

**THE CENSUS AND SOME OF ITS USES,
OUTLINING A PLAIN PHILOSOPHY OF
POPULATION, "THERE IS NO
WEALTH BUT LIFE." CENSUS ACT, 1920,
FOR GREAT BRITAIN AND "THE CENSUS
(IRELAND) ACT, 1920."**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649086535

The census and some of its uses, outlining a plain philosophy of population, "There is no wealth but life." Census Act, 1920, for Great Britain and "The Census (Ireland) Act, 1920." by George T. Bisset-Smith

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Cover @ 2017

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GEORGE T. BISSET-SMITH

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OUTLINING A PLAIN
PHILOSOPHY OF POPULATION

"There is no Wealth but Life"

The Census Act, 1920, for Great Britain
AND
"The Census (Ireland) Act, 1920"

BY
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EDINBURGH
W. GREEN & SON, LIMITED
LAW PUBLISHERS

1921

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167392.
16/11/21

INTRODUCTION

IN a previous work with the comprehensive title of "VITAL REGISTRATION," first published in 1902, there was (Chapter V.) given a very brief sketch of "The Census; and Some of its Uses."

Since that outline was penned nearly two decades have elapsed, and Census-taking has evolved very considerably.

The Census Act of 1920 has inaugurated a new era of Enumeration, as is appropriate and necessary in the novel circumstances of an after-war age.

No longer need the Census and its authority be decennial. For a permanent measure and a quinquennial Census there has for half a century been a strong cry from statisticians. Both these *desiderata* have now been granted. The Census Act is permanent. By the statute of 1920, His Majesty may authorise, by Order in Council, a Census to be taken five years after the Enumeration of 1921.

A better and fuller Census is in view with the achievement, mainly owing to the efforts of the Royal Statistical Society, of the two main fresh points in Census-taking—permanency and power to carry out an Enumeration every five years.

A more frequent Census will render more practicable the co-ordination of Census results with the returns of other Government Departments, such as reports relating to Food and Industry, Imports and Exports, and, of course, with the figures published by the Registrar-General regarding Births, Deaths, and Marriages. It may be mentioned here that the

Second Edition of "VITAL REGISTRATION" (Chapter VII.) deals, in a practical fashion, with the valuable information furnished by the various Statistical Reports of the Registration Department, partly linking up indirectly such Reports with the Population Census, and pointing to the lessons of Mortality Statistics.

Allusion to "VITAL REGISTRATION" is relevant. The present book is on the same lines. Though complete in itself, it is, indeed, a companion and complementary publication. From many authoritative quarters—Sheriffs, Registrars, Advocates, Clergymen, Doctors, Medical Officers of Health, and many others—expressions of approbation were received as to the interest and value of "*Vital Registration*." And it is hoped that an even wider circle may welcome this work; for the Census Act, 1920, is applicable to Great Britain, and, accordingly, there will be found herein an outline of the evolution of the Census in England.

Also, the Census Act for Ireland appears in the Appendix.

Consisting of three Parts and an Appendix, the book, owing to the increased expense of publishing to-day, has been kept within very moderate limits.

Much encouragement has been given the writer recently to put forth, in permanent form, articles upon various aspects of the Census which he had contributed to the Press, from time to time, in his limited leisure; and some part of such contributions are embodied in this publication. Possibly he may, later, have an opportunity of issuing a larger and completer work on this great and many-sided subject. Meantime, to meet the present and immediate demand, this rapid and general sketch is submitted in the hope that it may, at least in some measure, justify the opinion of the supreme Head of the Census in Scotland, who kindly wrote as follows:—"I have no doubt that it will be very helpful to those who are concerned with the administration of the Act, or are otherwise interested in

Census questions, to have available a work of this nature," and he (the Secretary of State for Scotland) added, in a later note, "I hope the book may have a wide circulation."

It would take a syndicate to deal completely and exhaustively with the Census in all its aspects. The writer is aware of the limits of this work. But it has a certain unity and gradation, resulting from its limitations as the outcome of one mind; for there is truth in the observation by Descartes: "*Souvent il n'y a pas tant de perfection dans les ouvrages composés de plusieurs pièces, et fait de la main de divers maîtres, qu'en ceux auxquels un seul a travaillé.*"

Especially in the earlier part of the book, the use of many figures and statistical tables has been carefully avoided; as masses of figures are repellent to the general reader, although attractive to the statistician.

It was partly owing to the fact that this work was being written while the Census Bill was under discussion that such points as the exclusion of the Infirmities inquiry and the expediency of having an inquiry into Religion in Great Britain are treated at some length. The question of a Religious Census will, no doubt, reappear as usual at the next Enumeration, and some other matters alluded to will also fall to be reconsidered. Evolution in Census-taking promises to be rapid in future.

To those whose interest is meantime centred chiefly on the Census of 1921 in its actual form as approved by Parliament, probably Part III. of the book will contain the greatest proportion of matter of practical interest and immediate application. It will be observed, however, that the treatment throughout is general: the two main purposes being to indicate the value of the Census results, and to excite interest in the great national stocktaking, which has now, for the first time, been made a permanent British institution by Act of Parliament.

First attempt to give a general conspectus of the Census in all its bearings, the book is put forth in the hope that it may be received with forbearance by fellow-experts, who will know best the difficulties of the subject, and forgive its shortcomings, some of which may be remedied in a second edition, for which suggestions will be very cordially welcomed and considered.

G. T. B.-S.

11 CARLTON TERRACE,
EDENBURGH, 11th March, 1921.

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