

Section 4.—Deaths.

Within the past century and more especially within the past generation there has occurred generally throughout the countries of the white world a notable decline in the death rate, except where man has brought death upon himself through wars and the aftermath of wars. How far this decline has been due to advances in medical science, how far to better sanitation and how far to the improvement in the general conditions of living as a result of the increase in the productive power of humanity, is in dispute, but concerning the facts there is no doubt.

Perhaps the most impressive testimony regarding this decline in the death rate is furnished by the mortality statistics of Sweden, where vital statistics have been kept with great accuracy for the whole nation ever since 1750. There the crude death rate declined from an average of 35.67 per 1,000 in the decade 1751-60 to 14.29 in the decade 1911-20 and 11.8 in 1926.

Similarly, in England, the crude death rate, which was 22.6 per 1,000 in the 60's, 21.3 in the 70's and 18.2 in the 90's of the last century, declined to 15.5 in 1906, 13.8 in 1913 and 11.6 and 12.3 (England and Wales) in 1926 and 1927. In Scotland, again, the rate was 22.1 in the 60's, 21.8 in the 70's, 18.5 in the 90's, 16.4 in 1906, 13.0 in 1926 and 13.5 in 1927.

Of course the preceding statements are not to be taken to mean that every year will show a decline in the death rate as compared with the preceding year. There will always be years of specially high mortality, as for instance 1918, when the death rate in Ontario, the most populous of the provinces of Canada, was 15.3 per 1,000 as against 12.0 in 1917 and 11.9 in 1919. (This was owing to the great influenza-pneumonia epidemic of that year.) Over a decade, however, these idiosyncrasies of individual years are reduced to negligibility, and it remains true that from decade to decade there is, generally speaking and under normal conditions, a decline in the crude death rate of the countries of the white man's world.

As for Canada, while the period elapsed since the introduction of complete and comprehensive vital statistics in 1920 has been too short for the establishing of a definite downward trend, there is nevertheless evident a rather extraordinary reduction in the death rate in the short period of seven years, the 1927 crude death rate for the eight provinces formerly included in the registration area being 10.0 per 1,000 as against 12.4 in 1920. Or, using provincial figures for Quebec for the years 1920 to 1925, the crude death rate for the Dominion as a whole has declined from 13.7 per 1,000 in 1920 to 11.1 per 1,000 (provisional figure) in 1927.

Subsection 1.—General Mortality.

Total deaths and crude death rates in recent years are given in Table 19 for the former registration area and for Canada, by provinces. The decline in the absolute number of deaths in the former registration area from 77,722 in 1920 to 70,203 in 1926 and 68,970 (provisional figure) in 1927, and the drop in the death rate from 12.4 in 1920 to 10.0 in 1927, are notable phenomena. Quebec figures from 1923 to 1925 are added from provincial sources.