase the profits of the shoe manufacturers.

A result something like this must be accomplished in agriculture. Farming, of course, cannot be so thoroughly organized and systematized as city business, nor can the same methods be used for rural organization as for city organization—as Sir Horace Plunkett points out in a quotation we have already printed; but our rural producers must at least become "business men" in the same degree, in proportion to their opportunities, as our city producers have become.

A Twofold Problem.

The wide-awake business man looks after two things—economy of production and economy of distribution. The wise farmer must also look after both. He cannot afford to neglect either. As Sir Horace Plunkett says: "An efficient department [of agriculture] can help the farmer to grow more crops and breed better cattle and do these things at less expenditure than when his output was smaller in amount and inferior in quality. But he will not get a full reward of his intelligence and enterprise, unless he learns to control the distribution of his produce and obtains working capital on suitable terms. This he cannot do until he adopts the co-operative method. On the other hand, what is the use of organizing the farmers, if they are not making good use of their land?"

The two things must indeed go hand in hand, and those leaders are not wise who try to encourage one policy at the expense of the other, or try to make it appear that one policy is at enmity with the other. The farmer does need to learn how to produce his beef more economically. He also needs to know how to market his beef more economically and thereby save to himself the millions the Beef Trust takes in unnecessary tolls between the farmer's barnyard and the city butcher-shop. The farmer does need to know how to make his cotton with the smallest possible outlay of sweat and purse. He also needs to know to save to his own pocket-book the millions and millions appreciation in value between the time the cotton leaves his hands in November and the time the normal price-level is reached in May.

Ireland's Recognition of the Facts.

The present prosperity of the Irish farmer seems to me to be largely due to the fact that nearly all his leaders have recognized the two-fold character of his problem. Sir Horace Plun-

kett and other leaders, in organizing the farmers, have strenuously insisted at the same time upon better methods of farming, while the Department of Agriculture, always insistent upon more progressive farm practice, has also searched the world over for examples of agricultural co-operation and has been as careful to give lessons in marketing farm crops as in producing farm crops.

At the beginning of his movement for organizing the farmers, Sir Horace Plunkett saw clearly that there would be no hope for the Irish farmer's financial salvation unless he quit the ways of his grandfathers and learned to produce as economically as the farmer on the Continent; and he was so intent upon getting better methods of farming that he braved local prejudice and brought in agricultural experts from foreign countries—for the very good and sufficient reasons that at that time he could get better men abroad than he could find at home. And ever since he has preached better methods of production as well as better methods of distribution. Thus in his latest annual report we find him saying:

"The Irish dairy farmer, by the simple process of weighing each cow's milk daily and periodically testing the milk for butter-fat, can eliminate all his unprofitable milkers, and by judicious breeding fill their places with cows which would leave a handsome margin of profit. In one reported case, a farmer gave figures to show that one cow in his herd had given him a return of £12 (\$60) for her milk, while another cow had produced but £5 (\$25). A 25 per cent increase in the milking capacity of our cows would mean an increased turn-over of close upon £50,000 (\$2,500,000) a year."

And again with regard to poultry: "It is no exaggeration to say that the present output of eggs might be almost doubled without increasing the material cost of their keep or the number of fowls which are kept. It is not uncommon to find hens producing 150 eggs per annum, while it is pretty safe to say that the general average of Irish laying fowls would be little more than half this figure. The 150-egg hen does not cost any more to keep than the 75-egg producer."

Teaching How to Pack and Ship.

Moreover, the Department of Agricultural and Technical Instruction, in addition to all its usual departmental labors, has taught better methods of handling, packing and shipping all kinds of farm products—a work which should be more generally prosecuted by our Departments of Agriculture in the South. In Western North Carolina, for example, we have a great apple-growing country, but the farmers will never half realize upon their opportunities until they learn better methods of packing and shipping. Nor shall we ever receive one-tenth of our possible dairy wealth until we learn better methods of handling our milk and butter. I have before me now some typical bulletins issued by the Irish Department of Agriculture: "The Packing of Butter"; "The Marketing of Fruit"; "Better Milk" (issued for the purpose of insisting upon absolute cleanliness, essential wherever any profitable milk market is to be maintained), etc. The Department has also issued leaflets on agricultural co-operation in Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, and Belgium.

Wheat or Straw?

On some of the best wheat land the crop runs to straw. This is because there are not enough available mineral foods to balance the manure or clover. A field test on such land showed that Potash increased the grain from 20 bushels on unfertilized soil to 31 bushels where

POTASH

was used, and to 37 bushels where Potash and phosphate were used. Both were profitable. Supplement the humus of such land with 200 lbs. acid phosphate and 30 lbs. Muriate of Potash or 125 lbs. Kainit per acre. Potash Pays.

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RIGHT PROPORTION OF HEAD TO STRAW

CROP RUNS TO STRAW

A Wise Method of Agricultural Instruction.

The general method of agricultural instruction adopted by the Irish Department, moreover, are so unique in some respects that it will be well to outline them briefly. In every county in Ireland there is one of more general agricultural instructor, one horticultural instructor, and one woman instructor in poultry alone or in poultry and dairy work combined, all of whom visit the farmers, confer with them, and conduct experiments, etc., somewhat as our demonstration workers do in the South. These county instructors conduct winter classes in agriculture in every county, mainly for the purpose of teaching the farm boys, though older men are welcomed as well. The instructors in agriculture, for example, will select two or three centers in each county, spending two consecutive days each week at each center for from sixteen to twenty weeks. The dairy and poultry classes, however, are not rotated in this fashion. The dairy short course lasts usually one month without break, and poultry classes four or five days at the time. These short courses are very popular and many of the farm boys who acquire in them a taste for better farming methods later attend the short courses in the provincial agricultural colleges. I notice one statement made by the Department which is in line with what institute workers in the South have told me of their own experiences: "Towns and the larger villages are to be avoided, as experience has shown that the greatest class attends those lectures which are given in the rural parts of the country."

Direct Financial Encouragement and Aid.

The county instructor in horticulture is expected to teach not only better methods of fruit growing, but spraying, pruning, grafting, and the packing of fruit. The Department has also arranged to grant loans of \$100 and upwards to associations of farmers preparing to undertake commercial fruit growing on satisfactory terms, these loans to be repaid in ten yearly installments, with interest at 3 per cent. The Department has also done much to encourage the beautifying of farm homes and the farms themselves through a system of prizes awarded in county contests each year. In making awards, the considerations are cleanliness, freedom from weeds, variety of flowers, fruits and vegetables; proper arrangement of pig pens poultry houses, barns, etc.; wise rotation of crops; proper keeping of farm accounts, etc.

The Department also lends money for the erection of village halls, these

halls being built for the purpose of providing suitable places for lectures, entertainments, public meetings, dances, etc. The money advanced by the Department is not to exceed two-thirds of the total cost. The community pays one-third outright, and then repays the borrowed two-thirds in ten annual installments, with interest at 2 1/2 per cent.

THE LINCOLN COUNTY FARMERS' UNION RALLY.

On August 1st. The Lincoln County Farmers' Union held a picnic and rally. It was entertained by the Asbury Local, three miles east of the county seat. The local decided to have the address in a grove and built a nice stand and prepared seats for the occasion.

An executive session was held at 10 o'clock. It was short but interesting.

After the executive session Dr. H. Q. Alexander was introduced and, as usual, the Doctor made a fine speech. It was highly praised by all.

At the close of the morning speech dinner was served. A table one hundred feet or more was loaded and twelve hundred or more enjoyed the noon meal.

At 2 o'clock Prof. W. C. Crosby addressed the people on education. This, too, was a splendid discourse. At this point of time the course of the programme was changed and the people of Lincoln County gladly listened to Mr. J. E. Walker, who gave an address on the East. Everybody was highly pleased with Mr. Walker, and was sorry that time would not allow him to talk longer!

In addition to the above the local had secured the services of a brass band for the occasion.

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