

The Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths.

By R. B. Hamilton, Inspector of Vital Statistics.

The attention of Division Registrars throughout the Province of Ontario, is directed to "the act revising and consolidating the acts relating to births, marriages and deaths," passed at the last session of the Legislative Assembly.

So many alterations, amendments and additions have been made that the present revised act is practically a new one to all intents and purposes, and I am pleased to say its several clauses are much more clearly laid down than was the case with its predecessor, which had about as many different interpretations attached to it as it had readers.

The duties of division registrars, medical practitioners, and all parties connected with carrying out the provisions of the new act, together with the penalties attached for neglect of duty, are so explicitly set out that "he who runs may read," and none can now plead a lack of definiteness in their instructions.

DUTIES OF DIVISION REGISTRARS.

The present article is specially intended to call the attention of division registrars to a few of the most important sections of the act, with the hope that the department will receive their active assistance in carrying them out as thoroughly as possible.

Division registrars are now required to make diligent enquiry concerning births, marriages and deaths, and in case of neglect, to notify the proper person to register the same. It is advised that a blank card be placed in small envelopes prepared for the purpose, and addressed to the persons required by law to register. If after notification, the registration is not made, the division registrar must give the names of the offending parties to the inspector of vital statistics, who is authorized to institute proceedings against such persons.

Particular attention is called to the returns to be made half yearly. These returns should be mailed as soon as possible after the first days of January and July in each year. Do not wait until the fifteenth of the month, as all the returns should be in the hands of the registrar general by that time. These returns must be as complete as possible; and I would call the attention of division registrars, to a few points, the observance of which will save themselves and the department considerable extra work.

Always see that the date of a birth, marriage or death is complete; frequently the year is left out, never omit this.

If a year or more has elapsed in the case of a birth, and two years or more in the case of a death, before the particulars are sent for registration, do not enter them on the schedule to be sent to the department, but write the registrar general, requesting permission to register; said

registration to be made on forms specially provided for such cases.

All cases of still births must be entered both as a birth and a death, and be sure to give the father's name in both instances, so that the surname can be indexed.

In all cases where the dead body of any person is found elsewhere than in a house, that death should not be registered except with the written authority of the registrar general.

REGISTERS.

A local register, properly indexed, containing the full particulars of each birth, marriage and death is to be kept by each division registrar. These books are to be supplied at the cost of the municipality, and according to the form approved by the registrar general. The registers should begin in January, so as to include all births, marriages and deaths for the current year.

The fact will be noted that births and marriages are to be registered within thirty days after the event, and deaths before the interment of the body.

MONTHLY RETURNS OF DEATHS FROM CONTAGIOUS DISEASES.

On or before the fifth day of each month, division registrars must make returns of all deaths from contagious diseases occurring within their municipality, according to the form supplied by the registrar general.

PENALTIES

Special attention is directed to the penalties to be imposed for neglect of duty on the part of division registrars. The registrar general may refuse to issue him a certificate for payment of fees due by the municipality, even though the return should be made at a later date, and he shall, upon conviction before any magistrate or justice of the peace, forfeit the sum of fifty dollars to her Majesty.

FEES

The fact will no doubt be fully appreciated, that for each complete registration in the future the sum of twenty cents will be paid.

It will be noticed that all registration returns go through the post free. This includes the half yearly returns sent to the registrar general, but in all cases envelopes must be left unsealed.

I have frequently pointed out in my annual reports during the past years, that the large majority of division registrars were extremely anxious to make their semi annual returns as complete as possible, but owing to the small fees attached to the work and the lack of support from all quarters, their endeavors were seldom successful. I trust now that so many defects have been remedied and the principle adopted that "the laborer is worthy of his hire," the division registrars will show, by the result of their work in the future, that the confidence reposed in them has not been misplaced.

Two or Three Year Terms.

The following extract from the *Montreal Star*, referring to the term for which aldermen should be elected, shows the result of the three-year term in that city:

The Ontario Legislature abandoned the principle of two-year aldermanic terms incorporated in Hon. Mr. Hardy's bill. We in Montreal have recently adopted the two-year term; but it was a change from the supremely bad system of sending only a third of the council to the polls annually. The two-year term was a sort of a compromise between the old three-year term with the annual election of a third of the council and an annual election of the whole council, which many would have thought more desirable. The *Hamilton Herald*, in arguing against the two-year term, falls into an error respecting the experience of Montreal. It says:

"In Montreal they have tried the two-years' term along the lines of Mr. Hardy's proposal, and it has been found to be a highly undesirable arrangement, for the reason that as the old ward boundaries are maintained there is not much chance for an escape from the old crowd of ward heelers and general incompetents who constitute the aldermanic rank and file in too many cities. Under Mr. Hardy's plan the cities would have to put up with them for two years instead of one, and, as they would not be called upon to face the electorate every twelve-month, they would be under less restraint even than at present. The best proof of the unsatisfactory nature of the plan is that Montreal tried it and abandoned it."

The *Herald* will see that it was the three-year term, coupled with an annual election, that Montreal tried and found wanting. The real complaint against the system was that it prevented the people from calling more than a small minority to account at any one time. It pays municipally to keep the council within easy reach of the popular hand. A bad measure has much less chance to pass when the municipal elections are near at hand than when they are two years off. The people may and do make mistakes, but the bad alderman always fears that they will do right for once.

A Lesson in Spelling.

A showman had an announcement stating, "Come and see the great sawed fish." A learned gentleman read it and informed the showman that he had made a mistake in the word "sawed," that it ought to be "sword." "Yer'd better come in an' see for yerself; the shadmission is on'y tuppence," said the showman. So the learned gentleman paid his "tuppence," went in, and was shown a large codfish sawed in half. "Yer ain't the fust gentleman wot has tried to teach me 'ow to spell," grinned the showman.—[Household Words.]

The Act Applies to All.

In view of the fact that the authorities are prosecuting parents for neglecting to register births, it may be interesting to point out that Queen Victoria incurred a fine of 7s. 6d. for having allowed six weeks to elapse before registering the birth of the present Duke of Edinburgh. Her majesty had to, and did, pay the fine.

Farmers should be in favor of good roads. They use them more than any one else.