

THE VANISHING IRISH. Edited by John A. O'Brien. (W. H. Allen; 12s. 6d.)

Fr O'Brien has collected a strong team of Irish and Irish-American writers to discuss the statement of the Bishop of Cork that 'The rural population is vanishing and with it is vanishing the Irish race itself. Rural Ireland is stricken and dying and the will to marry on the land is almost gone.' Instead of tripling in the course of the last hundred years, as the other nations of Europe have done, it has declined to less than half, from six and a half million to under three million. No doubt this book will be read by many thousands of Irish-Americans, to whom apparently it was originally addressed, who will shake their heads sadly over the future of the homeland and then go to their evening class in Gaelic or turn on the TV to watch the antics of the junior senator from Wisconsin ('one of ours') or just quietly shed a tear into their highball for the glories that have departed. The fact that the Irish nation is declining is fairly and squarely the fault of the Irish people, and especially of their politicians. The editor writes in unctuous tones about 'the Emerald Isle so dear to the heart of every Irish exile', and no doubt this piece of meaningless sentimentality will stir the emotions of every son of Eire who has contributed to the decline of the Irish nation by his emigration. If there are any Irish-born exiles at present they have been exiled by their own countrymen, because their land, which is as rich in potentialities as Denmark, for instance, has not been organized so as to provide a living for them. One can only hope that the appalling facts—and still more the appalling attitudes of mind that have caused them—will be taken to heart by all Irishmen *in Ireland* and particularly by the Irish clergy. To them it is a matter of urgency. To readers outside Ireland it is painful, though not necessary, reading because only the Irish themselves can help themselves. Somebody should translate the words *Sinn Fein* and explain them to the Irish nation.

JOHN FITZSIMONS