

THE MORTALITY OF MONTREAL.

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The "Notes on the Principles of Population," published by Mr. Watt, originally anonymously and at intervals in various newspapers, have been collected and issued in pamphlet form. "The Notes" have already attracted considerable attention, as they contradict, on many material points, the conclusions arrived at by Dr. Carpenter. The questions raised are of very considerable importance to the reputation of Montreal, and to Mr. Watt must be accorded the credit of at least making out a good case, and of his having spared no trouble to ascertain not only the facts but the deductions to be legitimately drawn from them. As the pamphlet will be found in Messrs. Dawson Bros., and Messrs. Murray & Co's., we shall not enter at length into the consideration of the arguments, as without the tables which illustrate them we could scarcely hope to make them intelligible, and those interested will find it better to read them in full than to trust to a bald summary, which would scarcely do justice to the subject. There is a statement in the introductory remarks which is highly suggestive, and which in another form calls attention to a great want to be supplied. In the other cities (London, Manchester and Glasgow) with which Montreal is compared, registration of births is compulsory, whereas here "baptisms only are recorded." The collection of vital statistics, it has often been pointed out, is most imperfect, and it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to get information that can be relied on respecting the increase and changes in the population. Until a proper registration can be obtained, there will be endless disputes as to facts, and an opportunity given to torture them in support of particular views. A prevention for the overstatement of the number of deaths of residents of Montreal has lately been attempted, by the addition of another column to the cemetery returns, in which shall be recorded the length of time during which the deceased had resided in Montreal, or if the body was brought from the country. By this means a true statement of the burials of those brought from other places can be obtained, but as the number of those dying here and buried elsewhere will not be given, it is clear an error will be found on the other side. Nothing short of a general registration law will prove effective to obtain correct figures regarding these matters. The theory of Mr. Watt, which he seeks to support by figures, is that the birth rate rules the death rate, that is, given the largest number of births, the number of deaths will be in like proportion. In this view,

seeing that from the tables the birth rate of Montreal is nearly double that of London, the death rate must be the same under equal conditions. But, as contradicting the statement of those who argue that the mortality in Montreal is excessive, Mr. Watt maintains that it is far below that of London. The birth rate of the latter city was 2.054 and death rate 2.676 per cent on the whole population. The birth rate of Montreal, 5.683 should have given 5.148 per cent of deaths or one in 19, whereas the rate for 14 years showed an average of only one in 28. The second paper contained in the "Notes" is a very strong and apparently unanswerable attack on the Census returns. The utter stupidity of the returns and the incorrectness of the figures contained in them are well known. In some cases the grossest errors have been allowed to escape, and Mr. Langton, the auditor, some years ago, in an amusing lecture showed how beautifully many of the errors balanced each other. Mr. Watt puts the matter in a new and even stronger light. For the tables and arguments we would, however, refer to the pamphlet itself. Montreal is greatly indebted to Mr. Watt for his labours and his attempt to remove from the city the stigma of being the most unhealthy spot on this continent.

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