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A Sounding Verse

Author(s): D'Arcy M'Gee

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eyes. I left the mountain home of the gods for Emain Macha, and to plot for your return. I—I deceived the king. I told him your loveliness was passed, and the time of the prophecy gone by. I thought when you came all would be well. I thought wildly, for love had made a blindness in my heart; and now the king has discovered the deceit; and, oh! he has gone away in wrath, and soon his terrible hand will fall!

DEIRDRE.

It was not love made you all blind, but the high gods have deserted us, and the demons draw us into a trap. They have lured us from Alba, and they hover here above us in red clouds—cloud upon cloud—and await the sacrifice!

LAVARCAM.

Oh, it is not yet too late! Where is Fergus? The king dare not war on Fergus. Fergus is our only hope.

DEIRDRE.

Fergus has bartered his honour for a feast. He remained with Baruch, that he might boast he never refused the wine cup. He feasts with Baruch, and the Lights of Valour who put their trust in him—must die.

BUINNE.

Fergus never bartered his honour. I do protest, girl, against your speech. The name of Fergus alone would protect you throughout all Eri; how much more here, where he is champion in Ulla. Come, brother, we are none of us needed here. (*Buinne leaves the room*).

DEIRDRE.

Father and son alike desert us! O foster-mother, is this the end of all? Is there no way out? Is there no way out?

ILANN.

I will not desert you, Deirdre, while I can still thrust a spear. But you fear overmuch without a cause.

LAVARCAM.

Bar up the door and close the windows. I will send a swift messenger for Fergus. If you hold the dun until Fergus comes, all will yet be well. (*Lavarcam hurries out*).

DEIRDRE (*going to Naisi*).

Naisi, do you not hear? Let the door be barred! Ainle and Ardán, are you still all blind? Oh! must I close them with my own hand! (*Deirdre goes to the window, and lays her hand on the bars. Naisi follows her*).

NAISI.

Deirdre, in your girlhood you have not known of the ways of the Red Branch. This thing you fear is unheard of in Ulla. The king may be wrathful; but the word once passed is inviolable. If he whispered treachery to one of the Red Branch he would not be Ardrie to-morrow. Nay, leave the window unbarred or they will say the sons of Usna have returned timid as birds! Come; we are enough protection for thee. See, here is the chess-board of Concobar, with which he is wont to divine playing a lonely game with fate. The pieces are set. We will finish the game, and so pass the time until the feast is ready. (*He sits down*). The golden pieces are yours, and the silver mine.

AINLE (*looking at the board*).

You have given Deirdre the weaker side.

NAISI.

Deirdre always plays with more cunning skill.

(*To be continued.*)

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION FOR IRELAND.—Continued.

POSTPONEMENT OF INSTITUTION BUILDING.

I have, in the foregoing, stated the case for the utilisation of existing agencies—the development of that which we have, rather than the more showy expedient of brand new institutions. I think this course will approve itself to the mature judgment of the country. Nothing would be easier than to copy some of the admirable schemes for agricultural education which Continental countries have made so successful, and to present a plausible appearance of adaptation to our own conditions. While the Recess Committee found almost everywhere abroad some lessons most applicable to the problem we are discussing, they were, quite early in their investigations, made alive to the danger of mere servile imitations. These Continental models are most alluring, because they are both efficient and economical. Many of them seem so exactly to deal with the conditions of Ireland that their transplantation looks as easy as putting up a Swiss chalet on a Wicklow mountain. But what does not appear on the face of these schemes is the history of their growth and the educational atmosphere with which they are surrounded. If you will give us all the help we ask, we hope, in a not distant future, to make no poor show alongside of the best of them. Meanwhile let us avoid the illusory attempt to reap where we have not sown.

POSTPONEMENT OF PROVINCIAL AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES.

The provision in our Act of £10,000 to be applied in connection with the Munster Institution was generally taken to foreshadow the early erection of a Provincial Agricultural college, and the Department was influentially approached, as soon as it was created, with a view to the establishment of similar Institutions for the provinces of Ulster and Connaught. I may say at once that any province which could solve its educational problem in this way would find the Department most anxious to provide its full share of the funds required. It is only human nature that the Vice-President should desire to erect such monuments to his educational zeal during his term of office. Indeed, I may confess that I was grievously disappointed when certain castles in the air vanished before the knowledge which, owing to the pressure of miscellaneous duties, it took me a year to obtain. But, unhappily, we cannot honestly recommend the country to begin at this end, because our system of agricultural education in Ireland, which we are only about to construct, will not for some years yet be ripe for provincial collegiate institutions of this type. They might do some good; but it is clear that they would not meet the needs of the half million farmers of Ireland, and would not ensure the support of the County Councils. They might even do positive harm by retarding what you will see presently is one of the primary objects of the Department—the creation of a belief in and a desire for practical education in the minds of the working farmers of Ireland. In England and in Scotland the County Councils have had the same problem to deal with. There they have had the

start of us in education, and their conditions are much more favourable to the provincial college type of institution. They have tried this type in many places for the past ten years, and so far as the purpose of meeting the direct needs of the working farmer is concerned, the system has been a failure. Such colleges turn out agricultural professors, it is true, but they do not turn out farmers, and the farmers do not resort to them. They are now beginning to change the system, and after ten years of the work of the itinerant instructor (to be presently explained), several of them have an agricultural population better fitted for the benefits of these institutions. Let us not repeat the mistakes of the English and Scottish County Councils, but take advantage of the experience they have purchased at much expense.

THE DEPARTMENT'S SCHEME OF AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION.

I have now endeavoured to come to an agreement with you as to the objects to be aimed at and as to the general principles to be observed in seeking their attainment. It has been necessary to devote a good deal of space to the discussion of what we ought to avoid. The ground had thus to be cleared for the presentation of the scheme to which the Department submits as the best under existing circumstances, and which, so far as its local features are concerned, it will do its utmost to put into practical operation at the earliest possible moment in any county where the co-operation of the County Council is assured.

Our scheme at the outset is threefold in its operation. It consists of itinerant instruction, of the utilisation of existing schools, and of the training of teachers. But at a further stage, which will be reached at an earlier or a later date according to local conditions, but which should not be prematurely forced, technical schools to serve a county or smaller area, either exclusively or partially for the special teaching of agriculture, will be required. These may, and we hope will, lead up to higher agricultural institutions, aided by groups of counties, the provincial line being observed if there be any strong sentiment or practical convenience to be served thereby. But first let me explain as clearly as I can the different steps in the procedure I have outlined, beginning with the system of itinerant instruction, upon the successful operation of which the working out of our scheme will largely depend.

(*To be continued.*)

A SOUNDING VERSE.

Hail to our Celtic brethren wherever they may be,
In the far woods of Oregon, or o'er the Atlantic Sea,
Whether they guard the banner of St. George in Indian vales,
Or spread beneath the nightless north experimental sails.
One in name,
And in fame,
Are the sea-divided Gaels.

D'ARCY M'GEE.