

to say when that work should be carried out," and adds, "but I say without hesitation that public men who would despise all these projects"—he had mentioned a great many—"would not be worthy of public confidence." This is Mr. Tarte's way of avoiding the railway grant. One of the other projects which he had mentioned is a Georgian Bay canal; but while he declared the project "worthy of all consideration," he was not prepared to give an opinion as to the best mode of carrying out that work.

We may venture to hope now that England and France have settled their difference in Africa and that the Madagascar and Newfoundland questions are to be taken up, the Newfoundland question may soon reach a settlement. Mr. Chamberlain, we notice, while unable to disallow the Reid contract, has not a good word to say for it economically. One good Mr. Reid, moved by his great interests in the island, may do, is in keeping the French shore question well in the front till it is disposed of. The bargain which the island has made with Mr. Reid must be worked out, in good faith, whether or not it ought ever to have been made. Perhaps if the chief Crown officers had not been the legal advisers of Mr. Reid there would have been no contract. A Government which owns vast areas of timber, coal and iron, could surely, if no other resource were open to it, have worked some of them, on a moderate scale at first, and perhaps all of them, ultimately, on a greatly increased scale.

VITAL STATISTICS.

The Registrar-General of Ontario is not exactly in the position of the man who was required to make bricks without straw, but in the position the brickmaker would have been if he had been required to count the straws without having the means of doing so. When the Registrar-General wants to ascertain the number of births, marriages or deaths, in the 1,000 of the population, he has to guess at the number of thousands the population will divide into. If the birth-rate and death-rate could be ascertained with accuracy, which is impossible if you cannot tell how many thousands there are in the population, immigration on the one hand and emigration on the other, come in as disturbing elements. The Registrar-General admits that there is no means of ascertaining with certainty what either the one or the other amounts to. But by some process, which is unintelligible to us, he puts down 4,570 as the number of immigrants who go to the North-West, and takes credit for 9,140 who are assumed to have come to Ontario. As a result of the suppositious division he strikes a balance of 4,570, and adds it to the population of Ontario. In this way a scaffolding of conjectural statistics, far too feeble to bear the strain put upon it, is built up.

In dealing with births, marriages and deaths, the greatest difficulty is with the births. As there can be no burial without a medical certificate, the means of knowing the number of deaths exist, but on births there is no such check, for many children come into the world without the aid of a medical man. The Registrar-General has ingeniously assumed that he may fairly reason from the known to the unknown; that from the known number in the increase of deaths, he may assume the increase, to an equal amount, in the births. It is quite clear, however, that in the actual circumstances and considering all the facts involved, he is not entitled to act upon this assumption. Nothing is more notorious than the fluctuations in the proportion of deaths at different times. And in a review of relative number of births, in Canada and elsewhere, he admits that "it is impossible not to conclude that certain other

influences which may be termed of a moral or social character, must be operative to produce such low a birth-rate" in the province. If the birth-rate be abnormal it is not permissible to argue as if it were normal. It cannot be pretended that the death-rate has increased from similar abnormal causes. How far the birth-rate is abnormal there are no means of knowing.

Mr. R. B. Hamilton, inspector of the Department, thinks the low birth-rate is accounted for "to a considerable extent," by neglect to report returns. "A considerable extent" is a very uncertain quantity. There is no actual contradiction between the two officers, and if there were it would amount only to a difference of opinion. If it be worth while to require returns for statistical purposes, as it undoubtedly is, it is necessary to do everything possible to ensure that they shall be complete; if incomplete they must be misleading, and therefore worse than none at all. Before we conclude definitely that the birth-rate of Ontario is barely two-thirds of the English average, not greatly more than one-half that of Quebec, and that it approaches that of France, we must see that all possible pains are taken to ascertain that the figures are reliable. How is this to be done? It ought to be possible to compel medical men to make complete returns of the births they attend; further than this they cannot reasonably be expected to go. If they can be compelled to make full returns to this extent, the only difficulty that remains is with the births at which no medical man is present. It is easy to understand that, in Quebec, vital statistics are better collected than in Ontario. There, as previous to the revolution in France, the priests kept registers of births, marriages and deaths, and though they did not like to become officers of the State for this purpose, it was found possible to dispense with their service, in France, and here if they grumbled a little they would nevertheless obey.

Most people here will be willing to postpone the final discussion of the alleged abnormal birth-rate, in Ontario, until the facts can be ascertained with something like certainty. But enough is known, outside the office of Registrar-General, to make it but too probable that his worst fears, on this point, are founded on fact. Meanwhile, we may note that it is an ill omen when the birth-rate of this province falls below that of France, in this stage of her decadence. A French-Canadian journal recommends the use of the confessional, as a cure for the evil which is assumed to exist in Ontario. It is a fair answer to point to the fact that this remedy has not proved efficacious, in France, where presumably it has been tried.

If ever the time should come when the governing races should refuse to multiply, as the people of France already do, a revolution of the most tremendous character, in human affairs, would take place. For while there may be checks artificially put to the increase of population, in Europe, increase in Asia goes on, in some parts at tremendous speed. In the last sixteen years, the increase in the population of British India has been 78,000,000, a number equal to the whole population of the United States. The question how to feed the increased population presses, in India, and at some point it will impose a limit. But in some other countries artificial limitations are much sooner reached.

EIGHT MONTHS OF FOREIGN TRADE.

There has been during the past eight months a steady and substantial increase in the foreign trade of the Dominion. From the beginning of the fiscal year in June to the end of February the import and export trade o