

Life Assurance is unnecessary for our purpose. Those who are curious on such subjects will find information in several accessible works. The basis of the science was a discovery founded necessarily on long and patient observation of life and death in different countries and in different towns. Mankind had been long acquainted with the uncertainty of their life, but ignorant of its certainty. The certainty is, however, not less firmly established than the uncertainty. Life is uncertain to one individual, but it is certain to a thousand. There are no means of telling the duration of one life, but there are means of ascertaining the duration of a thousand lives. Science will never be able to foretell the death of one individual; but the time of death to a thousand can be predicated, because it has been ascertained upon the most satisfactory grounds. The tables published by various individuals, at different periods, and founded on public records, are interesting to some parties; but to the general reader, statistics are repulsive, and columns of figures are so many bores, doomed invariably to neglect. The vast majority of the reading public are satisfied with results, and leave the materials of reaching them untouched. The following extracts from the tables, published in a work accessible to almost every individual, will serve to show the basis on which the calculations of Life Assurance Societies originally rested, without occupying much space:—

Table showing the number of persons alive at the end of every decennial period from 1 to 100.

	Carlisle.	France & Midland.	Sweden.	Vienna.	Holland.
1	846	768	780	542	804
10	646	551	611	327	630
20	609	502	570	288	584
30	564	438	519	247	508
40	508	369	469	199	432
50	440	297	385	147	362
60	364	214	293	96	273
70	240	118	175	48	175
80	17	35	56	16	72
90	4	4	5	2	7
99	1				
100	0				

The work from which we have reduced this extract contains many more tables, and gives the annual instead of the decennial results. The gradual waste of life varies much in different countries, and under changed circumstances. Its long duration in Carlisle, as contrasted with Vienna, is very remarkable. When the table was drawn up, Carlisle was almost entirely a non-manufacturing town, with a small population, engaged in the pursuits, and enjoying the advantages, belonging to the little metropolis of a rural county. Vienna, then, as now, was the luxurious and immoral capital of a great empire, and the result in diminishing life is the price of immorality and an unnatural mode of existence. The French table goes over the whole population of the country; which is also the case with the Swiss table, and that for Holland. A table of that nature is the only one on which a Life Assurance Society's prices can be based with propriety. They draw their customers, their members or partners, as the case may be, from all quarters of a country; and they must therefore

take the average decrement of life in the nation for their guide. There were three tables reckoned in authority and brought into frequent use in England—the London, the Northampton, and the Carlisle. There was a wide difference between the Carlisle and the London, while Northampton, standing between the extremes, was generally considered to yield a fair average, and acted upon.

The tables of Mr. Finlaison give, from the payments of Government annuities in Great Britain, the experience derived of the gradual decrement of life amongst the class who were purchasers of annuities, and we abridge it. The table begins with 1,000, and the rate of decrement is on that number. The results show a greatly superior value of female life over that of male; or, in other words, they prove that women live longer than men. The difference might be explained in youth and in the middle years of life by the exposure of males to a greater number of vicissitudes in life than generally fall to the lot of females. Although there are many walks in life where females are exposed to all the influences of hard labour and of the element equally with males; yet in the aggregate, and especially in the classes from which annuitants are likely to come, that would not be true. This explanation is, however, quite insufficient to account for the superior value of female life in infancy, and it will be noticed that the distinction commences at the beginning of existence, and gradually increases from that to youth, to middle life, and to old age:—

ALIVE FROM 1,000 BIRTHS.					
Year.	Male.	Female.	Year.	Male.	Female.
1	981	981	50	561	623
2	963	967	60	440	539
4	937	946	70	288	412
6	919	926	80	125	210
8	906	913	90	11	52
10	896	903	94	1	14
15	872	883	95	0	8
20	837	848	96	0	5
30	732	777	97	0	2
40	644	700	98	0	1

These tables show the great superiority of the lives on which annuities had been granted over the average in society. That was not a profitable fact to the Government; for the interest of parties, who have received a single sum in exchange for an annuity, is to deal with persons of a broken constitution, and who may be expected to die soon. There can be no doubt that the friends of such individuals are averse to the transaction; but annuitants generally act without consulting their friends; or the payment necessary to form the annuity is provided by relatives in circumstances superior to those of the annuitant.

The interest of Life Assurance Societies is exactly the reverse of individuals, of companies, or of statesmen by whom annuities are granted. The former desiderate long life on the part of their policy holders; and the latter, few payments of their annuities. The former, therefore, select a healthy class of customers or members, while the latter are best pleased with droop-