

provements in property unless made compulsorily for sanitary purposes.

Anyone thoroughly acquainted and conversant with the back slums of Dublin, with their fever nests and rack rented population, living in wretched miserable tenements not fit for human habitation, without proper accommodation, and in some instances without any sanitary accommodation at all (as has been found in the Plunkett Street area), cannot but hail such an act as the 38 and 39 Vic. chap. 36 as a great boon, even though it has its defects, and feel that the citizens of Dublin deserve praise for putting it in force.

In the working of these acts, Dublin has had to contend with difficulties similar to those met with elsewhere, and has fared no worse, if not better, than the large cities or towns in England. The Coombe area was the first in Dublin. Plunkett Street has been the second, in the purchase of which the local authority have more cautiously dealt with. Let it be hoped that before further efforts are made in this wide and beneficent sphere of reform the acts governing them will be much improved and modified, and that it will be possible to effect the purchase of lands and houses for purposes of local improvements much more cheaply and expeditiously than at present.

V.—*Notes on the Statistics of Waste Lands in Ireland.* By Thomas W. Grimshaw, M.A., M.D., Registrar-General for Ireland.

[Read Tuesday, 29th April, 1884.]

IN consequence of many published statements by public speakers, newspaper writers, essayists, and writers in reviews, with reference to the relative amount of Irish land which is out of use, I have thought it advisable to make this matter the subject of a communication to this Society. The tenor of the statements just referred to is that the land utilised in Ireland for agricultural purposes is gradually decreasing, and that waste lands are as steadily increasing; in fact that the land of Ireland is steadily going back to bog and waste, and that Irish agriculture is steadily decaying, as compared with agriculture elsewhere. As the growth of agricultural products is the principal trade of three-fourths of Ireland, the affirmation that Ireland is passing back into bog and waste, and that agriculture is decaying is tantamount to saying that this country is steadily becoming poorer, that trade is likely to become worse, and that Ireland is not likely to be a country where capital can be employed to advantage. Now nothing can be more destructive to the welfare of any country than to have the character of being in a perpetual state of decay: Such an impression drives out capital, and deters other capital from entering the country.

The statement that Irish land is steadily falling out of use, is persistently made, and the proof that such is the case is, I regret to say, drawn from the publications issued by the General Register

office. Those who make these statements, however, do not take the trouble to study the older reports of the department, or they would soon discover their fallacy.

The annexed table shows that so far from the waste lands of Ireland being on the increase, an immense amount of waste land has been reclaimed during the past forty years.

In the year 1841, according to the Census Report for that year, the waste lands of Ireland amounted to 6,489,971 statute acres. In the year 1881 the amount was only 4,729,251 acres, or in other words, 1,760,720 acres, or 8·6 per cent. of the whole surface of Ireland had been reclaimed in forty years. It will be observed from the Table on p. 525, that the decrease of waste land between 1841 and 1851, was 1,073,652 acres, between 1851 and 1861, it was 828,228 acres; and between 1861 and 1871, it was 277,050. Between 1871 and 1881, an apparent increase of 418,210 acres took place, and the natural conclusion arrived at by anyone testing the question in this manner, and without going into details, would be that during the last decade, land in Ireland to the extent of nearly half a million of acres, had fallen out of use. If a more detailed examination of this question is made, it will be found that up to the year 1876 the statistics show a general decrease of waste lands, with slight variations, from year to year, sometimes showing a slight increase. From the year 1876 up to the present year, the returns apparently point to a steady increase of waste land, and from this apparent fact the lamentable conclusion has been arrived at that Ireland is steadily "going back to bog and waste." The real facts of the case are these:—In the earlier days of the collection of agricultural statistics it was thought unnecessary to go into too minute detail, and thus if a grazing farm on a mountain side had a strip of barren mountain land at the top, and a little bit of marsh at its lowest level, the whole area would be probably put down as grass. No doubt nearly all was grass, but the stony part, and the marshy part, were practically useless, and, therefore the area of such a farm should have been divided among all these elements, and only the usable grass included as pasture. For some years prior to 1876, greater care was enjoined on the enumerators, and land not actually used for grazing or other purposes, was, unless of good quality, classed as waste. In 1877, in accordance with the increased accuracy demanded by advancing knowledge, a still further detail was insisted on, and the enumerators were required to ascertain, as *nearly as possible*, the amount of land available for use, and how it was employed, and also how much bog and marsh, barren mountain land, etc., was actually in the area of each farm. It has been this picking out of little scraps of waste of all kinds, that has during the past few years apparently so much diminished the land in use in Ireland.

Another element which produces apparent fluctuation in the amount of waste land, is that where live stock are very plentiful, lands which are almost waste are temporarily used during the fine summer months, when the acreage of the country in use is enumerated. Thus we find in 1880, 1881, and 1882, when there was a diminution of cattle and sheep, especially of the latter,

the waste apparently increased. We may expect that with returning prosperity in the cattle trade, and as a result of Dr. Lyons' useful agitation in favour of re-forestation many of our waste places, and further reclamation, waste lands will diminish steadily until all usable land in Ireland is in use. I would here utter a word of warning to those who are enthusiastic concerning reclamation of waste lands, that it is not to be assumed that the four and three quarter millions acres of waste lands of Ireland are to any considerable extent capable of being converted into valuable land. No doubt much can be improved, but a large quantity, probably amounting to upwards of 2,000,000 acres, is barren mountain, scarcely of any value.

I believe much more can be done by improved cultivation than by reclamation. I was once driving along a road, bounded on one side by a stretch of swampy, and partly peaty moor, in the County of Galway, with a gentleman who owned a portion of this waste, and who took a great interest in the improvement of his estate. I asked what he thought of the value of reclaiming such land as this. He said, "I am trying to get them [the people in his neighbourhood] to drain and properly cultivate the good land they have got; when that is done, we can talk of the bog." I have no belief in the doctrine that farming in Ireland is a ruined trade, and that, consequently, Ireland is a ruined country, and I believe those who are perpetually announcing that everything in Ireland is financially going to the bad, and can never get better, are enemies of their country.

DIVISION OF LAND IN 1841, '51, '61, '71, AND '81.

PART LXII.

1884.]

By Thomas W. Grimshaw, M.A. M.D.

Division of Land.	1841.	1851	1861	1871	1881
	Statute Acres	Statute Acres	Statute Acres.	Statute Acres.	Statute Acres.
Under Crops (including Meadow), ...	13,464,300	5,858,951	5,890,536	5,621,437	5,195,375
„ Grass, ...		8,748,577	9,533,529	10,071,285	10,075,424
Woods and Plantations, .	374,482	304,906	316,597	324,990	328,703
Barren Mountain Land, .	6,489,971	5,416,319	4,588,091	4,311,041	2,117,672
Bog and Marsh, ..					1,720,026
Waste Land, etc, ...					891,553
					4,729,251
Total, ...	20,328,753				

5

NOTE.—The information for 1841 and 1851 respectively, has been obtained from the Census Reports for those years; and that for the subsequent periods from the Agricultural Statistics.

525