

TWO CENTURIES OF IRISH AGRICULTURE.

A STATISTICAL RETROSPECT, 1672-1905.

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IN economic, as in political problems, a knowledge of the past is essential to the proper understanding of the present. At this time, therefore, when so many Irishmen are hoping and striving for a general industrial revival, it may not be inappropriate to trace the fortunes of our oldest, most important, and perhaps, most successful industry—that connected with the land.

And here the tendency of history in general, and Irish history in particular, to repeat itself is the first thing to impress the inquirer. From the earliest times, Ireland has been, just as she is still, primarily a country of pasturage. Animals and animal products, cattle and sheep, wool, tallow, hides, butter, figure as prominently in the mediæval records as they do in the most recent returns of the Department of Agriculture. The Celtic tribes were purely pastoral in their habits, even taking the cow as their standard of value. The English settlers of the Pale were also, for the most part graziers. Yet cereal crops were raised to an extent that varied, probably, according as the country was peaceful or the reverse. In times of disturbance no holder of land cared to give a hostage to fortune by sowing his land with corn, which could easily be burnt or destroyed by his enemies. Cattle, on the other hand, in the eyes of both English and Irish, had the advantage that they could, at time of need, be driven to some hiding-place or some defensible position, where they would be secure from capture. The "bawn" or fortified enclosure to which cattle were driven for safety at night or in war time, is a prominent feature in most of our ancient castles. In the thirteenth century, however, before the Bruce invasions threw everything into confusion, a considerable quantity of wheat must have been grown, for the English armies campaigning in Scotland, Wales and France were largely victualled by cargoes of corn from Ireland. The counties of Dublin, Kildare, Kilkenny and Carlow were the chief sources of this supply. The tribesmen, too, must, in later times, have taken to growing oats, for the Elizabethan

writer, Campion, in 1571, mentions oatmeal (with "shamrocks, watercresses, roots, butter, whey, milk and beef broth") in a list of the chief articles of diet among the natives. Still the evidence goes to show that the practice of tillage in Ireland was spasmodic and uncertain, while pasturage was steadily and consistently pursued.

In the seventeenth century we come to firmer ground for our conclusions than the casual entries in royal accounts or the *obiter dicta* of the careless chronicler on which we have hitherto had to rely. Official statistics of trade begin to be issued, and these, illustrated and elucidated, as such silent witnesses should always be, by the remarks of contemporary economic writers, provide sufficient data for our inferences. The best authority for the period is undoubtedly Sir William Petty, a man of great practical ability, deeply interested in problems of state. In 1672 he published his *Political Anatomy of Ireland*, in which he applies his methods of "political arithmetic," in other words, statistics, to ascertain the state of that country. As an official of the Irish Government, for many years, he had had ample opportunity for observation and investigation. His *Treatise of Ireland*, written in 1687 adds further details.

Again, the picture is of a land devoted mainly to pasturage, but producing, nevertheless, a certain quantity of corn. The chief exports in 1685 were as follows:—

Beef	..	..	..	75,000 barrels.	
				(a barrel equals 2½ cwt.)	
Pork	..	..	..	2,500 barrels.	
Butter	..	..	..	134,000	..
Corn (of all kinds, apparently)	..	..	..	148,000	..
Bacon	..	..	..	2,080	fitches.
Tallow	..	..	..	41,000	cwt.
Hides (Tanned)	..	..	..	86,000	..
„ (Salted)	..	..	..	93,000	..
Lamb Skins	..	..	..	1,435,000	..
Calf Skins	..	..	..	48,000	..
Coney (Rabbit) Skins	..	..	..	1,665,000	..
Goat Skins	..	..	..	278,000	..
Linen Cloth	..	..	..	1,851	pieces.
Linen Yarn	..	..	..	3,825	cwt.
Wool	..	..	..	123,000	stone.
Frieze	..	..	..	629,000	yards.
Drapery	..	..	..	4,900	pieces.
Beer	..	..	..	4,600	barrels.
Aquavita	..	..	..	1,519	gallons.

These figures show what a country Ireland has always been for live stock. Almost every item deals with animals or their produce. The total production of grain must have

been small, for, as will be shown, there was very little consumed at home, and not much was exported. Indeed, Petty estimates that only 500,000 acres were under tillage, while 7,000,000 were devoted to the support of great flocks and herds whose total numbers he estimates at 3,000,000 horned cattle and 3,000,000 sheep. The number, great as it is, is probably not exaggerated. The million and a half of lambs whose skins are mentioned, presuppose almost as many full-grown sheep to give them birth. At least 180,000 head of cattle must have been slaughtered in one year to supply so many hides and fill so many barrels of salt meat. Great numbers of milch cows were needed to provide such a quantity of butter after supplying the home demand for milk, then a chief article of diet. The grain export is the surplus after home consumption, which was probably less than of old, for by this time the people had taken eagerly to the potato. Petty asserts that for the ten months from August till May, potatoes and milk were the staple food everywhere, oatmeal being only used to fill up the intervals when the tuber was not available. The abundance of sheep and the consequent cheapness of wool had led to a prosperous manufacture of the coarser grades of woollen fabrics. The export of frieze was so considerable, that it was destined to arouse the fatal jealousy of English manufacturers and to be smothered by hostile legislation. Under the head of bacon, linen, beer and whiskey, we find the small beginnings of four still flourishing Irish industries. As a whole, however, the country was self-supporting and self-sufficing. It made its own clothes, tanned its own leather, grew and prepared its own food. There were little or no imported luxuries, and the standard of living was low. The houses of the poor were miserable cabins, which could be run up in three or four days. Irish bacon and butter, produced amid such unwholesome surroundings, often took a taint, which diminished their value considerably. There was a certain rude plenty, no doubt, in favourable seasons, but, taken altogether, the condition of the people was deplorable. The tribal organisation had been swept away, and the race was not taking kindly to the new system of landlord and tenant.

Apparently during the next forty years there was little progress in Ireland. In 1729 Dobbs published his *Essay on the Trade and Improvement of Ireland*, and it cannot be said that either the statements made in his book or the official figures of the period indicate any very marked improvement. Wool, tallow and hides are stationary or retrogressing, butter has diminished, bacon and cheese are approaching extinction, woollen manufactures are much reduced; grain is hardly an eighth part of the figure quoted in 1685.

On the other hand, the dead meat trade is increasing by leaps and bounds. The average export of beef was 135,000 barrels, and of pork 10,000 barrels. These figures are, in the one case, nearly double; in the other, four times the exports in Petty's time. The probable explanation of the increase is to be found in the need of the young American and West Indian colonies for salt provisions, pending the establishment of their own agriculture on a sound basis. Ireland was favourably situated for this trade. The navy, army, and merchant service of Great Britain was largely victualled from the South of Ireland ports.

Again, linen was a flourishing industry, and the country was now able to export 4,000,000 yards of linen cloth. It may, perhaps, be objected that export returns are not a true guide to the amount of produce raised in the kingdom, that, conceivably, much of the annual crop was consumed at home and never appeared in the export returns. The only answer to this is, that, for many years, export and import figures were the only ones which Governments troubled themselves to collect, and hence they are the only data for our conclusions. Wherever any particular form of agricultural produce is shown on the evidence of contemporary writers to have been an article of diet or daily use, and does not appear to have been much imported, it must be presumed that it was largely grown in Ireland, and must, therefore, be added ¹⁷⁷⁶ to our lists of agricultural products based on the export returns. This is the case throughout our period, with potatoes and oatmeal, for instance, both staple foods of the people.

Dobbs, however, though an earnest and intelligent writer, is not a very good witness as to the conditions of farming, in which, indeed, he does not display a very great interest, save that, like all the economists of the day, he disliked the grazing system on account of the few hands it employed, and, on that account, desired to see it replaced by tillage. From many indications in his book, it is evident that the country was still in a bad way. A devastating war had been followed by a period of confiscation, change of ownership and emigration. Penal laws and commercial restrictions were in full force, and were producing their baneful and blighting effect on the life of the country.

A far better picture of eighteenth century agriculture is given by Arthur Young, who visited Ireland more than once between 1776 and 1779 and traversed the whole length and breadth of the country, observing and inquiring into the cultivation of each district he passed through, and noting down the results with all the conscientious industry of a Royal Commission. He was a man of lively intelligence and warm, human sympathies, an agriculturist of no small reputation, and therefore peculiarly fitted to conduct an unofficial survey

of Ireland. During the fifty years between Dobbs and Young new influences had been at work. The native Parliament had grown in strength and had cast about it for means to encourage the industries and promote the prosperity of the people. Associations of private individuals, like the Dublin Society, pursued the same ends. The stranger found much to criticise, yet much to approve. There was a certain poverty of equipment everywhere, which prevented the attainment of the best results. Ploughs and harrows were often of primitive construction. Farm cars consisted of no more than two wheels, an axle, and a small platform of boards. Bullocks were used in place of horses. Corn was threshed on mud floors, so that Irish grain could often be recognized by the clay adhering to it. Insanitary cabins served the purpose of dairies.

The system of land tenure was unsound and oppressive. Land was let out for limited periods; and, as a rule, several middlemen of a low social type intervened between the landlord and the occupying tenant. The holder of land on short lease racked the property during the last few years of his term, and made no improvements whatever, knowing they would profit him nothing. A service tenure by which the tenant was obliged to give so many days' work yearly to his landlord was not unusual. Rents were forced up by competition, for, to the Irish peasant, the possession of land on which potatoes might be grown was the only sure guarantee of continued existence. There were practically no industries to turn to, except, perhaps, in the North, the linen manufacture. There was no system of poor relief. The landless man, having no means to raise food for himself and his family, must either starve by the wayside or drift into the precarious existence of the hired labourer.

The labourers were, indeed, miserably situated. Wages were nominally sixpence a day, but each man employed had to submit to two heavy annual deductions from his pay, firstly, for the rent of a little patch of ground let out to him for growing potatoes, secondly, for the grazing of a cow to provide the milk required to supplement that monotonous vegetable in the daily diet. These payments brought his wages down to some three pounds a year, which was often whittled down still further on various pretexts, so that Young declares that, as a rule, no money at all passed between the parties. Men living in a state like this are at the mercy of every accident. A bad yield of the potatoes or the death of the one solitary cow brought them face to face with starvation.

Yet, on the other hand, there were traces of improvement. The encouragement of tillage and corn-growing, which was a pious wish with Dobbs, had been carried into action, though at an enormous expense and on an uneconomical method,

by the Irish Parliament. Bounties were given for corn raised in the interior of Ireland and brought to Dublin for sale. The scale of payment was most liberal—6d per ton per mile for wheat and barley, and 4d. per ton per mile for oats. For flour the premium was 1s. per ton per mile, so that in order to earn the higher premium, country gentlemen were tempted to erect mills on their properties. In 1777 bounty was paid on some 40,000 tons of wheat and 15,000 tons of flour, and the cost to the Irish Government was £50,000—about one-twentieth of the total annual revenue. Young thought the results attained were not value for the expenditure, and would rather have spent the money on the improvement of waste lands. Here, however, the Dublin Society had done some very useful work by giving premiums and medals for the reclamation of bogs and mountains. Many of the great landowners, even without such a stimulus, had spent considerable sums in experimenting on the best methods of cultivating the waste. Altogether, in Young's opinion, the country was on the up grade, and had been so for some time past.

The increase of tillage had not materially injured the grazier. In fact Young states several reasons why Ireland must always be a pastoral rather than an agricultural country. The damp climate is favourable to the growth of grass, and adverse to cereals, especially to wheat. A field left fallow in Ireland would, he states, cover itself with a spontaneous natural crop of white clover and succulent grass, whereas in other countries the result would be a fearful array of weeds. Such a soil must always be specially suited to the rearing of cattle. However, he laments the general omission of turnips, which would provide food for bullocks during the winter, when the grass did not grow. The result of this lack of winter provender was that the cattle, half starved as they were during half the year, could not pick up condition during the other half, and never attained the size or weight of beasts in other lands. The export figures of the produce of pasturage and pig-keeping will show clearly that tillage and grazing managed to co-exist very comfortably.

AVERAGE OF EXPORTS, 1771-1777.

Beef	..	..	..	195,000	barrels.
Pork	..	..	..	55,000	"
Bacon	..	..	..	19,125	fitches.
Butter	..	..	..	267,000	cwt.
Hides	..	..	..	121,000	"
Tallow	..	..	..	41,000	"
Wool	..	..	..	1,415	stone.
Worsted Yarn	..	..	..	99,000	"

If these figures be compared with those of 1685, it will be seen that, in most of the commodities mentioned, with the conspicuous exception of wool, Irish production had considerably increased. Corn was now produced all over Ireland for the Dublin market. Even from County Cork, distant at least 120 miles, it was carried in carts to the capital, earning for the growers a bounty of 6d. per mile carried, in this case £3 to the ton. Export was encouraged by a bounty, and the home market was protected by a duty of 2s. per barrel on import, but, nevertheless, the corn exports were not large at this period. The figures are—

Wheat	..	..	..	5,000 quarters.
Barley	..	..	..	5,500 „
Oats	..	..	..	33,000 „
Flour	..	..	..	35,000 cwt.

The growing taste for beer and spirits was fostering the growth of barley. But oats, then as now, was far and away the most important grain crop in Ireland. There were four fields of oats to one of any other cereal. It was grown chiefly for home consumption; oatmeal stirabout, especially in the North, alternated with boiled potatoes as the staple dish of the poor.

1812.

Thirty-three years after Young, in 1812, a year of great wars, another experienced agriculturist, Edward Wakefield, took a survey of the state of Ireland. Despite his careful accuracy, he is not so illuminative as Young. Like his predecessor, he was a humane man, but he failed to humanize his statistics, and his work accordingly savours a little too much of the blue book. However, from his laboriously collected facts and marshalled statistics satisfactory inferences may be drawn. The first of these is that the long war with the French Republic and Napoleon had given a distinct impetus to Irish agriculture. What with privateers and Berlin Decrees, the usual sources of supply were closed to England. Ireland had that great and increasing market all to herself, and profited accordingly. The two great canals, the Grand and the Royal, brought produce to Dublin in a cheap and convenient manner. Corn was grown in Ireland to an extent unequalled before. The total production can, of course, only be guessed at, but the export figures for 1811 give some idea of its magnitude.

Wheat	..	..	..	192,000 barrels.
Barley	..	..	..	76,000 „
Oats	..	..	..	756,000 „
Flour	..	..	..	91,000 cwt.
Oatmeal	.	..	..	57,000 „

A contemporary letter speaks of Kildare, Carlow, Kilkenny, Queen's Co., Tipperary, and Limerick as the "granary of England." And, just as in Young's time, the extra growth of corn seems to have been achieved without inflicting marked injury on the pasturage system, for which the export figures for 1811 are as follows:—

Beef	..	..	..	95,000 barrels.
Pork	..	..	..	110,000 "
Bacon	..	..	..	{ 310,000 flitches.
				{ 16,000 hams.
Butter	..	..	..	390,000 cwt.
Hides (untanned)	..	..	..	54,000.
Bullocks	..	..	..	45,000.
Sheep	..	..	..	21,000.
Hogs	..	..	..	35,000.

It will be noticed that the export of beef is down compared with the figures of 1770-1777, but this diminution is amply compensated by a larger production of butter and an enormously increased export of pork and bacon. The pig, once comparatively seldom mentioned in Irish records, had now become universal. Every cottier kept one, feeding it on potato refuse, and curing establishments sprang up at Limerick, Clonmel, and Waterford. The salt meat trade was centred at Cork, a great victualling station, not only for merchantmen sailing to America, but also for the navy blockading French ports, and for Wellington's troops in the Peninsula. The live cattle trade was just commencing to be of importance again. It had flourished in the seventeenth century, until checked in 1666 by a law against the import of Irish cattle into England. Slowness and difficulty of transit were also a great obstacle to its development. In the absence of railways, only districts within a day or two's march of the sea could send out bullocks and sheep, and again on arrival the beasts could not be driven far inland; sometimes, however, a trade could be done, as, for instance, between Meath and Lancashire, by way of Liverpool and Dublin. Dairy-farms were on the increase, and, according to Wakefield, covered more land than the grazing farms. Butter commanded a good price, not less than £6 a cwt., though the old complaints are reiterated of deterioration caused by insanitary surroundings at the place of origin. Beer and spirits increased every year, and must have consumed great quantities of barley. The firm of Beamish and Crawford, in Cork, alone brewed 100,000 barrels yearly. 1,000,000 gallons of whiskey were sent to England in 1806, and probably much more than that amount consumed at home; for it was the palmy time of illicit distilling, and most of the whiskey "never saw the

face of a gauger," and, *a priori*, never got into an official return. The value of turnips to cattle-owners had, since Young's time, been recognised in Ireland, and a considerable crop was grown.

During the first half of the nineteenth century the state of things described by Wakefield continued. The war came to an end in 1815, but the Corn Laws, with their heavy duties on foreign cereals, gave the Irish corn-grower a great advantage in the English market. The exports of grain, flour, and meal increased, until in 1845 they stood as follows:—

Wheat and flour	779,000	quarters.
Barley	93,000	"
Oats and Oatmeal	2,353,000	"

The returns of the period do not distinguish ground corn from unground, but, on a rough estimate, about two fifths of the total export was in the form of flour and meal, and it may be inferred that the old mills, whose ruins now sadden many an Irish glen and river valley, were still doing a prosperous business. Butter, bacon, porter, etc., were exported as before in undiminished quantities, but the trade in dead meat was fast being replaced by that in live cattle. The steamship and the railway train were now available to carry Irish cattle from Liverpool or Bristol to the inland cities of England. Great Britain was now covered with railroads, and Ireland was just beginning to follow suit, when the great catastrophe of the Famine broke unexpectedly on the land.

The causes of that disaster are not easy to trace, and indeed, in view of the terrible sufferings recorded, it seems a hateful thing to sit and philosophise over the whys and wherefores of such a national misfortune. However, it may be premised that the country was over-populated, considering its lack of industries. It was carrying three hundred souls to the square mile, nearly half as many again as the purely agricultural districts of England support at the present time, and, indeed, twice as many as Denmark, the model farming country of Europe. To maintain this teeming population the land was subdivided into a number of small holdings, each of which grew enough potatoes to feed a family, provided it was content to live on little else from year's end to year's end. Where an overcrowded people with a low standard of living is subsisting mainly on the produce of one particular crop, periodical famines are inevitable. The same causes lead to the same result, whether in India or Ireland. There had been sharp distress on several previous occasions, notably in 1822, but, with a less numerous population and, perhaps, a less complete reliance on the potato, the suffering had not been so great as it was destined to be in 1846 and 1847.

Another point to be noticed is that communications in Ireland were as yet undeveloped. At the beginning of 1846 there were only 65 miles of railway in the country. The Great Northern had only got as far as Drogheda ; the Great Southern, though in course of construction, was not yet open for traffic, and its engineers had so far not penetrated south of Carlow. Hence it was not easy for one region to aid another. There are many indications that the famine, though severe, was, to some extent, local. The remote and backward districts, where the potato was the only crop—West Cork, Kerry, Galway, Mayo, Donegal—the identical "Congested Districts" that require special treatment even now, were the worst afflicted and the hardest to relieve. So recently as 1891 relief measures had to be provided for these very localities, though Ireland as a whole was not much distressed. The midlands, in 1846, grew a good crop of corn, but it passed out of the country by export along the usual channels, going, as commodities will, to the best neighbouring market. In the absence of compulsory State purchase there was nothing to detain the corn in Ireland. The starving peasant in Mayo could not buy corn, even if he would. Irish rural economy, whether of tenant or labourer, was not based on a money system. The one took his food directly out of the ground ; the other received for his toil, not, as a rule, money, but a piece of ground, from which he, too, might produce his own food. Money wages or growing for a market were very unusual west of the Shannon. It was a peculiar subsistence, farming, in which failure of the chief crop meant starvation.

At all events the Famine, like the mediaeval Black Death, had a profound influence on the conditions of rural life. It gave rise to an enormous stream of emigration, overcoming at one bound the strong local attachments of the people. That stream has not yet ceased to flow, though the causes which originally produced it have now ceased to operate. Emigration is now a settled habit, and, as a nation, we are strongly wedded to our habits and averse to change. The small holder was hard hit by the Famine, and, either by death, emigration, or eviction, soon disappeared.

A change in popular diet was another outcome of this disastrous period. The treacherous potato fell from its position. The peasantry no longer trusted to it for its chief support. Gradually, as will be shown, other articles of food have crept into the Irish *menu*. This has had a most important and a most beneficial influence on social conditions.

Again, concurrently with the Famine, Ireland lost her privileges in the English corn market. One of the justifications alleged for the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 was that they hindered the despatch of cheap corn from America to relieve the scarcity. The Irish agriculturist found himself unable to

1851—1905. contend with the produce of the prairies of America or the steppes of Russia, both better adapted by nature to the growing of cereals than his own country. Except oats, little or no corn is now grown in Ireland. Since the fatal year 1847 an annual record has been kept of the acreage under the different crops in Ireland and the amount of their produce. A comparison of the returns for 1851 and those for 1905 will illustrate the trend of modern Irish farming:—

	1851.		1905.	
	Acres.	Produce. Qrs.	Acres.	Produce. Qrs.
Wheat	504,000	1,493,000	37,860	182,000
Oats	2,189,000	10,771,000	1,066,000	6,211,000
Barley Bere & Rye	355,000	1,758,000	164,000	887,000
Beans and Peas ..	49,000	160,000	1,724	8,910
Total Cereals ..	3,099,000	14,184,000	1,271,000	7,290,000
	—	Tons.	—	Tons.
Potatoes	868,000	4,442,000	616,000	3,423,000
Turnips	383,000	6,081,000	282,000	4,722,000
Other Green Crops	99,000	1,058,000	145,000	1,789,000
Total Green Crops	1,352,000	11,582,000	1,044,000	9,934,000
Flax	140,000	33,000	46,000	10,000
Meadow and Clover	1,246,000	2,518,000	2,294,000	5,322,000

It will be noticed that corn crops have uniformly gone down. Wheat has almost reached the vanishing point; oats and barley are down to one-half their former figures. Oats, however, though so diminished, are still a crop of some magnitude, amounting to about $1\frac{1}{2}$ quarters, or $4\frac{1}{2}$ cwt., per head of the population. Potatoes, turnips, and green crops generally are diminished about one-fourth. The average yield of potatoes is three quarters of a ton per head, and as the export is comparatively small, we may assume that each individual consumes about 1,500 lbs. per annum, or 4 lbs. per diem. The Irish peasant of the present day eats quite as many potatoes as his grandfather did in 1851, but, unlike his progenitor, is able to diversify his bill of fare with other cheap foods, mostly imported.

The only noteworthy increase during the period from 1851 to 1905 is in "Meadow and Clover," which has nearly doubled itself. The figures are symbolical of the new tendency, or rather, perhaps, the old tendency reasserting itself. Ireland

has become a country rearing animals on a scale never before equalled in her history. Here again the statistics of 1851 and 1905 may be compared.

		1851.	1905.
Cattle		2,967,000	4,645,000
Sheep		2,122,000	3,747,000
Pigs		1,084,000	1,164,000
Poultry		7,470,000	18,549,000

Cattle and sheep have nearly doubled themselves; pigs show an increase; poultry is nearly treble its former amount. The value of Ireland's live stock, as it stands, is £69,000,000. About one-fourth of the whole is disposed of annually by export to Great Britain, and brings in a return of about £12,000,000. But the profits of cattle-rearing do not end with the selling of live animals. Animal products, butter, bacon, eggs, hides, tallow, etc., earn large profits annually for the Irish producer. The export figures for the first three of these, taken from the returns of the Agricultural Department, show a very satisfactory result.

	Amount.	Value.
Eggs	.. 6,098,000 great hundreds.	£2,515,000
Bacon	.. 617,000 cwt.	£1,790,000
Butter	.. 685,000 „	£3,357,000
Total value of export ..		£7,662,000

In these commodities Ireland occupies a strong position, and enjoys a good reputation in the British market. But there is room for improvement. Irish eggs and butter diminish in quantity in the winter and give the foreigner a chance during the cold season of recovering whatever ground he may have lost during the summer.

By a singular coincidence, the imports of bacon almost exactly equal the exports. The explanation is that the Munster farmer, who, through the medium of a local factory, produces Irish bacon, does not eat the home-cured article, but uses the proceeds of the sale of his pigs to purchase cheap American bacon for his household. This is an instance of how modern Ireland grows most of her produce for a distant market, and is content to subsist her own population largely on imported food. It has been remarked that Ireland now raises very little wheat. Not one field in sixty is now devoted to this crop. To make up for the deficiency she imports 7,000,000 cwts. of wheat and 5,000,000 cwts. of flour annually. Maize, very little known in Ireland before the Famine, is now imported to the amount of 10,000,000 cwts. The individual

consumption per head of foreign wheat and flour is 3 cwts. per annum, very nearly a pound a day ; and of maize, $2\frac{1}{2}$ cwts., or about 10 ounces a day. These figures point to an increasing adoption of cereals in the daily diet, and the evidence of statistics is supported by observers of country life, who remark that tea, baker's bread, and, indeed, butcher's meat are now seen in houses where, fifty years ago, they were unheard-of luxuries. The cattle bring Ireland money, and the money is used to improve the conditions of life at home. The standard of living is being raised. Economically, as well as in other respects, the old land struggles on, "with painful steps and slow," to a better day.

What form that future will take no man can tell, and few will venture to prophesy. It is never safe to dogmatise or theorise too much about Irish affairs. Yet, if we may judge from the history of the past, the future should be bright. In spite of hindrances and disasters, of commercial restriction in one century and famines in another, there is a steady tendency towards improvement. Ireland to-day is vastly superior to the Ireland of Petty's day ; though less densely populated, it is richer, happier, and healthier than the Ireland of 1851. Trade and agriculture show different forms from time to time, but the results, taken in the mass, are better from year to year. There is no need to "despair of the republic." But in these days of world-wide competition, when France, Denmark, and Russia, Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and the Argentine, pour their products into our one great market, and even into Ireland itself ; when huge liners and fast trains annihilate distance, and every resource of science is turned by our competitors to advantage in agriculture, there will be need of unceasing effort, both of hand and brain, in this country, if we are to improve, nay, if we are to do no more than maintain our position.