

## THE FEDERAL CENSUS.

THE Eleventh Census is practically out of the way. The volumes of reports relating to it that are yet unpublished will come from the Government Printing Office as rapidly as possible, but for all purposes of experience as to methods, cost, and scope, it is finished. In the past, when a census has been completed, all interest in it has ceased until within a brief period prior to a subsequent enumeration. Herein lies the chief reason for delays, great expense, and unsatisfactory results. So, with the experience of the Eleventh Census fresh in mind, it seems wise to call attention to the Twelfth Census, with a view to understanding not only what is essential, but also the necessity for immediate action so far as legislation is concerned.

There are fourteen countries whose governments have provided, either by their constitutions or through legislative enactment, for the periodical enumeration of the population. With one exception a census will be taken in each of these fourteen countries either in 1900 or in 1901; namely, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Hungary, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States in 1900; France, Great Britain, Italy, and Norway in 1901, and Holland in January, 1899. Thus the leading countries of the world will open the new century with a new enumeration of their people.

It has long been the desire of statisticians to secure some uniformity throughout the world in these enumerations. The International Statistical Congress, which met for the first time in 1853, and at intervals afterward, undertook to accomplish something in the way of obtaining uniform census statistics, but it was unsuccessful. There is now an association bearing the name of the International Statistical Institute, whose membership is limited to one hundred and fifty, comprising the leading official statisticians in the world, but which also admits to membership those outside of official positions who have distinguished themselves as statisticians. This Institute meets biennially. Its last session was held in Berne in August, 1895, when unanimous action was taken toward securing uniformity in certain respects in the census inquiries to be made in 1900. For this purpose the Institute charged

a special committee (composed of members who in their respective countries are charged with census duties) with the task of studying the question and making a report at the next session, to be held in 1897. The duties of this committee are: to seek and consider information regarding the most convenient date to recommend for a universal census; to determine and put into proper form the various important questions of general interest which may thereafter obtain a place upon the schedules of a universal census; to define with precision the terms used in the schedules of the enumeration, in order to avoid all ambiguity and to obtain uniform and identical information; and to inform the members of the Institute as to the best manner of procuring an understanding, as early as 1898, among the various states interested. In the opinion of the Institute the uniform questions to be chosen for adoption should everywhere be asked in the same manner, and the terms used should have the same signification, in order to obtain exact results. It was particularly pointed out that the chief question which would necessitate international agreement related to occupations.

The scope of the United States census is much wider than that of any of the countries involved in the proposed universal census, and it collects information not only on the lines which should be brought into uniformity, but upon many others. There is no reason, therefore, why it should not enter into any judicious arrangement whereby the form of the questions which are common to the censuses of all the countries shall be determined, and to this end the officer in charge of the Eleventh Census is making a preliminary study for the use of the committee of the International Statistical Institute. Something more, however, is essential. The Congress of the United States should consider this matter at as early a date as possible. The United States cannot now take the lead in this idea of uniformity, but it can and should take the lead in official action upon it, for our government was the first to establish by law a periodical census, and we have been the leading nation in the expansion of census inquiries. For this reason, therefore, if for no other, there should be early legislation; and there is no doubt as to the prompt action of Congress, for it has ever taken a lively interest in census work. Irrespective of these considerations, however, there is a much more important reason why there should be early legislation, and this relates to the preparation for the Twelfth Census without regard to the action of other countries.

There have been three fundamental Census Acts. The first six censuses of the United States were taken under the Act of March 1, 1790,

with amendments and extensions thereof. This Act was very brief and simple in its provisions. The Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth censuses were taken under the Act of May 23, 1850, with some modifications at each census period. This Act went more into detail, and marked a departure in census-taking in this country. There was a considerable expansion of the inquiries; but under the law the attempts to secure industrial statistics, or those relating to the products of the country, were not entirely satisfactory. Prior to the census of 1850 such attempts had been practically failures. The Tenth and Eleventh censuses were taken substantially according to the provisions of the Act of March 3, 1879,—a radical departure from any previous legislation, and the census was greatly expanded in its comprehensiveness.

It is significant that all the Acts have been passed just previous to the enumeration, and in hardly any instance has sufficient time for proper preparation been given. We need not consider the remote censuses. Taking the Ninth Census,—that of 1870,—which was carried out in accordance with the Act of 1850, we find sufficient tardiness in legislation to account for many things which have been the subject of the severest criticism. March 24, 1869, Mr. Garfield introduced a bill to provide for taking the Ninth and subsequent censuses,—a measure intended to make improvements indicated by previous experience. This bill passed the House of Representatives April 6, 1869, but was defeated in the Senate. So the Ninth Census was taken under the law substantially as passed in 1850, but the pendency of legislation delayed all action, on the part of the proper officers of the government, for the vast preparations necessary for the enumeration.

The legislation for the Tenth Census—that of 1880—was initiated May 20, 1878, by the introduction of a bill by Mr. Garfield, but nothing came of that effort. January 7, 1879, Mr. Cox, of New York, introduced a bill for taking the Federal census of 1880. A substitute for this bill was reported the same month by Mr. Cox from the Select Committee on the Census, and on the same day Senator Morrill, of the Senate Committee on the Tenth Census, reported the same bill in the Senate. This bill, substantially as reported, became a law March 3, 1879, and the census of 1880 was taken in accordance with its provisions, although, strangely enough, some important amendments, without which the census could not have been taken properly, were made in an act approved as late as April 20, 1880, while the main appropriations for the Tenth Census were not made until the passage of a bill June 16, 1880, two weeks subsequent to the commencement of the work.

The legislation providing for the Eleventh Census—that of 1890—was started on its course January 4, 1888, when Mr. Cox introduced a bill for taking the Eleventh and subsequent censuses. This bill was substantially the Act of March 3, 1879, so far as system and principles were concerned. It embodied some new features of census-taking, and undertook the correction of some of the faults of previous legislation; but for scope, system, and methods it was practically the law of 1879. Mr. Cox's bill, with some amendments, was passed by the House of Representatives July 11, 1888, at an evening session. The bill had been before the House six months. I have been informed that the Committee on Census of the House of Representatives never had a session to consider the bill in full, and at the time of its passage, one exceedingly hot night, there were but twenty-seven members of the House present. It was received in the Senate July 13, 1888, toward the close of the session, and became a law March 1, 1889. In addition, legislation making provision on the population schedule for certain inquiries concerning the ownership of homes and farms was not approved until February 22, 1890, barely three months before the enumerators commenced their work.

It should be remembered that the enumerations have been made as of June 1 of the census year in each decade, yet in 1870, 1880, and 1890 the officers charged with the enumeration had but little over a year under the laws in which to make the vast preparations necessary for the census, and in 1880, as stated, nothing could be done of any great moment until after the amendments of April 20, 1880. These delays have been costly in every respect. They cannot be charged to Congress, nor to any one else specifically, because there is no officer of the government whose duty it is to watch the affairs of the census and to see to it that the proper measures are brought before Congress, and at the proper time for securing the best results, or, in fact, for securing any results. So the initiative has been left almost to chance. The census, as such, goes out of existence when the work of each decennial census has been completed, and there is no officer, as stated, whose especial duty it is to call the attention of the legislative branch of the government to the necessities of the case. The necessity for such an officer clearly appears when we consider the stages of the work.

There are three great stages in every census: first, the collection of material; second, its tabulation and analysis; third, its publication. The first and second involve the great labor and expense of the census. The first should not be undertaken, even, until the second is not only

thoroughly understood but carefully and completely outlined. No officer should be allowed to enter upon the work of the collection of the raw material for census reports until he has a complete plan from the beginning to the end. Unless this rule is laid down by law, future censuses will be as expensive and as unsatisfactory in many respects as have been some of the past. No officer should be held responsible for great cost, for long delays, or for any inaccuracies when compelled to work as superintendents of the past censuses have worked. The collection of the material involves all the plans necessary therefor: the division of the country into proper districts of supervision; the division of the supervisors' districts into proper enumeration-districts; and the preparation of all blanks, instructions, and paraphernalia for the use of supervisors and enumerators. The officer in charge of the census should outline beforehand, as already stated, all classifications and tables necessary for the final tabulation and analysis of the material collected,—a task for which he should have at least two years in which to perfect his plans. This may seem an extravagant estimate of the time required, but when the great variety of the industries, business interests, etc., of the country is considered, the statement becomes reasonable. The preparation of blanks for the collection of facts relative to population would require a less time, perhaps; but the schedules for the collection of manufacturing, agricultural, mining, and other statistics relating to the material wealth and the welfare of the country require not only great care, but the consultation of experts in all the various industries involved. Furthermore, the officer charged with a census should study the methods and systems in vogue in other countries. If England, France, Germany, or any other country has adopted methods of collecting or tabulating material whereby time is saved, or better, clearer, and more satisfactory results secured, the United States should take cognizance of them and incorporate them in its own census work. All this preparation should be done under the direct personal care and supervision of the superintendent himself. He should delegate but little of this work to clerical assistants. He should have the services of the best statisticians of the country, and, if time be allowed by law, the outcome of his labors would be schedules harmoniously constructed with a view to securing the very best results,—a thing never yet attained in any census in this country.

Under the legislation of the past the superintendent has been obliged to rush into the work, to hurry up the printers, and to drive everybody engaged in the task. The lack of time for proper prepara-

tion has been found one of the greatest drawbacks to census-taking. It has been the cause of more than half the complaints and criticisms concerning the work, and to a considerable extent the long delay in the final publication of the census reports can be traced to it. In the Eleventh Census there was barely time between the enacting of the final legislation (in February, 1890) and the first Monday in June (on which day the enumeration had by law to begin) to print and ship to the enumerators more than twenty million schedules and the necessary blanks. In many cases the outfit of forms reached the enumerator only a day or a few hours before his work should begin, giving him little or no time in which to familiarize himself with the inquiries to be made on the various schedules and the printed instructions concerning them. Furthermore, the subdivision of the supervisors' districts into enumeration-districts—which by law was made by the census supervisors subject to the approval of the superintendent—could not always be made and the papers transmitted to Washington in time for proper inspection prior to approval; and in several cases these subdivisions were approved without any inspection whatever. This was also largely true with respect to the appointment of the enumerators. For want of time not much more than a hasty examination, if any at all, could be made of the lists of persons recommended for appointment as enumerators, together with their written applications and indorsements as to their honesty, intelligence, and ability to do the work; so that these lists were practically approved in bulk by the superintendent, in several cases lists which did not reach the Census Office until after the appointment of the enumerators and the commencement of their work being approved by telegraph.

Another very important reason why plenty of time should be given for preparation is found in the matter of ascertaining the distribution of population by civil divisions, the enumeration of which in the last census was attended by the conditions just noted, and which entailed a vast amount of correspondence with supervisors and enumerators after their work was finished, and oftentimes with county clerks and other local officers, in order to determine the boundaries of smaller areas and the population comprised within them. This information should be in the possession of the census officers prior to the enumeration itself, so that proper subdivisions of the country into enumeration-districts, based upon such information, could be made by the Census Office, and specific instructions given to each enumerator as to the various incorporated places or other subdivisions included in his

district for which a separate return of population should be made. The people grow more exacting under each census, and the population of hamlets, villages, and other minor civil divisions is required; but without previous information the Census Office is often at a loss to know what constitutes one of these divisions. As a consequence of the lack of this information, the greatest source of trouble in the tabulation of the returns of the Eleventh Census was to determine the population of incorporated places included within the limits of the primary divisions of counties. In hundreds of cases no statement as to the population of such places could be made in the final report.

Could the plans for the use of material be considered in connection with those for the collection thereof, much expense, annoyance, and criticism would be avoided; but unless this is accomplished, and harmony is secured by one mind passing upon all points, there will be incongruity in the whole work. These considerations are based on the supposition that the standard set by the Tenth and Eleventh Censuses, under the supervision of General Walker and Mr. Porter, respectively, will in no wise be lowered, that their comprehensiveness will not be lessened, and that the demands of the public will increase; and these considerations constitute the second great reason why early and prompt attention should be given to legislation providing for the Twelfth Census.

The third reason for early legislation lies in the fact that in all probability a permanent Census Office will be established. It hardly seems necessary to state any reasons for such an establishment, but some of the principal ones may be given. By the establishment of a permanent office its chief would always be on the lookout for improvements in methods for the collection and tabulation of census data; he would always be informed of what was going on in other countries; he would understand the necessity for legislation by Congress and be in a position to point it out; he would be enabled to avoid all the difficulties which have just been enumerated that are attributable to delays; he would be ready, when he approached the census year and month, to proceed in an orderly and systematic manner; he would avoid crowding into a week what should take a month or three months to do; he would have his work all laid out, his plans perfected from start to finish, a trained force as a nucleus at all times, men skilled through experience to assist him, and harmony secured in all methods of tabulation and presentation through his ability to pass upon them himself.

From a purely business point of view no other reasons need be

given, but there are other considerations of equal importance. Under the present system, or rather lack of system, the superintendent is expected during the census year to collect a vast amount of material. The population must be enumerated; the account of the products of manufactures and of agriculture taken; the facts collected as to the fisheries, mineral products, transportation, insurance, wealth, debt, taxation, home indebtedness, churches, schools, Indians, and all the other subjects named in the existing census laws. The result of the attempt to collect the information relating to these great subjects is literally to "snow under" the Census Office, and it is almost an impossibility to get out from under the crush. The attempt results in the beginning of many pieces of work which must be suspended or even abandoned; it results in variety instead of uniformity in forms and methods; it prevents the superintendent, however skilled as a statistician or an administrative officer, from attending to anything thoroughly and well; it results in vast expense through sending agents over the country on different errands; and, worst of all, despite all efforts, nothing is brought out promptly or within a reasonable time. To be sure, under the last two censuses, bulletins of important facts were sent to the public with very great promptness, but to compile, tabulate, and analyze the information filling twenty-five huge quarto volumes is a task which might well stagger any man.

Another bad effect of the present method of doing business is the necessity of bringing together a large temporary clerical force without a nucleus of skilled clerks to influence the whole body. This results in delay, poor service, and a vast expenditure of money for corrections. A temporary force does not work as industriously as a permanent one. Each member understands that the better he works the sooner he will be out of a job; and while the integrity of the census force cannot be impugned, there is nevertheless a silent influence which works to the disadvantage of the Treasury.

All these difficulties would be corrected and avoided by the establishment of a permanent Census Office, and, above all, the information would be brought out more promptly, and of an improved quality; for under a permanent system of census-taking the work now crowded into the first few years of each decennial period would be extended over the whole period. By the Constitution the enumeration of the people must be taken each ten years, and on or before June 1 of the census years; so the enumerators must travel over the country for this purpose. While doing it they should be called upon to collect infor-



mation on schedules having but few inquiries relating to agriculture and manufactures. All the topics heretofore treated by the censuses could be distributed over the remainder of each ten years, in some cases dropped entirely, or in others postponed, while in others still they could be taken up more frequently. It would be convenient and economical to make brief inquiries relative to agriculture and manufactures, as stated, but the account of agriculture and manufactures should be taken every year,—or once in two or three years, perhaps. For some of the topics information once in fifteen or twenty years would be ample, but with the Census Office relieved in the way indicated there should be no reason for much delay in bringing out the results in each case.

The organization of a permanent Census Office should be effected under civil-service regulations. Its nucleus organization should be comparatively small, and its annual cost of maintenance, as such, limited. Aside from a competent head, it should consist only of the necessary clerks and employees to attend to its purely administrative functions, and a force of trained experts and experienced clerks of the higher grades to carry on the constant statistical part of the work. Every ten years, when the enumeration of the population is made, a large temporary force would have to be added to the permanent force; but the two forces should be absolutely independent of each other so far as appointment to them is concerned. The persons comprising each should be secured through civil-service competitive or special examination, or by transfer if within the classified service; but transfer from the temporary to the permanent force should be restricted and made in accordance with civil-service regulations, and then only under certain contingencies which should be clearly defined. I am perfectly well satisfied that had the Eleventh Census been taken under conditions of permanency the cost would have been at least two million dollars less than it has been, and the results would have been finished and before the public in complete form at least a year prior to the present time.

The objection may be raised that a permanent Census Office would involve too much expense, or an expense much greater than has already been applied to the work. A little examination of the subject, however, leads to a different conclusion. The last three censuses have been the most comprehensive. The census of 1870 cost in the aggregate \$3,336,511; that for 1880 cost \$5,862,750. The amount already appropriated for the Eleventh Census is \$11,271,500, and this can be

taken as its cost, no further appropriation being necessary, except, it may be, for printing and binding a very few of the final reports. If, now, there should be a permanent Census Office established, it should be on a basis of comprehensive work each year, and of the great work of the enumeration of the people and the account of agriculture and manufactures every tenth year. A reasonable appropriation for seven years consecutively for permanent work would leave a margin—taking the cost of the Eleventh Census as a guiding-point—ample in every respect for the decennial work.

There is no question as to the advisability of securing, in some way, a very material reduction in the amount of work given to the ordinary census enumerator. Every effort should be made to obtain complete and accurate data concerning population, both as to the care and thoroughness with which the enumerator canvasses his district, and the completeness of the answers to the inquiries made concerning each person enumerated; but such questions are substantially dependent upon a house-to-house canvass, and they cannot be obtained readily in any other way. The work of the enumerator is now so increased through the multiplicity of inquiries that it is almost impossible for him to be faithful in his work and at the same time secure reasonable compensation: but by spreading the present work over ten years; by instituting a closer supervision of enumerators; by increasing the number of supervisors; and by making some preliminary examination of the enumerators selected, as was done in Massachusetts preparatory to the census just taken in that State,—it is believed that great improvement can be secured, not only as to the quality of the work done, but in the time necessary to do it. There should be ample preliminary instruction of the supervisors and enumerators, and they should be made familiar with their work before they enter upon it. This desirable result can be secured only by having ample time for preparation. The fact that very many of the enumerators find, after appointment, that it is impossible for them to carry on the work and at the same time secure proper remuneration therefor, and are thus led to throw up their commissions, compels the Census Office to make other appointments without due consideration of the qualifications of candidates. More expense in the supervision and instruction of supervisors and enumerators would result in a great decrease of the expense necessary for the correction of crude and bungling work.

The Senate on the 16th of February, 1891, by resolution, directed the Secretary of the Interior to consider the expediency of the estab-

lishment of a permanent Census Bureau, and to embody the result of his consideration in a report to be made at the opening of the Fifty-second Congress, such report to include a draft of a bill should the Secretary consider it expedient. Under this resolution the Superintendent of the Census, Hon. Robert P. Porter, made a very elaborate report, through the Secretary, to the Senate. This report is known as "Executive Document No. 1, Fifty-second Congress, 1st Session," and was forwarded December 7, 1891. It is an exceedingly valuable document, and gives in full all the reasons why a permanent Census Office should be established. It also gives the testimony of a very large number of statisticians, churchmen, representatives of commercial organizations, commissioners of agriculture, officers of boards of health, officers of institutions, and officers of State bureaus of statistics.

The House of Representatives also took up the question of a permanent Census Bureau, and directed the Select Committee on the Eleventh Census to inquire into the expediency of establishing such an office. This committee made a report, known as "Report No. 2393, Fifty-second Congress, 2d Session"; and as a result of the hearings which this committee gave, and of the evidence which it collected, a bill providing for a permanent census service was reported unanimously. This bill, however, was never acted upon, but it is especially noticeable that in the consideration of these two reports there was no opposition on the part of any one to the establishment of such an office: on the other hand, every one indorsed it heartily and emphatically.

The point now made is that if a permanent Census Office is to be established at all, the initiative legislation looking to that result should be taken without delay; for under such legislation whoever might be placed at the head of such an office would have ample opportunity to study the whole question and to report to Congress full and comprehensive plans for future census work. There are these three reasons, then, for prompt legislation: the action looking to the unification of certain inquiries in the various censuses of the world for 1900; the necessity of preparation for the Twelfth Census; the desire to establish a permanent Census Office. In considering these three reasons there is no necessity of indulging in any criticisms, for all criticism must come back to the fact that there has been no one whose particular duty it was to see to it that proper preparations were made, not only for legislation, but for the real work of the census.

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## MATTHEW ARNOLD'S LETTERS.<sup>1</sup>

"It has ever been a hobby of mine, though perhaps it is a truism, not a hobby, that the true life of a man is in his letters."

So wrote John Henry Newman to his sister thirty-two years ago. Truisms, like paradoxes, must be taken with a grain of salt. Newman's own letters hardly bear out his own theory. Less than the *Apology*, less than the *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England* (1851), less even than some of the famous sermons, such as the sermon on the Parting of Friends, are they the man. "Biographers," says Dr. Newman, "varnish, they assign motives, they conjecture feelings, they interpret Lord Burleigh's nods, but contemporary letters are facts." Letters are conclusive evidence of the fact that they were written, but not necessarily of the facts which they allege. If some letters are the most natural, others are the most artificial of all human compositions. They may be written with the fear that they will be published, or with the fear that they will not. Mr. Chamberlain addressed a private letter on a public question to the editor of a newspaper. Cicero, in one of his letters to Atticus, explains that he would not have expressed himself with so much freedom if he had not felt confident that his words would never be read by any other human eyes. But if Newman's remarks are true of any one, they are true of Matthew Arnold. His letters are, if possible, more natural than his conversation. In his witty, genial, and delightful talk there was a serio-comic pretence which people with no humor mistook for affectation. His friendly, chatty, confidential letters combine the simplicity of a child with all the mental and imaginative resources of a scholar, a poet, a philosopher, and a man of the world. Mr. Arnold's family had either to deprive the public of what, apart from enjoyment, it must do every one good to read, or to run the risk of spoiling the letters by cutting out much that was most private and therefore most characteristic. Very few letters could have endured

<sup>1</sup> "Letters of Matthew Arnold," 1848-1888, collected and arranged by George W. E. Russell. 2 vols. Macmillan.