

THE
LAND QUESTION,
IRELAND.

No. 1.

NOTES

UPON THE

GOVERNMENT VALUATION OF LAND
IN IRELAND,
COMMONLY KNOWN AS "GRIFFITH'S VALUATION.

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NOTES

UPON THE

Government Valuation of Land in Ireland,

ONE result of the Land Agitation carried on in Ireland during the past year has been to bring prominently under public notice the question of the valuation of the country. Both on the platform at land meetings, and in that portion of the Irish press which professes to sympathise with the aims of the agitators, the Government Valuation—"Griffith's Valuation," as it is commonly called—has been represented as the legitimate measure and standard of rent, any demand above which must of necessity be arbitrary and excessive.

There is, no doubt, a good deal of plausibility in this representation. Most persons unacquainted with the facts would, not unnaturally, conclude that the valuation of an agricultural country must mean an estimate of the letting value of its soil for agricultural purposes, and that, if carefully and impartially made, such a valuation would coincide with the rent which, one year with another, an industrious tenant could afford to pay. Whether a valuation thus theoretically perfect is attainable in practice, or whether, if attainable, it would be desirable, does not fall within our present purpose to inquire. The question which we propose to consider is, whether the Government Valuation of Ireland now in force

affords a fair and uniform standard of the letting value of Irish land under the ordinary circumstances of the country. To enable us to answer this question, we must examine the history of the valuation, the principles upon which it was based, and the manner in which it was carried into effect. Fortunately the materials for such examination are abundant, and readily accessible.

Passing by earlier surveys and valuations, which are now interesting merely as matters of Irish history, the first undertaken in recent times by the authority of Parliament was the Townland Valuation of Ireland, which was authorised in 1826 by the 7th Geo. 4, cap. 62, but was not commenced until 1830. The object of this valuation was to afford a uniform basis for the assessment of county cess and other local charges levied by the grand juries. The Commissioner appointed to carry it out was the late Sir R. Griffith, Bart., who also carried out the subsequent valuations, and who continued at the head of the Valuation Department until the end of 1868.

The Townland Valuation Act contained, like all the subsequent Acts on the same subject, a schedule or scale of prices of agricultural produce, according to which the valuation should be made, but gave no clear directions as to how this scale should be applied; and Sir R. Griffith adopted the system of having a valuation made of the land at the current prices of the day, with reference to the intrinsic capabilities of the soil,

estimated by an examination of the soil and subsoil, which primary valuation was afterwards modified according to peculiar local circumstances, and ultimately adjusted to the scale of prices laid down in the Act. This scale had been ascertained in 1816 or 1817, soon after the conclusion of the French war, at a time when the prices of agricultural produce were brought to a very low ebb by the reaction consequent on the fall of Buonaparte, and was in fact two and sixpence in the pound— $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.—below the prices ascertained by Sir R. Griffith to have prevailed in the five years preceding 1830, when the townland valuation was begun.

Under the Poor-law Act (1 & 2 Vic., cap. 56), a new valuation of each separate tenement was authorised to meet the requirements of the assessment of poor-rates. This valuation was made by the guardians of each poor-law union independently, and was carried out by local valuers appointed by them. As may well be supposed, the townland valuation made by Sir R. Griffith, and the poor-law valuation made by local valuers, did not always coincide; and the inconvenience, or rather in many cases the injustice, of having two systems of valuation in force, soon began to be felt. Besides, the local valuation by the poor-law guardians was frequently entrusted to incompetent, and occasionally to dishonest, valuers, so that in many unions it was utterly worthless as a basis for taxation.

To remedy this state of things the first Tenement Valuation Act (9 & 10 Vic., cap. 110) was passed in 1846, the first year of the Irish Famine; and this Act subsequently merged in the Act now in force—15 & 16 Vic., cap. 63—passed in 1852, when the Famine was over. There have been Acts passed since affecting some details of the Act 15 & 16 Vic., cap. 63, but none altering the principle of that Statute, which still remains in full force. Such were the 17 Vic., cap. 8, amending certain details connected with the annual revision of the valuation, and the exemption of buildings used for public or charitable purposes; the 19 & 20 Vic., cap. 63, providing for the adoption of the tenement valuation for grand jury taxation; the 23 Vic., cap. 4, authorising the Treasury to pay a moiety of the cost of the annual revision, and dealing with other minor matters; the 27 & 28 Vic., cap. 52, giving to the Boards of Guardians, with the sanction of the Poor-law Commissioners, the same right of appeal against the annual revision as was absolutely provided in the case of owners and occupiers; and 37 & 38 Vic., cap. 70, dealing further with the payments by the Treasury, and fixing the amounts to be repaid by each county in respect of the annual revision of the valuation.

The Act of 1846 differs from all the other Valuation Acts in one remarkable respect, namely, that it contains a clause defining the net annual value of a tenement, which is a rateable heredita-

ment, to be the "rent for which, one year with another, the same might in its actual state be reasonably expected to let from year to year, the probable average cost of repairs, insurance and other expenses, if any, necessary to maintain the hereditament in its actual state, and all rates, taxes and public charges, if any, except tithe rent-charge being paid by the tenant." Whether this definition was intended to apply to land may, perhaps, be open to argument; but whether it was or not, it is found in the Act of 1846 only. In the other Valuation Acts, the same form of words is expressly confined to houses and buildings, and a different principle is laid down as the basis of the valuation of land.

The General Valuation Act (15 & 16 Vic. c. 63) was passed in 1852, and arrangements were at once made for proceeding with the work of valuation under that Act. The Commissioner appointed by the Lord Lieutenant to carry out this Valuation also was the late Sir Richard Griffith, who had, as already stated, been Commissioner under the previous Acts, a man eminently fitted for the office.

In early life he had abundant opportunity, of which he fully availed himself, of learning practical agriculture on the large tract of land, over 500 acres, farmed by his father in Kildare. He subsequently studied chemistry, geology and mineralogy in London and Edinburgh; and afterwards lived as pupil for two seasons with a gentleman in the Lothians, who was not only an

agriculturist on a large scale, but a professional valuator, employed as such to value farms for letting on the 19 years' lease common in that part of Scotland. From this gentleman he learned the particular system of valuing land, based on the composition of the subjacent rock, which he inaugurated and carried out in Ireland. Sir R. Griffith was a man of great administrative ability, and when he was appointed Commissioner under the Act of 1852, he had already had twenty-six years' experience of the duties of the office.

His first step was to prepare, for the surveyors and valuers to be employed under his direction, a new code of instructions, based upon those previously issued by him in 1839, in which the nature of their duties and the mode of performing them are set out with the most careful forethought and elaborate minuteness of detail. These instructions were approved by the Lord Lieutenant on the 4th of August, 1853, and thenceforth acquired, under the 8th section of the Valuation Act, an authority equivalent to that of the Act itself.

In the opening paragraphs of these instructions the principle of the Act is thus set forth :—

“1. The intention of the Legislature in passing the General Valuation Act was, that a valuation of the lands of Ireland should be made on a uniform principle and scale of prices for agricultural produce, so as to insure that the relative value of the lands within any county, though

ascertained at different periods, and also that the relative value of the lands of different and distant counties, though ascertained at different and distant periods, should be the same.

“ 2. To effect this object, the scale of prices of agricultural produce contained in the 11th Section of the Act, quoted below, is given as the standard according to which the uniform Tenement Valuation of the lands of Ireland shall be made, and all valuations must be made as if the standard prices were the prices of the several kinds of produce at the time the valuation is undertaken.

EXTRACTS FROM ACT 15 & 16 VICTORIA, CAP. 63,
SECTION XI.

“ 3. That in every valuation hereafter to be made, or to be carried on or completed, under the Provisions of this Act, the Commissioners of Valuation shall cause every tenement or rateable hereditament hereinafter specified to be separately valued, and such valuation, in regard to the land, shall be made upon an estimate of the net annual value thereof, with reference to the average prices of the several articles of agricultural produce hereinafter specified; all peculiar local circumstances, in each case, being taken into consideration, and all rates, taxes, and public charges, if any, (except tithe rent-charge) being paid by the tenant (that is to say),

WHEAT, at the general average price of *seven shillings and sixpence* per hundred weight of 112 pounds.

OATS, at the general average price of *four shillings and tenpence* per cwt., &c.

BARLEY, at the general average price of *five shillings and sixpence* per cwt., &c.

FLAX, at the general average price of *forty-nine shillings* per cwt., &c.

BUTTER, at the general average price of *sixty-five shillings and fourpence* per cwt., &c.

BEEF, at the general average price of *thirty-five shillings and sixpence* per cwt., &c.

MUTTON, at the general average price of *forty-one shillings* per cwt., &c.

PORK, at the general average price of *thirty-two shillings* per cwt., &c.

And such valuation, in regard to houses and buildings, shall be made upon an estimate of the net annual value thereof ; that is to say, the rent for which, one year with another, the same might, in its actual state, be reasonably expected to let from year to year, the probable average annual cost of repairs, insurance, and other expenses (if any) necessary to maintain the hereditament in its actual state, and all rates, taxes, and public charges, if any, (except tithe rent-charge) being paid by the tenant."

We have quoted these paragraphs from the official instructions at length, because, speaking with the authority of the Lord Lieutenant and of the Commissioner of Valuation, and having, in every respect, the force of an Act of Parliament, they define the principle and object of the General Valuation Act. The object was to secure uniformity of valuation all over Ireland for purposes of taxation ; and the principle was, that a fixed scale of prices should form the basis of the valuation "in regard to the land." There is no reference in the Act of 1852 to the rent of land, nor any suggestion that the rent should form the basis or measure of the valuation of land ; or that the rent should or ought to be in any way adjusted to the valuation. And this is the more remarkable, because, in the case of houses and buildings, the rent for which they might be expected to let, the tenant paying all

costs of repair and all taxes, is distinctly laid down in the Act as the measure of their net annual value. Surely, if the Legislature had the intention of correlating the valuation and the rent of land, they would have stated so in the Act as explicitly as they have done in the case of buildings.

In the instructions issued to the valuers only two references are made to rent in connection with valuation. In the first the valuers are cautioned that the "total valuation of land and buildings, exclusive of taxes, should not exceed the fair letting value to a solvent tenant." This caution was necessary because, in conformity with the Act, the value of the land had to be ascertained and entered separately from that of the buildings, and cases might arise in which extravagant and unnecessary buildings would raise the gross valuation out of proportion to the intrinsic value of the land, or the fair letting value of the tenement, and therefore subject the tenant to excessive local taxation.

The second reference is of the same character, though differently expressed. The exact words are—"In fine, it should be borne in mind that for each separate tenement a similar conclusion is ultimately to be arrived at, viz., that the value of land, buildings, &c., as the case may be, when set forth in the column for totals, is the rent which a liberal landlord would obtain from a solvent tenant for a term of years (*rates, taxes, &c., being*

paid by the tenant), and that this rent (*sic*) has been so adjusted with reference to those of surrounding tenements that the assessment of rates may be borne equably and relatively by all."

This direction obviously has reference in the first instance to that previously given, that "the total valuation of land and buildings, exclusive of taxes, should not exceed the fair letting value"—but it further impresses on the valuers the necessity of preserving uniformity in their estimates, so that no person should be relieved of taxation at the expense of his neighbour; and so far as it deals with the relation of valuation and rent to each other, it rather lays down the principle that the valuation should be adjusted to the rent, and not the rent to the valuation. The concluding paragraph is not very clear. The valuers had no power to adjust the "rent"—*rent*, observe, not *valuation*—to the rents of surrounding tenements; but it would be only right that before taking rent into account at all as an element in estimating the value of a tenement, they should see how far rents were uniform in the immediate neighbourhood.

It will be observed that it is only in the case of land and buildings taken together that this reference to rent or letting value is made—in no instance does Sir R. Griffith direct that the land, as such is to be valued with reference to rent. The land was to be valued, and was valued, on a special principle, and as attempts have recently

been made to confuse the public mind on this point, it may be well to set it at rest by evidence which cannot be controverted.

Sir R. Griffith was examined in May, 1869, four years after the completion of the Tenement Valuation now in force, before a Select Committee of the House of Commons, "appointed to inquire into the Constitution and Management of the Department of the General Valuation of Ireland," when we find him giving evidence as follows, in answer to questions by The O'Connor Don:—

"1498. You stated that the principle followed before 1844 was the same principle of Valuation that was followed under the first Tenement Valuation Act?—The principle of the Acts throughout was the same, and it continues up to the present time."

"1499. Are you aware that the principle was condemned by the Committee of 1844?—I do not recollect the circumstances."

"1500. I will read you two or three extracts from the Report of the Committee: they say, on page 8, 'The principle of Valuation employed by Mr. Griffith is not founded upon an estimate of the probable letting value, and therefore it appears to be open to the objections just alleged:' then they say, 'The extension to these counties,' that is the counties that were not at that time valued, 'of Mr. Griffith's Valuation will create a second valuation for the imposition of another local tax framed uniformly, but upon an unsound

principle'?—The Act was not altered, and I was bound to follow the Act, not their recommendations."

"1501. On page 10 they recommend, 'That Mr. Griffith be instructed not to continue his valuation upon the principle which he has hitherto followed'?—That principle was to value according to a scale of agricultural prices, not according to rents; but the Act was never altered."

The Committee of 1844 reported, after hearing evidence of facts then of recent, almost contemporaneous occurrence, that "Mr. Griffith's Valuation was not founded upon an estimate of the probable letting value." Sir R. Griffith himself, before the Committee of 1869, states that his valuation was made "according to a scale of agricultural prices, not according to rents"—how then can any one assert, or pretend to believe, that the Tenement Valuation was intended to be, or ought to be, a basis for rent?

And this must have been so from the very nature of the case. Neither 'kings nor laws' can control the course of nature; and no legislature could assume to stereotype the prices of agricultural produce. Whether the scale of prices fixed by the Act were arbitrary, or whether it were based on the prices which prevailed when the Act was passed, it would be equally suitable, considered only as the basis of a uniform valuation; but, as the scale was fixed after full discussion in Parliament, we may assume that

it represents fairly the current average market prices of the day. This was in the years immediately preceding 1852, when the country was still prostrate after the Famine, and before the re-action had set in. Prices of all kinds of agricultural produce were then exceptionally low—lower than they have ever been since—much lower than they are now. Besides, while all articles of agricultural produce have increased in value, some have increased in greater ratio than others; butter and meat, for example, have increased relatively more than wheat or oats. Hence, even if Griffith's valuation had been made with special reference to the adjustment of rent, and if it had been carried out in strict conformity with his instructions, and in such a manner as to represent the fair letting value of the land of Ireland with reference to the scale of prices laid down in the Valuation Act, assuming them to be the prices current in 1852, or immediately before, it is perfectly plain that it would be a wholly unsafe guide to the letting value of the same lands in 1880. We shall see this more plainly when we come to compare the scale of prices, already quoted from the Valuation Act, with those which have prevailed since.

However, before entering on this comparison, it may be well to consider how far the valuation actually made, and now in force, can be regarded as corresponding to the instructions issued by Sir Richard Griffith, to the valuers. We have

spoken of these instructions as exhibiting careful forethought and minuteness of detail. No small portion of them is devoted to an able summary of the geological formation of Ireland, and classification of its soils. Elaborate tables are given for both tillage and pasture, showing the expense of cultivation and the probable yield of each class of land. Nothing that skill, experience, and foresight could suggest seems to have been omitted, the one great object in view being to make the valuation uniform over the whole country. It could scarcely be expected, however, that a work entrusted to so many different hands as were necessarily employed upon it, should be carried out by all with equal care and accuracy. Errors of judgment, and inattention to instructions must be reckoned with in all human work, especially if on a large scale; and we have certainly no guarantee that, on a new valuation, we should have abler or more careful valuers than were employed on the last. It may be that the inequalities, which all now acknowledge to exist, were not so glaring when the valuation was first made, at any rate they were not so much observed; but there was an element of error which might have been eliminated during the progress of the valuation had it attracted sufficient attention at the time. This is well pointed out in *Thom's Irish Almanac*, a work of deservedly high authority on statistical subjects. We should mention that the Valuation Act of 1852 provided for the adoption, subject to revision, of all valuations completed

under the Act of 1846, and the completion of such as had been begun under that statute, which referred primarily to the County Dublin, all the Counties in Munster except Clare, and the Counties of the Cities of Waterford, Limerick, Cork, and Kilkenny.

The following is the passage from *Thom's Almanac*:—

“The valuation of some of the Southern and Western Counties was made during and immediately subsequent to the famine of 1847-8, when agriculture was greatly neglected, the prices of agricultural produce very low, and poor's-rate in many Unions very much higher than at present; the result being that in those Counties the valuation is considerably too low, unequal, and less than that of lands of similar quality in the Province of Ulster, which were more recently valued. The present Valuation being, therefore, so much under the fair rent value, depreciates land sales, and has an injurious effect on dealings between landlord and tenant in respect of rents; and it also misleads as to local taxation, the present average of the grand jury cess being 1s. 9d., and poor's-rate 1s. 5¼d. in the pound; whereas, under a new valuation, 1s. 3d. and 10d. in the pound respectively would produce the sums now required for these purposes.”

Not only was the country, as pointed out in the foregoing extract, in an exceptionally low condition when some of the Southern Counties were originally valued, but it had advanced far on the path to prosperity when the revaluation of the Northern Counties was made under the Act of 1852, thus further augmenting the divergence in the values assigned to the two portions of the island. Sir R. Griffith, in his evidence before the Committee of 1869, frequently refers to this fact,

which he calls "the improvement in agriculture." Hence it is that the difference between the valuation and the rent is usually so much greater in the South and West than in the North.

We give in an Appendix Tables showing the dates at which the valuation of each county was issued, and the amount per pound sterling that should be added to the valuation of the Counties of the other Provinces to bring them to a uniform scale with those in the Province of Ulster. These Tables were given in evidence before the Committee of 1869, already referred to. During the first three years—from 1853 to 1855 inclusive—the valuations of seventeen counties were issued, all in Leinster and Munster, while the valuations of the Ulster Counties were issued, at the rate of one in each year, beginning with Cavan in 1857, and ending with Armagh in 1865. (*See Appendix, A.*)

Those who are familiar with dealings in land in Ireland know very well that when a farm is to be let, neither landlord nor tenant regards the valuation as a measure of the rent, or even as a guide to its amount; it is referred to solely for the purpose of ascertaining the probable amount of poor-rate, or other local taxation, to which the farm is liable, an element which both landlord and tenant are bound to take into account; but the rent of the farm is settled on entirely different principles. Exactly the same thing has taken place with respect to house property. The valuation of houses in Dublin and its suburbs is

notoriously too low, and consequently no one ever dreams of regarding it as a measure of the letting value—it simply enables the parties concerned to calculate the probable amount of local taxation—nothing more.

How little the Government Valuation is regarded in actual practice, as a standard of letting value, will be seen from the following typical cases of recent occurrence:—

1. In 1874 five farms in County Limerick, containing in the aggregate 915a. 2r. 23p., were let on leases varying from 35 to 50 years. The Government Valuation of the whole was £270 15s.; the reserved rent was £437 13s. 1d.—nearly 62 per cent., be it observed, over the valuation—and for these leases fines amounting to £3610 were paid by the tenants. If we convert these fines into rent at six per cent. we get for their equivalent £216, which, added to the reserved rent, makes up £653 13s. 1d., or 142 per cent. over Griffith's Valuation.

2. In 1876 a farm containing 57a. 1r. 7p. was let, in County Cork, on lease for 31 years, without fine; the Government Valuation was £50, and the rent reserved in the lease was £97, being an advance of 94 per cent. on the valuation.

3. In 1877 an estate in County Clare, containing 1447 acres, was sold in eight lots. The Government Valuation of the whole was £433; the gross rental paid by the tenants was £928, or 114 per cent. above the valuation, in fact more

than double—the net rental was £667, and the purchase-money amounted to £21,585, being $32\frac{1}{2}$ years' purchase on the net rental. This estate was sold subject to a jointure of £200 a year—valued at £2,400. If we add the jointure to the net rental, and its capitalized value to the purchase-money, we shall still have this estate, though let at more than double the Government valuation, bringing in the open market, $27\frac{2}{3}$ years' purchase on the rental. And if we take the purchase-money as last stated, that is, including the capitalized value of the jointure, we find it amounting to no less than $55\frac{1}{2}$ years' purchase on the Government valuation.

In the face of such facts—and they are but specimens—it cannot be seriously contended that the Government valuation is any guide to the letting value of land; or that it affords any sufficient data on which rent could be estimated.

But even though Griffith's valuation had been accurate and uniform, and even though the relative values of the articles of agricultural produce specified in the valuation Act had not changed—even though the country had not advanced in material prosperity since the valuation was made, still that valuation could not be regarded as affording a standard of rent, as the land agitators allege it to be. On this point, if on any, Sir Richard Griffith himself may safely be accepted as speaking with authority, and he has left on record his deliberate opinion respecting the “ad-

dition that should be made to the amount contained in the printed schedules of the general valuation to bring it to a rent value:" and that opinion is, that "if one-third be added, the result will give very nearly the full rent value of the land under ordinary proprietors."*

This was the opinion expressed by Sir R. Griffith in 1844, and it was given with reference to the Townland Valuation then in progress under the Acts of 1826 and 1836. The scale of prices laid down in each of these Acts was the same in every particular; it was the scale already referred to as having been ascertained in 1816, and was lower by two and sixpence in the pound than the prices which prevailed during the five years previous to 1830. Sir R. Griffith's instructions to the valuers employed in making the primary Townland Valuation were to neglect the scale laid down in the Act of 1826, and to estimate the value of the land on what he calls the "live and let live" principle, according to the average prices of the preceding five years; and the valuation thus made, which he says closely approximated to the rents on the great estates under liberal landlords, was subsequently *reduced* by two and sixpence in the pound, or twelve and a-half per cent., to bring it into harmony with the scale laid down in the Act of Parliament to which he was bound to conform.

It would appear from this that, even on the great estates referred to by Sir R. Griffith, the Town-

* See Griffith's "Outline of System of General Valuation of Ireland," page 7.

land Valuation, when completed, must have been twelve and a-half per cent. under the most moderate rents, estimated at the current prices of the day.

Comparing the scales of prices in the Acts of 1826, 1836, and 1846, which are all identical, with the scale laid down in the Act of 1852, under which the valuation now in force was made, we find that the prices of cereals and butter were higher in the earlier Acts, and the price of meat higher in the Act of 1852. This will be clearly seen from the following Table:—

TABLE showing the scale of prices of agricultural produce laid down in the Acts of 1826, 1836, and 1846, as compared with the scale laid down in the Act of 1852.

SPECIES OF PRODUCE	Prices		Per-centage of Differences	
	Acts of 1826, 1836, and 1846	Act of 1852	Earlier Acts higher than Act of 1852	Act of 1852 higher than earlier Acts
	s. d.	s. d.		
WHEAT	10 0	7 6	33·3	—
OATS	6 0	4 10	24·1	—
BARLEY	7 6	5 6	27·3	—
BUTTER	69 0	65 4	7·1	—
BEEF	33 0	35 6	—	7·6
MUTTON	34 6	41 0	—	18·8
PORK	25 6	32 0	—	25·5

The Townland Valuation, which was present to Sir R. Griffith's mind when he wrote that 33 per cent. should be added to the valuation to bring it up to the rent of the land, ultimately merged in the valuation made under the Act of 1852—that now in force; and the general effect of adjusting

the Townland Valuation to the scale laid down in the Act of 1852, would necessarily be to reduce the valuation of tillage lands; and to increase, though not to the same extent, the valuation of sheep pastures; while dairy land, and the richer pastures suited for the production of beef, would not be materially affected.

It is plain, however, that this adjustment, if carefully made, as we must believe it to have been, would not alter the proportion between valuation and rent, both being regulated by the prices of agricultural produce; and so long as the prices of the Act of 1852 continued, Sir R. Griffith's dictum would apply to the tenement valuation made under that Act and now in force, as fully as to the Townland Valuation respecting which it was originally uttered. But the prices of 1852 did not long continue. In the very next year they began to rise, and ever since the prices of cereals have been higher than the scale of the Act of 1846, and the prices of meat higher than those laid down in the Act of 1852, in some cases enormously higher. The valuation, meanwhile, has remained unchanged; so that the excess of rent over valuation, which Sir R. Griffith estimated at 33 per cent., might now safely be set down at a very much higher rate.

Two other points are worthy of attention in connection with this branch of the subject:—

When settling the Valuation, Sir R. Griffith was bound, by the Act which regulated his proceed-

ings, to deduct all rates, taxes and public charges, except tithe rentcharge. He, accordingly, deducted in every instance the full amount of the poor-rate, although the landlord is bound to pay the whole rate where the valuation does not exceed £4, and to allow half the rate in all other cases. Sir R. Griffith admits that this was a mistake in the Valuation Acts, and that the deduction should have been limited to the amount of taxes actually payable by the tenant; but, nevertheless, he was bound, when making the valuation, to deduct the full poor-rate, and, as a matter of fact, he did deduct it in every case before fixing the net annual value. It is easy to see how unjustly and how unequally this deduction must have operated to reduce the net annual value, especially in districts—and they were very many—where the poor-rates were heavy at the time the valuation was made.

It is, of course, impossible to ascertain with accuracy how much was thus deducted, but we may get a fairly close approximation to the amount. It is not too much to assume that the poor-rate deducted in the course of the valuation averaged $1/8$ in the pound. Of this amount only 10d. in the pound, the proportion payable by the tenant, should have been deducted; and the total valuation of Ireland is, in consequence of the deduction of the landlord's portion of the poor-rate, some four per cent. below what it ought to be.

It should be mentioned that, although the Act of 1852 provides for a general revision of the valuation, such has never been made; nor is it likely to be until a new Valuation Act is passed. The annual revision, so far as land is concerned, consists merely in ascertaining and noting changes of occupancy, but not a shilling can be added to or taken from the value of any field, and the gross valuation of the land is now just the same as it was when the valuation was made.

Further, the Act contained a provision that improvements effected within the seven years preceding the valuation should not be taken into account. This carries us back to 1845—the eve of the famine—for the earlier valuations; and, in every case, to a period of seven years antecedent to the making of the valuation—and thus the great bulk of the money expended by the landlords during the past thirty-five years in improving their estates is excluded absolutely from consideration in estimating the value of the land. We know that from 1847 to 1879 three millions of money were borrowed under the Land Improvement Acts, of which two and a-half millions were for the improvement of land, as distinguished from the erection of farm buildings; and large sums have, during the same period, been expended on arterial drainage. We cannot estimate, even approximately, the amount of private funds laid out by landlords on their estates, or allowed to their tenants for improvements carried out by them, but

it must have been very large. All this expenditure has gone to increase the letting value of the land, while but a small portion of it—how small we cannot say—has been taken into account in the valuation, thus further augmenting the difference between rent and valuation to a very considerable extent.

But perhaps the most remarkable, as it is certainly the most independent, testimony to the fact that there is no mutual interdependence between valuation and rent, is that borne by the tenants themselves. We do not allude now to the fact that they are willing to give rents far in excess of the valuation, and to purchase, at a high rate, the interest of any out-going tenant, though that of itself should be conclusive on the point. We refer particularly to the case of tenants purchasing under the Bright Clauses of the Land Act of 1870.

In estimating the proportion of the purchase-money which might be safely advanced to assist the tenants to purchase their holdings, the Treasury, at the suggestion of the Irish Board of Works, fixed twenty-four years' purchase of the Tenement Valuation as the standard price of land, and sanctioned the advance to the tenant of a sum not exceeding two-thirds of that amount, or sixteen years' purchase on the Tenement Valuation, provided this sum did not exceed two-thirds of the purchase money. As a matter of fact it never reached two-thirds of the purchase money; and the tenants who desired to purchase their holdings "complained to the Board of Works that their rule

offered so much below the fair price of the holding that the number of years should be increased as a compensation for the lowness of the valuation." These are not our words—they are taken *verbatim* from the evidence of Mr. Stack, "the chief clerk of that division of the Board of Works in Ireland in which the business of the Bright Clauses is transacted," given before Mr. Shaw-Lefevre's Select Committee on the Irish Land Act, which sat so recently as 1878. Mr. Stack further states that the tenants were "very dissatisfied" when they were told that they would get an advance to the amount of only sixteen times the Tenement Valuation, which, according to the Treasury rule, must be less than two-thirds of the total purchase-money to be paid for the holding. The Board of Works then applied to the Treasury to allow them to increase the standard price, and the Treasury agreed to raise it from twenty-four to twenty-seven year's purchase on the Tenement Valuation. This change of rule was made in 1871, and in the following year the Board of Works, acting on a discretion which they believed themselves to possess, raised the standard price to thirty years' purchase on the Tenement Valuation, and their action in this matter has not since been repudiated by the Treasury. The following extract from Mr. Stack's evidence puts the facts clearly and forcibly. The Chairman, Mr. Shaw-Lefevre, asks him—

"1732. The result of all that has taken place between you and the Treasury, and what your

office has done of its own accord is, that now the basis of calculation is thirty times the Tenement Valuation? Yes."

"1733. And you advance two-thirds of that? Yes, we can advance as much as two-thirds of it to a tenant."

"1734. I believe even that has not given satisfaction, and has not come up to the full value of the holding in many cases? In many cases it has not."

In other words, tenants purchasing their holdings under the Bright Clauses of the Land Act are of opinion that the purchase money, of which they must themselves provide one-third, and the other two-thirds of which they are bound to repay with interest, is not adequately represented by thirty years' purchase on the Tenement Valuation. Now, since the year 1865 the average price obtained for estates sold in the Landed Estates Court has been twenty-one years' purchase on the rental, hence, if the opinion of the tenants referred to is correct, the rent should exceed the Tenement Valuation in the ratio of 30 to 21; in other words, the rent might be 43 per cent. above the valuation, and yet be below the full value.

Hitherto we have assumed that the prices of agricultural produce have increased to an enormous extent since the Act of 1852 was passed. It seems almost like attempting to prove an axiom to offer evidence in support of a fact so notorious, but we must put the matter beyond doubt or cavil, on authority that cannot be disputed.

Mr. J. Ball Greene, C.B., the able successor of Sir R. Griffith in the direction of the Valuation Office, adds an official note to the Irish "Dooms-day Book," published in 1876, in which he says—

"NOTE.—In this return, instead of the 'gross estimated rental' being given, as in the return for England and Wales, the rateable valuation is set forth. This valuation was made many years ago, and is based upon the scale of prices of agricultural produce contained in Act 15 & 16 Vic., cap. 63, which scale is much below the present average prices of such produce. Consequently, the valuation cannot be compared in any way with the gross estimated rental given in the return for England and Wales. (Signed) J. BALL GREENE,
Commissioner of Valuation."

The following Table not only proves the fact of the increase, but enables us to judge of its amount in the year 1873 :—

TABLE showing the Prices of AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE as fixed by the Valuation (Ireland) Act, 1852, (and on which rates the present value of Land is still estimated) and the prices for the year 1873, in Thirteen of the principal Market Towns in Ireland, with the increase of Prices per cent. between 1852 and 1873 :—

	Year 1852	Year 1873	Increase per cent. between 1852 & 1873
	Prices fixed by Tenement Valuation	Prices in Thirteen Principal Towns	
	s. d.	s. d.	per cent.
WHEAT, per cwt. of 112 lbs.	7 6	12 0	60·0
OATS, " "	4 10	6 10	41·4
BARLEY, " "	5 6	8 6	54·5
FLAX, " "	49 0	66 7	35·9
BUTTER, " "	65 4	110 0	68·4
BEEF, " "	35 6	70 0	97·2
MUTTON, " "	41 0	74 0	80·5
PORK, " "	32 0	50 0	56·2

In 1877 the late Government brought in a Bill to authorise a new Tenement Valuation of Ireland. This Bill contained a scale of prices intended to form the basis of the valuation, such as was contained in former Acts.

The following Table shows the enormous increase in the value of every kind of agricultural produce that had taken place in the twenty-five years subsequent to 1852:—

TABLE, showing the scale of prices of agricultural produce laid down in the Act of 1852 and the Bill of 1877 respectively, and the increase per cent. in the value of each species of produce.

PRODUCE	Act of 1852		Bill of 1877		Increase per cent. in scale of prices
	Price per cwt.		Price per cwt.		
	s.	d.	s.	d.	
WHEAT	7	6	10	0	33·3
OATS	4	10	7	8	58·6
BARLEY	5	6	8	4	51·5
FLAX	49	0	60	0	22·4
BUTTER	65	4	121	4	85·7
BEEF	35	6	70	0	97·2
MUTTON	41	0	74	8	82·1
PORK	32	0	51	4	60·4

The Bill of 1877 was brought in as a Government measure, and we may assume pretty confidently that the Government had abundant evidence to support the scale of prices laid down in the schedule which, as we see, ranged from 33 to 97 per cent. above the scale prices in the Act of 1852. Now let us suppose that Sir R. Griffith had had this scale of prices laid down

for his guidance, instead of the scale of 1852, what would be the result? Roughly speaking, the tenement valuation of Ireland would be from 30 to 50 per cent. higher than it is at present.

There have been some serious fluctuations in prices since 1877, especially in those of butter, cattle, and sheep, but they were due to exceptional causes of a temporary character, which are fast disappearing; while all other species of agricultural produce are fairly holding their own. Not even the most reckless agitator will venture to assert that there is any similarity between the prices of 1852 and those of 1880; and, until prices fall to the level of the scale laid down in the Act of 1852, there is not a shadow of pretence for the claim that rents should be assimilated to the valuation made under that Act. Even then, the claim would be untenable; until then, it is simply absurd.

But it has been asserted that the increase in the cost of production, consequent on the rise in wages, counterbalances the increased value of agricultural produce; and that the net annual value of land in Ireland is no greater now than it was in 1852. It is difficult to believe that this statement is seriously made, at least by any one familiar with the facts. We are not now considering whether the valuation made under the Act of 1852 should or should not be raised to bring it into harmony with the altered circumstances of the country. Our present object

is simply to show that it is not a legitimate standard or measure of rent ; and it would lead us too far from that object were we to enter on a minute examination of the details of the cost of production as affecting the ultimate value of agricultural produce. We may, however, indicate some points bearing on the case which are worthy of attention from those who seek to represent that the increased cost of labour since 1852 swallows up the increased value of the crops at present prices.

In the first place, the rise in wages had begun before 1852, and was well established at that time, though not to the same extent as subsequently.

Again, it is not the case that a rise of say 50 per cent. in wages counterbalances a rise of 50 per cent. in the value of agricultural produce. Per-centages are relative, and any per-centage on a small amount is not equal or equivalent to a corresponding per-centage on a larger amount—for instance, 50 per cent. of a shilling is a very different thing from 50 per cent. of a pound. Labour is an element, an important element, in the cost of tillage, but it is not the only one; and while we are quite ready to admit that the rise in wages since the famine has been relatively as great as the rise in agricultural produce, we emphatically deny that the absolute increase in money and money's worth has been the same in both cases ; yet this is what is asserted by persons who believe, or pretend to believe, that the increased cost of production since 1852

counterbalances the increase in the value of agricultural produce.

Further, since 1852, a large quantity of land, formerly in tillage, has been thrown into pasture, partly consequent on the rise in wages, but chiefly in consequence of the change of the relative value of corn on the one hand, and butter and meat on the other. The cost of labour in connexion with pasture bears a very low ratio to the value of the produce raised, and the quantity of labour required per acre is far less than in the case of tillage. Hence, every acre converted from tillage to pasture not only reduced the cost of production relatively to produce on that acre, but set free a certain amount of labour for employment elsewhere, thus tending to keep down the cost of tillage also.

The introduction of machinery, too, for agricultural purposes has tended not only to redress the balance between outlay and return, but has in some cases actually inclined it the other way. Mowing and reaping machines, threshing machines, hay-making machines, improved churns, and other labour-saving implements, are now to be met with everywhere throughout Ireland. Such were practically unknown in 1852. Steam engines also are finding their way to many places throughout the country, and, no doubt, in another generation they will be commonly applied to all descriptions of farm work.

These are considerations which cannot be left

out when estimating the effect of the rise in wages, which has undoubtedly taken place since 1852, on the increased value of agricultural produce, but which we cannot pursue further at present.

If we do not deceive ourselves we have shown, as we proposed to do, from the history of the General Valuation of Ireland, that it was solely as a basis for taxation that it was undertaken; from the instructions and the manner in which it was carried out, that the great object in view, however imperfectly that object was attained, was to make it uniform; and that, neither in its inception nor in its progress, was there the slightest idea of making it a standard or measure of rent. And we believe, further, we have established that, if by any fatality it should be set up as a standard of rent, it would be wholly insufficient and unjust.

The laws that regulate rent are ultimately the same that regulate all mercantile transactions, the irrefragable laws of demand and supply. It seems strange that so simple an elementary truth should require to be explicitly stated as that the rent of land will rise or fall according to the quantity in the market and the number of persons looking for it. All speculations as to why they look for it are wholly beside the question. Men, as a rule, are not fools where their personal interests are concerned; they know pretty well what they want; and having made up their minds on that point, they will be ready to give for the commodity,

whatever it may be, exactly what they consider it worth. If the prices of agricultural produce be high, the value of land will rise in proportion; and, if prices fall, so will rents. We are almost ashamed to repeat these economic truisms; but, amid the din of interested and selfish agitation, some may be in danger of forgetting them. Any attempt to regulate rent by Act of Parliament would be as futile as the efforts of our forefathers to control dress by sumptuary laws. It is not likely that in a nation which glories in Free Trade any such attempt will be made; but much present dissatisfaction and much future disappointment would be avoided if men would at once recognize and act upon the eternal truth, that perfect freedom of contract and absolute security of property are indispensable conditions of the prosperity of a country.

APPENDIX A.

GIVEN IN EVIDENCE BEFORE THE SELECT COMMITTEE OF 1869.

LIST of COUNTIES and CITIES, showing the Dates at which the VALUATION of each was completed.

Counties.	Date of Issue of Valuation.	Counties.	Date of Issue of Valuation.
Carlow ...	28 June 1853	Clare ...	3 July 1856
Cork ...	20 July 1853	Galway Town ...	14 July 1856
Cork City ...	9 July 1853	Cavan ...	25 June 1857
Dublin ...	5 May 1853	Galway ...	29 June 1857
Kerry ...	19 July 1853	Leitrim ...	6 July 1857
Kilkenny... ..	8 July 1853	Mayo ...	13 July 1857
Kilkenny City ...	8 July 1853	Donegal ...	6 July 1858
Limerick... ..	29 June 1853	Roscommon ...	1 July 1858
Limerick City ...	29 June 1853	Sligo ...	7 July 1858
Queen's	28 June 1853	Londonderry ...	16 July 1859
Tipperary ...	29 June 1853	Tyrone ...	13 July 1860
Waterford ...	5 July 1853	Monaghan ...	1 July 1861
Waterford Borough	5 July 1853	Antrim ...	10 July 1862
Dublin City ...	31 Oct. 1854	Carrickfergus ...	10 July 1862
Kildare	18 July 1854	Fermanagh ...	4 July 1863
Wexford	7 July 1854	Down ...	12 July 1864
Wicklow	4 July 1854	Armagh ...	1 June 1865
King's	2 July 1855		
Longford... ..	6 July 1855		
Louth	5 July 1855		
Borough of Drogheda	6 July 1855		
Meath	10 July 1855		
Westmeath ...	5 July 1855		

From the foregoing dates it will be seen that the valuation of the southern and western counties was made before the country had recovered the effect of the famine when agriculture was greatly neglected, and when the poor's rate was, in many unions, very much higher than at present, the result being that the valuation of those counties is considerably less than the valuation of lands of a similar quality in the province of Ulster which was

valued at more recent dates ; and the following statement will show the increase per pound on the valuation which would be required to make the valuation of the southern and western counties relative with the valuation of those in Ulster.

STATEMENT showing the Amount of the present TENEMENT VALUATION of the several COUNTIES and CITIES in Ireland, and the Addition necessary to be made to the Valuation of the Southern and Western Counties to bring them to a uniform Scale with those in the Province of Ulster.

Counties.	Present Tenement Valuation.	Proposed Increase per £.	Counties.	Present Tenement Valuation.	Proposed Increase per £.
LEINSTER.	£.	s. d.	Munster—con.	£	s. d.
Carlow ...	163,911	5 0	Tipperary ...	672,734	4 0
Dublin ...	567,015	5 0	Waterford ...	275,194	4 0
„ City ...	554,292	2 0	„ City ...	36,401	2 0
Kildare ...	333,927	5 0	CONNAUGHT.		
Rilkenny ...	341,229	5 0	Galway ...	468,788	4 0
„ City ...	17,339	2 0	Leitrim ...	134,637	2 6
King's ...	242,212	3 4	Mayo ...	307,806	3 4
Longford ...	152,094	3 4	Roscommon ...	292,403	5 0
Louth ...	224,088	5 0	Sligo ...	207,636	2 6
Meath ...	547,703	5 0	ULSTER.		
Queen's ...	257,385	3 4	Antrim ...	858,943	—
Westmeath ...	314,550	5 0	Cavan ...	268,044	—
Wexford ...	372,075	4 0	Donegal ...	289,302	—
Wicklow ...	252,055	4 0	Londonderry ...	341,342	—
MUNSTER.			Monaghan ...	260,400	—
Clare ...	312,089	4 0	Tyrone ...	418,234	—
Cork ...	1,028,862	4 0	Armagh ...	403,180	—
„ City ...	122,114	3 4	Down ...	757,495	—
Kerry ...	274,020	4 0	Fermanagh ...	227,567	—
Limerick ...	452,412	5 0			
„ City ...	63,876	2 0	Total	£ 12,814,014	—

