

TAKING THE CENSUS, 1901.

On the 1st inst., the work commenced of taking the Census of this Dominion, which is still in progress with every prospect of continuing for some time longer. The custom of enumerating the people is very ancient. In the Mosaic economy it was enjoined as a duty. When the Israelites were on their way from Egypt back to their own land they were numbered under the direction of Moses for purposes of an economic nature. Records are extant of a Census in China 3,943 years ago, and one in Japan about 2,000 years before this century. In ancient Athens the people were classified according to their taxable property or income. The same process took place in Rome where each citizen had to declare under oath his name, dwelling, age of each of his family, the value of his property. One of these is referred to in the New Testament. The object of these early enumerations was mainly to secure a basis for taxation, as, in later times, the purpose of the Census was to discover who had the property coveted by the State, and from whence conscripts could be drawn for the army. The latter object was the aim of the Census taken in Russia in 1719, as it is that of Turkey to this day. The feature most objected to in the Census taking of Canada is the enquiry made into the financial position of each citizen of both sexes, this is a revival of the ancient custom, but for a less obnoxious purpose. Glancing over the list of questions asked by the Census papers of different countries in different ages, we find enquiries relating to the names, ages, occupations, sex and nationality of the people, the number of houses, estates, schools, markets, fairs, postal stations, churches, benevolent institutions, manufacturing establishments, birth place, civil condition, language spoken, the number of blind, deaf and dumb and prisoners, the value and number of domestic animals kept, degree of education, the religion professed, data as to annuity and insurance companies. This seems a long list, but no one country prior to quite modern times included all these questions in its Census returns. The United States Census schedule of 1871 had 22 questions which, at that time, exceeded any on record. Indeed, the statistics collected decennially under the Census taking system include detailed returns from every section of the financial, industrial, commercial, mechanical, social, physical, religious, municipal and other interests of the people. The Census now being taken in Canada follows the lines of the United States rather than those of Great Britain in the variety of information sought. Some of the questions asked are generally regarded as too inquisitorial, intended to elicit information of no practical value, hence the schedules are certain to contain a large number of items that are misleading, if not wholly erroneous. The system of spreading the work of Census taking over several weeks is condemned by all the most eminent statistical authorities. For rural districts the plan may be admitted to work fairly well,

but, in towns and cities the prolongation of the work of filling in the Census papers necessarily involves very serious errors. In the United Kingdom the plan is adopted of "advance schedules," that is, blank papers are left at each dwelling a day or two before 1st April, which is "Census day," these are required to be filled in and ready for the enumerators not later than the 2nd April. In Ireland the work is done by the constabulary and the Irish Census is admitted to be the most reliable of any taken. In Great Britain the peace officers are used to some extent, but all over the old land Census is taken on one day. There are, of course, some there who try to balk the work of enumeration, there are also accidental delays, but these are regarded as of no importance as an element disturbing the accuracy of the work. No protest has ever been raised in England impugning the absolute honesty, secrecy, and reliability of the Census. Critics have challenged the advisability of this or that feature, such as, whether absent members of a family should be included in the home return or where they slept on Census night, also as to how British citizens travelling abroad should be treated, but in a broad sense, the British census is regarded as a trustworthy. Certainly, there never has been in the old land, nor in Europe, nor even the States—where Census papers are crowded with detail—any attempt to utilize the Census papers or officials for the advantage of any political party, nor to give factitious prominence to the citizens of some one race. The effort to acquire information regarding the details of a person's business, the amount of his personal income, and other matters of a most confidential nature needs to be conducted with the utmost caution and consideration, it will utterly fail in reliability unless perfect confidence is inspired in the secrecy of the returns. When papers are in the hands of local Census offices for weeks, exposed, in some cases, to the inspection of the curious, there is ground for doubting whether secrecy is kept inviolable. This, and the certainty of error from persons changing their residences, or dying, errors from new arrivals while the work is going on, and other causes, render the system of keeping up Census taking for several weeks highly unsatisfactory, the result cannot be as accurate as when the whole population is numbered on one day. Happily for Canada her material advancement since the last Census has been progressing far more rapidly than the numbers of her people. In this feature the Census of 1901 will be a record of pride to all Canadians.

CROWN LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY.

New Canadian life insurance companies have sprung up in the last few years so rapidly as to indicate great confidence in the future expansion and profitability of the business. We hope all their sanguine anticipations will be realized. The latest claimant for public favour is "The Crown Life Insurance Company," whose head office is in Toronto. The capital is