All Ireland Review

Our Industries. Starch Manufacturing

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Source: *All Ireland Review*, Vol. 3, No. 10 (May 10, 1902), p. 154

Published by: [All Ireland Review](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20546043>

Accessed: 20-03-2016 18:03 UTC

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OUR INDUSTRIES.

STARCH MANUFACTURING.

It is quite astonishing the amount of money annually sent out of this country for what might seem a rather unimportant commodity, but when we tell our readers that almost £200,000 has been sent away for the article mentioned in the title of this article, we are sure many of them will be surprised. We have the figures before us, collected from the most reliable sources, and we find that 7,080 tons of starch came into Ireland during 1901. This seems rather strange, and one would be almost inclined to think that nothing of the sort was made here, but it is not so, as we have recently had the privilege of inspecting the works, and looking over the exhibits at the Cork Exhibition of a flourishing concern situated in the South of Ireland. We were, however, astounded when we were informed that this concern, although their products will compare very favourably with the best importations, cannot get within £10 per cent. of the price realised for goods made by certain foreign manufacturers. This difference in price we could understand also, if the article imported was better, but judging from the up-to-date machinery, and many other advantages possessed by this particular home maker, as well as ample capital, combined with experience obtained in the great starch raising centres on the Continent, such as Louvain, Bruges, Ghent, &c., we cannot for a moment see where the excellence over the home article could come in. Now, while dealing with the question of higher prices realised for imported starch over home-made goods, we would like to bring before our readers another fact. We know of a certain continental house who will quote starch at from £15 17s. 6d., to £16 15s. 0d. per ton, according to the way it may be packed, to which we must add freight, making it £18 per ton, while our home-producer asks for £23 per ton. Now, at first sight, this may seem to be against the Irish article, but on carefully perusing the document of the foreigner, in which he quotes his prices, we find that for 7s. 6d. per ton

more, he is prepared to make the loose starch up into packets, and provide cardboard boxes for that purpose; and when we realise that to put a ton of starch into $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. packages, we get 8,960 such parcels, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. 4,480, 1 lb. 2,240 and provide the box for packing it into, and all for 7s. 6d., we certainly have our doubts as to whether the transaction might be quite straight or not. We have heard all about certain soaps containing a couple of ounces less than some of our home-made article, being sold in a very nicely got up packet at an enhanced price, but in the case of starch we find the foreign packed box, supposed to weigh, say, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb., is made up of packing far beyond the proportion required for safe delivery, and this might explain the difference in the price being lower, as our own manufacturers will always guarantee an actual $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of starch in every box supposed to contain that amount, and will not only guarantee the weight, but the quality and purity also. We are mainly concerned with the amount of work the consumption of our own starch would make, and to this end we have made enquiries, and find that to manufacture 20 tons of starch would give a week's employment to fifty hands, and to pay those would mean the disbursement of £30 in wages. So that, to make 7,080 tons of starch in Ireland (the quantity imported in 1901), would mean the employment of 17,700 extra hands and £10,620 spent in wages. We have nothing more to add; those figures speak for themselves. We should always remember "this is our own, our native land," and our duty is to make it as prosperous as we possibly can. Everyone can help. Let us not say, "My pennyworth of starch will not go far on the road to Nation Building," but let us reflect on the fact that almost £200,000 has left this country last year for the same apparently insignificant pennyworth of starch, and we cannot fail to be impressed with the importance of getting the home-made article. We have the authority of some of the largest users of starch in this country for stating that the quality of Irish starch is superior to any foreign starch imported into Ireland. English laundry proprietors are quick to recognise this fact, and many of them secure all their supply from Ireland. VIDETTE.

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