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THE APPROACHING CENSUS.

It has been rumoured that the first census of the Dominion is to be taken on Monday, the third of April next, the day fixed for the taking of the census in England. The last census taken in Canada was so utterly bad, that it was something worse than worthless, and the same remark may also be made of the census taken in the United States about the same time.

The fact is, the taking of a census is a statistical operation of very great magnitude; it requires the most scrupulous care, and ponderous machinery to secure even approximate accuracy.

We believe all this is thoroughly appreciated by the Government at Ottawa, as was evinced, in the first place, by the issuing of an act last session, combining the best features of the acts of other countries, and conferring very extensive powers.

These having been obtained, the Department of Agriculture set itself in communication with men in different parts of the Dominion, with the view of taking thorough preliminary information, respecting the various heads of inquiry which it proposed to make. It also appointed thirteen staff officers, five from Ontario, four from Quebec, and two each from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, to assist in the preparation of the schedules and other preliminary arrangements, and generally to superintend in their respective provinces the census operation.

It was found in the taking of the last census that one of the great evils was the want of departmental control. The Department found it impossible to answer all the inquiries of the Commissioners, or obtain sufficient control of their operations to secure uniformity of action. The consequence was the greatest irregularities were the rule, instead of the exception; and the way in which the accounts of the Commissioners was sent in, was a cause of the greatest scandal. Almost everybody will remember the "revelations," as they were called, on this head made before the T. S. Brown-Sheppard-Bristow Commission, under the Sandfield Macdonald administration, before the era of the Dominion.

We believe the first object of the Department is to take thorough steps to prevent the recurrence of these abuses, and the staff officer system which has been adopted seems well adapted to this end. These officers will, of course, be thoroughly acquainted with the views and system of the department, and see that they are carried out in their respective groups.

We have heard, also, that in furtherance of this end, it will be a part of their duty to instruct the various Commissioners in these views; and that the Commissioners in their turn are to convey the same instruction to the enumerators before the actual taking of the census commences. There will be time enough between this and the 3rd of April to acccomplish this, with a thoroughness sufficient to ensure complete uniformity in the returns, a uniformity without which the arrangement and classification of the statistics obtained would be simply impossible, or, if possible, utterly unreliable as was the last census.

Preliminary labors of this sort were never before undertaken in America, and it is to be hoped that they will result in the obtaining of an accurate enumeration. In England the necessary official machinery for good census-taking already exists, in the Registrar General's department; and the same thing is true of several States in Europe; but in Canada and the United States everything has to be created to meet the requirements of the occasion.

The people of the country should everywhere be ready to answer the questions of the Enumerators, truthfully and accurately, otherwise it will be impossible to obtain a good census. No one should imagine that those questions have, or can have, any reference to military affairs, or taxation of any kind; nor is there any danger that information, as regards individuals will be made public. The curious will have no means of learning in this way, what does not concern them, and the most elderly young lady may state her age, as it really is, without thereby endangering her possible chances of matrimony. The object of the census is solely and simply to obtain the grand stock taking of the country, for the purpose of national and international statistics, and the fixing of the political representatives of the country, as provided for under the Act of Confederation.

EQUITABLE LIFE ASSURANCE SOCIETY.

Ex-Superintendent Barnes, in his annual report for 1867 says:—"This corporation can be said to mark and distinguish the commencement of the recent astounding progress in the business of Life Insurance." At the time of its organization (1859) only two companies in New York State were issuing new policies, exceeding one thousand per annum. While the Equitable has been the means of giving a powerful impetus to the growth of life insurance, it has steadily led the van in the march of progress. A statement of the new business of the Society for 1870, shows that 9,000 new policies were issued, insuring no less an aggregate sum than forty millions o dollars! or ten millions more new insurance than any other company in the world for the same year.

The Equitable was started with a capital stock of $100,000, at which sum it still remains, and upon which the stockholders receive only legal interest of seven per cent. per annum, as provided in the charter. While it is nominally a stock company, it is, substantially, a mutual—so constituted and conducted that each policy-holder receives his equitable share of the surplus profits arising out of the business.

A good deal of distrust has arisen from the failure of two or three American life companies, which has no doubt affected all, more or less. There is, however, no just cause for alarm. Months ago we predicted the collapse of many of the smaller young offices, hatched into life by the hot-bed process, and forced on the American people by means fair or foul, to the serious detriment of life insurance, and to the probable future disgrace of everyone associated with them. Those predictions are now being fulfilled; and the work has only begun. Probably a score, at least, have yet to follow in the footsteps of the Great Western Mutual and the Farmer's and Mechanic's; the hand-writing on the wall that seals their doom is too plain to be misinterpreted. While these facts cannot be ignored, they should not give rise to an unreasoning suspicion, directed against such companies as the Equitable, standing in the front rank, and whose financial position is not questioned.