

HOW THE CENSUS IS TAKEN.

BY A FORMER "ENUMERATOR."



WHEN Parliament has decreed that a census of the people shall be taken, and provided for the costs of the operation ; when the Registrar-General has revised his previous arrangements, and when the vast mass of schedules have left the printers, the work of enumeration becomes that of the parochial enumerators. Whether it be a rural parish or a great town, the registrars map it out into districts, allotting to each an "enumerator," to whom is entrusted the task of leaving the schedules at the homes of the people and of collecting them, after satisfying himself that they are duly filled in, or remedying any omission. The enumerator, then, is the active agent in the taking of the census—he procures that vast mass of statistical information which is afterwards collated, arranged, digested, and tabulated by the central officials. The task is one of some difficulty, requiring a knowledge of the neighbourhood to be visited, persuasive powers, and the exercise of patient perseverance. The registrars who appoint these enumerators are requested to endeavour to secure the services of men interested in the work—of ministers, literary men, and others, who know the people, and who will secure as far as possible correct enumeration. The duties of the enumerator are not light, the remuneration is not heavy, so there is some inducement to regard it as a "service to the commonwealth," and as a labour of love.

The enumerator is furnished with the proper number of "schedules"—the sheets of printed paper on which are to be written the names, ages, and other particulars of the residents in the houses where they are to be left ; a book in which each schedule left is to be entered ; a paper of directions ; and the loan of a satchel, if he pleases, for the reception of these official documents. The number of houses allotted to him to visit varies according to the density or otherwise of the population, between 200 and 300 being the average in towns, less in rural districts. Each enumerator is furnished with a list of the streets or the parts he has to leave schedules in, and this must be effected at the times named for delivery and gathering in. With this guide to the work, it is left in his hands ; and from the results of the past, it may be fairly said that the confidence has been fully justified, and that the completeness of the census is often due to the enumerator's perseverance. It is no easy task to visit over 200 houses, and to induce the average Briton to fill in the papers properly. The enumerator is met at the commencement with the supposition that he is a bill-distributor, that he is the representative of "the taxes," or that he is canvassing for industrial life assurance companies. He has to clear away these fallacies, less prevalent since reading became more easy, and newspapers with anticipatory census-articles more abundant. He has next to ex-

plain, in the bulk of instances, how the paper is to be filled up, and to decide debatable points—whether Tom who is at sea, or Mary who is at service, but who comes on Sunday nights, is to be included ; and whether Bessie, who is "nine next week," shall be put down as eight or nine. All these points are decided by the headings and instructions, and by the "specimens" of census papers filled up ; but many are "not good readers," and a large proportion prefer oral explanation.

But the difficulties of the enumerator culminate on the day for the ingathering of the schedules. He has duly delivered his quota, and been favoured in meeting with that general civility which is the rule ; he has entered each number, and the number of the house, or its situation, in the enumerator's book, and has laid away his surplus schedules for return. It is now that he finds that in Artemus Ward's comic sketch there is the true maxim that "taking the census requires experience, like any other business ;" though the popular belief embedded in that sketch, that the difficulties are largely with the old maids who decline to disclose their ages, is rarely found in experience. The enumerator finds some schedules unfilled, because the heads of the family are "no scholars," or for similar reasons. His inquiries elicit redundant information, the memory of the mother supplying all the details with tolerable accuracy in a breath, helped out when lagging by domestic occurrences, such as the prevalence of measles, a relative's death, or the date of a wedding. It is easy to fill in the schedules—indeed it is difficult to induce the belief that extraneous facts must not be included.

But it is with the papers filled up in whole or in part that the enumerator has his task set. He glances at them to ascertain their accuracy, and he finds a few regardless of columns, many incomplete, some facetious, and some overflowing with unneeded particulars. Naturally, the class of district affects the proportion of the schedules filled in properly. In the aristocratic districts the returns need no revision, as a rule ; where tradesmen live, there is usually a still more accurate return ; but in the homes of the workmen, and where the "residuum" resides, there is needed the manipulation of the enumerator—the supply of facts omitted, and by pertinent questions elicited, and in the task both tact and suavity are needed. The columns for names are usually correct ; but in that for the age it is not uncommon to find "306" for 36 ; and there is a restless desire on the part of some mothers to give the exact age of infants in months. The geography of the column of place of birth needs a little attention, hazy notions being entertained as to the counties ; and when the Irish population is met with, the stock of geographical knowledge of the enumerator often runs out. In the other particulars demanded, there is less difficulty met with in practice ; but it is not uncommon to find the

"relationship" column oddly filled up; and the "occupation" is very often given in technical phrases that need a little more light. In ship-building towns, the description "holder-up" will at times imply a riveter's labourer; in iron-making districts, "baller" is one of the workers at an iron-works; in mines, there are "spraggers," "trappers," "callers," and others, whose familiar designation needs a little elucidation. When he has brought the schedule into something like fulness of detail, the enumerator may pass on.

A copy of the form left with the householder is given below blank, whilst an example is also given showing the method of properly and fully filling in the schedule. It may be also added that the registrar of the district receives the schedules from the enumerator, and after comparing them with the enumeration books, he sends the schedules to the Census Office, where they are arranged, tabulated, analysed, and the abstracts published at a later date. Local details of the numbers in towns or parishes may be had in April or May, but it will be much later before the numbers for the country will be procurable, and many months before the blue books containing the numbers in full detail are issued.

When the whole are gathered in, when those tenants that have moved out in the interval between

collection and delivery are traced as far as possible, and when additional ones are given to and gathered from those who have moved in, the task of the enumerator is concluded after he has filled up the statement of the numbers of schedules delivered, gathered, spoiled, and unused, and the numbers of houses and shops, empty or occupied, and his vast mass of matter is delivered in to the head enumerator of the district. His task is one largely of dry detail, but it has given him an insight into the condition of the people such as is rarely obtained; and if his district is a "poor one," he will speedily forget the affront to his dignity in the supposition that had been hazarded that he was a "bailiff" or other minion of the law engaged in unpleasant intrusions into the homes of the people. The task of the census-taker has now become familiarised to the people, and gradually the importance of the task is becoming fully recognised by all; and with that recognition, and the aid of the press in urging the necessity for, and the usefulness of the information thus gained, that task will be made still easier as the decades pass, when generations grow up that know not the difficulties of the illiterate, nor the resorts of the ignorant to evade inquiries the use of which they do not comprehend.

LIST OF MEMBERS OF THIS FAMILY, OF VISITORS, OF SERVANTS, AND OF ALL OTHER PERSONS WHO SLEPT OR ABODE IN THIS DWELLING ON THE NIGHT OF SUNDAY, APRIL 3rd, 1881.

NAME AND SURNAME.	RELATION TO HEAD OF FAMILY.	CONDITION AS TO MARRIAGE.	SEX.	AGE LAST BIRTH-DAY.	RANK, PROFESSION, OR OCCUPATION.	WHERE BORN.	IF
							1. DEAF OR DUMB. 2. BLIND. 3. IMBECILE OR IDIOT 4. LUNATIC.
No person absent on the night of Sunday, April 3rd, to be entered, except those travelling, or out at work during the night, and who return home on Monday, April 4th.	State whether Head, or Wife, Son, Daughter, or other Relative, Visitor, Boarder, &c., or Servant.	Write "Married," "Widower," "Widow," or "Unmarried," against names of all except young children.	Write "M" against Males, and "F" against Females.	For Infants under 1 Year, state the Age in Months.	Before filling up, read Instructions.*	Opposite Names of those born in England write County and Town or Parish. In Scotland, Ireland, or British Colonies, state Country or Colony.	Write the respective infirmities against Name of Afflicted Person, and if so from Birth, add "from Birth."
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2.							
3.							
4.							
5.							
6.							
7.							
8.							
9.							
10.							

I declare the foregoing to be a true return, according to the best of my knowledge and belief.
Witness my Hand. (Signed) _____

EXAMPLE OF MODE OF FILLING UP THE HOUSEHOLDER'S SCHEDULE.

NAME AND SURNAME.	RELATION TO HEAD OF FAMILY.	CONDITION AS TO MARRIAGE.	SEX.	AGE LAST BIRTH-DAY.	RANK, PROFESSION, OR OCCUPATION.*	WHERE BORN.	IF
							1. DEAF OR DUMB. 2. BLIND. 3. IMBECILE OR IDIOT 4. LUNATIC.
1.—GEORGE WOOD.	Head of Family.	Married.	M.	48	Farmer (of 317 acres, employing 8 labourers and 3 boys).	Surrey, Godstone.	—
2.—MARIA WOOD.	Wife.	Married.	F.	44	Farmer's Wife.	Scotland.	—
3.—ALAN WOOD.	Son.	Unmarried.	M.	20	Farmer's Son.	Surrey, Godstone.	—
4.—FLORA JANE WOOD.	Daughter.	—	F.	12	Scholar.	Kent, Ramsgate.	—
5.—ELLEN WOOD.	Mother.	Widow.	F.	71	Annuitant.	Canada.	Lunatic.
6.—ELIZA EDWARDS.	Servant.	Unmarried.	F.	24	General Servant.	Middlesex, Paddington.	—
7.—ANN YOUNG.	Servant.	Unmarried.	F.	22	Domestic.	Surrey, Croydon.	—
8.—THOMAS JONES.	Servant.	Unmarried.	M.	21	Dairymaid. Farm Servant.	Essex, Epping.	—

* Elaborate directions for filling up this column occupy a large part of the Schedule.