

ject much spoken and written about, but of which there is no accurate knowledge—I allude to the absentee drain. In my opinion this is much larger than is usually supposed.

V.—*Notice of some points in Irish Agricultural Statistics.*

By James Connolly, Esq.

[Read 25th June, 1878.]

I NOW wish to make a brief communication of a most important and interesting discovery, if I may so call it, which I think I have made with regard to agricultural statistics.

In poring over Thom's article on the latter, I noticed, to my great surprise, that no mention whatever is made of the annual wool clip. Seeing that there are upwards of 4,500,000 sheep in the country, the value must be very considerable. In my opinion, it cannot on an average be less than £1,500,000 at the lowest. I may here observe that, owing to the present universal dulness of trade, there is this year a very heavy fall in the value of this article, as compared to the average of the last—say eight or ten—years.

But a still greater omission is that with regard to dairy farming. This may be said to be one of the great industries of the country. Thom states that there are upwards of 1,500,000 milch cows in Ireland. If we value them at £13 each on an average, which I consider would be a low estimate, we shall find that the capital invested must be £20,000,000, or thereabouts. Considering the dangerous nature of this stock, which is more liable to disease than any other, and considering also the high rents for grass lands of the best quality, and the expense of artificial feeding in winter, I conclude that a dairy farmer could scarcely save himself, much less make a profit, unless his cows brought him in, one with another, £20 per annum at the very least. This would make the enormous sum of £30,000,000 per annum.

The only reference Thom makes to wool, is by giving the annual export of that article.

For dairy farming, he only gives the export of butter, but makes no allusion to the consumption of milk or butter in the country, although both are very largely consumed by the whole population, leaving but a comparatively small portion of the latter for exportation. I am sensible to the fact that thirty millions is an enormous sum, especially if, as I believe, it has hitherto been overlooked, to account for. In fine, I am well aware that the person advancing such a statement will be heard with the greatest distrust.

All things considered, I think the simplest way of proving the correctness of my estimate is to take nothing into account but the average price of milk all over the country, and the average quantity produced by cows throughout the year. To this must be added the value of a calf. It is well known that a good cow will give, during

the summer months, sixteen quarts of milk daily. It is by no means uncommon for some to milk twenty quarts. But there is a great falling off of milk in winter; and when a cow is near calving, she becomes, as it is termed, "dry." But we must here take the average run of cows, which I suppose must, one with another, milk six quarts of milk daily, winter and summer. In my opinion, most dairy farmers would at once sell such cows for stall feeding, and get rid of them as unprofitable, not to say ruinous stock; for the keep of a bad milker will be the same, generally speaking, as the best, with regard to the fodder used. Let us now turn to the price of milk. I have good reason to state, and know, that the average price all over Ireland cannot be estimated at less than 8d. per gallon. In reply to letters I sent to Union clerks in different and remote parts of the country—one only, in the County of Meath, being within thirty miles of Dublin, and three beyond the Shannon—I was informed, or rather I calculated from the returns sent me, that the average contract price paid by the five Unions was a fraction over $8\frac{1}{2}$ d. per gallon. I need scarcely add, contractors supplying public institutions do not expect to be paid, for furnishing in this wholesale manner, at the same rate as private individuals are charged. The natural inference is, that the latter sum should be taken as the average minimum price all over Ireland. But supposing it to be only 2d. per quart, and supposing each milch cow to produce only six quarts of milk daily throughout the year, which appears to me to be absurdly low, we shall find that the produce in milk alone will amount to £18 5s. per annum. To this must be added the value of a calf, which will be good value for three or four pounds more. But, in my opinion, the the average value of milk must be considerably over my estimate, and the average yield per cow also considerably greater than allowed by me. All this would prove to demonstration that the thirty millions must be under rather than over the real value of the produce of the dairy farming of Ireland.

In conclusion, it may be well to explain that, though this is one of the most profitable, as I think it must be ranked as one of the most important national industries, still, owing to rapid deterioration and losses from diseases, it is not so money-making as might be supposed. Milch cows are not on an average kept long, and almost always there is a considerable loss in selling them. They are usually bought in spring, when they are dearer than at any other season, and sold in autumn, when they are least valuable. Besides, they are usually parted with for having fallen off in their milk producing powers. But what is still more serious, they are very subject to distemper; and a fine animal, which but a week before was good value for £20 or more, has often to be sold to inferior butchers for £3 or £4, or even less. Hence I assume that a prudent dairy farmer will be obliged to lay by a very large sum of money out of his profits, as a reserve fund, to meet losses by deaths and still more frequent causes, when he is compelled to sell at a merely nominal price. But, though such losses come very heavy when distemper is prevalent, still, I think, great as they are, the steady and more gradual progress of deterioration, always in action and operating on the whole stock alike,

must in the long run draw more heavily on the resources of the reserve fund. My opinion is that it would take, one year with another, about 20 per cent. on the capital invested in stock, for renewing and keeping it up to the mark, in efficiency, in productiveness, and in value.

My reason for giving in detail the expenses and losses of dairy farming is with a view of answering by anticipation, and accounting for, the very large receipts of this most important rural industry, which, without being explained and accounted for, might appear almost incredible.

VI.—*On the Importance and Feasibility of making special Local Arrangements for facilitating Peasant Proprietors and other small holders in dealing with their Interests in Land.* By W. Neilson Hancock, LL.D.

[Read 26th February, 1878.]

(1)—*Analogy between Post Office reforms and law reforms for facilitating transfer of land.*

PROBABLY the greatest practical reform which the present generation has witnessed was Sir Rowland Hill's Penny Postage reform. The accommodation which the public, especially the poor and those residing in backward districts, have gained from it, is wonderful. Let us take the figures. In 1839, before the reduction in the postage took place, the number of letters delivered in the United Kingdom was 82 millions. In 1875 the number reached 1,008 millions. Making allowance for growth of population, this represents an increase from three letters per head to thirty-one, or more than tenfold.

This average increase for the whole United Kingdom was brought about by an increase in Great Britain of less than nine times; but in Ireland of more than thirteen times; so that the most backward part of the United Kingdom gained most by the reform. Now let us for a moment reflect in what this great reform consisted; it was extending to the whole United Kingdom the Dublin local penny post for letters not exceeding four ounces, with a slight modification of weight. The reduction of postage to anyone looking into a table of law taxes, would appear very inconsiderable. From Dublin to any part of Ireland the postage did not exceed fourteen pence, to any part of England, seventeen pence, and to the most distant part of Scotland (Wick), twenty pence.

What apparently insignificant matter for a man to trouble his mind about. Yet what wonderful results have arisen from Sir Rowland Hill considering how to reduce a tax of twenty pence to one penny.

Don't imagine this reform, which is self-evident to us, was easily carried. All the officials acquainted with the previous system condemned it. An association had to be formed to carry it. It became