

THE LATEST CENSUS

FROM THE FREEMAN.

Under some pressing exigency of the Irish Executive the Census returns taken on the night of the 3rd of April last were hastily called for, and a rough copy of results was prepared and forwarded to London with every possible expedition. From this we learn, amongst the other facts and figures that on the Census day the total population of the country was 5,159,849. In the last decennial return, 1871, the total population was given at 5,402,759, and there is thus within the period a decrease of population of 242,910 persons. The total population of 1871 is made up of—

Males	2,522,814
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Females	2,637,035
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the population in 1881 being, 2,768,636 females, and 2,634,123 males. The following are the statistics of decrease:—

Decrease in Linster	60,261
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Munster	69,575
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Ulster	93,686
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Connaught	29,016
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In other words the largest decrease has been in Ulster, and the smallest in Connaught. It is dispiriting work to be recording the depopulation of our country, and the process becomes more gloomy the further we extend it. If we take a comparative view of the parallel enumeration columns in the Census, we see that Ireland had a population of

8,196,597 in 1831,

6,574,278 in 1851,

5,798,967 in 1861,

5,402,804 in 1871, and

5,159,849 in 1881.

That is to say, ever decade continually there has been a decline, and in the five decades there has been a total decline of 3,036,784 of our people. One would suppose that this was depletion enough for a country that never was over populated; but many of our humane and patriotic philanthropists want to press the process much farther, and to make old oppression and new legislation co operate with the expropriation. The continued decrease in the population is easily explained by the fact that over 600,000 persons emigrated from Ireland in the decennial period ending 1881. In other words, about one ninth of the entire population in 1871 left the country within the next ten years. We can imagine nothing more terrible than this perennial drain from a fair and fertile land. It is to account for the miseries of the land. Those who go away are the young, the strong, the adventurous the brave, the high spirited. The old, the weak in body, the poor in spirit are left behind. The exodus still continues, the life blood of Ireland still wells from the open wound. One social consequence of the emigration is the great preponderance of women over men, the presence in this country of tens of thousands of females, to whom, for numerical reasons, marriage is impossible, and who, in the humbler classes, as they get past the time for field labour, become, poor creatures, burdens on their friends. The continued depopulation of Ireland is a fact unique in history, pregnant with misery of every kind, and a burning verdict of infamy against the rulers of an island which Heaven meant to be the home of an abundant population of brave men and virtuous women. The religious portion of the return gives, as the preceding return have given, some very suggestive figures. Thus for instance, we have—

Catholics	3,951,888
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Protestant Episcopalians	635,670
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Presbyterians,	485,503
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Methodists	47,669
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And other sects the remainder. The Catholics come to close on four millions of souls, while all other denominations bulked together come to nearly 1,200,000. In the Census of 1871 the figures show thus:

Catholics	4,141,933
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Protestant Episcopalians	683,295
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Presbyterians	503,461
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Methodists	41,815
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It is an exceedingly remarkable thing that the diminution in the Catholic and in the Protestant Episcopalian population is exactly at the same ratio—namely, at the rate of 4·8 per cent. in the decade. The decrease of the Presbyterians was at the rate of 2·4 per 100. The Methodists, it will be seen alone of the Christian bodies, have increased and multiplied in the ten years, which is accounted for by the fact that since the disestablishment a number of Episcopalian Protestants have joined this sect. In the present return the Jews number 453, which is nearly double what they were in 1871—they were in that year, 258. 120 females and 138 males. Of the population of the country, leaving out the 1,144 who refused to give their religion, 76·6 are Catholics, 12·3 are Protestants Episcopalian, 9·4 are Presbyterians, and 0·9 Methodists. The present Census gives 994,579 families in Ireland and 912,761 inhabited houses, as against, in 1871, 1,071,494 families and 960,352 habitations. That is to say there has been a decrease within the period of 76,915 families and of 47,591 houses. One of the most curious facts shown by the return is that the decrease of the population is greatest in Ulster. Monaghan showed a greater decrease than any other county, and one of the counties in which the population increased was the impoverished county of Kerry. This is accounted for, no doubt, by the fact that in the very poor districts of the country the people are not able to get together the few pounds which would carry them out of this unfortunate country. In the midst of such general diminution and decay it is perhaps satisfactory to see that our own city remains unaffected by the prevailing example. Dublin proper has increased 1·3 per cent., while her townships of Clontarf, Rathmines and Rathgar, Kingstown, Blackrock, and Kilmainham have increased respectively at the rate of 22·3, 17·9, 11·3, 11, and 8·7, per cent. The total population of the city is 249,486, as compared with 246,326 in 1871—Including the suburbs, the population is now 338,579, as against 320,735 ten years ago. The number of inhabited houses in the city and suburbs is 38,588. In 1871 the number was 35,285. Such is in bald and simple language a summary of the Census of 1881. In every other country in Europe the numbering of the people shows a tale of gladness and prosperity, of two blades of grass growing where one grew before, of villages grown into towns and towns into cities, of homesteads multiplied, and the hives of industry multiplying space. Here in Ireland for four decades the Census Table has told the same sad story of Misery, Desolation, and Decay. What can account for the terrible falling off in our population we now chronicle. No war has in the last decade swept the face of Ireland; no great pestilence has scourged her; and tremendous exertions presented want from, deepening into famine. The flight of 600,000 Irishmen and woman in less than ten years is a proof that worse than war and worse than famine is the dull agony of Foreign Rule.