

PART II.—VITAL STATISTICS.

111. The occupied area of the Dominion is so large, and settlements in some places so scattered, that it has not yet been found possible to elaborate any system of collecting vital statistics without putting the country to a large expense. The only step hitherto taken by the Government in that direction has been the collection of mortuary statistics from some of the principal cities and towns, which, under the authority of the "Census and Statistics Act, 1879," and of an Order in Council of 26th December, 1882, was commenced in 1883; six cities only made complete returns for that year, but nineteen did so in 1885, and twenty-two have sent in returns for 1886. While it is to be regretted that these returns are not yet in some cases as accurate as could be wished, they are still sufficiently correct to give a general idea of the mortality in the places represented. There is little doubt that the collection of vital statistics for the whole Dominion would be of the greatest possible benefit, not only for the purposes of general information, but also as establishing the general healthiness of our climate, about which there is so much misconception, a result which would probably have a tendency to promote immigration.

Collection
of vital
statistics.

112. Returns of births, deaths and marriages are kept by the Provincial Governments with more or less degree of accuracy, those of Ontario perhaps being collected with more system than the others, but the only really reliable vital statistics in Canada are those of the French population of Quebec, which have been collected by the Roman Catholic church for nearly three centuries, and which are believed to be almost as absolutely correct as it is possible for returns of this nature to be.

Provincial
and Ro-
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turns.

113. It is well known that when births and deaths are enquired into by means of a census, the number recorded falls very far short of the actual rate, and in a country like

Inaccu-
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Census
returns.