

gloom of sickness and premature death flies away before sanitary measures ; and when the qualified health officers whom the Universities are offering to examine, are in suitable positions under enlightened local authorities all over the country they will no doubt prove as efficient in preventing as their medical brethren are in treating sickness. The result on human happiness cannot be calculated ; but a future Industrial Census will show in a very definite shape its effect in raising the economic value of the population. The mean lifetime by the English Life Table is 40·86 years ; by the Healthy Life Table it is 49·0 years, which is attainable in every well organized State. It is fair to assume that if a fifth part be added to the mean lifetime, at least a fifth part will be added to the worth of a living and labouring population. Upon this estimate £1,050 million will be added to the economic value of the population of the kingdom. Its value will increase with its numbers, and so will the value of its emigrating thousands.—(39th Annual Report, pp. vi-x.)

CONTENTS

OF

PART II.—MARRIAGES.

INTRODUCTION.

- 1.—MARRIAGE AND PROSPERITY.—Causes of Fluctuations in the Marriage-rate.—Marriage-rate, Form of Marriage, and Commercial Prosperity.—Depression of the Marriage-rate by the Cotton Famine.—Summary of Fluctuations of the Marriage-rate, 1839-77.
 - 2.—MARRIAGES IN SUCCESSIVE GENERATIONS.
 - 3.—MARRIAGE SEASONS.
 - 4.—AGES AT MARRIAGE.—Statement of Ages in the Marriage Register.—Marriage of Minors.—Marriage-rates of Bachelors, Spinsters, Widowers, and Widows.
 - 5.—MARRIAGES AND RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.
 - 6.—CERTIFIED PLACES OF WORSHIP.
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PART II.—MARRIAGES.

INTRODUCTION.

MARRIAGE statistics possess value and interest from several points of view. Apart from their relation to and influence upon the birth-rate, and their influence upon the increase of population,* these statistics throw useful light upon various social and political problems. Marriage-rates directly afford a trustworthy test of our national well-being. Dr. Farr called them a barometer of national prosperity; and indirectly the Marriage Register supplies the most reliable measure of the progress of Elementary Education.

Although, as appears from some of the following extracts from Reports written by Dr. Farr, statistics based upon more or less reliable returns have been constructed for earlier periods, marriage statistics of a really trustworthy character date, in England, from the passing of the Civil Registration Act in 1837. The Registrar-General's Annual Reports contain tolerably uniform statistics relating to the 46 years 1838-83, and there is no good ground for doubting that the registration of marriages has been fairly complete throughout that period. The marriage-rate, that is the proportion of persons married in England and Wales, during these 46 years has ranged between 17·9 per 1,000 persons living in 1853, and 14·4 in 1879; the mean annual rate in the whole period being 16·3 per 1,000. A careful consideration of this long series of annual rates fully justifies Dr. Farr's description of the marriage rate as the barometer of national prosperity. Periods of commercial prosperity or inflation are consistently marked by high marriage rates, and those of depression as consistently by low rates. The relation, however, between the price of wheat and the marriage-rate has not been so persistently maintained in recent years, and it has been pointed out in the later Annual Reports of the Registrar-General that the marriage-rate in England moves in far more constant relation with the amount and value of British exports.

The simple proportion of persons married to the total population, while it affords a fairly accurate measure of the marriage-rate in any nation or community in a series of years, cannot be trusted as a means for comparing the respective marriage-rates in different nations or communities in which the proportions of sex, age, and conjugal condition may present very wide differences. In order to obviate the effect of this disturbing influence, marriage-rates for comparative purposes should be based upon the estimated numbers of bachelors, spinsters, widowers, and widows respectively living at different groups of ages. Examples of the methods adopted by Dr. Farr for this purpose will be found on pp. 78-80. The Census Report for 1881 shows the required numbers enumerated in counties, and in each of the urban sanitary districts having at the date of the Census a population exceeding

* On pages 20-21 and 44-47 of Part I., dealing with the Statistics of Population, will be found several extracts bearing upon the influence of marriage on the increase of population, and dealing generally with the statistics of its civil or conjugal condition.

50,000 persons. For smaller populations the calculation of detailed marriage statistics would be useless labour. The age proportions of a population, and also the proportions of the single and the married, change so slowly (except in rare cases), that for all practical purposes it may safely be assumed that during a current intercensal period such proportions remain the same as those found to prevail at the last Census. The amount of error involved in such an assumption would be too small to seriously detract from the value of marriage rates based upon numbers estimated by this method.

One of the most unsatisfactory features in the marriage statistics published by the Registrar-General is the still incomplete return of the ages of persons married. It appears from the last published Annual Report relating to the year 1883, that in 29,582, or 14·3 per cent. of the 206,384 marriages recorded during that year the age of one or both of the persons was omitted from the register by the officiating minister, the information in the age column being only "minor," or "full age," as the case might be. Such a description of the age is unfortunately indirectly sanctioned by the Registration Act, and so long as this is the case it is to be feared that the return of ages will be incomplete. The omissions are practically confined to Church of England marriages, and no difficulty arises in obtaining this desirable information in all cases (with rare exceptions) recorded by the civil registrars of marriages in dissenting places of worship and in register offices.

The last few extracts in this section bear upon the changing proportional relations between the Church of England and other religious denominations, as exemplified by the marriage returns, and by the registers of certified places of worship and of places certified for marriages.

The educational statistics based upon the signatures in the Marriage Register will be found in Part VI., at pp. 517-22.—(EDITOR.)

1.—MARRIAGE AND PROSPERITY.

Causes of Fluctuations in the Marriage-rate.—The number of marriages in a nation perhaps fluctuates independently of external causes, but it is a fair deduction from the facts that the Marriage Returns in England point out periods of prosperity little less distinctly than the funds measure the hopes and fears of the money market. If the one is the barometer of credit, the other is the barometer of prosperity, present in part, but future, expected, anticipated, in still greater part.

(1.) As a war diminishes the marriages by engaging great numbers of men at the marriageable age, an excess of marriages naturally follows peace, when the militia, soldiers, and sailors, with small pensions, are discharged. This is seen in the peace of Paris, the peace of Amiens, and the peace at the close of the last war. Manufactures and commerce in England have hitherto entered into renewed activity on the cessation of wars: markets are thrown open, and great numbers of people obtain employment, which has more to do with the increase of marriages than the mere discharge of great numbers of men from the public service and pay.

(2.) The growth of domestic animals is affected by comparatively few vicissitudes; and there is little fluctuation in the supply of meat. But the crops of grain in a country vary largely; the prices vary still more; while the wages of the bulk of the population have a limited range. Years of plenty are years of prosperity for the people; and the marriages

increase, with a few exceptions, when provisions are cheap. As abundance is one of the causes that multiply, dearth is one of those that diminish the number of marriages.

(3.) The establishment of new, or the extension of old, employments promotes marriages: the cotton manufactures, the canals of the last century, the railways of the present day, are examples. In fact, an increase in their incomes is taken by the generality of people for the beginning of perennial prosperity, and is followed by a multitude of marriages.

(4.) The periodical epidemics of speculation are accompanied by an increase of marriages. Great numbers of people, of all classes, fancy themselves growing wealthy while shares are rising; and in the gambling transactions of the Stock Exchange, if some are ruined, others are enriched. The apparent improvement in the position of the small capitalists, the increased wages of the working classes, where the speculation involves the employment of labour, and perhaps the spirit of speculation itself, lead many to embark in matrimony.

(5.) The nation is sometimes extraordinarily sanguine. A statesman of genius, like Lord Chatham, at the head of affairs, produces the same confidence in a country as the presence of a Caesar, Napoleon, or Wellington, on an army. Great victories, the joy of peace, large financial or political measures, new discoveries in science, new applications of the powers of nature, the opening of kingdoms and continents to commerce, raise public feeling to a state of exaltation long before the slightest improvement in the material condition of the population is realized by those measures that are likely to have ultimately that effect. Such periods of public exaltation are almost invariably accompanied by an increase in the number of marriages.

In fine, the great fluctuations in the marriages of England are the results of peace after war, abundance after dearth, high wages after want of employment, speculation after languid enterprise, confidence after distrust, national triumphs after national disasters.

The causes that increase and the causes that diminish marriage differ in energy; they admit of various combinations; they sometimes neutralize each other; and the marriages express the result of all those forces on the public conduct of the people.

I shall now inquire very briefly into the value of the Marriage Returns, and of other measures of public prosperity. An increase in the consumption of malt, hops, wine, spirits, coffee, tea, sugar, and tobacco, from which about 28,000,000*l.* of the revenue of the country are derived, implies an increase in the expenditure and wages of the working people; as an increase in the imports of raw silk, cotton, wool, tallow, and timber, is an evidence generally of more active manufacturing enterprise. The Marriage Returns express the same facts. Now it is invariably observed, that any extraordinary increase of marriages, or any augmentation in the consumption either of the comforts, stimulants, or necessities of life, not always within the reach of the great mass of the population, is followed by a corresponding falling off. The ship raised on the crest of the wave is not surer to plunge than this prosperity to subside. "Eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage," preceded a great historical catastrophe; and it is evident from the facts already adduced, that though a nation may be rising, it never behoves the wise and sober to be more on their guard, more alert, or more liberal in giving good counsels, than when thousands of the people are setting up in business, establishing families (for every marriage is the foundation of a family), and consuming an unusual amount of luxuries. This "prosperity" may be the dawn of progress, or the riotous forerunner of

about 28½ millions; of France about 35 millions. The increase in the relative strength of this empire, from the time of Chatham and Pitt, when England had to hire Hessians or other mercenaries, is immense. At the present time there are not less than 7 millions of men in these islands; and 5 millions of men well able to bear arms.

It is a fact well worthy of attention that the proportion of marriages to the female population has progressively diminished from 1·716 per cent. in the 10 years 1796–1805, to 1·533 per cent. in the 10 years 1836–45. The proportion of marriages to the population in each period of 10 years is shown in the accompanying Table. While the marriages increase in prosperity, it is a general rule that the proportion of marriages to the population decreases as the mortality decreases; and that marriage takes place later as life becomes longer. (8th Annual Report, pp. 26–30.)

Marriage-rate, Form of Marriage, and Commercial Prosperity.—The marriages after banns were as *five* to every *one* by licence. The proportion of marriages after banns to those by licence is less than it has ever been in any year, except 1847, since 1841; and it is evident that the pressure of the high prices of provisions, and of other circumstances, depressed the poorer classes of society more than the classes who usually marry by licence. Upon comparing the proportional numbers of marriages by licence and after banns, it appears that when the price of wheat is low or moderate the proportion of marriages by banns preponderates to the greatest extent.

It may be assumed that the marriages by licence represent the marriages of the higher and middle classes of society, and that those after banns represent the marriages amongst artizans and labourers.

If the facts for the 14 years are arranged in the order of the prices of wheat, it is seen that the marriages among the higher classes were relatively rather more frequent in the five years when the prices were highest than in the five years when the prices were lowest; while the marriages were most frequent among the classes who marry by banns, when the prices of wheat were low; and as these classes are the most numerous, they regulate the general result.

There is less fluctuation in the marriages of the rich than in the marriages of the poor, and the rise has hitherto not been simultaneous in the two classes; so that the difference in the proportion of marriages by banns and marriages by licence is a very sensitive test of the condition of the lower classes.

The cost of the marriage licence is on an average about 50s., while the usual fee for the publication of banns is *one* shilling; and the other marriage fees vary in the same direction, but not in the same proportion. If we exclude the persons married “not according to the rites of the Established Church,”—who are sufficiently well represented in respect of wealth by those who are married in the church by licence, and after banns—the population is thus voluntarily divided into two great classes, (1) those who are willing to pay 50s. for a licence, and (2) those who marry after banns; the numbers of the two classes on an average of 14 years being to each other as *one* to 5·35. These facts afford some guide in estimating the relative numbers of two great classes of society, which are well marked, but are not divided by specific names. The licences cost about 54,000*l.*, the publications of banns not less than 5,400*l.* in the year. (17th Annual Report, pp. ii–iv.)

High prices of wheat depress marriage among the classes (five out of six) who marry by banns, to a greater extent than they depress marriage among the remaining sixth of the people marrying by licence. Consequently, as the annual average price of wheat was higher (7*4s.* 8*d.*) in 1855 than it was in any of the 15 years since 1841, the proportion of marriages by *banns* to the marriages by *licence* should be lower than it was in any of those years. This is found to be the case, and the proportion was 4·883 marriages by banns, to 1 marriage by licence in 1855. The principle that was announced in the last report, is thus confirmed by the experience of another year. (18th Annual Report, p. iii.)

The proportion of marriages by banns to those by licence was 5·24 to one. Wheat was at an average price of 53*s.* 3*d.*, which may be termed “intermediate.” By comparing groups of years, distinguished as dear, cheap, and moderate, it will be seen that those when moderate prices ruled were most favourable in the general opinion of the unmarried for laying the foundation of domestic establishments. The year 1860 helped to confirm that result. If *licence* and *banns* be taken as the respective badges of capital and labour, it may be shown that in years of middle and low prices marriage was most frequent in the working classes; in years of high prices it was most frequent in the middle and upper classes; but in the “intermediate” priced year of 1860 the marriage-rate was remarkably well maintained amongst rich and poor alike. (23rd Annual Report, p. v.)

Depression of the Marriage-rate by the Cotton Famine.—In Lancashire the marriages, which were 6,315 and 6,127 in the third quarter of 1860–1 respectively, declined to 5,475 in that of last year. The following are some of the more important districts in that county, with the number of marriages in the quarter ending 30th September of each of the last three years:—

	1860.	1861.	1862.
Bolton	287	301	236
Bury	229	185	167
Chorlton	142	128	140
Salford	161	154	141
Manchester	1,194	1,157	1,018
Ashton	350	365	220
Oldham	243	221	184
Rochdale	218	221	158
Burnley	204	184	175
Blackburn	338	306	243
Preston	298	257	249

The marriages in Stockport, in Cheshire, show a clear decrease in 1862; they were 291, 301, and 204. It has been stated that Ashton-under-Lyne stands at the top of the scale of pauperism; and if marriages are expected to be fewest where distress is greatest, the returns fully justify that expectation. In Ashton the decrease on the two previous summers was no less than 38 per cent. Next in respect of decrease is Stockport, where it was 31 per cent. The marriages of Rochdale decreased 28 per cent.; of Chorley 28; of Leigh 24; of Blackburn 25; of Oldham 21; of Bolton 20; of Bury 19; of Manchester 13; of Salford and of Haslingden 11 per cent. In Preston and Burnley they decreased 10 per cent., and in Wigan the decrease was 9 per cent.

Chorlton showed a slight increase. When the marriage returns for the year are completed, they may be compared with the amount of pauperism, namely, the proportion which the persons relieved from the local rates and the funds of Relief Committees bore to the whole population. (25th Annual Report, pp. xxix-xxx.)

Summary of Fluctuations of the Marriage-rate, 1839-77.—Some of the general causes which have contributed to the fluctuation in the number of marriages in England and Wales during the past thirty-nine years may be referred to.

In the ten years, 1839-48, preceding the period when the Act relating to free trade came into operation the average price of wheat was high, 58s. 7d. per quarter, and there were great fluctuations in the marriage rate.

In the first five years of the decade the average price of wheat fell gradually from 70s. 8d. per quarter in 1839 to 50s. 1d. per quarter in 1843; but the hopes and prospects of the people were depressed, so the marriage-rate declined from 15.9 in 1839 to 15.2 in 1843. The most noteworthy events of the period were the Chartist riots in 1839, and the turn-out of cotton spinners and great general distress in 1842, when the depression reached a crisis and expressed itself in the lowest marriage-rate (14.7) recorded since the commencement of civil registration. Previously to 1842 the country had suffered from four successive bad harvests.

In the second half of the decade (1844-48) the marriage-rate rose, but the potato disease in England and Ireland, and three deficient harvests in 1845, 1846, and 1848, together with a commercial panic, brought the rate down to 15.8 in 1847, the year when 10,000,000l. were voted for the relief of the Irish who were suffering from famine. During these ten years just reviewed (1839-48) the quantity of wheat imported into the United Kingdom, and retained for home consumption, never exceeded 12,000,000 cwts.

In the five years 1849-53 the mean marriage-rate was high; it increased from 16.2 in 1849 to 17.5 in 1852, and notwithstanding the very deficient harvest in 1853, the rate rose to 17.9 in that year. This is the highest marriage-rate on record. During this period (1849-53) the duty on corn was reduced to 1s. per quarter; gold was discovered in Australia, the great exhibition was opened, and owing to free trade the quantity of foreign wheat imported began to increase; in 1853 it reached 20,913,000 cwts.; the average price of wheat was low, and in 1851 reached a minimum price of 38s. 6d. per quarter.

The five years 1854-8 witnessed some events of great importance; in 1854 there was an extremely good harvest, but war was declared against Russia, and the year 1857 was memorable for the Indian mutiny and for a great commercial panic; all these events had a depressing effect on the prospects of the community, and the marriage-rate declined from 17.2 in 1854 to 16.5 in 1857 and (notwithstanding a good harvest) to 16.0 in 1858.

In the decade 1859-68 the annual marriage-rate was 16.8. In the first five years of this period, although provisions were cheap, the marriage-rate fell to 16.3 in 1861, and to 16.1 in 1862, when great distress prevailed in the cotton districts of Lancashire, owing to the temporary disruption of the United States; in both these years the harvest was deficient. For the first three years (1864-6) of the second lustre, the marriage-rate was high, and the price of wheat comparatively low, but the effects of the rinderpest which broke out in 1865, and was not stamped out as an epidemic until about the middle of 1867, and

the great monetary panic in London in 1866, soon made their impression on the rate, and it fell from 17.5 in 1866 to 16.5 in 1867, and to 16.1 in 1868, the year of the Abyssinian war. The year 1866 was memorable as the commencement of a period of commercial depression which lasted until the end of 1870. From the year 1868, owing to the ravages of the cattle plague, both beef and mutton rose considerably in price. In each of the three years 1865-7 the harvest was deficient.

The next five years, 1869-73, comprised two (1869-70), when trade was dull and the marriage-rate was low. In 1869 the duty on corn ceased, but in this and the following four years the harvest was deficient. In the last three years (1871-3) of this lustre the country revived; the year 1871 witnessed a remarkable rise in prices and in the wages of labour, and commerce and manufactures recovered from the languor of the previous five years; but a year or two afterwards a reaction set in, wages were greatly reduced, and these three years of prosperity were followed by four years (1874-77) of commercial difficulties and stagnation in trade. There was an abundant harvest in 1874, but in 1875-7 the harvests were unsatisfactory, trade was depressed, strikes were prevalent, and commercial failures were experienced. All this was expressed in the marriage-rate of the country, which rose from 15.9 in 1869 and 16.1 in 1870 to 16.7 in 1871, 17.5 in 1872, 17.6 in 1873, and fell to 17.1 in 1874, to 16.8 in 1875, to 16.7 in 1876, and to 15.8 in 1877. The marriages in the last ten years experienced nearly as great fluctuations as they did in the decade previously to the introduction of free trade.

The gradual increase in the supply of foreign wheat, a few years after the duty on corn was reduced, is remarkable. Thus the number of cwts. of wheat imported into the United Kingdom to every 100 of population in the five years 1854-8 was 54, whereas in the five years 1859-63 the proportional number was 94.

In the four years 1863-6 when the price of wheat was low, there was a considerable reduction in the quantity imported, but in 1867 when the price rose to 64s. 5d. per quarter, after two or three deficient harvests, a new impetus was given to the importation of corn, and the foreign supply still further increased; the average number of cwts. imported in the five years 1869-73, to every 100 of population, was 121, and in 1874-7 it was 144.

In 1877 the number of cwts. imported for home consumption was no less than 53,347,482 or 159 cwts. to every 100 of population, an enormous increase compared with the quantity in 1846 (8,592,458 cwts.) immediately before free trade was in operation.—(40th Annual Report, pp. xii-xiii.)

2.—MARRIAGES IN SUCCESSIVE GENERATIONS.

It may be of interest to mention that there is a complete series of Returns of English marriages from the year 1755 down to the present day; and it appears (1) that on an average of the 5 years of which 1758 is the middle year, 52,666 men and the same number of women married annually; (2) that on an average of the 5 years, of which 1791 is the middle year, 72,347 men and as many women married annually; (3) that in the 5 years of which 1824 is the middle, 104,180 men and the same number of women married; while (4) in the 5 years 1855-9 the marriages rose to 158,868. Taking these intervals of 33 years to represent the intervals between the marriages of successive generations, it will be noticed, that the numbers run in such proportions that each couple married in the first generation left two couples

of marrying grandchildren and three couples of marrying great-grandchildren. Thus 52,665 fathers left to marry 72,347 sons, 104,180 grandsons, and 153,863 great-grandsons, consequently the great-grandfathers were only equal in number to one-third part of the number of their direct male descendants in the third degree. This happens only in increasing populations, and it is probable that in the four generations preceding the year 1756 no such inequality existed. An increase of population implies a profound social modification.—(28th Annual Report, p. v.)

3.—MARRIAGE SEASONS.

Unlike birth and death, marriage is a voluntary act, and if men so will, all the marriages of a country may be celebrated in any single month of the year. But human will is influenced by motives, and these appear to operate all through the seasons of the year with variable force. In London the close of the season among the higher classes is a matrimonial epoch; among the working classes the festivals of Whitsuntide and Christmas, and the season of Lent exert some influence, so do the terms of service, which vary in different counties. The geniality of spring is perceptible; but Lincolnshire is the only county in which the spring weddings exceed the autumn weddings in number. The accumulations of autumn supply a store of food and the harvest wages of the young swains in agricultural districts are often wisely invested in the furniture of a cottage: it has already been shown that workpeople are influenced in marriage by economic conditions and prospects.

It might be supposed that marriages take place indifferently on any day of the week. But it is not so. Few marriages are celebrated on a Friday. Now Friday was in former times the day which would be especially devoted to these celebrations, as is implied by the names *Dies Veneris* of the Latins; and Friday, the day of the Saxon goddess Friga.

This day was chosen by the early church, perhaps partly in opposition to Paganism, as a day for carnal mortification; it was the day of the crucifixion of Christ; and hence the festive Friday of the Saxons, and the day especially under the star which astrologers held was most fortunate, fell into the category of "unlucky days." Seamen will not sail, women will not wed, on a Friday so willingly as on others days of the week. The Sun, Moon, and Saturn have gained by this silly superstition. Half the weddings are celebrated on Sunday and Monday; Saturday has more than its average number, and in the southern as well as the northern counties the Saturday marriages are the most numerous. Economy of time is an alleged motive for Sunday weddings. (27th Annual Report, pp. xiv-v.)

4.—AGES AT MARRIAGE.

Statement of Ages in the Marriage Register.—The marriage registers ought in all cases to show the precise age of the parties married, but in 55,098 out of the 190,112 marriages registered in 1871 the age column was filled in with the words "of full age," "minor," or "under age." By law the clergy are required to register marriages according to the form of the Schedule annexed to the Act (6 & 7 W. 4. c. 86), in which form the example given, instead of stating the precise age of one or both of the parties, describes the man as "of full age" and the woman as "minor" only. And in the earlier years of registration the clergy

were perhaps not unnaturally disposed to content themselves with a bare conformation to the letter of the law without regard to the requirements of statistical and legal investigation which needed a more liberal interpretation of the spirit of that law to satisfy. It is gratifying, however, to find that whereas in 1851 the proportion of cases in which the precise ages of the parties married were not stated amounted to 63 per cent. of the total marriages registered, ten years later it had fallen to 37 per cent., in 1867-70 to 32 per cent., and in 1871 to 29 per cent. Instances of unwillingness on the part of bride or bridegroom to divulge their ages must of course be anticipated, but it may be hoped that gradually they will cease to occur as common sense gets the better of a vain wish to hide that which is already probably no secret to the clergyman or registration officer, whose avocations, moreover, would most likely predispose them to regard all such matters of detail from a general point of view rather than as affecting any particular individual. Furthermore, if clergymen and registrars made it a rule to put the question as to age in the form "What was your age last birthday?" instead of "Are you of full age?" the marriage returns would soon exhibit a diminution in the number of cases of unspecified age. The importance of complete statistics of the age at marriage in determining the relative fecundity of population is obvious.—(24th Annual Report, p. x.)

If all the ages were returned, it would afford the means of determining with greater accuracy the mean age at marriage in England, the probable duration of the joint lives of husband and wife, the annual rate of marriage at different ages, and many other important social questions.

The returns are less imperfect now than they were in 1855, when the ages of both parties were not returned in 42 per cent. of the total marriages, whereas in 1874, 26 per cent. was the proportional number of cases of imperfect returns.

Yorkshire supplied the greatest proportional number of perfect returns, but even in this county the ages of both parties were not stated in the marriage register in 11 instances out of every 100 marriages. In Wales, and in the Northern counties of Durham, Northumberland, Cumberland, and Westmorland, the proportion per cent. of imperfect returns was 15, in Lancashire and Cheshire 18 per cent. The groups of counties furnishing very imperfect returns were the South Midland, 31 per cent., the South-eastern, Eastern, and South-western, 28 per cent. But it is in London that the returns were most imperfect, for there the ages were omitted by the Officiating Minister or Registrar of marriages to the extent of 53 per cent.—(37th Annual Report, pp. xi-xii.)

Marriage of Minors.—It is necessary to bear in mind that the mere fact that the proportion of marriages under age is higher in one population than in another absolutely proves that the disposition to early marriage differs only when the proportional numbers of unmarried women under and above 21 years of age is the same; for the real relative tendency to early marriage is measured in two populations, by dividing the annual marriages of minors in those populations by the numbers living unmarried at the corresponding ages.—(19th Annual Report, p. vi.)

The proportion of children to a marriage is, to a great extent, dependent on the age at which marriage is contracted, and the marriage registers of a nation furnish the means of determining this age. In

England and Wales of 201,267 marriages registered in 1872 the ages of both parties were specified in 145,507 instances, about five-sevenths of the total number. The mean age at marriage of these 145,507, including the re-married, was 27·9 years for men, and 25·7 years for women.

The proportion of young people who marry has never been so high as it was in 1872, and the proportion has been gradually increasing since the commencement of registration. In 1851 in every 100 marriages 5·02 men and 15·75 women were under 21 years of age, while in 1872, 8·00 of the men and 22·32 of the women were minors, but this increasing tendency to early marriage has not affected the mean age at marriage to any appreciable extent, for while the mean age of bachelors in 1851 was 25·8 years, and of spinsters 24·6 years, the ages in 1872 were nearly the same, viz., 25·7 and 24·3 years.

By means of the Census returns relating to the ages and conjugal condition of the people, I am enabled to show the annual rate of marriage at each year of age under 21, in each of the three periods 1850-52, 1860-62, and 1870-72.

MARRIAGE-RATES OF BACHELORS, WIDOWERS, SPINSTERS, and WIDOWS, AGED UNDER 21, in 1850-2, in 1860-2, and in 1870-2.

AGES.	PROPORTION MARRIED TO 100 LIVING.					
	Bachelors.	Widowers.	Total Men.	Spinsters.	Widows.	Total Women.
ANNUALLY IN THE 3 YEARS 1850-52.						
Total aged 15 } and under 21 }	—	—	·763	—	—	2·427
ANNUALLY IN THE 3 YEARS 1860-62.						
Total aged 15 } and under 21 }	·946	4·255	·946	2·959	7·452	2·962
15—	—	—	—	·017	—	·017
16—	·003	—	·003	·136	—	·136
17—	·031	—	·031	·789	2·941	·790
18—	·320	—	·320	3·041	1·220	3·040
19—	1·539	—	1·539	6·096	5·714	6·096
20 and under 21	4·256	7·273	4·258	9·618	10·204	9·620
ANNUALLY IN THE 3 YEARS 1870-72.						
Total aged 15 } and under 21 }	1·177	3·390	1·177	3·405	6·710	3·408
15—	—	—	—	·018	—	·018
16—	·002	—	·002	·153	—	·153
17—	·041	—	·041	·933	—	·933
18—	·404	—	·404	3·640	1·282	3·639
19—	2·034	2·083	2·034	7·246	6·857	7·246
20 and under 21	5·298	4·698	5·298	10·590	8·333	10·584

Note.—The Population at the above Ages has been deduced from the graduated Tables showing the estimated numbers living at each year of age, published in each of the Census Reports of 1851, 1861, and 1871. In a certain number of cases the Age at Marriage is not returned; for example: the average annual number of Minors married in the 3 years 1870-72 was 14,883 Men and 41,978 Women, but an abstract of the instances in which the ages of both parties were stated only produced 13,681 Men and 35,732 Women; the ages of one or both of the couples married in the other cases being distinguished in the marriage registers by the terms "Minor," "Under Age, &c." The numbers of Men and Women whose ages were not stated have been proportionally distributed over the different periods of age.

To ascertain the increased disposition to early marriage more accurately the number of unmarried women living under 21 years of age at different periods must be taken into account. This has been done in the above table, and by dividing the average annual marriages of minors by the numbers unmarried at corresponding ages, the result shows that, among men under 21 years of age, marriage was contracted by 7·6 in 1,000 living in 1850-52, by 9·5 in 1860-62, and by 11·8 in 1870-72; and that early alliances among women under 21 years of age were contracted by 24·3 in 1,000 in 1850-52, by 29·6 in 1860-62, and by 34·1 in 1870-72.

There is therefore, beyond doubt, an increasing tendency to early marriage among the young people of this country.—(35th Annual Report, pp. xi-xiii.)

Marriage-rates of Bachelors, Spinsters, Widowers, and Widows.—A new table is introduced below, in which the number of marriages of bachelors, of spinsters, of widowers, and of widows respectively is compared with the numbers of the four classes enumerated at the Census in 1851. This table supplies a more satisfactory measure of the rate of marriage than the ordinary comparison of the marriages with the population, including a variable proportion of children. Thus of 1,000 bachelors in England, 58 married, and the proportions ranged in the counties from 82 in the Surrey portion of London to 36 in Herefordshire, and to 32 in Cumberland. Of 1,000 spinsters in England 61 married, and the proportions ranged from 82 in Staffordshire to 36 in Cumberland. It appears that the marriages in London are in a high proportion to the marriageable part of the population, and that the proportion in the surrounding counties of Surrey, Middlesex, and Essex, is conversely below the average. A certain proportion of the marriages of the country people are apparently contracted in the towns; and in the north of England, it was shown in the last report, that great numbers of the population of the northern countries marry, or pretend to marry, over the borders in Scotland, where the law of marriage is still in a loose and unsatisfactory state.

ANNUAL MARRIAGE-RATE in 1851 of BACHELORS, SPINSTERS, WIDOWERS, and WIDOWS, at DIFFERENT AGES, to 100 enumerated in 1851.

Ages.	Bachelors.	Spinsters.	Widowers.	Widows.
Total.	5·773	6·085	6·457	2·096
15—	·464	2·183	—	5·000
20—	11·209	12·672	30·766	19·649
25—	12·209	9·503	35·790	14·906
30—	7·851	6·025	28·627	11·611
35—	4·558	3·780	20·313	7·253
40—	2·798	2·501	14·075	4·333
45—	1·448	1·418	8·858	2·672
50—	·705	·599	5·711	1·298
55—	·349	·311	3·201	·731
60—	·152	·085	1·745	·241
65—	·146	·026	·862	·068
70—	·031	—	·316	·025
75—	·059	—	·100	·015
80 and upwards	—	·044	·067	·011

Note.—Of the 154,206 marriages solemnized in 1851 the ages of both parties were stated in only 56,347 cases. For this table the marriages in which the ages were not stated have been distributed to the various ages, in the proportion shown in the stated cases.

The accompanying Table shows, for the first time approximately the rate of marriage at different ages, and will admit of many useful applications in the solution of questions of population, as well as in the calculation of rates of insurance under certain contingencies. It will be noticed that 127 per 1,000 of the spinsters of the age of 20-25 married in the year: and that marriage was contracted by 3 in 1,000 spinsters of the advanced age of 55-60.—(14th Annual Report, pp. 6-8.)

Widowers are more inclined to marry than bachelors. By the annexed table, showing the average annual rate of marriage in the three years 1870-72 at each of 14 periods of age, it will be observed that this disparity of disposition is most remarkable in old widowers and old bachelors. At ages 35-40, to every bachelor who married 4 widowers remarried; at ages 40-45, 5 widowers remarried to every bachelor who married. As age advances this disparity increases, and at ages 50-55 the relative proportions were 1 bachelor to 7 widowers; at 60-65, 1 bachelor to 8 widowers; and at 65-70, to every bachelor who married 8 widowers remarried. These are marriages out of equal numbers.

ANNUAL MARRIAGE-RATE OF BACHELORS, SPINSTERS, WIDOWERS, and WIDOWS at DIFFERENT AGES, in the THREE YEARS 1870-72.

Ages.	Bachelors.	Spinsters.	Widowers.	Widows.
Total.	6·175	6·313	6·575	2·110
15-	·468	2·252	1·149	4·235
20-	12·352	13·785	22·917	17·064
25-	13·821	10·418	30·296	15·678
30-	8·604	5·997	27·943	10·806
35-	5·343	3·698	21·872	7·116
40-	3·051	2·400	15·337	4·459
45-	1·968	1·581	10·739	2·809
50-	1·060	·806	7·323	1·513
55-	·610	·395	4·519	·820
60-	·334	·165	2·735	·393
65-	·146	·057	1·185	·133
70-	·075	·022	·538	·047
75-	·083	—	·190	·013
80 and upwards	—	—	·061	·602

Note.—Of the average annual number of marriages (191,011) in the three years 1870-72 the ages of both parties were stated in 135,854 cases. For this table the marriages in which the ages were not stated have been distributed to the various ages in the proportion shown in the stated cases.

Widows also marry in higher proportions than spinsters; thus at ages 15-20, to every spinster who married 2 widows remarried; at ages 20-25 and 25-30 the disparity was not so great, but at ages 30-35, and up to 65, the relative proportions were about the same as at ages 15-20, for to every spinster who married 2 widows remarried.—(35th Annual Report, pp. xii-xiii.)

5. MARRIAGES AND RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.

It will be observed that the marriages in registered places increased from 2,976 to 15,249, or fivefold in 13 years; within the last 7 years the marriages in Roman Catholic chapels increased from 2,280 to 5,623, and in a more rapid ratio than the marriages in other registered places of worship.

From returns which were procured at the last Census, it was estimated that on Sunday, March 31st, 1851, the total number of persons who attended places of public worship was 7,261,032.* Upon comparing the marriages with the number of attendants at different places of religious worship, this general result is obtained:—That among the Roman Catholics the persons who married were in the proportion of one to every 28 attendants, while among the members of the Church of England and of other religious denominations, except Jews and Quakers, there was one marriage to every 25 attendants. The facts stand thus:

—	Persons married in 1850.	Attendants at Places of Public Worship on March 30th 1851.	Proportional Numbers.
Church of England and other Christian bodies (exclusive of Quakers and Roman Catholics)	281,170	6,913,690	1 to 25
Roman Catholics	11,246	305,393	1 to 28

If we divide the Protestants into two classes a very different result is obtained:

—	Persons married in 1850.	Attendants at Places of Public Worship on March 30th 1851.	Proportional Numbers.
Church of England	261,918	3,773,474	1 to 14
Other Christian bodies (exclusive of Quakers and Roman Catholics)	19,252	3,140,216	1 to 163

The number of persons married in 1850 at the churches was to the number of attendants on the Census Sunday as 1 to 14; while the number of persons married at the chapels was to the number of attendants as 1 to 163. The whole of this discrepancy can scarcely be accounted for by the attendance of members of the Church of England at the chapels, or by the marriage of members of dissenting congregations according to the rites of the Church of England: but it admits of no doubt that from the influence of long custom, of opinion, or of a preference for the judicious, admirable, and well-established marriage service of the Church of England, vast numbers of the people who habitually attend other places of worship resort to the churches to marry.

* Census of Great Britain 1851. Religious Worship, p. clvi.

The dissenters also complain, with justice, that in marrying according to their own rites they are subject to restrictions and unnecessary annoyances; the notices of their marriages are read before boards of poor law guardians, and their marriages in the register offices have often to be performed in the workhouses, which, it must be admitted, as they offer no pleasant associations, open no very inviting avenue to the temple of Hymen.

The Quakers attended to the number of 18,172 at their 371 places of worship, containing 91,559 sittings, on the Census Sunday (March 30th, 1851); but in the year 1850 only 138 of the Friends married according to their own forms, so that there is still an unusual reluctance to marry among the male or female members of this remarkable sect, which, if it is neither sustained by hereditary accessions nor proselytes, will eventually decline in England.

The Jews present quite a different aspect; they marry in considerable numbers (520 were married in 1850); but the number who attended their synagogues on Saturday was only 4,150; so that there was one Jew married to every 8 who attended. Marriage appears to be common, but polygamy, though it is allowed by the law of Moses, is, I am informed, not practised by the Jews in any country of Europe except Turkey. (13th Annual Report, pp. iii-iv.)

6. CERTIFIED PLACES OF WORSHIP.

The Toleration Act of 1688 gave Protestants freedom of meeting for religious worship at certified places; in 1791 the same advantages were extended to Roman Catholics; in 1812 it was enacted that no Protestant congregation of more than 20 persons should meet unless the place of meeting had been certified to the bishop, archdeacon, or the quarter sessions; and in 1852 the certificates were directed to be sent to the Registrar-General. The Act 18 & 19 Vict. c. 81, only enacts that "all places of religious worship, not being churches or chapels of the Established Church, should, if the congregation should desire, but not otherwise, be certified to the Registrar-General." Thus the certification is no longer indispensable, and the intolerant restrictions on religious worship are now entirely abolished in England.

Certain legal advantages attach to the registration of places of religious worship, for it places them under the especial protection of the law; and it is indispensable to the solemnization of any marriages, except those in Established Churches or in Register Offices.

A return was procured by this office of all the places that had ever been certified since the passing of the Toleration Act in 1688 to 30th June 1852, so far as existing documents supplied the information; and from that return it appeared that 54,804 places had been certified in the 164 years. In the first years, down to the end of 1690, 939 places were certified; 143 as permanent, 796 as temporary buildings. Of these 239 belonged to Quakers, 108 permanent and 131 temporary buildings. The places of Wesleyan Methodists first appear in 1741-50 in small numbers and as temporary buildings; but increase rapidly in 1791-1800, and then go on until their numbers in the end amount to 3,901, of which 2,035 were chapels or permanent structures. The other buildings are registered chiefly as belonging to Protestant Dissenters, consisting no doubt of Presbyterians (including Unitarians), Independents, and Baptists. Of 13,950 the particular denomination is not specified.

The following summary table gives the principal results:—

PLACES of WORSHIP returned as having been CERTIFIED in each DECENNIAL PERIOD from 1688 to 30th June 1852.

Decennial Periods.	Places described as		Total Number of Places certified in each Decennial Period.
	Houses, Dwelling-houses, Rooms, or otherwise as Temporary Buildings.	Chapels, Buildings, Meeting-houses, or otherwise as Permanent Buildings.	
TOTAL - - -	39,817	14,987	54,804
1688—1690 - - -	796	143	939
1691—1700 - - -	1,247	32	1,279
1701—1710 - - -	1,219	41	1,260
1711—1720 - - -	875	21	896
1721—1730 - - -	448	27	475
1731—1740 - - -	424	24	448
1741—1750 - - -	502	27	529
1751—1760 - - -	703	55	758
1761—1770 - - -	701	85	786
1771—1780 - - -	978	158	1,136
1781—1790 - - -	1,154	316	1,470
1791—1800 - - -	3,479	915	4,394
1801—1810 - - -	3,975	1,485	5,460
1811—1820 - - -	7,497	2,664	10,161
1821—1830 - - -	7,675	2,910	10,585
1831—1840 - - -	4,550	2,872	7,422
1841—1850 - - -	3,090	2,720	5,810
1851—1852 - - -	504	492	996

There appears to have been no means of striking any of the 54,804 certified places off the record; but great numbers of them disappeared in the progress of time; and at the Census of 1851 returns as to accommodation and attendance were obtained from 20,400 places of worship then existing and not belonging to the Established Church of England; 17,000 were returned as separate buildings. Of these separate buildings only 3,228 were on the marriage registers of 31st December of that year. The number registered for marriages on the last day of the year 1865 was 5,352; and at that date 16,819 places were on the register of places for religious worship. The Quakers and Jews are not required to register their places of worship as such. (28th Annual Report, pp. vii-viii.)