

THE IRISH IN ARGENTINA

Take an aeroplane here in St. Paul (says a writer in the *Catholic Bulletin*), fly eighty degrees due south, then turn east for some fifteen more, and you will find yourself nearly over a large city on a vast plain by a wide expanse of water. By careful piloting you can alight in a spacious square and admire the beautiful and stately buildings around you. On inquiry you will be told with high-bred courtesy that the square is the Plaza Victoria, the city, Buenos Aires, the country, the Argentine Republic, and the expanse of water, that majestic river, La Plata. You run a fair chance of detecting in the liquid intonation of your informant his Irish birth or descent; and, if so, you may wager two to one that he hails either personally or ancestrally from the 'town of the Carrigies' in the County Westmeath.

The Irish Colony.

Everyone presumes that there are Irish in the Argentine Republic, because there are Irish all over the globe. But few seem to know that the Irish colony in that southern land, though small in numbers, has forged its way to high distinction in every department of national life. Irish estancieros are among the wealthiest in the land. They own and stock leagues on leagues of the richest pastures; and the commission on their wool-exports alone has enriched more than one Irish broker. The Duggan Brothers' Banking Company was, some years ago, the fifth wealthiest in the world. As a financier, Don Eduardo Casey, a banker also, was for years the confidential adviser of the National and State Treasury Departments, and is said to have received an extensive territorial concession from the government for saving it in a crisis of impending embarrassment. Don Miguel Mulhall was in his days acknowledged by Gladstone to be the greatest living statistician. He was a member of the British Association and other learned societies, and started the *Daily Standard* of Buenos Aires, the first English paper, and still the most influential, on the southern continent. His wife, too, has written several works of high literary merit. Some time ago, General Donovan, one of the ablest commanders of the Argentine army, distinguished himself in the Indian wars. And as the latest link in the Irish Argentine tradition of eminent service of the republic, we may mention Vice Admiral O'Connor's recent tactful and diplomatic management of the Argentine fleet in Paraguayan waters—management for which he received on his return a most enthusiastic ovation from his countrymen. Finally, even in a summary, an honorable place is due to Doctor Santiago O'Farrell for forensic and popular eloquence of genuine Celtic ring.

Such is the magnificent record of the Irish Argentine colony, a record of which the mother country is justly proud. But it has other claims on the admiration of Ireland and the Irish race. It is intensely Catholic, intensely attached to 'the ould sod,' and, at the same time, intensely Argentine in loyalty and love to the country of its adoption. In proof, it will suffice to state that it has its own Irish academies and colleges for the education of its children, its own Irish homes for its orphans, its own Irish churches, its own Irish pastors.

Father Fahy, the Apostle of Argentina.

Most, if not all, of this prosperity is primarily due to the apostolic zeal and paternal solicitude of Father Fahy, whose memory holds a hallowed place in every Irish Argentine heart, and whose name cannot be spoken by those who knew him without a tremor of the voice and moist eyes. The story of his life was told a few months ago in the *Catholic Bulletin* in connection with the unveiling of a fitting memorial to his honor in the Recoleta cemetery of Buenos Aires. But it will not be amiss to add a few words that may suggest a clue to his beneficent influence over those Irish emigrants. Noble achievement is too rare not to give it, when found, the widest publicity.

From 1843 to 1871, Father Fahy lived and labored among his 'children,' ever faithful to duty and persistent in urging on them far-sighted paternal advice

on their temporal interests. He took pains to know his flock individually, he became a personal friend to each, won his confidence, and not rarely became the depository of his earnings. Every English vessel coming up the River Plata found him waiting on the Mole in quest of Irish emigrants. Those, both male and female, he took in charge and sent immediately to the 'camp,' where places had been already provided for them. Afterwards he not only visited them from time to time, and praised or scolded them according to the reports he received of them from their employers, but he also arranged for three or four yearly visits they were to make to Buenos Aires, where they were expected 'to go to their duty' (Confession and Communion), and to lodge in the Provincial Bank the wages they had received.

'Mind your soul, first of all,' he would say to each of those quarterly visitors. 'Then learn the ways and language of the country; and save your money to buy land; for this is going to be one of the greatest nations of the world.' They followed his advice, married within their own circle, and the combined saving of the young couples, swelled by the high bank interest then obtainable, enabled them to buy in nine or ten years on mortgage large tracts of pasture land which they gradually stocked with sheep and cattle.

A Noble Missionary.

He showed his people how they might become rich; but he himself chose to remain always poor. Like the saints, he was disinterested and generous to the verge of imprudence. On one occasion a thousand dollars were collected and offered to him for some much-needed personal use. He declined the gift, saying: 'Give it to the orphanage. The little ones want it more than I. As long as I have a coat to my back and a crust of bread, I am satisfied.' Noble words, worthy of the golden age of the Irish Church!

Father Fahy died in harness, as every true-hearted priest aspires to die. In an epidemic of yellow fever, he turned the Irish convent into a hospital, where he administered, day and night, the last Sacraments to the dying, until he himself was stricken down. 'Fiat voluntas tua,' he sighed, as he resigned his work to others and his soul to God. He died on the 20th of February, 1871.

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