

DUBLIN STATISTICAL SOCIETY,

ON THE

AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

OF

IRELAND.

A PAPER READ BEFORE

THE DUBLIN STATISTICAL SOCIETY,

ON THE 27TH APRIL, 1854

BY JAMES A. LAWSON, LL.D.

DUBLIN:
HODGES AND SMITH, 104, GRAFTON STEEET,
BOOKSELLERS TO THE UNIVERSITY.

1854.

No. 82.]

DUBLIN STATISTICAL SOCIETY.

PRESIDENT.

His Grace the Archbishop of Dublin.

VICE-PRESIDENTS.

The Earl of Rosse		The Provost of Trinity College.
The Bishop of Cork.		Sir Robert Kane.
Mountifort Longfield, Q.C. LL.D.		Edward Barnington, Esq.
Colonel Larcom, R.E.		Jonathan Pirn, Esq.

MEMBERS OF COUNCIL.

James Haughton, Esq.		Conway E Dobbs, jun., Esq.
Professor Allman.		William Hogan, Esq.
Professor Ingram, F.T.C.D.		Professor Apjohn, M.D.
James W Murland, Esq.		Maziere J. Brady, Esq.
Rev. Joseph A. Galbraith, F.T.C.D.		T H. Todhunter, Esq.
Robert Ball, LL.D.		S. M. Greer, Esq.

TREASURER!!.

W. F. Littledale, Esq., 9, Upper Ormond-quay.

SECRETARIES.

James A. Lawson, LL.D., 27, Upper Fitzwilliam-street.
W. Neilson Hancock, LL.D., 74, Lower Gardmer-street.
Professor Hussey Walsh, LL.B., 27, Summer-hill.

LIBRARIAN.

Richard D. Webb, 176, Great Brunswick-street.

AUDITORS.

Nathaniel Hone, Esq. | James Perry, Esq

BARRISTERS LECTURERS IN POLITICAL ECONOMY.

Professor Moffett, LL.D. | Professor Leslie, LL.B.

THIS society was established in November, 1847, for the purpose of promoting the study of Statistical and Economical Science. The meetings are held on the third Monday in each month, from November till June, inclusive, at 8, p M. The business is transacted by members reading written communications on subjects of Statistical and Economical Science. No communication is read unless two members of the council certify that they consider it in accordance with the rules and objects of the society. The reading of each paper, unless by express permission of the council previously obtained, is limited to *half an hour*.

Applications for leave to read papers should be made to the secretaries at least a *week* previously to the meeting.

Proposals of candidate members should be sent to the secretaries at least a *fortnight* previously to the meeting.

The subscription to the society is one pound entrance, and *ten shillings* per annum.

On the Agricultural Statistics of Ireland. By J. A. Lawson, LL.D.

GENTLEMEN,—A great deal of attention has lately been given to the question—how best the parliamentary papers which are published every session in such numbers, may be generally circulated, and a knowledge of their contents diffused. Great complaints have been made, and not unjustly, of the enormous expense annually entailed upon the nation by their publication; and it would certainly be desirable that, in order to make some return for so great an outlay, a knowledge of their valuable contents should be generally diffused. At present they are, except to a few, a sealed book; and I suppose there is scarcely any other class of publications so little read. I fear, however, that, even if they were placed in our public libraries, in mechanics' institutes, and literary societies, the number of readers would be thereby little increased, for though they contain a mine of valuable knowledge, yet it is a mine which requires to be carefully worked before its treasures can be brought to the surface. The knowledge is presented in a very unattractive and repulsive form to the general reader; figures are multiplied, facts are stated in reply to certain questions put by those who have views of their own to sustain, and not such as illustrate or explain the general bearing of the subject in hand. I fear, therefore, that unless our parliamentary papers are digested and popularized, and the general results presented in a striking manner, so as to attract attention and excite interest, they must remain a mystery to the general reader; although it is impossible to overrate their value as affording materials for estimating the progress of the nation, and furnishing the means of contradicting rash and unfounded assertions. It appears to me, then, that there is here a wide field of labour opened to those who are interested in statistical and social science. To analyse and compare the facts thus furnished, to deduce from them conclusions bearing upon our social and economic condition, and to present these in an accessible shape, is a work deserving of our best exertions, and which would greatly advance statistical science. Here is a vast mass of information, and it is surely worth while to endeavour to elicit the truths contained in it; and while this remains to be done, none of us need complain of a deficiency of materials for valuable statistical papers.

It was this train of thought which induced me to attempt, in a hurried and imperfect manner, to bring before you some matters connected with the Irish Returns of Agricultural Statistics; and I may mention that a very interesting publication, illustrative of the view I have put forward, has appeared: "Cheshire's Results of the Census of Great Britain in 1851," which gives some of the most striking results of the census, presented in a mode likely to attract, and which has attracted popular attention. If the same kind of work were performed with respect to the Irish census, it would be found to repay the labour which it would require

I now come to the subject immediately in hand—Irish Agricultural Statistics. The importance of procuring accurate information as to the state of agriculture in a country is obvious, for the purpose of estimating the probable quantity of produce which may be expected in any year, and the consequent state of prices. This kind of information is essential; and it is always procured by private individuals engaged in the trade, who require it for the purpose of regulating the nature and extent of their purchases; and for this temporary and transitory object, without establishing any formal machinery for the purpose, sufficiently accurate information is collected by those engaged in the matter, to enable them to form an estimate of the yield which may be expected. Into these calculations enter largely, not only the quantity of land under crop, but the state of the weather and seasons, and not only here, but in all corn-producing countries in the world; and by leaving persons to make their own calculations with a view to their own profit, the result is, that the supply of food is diffused through the world in exact proportion to the wants and purchasing power of the consumers. Agricultural statistics are, however, collected with a different view and a different object. They are not collected for the temporary purpose I have mentioned; indeed they can rarely subserve that purpose, for, though collected, the results are not and cannot be presented to the public until after the season has passed; nor would it be desirable, even if it were possible, to make them ancillary to the purposes of trade. They are intended to supply materials for history, and to enable us to estimate the social progress of the country. With that view, they were commenced in Ireland in the year 1847, under the direction of our distinguished vice-president, Colonel Larcom, and have been continued from that time down. In addition to these materials, the censuses of 1841 and 1851 furnish materials for estimating the state and progress of the country. It is, then, in reference to this period that I desire to call attention to some figures which I have taken from those returns, and which appear to me to throw light upon the condition and progress of the agriculture of Ireland.

I would venture to affirm that never in the history of any nation was there a period of ten years when, without the application of any external force, a more striking series of events and changes in condition occurred. In 1841 our population was 8,175,124. The population in 1831 had been 7,767,401, showing an increase per cent. of 5*25 between 1831 and 1841, while in 1821 the population had been 6,801,827, showing an increase per cent. of 14*19 between 1821 and 1831; so that starting from 1821 we have a very rapid increase of population for the next 10 years, and for the succeeding 10 years the rate of increase slower—in the proportion of 14 per cent. in the first decade, to 5 per cent. in the second decade. This apparent diminution in the rate of increase in these two decades, is mainly to be attributed to emigration from Ireland to other countries, and to England and Scotland. For instance, in 1841 the number of per-

sons of Irish birth dwelling in Great Britain was 419,256; and though we have not the means of estimating what portion of that number was added between 1831 and 1841, still, as we know that the emigration to Great Britain was much more active from 1831 to 1841 than it was from 1821 to 1831, we might perhaps say that one-third of that number had emigrated between 1831 and 1841, say 140,000. The emigration to the colonies for the same 10 years, 1831 to 1841, was 428,471, while the emigration from 1821 to 1831 has been estimated at 70,000 only. So that without any actual great decrease in the number of marriages or births, or increase in the rate of mortality, the increased quantity of emigration accounts for the less rapid rate of increase of the actual fixed population. This, perhaps, is sufficient to show us how idle are *a priori* speculations as to the future rate of increase, judging from the past, such as the Malthusians indulge in; for any of them, on being told that the rate of increase from 1821 to 1831 was 14 per cent., would assuredly assert that the rate of increase for the next 10 years would be still more rapid. This ought to make us place more confidence in the operations of nature and the promptings of self-interest, which assuredly lead man from places where his labour is less required to places where it is more required and more highly paid; and we cannot sufficiently admire the providential arrangement that, with the increased necessity and desirableness of emigration, the facilities for it should have increased even in a far greater proportion. The state of things in Ireland during these periods is completely illustrated by what occurs in England; the rate of increase in the agricultural districts is slow, while the population rapidly increases in the manufacturing districts and towns. When we come to the census of 1851 we find an actual decrease of population, the numbers being 6,551,970 as compared with 8,174,566, being a decrease of 1,622,596, or 20 per cent., and showing a smaller population in 1851 than in 1821, the decrease being 249,857.

Taking the three corresponding periods in Great Britain, we have the numbers in

1821.	14,402,643
1831.	16,564,138
1841.	18,813,786
1851.	21,121,967

so that, though the population has increased from 1841 to 1851, the *rate* of increase has been less.

The total emigration for Great Britain and Ireland has been—

For the ten years from 1831 to 1841.	717,913
” ” 1841 to 1851.	1,693,516

I have not ascertained how much of this 1,693,516 was from Ireland; nor would it be easy to do *so*, so much Irish emigration takes place from English ports; but we may certainly estimate it at over one million.

One is naturally anxious to see whether this diminution of population has had any, and what effect on the agricultural productiveness of Ireland. We know that both directly and indirectly—directly by death, and indirectly by emigration—the failure of the staple food of the country caused a great diminution in the population, and it will be interesting to examine the relative increase or decrease of cultivation. At the beginning of the decade in 1841, Ireland was in a comparatively prosperous condition, and seemed to be rapidly improving. In 1846 came the failure of the potato which continued several seasons; and we now are again entering on a condition of prosperity, in many important particulars different from that which we had in 1841. The general features that would strike the observer are, diminished population, increased size of holdings, diminished number of houses and holdings, more land under green, less under cereal crops, and fewer embarrassed proprietors. We shall see how far these general observations correspond with the actual results in figures.

	Cereal Crops, acres	Green Crops, Potatoes included	Flax
1847	3,313,679	727,738	58,312
1849	3,174,424	1,167,639	60,314
1850	3,149,556	1,317,572	91,040
1851	3,099,401	1,352,315	140,536
1852	2,976,606	1,335,483	137,008

The first year in which we have agricultural statistics is 1847.

	Total number of acres under Corn Crops	Green Crops	Flax.	Total under Crops	Potatoes
1847	3,313,679	727,738	58,312	5,238,575	284,116
1852	2,976,606	1,335,483	137,008	5,739,214	876,542
1853	2,832,945	1,417,670	174,423	5,695,347	897,774

The actual quantity of produce is also capable of being ascertained, but it is obviously uncertain, and depends too much on the accident of season to furnish any information in comparing one year with another.

I give flax and potatoes for 1847 and 1852.

	Potatoes, barrel of 20 stone	Flax—cwts.
1847.	16,385,582	349,872
1852.	34,044,831	709,294

The number of holdings for each year will be of use.

	Number of holdings exceeding 1 acre.
1847.	723,523
1849.	619,037
1850.	592,896
1851.	570,336
1852.	554,413
1841.	691,114

Total of Acres under crops:—

1847.	5,238,575
1849.	5,543,748
1850.	5,758,292
1851.	5,858,951
1852.	5,739,214

Quantity of Arable Land in Ireland in

1841.	13,464,300
1851.	14,802,581

Increase. 1,338,281

Number of Cattle, Sheep, and Pigs :—

1847.	5,400,051
1849.	5,343,703
1850.	5,721,547
1851.	6,174,446
1852.	6,781,668
1841.	5,382,118

Number of Poultry in Ireland:—

1847.	5,691,055
1849.	6,328,001
1850.	6,945,146
1851.	7,470,694
1852.	8,175,904
1841.	8,458,517

The classifications of holdings is very useful ; it was not introduced till 1851. The following is the comparison between 1851 and 1852 :—

	Not exceeding 1 acre	1 to 5 acres	5 to 15 acres	15 to 20 acres	30 to 60 acres.
1851.	37,782	88,083			
1852.	35,058	81,561			
Decrease	2,670	6,522	9,546	2,175	14
	50 to 100 acres	100 to 200 acres	200 to 500 acres		
Increase	1,449	683	197		

We have seen that there is a diminished extent of land under cultivation in 1852, as compared with 1851, of about 120,000 acres

In eight counties the cultivation has increased, the per centage augmentation in each being shown by the following figures :—

Antrim,	0 1
Clare,	4*0
Donegal,	4-1
Galway,	2*4
King's Co.,	0-4
Londonderry,	0 4
Mayo,	0 7
Tyrone,	1-2

Again, as to number of holdings, a comparison between 1841 and 1852 stands thus :—

	Total No of Holdings	1 to 5 acres	5 to 15 acres
1841	691,114	310,375	252,778
1852	554,413	81,501	182,308
Decrease	136,701	228,794	70,474
	15 to 30 acres	above 30 acres	
	79,338	48,623	
	139,136	151,408	
Increase	59,798	102,785	

The value of Stock in Ireland :—

1841 ...	£21,105,808	$\frac{T}{J}$	$\frac{QO}{O}$	$\frac{t}{t}$	$\frac{\wedge}{O}$
1852 ...	29,154,229	f	J	$\frac{increase}{O}$	$\frac{O}{O}$ per cent, in 11 years.

From the above figures we see that although the population has diminished considerably since 1841, both the quantity of arable land and the quantity under cultivation has increased,—the diminution in the cereal crops being met by an increase in the green crops, while in the important article flax the cultivation has been trebled. The number of small holdings has decreased, and the class of large holdings has increased; exhibiting as well a consolidation of small holdings as a general increase in the size of farms. The number of cattle, sheep, and pigs in 1852 exceeds the number in 1841; while the stock of poultry, though gradually increasing since 1847, does not yet quite equal that of 1841.

Such are a few of the leading results which a limited leisure has enabled me to extract from these valuable returns. I have no doubt that by instituting other comparisons results of greater interest would be arrived at.

I trust we may safely argue from these premises, that the state of things in this country, as to agricultural matters, is on a surer foundation than it has been at any former time. The progress of cultivation shows how groundless were the fears of those who thought that the abolition of the corn laws would throw land out of cultivation. "We find an increase in the cultivation of those crops to which the soil and climate of Ireland are peculiarly adapted. When we consider this, and observe the rise which has taken place in the wages of agricultural labour, we may reasonably hope that, if subsistence continues to increase in the same ratio which it has done, by degrees our pauper population will be nearly absorbed, and the temptation to emigrate will be diminished; while the greater security in the enjoyment of their own improvements which better laws and a more independent proprietary will ensure our farming classes, must furnish an additional stimulus to agricultural industry.