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"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

Dreams.

"Only in dreams can the past be ours again."

The past! the past! what sad forms dimly rise
From out the shadows of the long ago,
And through the mystic veil between us cast
We see their pale forms moving to and fro.

On that dim shore where Death's relentless tide
Hath borne away the early loved and lost;
And that deep river surging far and wide,
Freighted with treasures that we loved the most.

There ever landing from the deep laden sciff
Which Death's pale figure plieeth to and fro
Are household treasures rudely from us rife,
Whose vacant places speak so much of woe.

Bright childish forms, and age's silver hairs,
With manhood's strength, and woman's earnest love
By the stern boat-man borne across the tide
Yet is all guided by a hand above.

Only in dreams is the dim-veil removed,
That hides the mystic vision from our sight;
Again we mingle with the forms we loved
In the strange dream-land of mysterious night.

Thank God for dreams! that even in our sleep
Forms of the loved and lost again we meet;
Pale hands clasp ours from o'er that solemn deep,
And cherished forms again we fondly greet.

Not long they tarry; day, with cold dull care,
Dispels the vision from our longing sight;
And life's realities are all that's ours
Though tears may fall o'er visions of the night
Hillsdale S. I. E.

Political.

For the Christian Messenger.

Registration of Births, Marriages, and Deaths.

Extracts from a paper read before the Nova Scotia Literary and Scientific Society, March 12th, 1860. By the Rev. J. M. Cramp, D. D.

In England, the arrangements for registration of births, marriages, and deaths were very imperfect and incomplete till the year 1836. The only legal registers were those under the charge of the parochial clergymen, which date from the year 1536, when they were first instituted. But great numbers of these registers were irregularly kept and ill preserved; besides which, being scattered all over the kingdom, the trouble and expense necessary to be incurred very frequently prevented search, and thus, in many instances, personal rights were irrecoverable, and much property was lost. An additional inconvenience arose from the fact that the parochial registers were registers of baptisms, not of births, and could not afford legal evidence of the exact age of the parties, which is often a point of importance in regard to the possession of property. And further—those registers were only applicable to members of the Church of England. When the registration was established, that Church embraced, or was supposed to embrace, the whole population; but in the course of three centuries great changes had taken place, a large portion of the population being found in connection with various bodies of Dissenters, Protestant and Roman Catholic. Registers of births were generally kept among them, but they were not held valid in the Courts of Law.

When the right of celebrating marriages according to their own forms was conceded to Dissenters, it was judged advisable to establish at the same time a system of registration which should embrace the entire population of the country. As a preparatory measure, a Commission was appointed, to collect and examine all nonparochial Registers, with a view to a remedial enactment in their favour.

That was done: the Registers were classified, and reduced to one alphabetical arrangement for the sake of reference. They were then deposited in a place of security, and afterwards transferred to the General Registry Office. The Registers so collected and authenticated by the Commissioners were constituted valid evidence in Courts of Law by a Special Act.

The General Registration Acts followed; one relating to births and deaths, and the other to marriages. They were passed in 1836. A Registrar General was appointed, under whom the working of the Acts was committed to the Boards of Guardians of the Poor Law Unions. The Clerks of the Boards were generally appointed Superintendent Registrars of the Districts comprised in the respective Unions, with Subordinate Registrars under them in suitable localities. The Quarterly Returns of the latter are transmitted to the Superintendents, and by them to the Registrar General. The Registrars of Births and Deaths receive one shilling for each entry. The Registrars of marriages are paid by fees for attendance. Clergymen of the Church of England receive sixpence for every Register of marriage celebrated by them; they send separate Quarterly Returns to the Superintendent Registrars. The above mentioned payments are charges on the funds of the Unions, which funds are raised by parochial assessment. Register Books for all these purposes are supplied by the Registrar General, and paid for out of the same funds. Thus perfect uniformity in the mode of registration is secured.

The Quarterly Returns forwarded to the Registrar General's Office are there analysed and arranged; so that the time of birth, marriage, or death, of any individual, in England, and Wales, can be ascertained at any time, by any person, on the payment of a moderate fee for the search.

An Annual Report is prepared by the Registrar General, and laid before the House of Commons. It contains abstracts of all the Returns, shewing the number of Births, Marriages, and Deaths, in all the Counties, Districts, and Sub-Districts, during the preceding year, and many curious particulars, and much useful information, derived from those returns.

An abstract of some of the statements in the last Annual Report (the twentieth), comprising the Registration-history for the year 1857, may be interesting.

There were 159,097 marriages that year in England and Wales: 131,031 of them took place in parish churches, 28,066 in other places. Of the persons married, 8885 men and 28,798 women were minors; referring to that item, the Registrar General says, "the general law evidently is, that in the counties where the women are the most ignorant they marry in the largest proportions under 21 years of age, and lose the largest numbers of their children." Another noticeable thing is, that 115,084 men wrote their names in the marriage registers, while 44,013 made their marks; 97,332 women wrote, and 71,765 marked. The respective proportions were:—writers, men 72 in 100—women, 61; markers men, 28 in 100—women, 39. A decided improvement in this respect has taken place within the last ten years.

The population of England and Wales in 1857 was estimated at 19,304,897. The births were 663,071—339,998 males, and 323,073 females. The excess of births over deaths was 243,256. The average number of births, daily, was 1816—of deaths, 1150; nett daily increase, 666. Of the births, 43,002 were illegitimate.

The deaths during the year were 419,815; males, 212,356—females, 207,459.

The Ages at which the deaths took place are thus reported:—

Under 5	174,004	Males, 92,915	Females, 81,089
From 5 to 10	17,441	8,797	8,644
10 to 15	9,499	4,813	4,686
15 to 20	27,525	13,021	14,504
20 to 25	26,922	12,645	14,277
25 to 30	26,666	13,115	13,551
30 to 35	26,402	13,946	12,456
35 to 40	31,285	15,937	15,348
40 to 45	38,088	18,361	19,727
45 to 50	32,026	14,775	17,251
50 to 55	9,308	3,833	5,475
55 to 60	649	198	451

Among those last enumerated, 26 males and 71 females reached the age of 100, or upwards. The oldest male was 107; the oldest female, 111.

An important feature of the registration of deaths is the statement of the cause of death, as far as the same can be ascertained. The arrangements made for obtaining information on this subject are very complete; and the zealous co-operation of the medical profession enables the Registrar General to furnish, in tabular form, a yearly account of the mortal-

ity occasioned by every disease to which the human frame is liable. Register books are provided for medical gentlemen, whose certificates are placed in the hands of the Registrars, and the several items embodied in their Reports.

In reporting the causes of death the Registrar General adopts the following arrangement, viz:—Zymotic diseases; Constitutional diseases; Local diseases; Diseases of growth nutrition, and decay; and violent causes. All these are variously subdivided, the whole comprising 107 divisions. The deaths in 1857 are thus classified:—

	Males.	Females.
Zymotic diseases,	90,414	44,486
Constitutional diseases,	84,458	39,489
Local diseases,	158,809	82,595
Diseases of growth, &c.,	66,037	32,103
Violent causes,	15,027	11,048
Causes not ascertained,		4,980

From the Tables assigning "specified causes" of death, a few additional particulars may be gleaned.

	Males.	Females.
Small-pox,	3,936	2,077
Scarlatina,	14,229	7,214
Diarrhoea,	21,189	10,721
Typhus,	18,249	8,766
Dropsy,	8,452	3,422
Cancer,	6,201	1,820
Consumption,	50,106	23,354
Apoplexy,	8,378	4,171
Paralysis,	8,714	4,266
Convulsions,	24,532	13,702
Disease of the heart, &c.,	13,885	6,779
Bronchitis,	25,588	12,798
Pneumonia,	23,457	12,500
Teething,	3,992	2,125
Disease of liver,	3,881	2,032
Burns and scalds,	2,717	1,458
Hanging and suffocation,	1,402	968
Drowning,	2,807	2,291
Fractures and Contusions,	5,338	4,527
Wounds,	605	489
Old age,	26,847	11,323

It is much to be desired that a similar system of Registration (with such modification as might be thought expedient) should be established in all the Colonies and Dependencies of Great Britain. Indeed, it may be regarded as peculiarly important, since Colonists so frequently change their residences, and remove to distant parts. In the event of death it is often impossible, under present circumstances, to obtain such information as may enable persons to secure possession of property to which they are legally entitled.

By the Law of Nova Scotia (Revised Statutes, Chap. 123.) it is enacted that "every person who may baptize, marry, or perform the burial service, shall keep a registry, shewing the names and ages of the persons whom he shall have baptized and married, or who have been born, or who have died within his cure, or belonging to his Congregation;"—a return, in duplicate, is to be forwarded, within ten days after the 1st of January in each year to the Clerk of the peace, who is directed to file one return and transmit the other to the Board of Registration and Statistics, at Halifax. Neglect of duty renders the person liable to a fine of five pounds.

On this law it may be observed:—

1. That a registration of baptisms is not called for, the time of birth being the only information required. Infant baptism too, is by no means generally practised, even in the denominations which observe it.

2. That no form of registration is prescribed so that the information given will be lacking in uniformity.

3. That no provision is made for ascertaining the cause of death.

4. That no one is charged with execution of the law. It is no man's duty to see that it is enforced. A penalty for neglect is indeed threatened, but no prosecutor is appointed.

5. That the "Board of Registration and Statistics," as far as the writer can learn, is not now in existence.

6. That the law, as might have been expected, is almost wholly inoperative. During the year 1858, for instance, not a single return was sent in to the Clerk of the Peace for Kings County. There is reason to believe that the neglect generally prevails.

7. That in consequence, no evidence can now be obtained respecting the date of the birth, marriage, or death of a large number of the inhabitants of this Province.

8. That even if the returns had been regularly sent in and forwarded, there is no arrangement for general registry, and no provision for reference and search.

Such an unsatisfactory state of affairs

ought not to be permitted to remain. It may not be possible to establish a Registration in all respects as complete as that now in force in England; but an approximation to it should be endeavoured, and it may be obtained at a reasonable rate of expenditure.

The writer would therefore suggest the expediency of appointing a Registrar, with powers and duties similar to those of the Registrar General in England, with the Clerks of the Peace as Superintendent Registrars, and Subordinate Registrars in the Districts into which the counties may be divided for this purpose. A Registration Act for this Province should be framed substantially in accordance with the English law.

The writer would further suggest the desirability of fixing a time within which all existing Registers in the Offices of Clerks of the Peace or elsewhere should be collected together; within which time all persons whose births, or the births of whose children have not been registered, may have an opportunity of accomplishing that object, and all clergymen holding Registers which have not been forwarded to the Clerks of the Peace may be allowed to discharge the duty. The machinery of the new Act would go into operation as soon as Registrars could be appointed. After the time fixed, as above, no evidence of the date of birth, marriage, or death, otherwise than in accordance with the law, should be held valid. The utility and advantage of the law will ensure its observance, medical gentlemen, in particular, may be expected to render valuable aid in carrying it into effect.

In the neighbouring province of New Brunswick there is no legal provision for the registration of births and deaths. The registration of marriages is professedly in the hands of the Clerks of the Peace, as in this province but is very inadequately attended to. The attention of the Government has been directed to the subject, and an attempt will probably be made to remedy the existing evil.

In Canada East, the ministers of religion of all persuasions keep registers of the changes occurring by birth, marriage, and death, in their respective congregations, duplicates of which are annually sent to the Prothonotary's Office, Montreal; but persons not regularly connected with any congregations cannot share the benefits of the Registers, and the Registers themselves are of small use, since they are only deposited, not arranged, and an available search is almost entirely impracticable. Canada West is in the same state with regard to registration as New Brunswick. A new law was introduced during the last session of the Legislature, but there was not zeal enough in the House to carry it into effect.

The Australasian colonies are more alive to the importance of this matter. Registration is established there, and annual reports are published. In the province of Victoria, with a population of 403,419, the registered births for the year ending June 30, 1857, amounted to 15,937, and the deaths to 6521, considerably more than two births to one death. The South Australian records states that in a population of 104,708, the births in 1856, were 4448, while the deaths were only 1147, little more than one-fourth of the births. The population of Tasmania, at the beginning of 1857, was 81,492; the births in 1856 were 2956, the deaths 1338. Even in New Zealand registration is effectively accomplished. "The total births," says the *Quarterly Review* for October last, "for the year 1855 and 1856 were 3182, and the total deaths for the same period 876, showing an excess of births over deaths of 2306. * * The marriages, in a total population of 37,191 and 45,540, were for the years 1855 and 1856 respectively 406 and 404. * * The registrar's returns for one of the settlements show that out of 1247 children under 14 years of age, there were only seven deaths in the year, or one for every 178. The total number of deaths per 1000 was about 5, while the total number of births per 1000 was 45!"

These examples of useful legislation surely deserve to be imitated. The British North American Colonies ought not to be outdone by the infant settlements of Australasia.

A Bill for Registration purposes was presented to the House of Assembly during its last Session, passed the second reading, and was referred to the Law Committee, but it was thought advisable to leave the further