

THE PRESBYTERIAN.

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URING the last year we have more than once directed attention to the unsatisfactory manner in which the collection of the Vital Statistics of the Province has been conducted. To those who have not directed their attention to the value of Statistics, and who regard returns as only a confused mass of figures, it may appear that undue prominence is given to the subject. Those, however, who have studied the matter most deeply, feel year by year its growing importance; and at the present moment, when questions of the deepest interest for the future destinies of Canada are engaging the minds of men of the highest intellect, and attracting the deepest attention of the great majority of the population of the Province, it becomes more apparent that these dry columns of figures may to a great extent influence the decision to be come to. One step has been taken to amend the present system, and a Report has been presented to the Legislative Assembly by a Select Committee on the Registration of Births, Marriages, and Deaths, in Upper Canada, of which Alexander Morris, Esq., M.P.P., was chairman. This Report, as far as it goes, confirms all that has been stated in these columns; and the suggestions of the witnesses called upon, point to the adoption of some such system as that recommended in the *Presbyterian*.

The Committee was only appointed for Upper Canada, and the short time allowed them to collect evidence and make a report did not, of course, permit of any matured plan being prepared that might be recommended to the Legislature. Enough has been ascertained to shew, in the words of the Committee, "that the system of obtaining accurate Statistical returns..... in that section of the Province is wholly inadequate to that end," "that the returns

required to be supplied under the Census Act are so irregularly given as to be utterly worthless." In November last it was suggested in these pages that to obtain the returns our Municipal machinery should be employed; and this is the view adopted by the Committee. It would be at once the cheapest and the most effectual, and in Upper Canada its adoption would probably meet with little opposition. In this part of the Province, however, the change would be brought about with much more difficulty. The Secretary to the Board of Agriculture and Statistics, Mr. J. C. Taché, one of the witnesses before the Committee, appears to be preparing beforehand for an inquiry into the working of the system in Lower Canada, and it will not be without a desperate struggle on the part of the Church of Rome that a proper method will ever be established here. He says in his evidence, and we hope that this statement was made without due examination of the facts: "It is by so doing" (namely by assigning to the religious element its full share in the registration) "that the system of Registration of Births, Marriages, and Deaths amongst the French population of Lower Canada, is so perfect, that, notwithstanding all other changes and perils of destruction, vital statistics of every family, and mostly every individual buried, or living in the country, can be ascertained, from the beginning of the establishment of the country in the commencement of the seventeenth century to this very day." Such a statement, so directly at variance with what we know to be the case with regard to the *published* statistics, at least, is somewhat remarkable, taken in connection with the words in the Consolidated Statutes of Lower Canada, page 138, cap. 20, sec. 13, in which provision is made for the loss or neglect of keeping a register in any Roman Catholic Parish Church. But even were their returns as perfect as Mr. Taché alleges they are, they cannot be allowed to stand in the way of a general