

## Diverting Ourselves with Diversification

By PERCY A. HILL\*

There are many words which can be parsed from different angles, with varied results. We have that fine old word *crisis*, for example, which can mean anything from an empty pocket-book to a bureau impasse; that splendid word, *co-operation*, which hops all over the dictionary as well as the horizon and still remains—a word; and now we have that bright evangel word *diversification*, as a panacea for all our Philippine troubles. Used by a non-producer, it may mean something or nothing; used by a business man it may merely be a reiterated formula to take the place of thought; used by a politician it comes through his hat, but employed by a statesman, it becomes a noble expression, like conservation, trust-busting or what have you. But just how does this word strike the thirteen millions busied with their happy production, and far removed from the frolicsome rigodon, the mutual admiration banquet and the merry word that does for the deed?

The producer is sternly told he is making a mistake if he does not diversify. This is all right for a nation of farmers but not for a nation of planters. Even in the United States, the farmer-nation par-excellence, farmers have long ceased merely growing a variety of produce for actual consumption. Farming itself has moved upward from the subsistence occupations and has become a cash-crop occupation. Let us look at Philippine conditions, not from the viewpoint of the idealist, the optimist, or the "politicastror." but as they actually are. We will find the following factors:

The farmer or planter who faces the hardest problem is the one who diversifies or grows a variety of crops. He must start anew with some of these and learn new principles, as it were; he must fit his land to the crops and not the crop to the land; he must ignore climatic and physical conditions, which, sad to say, were here first; he cannot afford the latest equipment for each of his several major crops nor can he hope for low production costs,—a matter of time, concentration and experience. There is also his immobile labor question to be taken into account. Ever-present problems are magnified when he is unable to concentrate on the crop that yields the greatest returns.

Where diversification of crops has taken place in the United States, it has only been a matter of time when requirement turned in the direction of the crop most suited to the physical, climatic and labor conditions of the producer, factors with which he was actually faced. There is a vast difference between a nation of farmers and one of planters. The former, as a world force, is being relegated to the background. If we had a nation of purely diversified farmers we might find out that our export crops, upon which we depend for material existence, would be neglected for those of vital requirement for the field worker, as in Russia.

Our four principal export crops, sugar, copra, hemp and tobacco, which, together with our principal domestic commodity, rice, are located in regions over which the clever word has no control, for they are bound rigidly by climatic and physical conditions. As a matter of fact, we need more concentration than diversification to bring these crops up to what they should be, for in the last analysis they supply the wherewithal the country requires in the way of favorable balances of trade.

It would be interesting to have our experts, who are not faced with the actual conditions of the producer, recommend a paying crop that could substitute rice in the clay lands of the Central Luzon plain, bound by monsoons, or one that might enrich the poverty-stricken Ilocano Coast, or the typhoon racked provinces of Isabela and Cagayan, not to speak of the Batanes. Have we any agricultural or political Messiah who can discover that hemp can be produced north of a line running from Zambales to Baler, copra in Nueva Ecija, or vast quantities of cacao in Abra, rice in Davao or Cebu? The climatic

conditions facing the planter from Basco to Jolo have thus far baffled all but the most optimistic theorists.

If our agriculturists by proxy and exponents of the nebulous theory of diversification applied to Philippine crops mean that each region should diversify with the crops of the others, in other words, that each should grow a small area devoted to sugar, rice, copra, hemp, etc., so that they

### WHAT A ROAD DOES

Henry Becker, of Aparri, tells on his frequent visits to Manila of the stimulation the road into the Cagayan valley has been to industry in that region, particularly to agriculture. Formerly the valley imported rice, now it exports some 125,000 bags a month. More than 100 small rice mills have been installed, most of them in villages which never had heard of such conveniences before the road gave machinery salesmen a means of reaching the valley. Sugar-cane planting is being extended, and the commerce-and-industry bureau reports a sugar-mill company organized; for several years, however, the output of this mill will be consumed in the valley. Less tobacco is being grown, Becker says, farmers are turning to rice and corn as better crops. This is partly a response to circulars printed in the local dialect and widely distributed among the farmers two years ago, Becker, Judge Cata lino Sevilla and more than 20 other influential men having been associated in the preparation of the circular.

Lumber and logs are among the valley's exports which are increasing in volume and value. The road across the mountains from Bangui to Aparri, giving access to the Ilokos region without the necessity of the present long, expensive detour, is greatly needed.

will not put their eggs all into one basket (a homely phrase that has ruined many a farmer) we cannot see how this ruinous policy would favorably affect Philippine conditions. If they advocate the production of new crops such as chinchona, pepper, camphor, or oil-nuts, they will have to resort to other methods than the blah-blah before they get producers to abandon

a good egg for one that might be addled, or divert their energy and capital from the known to the unknown. If they mean the growing of crops such as cotton, cacao, coffee, kapok, etc., they should be aware that these do grow here but they are grown unprofitably or there would long ago have been a rush to engage in such industries.

If they mean the diversification of crops to be put into pigs, cattle, poultry, this is also being done but we see no millionaires in any of those diversified industries. They should also note that the price of Philippine coffee produced in Batangas, when the industry there was at its zenith, cannot compete with the flood of Brazilian, Columbian and Central American coffee at present prices. There are quite a few angles to this diversification, it must be admitted.

The whole problem comes back to its original status of many years ago. Only those entities of large capital desiring security, and willing to embark in new industries can solve the problems of introducing a new crop into the Isles of Philip. This modus operandi is paralyzed under present conditions and heeds not the siren song now sung by the co-oppers, who retain their former reservations, mental and what-not. This may be the result of our hot climate,—*quien sabe*,—as it is not in line with the aspirations of the impractical; but it exists—like a sore thumb.

Again the production or diversification, as you prefer, of cotton, coffee, cacao, brings us in direct competition with these same commodities produced in the United States, South America and Africa,—another problem. To advocate for the Philippines what is good in other countries needs more gray matter than that prompting a mere cursory exclamation. Diversity might lie in the cutting down of imports like pork and beef products, eggs, fish, spices, pepper, etc. Who is the Moses who wants to invest money in these industries? If they were profitable they would be flourishing adjuncts instead of adverse facts. Why ask the cattle raisers to diversify when they are blocked by law? Why ask the sugar-grower to turn to pepper, the rice producer to grow camphor or abandon a good egg for a doubtful henfruit? No producer with his nose to the grindstone can be a patriot, nor does he welcome the idea of grafting the egg-plant with the milk-veek to produce a vegetable custard.

To date we have no Utopian idea that will aid us in producing more wealth except by concentration rather than diversification owing to our unspeakable status. Faced with the dilemma of lowered prices for tropical products, expansion is out of the question, for many of the prices

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offered are less than the cost of production. If diversification means new crops, who is to be the John D. or Edison who will lead the way—at a price? If it means diversification of known crops, it leads back to doing each other's washing. What we need is a Society of Amigos de Paisanos and not Amigos del País. All these things were tried, weighed in the balances and found wanting, as any one can ascertain if he cares to read history. For four long centuries we have found out what crops can be produced here under our peculiar climatic limitations. It now remains to be seen what new ones can be introduced under our peculiar political limitations. We are inclined to believe from past performances that Juan will let some George do it, for he has only a few eggs in his basket which he knows are good eggs.

## Farther with Franciscans in Samar.

For two months we left the Franciscans laboring in Samar, at the many missions taken over by them from the founders, the Jesuits, upon the latter's expulsion from the Philippines in 1768. Other matters have claimed space, and our friend, the companion of the vicar of Santa Clara convent, has been making a vain fight against cancer of the throat. Samar was a familiar book to him, he was a parish priest there for so many years. He was short, stout, and sunny-natured. He knew how to suffer excruciating pain and die of it—with philosophic

For the others he has neither capital, time nor inclination in the face of existing conditions. The proof of the feasibility of introducing new crops here lies in the melancholy fact of surns aggregating into the millions spent here by those who tried and were beaten. And the crops were many from peanuts to pineapples, kapok to camphor, castor-oil-beans to champacas, and a score of other efforts in agricultural pioneering. Tired of the fruitless struggle and saddened by the loss of their capital they have long since disappeared from the scene. The introduction of new crops is the work of efficient experimental stations carried on by entities that can afford to lose at first if there is ultimate hope in prospect. These again would be organizations of some magnitude which desire to invest in a stable country with the hope of a continuity of existence.

*Sulat*, meaning *Writing*. At the edge of a beautiful and fertile plain on the east coast of Samar, on the right bank of the Sulat river and on the shore of secure cove. "The church, dedicated to St. Ignatius Loyola, is of stone, built by the Jesuits and repaired by Fr. Enrique de Barcelona in 1844, who at the same time built a bell tower of stone (no doubt serving as a fortress against the Moros too), a beautiful baptismal chapel and a cemetery surrounded by a stone wall, outside the town and well situated. The *convento* is also of stone, strong and spacious.

ages thrifty husbandry and blesses the crops, is the patron of the *ermila* at Meytigbaou.

Of course, if their intercessions are unsuccessful, man is at fault—never the kindly saints. Ah, that man should sin: he should ever heed the homilies from the parish pulpit and properly behave himself.

The friars' recipe for a good life was simple, and, perhaps in part for the reasons about to be stated, not very difficult to follow: "The boundaries of this town extend five leagues north and south and on the west are not marked at all. The mountains abound in fine woods suitable for building and for cabinet-work; there is a diversity of palms, rattans, edible plants, resins, gums and wild game of every variety. . . . Excellent sea fish abound in the coastal waters. Cultivated lands yield rice enough for all requirements, especially a black rice known as *mumus*, which ordinarily is given to the sick. Coconuts, Manila hemp, taro and yams are also abundantly produced. The people are devoted to agriculture, the stripping of Manila hemp, the making of coconut oil, hunting and fishing, the women to weaving; and all the surplus products are exported in the people's own boats to the provincial capital and Manila. . . . This parish is served by Fr. José Mata, minister, 27 years old."

In such pastoral isolation and plenitude simple virtues were not of course exceptional; all authority being in the parish priest, they were the rule.

*Borongan*. "The name of this pueblo signifies Cloudy Place, from the fogs from two rivers between whose opposite banks the pueblo is situated." As was the case with the other towns of Samar which were early established, the Franciscans took over Borongan from the Jesuits in 1768, when there were 751 *tributos* in the town and a population of 4,999. Fr. Juan de Mora was the first Franciscan sent there as a parish priest. The church is under the advocacy of Our Lady of the Nativity. Burned down in 1773, Fr. Roque de San José rebuilt it in 1781; Fr. Juan Navarrete gave it a new roof of tile in 1843 and defrayed from his personal funds the expense of a fine tower in 1853. Navarrete erected other buildings in the town. The church in one of the barrios, Meydolong, "was built by the infidels converted by the zealous Fr. Vicente Mérida about the year 1820, who began paying tribute in 1844"; another village, converted to Christianity by Navarrete "began paying tribute in 1849."

That was the process, then; first, teaching the seminoradic animists the Catholic faith and respect for established government, then settling the neophytes in a village round a church

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uncomplaining thoughts, merry-smiling lips even when the voice was but a whisper, and faith that all is ordered for the best. Oh, an old formula enough; but a formula that made of our friend a very fine man to know.

If anyone would make fine acquaintances, let him insinuate himself into the friendship of some of the friars in the walled city whom he thinks he should like to know; and let him go and visit with them, and they with him. He shall better his Spanish, revise his views perhaps, and fill his memory with quaint reminiscences out of which good tales may be made. The friars' geniality is spontaneous and unfeeling. They may think little enough of many present-day institutions, but they always think well of their fellow man. Some want Spanish teachers. Why not a friar friend?

We could wish that the old priest from Samar had not had to succumb to cancer, but he seemed to mind it little enough. Faith was his nursemaid, submission his physician. When we occasionally took groups of children to the convent and went up into the vicarage, he gave each one some religious token—a picture of one of the saints in a plush or silken frame the nuns had made for it. He gave our daughter the Nazarene, which has become a cherished symbol to her; and on his hand, when he gave it, was the palsy of death, but on his lips and in his merry eyes gleamed a smile that knew not that mysterious halting, or unexplained shifting of course which men call death—wanting a better word.

Many another friar living out his days among us, but with so very few of us, is a character who will bear acquaintance. If our traditions come to be as eloquent as theirs, taken with all their faults, but with their virtues too, great indeed will be our annals in these islands. Father Julian, God rest him. Now let us see some more of the Franciscans' work in Samar:

There is a wooden town hall and a primary school supported by the community fund, the building being by Father Barcelona; the other buildings, excepting about ten wooden ones, are of nipa and in the usual style of the country." When Father Huerta wrote, in 1865, he also mentioned the chapel in the *visita* of Catalaban, on the island of that name at the mouth of the cove. San Antonio de Padua, always good to the poor in their afflictions, is the patron of this chapel; San Isidro Labrador, who encour-



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