

courts, though I consider such might be given in small cases with great advantage to the poorer class of farmers, and, at the same time, with benefit to the revenue, as many widows or children of a deceased farmer of the smaller class would gladly have the wills proved or administration granted, if it could be done expeditiously and at a moderate expense, and this might be done by taking the petty sessions court as the initiative court, and allowing it to carry out the preliminary steps, and then to transmit the necessary documents to the district registry court for recording.

With this might be added a power to direct children either to be made wards of court or to have power to report such to the Court of Chancery, and so to preserve their small properties; for, in my own limited experience, I am aware of cases where moneys to which children ought to be entitled, have melted away during their minority and been lost, which might have been preserved had there been any jurisdiction available at petty sessions to look after them.

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IV.—*Notes on the Prices of Irish Agricultural Produce Illustrated by Diagrams.* By Richard M. Barrington, LL.B.

[Read Wednesday, 1st March, 1893.]

THE paper on this subject I had the honour of reading before the Society, in December, 1886, was based on statistics derived from private sources. The following notes and diagrams are, on the other hand, compiled and drawn from data which are, for the most part, public property. To speculate on the causes which affect prices, or discuss the remedies which have been, from time to time, applied or suggested to counteract their fall or check their rise, is outside the scope of this paper. Agricultural values only are dealt with, the figures and authorities are given. As far as possible, the great question of agricultural depression has been avoided. For some products the quotations extend backwards over a century.

No prices are infallible, many are misleading, and erroneous conclusions are constantly drawn from the most trustworthy statistics, by persons ignorant of the true origin of the fluctuation in values in different years. This is no reason why the best we have should not be discussed. Tables of figures are best realised by diagrams.

Of all things statistics require illustration. The report of the American Department of Agriculture is in this respect an example. As to expense, £100 a year from the Treasury would make our Irish agricultural returns more intelligible to the ordinary mind. At present, who can carry away a mental picture of anything from 150 pages of figures.

Eleven diagrams accompany this paper, they show:—

1. The average price of cattle at the great Ballinasloe October fair since 1828 (65 years), and the price of a 6½ cwt. fat beast in

Dublin Market, being a rough attempt to illustrate the middleman's (grazier's or stall-feeder's) margin between buying and selling.

2. The average prices of ewes and wethers at the great Ballinasloe fair since 1828 (65 years).

3. The price of British wool since 1784 (109 years).

4. The mean annual price of beef and mutton in Dublin cattle market since 1845 (48 years).

5. The mean annual price of beef and mutton in London Metropolitan cattle market since 1815 (78 years).

6. The number of sheep and cattle in Ireland since 1841.

7. The price of butter since 1801 (92 years).

8. The price of pork since 1846 (47 years).

9. The price of flax since 1852 (41 years).

10. The price of wheat, barley, and oats since 1786, in Dublin market (107 years).

11. The price of wheat, barley, and oats in England since 1771 (122 years).

#### Diagram No. 1.—Store and Fat Cattle.

The prices of sheep and cattle at Ballinasloe fair are now collected by Mr. R. J. Gill, Clerk of the Ballinasloe Union. Writing in 1891, he says:—

“I obtain the numbers from the Clancarty Estate Office, and the prices from the buyers, and forward the list once a year to Messrs. Thom, Dublin, for their ‘Directory,’ but never keep a record. I make careful inquiry from several sellers and buyers previous to filling up the form sent me by Messrs. Thom. My late father used to supply the prices previous to 1882, but how far back cannot be ascertained.”

The oxen and heifers are each divided into four classes, the ewes and wethers likewise, and my informant states, that “class” refers to size, age, and quality. This has been done since the prices were first collected, but by whom the earlier returns were compiled no information is forthcoming. They have been averaged in Table I., which will be found appended.

“Thom’s Directory” was first published in 1844, and prices are given in that year as far back as 1830. For the two previous years I am indebted to the first volume of *The Farmer’s Gazette*. Mr. Fowler, Lord Clancarty’s agent, writes that no record of the prices are kept in the Estate Office, though the numbers sold and unsold at the fair are recorded, as far back as 1790. In that year there were 62,000 sheep and 8,600 cattle in the fair.

Ballinasloe was, and probably still is, one of the largest sheep and cattle fairs in the world. They are chiefly stores as distinguished from fat animals, and no record of the value of store cattle and sheep seems to have been regularly kept for such a long period anywhere else in the United Kingdom.

In 1856 the fair reached its maximum, when nearly 100,000 sheep and 26,000 cattle were exhibited, representing a money value, at the prices of that year, of nearly £600,000. Since 1856, the number of sheep on the fair-green has decreased, with little interruption,

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Mr. O'Sullivan Valuation Office informed me that <sup>Apprenticed Servants</sup> in his records there are returns of prices made by the Valuation Office in 1864, 1874, 1877, 1879.

The 1864 return was pub. by the Stationery Office & gives prices for 1859-64 compares them with similar tables prepared by the Bursar of Trinity College in connection with 14-15 Vic. Cap. 128.

The 1874 return contains prices for 1873.

The 1877 return contains prices for 1870, 1871, 1872-55 & for 1878-86.

The 1879 return contains prices for 1870, 1871, 1872, 1873, 1874, 1875, 1876, 1877 (Ag. Land) 1878.

to 26,000 head last year. Cattle have also decreased in numbers, but less rapidly.

The highest and lowest prices are :—

	Year.	Highest Average.			Year.	Lowest Average.		
		£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
Bullocks, ..	1880	18	5	0	1850	7	5	0
Heifers, ..	1882	18	17	6	1830	8	15	0
Wethers, ..	1871	3	3	1	1831	1	4	3
Ewes, ..	1865	3	15	0	1829	1	3	0

There are no prices given for 1846, the famine year.

Although the quotations previous to 1828 have not yet been discovered some estimate of the demand can be formed by the number sold and unsold each year. The prices for heifers and bullocks in 1892 were lower than any year since 1852.

Assuming that an average store beast at this fair would make  $6\frac{1}{2}$  cwt. when fat, we can estimate the price it would sell for in Dublin market by multiplying the cost of beef per cwt. each year by  $6\frac{1}{2}$ . The *blue line* of diagram No. 1 represents this price. The *red line* is the average price paid for first, second, third, and, fourth-class cattle in Ballinasloe, and the space between the two lines exhibits on this hypothesis, the margin between buying and selling.

The idea of attempting to represent the middleman's margin on a diagram is not easy with the materials at hand. No matter what assumption is made it will be open to objections of one kind or another. The fact that  $6\frac{1}{2}$  cwt. is a high estimate for an average Ballinasloe beast has not been overlooked, nor the equally important one that some cattle in the fair are sold nearly ready for the butcher. The relative distance between the lines would remain constant whether the multiplier be six or six-and-a-half, or whether the lower line be depressed uniformly, as too high an average price for store cattle.

#### Diagrams No. 2.—Ewes and Wethers.

This shows the average price of first, second, third, and fourth-class ewes and wethers at the great October Fairs of Ballinasloe, 1828 to 1892. *Blue line* wethers, *red line* ewes—the returns are from the same sources as the cattle prices. In 1892 the price was lower than any time since 1849 for ewes and wethers. Observe the great fall in the prices of ewes in 1879 owing to the wet summer and the fluke disease consequent thereon. Their value is influenced by the price of lambs and does not fluctuate in the same ratio as that of wethers. The rapid rise of both in 1865 was due in a measure to wool, which, simultaneously with flax (see diagram No. 9), rose to a very high point after the American War. Mutton at the same time became dearer.

#### Diagram No. 3.—Wool.

From 1784 to 1840 the price (*red line*) of English (Southdown) Wool is taken from McCullagh's *Dictionary of Commerce* (1844), page 1,370, a standard work. Some of these figures, on the authority

of Mr. McCullagh, are given by Mr. R. Giffen, of the Statistical Department of the Board of Trade (see *Parliamentary Papers*, 1878-9, vol. 65, No. 378); 1837 to 1892 are Fassaroe\* prices (*blue line*), with the exception of the years marked thus\* from *Purdon's Almanac*. The *black line* shows the returns collected by the Land Commission from 1887 to 1892.

English wool during the past century was cheapest in the year 1829 when it fell to 6d. per lb.; and highest in 1809—3s. per lb. In the years 1837 to 1840 McCullagh's prices and the Fassaroe figures overlap and nearly coincide, and it is probable that the earlier ones for English wool given by the same writer are not very different from the Dublin market. In 1809 the year of the highest return for English wool, namely 3s. a lb., Wakefield in his *Statistical Account of Ireland*, vol. 1, page 713, gives the average price at a Dublin wool auction, held July 17th 1809, as 4s. 2d. per lb., the number of fleeces sold, 2,166. At another auction on August 29th, 1810, the average given is 3s. 9d., the number of fleeces sold, 4,494.

Mr. Wakefield remarks:—

“To persons in England acquainted with the wool trade the high prices at the foregoing market must appear very extraordinary. It is to be observed that the value of the article is affected by the premium offered by the Farming Society for the best piece of cloth manufactured of Irish wool. This inducement occasions at present a competition amongst the buyers, but when an adequate supply is produced the prices will probably fall to a level with those given for English wool the free importation of which is allowed by the Act of Union.”

A very few fleeces at each auction were Spanish and Merino which raised the average 1d. or 2d. per lb. Mulhall in his *Dictionary of Statistics*, 1892, quoting from Tooke and Newmarch (*History of Prices*) gives the value of wool in 1809 as 17s. per lb., but he omits to state that this is not English wool, the price of which was 3s. per lb. The diagram shows that since 1883 wool has maintained a lower value than for any similar period during the last 109 years. There are now in Ireland 4,800,000 sheep and if we assume each fleece to weigh 4 lbs., a fall of 1d. per lb. means a loss of £80,000 per annum on wool, and this article has fallen not 1d. but 3d. below its average for the last century.

#### Diagram No. 4.—Beef and Mutton, Dublin.

This exhibits the mean annual price of beef and mutton in the Dublin market since 1845, from the quotations in *Purdon's Farmer's Almanac*; the *red lines*, beef; the *blue lines*, mutton. As reference shall frequently be made to this source of information, the following remarks are appropriate.

The wet cold summer of 1879, and its disastrous effects on Irish agriculture stimulated researches into the question of prices. On October 1st, 1879, a table was issued by the Valuation Office giving quotations for farming produce for various years since 1826. A month later, November 1st, the most complete table of Irish prices

\* The “Fassaroe Prices” are the prices of wool grown on the farm of that name in Co. Wicklow, but sold in Dublin.

we possess was published in the *Irish Farmer's Gazette*, giving figures for 1830, 1840, and every year since 1845. The values for 1830 and 1840 were taken from *Saunders' Newsletter*. The prices of grain are those of the Dublin market, and where only one quotation is given for the year it is taken from the *Dublin Gazette*. The prices of flax are taken from reports in Ulster, chiefly Armagh and Belfast. The prices of beef, mutton, pork, potatoes, wool, hay, and straw are from the Dublin market. The prices of milch cows, two-year-old and one-year old cattle are taken from the reports of country fairs held during the months of May and June each year, and published in the *Farmer's Gazette*. The price of lambs are those current during May and June in the Dublin market. The prices of butter are taken from reports of Cork and other leading markets in Munster and also the Dublin market. With regard to the prices for 1852, the first eight, viz., wheat, oats, barley, flax, butter, beef, mutton, and pork are to all appearance taken from the Valuation Act of that year (15 and 16 Vict., c 63), while the remaining items are ordinary market returns. The Editor of the *Farmer's Gazette* writing, in 1886, agrees with this view. Griffith's prices are I believe slightly lower than average market quotations for 1852, but that the valuers were influenced more by the rental than the price of produce is now admitted. The table given in the *Irish Farmer's Gazette* for 1879 has been continued up to date in *Purdon's Almanac*, with but slight variation in the sources from which it is compiled.

The Registrar-General was the first witness examined before the Cowper Commission, in 1886, and in reply to the President (question 147), said that the *Farmer's Gazette* Table of Prices "is believed to be the best information to be had in Ireland, and it has been very much used." The table was handed in, and is published in the appendix.

These details are given because this table has been consulted, and compared with other prices in the diagrams which follow. The extreme quotation, 4s. per lb., for wool in 1856, given by Purdon, is omitted in the Cowper Commission appendix, and rightly so.

On 7th March, 1870, Sir J. Ball Greene presented a return to Parliament, giving returns of Irish farm produce 1850, 1860, and 1866; but the figures in this paper are all contained in the table issued the previous year, with the exception of the price of flax, and those for 1866. The return for 1850 are the averages of 40 towns in Ireland, for 1860, of 47 towns, and for 1866, not stated. None appear to have been collected between 1866 and 1869 by the Valuation Office.

The Irish Land Commission, which is more interested in an accurate table of the prices of Irish agricultural produce than any private individual, made no arrangements for systematic returns until 1887, six years after its establishment. By the equitable provisions of the Land Act of that year (50 & 51 Vic., c. 33, sec. 29) it was compelled to do so for the temporary adjustment of judicial rents, and since then annual returns have been published. (See Table No. 2, appended).

In the diagram No. 4 under consideration, the thin *blue line* shows the Land Commission prices for mutton since 1887, while the thin *red line* represents beef from the same source, for a like period. Most of these figures are below the mean values in Purdon for mutton, and above them for beef. Both are Dublin market quotations. Up to August 4th, 1888, the Land Commission figures are from reported prices for beef and mutton, after that date they have been calculated for dead weights, by taking seven-fourths of the average reported live weight sales. Thus, if live weight price is 32s. per cwt., the dead weight quotation is given 56s. per cwt. The letter V on diagram shows the relative position of Valuation Office quotations for beef, and A for mutton. These returns for 1826 and 1852 are the Act prices (7 Geo. IV., c. 62) and (15 and 16 Vict., c. 63), respectively, and not market values. The highest price for beef in Dublin market since 1845 was in 1873, the lowest for beef and mutton was in 1852, and last year saw the lowest level for both since that date, the year 1887 excepted. Mutton reached its maximum price in 1883. Generally speaking, it has maintained a higher level than beef, but was considerably below it in 1867, when sheep increased rapidly in number (see diagram No. 6 and Table 4) and became a drug in Ireland.

The Dublin Corporation has an official, who records, on a printed form, the weekly price of beef and mutton, but no yearly returns are obtainable.

#### Diagram No. 5.—Beef and Mutton, London.

The *red line* illustrates the price of beef, the *blue line* the price of mutton in the London Metropolitan Cattle Market since 1815. These can, with advantage, be compared with the fluctuations in Dublin since 1845. The mean of the lowest and highest are given. The authorities are:—

1st.—1815 to 1835, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1837, vol. v No. 464, p. 400.

2nd.—1836-7-8-9, Tooke's *History of Prices*.

3rd.—1840-63, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1878-9, vol. lxx. No. 378.

4th.—1864-92, *Agricultural Returns of Great Britain*.

No. 1 are mean January and July prices, and, probably, are very near the mean annual value. No. 2 (Tooke's prices) are for superior meat only, and these four years are slightly higher than they should be. Nos. 1, 2, and 3 are quoted by the stone of 8 lbs., sinking offal; No. 4, by the lb., sinking offal, and all have been calculated by the cwt. for comparison with Dublin quotations.

The lowest price for beef and mutton in England since 1815 was reached in 1822-3. Mutton fell to 35s. per cwt., and beef to 38s. 6d., or nearly as low as prices in the Valuation Act of 1826. "Tooke," vol. ii. p. 85, states that, in 1822, the extremely low value of cattle attracted much attention. Wheat, oats, barley, and other produce, were likewise abnormally low in England.

The nearest approach to the great depression of 1822 would seem to have been 1852. The maximum price for beef in London was, simultaneously with Dublin, in 1873; but mutton was dearest

in London in 1877—91s. per cwt., whereas 1883 was high watermark in Ireland. Table III. gives London prices since 1864.

#### Diagram No. 6.--Cattle and Sheep in Ireland.

The *red line* shows number of cattle, the *blue line*, the number of sheep. The first census of live-stock in Ireland was taken in 1841, when the numbers were—cattle, 1,860,000; sheep, 2,100,000. They have increased—sheep, to 4,820,000; cattle, to 4,530,000. Table No. IV. There were more cattle in Ireland last year than at any previous period, and sheep were almost as numerous as in 1868, when they attained their maximum. Sheep have apparently fluctuated more than cattle. It is to be remembered, however, that one beast is equal to at least three sheep. In other words, an increase of three million cattle would be equivalent to an addition of nine million sheep to our pastures.

They have also increased in Great Britain, see Table No. V. The tendency in most countries furnishing statistics has been to increase in live stock. In Ireland note the sudden increase in the number of sheep after the American War caused by the rise of wool and meat. Observe also the great falling off in numbers after the wet summer of 1879 when our flocks were decimated by disease, and farmers were timid in purchasing stock.

For the first twenty-five years of this century the number of cattle exported to England averaged about 40,000 per annum, and sheep about 22,000; they numbered last year 625,000, and 1,082,000, respectively (see Table No. VI.). As against this, however, it is right to mention that there was a considerable export trade to England and foreign countries in dead meat between 1800 and 1825. Live cattle landed at Liverpool in those days were *driven* to Birmingham, Coventry, Leicester and elsewhere (*Marshall's Digest of Accounts of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1834, p. 94). The most graphic idea of the foreign competition in the dead meat trade is obtained by inspecting the diagram published annually by Weddel & Co., 16 St. Helen's-place, London, E.C., and reading their annual review. The number of carcasses of frozen mutton imported from the River Plate, New Zealand, Australia, and the Falkland Islands in 1880 was only 400; in 1892 it was 3,310,000, but the number of live sheep imported have diminished from 941,000 in 1880 to 344,000 in 1891 (Table VII.), leaving a nett gain of about 2,700,000 sheep to compete against us in the market. In 1880, there were imported 389,000 live cattle and 727,000 cwts. of fresh meat; in 1891, 507,000 live cattle and 1,920,000 cwts. of fresh beef, and last year the quantity of fresh beef imported was over 2,000,000 cwts. The number of vessels fitted with refrigerating machinery for carrying frozen meat long distances, from New Zealand, Australia, and the River Plate has increased from 57 in 1888 to 92 last year, and they have now a maximum annual importing capacity estimated at 6,000,000 carcasses. This is altogether exclusive of the steamers engaged in the chilled beef trade. The United States practically monopolises this

industry. The increase from 1887 has been from 643,000 cwts. to 1,900,000 cwts., and since 1888 the number of live cattle from the States has been raised from 143,000 to 314,000 in 1891. One pleasant point for the British farmer in this struggle is that in 1892, for the first time, the carcasses of frozen mutton, from New Zealand showed a slight decrease. Table VIII. may here be referred to.

In the Agricultural returns of Great Britain for 1892, p. xxiv. Major Craigie, the chief official, gives the following table showing the values of the imports of animals intended for food, and of all forms of dead meat, thus :—

Years	Cattle and Beef.	Sheep and Fresh Mutton.	Pigs and Bacon, Hams and Pork	All other Forms of Meat	Total.
1871	4,218,000	1,790,000	3,710,000	770,000	10,488,000
1881	8,915,000	2,192,000	11,493,000	2,154,000	24,754,000
1891	14,270,000	4,082,000	10,042,000	713,000	29,107,000

and adds :—

“It thus appears that the development of the aggregate trade on beef imported, alive and dead, has been remarkable, but the form in which it comes is changing, for whereas, 85 per cent. of this import was brought to our shores in the shape of live cattle twenty years ago, the proportion of the foreign import landed alive in 1891 was reduced to 60 per cent. In mutton the whole recorded import of 1871 consisted of live sheep. The trade in frozen mutton only came into notice in 1882, but it so largely developed subsequently that in 1891 only 16 per cent of the foreign mutton came here alive.”

In the frozen meat trade, to quote the words of the *Annual Review* of Weddel & Co., for 1892 :—

“In view of the comparatively moderate growth of the population and the steady increase in the flocks and herds of the British Isles, the surprise is, that the rapid expansion of importations from New Zealand, Australia, and the River Plate has not more seriously affected values for all descriptions of meat.”

It is stated that fair average River Plate sheep can at present be laid down in London or Liverpool at a cost of less than 2½d. per lb. ex-ship, “that price including all freezing expenses, freight and insurance.”

The quantity of mutton imported into France is limited by reason of a law—

“Necessitating the retention of the lungs in each carcase, and the quartering of each carcase before distribution.”

It is worth remembering that there were more cattle in Ireland last year than in England in 1889, also that in Ireland there is nearly a beast for every sheep, whereas England has more than three sheep to each beast.

**Diagram No. 7.—Butter.**

The authorities for the prices of butter are:—

1800-1811, *Wakefield's Ireland*, vol. ii., p. 207., Waterford quotations only. *Red line.*

1815-1835, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1837, vol v., No. 464, p. 400. These are mean January and July values for Cork butter, 1st quality, in London markets. See *blue line.* Tooke gives Waterford values for these years, and they agree fairly, save in 1816 and 1819, when Tooke's figures are much lower.

1812-1845, Tooke, vol. ii., p. 408; vol. iii.; Appendix p. 297; vol. iv., p. 430, all Waterford figures. *Red line.*

1846-1892, *Purdon's Almanac.* *Red line.*

Prices marked V are on authority of Valuation Office return, 1st October, 1879. In 1826 and 1852 V coincides with Act prices. The *black line* shows Land Commission returns 1887-92. High-water mark for butter was attained in 1876, 132s. per cwt.; it was lowest in 1849-50, 63s. per cwt. Subsequent to 1885 prices in *Purdon's Almanac* are the average of "Firsts," "Seconds," and "Thirds," in Cork; previously no mention was made of different qualities. Since 1872 the imports of butter and margarine have increased from 1,279,000 cwts. to 3,370,000. cwts.

**Diagram No. 8.—Pork,**

Perhaps the most striking feature in the live stock returns of the United Kingdom in 1892 was the large reduction in the number of pigs. They have diminished from 4,272,000 to 3,265,000, or by more than a million. It is well known that this class of stock is liable to frequent and sometimes violent fluctuations, both in number and value. The price of pork has been abnormally high in 1892 compared with beef and mutton.

The *red line* in the diagram shows the price from 1846 to 1892 from *Purdon's Almanac.* Matterson and Sons of Limerick, have been good enough to furnish their prices (*blue line*) from 1875, representing the average price per cwt. on an annual slaughter of about 350,000 pigs. The Land Commission values are shown by a *black line.* V=Valuation Office returns issued in 1879; the 1852 figures being as in other articles, the Act prices. Pork reached its highest point in 1869 and 1875, and if the Act price of 1852 be regarded as accurate, its lowest value since 1846 occurred that year.

**Diagram No. 9.—Flax.**

Having received from Mr. William Morton, Secretary of the Belfast Flax Supply Association, a copy of the *Irish Textile Journal* for Jan. 15th, 1893, showing the price of flax for forty-one years; the mean quotations have been placed on the diagram (*red line*) for comparison with those in *Purdon's Almanac*

(*blue line*), to which Mr. Morton also referred me. The Land Commission are represented by the *black line*. The Secretary of the Flax Supply Association writes :—

“The prices in the *Textile Journal* are made up in the following manner—the *lowest* quotations in the leading markets are put together, and the result called the *lowest average*, the *highest* quotations are dealt with in a similar manner. It is a very imperfect practice, but where there is no *standard of quality*, a satisfactory comparison of prices is almost impossible. I know of no tables of an earlier date than 1852.”

Great variation sometimes exist between the *Almanac* and *Textile Journal* figures, but the public refer to both, and like all the previous authorities, their fluctuations, agreements, and differences are grasped with least effort on a diagram. From 1865 flax has fallen in price step by step, the process being an occasional rise followed by a still greater fall. The number of acres under this crop in Ireland has diminished from 302,000 in 1864 to 71,000 last year, the lowest on record since 1850.

#### Diagrams Nos. 10 and 11.—Wheat, Barley and Oats.

The *red line* in each diagram represents wheat, the *blue line* barley, and the *black line* oats. Diagram No. 10 shows Dublin, and Diagram No. 11 English returns—the former the price per barrel—the latter the price per imperial quarter. The values of wheat, barley, and oats, have been compiled with much care in England. Records are to be found in the almanacs, copied from official sources, showing the quotations per imperial quarter for over 100 years, and the researches of various writers have carried these figures backwards several centuries. Duties under the corn laws varied, like tithes, with prices, so it became necessary to have accurate information. Parliamentary papers bristle with returns showing prices of grain; The Corn Return Act of 1882 (45 & 46 Vict. c. 37), repealing former Acts, now regulates the collection of such prices in England and Wales. In Ireland there is no such Act, and no government official whose duty it is to record the prices of Irish wheat, oats, or barley.

At p. 149 of the Minutes of the Municipal Council of the City of Dublin for 1887 the fourth condition of the appointment of the sword bearer runs thus :—

“The sword bearer shall, without receiving any payment for so doing, use all available means to procure true weekly returns of the average prices in Dublin of grain of Irish produce, and disclosing to any one the prices at which any of the factors sold grain, and shall transmit copies of such returns to the press of Dublin, and at the close of each year shall likewise supply a summary of the quantities of each kind of grain of Irish produce sold in Dublin for the then preceding twelve months, stating the average price of each kind of grain of Irish produce for the year, and shall lay a copy of such summary before the Council of the Corporation. He shall himself bear and defray all expenses connected with such returns, which shall be authenticated by his signature.”

There is no remuneration, and the condition is not now enforced. In *Wakefield's Ireland*, 1814, vol. ii., p. 20, is a copy of "An Account of the Quantities and Prices, and Average Prices of Corn, Meal, and Flour sold in the City of Dublin and Liberties thereunto adjoining; and of the Corn, Grain, Meal, and Flour, returned by the Register of Corn returns for each year from 1785, agreeably to the quarterly returns made by the Lord Mayor of the City of Dublin to the Commissioners of Customs."

From 1800 to 1846, returns of the prices of grain in Dublin were at different dates presented to parliament. After the repeal of the Corn Laws less interest was taken in prices, but up to some date between 1880 and 1887, a corporation official would seem to have been associated with the prices in the *Dublin Gazette*, which are now signed by Mayor Grace, Secretary to the Corn Exchange Company. The old *Dublin Gazette* prices appear to be returns collected by the corporation, but they are not collected under the authority of an act of parliament, and by a numerous staff like the *English Gazette* quotations.

Discussing the collection of English corn prices, Mr. Giffen says, *Parliamentary Papers* No. 5 1889, vol. lx:—

"There have been various changes in the methods and machinery of collection, and it was only after the 'Act 1 and 2, Geo. IV., c. 87,' passed in the year 1821, that the weekly prices were on the same basis as at present, viz., an average for the whole of England and Wales, arrived at by adding up the quantities and values, and dividing the one by the other. Before that date there was an average price for each district, and the average for the Kingdom was computed from the district averages."

The number of towns from which prices were collected in England and Wales was as follows:—

				Towns.
1815-21	--	--	--	212
1821-28	--	--	--	148
1828-42	--	--	--	150
1842-64	--	--	--	290
1865-82	--	--	--	150
1883-89	--	--	--	187
1890-91	--	--	--	196

By the Corn Return Act, 1882, the number was not to exceed 200 or fall short of 150 towns. Every person who deals in British corn—every cornfactor, miller, malster, brewer, and distiller, every carter of corn, and every person who purchases it to make into meal, flour, or bread—is bound to furnish returns. The act aims at obtaining the price of every transaction.

Since February 1st, 1892, the duties connected with the collection of corn returns have been transferred to the Board of Agriculture.

In England they are made up in the last week of December. In Ireland it has been otherwise. The diagram of Irish grain prices was the most troublesome of all to complete. The authorities are:—

1785-6 to 1810-11.—*Wakefield's Ireland*, vol. ii., p. 20, where

the quantities sold are also given. Returns made up to May 1st, each year.

1812 to 1818.—*Parliamentary Papers*, 1819, vol. xvi., No. 172. Return to May 1st, each year.

1819 to 1824.—Extracted from weekly returns in *Dublin Gazette*, year's end, December 31st.

1825 to 1843.—Ditto for Barley only.

1825 to 1843.—Wheat and Oats, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1837-8, vol. xlv., No. 177, year ends May 1st; 1840, vol. xlv., No. 590; 1843, vol. li., No. 411.

1844 to 1847.—Extracted from weekly return in *Dublin Gazette* for wheat, oats, and barley, year ends December 31st.

1847 to 1892.—*Thom's Directory*, year ends October 31st.

If allowance be made for the fact that the English years ended in December, and the Irish years from May to December, the great mountain peaks on the curves all correspond. In *Parliamentary Papers* 1852 (316), vol. xlvii., Sir Richard Griffith gives the average price of wheat, oats, and barley from 1832 to 1844 in eleven maritime towns in Ireland; they are below Dublin prices, about 2s. per barrel.

Any restraints which existed on the free importation and exportation of corn between Great Britain and Ireland were wholly abolished in 1806 (46 Geo. III., c. 97), so that no great difference between the price on a seaport like Dublin and England was likely to exist.

The authorities for the English prices are:—1771 to 1840, M'Cullagh, *Dictionary of Commerce*, 1844, p. 417. The 1844 edition has an elaborate account of the Corn Laws, omitted in later ones. *Parliamentary Paper*, No. 84, 1892, has the *Gazette* prices back to 1815; No. 18 (1 to 3) of 1842, gives the prices back to 1771, also the "Windsor Prices," back to 1646. English returns are by the imperial quarter—a measure of capacity containing eight bushels of 2.218.19 cubic inches each. Irish quotations are all by the barrel—wheat, 20 stones; barley, 16 stones; oats, 14 stones—the stones weighing 14lbs. each. This is mentioned because the stone weight was different in many parts of Ireland. In Ireland, the year 1885 saw wheat, for the first time for over a century, fall below 20s. a barrel, and, with the exception of 1891, it has never raised its head above the 20s. line. In 1886 it descended to 16s. 3d. The average annual price for 1892 was not so low, but, last December, it fell to 26s. 4d. per quarter in England, equal to about 14s. 7d. per barrel, and at this figure, not equalled since 1761, the farmers had to sell their wheat.

Ireland is fortunately not now a wheat-growing country, and though cattle and sheep are at present a drug, wheat is still cheaper. Taking the annual returns of the Dublin markets, the highest and lowest averages since 1786, in Ireland were:—

		Year	Highest Price per Barrel.				Year	Lowest Price per Barrel.			
			£	s	d.			£	s	d.	
Wheat,	--	1812	--	3	7	3	1886	--	0	16	3
Barley,	--	1801	--	1	11	9	1787	--	0	9	8
Oats	--	1812	--	1	6	8	1789	--	0	7	9

Oats did not fall below 10s. per barrel since 1800, save in 1850 and 1834 and '35; barley twice descended below 12s. per barrel, during the same period, in 1821 and 1850. The feature of recent years in the price of almost every article has been uniformity. The great irregularities have disappeared, and a process of levelling is in operation, but the slope is downwards, not upwards. There is a bright side, however. If statistics show anything, they indicate that we are consuming more; the great mass of the population is living better. Cheap food is to them a blessing.

Prices of produce extending backwards almost to Arthur Young's time have been given, not as accurate, for it is impossible to procure such, but as the best obtainable. It is not even assumed that the error is constant; but, on the whole, the great heights stand out against the sky, and the deep valleys are equally apparent. These diagrams, if worthless, neglect them, but if useful in illustrating the battles agriculture has fought, and the struggle it is now engaged in, my object has been attained.

For Appendix B and Tables and Diagrams referred to in foregoing, see p. 695, *et seq.*

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