

THE INCIDENCE OF EMIGRATION ON TOWN AND COUNTRY LIFE IN IRELAND.

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To the student of economics Ireland always presents a budget of paradoxes. Things which are abnormal elsewhere are here normal and commonplace. The usual laws of cause and effect may, by an act of faith, be presumed to operate; but they elude recognition with a whimsical contrariety so that the wisest of us only differ from the "man in the street" in being less cocksure that we know all about it. I know no reason for this paradoxical aspect of Irish life except that Ireland is a country where the population has been shrinking continuously for above sixty years. The rules that we habitually apply to interpret the significance of economic facts in other countries require readjustment when we come to apply them to Ireland because of this unique circumstance. Lest we forget to bear in mind what everybody knows, I begin by setting down the familiar figures showing the movement of the population in the different parts of the United Kingdom, namely:

<i>Year.</i>	<i>England and Wales.</i>	<i>Scotland.</i>	<i>Ireland.</i>
1801	8,892,536	1,608,420	5,299,000
1841	15,914,148	2,620,184	8,175,124
1881	25,974,439	3,735,573	5,174,936
1911	36,070,492	4,760,904	4,390,219

The percentage of the decline of Ireland's population in each succeeding decennium since 1841 has been 19.8, 11.5, 6.7, 4.4, 9.1, 5.2, and 1.5 per cent. respectively. There are some signs that the limit of decline has been reached, and that economic conditions in Ireland may become normal in the near future. Thus, in the decade from 1901 to 1911, the number of families rose from 910,256 to 910,748; and the inhabited houses also rose from 858,158 to 861,879. In the year 1908-9 the population of Ireland was estimated to have risen by 1,937; and again, in the year 1911-12, to have risen by 1,102: the first instances of the kind since the solitary case of the year 1876-7, when the population was estimated to have risen by 8,836.

But there are heavy clouds still darkening the Irish prospect. On the one hand, the flight of women seems to prove that conditions are peculiarly bad for that sex in Ireland. During the whole period from May 1st, 1851, to December 31st, 1913, for which the numbers of emigrants, natives of Ireland, have been recorded, we find a total emigration of 2,224,089 Men and 2,054,238 Women. Taking the counties of Ireland separately, we find only eight counties from which women have emigrated in larger numbers than men, viz. :—Louth, in Leinster; Kerry and Clare, in Munster; and all five counties in Connaught. The fact that Ulster contributes no county to this “black list” seems easily explainable if we think of the special employments open to women in the linen industry and the shirt and collar industry of this Northern Province. Yet it is really startling to find that every Province of “Old” Ireland except Ulster, has come to resemble the Colonies and other “New” Countries in the fact that the Male Sex is now preponderating, viz. :—

POPULATION ACCORDING TO THE CENSUS OF 1911.

	<i>Leinster.</i>	<i>Munster.</i>	<i>Connaught.</i>	<i>Ulster.</i>
Males,	582,967	526,130	312,089	770,862
Females,	579,077	509,365	298,895	810,834

This matter may be put in another way, by stating the *Population of Adults* (aged 20 years and upwards) in Ireland at each succeeding Census since 1881, viz. :—

	<i>Male Adults.</i>	<i>Female Adults.</i>	<i>Total Adults.</i>
1881	1,337,516	1,464,374	2,801,890
1891	1,264,973	1,360,802	2,625,775
1901	1,277,548	1,355,238	2,632,786
1911	1,316,898	1,349,673	2,666,571

It is certainly remarkable that for the last thirty years, when we supposed the Population of Ireland to have been declining, the Population of Adults (shown in the last column) has been slowly enlarging! But the sinister feature of this table is the contrast between the movement of the sexes as indicated in the two central columns. In other countries women find a very large amount of employment in agriculture; but statistics show that the number of women employed in agriculture in Ireland is not 1 to 12 of the men—they do not even milk the cows, and the harvesting is done by machines handled by men. Are there any women appointed to the Boards and the Council

which exist to advise the Department of Agriculture in Ireland? This lack of employment for women in Ireland is part of a wider phenomenon, viz.—*the deterioration in the economic character of employment in Ireland*, one result of which is that men look for a livelihood in doing women's work. Now this matter needs some illustration from that part of the Census Reports that is called "Occupations of the People," which everybody knows is the least satisfactory and least reliable part of the Census as taken in the United Kingdom. Of course, when "employment" is what we look for, we had better consider only the *Adult Population*, aged 20 years and upwards. In the following Table, based on the usual Six Classes of Occupations, I have reduced the whole Adult Population to the figure of 1,000 in each year, so that what this Table shows is *the Relative Changes of Occupations of Adults in Ireland*, viz. :—

	1881.	1891.	1901.	1911.
I. Professional	39.7	42.2	40.9	46.2
II. Domestic	121.2	70.9	64.4	49.9
III. Commercial	21.7	25.4	30.4	34.8
IV. Agricultural	300.4	302.7	291.8	263.8
V. Industrial	198.3	198.1	197.9	189.2
VI. Indefinite	318.7	360.7	374.6	416.1
Total Adults	1000	1000	1000	1000

One must lean gently where the wood is rotten, and this Table must not be pressed into too close detail; for some of the particular fluctuations are caused by difference of classification in the Census Office (*e.g.*, Trained Nurses, treated as "Domestic" in 1901, were ranked as "Professional" in 1911, etc.). But the broad results of the Table are unmistakable, and are very remarkable. Since 1881, what has happened in Ireland? Well, there has been a lot of new money spent on "education" (of a sort); that has probably increased the Professional and Commercial Classes, and it has certainly fitted many people to obtain employment out of Ireland. Then the Land Act of 1881 gave security of tenure to the Irish farmer; since when enormous Government activity and expenditure have gone to Land Purchase, to Labourers' Cottages, to the Congested Districts Board, to the Department of Agriculture, to the development of Local Government work, etc.; and the Agricultural Co-operative Movement has also given a new life to Rural Ireland. What has all this prodigious effort to aid the Irish farmer come to? This Table discloses no results: we see only Agricultural employment withering away, and Domestic employment vanishing still

faster, and the Indefinite Unoccupied Class gathering all the wreckage into its ever-growing total. Remember, we are talking only of Adult Persons, aged 20 years and upwards. Is there no satisfactory feature anywhere in this *kaleidoscope* of Employment for Adults in Ireland? Yes, there is: if the figures for the Industrial and Commercial Classes be added together, we obtain the following totals for each Census, viz.:—220.0, 223.5, 228.3, and 224.0 respectively. The Industry and Commerce of Ireland has held its ground all the time as the one solid, sound, and secure basis for the employment of Adults in Ireland. The Town Population of Ireland has held its place, the Rural Population has shrivelled and decayed! If these Census figures are worth anything, that is what they mean.

As this matter of the change in the character of the employment for Adults in Ireland is so important, I may be allowed to repeat the same Table in another form, giving the actual number of persons in each Class of Occupation at each Census. But I have separated the sexes, thereby obtaining two Tables, as follows:—

Numbers of Adult Men in Occupations.

	1881.	1891.	1901.	1911.
I. Professional	91,382	85,503	80,611	89,430
II. Domestic	26,072	27,216	21,547	21,887
III. Commercial	59,663	65,400	76,674	85,760
IV. Agricultural	757,112	701,450	686,461	645,382
V. Industrial	355,877	333,621	344,380	378,286
VI. Indefinite	47,410	51,783	67,875	96,153
Total Men Adults,	1,337,516	1,264,973	1,277,548	1,316,898

Numbers of Adult Women in Occupations.

	1881.	1891.	1901.	1911.
I. Professional	20,021	25,293	27,114	33,959
II. Domestic	313,364	158,996	148,243	111,333
III. Commercial	1,109	1,543	3,576	7,150
IV. Agricultural	84,656	83,614	81,886	58,138
V. Industrial	199,585	186,555	176,764	134,161
VI. Indefinite	845,639	904,801	917,655	1,004,932
Total Women Adults	1,464,374	1,360,802	1,355,238	1,349,673

I will now consider the causes of the decline in our population. Viewed statistically, the decline occurs because the "natural increase," or the excess of Births over

Deaths, is too small to fill the gap caused by Emigration. Thus, during the ten years 1901-11, 1,023,211 births and 764,811 deaths left a natural increase of 258,400 persons; but emigration removed 345,159 persons of Irish birth during the same period. Stating the same thing in a form that allows comparison with other countries, an average annual birth-rate of 23.1 per 1,000 and death-rate of 17.3 per 1,000 yielded a natural increase of only 5.8 per 1,000; meanwhile the average annual emigration was at the rate of 7.7 per 1,000 of the population. We find, therefore, that three causes are contributing to the decline of Irish population:—(1) The birth-rate in Ireland is extraordinarily low, the lowest in Europe excepting France; (2) the death-rate in Ireland is rather too high for a population that is so largely rural; and (3) the emigration from Ireland, though much diminished for the last twenty years, is still somewhat larger than is economically desirable.

In the following table Ireland is compared with other European countries, in order to show that the excess of births over deaths is unusually low in Ireland. The figures are taken first for the year 1910; and then for a date twenty years ago, viz., 1893. As regards France, it should be noted that that country has practically no emigration to meet.

Rate per 1,000 for Births and Deaths.

	1910			1893.	
	Births.	Deaths.	Natural Increase	Births.	Deaths
Ireland,	23.3	17.1	6.2	23.0	18.0
England,	25.1	13.5	11.6	30.7	19.2
Scotland,	29.6	15.3	14.3	30.8	19.3
Norway,	26.1	13.5	12.6	30.7	16.3
Denmark,	27.5	12.9	14.6	30.6	18.9
Switzerland,	25.0	15.0	10.0	27.9	20.1
Portugal,	30.7	19.4	11.3	31.8	21.6
Sweden,	24.7	14.0	10.7	27.4	16.8
Netherlands,	28.6	13.6	15.0	33.8	19.2
Belgium,	23.7	15.8	7.9	29.5	20.3
Spain,	33.1	23.3	9.8	36.1	30.3
Italy,	32.9	19.6	13.3	36.5	25.2
Germany,	31.0	16.2	14.8	36.7	24.6
France,	19.6	17.8	1.8	22.7	22.5

Next follows a table showing the Emigration from such European countries as keep a record. The number of emigrants given is the average of the three years 1909, 1910, and 1911. The population figure is that for the date stated in the table. It should be remembered that the inhabitants of one country (say, Belgium, or Germany) often

go to swell the emigration through the sea-ports of another country (say, the Netherlands). Thus, the real emigration from Germany is unknown. Many people, finding in the *Statistical Abstract* that its great population (65 millions in 1910) is credited with only 24,381 emigrants, have concluded that there is very little emigration from Germany. But more than 24,381 Germans entered the United States alone; not to speak of the movement of Germans into South America, and into neighbouring countries in Europe. The figure 24,381 is only the oversea emigration of native-born Germans from German sea-ports. But for my present comparison with Ireland, these figures will serve; and anyone can lump together the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, and Switzerland figures into a single unit if they please. The Irish figure includes those native-born Irish who migrated to Great Britain (because they leave Ireland); but the United Kingdom figure includes only natives who leave the United Kingdom for other places abroad.

Emigration from Some European Countries.

	Population.	Emigrants.*	Per 1,000
Ireland (1911),	4,390,219	30,295	6.9
United Kingdom (1911),	45,221,615	254,666†	5.6
Norway (1910),	2,391,782	15,847	6.6
Denmark (1911),	2,757,076	7,992	2.9
Switzerland (1910),	3,753,293	5,202	1.4
Portugal (1900),	5,016,267	39,357	7.8
Sweden (1910),	5,522,403	20,103	3.6
Netherlands (1909),	5,858,175	52,785	9.0
Belgium (1910),	7,423,784	24,608	3.3
Spain (1910),	19,588,688	170,015	8.7
Italy (1911),	34,687,000	603,652	17.1

This comparison proves, I think, that there is nothing alarming about Irish emigration at its present rate, considering mere numbers. What is causing the decline of Irish population is the low birth-rate; and this arises in Ireland from two facts, viz., the marriages are fewer in number, and they take place at a much later age than in any other country in the world. The truth is that young people in the rural parts of Ireland are all intending emigrants, they never think of marrying so long as they still hope to be able to emigrate. Of men and women aged 20 years and upwards, in Ireland only 44.8 per cent. are married. Of the women of Ireland in 1911, aged between 15 and 45 years of age, who might be child-bearing, *only*

* Average of years 1909, 1910, and 1911.

† Emigrants (440,012) less Immigrants (185,346) = 254,666.

one in three (34.4 per 100) were married! Yet illegitimate births are only 2.7 per cent. of the total births. And the number of persons to the family, viz., 4.7, is a rather higher average in Ireland than in Great Britain. To stop the decline of population in Ireland the thing now most required is to find employment at home for the unmarried women of Ireland; they find too few openings for useful happy careers under the present conditions in Modern Ireland. Speaking particularly of agriculture as an occupation for women in Ireland, I cannot accept the Census figure for 1911—that of an Agricultural Class numbering 703,520 persons (adults, aged 20 years and upwards), *only 58,138 are Women!* There are considerable districts in the West of Ireland where practically the whole of the agricultural work is now being done by women; the men are migratory workers, who work on farms in Great Britain in the summer, and often return there to work at mining occupations in the winter. But these women agricultural workers are probably included among the 1,104,032 adult women who appear in the Irish Census as the “Indefinite,” or Unoccupied Class.

Professor Richmond Mayo-Smith and other American economists, who are well able to form an unbiassed opinion as they compare the immigration into the United States from the various countries of Europe, have long ago picked out three respects in which the emigration from Ireland is singular and remarkable:—(1) its great dimensions, relative to the home population at its source; (2) the large proportion of female emigrants, who in recent years have outnumbered the males; and (3) the small proportion of children among the emigrants—a fact indicating that it is an emigration of individuals, rather than of families. Now to these three features of Irish Emigration I may add two others, viz.:—(4) It is drawn chiefly from the rural population; the civic population of Ireland is increasing; and (5) it rises and falls according as times are good or bad in the United States; the volume of Irish emigration seems to be little affected at present by changes of prosperity in Ireland itself. [I have a slide to show, which will pretty well demonstrate this last point.]

I need not say anything more about points (1) and (2). To-day Irish emigration can hardly be called excessive; 30,000 emigrants in a population of 4,380,000 means a rate of only 6.8 per 1,000 inhabitants. If Ireland had something like a normal rate of “natural increase,” say, 10 or 12 per 1,000, the gap caused by the present rate of emigration would pass unnoticed. What is serious is the quality not the quantity of the drain. An emigration by individuals is very much more injurious to a country than an

emigration by families. As the Registrar-General for Ireland put it to me on a recent occasion, when a family emigrates all that happens is that one economic unit disappears from the country, but another takes its place which is probably just as efficient. But when individuals emigrate, the family unit still remains, only it remains in a form weakened by the absence of one of its most vigorous parts. The economic units are unchanged, but each is depleted and its efficiency reduced. Thus there has been in Ireland a perpetuated survival of the unfittest, a steady debasement of the human currency—very similar to Gresham's Law, by which bad money continually tends to displace good money in the circulation.

It was an Address given to this Society by our late President, Rev. T. A. Finlay, S.J., at the commencement of his second year of office, that first drew my attention to the interesting fact that in Ireland "the towns as a whole show an increase in population, while the rural areas are being steadily depleted."† Taking the usual rule by which towns of 2,000 inhabitants and upwards are described as "Civic Areas," the surrounding country districts as "Rural Areas," Father Finlay gave us the following figures, viz. :— "In 1881 the population of the Civic Areas stood at 1,224,919; in 1891, at 1,244,113; in 1901, at 1,425,818; and in 1911, at 1,507,570." It is not stated from what source he derived these figures, but the context seems to imply that they were drawn from the Census Reports. Now, I have myself gone to these Census Reports, and I have found that Father Finlay's figures are not quite accurate. To be sure, his general conclusion is not affected in the least, for the accurate figures equally well support Father Finlay's argument. But it is just as well to set down here the correct figures, as given in the General Report for each Census. Taking the "Civic" population to mean all those living in towns with 2,000 or more inhabitants, and the "Rural" population to mean all the rest, then the whole population of Ireland for sixty years back, has varied in distribution as follows, viz. :—

<i>Census.</i>	<i>Civic.</i>	<i>Rural.</i>	<i>Total.</i>
1861	1,140,368	4,658,599	5,798,967
1871	1,202,844	4,211,033	5,413,877
1881	1,245,503	3,929,333	5,174,836
1891	1,244,113	3,460,637	4,704,750
1901	1,384,929	3,073,846	4,458,775
1911	1,470,595	2,919,624	4,390,219

This table shows that in fifty years the "Town" has grown by 330,227 persons (29 per cent.), while the

"Country" has been losing 1,738,975 inhabitants (37 per cent.), the net fall for all Ireland being 1,408,748 persons (21 per cent.). This change in the distribution of the inhabitants may be more simply stated by reducing the whole population to 100. Thus, fifty years ago, 19.7 persons lived in the "Town," and 80.3 persons lived in the "Country"; to-day 33.5 persons live in "Town," and 66.5 persons in the "Country."

People are accustomed to regard Ireland as an agricultural country, with comparatively few industries; we are always being told that the emigration cannot be stopped unless we can develop industries in Ireland to provide employment for the people at home. It seems, that these sort of people know not what they are saying. The direct contrary seems to me to be nearer the actual facts: Ireland is a country with industries that are remarkable and successful, and an agriculture that is the most wasteful and ridiculous in the world. The emigration cannot be stopped unless we can develop agriculture in Ireland to provide employment for the people in the rural districts. Is this another of the paradoxes of Ireland? Some years ago I examined the figures of Irish Exports for the purpose of picking out the dozen largest items, *i.e.*, the principal articles which Ireland produced for sale to the world. I then found that eight out of the thirteen largest items (measured in sterling value) were the products of capitalised industries. Since then the *Census of Production* has been taken for the whole of the United Kingdom. Now, I confess I have never been able to get at the meaning of the figures issued in the Final Report of this Census of Production. I see that the Gross Output of the Industries of Ireland was put at a Selling Value of £66,777,000; there is occupation provided in completing that amount of Sales. But then, I see that the cost of Materials Used was £43,090,000; which when deducted left about £23,000,000 as the value of the Net Output. But I presume there is occupation provided in procuring all that £43,090,000 worth of Materials Used. On the other hand, the Agricultural Report for the same Census of Production put the value of the Agricultural Produce of Ireland at £45,574,000, arrived at by a process of calculation not very satisfying to my own mind. Consequently, I cannot reach any precise figures from the Census of Production. But here we are with Two Irelands: a Town population, of something less than 1,500,000 persons who do not depend on the land except very indirectly, and a Country population of something less than 3,000,000 persons who do not depend for their market on the Irish Town nearly so much as on export. My own belief is that this Town population produces as much wealth

by independent industries as the Country population, although twice as numerous, produces by the use of the land. To speak of agriculture, then, as the staple industry of Ireland is to ignore these Townsmen who (in my judgment) produce probably one-half of the wealth of the country.

When the historian of Ireland comes to the task of interpreting the causes of the great emigration movement which now seems to be drawing near its end, it will be his duty to consider whether, or how far, it was the Agriculture or the Industry of the country that failed to provide the Irish people with the means of livelihood in their own land. I will conclude with a brief retrospect of the salient facts which must govern the two sides of this great argument. Behind the dismal figures of emigration there is a story of economic transformation proceeding in Ireland alike for Town and Country. The difference is that the industrial transformation happened long ago, and Ireland has long since adjusted itself to the change; but the agricultural transformation is still in progress and development under the changed conditions has yet to come.

During the nineteenth century the economy of Ireland was subjected to two disturbing influences which have changed the whole basis of economic life, for both Town and Country, with revolutionary completeness. The one was Free Trade, which began in the year 1824, the other was the introduction of railways and the cheapening of ocean carriage. The year 1824 is the turning-point in the industrial history of Ireland. The post-Union protective duties (amounting to about 10 per cent. *ad valorem*) then ceased, and Huskisson's Act (4 Geo. IV., c. 72) established Free Trade between Great Britain and Ireland. In 1824, also, a common system of weights and measures for both countries was adopted. More important still, in 1824, regular cross-Channel steam navigation began: for the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company, between Dublin and Liverpool, and the G. and J. Burns Line of Steamers, between Belfast and Glasgow, both date from that year. About this same time, in 1828, the application of machinery to the wet-spinning of flax led to the modern linen factory, and (by a local circumstance enabling the obtaining of long building leases there) to the concentration in and around Belfast of an industry previously spread widely through the homes of the Irish peasantry, especially in Connaught. Thus, since 1824, industrial Ireland has undergone an astonishing transformation. Along with the decay of the industries of the countryside, there went forward a prodigious stimulus to the commerce of Ireland, and to the building up of a new

growth of industries on a scale far larger than the capacity of the local market for consumption. From the year 1824 we must date the growth (1) of the modern linen trade; (2) the Irish porter and whisky exports; (3) the large live-stock industry, which displaced the old-time Irish trade in salted meats; and (4) a great Irish grain trade to Great Britain (a preferential market until 1845), which reached its greatest development in 1838, but only began to fall away rapidly after 1861, with the new advent of the American prairie produce. The foundation of Belfast shipbuilding dates from the arrival there at Christmas, 1854, of Edward James Harland, then aged 23 years, who in 1859 founded the firm of Harland and Wolff. The modern factory Woollen Industry of Ireland is also to be dated from the fifties.

Irish Agriculture during the nineteenth century has had to face two revolutionary changes. During the Napoleonic Wars, when England was isolated, the agriculture of Ireland was developed on a tillage basis, with a large export trade in grain. This tillage system became precarious after the Peace of 1815, and had to collapse after the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1845. The transition from tillage to stock involved the displacement of the redundant rural population. Upon this calamity followed the second, viz., the fall of agricultural prices, attributable in part to foreign competition after the railways of the United States had been built, and in part to the general appreciation in the value of gold during the thirty years after 1873. This second calamity necessitated the prolonged agony of the "Land War in Ireland," to obtain a reduction of rents, and finally the expropriation of the Irish Landlords by an onerous operation of land purchase. In all this disturbed period of social readjustment the rural parts of Ireland were handicapped and economic development was impossible.

The result has been that Irish farming has fallen into a dilapidated condition, and the usage of the soil of Ireland has become deplorably uneconomic. To indicate the facts we may display in a statistical form the manner of using the surface of the country as followed by other European nations, viz. :—

	<i>Danes.</i>	<i>Dutch.</i>	<i>Swiss.</i>	<i>French.</i>	<i>Irish.</i>
Arable Land, .	42.5	27.7	16.5	52.4	11.1
Hay, Pasture, .	28.2	34.7	35.9	11.3	64.1
Forest, .	4.6	6.9	18.4	18.3	1.5
Vineyards, .	0.0	0.0	0.8	3.7	0.0
Unproductive, .	24.7	30.7	28.4	14.3	23.3
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Total area, .	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

We are here viewing agriculture as the means of living for two-thirds of the population of Ireland—admittedly one of the most fertile soils in Europe. We are comparing Ireland with countries having about the same proportion of “unproductive” surface. Such a fact as that 64.1 per cent. of the land surface should be given up to grass is unparalleled in the world; and the pitiful 11.1 per cent. devoted to ploughed land offers no adequate basis for the employment of the agricultural population. In its Ship-building, its Linen Cloth, its Brewing and Distilling, its Tobacco Manufactures, its Woollen Tweeds and Hosiery Goods, its Rope making, and delicate Lace Fabrics, Ireland has industries that may stand, quality for quality, alongside the best producers of similar goods anywhere in Europe. But in the arts of using a most fertile soil in the business of agriculture, it is but a ruined land, wasted and withered by the fifty-years-long struggle to settle the question of land tenure. Hence and so grievous is the contrast now visible in the Town and Country Life of Ireland!