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## CHAPTER X

### IRISH EMIGRATION<sup>1</sup>

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During the latter half of the seventeenth century the population of Ireland was variously estimated at from one to one and a half million people. Malthus estimates that it was about 1,250,000 in 1700 and this is probably as satisfactory a figure as can be obtained. At the beginning of the nineteenth century it had considerably more than trebled and was about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  millions. The first census of Ireland in 1821 revealed that there were 6,802,000 people in the country.<sup>2</sup> In 1831 the numbers were returned at 7,767,000<sup>3</sup> and in 1841 at 8,175,000. The population is believed to have reached its maximum in 1845 when the estimated numbers were 8,295,000.<sup>4</sup> Thus within a century and a half the inhabitants of the country increased more than 6-fold. In England and Wales the population at the opening of the eighteenth century is estimated at approximately  $5\frac{1}{2}$  millions. By 1801 it had increased to 8,892,000 and by 1841 to 15,909,000—a total increase of slightly less than 3-fold as compared with more than 6-fold in Ireland. During the eighteenth century the rate of increase in Ireland was approximately four times as great as in England and Wales. Thus even during a period when the industrial revolution was taking place in Great Britain and changing the country from an agricultural to a predominantly industrial one, Ireland which remained unindustrialized and solely dependent upon agriculture for the livelihood of the vast bulk of her population showed a rate of increase in the number of her inhabitants fully twice as great as in England and Wales.

<sup>1</sup>[See *International Migrations*, Volume I, pp. 729-736.—Ed.]

<sup>2</sup>The Census Commissioners considered that this number was "rather below than above the truth." *Census of Ireland, 1851. Pt. VI, General Report* (Dublin, 1856), p. VI.

<sup>3</sup>This figure is believed to be an overstatement. In 1831 the census was taken at different places at different times, extending over a considerable period. There was thus room for duplication. Further, the enumerators believed that they would be paid—in fact many were paid—in proportion to the numbers they enumerated. There was thus an incentive to over-statement.—*Loc. cit.*

<sup>4</sup>T. W. Grimshaw, "A Statistical Survey of Ireland 1840-1888."

This rapid increase in the population of Ireland may be briefly explained. (1) The standard of living among the Irish peasantry was miserably low. Their staple diet was potatoes and milk—not infrequently buttermilk—and no improvement in the living conditions of the peasantry occurred during the whole of the period under review. In England the first half of the eighteenth century witnessed an important change in the standard of living whereby wheat became the staple diet of the population. In Ireland, on the other hand, during the latter half of the seventeenth century, potatoes replaced cereals as the principal foodstuff. (2) The passage of Foster's Corn Law in 1785 under which a bounty was given on the exportation of Irish grain, the Napoleonic Wars which shut off England from continental grain, and subsequently the Corn Laws of 1815-46, under which Ireland obtained a preference for her cereals in Great Britain, led to a big increase in tillage and a sub-division of agricultural holdings. The absence of settlement laws, such as existed in England, allowed huts or mud cabins to be erected freely and to become the miserable dwellings of an army of cottiers. (3) The low electoral qualification in Ireland prior to 1829 led landowners to create large numbers of small freeholds on their estates on account of the increase in political power it afforded them, since they controlled the votes of their tenants. (4) The Roman Catholic Church, in the interests of morality, encouraged early marriages. The rarity of meeting an unmarried adult member of the community was commented on by Arthur Young in his account of his tour in Ireland in 1776-79.

Where children were an important source of wealth through their labor on the farms, where sustenance could be obtained from the potato crop supplemented by the milk of cows or of goats, and where no obstacle existed to the minute subdivision of holdings<sup>1</sup> and the creation of numerous miserable huts, there was virtually no check except famine to the natural increase of population. This drastic inhibiting factor was in evidence on several occasions in the eighteenth century—in 1727 and in 1739—while towards the close of that century, and during the first part of the nineteenth, shortage of food was an ever-present menace to a large number of the inhabitants.

Actually the increase in numbers was even greater than the

<sup>1</sup>Except between 1826 and 1832 when an Act was in force making sub-division illegal unless carried out with the consent of the landlord. The law, however, was easily evaded.

statistics show, for even prior to 1847 Ireland had a surplus of emigrants. Irish emigration during the eighteenth century was of two-fold character: (a) military, and (b) industrial. Large numbers of Irishmen served as mercenary soldiers in the service of France, Austria or Spain in almost every war which occurred during the earlier part of the century. Later in the century large numbers served in the British Army and Navy. The decline in the Irish woolen industry resulted in the emigration of many weavers and their families to France, Germany and Spain, and to the North American colonies. Further, during the depression in the linen trade which occurred after 1770, there was a steady stream of emigration—chiefly from Ulster—to the various British colonies on the Atlantic seaboard. A writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1774 estimated, from the tonnage of passenger ships to "America" between July 25, 1769 and June 25, 1774, that fully 43,720 persons sailed from the Ulster ports of Londonderry, Belfast, Newry, Larne and Portrush during those 5 years to different places in North America.<sup>1</sup> The emigrants were drawn from the best and most vigorous elements of the population. There was some slight compensation in a number of foreign immigrants. About 4,000 Palatines were settled in Limerick and Kerry in 1709, while considerable numbers of French Huguenots contributed richly to the economic prosperity of the country, particularly in the North, where their services to the linen industry were of the highest importance. Some English immigrants also arrived. But numerically immigration into Ireland since the seventeenth century has been insignificant.

In the early nineteenth century emigration to Europe had practically ceased, while the expense of a passage to the United States precluded the poorer classes of the country from finding an outlet across the Atlantic. But England was very near and was passing through a stage of development when there was a great opening for unskilled labor. In the eighteenth century the stringency of the Settlement Laws had hampered the movement from Ireland to the sister land. Bands of migratory laborers, however, appear to have begun to cross to England early in the eighteenth century in search of employment in harvesting. With the breakdown of restrictions on migration into England and Wales, as a result of the demand for labor which sprang up during the industrial revolution, and especially after the famine of 1823 the stream of emigrants across the Irish Channel increased. These emigrants to Great Britain were

<sup>1</sup>"Historical Chronicle", *The Gentleman's Magazine* (London), vol. 44, p. 332 (1774).

drawn from the poorest section of the community. Numbers were employed as unskilled laborers in the factories which had sprung up all over the North and the Midlands of England and in the Clyde and Forth valleys of Scotland. Others found employment as navvies during the boom in railway construction. Many, however, remained unabsorbed into industry and the dominant impression on the minds of contemporaries appears to have been one of hordes of Irish vagrants and beggars who constituted a real problem to the English Poor Law Authorities. The United States and the British Colonies also received increasing streams of emigration drawn from the better class of emigrants, since the poorer members of the community were cut off from the New World by the cost of the passage.

By 1845 the population of Ireland had increased to 8,250,000, while large numbers of emigrants had gone from her shores to supply "the chief part of the animal strength by which the great works of our manufacturing districts [in Great Britain] have been executed."<sup>1</sup> This steady increase in population could not be continued indefinitely especially when sustenance was dependant upon a crop so subject to disease as the potato. Moreover, the rapid progress in industrial development which was taking place in Great Britain and the United States was creating a steady demand for labor. Economic influences were making inevitable in the Old World, a flow of labor from agriculture towards industry. Such influences would have become particularly marked in Ireland with its low standard of living and lack of any property tie between the peasant and the land. During the early years of the century political, religious and sentimental reasons restrained emigration, but their influence could not for long have stemmed the development of a steady drift to the New World. The famine of 1845-47 opened the flood gates and hastened a movement which must sooner or later have taken place.

### *The Famine*

Before the calamity of 1845 the potato crop in Ireland had frequently failed, but never before was failure more widespread or more complete than in that and the following year. In 1845 the early crop escaped while the main crop was destroyed, but in 1846 the whole crop was reduced to a mass of decaying vegetation. These years brought a terrible mortality from starvation, illness and

<sup>1</sup>Sir George Cornwall Lewis, quoted by George O'Brien in *Economic History of Ireland from the Union to the Famine* (London, 1921), p. 170.

disease. "The recorded mortality for the last five years of the decennial period 1841-51 was as great as 985,366, or very nearly one million."<sup>1</sup> In those years also there was an enormous flow of emigration. Table 93 shows the estimated numbers of emigrants born in Ireland who left United Kingdom ports during the period June 30, 1841, to December 31, 1855. It includes persons born in Ireland but settled in some part of Great Britain at the time of emigrating.

TABLE 93.

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF IRISH EMIGRANTS FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM,  
TO VARIOUS DESTINATIONS, 1841-55.<sup>a</sup>  
(Thousands and Per cent of Totals)

Year	United States		British North America		Australasian Colonies		All other places		Annual Totals
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	
1841 <sup>b</sup>	12	70.4	2	10.7	3	18.8	....	0.1	16 <sup>b</sup>
1842	49	55.9	39	44.0	1	1.1	....	...	90
1843	23	62.4	14	36.2	0.5	1.4	....	...	38.
1844	37	68.6	16	30.4	0.5	1.0	....	...	54
1845	50	66.9	25	23.0	...	....	....	0.1	75
1846	68	64.2	38	35.8	...	....	....	..	106
1847	117	54.3	97	45.2	1	0.5	....	...	215
1848	154	86.2	23	13.8	2	1.0	....	...	178
1849	177	82.4	31	14.3	7	3.3	....	...	214
1850	181	86.4	24	11.7	4	1.9	....	...	209
1851	216	86.3	29	11.8	5	1.9	....	...	250
1852	193	87.4	22	9.8	6	2.8	....	...	220
1853	157	81.5	22	11.6	13	6.6	0.50	0.3	193
1854	111	73.9	23	15.3	16	10.8	....	...	150
1855	57	72.4	6	7.9	16	19.6	....	0.1	79
Total, 30-6-1841 to 31-12-1855	1,601	76.7	412	19.7	75	3.6	0.72	...	2,088

<sup>a</sup>*Census of Ireland, 1851. Part VI: General Report* (Dublin, 1856), p. iv.

<sup>b</sup>For the 6 months 30 June—31 December, 1841.

It appears that even prior to 1846 there was considerable Irish emigration to places outside the United Kingdom. This emigration enjoyed some government assistance and encouragement. Prior to 1834 state aid to emigration had been confined to occasional money grants, generally with the object of carrying out a definite scheme of

<sup>1</sup>*Census of Ireland, 1851. Pt. VI: Tables of Deaths* (Dublin, 1856), vol. I, p. 246.

colonization. In 1834, however, Emigration Officers were appointed at seven different ports in the United Kingdom, of which four—Dublin, Belfast, Cork and Limerick—were in Ireland, and only three—London, Bristol and Greenock—in Great Britain. In 1838 the Poor Law Relief Act gave Irish Boards of Guardians power, subject to the sanction of a special meeting of ratepayers, to levy an emigration rate. The provision for this special meeting was omitted from an Amending Act of 1843, while the Poor Law Relief Act of 1847 empowered the Poor Law Guardians, in certain cases, to assist landlords who were anxious to provide for the emigration of their destitute tenants by defraying one-third of the cost of emigration, two-thirds being paid by the landlords.

The efforts of the government were naturally directed towards encouraging emigration to the British colonies, especially to Australia which had ceased in 1840 to be a convict settlement. The effect of this policy may be read in the relatively high proportion of Irish emigrants to British North America and Australia prior to the famine. At the time of the famine the government appointed a Committee to consider emigration as a remedial measure for the sufferings of the community. The Committee did not prove helpful, however, and the stream of emigration enjoyed little or no government assistance or supervision.

In 1846 the number of emigrants, almost 106,000, for the first time exceeded the 100,000-mark. In 1847 the previous year's figure was doubled and yet these numbers do not give an adequate idea of the total emigration. It is stated<sup>1</sup> that from January 13 to November 1, 1847, 278,000 persons landed at Liverpool from Ireland. Of this number 123,000 sailed from that port to foreign countries. Some of the others probably sailed to the British colonies, but a number remained to swell the Irish colony in Liverpool. Similar migration, on a lesser scale, took place to and from other British ports. Altogether during the 8 years 1847-54 no less than 1,630,000 persons of Irish nationality left United Kingdom ports with the intention of making their homes beyond the sea.

In 1847 out of 215,000 Irish emigrants who left the United Kingdom 97,000 or 45.2 per cent were bound for Canada. This number represented an increase of practically 60,000 on the previous year, and the proportion of the total number of emigrants who sailed for British North America rose by almost 10 per cent, while

<sup>1</sup>Rt. Hon. Sir James O'Connor, *History of Ireland, 1898-1924* (London, 1925), vol. I, p. 228.

there was a corresponding decrease in the proportion who sailed for the United States. This great increase of immigration into Canada led to an increase of the head tax imposed upon immigrants,<sup>1</sup> which somewhat diverted the stream of emigration to the United States. This shift was further stimulated by the discovery of gold in California. In 1851 gold was found also in Australia and a greatly increased flow of Irish emigrants to that country resulted. In 1848 the proportion of Irish emigrants who went to the States rose to 86.2 per cent of the total number who left the United Kingdom, as compared with 54.3 per cent in the previous year. It remained at over 80 per cent of the total in each year up to 1853.

Between 1841 and 1851 the population of Ireland declined from 8,175,000 to 6,552,000, a decrease of 19.9 per cent. The density of population fell from 251 to 202 per square mile. The decrease was greatest in the rural districts where the population declined from 7,040,000 in 1841 to 5,334,000 in 1851, or by 24.2 per cent. Meanwhile the population of the civic areas (towns with more than 2,000 inhabitants) increased from 1,135,000 to 1,219,000, or by 6.8 per cent, due to a drift from the country to the towns in an endeavor to escape the effects of the famine. The decrease in population caused by emigration and famine was accompanied by an increase in the area under crops and pasture from 13,464,300 acres in 1841 to 14,802,581 acres in 1851 or 9 per cent. This increase in the cultivated area and decline in population brought about a considerable reduction in the density of the rural population—from 335 persons per square mile of cultivated land in 1841 to 231 in 1851.

During the eighteenth century the emigrants from Ireland had been drawn from the most vigorous and most industrialized sections of the community. The effect of the depopulation in the years after 1846, however, was to remove from the island the poorest inhabitants or those who had been living on the margin of subsistence. Table 94 (page 268) shows the reduction in the number of the poorest class of houses between 1841 and 1851.

Thus while there was a reduction of 356,000 or nearly three-fourths in the number of single-room mud cabins, the dwelling houses of all three superior classes increased in number. The decline in the number of mud cabins was a reflex of the clearance of large numbers of small holdings, upon which the occupiers had eked out a miserable livelihood, and the consolidation of these holdings into larger farms.

<sup>1</sup>Report of the Emigration Commissioners for the United Kingdom for 1851, quoted in *Census of Ireland, 1851*. Pt. VII: *General Report* (Dublin. 1856), p. 151.



TABLE 94.

NUMBER AND PER CENT OF INHABITED HOUSES, BY CLASSES,  
1841 AND 1851.

Class of House <sup>a</sup>	Number		Per Cent	
	1841	1851	1841	1851
First.....	40,080	50,164	3.0	4.8
Second.....	264,184	318,758	19.9	30.5
Third.....	533,297	541,712	40.1	51.8
Fourth.....	491,278	135,589	37.0	12.9
Total.....	1,328,839	1,046,223	100.0	100.0

<sup>a</sup>The classification was thus described by the Census Commissioners for 1851: "In the lowest or 4th class, all mud cabins having only one room; in the 3rd a better description of cottage, still built of mud, but varying from two to four rooms and windows; in the 2nd a good farm house or, in towns, a house in a small street, having from five to nine rooms and windows, and in the 1st class all better houses." (*Report on Census of 1851*, p. XXIII).

Table 95 shows the changes in the number of different sized holdings which occurred during the two decades.

The reduction of 382,000 in number of holdings of under 15 acres is not far from the reduction of 356,000 in the number of single-room mud cabins. The general result was to effect a considerable improvement in the economic well-being of the population. The Census Commissioners for 1851 prepared Table 96 showing the progress of the country during the previous decade.

TABLE 95.

NUMBER OF HOLDINGS OF SPECIFIED SIZE.  
(In Thousands)

Size of Holding	1841	1851	1861	Change
Under 1 acre.....	134	36	42	-92
One to 5 acres.....	310	88	85	-225
Five to 15 acres.....	253	192	184	-69
Fifteen to 30 acres.....	79	141	141	+62
Over 30 acres.....	49	149	158	+109
Exceeding one acre.....	691	570	568	-23

TABLE 96

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING IN IRELAND COMPARED, 1841 AND 1851.

Census Year	Percentage of:		
	Persons (5 years old and upwards) who could neither read nor write.	Families occupying only 4th class accomodation	Families dependent on their own manual labor.
1841	56	43.5	67.9
1851	50	21.8	49.0

In commenting on this table the Commissioners remark: "The great mass of the emigrants from Ireland is composed of the poorer classes who, being withdrawn from the population, must diminish the proportions of the illiterate, of persons occupying fourth class house accomodation, and of those dependent on their own manual labor for support."<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately this improvement in national prosperity was accompanied by a vast amount of individual suffering. The flight from starvation during 1847 and 1848 was followed by years in which the inability of the peasantry to eke out a livelihood on their small patches of land forced them to abandon their holdings either voluntarily or by eviction for the non-payment of rent. In some cases the efforts of landlords to improve their farms by the consolidation of the smaller holdings also led to the dispossession of the small cottier class.

The wave of emigration caused by the famine drove the number of Irish emigrants from the United Kingdom up to 215,000 in 1847, it receded to 178,000 in 1848, increased to 214,000 in the following year and almost maintained this level in 1850 when 209,000 persons emigrated. The maximum figure of 250,000 was reached in 1851. Thereafter the numbers began to diminish, although the annual flow of Irish emigration remained high for, as their prosperity increased, the colonies of Irish settlers abroad attracted large numbers of fresh emigrants. Speaking of the stream of Irish people who were annually leaving the country the Emigration Commissioners for the United Kingdom in their *Report for 1851* remarked:

The misery which they have for many years endured has destroyed their attachment to their native soil, the numbers who have already

<sup>1</sup>*Census of Ireland 1851. Part VI: General Report* (Dublin, 1856), p. XXXVII.

emigrated and prospered, remove the apprehension of going to a strange and untried country, while the want of means is remedied by the liberal contributions of their relatives and friends who have preceded them. The contributions so made either in the form of prepaid passages or of money sent home and which are almost exclusively provided by the Irish, were returned to us as in 1848 upwards of £460,000; 1849 upwards of £540,000; 1850 upwards of £957,000; 1851 upwards of £990,000,<sup>1</sup> and although it is probable that all the money included in these returns is not expended in emigration, yet as we have reason to know that much is sent home of which these returns show no trace, it seems not unfair to assume that of the money expended in Irish emigration in each of the last four years a very large proportion was provided from the other side of the Atlantic.

The amount of Irish emigrants' remittance has continued to be considerable and has constituted an important item in the trade balance of the country. During the years immediately after the famine it appears to have been customary for one or two members of a family to emigrate and to work out the passage money for the rest who were sent for as soon as this passage money was available and the prospect of employment in their new home seemed favorable. Later the remittances also took the form of pensions to aged members of the family who remained at home. Large numbers of passages, however, continued to be paid for in America.

Information was obtained in 1904 about the number of emigrants whose passages were pre-paid. During the seven years ending with 1910, there were 226,000 natives of Ireland who left the country with the intention of settling elsewhere. This number included 163,000 steerage passengers to the United States, of whom 58,000 or 35.4 per cent, had their passages paid for in America.<sup>2</sup>

Statistics collected by the Irish Registrar General from May 1, 1851, onward show the number of emigrants (natives of Ireland) who left the country in each year. The number from May 1 to December 31, 1851 was 152,000 and the Registrar General estimated that the total for that year was 228,000. The numbers steadily declined until 1856 when they were 91,000. In the following year they increased to 95,000 but dropped to 64,000 in 1858.<sup>3</sup>

The immediate influence of the famine and of the reorganization

<sup>1</sup>In 1852 the amount was £1,404,000, in 1853 it was £1,439,000 and in 1854 it had risen to £1,730,000. After that £1,000,000 was not exceeded in any year during the period up to 1878. The amounts refer not exclusively to Irish remittances, but to all sums sent by successful emigrants in North America to friends at home. The Irish contributions, however, were always the most important item.

<sup>2</sup>*Census of Ireland, 1911. General Report* (Dublin, 1913), p. LX.

<sup>3</sup>Natives of other countries who emigrated from Irish ports up to the year 1857 were not separately tabulated and are included in the returns prior to 1858. [See Volume I, p. 730, Table I.—Ed.]

of Irish agriculture which followed it appears to have largely worked itself out by 1855 or 1856. Thereafter emigration from the island continued to decrease but periods when a pronounced upward movement was in evidence interrupted, sometimes for several years, the secular trend. The general causes of the decline in emigration are the improved economic condition of the country, the decrease in the number of the agricultural classes from which the emigrants were principally drawn, and towards the close of the century the effect of the various Land Purchase Acts in binding the farming community to the land. The result of these Acts was virtually to turn Ireland into a land of peasant proprietors, a class notorious for their reluctance to leave home. The fluctuations in the numbers departing annually were considerable, due to the operation of temporary causes such as the condition of the Irish harvest and—to a less extent—conditions in the United States, Great Britain and Canada.

The two periods subsequent to 1854 during which the interruption of the downward movement in emigration was most marked, were the years following 1862 and 1879.

A succession of bad harvests preceded the year 1863. The yield of potatoes, which remained an important item in the diet of Irish peasants, probably exerted a greater influence on the flow of emigration than any other crop. It is, therefore, instructive to review briefly the variation in the yield of this crop during the latter portion of the nineteenth century. During the decade 1851-60 the average yield in Ireland was 4.5 tons per acre. During the early years of this decade, however, a considerable portion of the potato crop on the smaller holdings was cultivated by spade labor and was fertilized by abundant applications of fertilizers, including seaweed, sand, and lime, much of which was carted for long distances. During the first 5 years of this decade the average yields were, successively: 5.1, 4.8, 6.4, 5.1 and 6.4 tons. During the next 4 years, 1856-60 the average yields were 4.0, 3.1, 4.2 and 3.6 tons. These latter figures are more representative of the returns secured from the crop during the last 4 decades of the nineteenth century than are the high yields of the early '50's. The decennial averages from 1861 to 1900 were as follows:

	<i>Tons per acre</i>
1861-1870	3.2
1871-1880	3.0
1881-1890	3.5
1891-1900	3.7

In 1860, 1861 and 1862, however, the yields of potatoes were only 2.3, 1.6, and 2.1 tons, respectively. The yields of wheat, oats and barley in 1861, also were all lower than in any other year since 1847, the first year for which agricultural statistics of Ireland were collected. Further, in the case of turnips, mangels and cabbage extremely poor yields were obtained during the years following 1858. During the earlier of these years the American Civil War tended to check emigration, but in 1863 the numbers who left Ireland increased greatly, so that in this and the two succeeding years the number of emigrants exceeded 100,000 annually. In only one subsequent year, 1883, did the number of emigrants again reach this level.

After 1863 the number of emigrants slowly declined but even in 1867, four years later, the number was over 80,000. In 1868 it declined to 61,000; but increased again in 1869 and in each of the years 1870, 1871, and 1872, exceeded the 70,000-level. With the exception of 1866 and 1867 when the potato crop averaged 2.9 tons and 3.1 tons respectively—both slightly below the decennial average of 3.2 tons—the harvests between 1863 and 1870 were all good. Even in the poorest two years—1866 and 1867—the harvest was far from being a failure and had little apparent influence on the number of emigrants. In 1871, however, the yield of potatoes fell to 2.6 tons per acre and in 1872 to 1.8 tons—the poorest crop since 1861. In 1872 the yields of wheat, oats, barley, turnips and mangels were all appreciably below the 10-years average for 1871–80, while in 1871 the yield of flax was the poorest on record. The effect of these bad harvests was to increase emigration in 1873 to 90,000, the highest figure since 1866. The years following 1873, however, witnessed a rapid reduction in the number of emigrants until in 1876 only 38,000 persons left the country—the smallest number before 1894. Thereafter there was a slight annual increase and in 1879 the number was 47,000. The yield of potatoes in the three years 1874 to 1876 was extremely good. In the latter year it was 4.7 tons per acre, the highest yield obtained since 1855. A series of years then occurred during which rather poor crops were obtained. In 1877 the yield was only 2 tons. In 1878 it was 3 tons and equal to the decennial average for 1871–80. In 1879, however, this crop was only 1.3 tons—the poorest return ever obtained from the potato crop in Ireland during the whole period for which agricultural statistics have been collected. The year 1879 was a disastrous one, the harvest of the other crops also being poor. The effect upon emigration was immediate and marked, the numbers who left the

country in 1880 increased to 96,000, or slightly more than double the number in the previous year.

The year 1879 is remembered in British agriculture as the "Black Year." Disastrous in itself, it heralded the coming of a prolonged period of falling prices, intensified trans-oceanic competition, and depression in practically all branches of agriculture. In Great Britain the drift from the land to the town became more pronounced; in Ireland the stream of emigration swelled to volumes unknown since the early '60's. In 1881 and 1882 the numbers of persons who left the country, although lower than in 1880, yet remained very high. In 1882 a rather poor harvest occurred, especially in the case of the potato crop which gave only 2.4 tons per acre—over a ton less than the average of 3.5 tons for the ten years 1881–90. The following year the number of emigrants jumped to 109,000—a figure only exceeded during the years 1851–54, 1863 and 1864. In 1884 the number fell to 76,000 but the flow of emigration remained high, fluctuating between 61,000 and 83,000 during the next 6 years, and did not fall below 60,000 until 1891. It was not until the last decade of the century that emigration from Ireland declined to the level it had reached between 1875 and 1879. In 1894 the emigrants numbered only 36,000, less than any previously returned, but following the poor yield of potatoes in that year—2.6 tons per acre—their number rose to 49,000 in 1895. On the other hand the bad harvest of 1897—2.2 tons per acre—had little immediate effect and the number who left the country in 1898 was the smallest since 1851. The two following years, however, showed increases.

During the first decade of the twentieth century emigration from Ireland was on a smaller scale than at any recorded period during the nineteenth century. The only year in which the number of emigrants exceeded 40,000 was 1902. The outbreak of the War in 1914 restricted emigration, especially during 1917–19. With the restoration of peace came a gradual increase in the number of emigrants; but no such rush as occurred in many European states. In 1920 the numbers from all Ireland rose to 16,000 as compared with 3,000 in the previous year. In 1921 the numbers were 14,000. The statistics compiled by the Irish Registrar-General were not continued beyond that date, and 1924 is the first complete year for which returns are available for the Irish Free State.<sup>1</sup> They show that 19,000 persons emigrated to places out of Europe and not

<sup>1</sup>[Volume I, p. 734, Table IV.—Ed.]

within the Mediterranean Sea. In 1925 the numbers were 30,180 and were 30,041 in 1926. Including emigrants from North Ireland, the total emigration from Ireland to non-European countries was 27,000 in 1924, rose to 39,000 in 1925 and attained 43,000 in 1926. This last figure is the highest recorded since 1900 when the number of emigrants was over 45,000 including 6,000 to Great Britain. The figures for the years 1924-26 do not cover emigrants to Great Britain who were included in the tables showing Irish emigration from 1851 to 1921. The increase in emigration which has occurred since the war is thus all the more marked. There can be little doubt that its cause is to be found in the industrial and more especially the agricultural depression which has been experienced during the last few years.

The prolonged stream of emigration from Ireland during the past 80 years has resulted in a progressive decline in the population of the country, as shown by each census since 1841, and presented in Table 97.

TABLE 97.  
AMOUNT AND RATE OF CHANGE IN THE POPULATION OF IRELAND,  
1821-1926.  
(In Thousands and Per Cents)

Census Year	Total Population	Actual Change	Per Cent of Change
1821	6,802	.....	.....
1831	7,767	+966	+14.2
1841	8,175	+408	+5.3
1845 <sup>a</sup>	8,295 <sup>a</sup>	+120 <sup>a</sup>	+1.5 <sup>a</sup>
1851	6,552	-1,623	-19.9
1861	5,799	-753	-11.5
1871	5,413	-387	-6.7
1881	5,175	-238	-4.4
1891	4,705	-470	-9.1
1901	4,459	-246	-5.2
1911	4,390	-69	-1.5
1921	no census was taken in this year		
1926	4,229	-161	-3.7

<sup>a</sup>Estimate, see p. 261.

The foregoing account of emigration from Ireland would be incomplete without a reference to the numbers of migratory laborers who left the country for a few months in each year as harvesters

in Great Britain. This emigration of agricultural laborers, chiefly from certain districts of Connaught and Ulster, appears to have been in operation since early in the eighteenth century. The first occasion upon which statistical enquiry was made regarding the numbers involved was in 1841, when it was estimated by the Census Commissioners that approximately 40,000 migratory laborers went to England and Scotland. No particulars are available regarding the intervening period up to 1880 when an annual enumeration was instituted. The number of harvest laborers in that year was approximately 35,000. Between 1880 and 1888 the numbers fell probably as a consequence of the agricultural depression in Great Britain during these years. From 1888 until the end of the century there was an increase, and the number in 1901 was estimated at about 30,000. Since the beginning of the present century there has been a rapid decline in the numbers. During the years immediately prior to the war they had fallen to less than 10,000. No particulars are available regarding the post-war years, but the numbers are now insignificant.

During the seventy years under review there have been several marked changes in the number of emigrants of the two sexes.<sup>1</sup> Immediately after the Famine, and down to 1855 the numbers of males and of females were nearly equal. The following figures (Table 98) for these years reproduce, to the nearest thousand, those in the census of 1871.<sup>2</sup>

TABLE 98.  
EMIGRANTS FROM IRELAND, BY SEX, 1851-1855.  
(In Thousands)

Years	Males	Females	Totals
1851	114	114	228
1852	95	95	190
1853	85	88	173
1854	72	69	141
1855	45	47	92

The effect of the famine had been to uproot whole families from their homes and to send them forth to seek a new abode in Great

<sup>1</sup>[See Volume I, page 730, Table I.—Ed.]

<sup>2</sup>*Census of Ireland, 1871. Pt. III: General Report (Dublin, 1876), p. 193.*



Britain or beyond the sea. The exodus had more in common with the flight of refugees from the war smitten and war devastated countries of southeastern Europe and Asia Minor after the recent war than with normal emigration. Women and men shared in this flight from starvation, but the special disadvantages of their sex left large numbers of women still dependent upon the Poor Law Guardians for support. In the early '50's many districts of Ireland found themselves burdened with large numbers of female paupers and under the powers given by the Poor Law Relief Act of 1847 arrangements were made to send several parties of women out to Canada. The results of this system of assisted emigration appear to have been extremely satisfactory, and it was continued for a number of years.<sup>1</sup>

Subsequent to 1855 the character of Irish emigration changed. For some years after 1847 the area of land plowed was maintained undiminished, indeed for a few years there was an upward movement. From the late '50's and early '60's onward, however, there was a progressive decline in the area under tillage. Consolidation of agricultural holdings (see Table 95 on p. 268) had practically ceased. The number of holdings exceeding 30 acres in area increased from under 49,000 in 1841 to over 157,000 in 1861, but thereafter remained fairly steady. Emigration of families due to the absorption of the smaller holdings thus declined. But the prosperity of the Irish emigrants in the New World, the tendency towards agricultural decline in the island itself, and the obstacles in the way of subdivision of farms when land owners were endeavoring to improve the value of their estates by the elimination of small uneconomic holdings<sup>2</sup> led the youth of the country to look across the Atlantic as the principal outlet for ambition and enterprise. In a new country the demand for male laborers was considerably greater than for females, and the excess of males over females in the emigration figures during the decade following 1865 is specially marked. Thereafter the discrepancy in numbers becomes gradually less pronounced, and in 1885 the number of female emigrants exceeded the number of males for the first time since 1855.

Despite the preponderance of male emigration during the previous 30 years it is probable that the number of females who were assisted to emigrate was greater than the number of males. Reference has already been made to the assistance given by the Poor

<sup>1</sup>S. C. Johnson, *History of Emigration from the United Kingdom* (1913), p. 256 f.

<sup>2</sup>The Land Purchase Acts forbid subdivision for two generations.

Law Guardians and it is stated<sup>1</sup> that during the '70's one individual benefactor gave assistance towards the emigration of no fewer than 15,000 women from the poorer districts in Ireland.

After 1892 there followed a period during which the preponderance of female emigrants was as marked as had been the excess of males during the previous years. Later during 1905-15 there was again—except in 1908—an annual excess of male emigrants. Between 1916 and 1921 there was an excess of females.<sup>2</sup>

The majority of Irish female emigrants, other than married women accompanying or going out to join their husbands, have been attracted by the demand for domestic servants in the country in which they intend to settle—generally the United States. The greater number of emigrants of this class have been young and the Census Commissioners for 1871,<sup>3</sup> writing of a time when the proportion of males was particularly high, pointed out that during the previous decade during which 470,000 males and 380,000 females had left the country the female emigrants between 15 and 20 years of age exceeded the males. The totals between these ages were 39,000 males and 50,000 females, and the preponderance of the latter is ascribed to the large number of young girls who emigrated to enter domestic or farm service in the United States or in the British colonies.

The preponderance of emigrants between the ages of 15 and 24 has been a noteworthy feature of the emigration statistics of Ireland since 1856, the year in which an age classification of emigrants was introduced.<sup>4</sup> Indeed the relative number in this age group has tended to increase. Prior to 1880 the emigrants in this category had never exceeded 50 per cent of the total. From 1880 to 1916, however, more than half of the emigrants from Ireland annually were between these ages. Between 1887 and 1893 the proportion rose to over 60 per cent of the total, but declined somewhat between 1894 and 1903. In 1904 they again numbered more than 60 per cent of the total and maintained this level in each year except 1908 up to and including 1914.

After the Famine the vast majority of Irish emigrants made their way to the United States. Between June 30, 1841 and December 31, 1855, there were 2,089,000 of Irish birth who left the United Kingdom. Of this number 1,601,000, or 76.7 per cent, went to

<sup>1</sup>S. C. Johnson, *op. cit.* p. 257.

<sup>2</sup>[See Volume I, p. 730.—Ed.]

<sup>3</sup>*Census of Ireland, 1871, Pt. III: General Report* (Dublin, 1876), p. 192.

<sup>4</sup>[See Volume I, p. 732 f., Table III.—Ed.]

the North American republic, the annual ratio from 1848 to 1853 being above 80 per cent and reaching its maximum of 87.4 per cent in 1852. In 1876 when the Irish Registrar-General's returns began to show the destination of emigrants the stream of emigration from Ireland had fallen below the lowest figure previously recorded.<sup>1</sup> During the next three years, 1876-79, it remained low, the annual number of emigrants to the United States was less than half the total emigration including emigration to Great Britain. In 1880 the number of emigrants increased sharply to more than double the figure for the previous year while the number destined for the North American republic trebled. Thereafter, in each year from 1880 to 1916 more than half the emigrants from Ireland sailed for the United States.

In each of the years 1880 to 1914 the proportion of emigrants destined for the States was more than two-thirds of the total. In 1880, 1881, 1885-1907, 1909, 1910 and 1914 the proportion exceeded three-fourths of the total; in 1885-1904 it was more than 80 per cent of the total, while during the decade 1890-1900 and also in 1902 and 1903 it exceeded five-sixths of all the emigrants leaving the country. The highest proportion of emigrants to the States occurred during the period 1892-96. During each of these years the percentage of emigrants to the States exceeded 90 per cent of the total, and the peak year was 1893 when the percentage was 93.9. Emigration to the United States declined after August 1914 and was negligible in 1917-18. Since the war, large numbers of Irish emigrants have turned again to the Republic, whither 83.7 per cent of all emigrants were destined in 1921. In 1926, however, the proportion of emigrants to the United States had fallen to 67.5 per cent.

With the exception of 1885 the year 1893 was the first in which the number of female emigrants from Ireland exceeded the males. This condition continued until 1905 when a preponderance of males again appeared. Between 1887 and 1893, also, the number of emigrants between 15 and 24 years of age annually exceeded 60 per cent of the total. Speaking generally, a large emigration to the United States appears to correspond with large proportions of young people and females among the emigrants. The two features are not unconnected since unmarried Irish females who emigrate leave the country at an early age, and the States have attracted young unattached emigrants to a greater extent than older people with families. It has indeed been a subject of frequent comment

<sup>1</sup>[Volume I, page 731.—Ed.]

that Irish emigrants to the United States, although drawn predominantly from the land, have congregated in the cities. Emigrants leaving Ireland to try their fortune as farmers or agricultural laborers in a new country have preferred one of the British colonies, and in recent years especially Canada. That Dominion has also been the principal field for family settlement.

In 1876 the country attracting the largest number of Irish emigrants was Great Britain which received 17,000. In the following year the number rose to 20,000 as compared with a total of only 18,000 to all other countries. The large Irish colonies in Liverpool, the Clyde Valley, and other towns and districts of Great Britain date from about the middle of the 19th century. In their report on the census of 1871 the Scottish Census Commissioners commented unfavorably on the large Irish element in the population. They remarked<sup>1</sup> that in 1820, "an invasion or immigration of the Irish race began which slowly increased until it obtained enormous dimensions after 1840, when the railways began to be constructed over the country. . . . Already in many of our towns do the persons born in Ireland constitute from 5 to 15 per cent of the population and if we include their children born in this country from 10 to 30 per cent of the population of these towns consists of the Irish Celtic race." The County of Scotland in which the proportion of Irish-born persons was highest in 1871 was Lanark with 13.7 per cent, followed by Renfrew with 12.9 per cent. The total number of Irish-born persons residing in Scotland was 208,000 or 6.2 per cent of the total population, an increase of 4,000 since 1861. In England and Wales the number of inhabitants of Irish birth was 567,000 in 1871 or 2.5 per cent of the population—a decrease of 35,000 during the preceding years. The county with the largest number of Irish settlers was Lancashire where the Irish-born constituted 7.1 per cent of the population. From 1877 until about the middle of the last decade of the nineteenth century the number of Irish emigrants to Great Britain steadily and rapidly declined. In 1893 the number was only 1,352. Thereafter there was a slow upward movement to over 6,000 in 1901. The number fell to about 5,000 in the following year and then fluctuated around 3,500 until 1908. A further downward movement then set in and by 1914 the numbers were only 1,047. A slight increase occurred during the war years but in 1921 the number fell as low as 387. The industrial depression in Great Britain during the past few years has checked Irish emigration to the sister island.

<sup>1</sup>Quoted in *Census of Ireland, 1871*, Pt. III: *General Report*, p. 9.

After Great Britain and the United States, Canada has been the country which has attracted the greatest number of Irish emigrants. Large numbers of Irish settlers landed in British North America at the time of the Famine. Thereafter, however, there appears to have been a great reduction in the number of emigrants to Canada and the returns for 1876 show less than a thousand emigrants to that country. With the expansion in emigration which took place from 1879 onwards, the number of emigrants to Canada increased. The highest figure, 11 070, was reached in 1883 but thereafter there was a steady decline and between 1892 and 1902 the number of emigrants sailing to the Dominion annually was less than a thousand. After 1903 Canada again attracted large numbers of Irish emigrants. In 1913 the number was 7,000 while in 1926 it was over 8,000. Arrangements have now been made by the Canadian Government whereby emigrants proposing to engage in farm work can obtain passages for the small sum of £2.

In 1876 the number of Irish emigrants to Australia greatly outnumbered those to Canada. The maximum figure of 6,009 was reached in 1883, the same year in which emigration to Canada reached its zenith. Thereafter the movement has been dwindling, and in only one year since 1892 has the number of Irish sailing to Australia exceeded 1,000.

Emigration to New Zealand has, on the whole, followed a similar trend, in fact the decline in emigration appears to have set in a few years earlier. The greatest number recorded was 3,166 in 1879. There have been many years since 1888 in which the number was less than 100; in no year since 1887 has it exceeded 300.

Emigration to South Africa recorded since 1901, has been small, the highest figure being 678 in 1903.

Irish emigration evidently has gone predominantly to North America, to Great Britain, and to Australasia. Since the last decade of the nineteenth century the movement to Great Britain and Australasia also has fallen to a relatively insignificant position. At no time has emigration to other countries been important.

The Irish statistics regarding emigration do not take into account the previous occupation of the emigrants in Ireland. There is little question, however, that the majority of those who left the country were agricultural laborers or small farmers. The decline in the urban population of Ireland during the past 85 years has been much less than that of the rural districts. An interesting table in the Irish Free State preliminary report on the census of 1926 shows

that "since 1841 the 'country districts' lost 64.4 per cent of their population, towns of 200 to 500 lost 49.1 per cent, towns of 500 to 2,000 lost 43.0 per cent, towns of 2,000 to 5,000 lost 33.3 per cent, towns of 5,000 to 10,000 lost 25 per cent, towns over 10,000 (other than Dublin and its four adjoining urban districts) lost 13 per cent, while Dublin and its four adjoining urban districts gained 47 per cent."<sup>1</sup> In this comparison the greater depopulation of the country districts and the smaller towns and villages is clearly brought out.

The number of agricultural laborers in Ireland has declined greatly. Table 99, taken from the report relating to Irish agricultural laborers for 1913,<sup>2</sup> shows the total number of agricultural and general laborers (excluding those living in Dublin, Belfast, Cork, Londonderry and Waterford) in Ireland in each of the census years from 1871 to 1911. The census authorities state that a large proportion of the persons returned as general laborers may be assumed to be engaged in agriculture.<sup>3</sup>

TABLE 99.

NUMBER OF AGRICULTURAL AND GENERAL LABORERS, CLASSIFIED BY SEX, FOR CENSUS YEARS, 1871-1911.  
(In Thousands)

Census Year	Agricultural Laborers			General Laborers		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
1871	447	63	509	195	20	215
1881	300	36	336	105	9	114
1891	258	22	280	83	5	87
1901	218	14	232	77	2	79
1911	196	4	200	10	1	102

Prior to the war complaints were frequent that there was a real shortage of qualified agricultural laborers.

The Irish Free State emigration returns for 1924 show that out of a total of 10,000 male emigrants over 18 years of age, no fewer than 8,000 were drawn from agriculture. Of the remainder 669 were drawn from skilled trades, 515 from "commercial, finance, insur-

<sup>1</sup>*Census of Irish Free State, 1926: Preliminary Report* (Dublin, 1913), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>*Agricultural Statistics, Ireland 1913. Report and Tables relating to Irish agricultural Labourers* (Dublin, 1913).

<sup>3</sup>See *Census of Ireland, 1911: General Report* (Dublin, 1913), p. XXVII.

ance" and 278 from "professional and independent" classes. In the case of females, out of a total of 7,000 over 18 years of age, no fewer than 6,000 were domestic servants many of whom probably came from country homes and 967 "wives or housewives not otherwise described."<sup>1</sup>

*Immigration.*

Prior to 1923 no particulars were collected regarding Ireland's immigration. The number of immigrants, however, has not been large at any time within the past two centuries. The proportion of British-born at successive censuses is shown in Table 100.

TABLE 100.  
PER CENT OF BRITISH-BORN IN POPULATION OF IRELAND, 1841-1911.

Census Year	British-born Per Cent	Census Year	British-born Per Cent
1841	0.38	1881	1.77
1851	0.71	1891	2.16
1861	1.16	1901	2.41
1871	1.63	1911	2.93

In 1841 only 0.05 per cent of the population were born outside the United Kingdom. There was a slow increase in this percentage at each decennial census, but in 1911 it had risen to only 0.64, giving a total of 3.57 per cent of the population in that year born outside Ireland, a small proportion but eight times as large as it was seventy years before.

In 1924 there were 2,500 immigrants of Irish nationality admitted into the Irish Free State, of these 1,460 were from the United States, 333 from British North America, 203 from Australia, and 503 from "other countries." Out of a total of 891 aliens who arrived in the Irish Free State in the last nine months of that year 880 were from the United States.<sup>2</sup> The high proportion of immigrants from the United States reflects the important place which that country has occupied in the history of Irish emigration. In the development of American industry Irishmen have played an active part and although those who have subsequently returned from the States to the land of their origin have been relatively few yet they have constituted the bulk of Irish immigrants from abroad.

<sup>1</sup>[Volume I, p. 734, Table V.—Ed.]

<sup>2</sup>[Volume I, p. 735, Tables VII and VIII.—Ed.]