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BRIEF NOTES
ON
IRISH CENSUSES

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Houses of the Oireachtas

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With the Author's respects.

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BRIEF NOTES ON IRISH CENSUSES.

CENSUSES OF 1813, 1821, 1831, 1841, 1851.

MORE than half a century has now elapsed since the first Irish Census was taken. Many attempts had been previously made to ascertain the number of the people, but the results, being merely estimates, are unreliable.

A measure for taking a Census of the population was first introduced into England in 1801, and the importance of having a similar inquiry instituted in Ireland soon became so manifest that an Act was passed for the purpose in 1812, entrusting the supervision of the enumeration to the Grand Juries of the several counties. As might have been expected, this arrangement worked badly, the Grand Juries not being capable, from their constitution, of efficiently superintending the work, and having at their disposal no adequate machinery to perform it. In several counties no steps were taken in the matter, and in others where there were, the work was so irregularly and tardily performed, that after two years spent in a fruitless endeavour to carry out the intentions of the Legislature, the attempt was abandoned.

The failure of this Inquiry directed public attention to the necessity of providing more effective machinery, and an Act was passed in 1815, vesting the superintendence of the next Census in the Magistrates at Quarter Sessions, and the Assistant-Barristers; and, accordingly, the Census of 1821 was taken under their supervision. Though there was no staff officially under the control of the magistrates, yet the nomination of the enumerators was placed in their hands, and much pains appear to have been taken to secure the services of men who were competent to perform the duty. At first many difficulties appeared. In some districts open hostility manifested itself, while in others the undefined state of the boundaries caused many obstacles to the compilation of a satisfactory statistical return. These, however, having been surmounted, in 1823 the results of the first authoritative and complete Irish Census were presented to the public.

A second enumeration of the people was undertaken in 1831. The Inquiry, however, was not commenced simultaneously in all parts of the country, and it extended over a considerable period. The enumerators, moreover, were under the impression that they would be paid in proportion to the numbers they enumerated, a system of payment which, it appears, was in many cases actually adopted. For these and other reasons the results of this Census have been regarded as unsatisfactory.

The Census of 1841 marked a new era in Irish statistics. It was then for the first time that the Ordnance maps were

available, and the territorial divisions of the country definitely settled. It was then also that the enumeration was first entrusted to a regularly disciplined body of men, and taken for *a given day*, instead of its being, as on former occasions, extended over a lengthened period. A brief review even of the merits of the Census Reports of 1841 would occupy a volume; suffice it to say, that in their varied departments they have justly called forth the greatest admiration, and opened up new lines of inquiry, which have thrown much light on the social condition of the Irish people.

In the Census of 1851, the Reports were framed mainly on the model of 1841, but they comprised much additional valuable information.

CENSUS OF 1861.

As the Census of 1861 possesses at present the chief interest, being the latest enumeration, it is proposed to offer a few more detailed observations respecting it, considering whether the somewhat altered circumstances under which the next Census will be taken may render any change in its plan expedient, and whether the uniformity which it is generally agreed should exist between the English and Irish reports cannot be more effectually secured.

Territorial Divisions Adopted.

In 1861 the Census Returns of Ireland were published

chiefly by counties, baronies, and parishes, while the English Returns were tabulated mainly by registration districts and sub-districts. Since the last Census the Registration Acts have been extended to Ireland, and the question therefore arises, whether future Census Returns should be compiled by registration districts, as in England, or, as in former Irish Censuses, by counties, baronies, and parishes, or by both.

Some light may be obtained with regard to this point by looking back to the English Census of 1841, which was the first decennial enumeration after the establishment in England of a general registration of births, deaths, and marriages, and in which the registration districts were not adopted. Mr. Neison, in his *Contributions to Vital Statistics*, publishes a correspondence with the Registrar-General of England on the subject, in which he points out that, although both the Census Returns of 1841, and the statistics obtained from the registration, were excellent, yet, in consequence of a want of uniformity of design between them, they were nearly useless for purposes of exact calculation.

Mr. Neison says, in his letter of the 22nd March 1845 :—
' If at this moment it were required to determine the comparative value of life in any two counties in England, or any two towns in England, there exists no means of accomplishing it. For if the population of any particular place is obtained from the Report of the Census Commis-

sioners, the deaths in your own report will be found for quite a different arrangement of districts, and *vice versâ*. It would, therefore, be of great public value if means were adopted to remedy this evil, and to render the districts in some way or other *coterminous*, or, at least, to obtain the enumeration of the population at each term of life in your own districts for the period of the last Census, and to arrange for the same being done at the next Census in 1851.' The want of uniformity between the English Census Returns and the Reports of the Registrar-General, to which Mr. Neison alludes, was partially remedied in 1851, and entirely removed in 1861, when the Census Returns, as before stated, were published by registration districts and sub-districts.

The main objections to the adoption of the registration districts for Census purposes in this country are—that such a course, being a departure from the system followed in former Censuses, would, to a certain extent, prevent comparison with them; that the baronies and parishes are the recognized civil divisions of the country, according to which local business is transacted, their boundaries being set forth on the ordnance maps; and that the boundaries of the registration sub-districts are subject to alteration in consequence of changes in the limits of the dispensary districts with which they are *coterminous*. The portions of the Census, moreover, relating to the education of the people, and, in connexion with it, to their ages and religious pro-

fessions, would obviously be much more useful if tabulated according to parishes, as on former occasions.

For these reasons, it would appear advisable, in the coming inquiry in this country, to adhere to the old arrangement, following the alternative suggested by Mr. Neison, of publishing *additional* tables, showing the population *at the various age periods* by registration districts and sub-districts. The occupations should also be given according to these districts.

Population Tables.

These Returns, both in England and in Ireland, furnish particulars respecting acreage, population, and houses. In Ireland the valuation is also given. In England the tables are compiled by the registration divisions;* in this country by counties, baronies, parishes, and townlands.† The number of statute acres is first stated. Each Report further shows the number of houses in 1861, distinguishing those inhabited, uninhabited, and building, and also the number of houses in 1851; but in the English Returns the latter are classified as in 1861, while in Ireland the total merely is given. The English practice would not only appear to be the more satisfactory, but also the more correct, as the detail is necessary to enable an accurate comparison to be made

* The population and houses are also tabulated by counties, hundreds, cities, towns, &c.

† In the Irish Returns there are also summary tables, showing the area, population, houses, and valuation by unions and electoral divisions.

with the results of the preceding enumeration, and the number of houses inhabited, uninhabited, and building cannot properly be formed into a total. It would appear desirable that in future Irish Reports, if material for comparison with a former Census be afforded, the English mode should be adopted, so as to render reference to the original reports unnecessary.

In addition to the houses in 1851 and 1861, the Irish Reports also give the total number of houses in 1841, information on this point not being furnished in England.

Under the head 'Population' the information afforded is the same, except that in the English Return the males and females are distinguished for 1851, the total merely being inserted in the Irish Reports, and that in the latter the total number of persons in 1841 is also shown. The total population at the preceding Census would appear to afford sufficient means of comparison without publishing it by males and females ; but whichever plan may be thought the more advisable, it should be uniformly adopted in both countries. The English practice of placing the total population at each decade in juxtaposition might be advantageously followed in Ireland.

The last heading in the Irish Return is 'Valuation,' which is given both for 1851 and 1861, the Poor Law Valuation for the former year, and the General Valuation for the latter. No information on this subject is afforded in the Tables from the sister country.

A difficulty which exists in ascertaining the entire population of townlands from the Irish Reports may here be noticed. The population of each townland is apparently given opposite to its name, but this is really the case only where there is no town containing at least 20 houses on it; in fact, the figures represent the rural population only. The towns are placed at foot of the townlands in each parish, but there is nothing to show to which townland each town belongs. Thus, where there are one or more towns in a parish, it is not possible to ascertain with certainty the entire population of any of the townlands in it without referring to the Ordnance maps (which are available to comparatively but few persons), and allocating the towns to their respective townlands. If a town happens to lie in two or more townlands, it is not possible to ascertain from the Returns what portion of the population belongs to each. This defect might be remedied by placing in brackets after each town the name of the townland to which it belongs, and in case of a town situated on two or more townlands to give the portion of the population belonging to each.

Before leaving the subject of the Population Tables, allusion may be made to the valuable notes in the English Report, in which reasons are assigned for local increase or decrease, and temporary disturbing causes stated. It is desirable that similar information should be collected in Ireland and appended to the Returns, which would then transmit to posterity the record not merely of the movement

in the population, but also of the causes of such movement, the notes in many cases preventing false deductions being drawn from the figures.

The subjoined extracts from the English Report for 1861 will illustrate the value of this practice, and the expediency of introducing it into the Returns for this country:—

‘NOTE.—The increase of population in Eaton Hastings Parish is partly attributed to drainage operations. From 300 to 400 labourers were employed on drainage works in this and adjoining parishes in the winter of 1860.’

‘NOTE.—The decrease of population in Tubney Parish is attributed mainly to the removal of the kennels of the Old Berkshire Hunt from Tubney House, where a large establishment was kept.’

‘NOTE.—The decrease of population in Herriard Parish is mainly attributed to migration, in consequence of a reduction having been made by a proprietor in the number of families to a cottage. Some of the cottages were occupied by two, three, or even four families.’

‘NOTE.—The decrease of population in Bisham Parish is mainly attributed to the temporary absence of several large families at the time the census was taken in 1861.’

Annexed to the English Population Report are tables showing by Registration Counties and Superintendent Registrars' Districts the population in 1851 and 1861, the number of Births, Deaths, and Marriages registered in the ten years 1851—60, the excess of registered births over deaths, and the increase or decrease of the population in the interval between the two enumerations. Similar tables might be inserted in the Irish Reports for 1871; but unfortunately, as the Registration Acts only came into operation in 1864, the records of Births, Deaths, and Marriages for nearly three

years are wanting. An important element could in Ireland be introduced into these tables—viz., the Emigration, if the Poor Law Union, in addition to the county, of intending emigrants were ascertained through the Emigration Returns.

Occupation Tables.

A very salutary advance towards uniformity was made at the last Irish Census in this branch, by the publication of the General Summary Table of occupations on the English plan. The Irish Commissioners have, however, retained the old classification for the other Tables, on the ground that their doing so afforded means of comparison with the Returns for 1841 and 1851, which would be rendered difficult by the adoption of the other method throughout.

Under Dr. Farr's scheme the occupations are divided into six classes—viz. : Professional, Domestic, Commercial, Agricultural, Industrial, and Indefinite and Non-productive, each of which is subdivided into orders and sub-orders.

The Irish system, devised by the Commissioners of 1841, to use their own definition, considers 'every individual as dependent on the mode in which he could serve his fellows, or in other words, as he could minister to the physical or moral wants of others.' The occupations are distributed under the following heads—viz., Ministering to — Food, Clothing, Lodging Furniture and Machinery, Conveyance and Travelling,* Banking and Agency,* Literature and Education, Reli-

* These classes were added in 1861.

gion, Charity and Benevolence, Health, Justice and Government, Amusement,* Science and Art;* while a number of occupations which cannot properly be inserted under any of these heads are returned as 'Unclassified.'

A consideration of the two schemes will show that the English classification, so elaborately explained in the Appendix to the General Report, is far superior to that adopted in the Irish Returns, which on investigation will be found productive of many anomalies. Thus, under the head '*Ministering to Furniture*' are included Watch-glass Makers, Gate-keepers, Colliery Overseers, and Colliery Contractors. Land Surveyors and Sack Makers appear as '*Ministering to Food*.' Jewellers are returned as '*Ministering to Clothing*;' a Tar Dealer and Grease Manufacturers as '*Ministering to Conveyance and Travelling*;' Organ Builders, as '*Ministering to Amusement*;' Botanists, as '*Ministering to Health*;' and a Government Stationery Officer, and Sealing-wax Makers, as '*Ministering to Literature and Education*.'

The following Table contrasts the classification of these occupations under the two systems.

OCCUPATION.	CLASSIFICATION IN ENGLAND.			CLASSIFICATION IN IRELAND.
	Class.	Order.	Sub-order.	
Watch-glass Makers Gate-keepers .	Industrial Domestic	Persons working and dealing in minerals Persons engaged in entertaining and performing personal offices for man	In glass In attendance (domestic servants, &c.)	<i>Ministering to Furniture</i> Do.
Colliery Overseers . Colliery Contractors	} Industrial Agricultural	Persons working and dealing in minerals	Miners	Do.
Land Surveyors . Sack Makers .		Persons possessing or working the land, &c. Persons working and dealing in the textile fabrics and in dress	In fields and pastures Hemp and other fibrous materials	Food Do.
Jewellers .	Do.	Persons working and dealing in minerals	In gold, silver, and precious stones	Clothing
Tar Dealer .	Do.	Persons working and dealing in vegetable substances	In gums and resins	Conveyance & Travelling Do.
Grease Manufacturers Organ Builders	Do. Do.	Persons working and dealing in animal substances Persons engaged in art and mechanic productions, in which matters of various kinds are employed in combination	In grease, gut, bones, horn, ivory, whalebone In musical instruments	Amusement
Botanists .	Professional	Persons engaged in the learned professions, or in literature, art, and science (with their immediate subordinates)	Scientific persons	Health
Government Stationery Officer . Sealing-wax Makers	Do. Industrial	Persons engaged in general or local government of the country Persons working and dealing in vegetable substances	National government In gums and resins	Literature & Education Do.

The large number of occupations which are left 'unclassified' is also a defect in the Irish system. Amongst these are vitriol rectifiers, gutta-percha manufacturers, vermin-killers, gun-cartridge makers, storekeepers, rag and bone dealers, pipe polishers, a paper-bag stamper, woodrangers, woodcutters, lamplighters, bellmen, divers, billstickers and placard-carriers, scavengers, &c., &c., each of which finds a definite place in the English classification. Labourers, and others whose branch of labour is undefined, persons of rank and property, not returned under any office or occupation, and persons supported by the community and of no specified occupation, who swell the list of unclassified occupations in the Irish Tables, form, under the English system, a distinct class, divided, as already mentioned, into orders and sub-orders.

The Irish Commissioners of 1861, with commendable caution, did not abandon the old classification, as the merits of the new one had not been fully tested; but now that Dr. Farr's scheme has been twice tried in England with satisfactory results, it would appear that at the coming enumeration it might be generally adopted in the Irish Returns. An alphabetical index to the occupations, showing the place of each in the two systems, would obviate much of the inconvenience consequent on the change by facilitating comparison with the reports of past Censuses.

Religious Professions, Ages, and Education.

The Report on Religions and Education in the Census of 1861 proves the great difficulty of framing a correct and satisfactory statement of the religious professions of the people. The general classification is the following:—Established Church, Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, Independents, Baptists, Society of Friends or Quakers, all other persuasions, and Jews. The several denominations stand in the order of their numerical amount, except the Established Church, to which, as such, priority is given. In 1871 the reason for this exception will no longer exist.

The table showing the religions included under the head 'All other Persuasions' would appear to be capable of amendment. Some persons are inserted in it who apparently belong to the larger bodies. Thus 'Congregationalists' are synonymous with Independents, and 'Orthodox Presbyterians' and 'Members of the General Assembly' with the *main* Presbyterian Body; whilst 'High Church,' 'Churchmen,' and 'Puseyite' evidently belong to the Established Church. Again, several sects appear under two or more different names. For instance, 'Covenanters,' 'Reformed Presbyterians,' and 'Eastern Reformed Presbyterians,' 'Seceders' and 'Seceding Presbyterians,' 'Brethren,' 'Christian Brethren,' 'Plymouth Brethren,' and 'Darbyites,' 'Unitarians' and

'Unitarian Presbyterians,' &c. The titles 'Nonconformists,' 'Dissenters,' 'Protestant Dissenters,' 'Evangelical Church,' 'Evangelical Protestants,' and some others, are indefinite, and in the coming Census an attempt might be made to ascertain the particular denomination, if any, to which persons returned under these heads belong.

The Tabular Report on Ages and Education is compiled in precisely the same manner as the Report on Religious Professions and Education, except that the age-periods are inserted in lieu of the religions. The names of the baronies, parishes, and towns, and the education, are thus common to both Reports. In the coming Census, it would appear that this repetition might be avoided, and much printing be saved by amalgamating the two reports, confining the Ages and Education to half the sheet, and inserting the Religious Professions on the opposite side. The arrangement of 1861 would thus be practically retained, but in a more condensed form.

The information respecting religions is not only obtainable from the Report on that subject, but it is also inserted in the tables of the General Report, with other particulars; amongst them, the number of persons above five years old who can read, read and write, and those who can neither read nor write, matter which is also to be found in the volumes on Ages and Education. If these two items—viz., Religions and Education, were omitted from the tables of the General Report, and the remaining information restricted to one side of the

page, a further considerable reduction in bulk and cost of printing would be effected.

The Deaf and Dumb and the Blind.

Among the most interesting inquiries in connexion with the Decennial Census are those relating to the Deaf and Dumb and to the Blind.

The Irish statistics relating to the Deaf and Dumb were first collected in 1851, and were followed up in 1861, each case being traced as far as possible through the decade. Further light can, no doubt, be thrown in the Census of 1871 upon this branch of social inquiry, and fresh information obtained respecting the individuals whom it has pleased an All-wise Providence thus to afflict. Should the Census Returns continue to point out, as doubtless they will, that mutism is often the result of the *consanguinity* of the parents, it will probably become a question for consideration whether, instead of prohibiting marriage between persons on the ground of *affinity*, the Legislature should not rather place further restrictions on the intermarriage of relatives, which frequently causes so much misery to their ill-fated descendants. The question of the influence of climate and habits in producing muteness yet remains to be fully investigated, the data heretofore available being insufficient. That mutism, however, is very much more prevalent in some countries than in others appears from the fact that while in 1861 the ratio of mutes to the population of Ireland was 1 in

1176, and to the population of England 1 in 1641, in Piedmont (in 1858) it was 1 in 563, and in Savoy (in 1861) 1 in 443.

The statistics relating to the Blind in Ireland are the fullest and most satisfactory ever collected in any country. It is worthy of note that while in England, in the chief cities and towns, the proportion of the blind is *lower* than the general average, in Ireland it is in most cases *higher*; and that while in England the proportion of the sexes was 113 males to 100 females, in this country it was 100 males to 118.45 females. The very high ratio of 1 in 843 of the blind in Ireland to the total population (the highest of European countries in which an enumeration of the blind was made, with the exception of Norway) is accounted for principally by the repeated epidemics of ophthalmia which have visited this island, and by the fact that in the flow of emigration the blind have been left behind, thus swelling their ratio to the general population. One fertile source of blindness in this as well as in other states has been small-pox. Seven hundred and twenty-five cases were enumerated in Ireland in 1861 in which blindness had been caused by this malady; and four per cent. of the blind in Norway are said to have been deprived of their sight by its means. It is stated also that more than a sixth of the pupils received into the Liverpool School during the seventy years ended in 1860 lost their vision from the effects of small-pox. Owing to the operation of the Compulsory Vaccination Act, which was introduced into Ireland in 1864, this fearful scourge

has been almost stamped out of the country; and with continued vigilance on the part of the authorities, fresh cases of blindness from this cause will, it is to be hoped, become rare. The improvement in the sanitary condition of our towns, consequent on recent legislation, will likewise, by reducing fever and other zymotic diseases which not unfrequently cause loss of sight, effect a gradual reduction in the number of the blind.

The question of congenital blindness received attention in 1861, both in the English and Irish Censuses, but in neither country was the inquiry thoroughly satisfactory, and much remains still to be learned respecting this important subject. In Ireland, out of the 6,879 cases of blindness, replies to the query as to whether loss of sight was congenital were obtained in 6,341 instances, and from these it appeared that 211 persons (118 males and 93 females), or 3.33 per cent., were born blind. Assuming that in the 538 cases in which replies were not received, the same proportion existed between the sexes of the congenitally blind, it appears that congenital blindness in this country is more common to males than females in the proportion of 118 to 93, while the males among the blind generally are fewer than the females in the proportion of 100 to 118.45. The attempt to ascertain the specific disease in each case of congenital blindness proved a failure, a return being made in only two cases. The ages of the persons born blind might with advantage be given in the coming Census. This might easily be done by distin-

guishing those cases in the table showing the ages and occupations of the blind generally. From a comparison of the extent of congenital blindness in Ireland with that in England, it appears that whereas in Ireland these cases were only 3.33 per cent. of the total blindness, in England they were 9.54 per cent. This leads to the conclusion that either the popular custom of terming persons 'born blind,' who lose their sight in the first few years of life—a custom to which the English Commissioners allude—has very seriously affected the accuracy of their returns, or else that there are influences at work in England, producing this result, which do not operate with equal power in this country. It appears, however, that the high ratio in England is confirmed to some extent by the records of the Liverpool school, which show a proportion of ten per cent. of congenital cases.

The occupations of the blind form also an inquiry of much interest, and one which is capable of being followed up further at the next Census, as in 1861 the employments of the blind *before* and *after* loss of vision were not distinguished, and it can therefore only be guessed from the nature of the occupation given whether it was pursued before the calamity or not. In consequence of this defect, the occupation table loses much of its value, as it is not a correct record of the occupations of the blind previous to loss of sight, nor is it a reliable statement as to what employment they followed at the time of the enumeration. This, however, could easily be remedied at the forthcoming enumeration, by a slight

alteration in the queries issued in connexion with the secondary inquiry.

Tables of Deaths.

The volumes containing the Tables of Deaths will in future cease to form part of the Irish Census, as the information conveyed in them will be obtainable from the Annual Reports of the Registrar-General. As, however, there was an interval of nearly three years between the last Census and the date on which the Registration Acts came into operation, it is a question for the Government to determine whether, in the coming Inquiry, a return of Deaths should be obtained, in order to complete the mortality records of the decade.

It will be seen from the Quarterly Returns of Births, Deaths, and Marriages, that the registration of deaths is far from being perfect. This is mainly owing to the omission in the Irish Act of a clause corresponding to that in the English statute, which requires a certificate of registration to be obtained before burial, a provision which, in the sister country, has secured a complete record of deaths. The defective registration is not only to be regretted, from its being an indication that the people have not learned the benefits resulting to themselves from compliance with the law, but because it prevents practical use being made of the figures, it not being possible to estimate the deficiency except by comparison with

England, the population of which is very differently circumstanced.

One of the purposes for which a complete registration of deaths, together with a correct Census, is required, is the construction of a Life Table. The English Registration Act had been in operation but a few years when, in connexion with the Census of 1841, a table of the expectation of life was framed, based on the mortality of that year. Subsequently, a second table was framed on the deaths for the seven years—1838 to 1844; and a third table has since been issued, founded on the Censuses of 1841 and 1851, and the deaths registered in seventeen years. Much as a correct Life Table is to be desired for Ireland, where insurance offices are rapidly extending their operations, and an insurance scheme is carried on by the Government itself, through the medium of the Post Office, it is to be feared that an attempt to frame such a table from the present incomplete records of deaths would be a useless expenditure of the public money.

The Irish Commissioners entrusted with the charge of former Inquiries performed their work subject to the many difficulties consequent on having suddenly to organize a department expressly for the purpose, difficulties which have now to a great extent been removed by the establishment of

the General Register Office, from the staff of which trained officers can be obtained, as in England, to superintend the work. It is thus to be hoped that the Census of 1871 will prove a greater success than any of the preceding enumerations.

