

CANADA

Medical and Surgical Journal.

MONTREAL, JANUARY, 1874.

A REGISTRATION ACT.

At a recent meeting of the Montreal Sanitary Association, the Rev. Father Villeneuve is reported to have said that the clergy would give every assistance to ensure the proper execution of Civil Registration, provided it did not interfere with their Ecclesiastical Rights.

We certainly are at a loss to see how civil registration, if even performed by a Catholic or Protestant priest, can in any way interfere with his ecclesiastical rights. These functions cannot, and ought not to clash. All that is desirable is to ensure accuracy. If a general law, either a Dominion or a Provincial Act is obtained, how is it to be administered without the aid of the clergy? There are places in Lower Canada where the Priest is the only person in the community that is capable of keeping a register. Registration, such as it is with us at the present day, is a civil act, a copy of the register is required to be sent to the Prothonotary to be filed or put away in the vaults of the Court House of the district. This does not interfere with any ecclesiastical right. But if a general law were in working order, the registrar, whoever he might be, would, in the execution of such duty, be a Government official, subject to such pains and penalties appertaining to his office in the case of neglect of duty. But again, are we not all, Priest and Laymen alike, subject to pains and penalties, in case we break the law, which as a society we have agreed to adopt for our well ordering. In what way, then, can ecclesiastical rights be assailed