

marriages, and burials, the transcripts to be certified by the clergymen and churchwardens at the bottom of each page. To compliance with this order we owe the preservation of most of the registers previous to 1597. It was further provided that copies of the registers should annually within a month after Easter be transmitted by the churchwardens to the registrar of the diocese, to be received by him without fee, and faithfully preserved in the episcopal archives. It is to be feared that this faith was hardly kept, as although gaps in parish registers can sometimes be supplied by the transcripts, yet these documents are in general found to be unsorted and in a dilapidated condition. The seventeenth canon of 1603, in its turn, directs a fresh transcription of the old registers, especially from 1588, thus affording a fresh chance for duplicate registers. The injunction of the Lord Cromwell, and the order for transcripts to be sent to the bishop's registry, are otherwise confirmed with the addition that a 'sure coffer' with three locks, and keys for each of the chief officials of the church, are to be provided, and the entries are required to be made in the register on the Sabbath day for the preceding week, in the presence of the churchwardens. These coffers are still to be seen in many parish vestries, but in accordance with section 4 of 52 Geo. III. c. 146, ought to be replaced by 'a dry, well-painted iron chest, constantly kept locked in some dry, safe, and secure place within the usual place of residence of the rector, vicar, curate, or other officiating minister if resident within the parish or chapel, or in the parish church or chapel.' The section continues, 'the said books shall not be taken or removed from or out of the said chest at any time or for any cause whatever except for purpose of making such entries therein as aforesaid or for the inspection of persons desirous of making search therein, or to be produced as evidence in some Court of law, or to be inspected as to the state and condition thereof.' These duties are imposed on and the custody of registers given solely to the parson. Annual copies are to be made by him or a churchwarden, and copies are to be transmitted to the diocesan registrar on or before June 1 in each year; and the

schedules of the Act provide forms of entries to be made in books of parchment or good and durable paper to be provided by Her Majesty's printer.

The history of the law of registers shows that at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries it was found necessary to remind the clergy of their duties by frequent injunctions to observe the law and recopy their register. There is a lull in the history of the subject until we come to the year 1812, when the statute of that year provides the law on the subject down to the present day, with one exception—namely, that so far as the form of the registration of marriages is concerned that Act was repealed by 6 & 7 Wm. IV. c. 86, section 31 of which provides a new form. The difficulty about the Act of Geo. III. is that a strange accident appears to have happened to it during its passage through Parliament. By section 18, all fines and penalties are to go one-half to the informer and the other to the poor of the parish, a remarkable destination for the sole penalty in the Act—namely, fourteen years; transportation for a false entry. The clauses providing penalties for the neglect of the duties imposed by the Act appear to have slipped out during its progress through Parliament. The title extends to the registration of births as well as baptisms, but nothing is said in the Act about births, the registration of which does not come within the proper functions of the parson of the parish, although the date of the birth is sometimes inserted in the register, especially when the child is his own. In that case he has been known to give even the hour of the event. 'Son and heir,' also, occurs sometimes, but is equally supererogatory. The distinction between the duties of the parson and those of the public registrar was emphasised when the Act 6 & 7 Wm. IV. c. 86, for registering births, deaths, and marriages in England, was passed. That Act required every clergyman of the Church of England to keep the marriage registers in duplicate, and provided a machinery for registering births and deaths. In regard to marriages, the parish register and the general register overlap, but births and deaths record distinct events from baptisms and burials. The one