

THE
BRITISH AMERICAN JOURNAL

OF

MEDICAL AND PHYSICAL SCIENCE.

Vol. III.]

MONTREAL, OCTOBER, 1847.

[No. 6

ART. XXIV.—OBSERVATIONS ON THE MORTALITY OF THE CITY OF MONTREAL, FOR THE YEAR 1846.

By A. HALL, M.D., Physician to the Montreal General Hospital, &c.

Vital statistics are of exceeding moment. Not only are we enabled, by them, to trace the progress of diseases, in their increase and decline, and in their connection with prevailing atmospheric changes, but we are enabled to point out by them what diseases are the most endemic; and if these are dependent on local causes, they naturally suggest measures whereby the evils, thus incurred, may be removed, or at least mitigated. But the beneficial results which flow from them stop not here. The ratio of mortality and expectancy at the different epochs of life being clearly developed, the rates of life assurance—a circumstance in which a provident public is immediately interested—are placed on a safe and equitable basis, because founded on positive data, and not on the speculative ideas furnished by erroneous comparison with like statistics in other cities or countries.

The first bill of mortality for this city, was published in the *British American Journal* for December, 1845. It was the result of a by-law of the City Council, providing for weekly returns of deaths in this city, with an enumeration of the diseases. In consequence of the mode adopted to obtain the names of the diseases from which the fatal issue proceeded, namely, from the friends of the deceased, the diseases are recorded most inaccurately, except in the instance of the most prominent affections; and even on these implicit reliance cannot be placed, as far as regards accuracy of specific nomenclature. They will be found valuable, however, for many purposes; and one result—not the least important—so far as the returns of one year may subserve the end, is exhibited, that the chief mortality is met with below the age of five years, or ten years. The source of inaccuracy to which allusion has been made, is now remedied, as far as possible, by causing the names of the diseases to be returned by the physicians, in cases which have been professionally attended.

TABLE 1.

M'ths.	Age Groups													Total
	Male.	Female.	Under 1.	1 to 3.	3 to 5.	5 to 10.	10 to 15.	15 to 25.	25 to 35.	35 to 45.	45 to 55.	55 to 75.	75-upward.	
Jan.	121	150	84	88	19	15	6	9	14	11	6	16	3	271
Feb.	94	109	58	46	21	9	4	16	21	10	5	9	4	203
Mar.	92	88	55	32	18	12	4	11	14	8	15	6	5	180
April.	79	75	47	32	3	10	6	10	8	10	11	11	6	154
May.	78	85	58	37	5	9	1	6	12	16	7	9	3	163
June.	139	117	122	43	9	7	3	12	15	15	7	13	10	256
July.	96	125	102	40	6	7	3	7	12	13	10	16	5	221
Aug.	119	82	68	50	7	4	9	15	15	11	12	6	4	201
Sept.	72	63	51	25	5	2	1	6	13	11	7	10	4	135
Oct.	55	40	22	13	4	5	4	8	8	8	9	12	2	95
Nov.	55	59	36	12	9	5	3	11	14	8	6	7	3	114
Dec.	69	56	29	18	11	4	3	8	10	13	10	10	9	125
	1069	1049	732	436	117	89	47	119	156	134	105	125	58	2118

It will be observed, on referring to this table, that the month of greatest mortality was January; that the month ranking next in numbers was June; and that the monthly period characterized by the least mortality was October. The unusually high rate of mortality which the month of January presents appears to have been mainly dependant on an epidemic of measles, which, if we base our judgment on the totality of deaths recorded under that head, was a remarkably fatal one. The number of deaths from that cause, alone, in December, 1845, reached as high as 137 out of 270—the whole number recorded that month, or more than one half. The epidemic was then at its height, gradually subsiding, as denoted by a diminishing mortality until June, when it again increased, and finally fell off according to the following scale, until September, when it ceased: 97, 39, 23, 13, 12, 24, 19, 5. During the year, 237 deaths are noted, from that disease alone—25 from scarlatina, and 21 from small pox. The following table exhibits the mortality from these several diseases, until the age of five years, with the general number opposite each month.