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978-1-108-03635-1 - A Statistical Account of the British Empire: Exhibiting its Extent, Physical Capacities, Population, Industry, and Civil and Religious Institutions: Volume 1

J. R. McCulloch

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A Statistical Account of the British Empire

John Ramsay McCulloch (1789–1864) wrote numerous articles, pamphlets and books about the emerging field of political economy. This two-volume work, published in 1837, focuses on ‘the British Empire, exclusive of its foreign dependencies’, in other words, Great Britain and Ireland. McCulloch drew information from the 1821 and 1831 census returns and commissioned contributions from experts including William Jackson Hooker, who provided the article on botany. His book was the first such overview to be compiled in more than a century and is an indispensable contemporary source on life in Great Britain and Ireland at the close of the Georgian era. Volume 1 first covers topography and population, and then focuses on agriculture, providing fascinating data on land use and the breeds of livestock reared. Additional chapters focus on crime and punishment, improvements in diet and standard of living, the economic benefits deriving from overseas colonies, and the English language.

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Frontmatter

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A

STATISTICAL ACCOUNT

OF

THE BRITISH EMPIRE:

EXHIBITING ITS EXTENT, PHYSICAL CAPACITIES,
POPULATION, INDUSTRY, AND
CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS.

BY J. R. M^cCULLOCH, ESQ.

ASSISTED BY NUMEROUS CONTRIBUTORS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

P R E F A C E.

IT has long been matter of surprise and regret to many that there should be no modern work developing, within a moderate compass, the physical capacities, population, industry, and institutions of the British empire. The latest work of the kind that has attracted any notice is the *State of Great Britain and Ireland*, by Chamberlayne, the last edition of which was published so far back as the reign of George II. But, though this once popular publication contains a good deal of useful information, it is not written on any scientific plan, or with any considerable discrimination; while the change of circumstances since the peace of Paris in 1763, would have rendered it, how good soever it might originally have been, quite obsolete for many years past. The want of any separate publication on the state of the empire has been but indifferently supplied by the notices of it in other works. Speaking generally, geographical science in this country has been, until very recently, at the lowest ebb, while, during the long interval between Sir William Petty and Dr. Beeke, statistical science could hardly be said to exist. Hence the accounts of Great Britain and Ireland, given in our *Encyclopædias* and geographical works, are, for the most part, very meagre and defective. The article on England in the *Edinburgh Encyclopædia*, written by the late William Stevenson, Esq., Librarian to the Treasury, is undoubtedly the best of this class of publications. The space allotted to it was, however, too confined; so that some very important subjects, such as those relating to population, education, the poor, revenue and expenditure, army and navy, &c., are disposed of in the briefest and most unsatisfactory manner. The accounts of agriculture and manufactures are the best parts of the article, and are superior to any that had appeared when it was printed in 1815.

Since this era a number of detached treatises of various merit have been published on different branches of industry; and our political, commercial, and financial systems have been subjected not only to a more thorough examination than they had previously undergone, but to many important changes. Much valuable information has also been acquired under the acts for taking the census in 1821 and 1831;

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Frontmatter

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and there are few departments that have not been made the subject of investigation by parliamentary committees, or by commissions appointed by the Crown. A vast mass of materials has consequently been collected that may be employed to illustrate the statistics of the empire; and the time seemed to be at length arrived when it might be attempted to compile a work that should give a pretty fair representation of the present condition of the United Kingdom.

Influenced by this feeling, the Editor and principal author of this work submitted, some years ago, a proposal to the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge for the drawing up a statistical account of the British empire. The Society readily and liberally agreed to it; and the work now before the reader is the fruit of that arrangement.

The Editor has endeavoured, with what success the public will judge, to make the work generally interesting and instructive. To have confined it, as some suggested, to mere statements of results, or to the detail of such information as might have been mostly thrown into a tabular form, would have made it unreadable, and destroyed its utility. The plan that has been followed is nearly the same as that adopted by Peuchet in his *Statistique Elementaire de la France*; but with a greater latitude of criticism than that writer thought it right or perhaps safe to indulge in. We have not been satisfied, for example, in giving an account of any branch of industry, with stating the value of its products, the number and wages of the people engaged in it, and so forth; but have, in addition, given some notices of its history, and of the more prominent of the circumstances that have accelerated or retarded its progress. This seemed to be necessary to impart interest to the work, to make it useful, and to give it a chance for getting into circulation. We have, also, seldom scrupled, when a fair opportunity presented itself, briefly to expound the general principles applicable to the subject under review; but as these discussions are always separated from the descriptive and arithmetical details, they may be passed over by those anxious only to acquire information as to the latter.

In a work embracing such a diversity of subjects, the co-operation of different authors was necessary. The choice of these was left to the Editor; and he is not without hopes that the reader may be of opinion that there are not many instances in which a much better selection could have been made.

The articles on the Geology of the three great divisions of the empire, were contributed by Robert Bakewell, Esq.; the article on the Climate of England by Dr. Copland, the learned and able

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE.

vii

author of the Medical Dictionary; that on Botany by Sir William Jackson Hooker, of Glasgow; and that on Zoology by William Swainson, Esq.

The important articles on the English Constitution and Courts of Law were contributed by F. Forster, Esq. A.M., Barrister at Law, and Fellow of Wadham College, Oxford; and we believe we run little risk in saying that they present one of the best as well as most compendious outlines of the constitution that is any where to be met with.

The chapter on Corporations is by Charles Neate, Esq., Barrister at Law.

The account of the Constitution and Courts of Law of Scotland was contributed by William Spalding, Esq., Advocate.

The articles on the Constitution, Courts of Law, Religious Establishments, Education, and Poor of Ireland were supplied by the Rev. Edward Groves, of the Record Office, Dublin. But it is due to that gentleman to state that he is not responsible for the statements on pages 437. and 438. of the second volume, nor for the reasoning in favour of the introduction of a system of poor laws into Ireland.

The articles on the Religious Establishments and Education of Scotland are by Thomas Murray, Esq. LL.D., of Edinburgh; and are models of that sort of composition.

The article on Education in England and Wales, containing a luminous account of the systems of education followed at the great public schools, and at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, is the contribution of Herman Merivale, Esq. A.M., Barrister at Law.

William Farr, Esq., Surgeon, is the author of the elaborate and original article on Vital Statistics.

The account of the Compulsory Provision for the Poor of England, and of the changes effected by the late act, was furnished by George Coode, Esq., Barrister at Law, Assistant Secretary to the Poor Law Commissioners.

Dr. Irving, Librarian to the Faculty of Advocates, Edinburgh, is the author of the chapter on the Origin and Progress of the English Language.

For the remainder of the work, and its general supervision, the Editor is responsible.

We are quite aware that, notwithstanding the pains that have been taken to make this publication worthy of the subject, it is fairly open to much criticism. Some may think that we have discussed various topics that had better been omitted to the exclusion of others of greater importance; and others, without objecting to the subjects,

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

may probably object to the way in which they are treated. But, in a work of this kind, the outline of which does not admit of being accurately defined, and where much must necessarily be left to the discretion of the compilers, it is impossible to please all parties; and we shall be satisfied if we shall be thought to have produced a work which, though not free from defects, furnishes, on the whole, a tolerably correct view of the present state and resources of the empire.

Notwithstanding the magnitude of the materials from which we have drawn, we have had to regret the extreme scarcity, and sometimes, indeed, the total want, of all authentic and trustworthy information on various important points. In many instances we have had to build our conclusions on reasonings from analogy, or on a few detached facts; and we have not unfrequently been compelled, from the total want of experience and information, to decline drawing any conclusions. Few, indeed, would imagine, *à priori*, how ill supplied British writers are with the means necessary to throw light on some of the most interesting departments of statistical inquiry. Latterly, indeed, the public attention has been, in some degree, awakened to the state of this long-neglected department of science, and a few steps, though of no great importance, have been taken to supply the deficiencies in question. But much remains to be done. And we may be permitted to hope that the circulation of this work, by bringing those deficiencies under the public view, and drawing attention to them, will, in this respect, if in none else, contribute to the advancement of the science.

CONTENTS
OF
THE FIRST VOLUME.

STATISTICAL ACCOUNT OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE	-	Page - 1
---	---	-------------

PART I.

EXTENT, PHYSICAL CIRCUMSTANCES, AND CIVIL DIVISIONS OF THE
BRITISH EMPIRE.

CHAPTER I.

ENGLAND AND WALES	-	-	-	-	3
SECT. 1. — Name and Extent	-	-	-	-	3
2. — Face of the Country	-	-	-	-	7
3. — Mountains and Moorlands	-	-	-	-	8
4. — Vales, Fens, Marshes, &c.	-	-	-	-	20
5. — Rivers, River-ports, and Lakes	-	-	-	-	34
6. — Sea-coast and Sea-ports	-	-	-	-	51
7. — Geology	-	-	-	-	71
8. — Climate	-	-	-	-	98
9. — Botany	-	-	-	-	117
10. — Zoology	-	-	-	-	129
11. — Civil Divisions	-	-	-	-	163
12. — Statistical Notices of the different English Counties	-	-	-	-	171
Counties bordering on Wales	-	-	-	-	180
Midland Counties	-	-	-	-	185
Eastern District	-	-	-	-	198
South-eastern District	-	-	-	-	212
Southern District	-	-	-	-	219
South-western District	-	-	-	-	225
Wales	-	-	-	-	229
Islands	-	-	-	-	232

CHAPTER II.

	Page
SCOTLAND	- 236
SECT. 1. — Name. — Extent. — Face of the Country	- 236
2. — Mountains, Vales, &c.	- 240
3. — Rivers and River-ports. — Lakes, &c.	- 248
4. — Sea-coast and Sea-ports	- 257
5. — Geology	- 264
6. — Climate	- 277
7. — Civil Divisions	- 283
8. — Statistical Notices of the different Scotch Counties	- 285
Islands	- 317

CHAPTER III.

IRELAND	- 326
SECT. 1. — Name and Extent. — Face of the Country	- 326
2. — Mountains. — Level Lands, &c.	- 330
3. — Rivers and River-ports. — Lakes	- 332
4. — Sea-coast and Sea-ports	- 344
5. — Soil, Bogs, &c.	- 355
6. — Geology	- 360
7. — Climate	- 373
8. — Civil Divisions	- 378
9. — Statistical Notices of the different Irish Counties	- 379
Leinster	- 379
Munster	- 385
Ulster	- 390
Connaught	- 395
Islands	- 399

PART II.

POPULATION	- 399
SECT. 1. — Population of England and Wales	- 399
2. — Population of Scotland	- 421
3. — Population of Ireland	- 432
4. — Population of the Empire	- 444

PART III.

INDUSTRY OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE.

CHAPTER I.

AGRICULTURE	- 445
SECT. 1. — State of Property in England and Wales. — Size of Estates, &c.	- 445

CONTENTS. xi

	Page
SECT. 2. — Division of the Kingdom into Agricultural Departments. —	
Size of Farms. — Conditions in Leases. — Buildings and	
Fences, &c. - - - - -	447
3. — Tillage Husbandry - - - - -	468
4. — Agriculture of Scotland - - - - -	481
5. — Grazing Husbandry of Great Britain - - - - -	485
6. — Live Stock of Great Britain - - - - -	487
Cattle - - - - -	490
Sheep - - - - -	498
7. — Agriculture of Ireland - - - - -	506
8. — Produce of Timber - - - - -	524
9. — Distribution of Lands, Rents, Profits of Farmers, &c. - - - - -	528
I. — England - - - - -	528
II. — Scotland - - - - -	537
III. — Ireland - - - - -	541
Number of Persons employed in Agriculture - - - - -	544
10. — Slow Progress of Agricultural Improvements. — Notices of	
the Progress and present State of English and Scotch	
Agriculture - - - - -	545

SUPPLEMENT.

CHAPTER I. — CRIMES, PUNISHMENTS, AND PRISONS - - - - -	560
II. — IMPROVEMENTS IN FOOD, CLOTHING, AND LODGING. —	
CLASSIFICATION AND INCOME OF THE PEOPLE - - - - -	584
III. — COLONIES AND DEPENDENCIES - - - - -	593
IV. — ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE - - - - -	603

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978-1-108-03635-1 - A Statistical Account of the British Empire: Exhibiting its Extent, Physical Capacities, Population, Industry, and Civil and Religious Institutions: Volume 1

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ERRATA IN VOL. I.

Page 58., line 20. from top, *for* “22,000*l.*” *read* “220,000*l.*” In point of fact, however, the exact cost of the bridge was 211,791*l.* 4*s.* 2*d.* (*Parl. Paper*, No. 487. Sess. 1836.)

Page 261., line 4. from top, *for* “Duncansby Head has been crowned,” *read* “it has been proposed to crown Duncansby Head.”

Page 327., line 19. from top, *for* “Mayo,” *read* “Donegal.”

Page 536. For the statement as to the *profit of farmers*, in lines 30–38. from the top, *read*, — “Th profits arising from farming in England and Wales, in 1810–11, amounted to about 22,000,000*l.* It is contended that they have fallen since 1815 in a greater degree than the rent of land; but at present they may be safely estimated at about 21,000,000*l.* This would give, on a capital of 186,000,000*l.*, a gross profit of about 11½ per cent.; and on a capital of 217,000,000*l.* it would give nearly 10 per cent. It is, however, to be observed that the 22,000,000*l.* of gross profit includes,” &c.