

William Farr, F.S.S., M.D., F.R.S., C.B., &c.; &c.;

Contributors

Royal College of Surgeons of England

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A circular purple stamp of the College of Surgeons of England is centered on the page. The text "COLLEGE OF SURGEONS OF ENGLAND" is written around the inner edge of the circle. In the center of the stamp, the name "WILLIAM FARR" is printed in a larger font, with "F.S.S., M.D., F.R.S." written below it. The stamp is partially overlaid by the text of the title and the motto below.

WILLIAM FARR, F.S.S., M.D., F.R.S., C.B., &c., &c.

"Salus Populi, ~~Lex~~ Suprema."

WILLIAM FARR was born in 1807 at Kenley (Saxon—Cyng, a king, and ley, a field), a Shropshire village of some forty houses, much scattered, and of great antiquity, beautifully situated on a steep eminence, at a short distance from Cressage (Sax.—Cristes-ác, Christ's Oak) Station, on the Great Western system. Of the church, which is dedicated to St. John the Baptist, and was originally a chapel affiliated to some ancient parochial church, probably that of Cound, no mention can be found before the reign of Henry VIII, nor is it referred to in the Valor of 1534-35. It comprises portions of Saxon and Roman work, the dwarf massive stone tower, with its narrow embrasures, being supposed to have been a Roman watch tower forming part of a fortified encampment overlooking the old Roman road, Watling Street, within sight of the city of Uriconium (Wroxeter), a city that was larger than Londinium; and of the entrenchment made by Caractacus, king of the Silures (A.D. 51), on the heights of Caradoc. In 1854, a writer in "Eddowe's Shrewsbury Journal," in describing the antiquity of the place, mentions a brass piece which had been discovered in that year (1854) buried a few inches beneath the rector's seat in the chancel, bearing, with several devices, the inscriptions, "HANS KRANWINCKEL IN NYRNB:" on the one, and "DAS WORT GOTTES BLEIBT FÜR EWIG" on the other side, and was locally believed to have been the current money of Edward III's reign, but is really nothing more than a counter struck at Nuremburg by one Hans Kranwinckel, a counter maker of the sixteenth century, the inscription on the reverse signifying, "The word of God endureth for ever;" the said pieces being very common, and existing in numerous varieties.

Another distinguished man, native to the spot, was the first Sir Archibald Alison, author of a "History of Europe," of acknowledged merit, whose father was the perpetual

curate of the rectory at the close of the eighteenth century, and composed his elegant "Essay on Taste" sitting in the farmhouse, girdled with pleasant fields, that Sir William Pulteney assigned him as a residence rent free, the present rectory and schoolhouse not having been erected until 1854. An examination of the church register, which dates back to the year 1601, discloses the following entry: "1807. "William, son of John Farr, and Catherine his wife, is "baptised, December 6," from which we may fairly conclude that this rite was performed by the reverend essayist "Taste Alison." Farr's grandfather was a small farmer in the parish, who died at the great age of ninety-six, about the middle of this century. His father, while resident at Kenley, may be described by the somewhat less pretentious designation of farm labourer; while of his mother we know nothing more than that she came of a family named Pinches, which would appear indigenous to the shire.

But to enquirers into the story of William Farr, a small township, with about four hundred inhabitants, called Dorrington, probably from the Saxon words *deár*, a deer, and *tun*, a hedge, dwelling-place or town, is even still more interesting. It is now reached by the Shrewsbury and Hereford Railway, at a little more than six miles from the former town. Although "Domesday" records it as having been given by one of William Malbeding's descendants to "The Monks of Wenlock," the church is no older than the year 1845. It was to this place the FARRS migrated a few months after the birth of their first child William, finding shelter and employment with a retired cab proprietor of Bath, named Price, the father acting as bailiff and gardener, while his wife made herself useful about the house. The only place of worship in Dorrington at that time was a small meeting-house, at which the Rev. John Jones Beynon ministered after the congregational or independent order. Here the FARRS and Mr. Price were in habit of attending. In the course of a few years the boy William was of an age to require schooling, which was not received at Shrewsbury Grammar School, as we were originally led to believe, but simply at the hands of the village schoolmistress, supplemented by some doubtless very painstaking and valuable evening instruction in the house of the Rev. Mr. Beynon. That he was never at Shrewsbury Grammar School, we have, by the courtesy of the Rev. T. B. Lloyd, of Whitehall,

Shrewsbury, one of the Governors of the School, been able to settle beyond all question. This gentleman, after making a thorough search of the School Records, assures us in the most positive terms that Farr was never there. This is corroborated by Mr. W. Roderick, surgeon, Oswestry, and by Mrs. Cloude of Shrewsbury, two of the late Doctor's most intimate friends; upon whose joint-authority we are assured, that his education, prior to being articed to Dr. Webster, was received at the village school, Dorrington, as before indicated.

Young as he then was, he would appear to have had a concurrent fancy for doctoring, for we learn on the authority of an old domestic servant of Mr. Price's, that he would "salve and plaster the servants for any temporary ailment which seemed to require such treatment." When it was decided that he should be trained for the medical profession, and when he first entered upon his articles, we are unable to state. His benefactor, Mr. Price, who had remained a bachelor all his life, died (1828) aged 90. We may here note the fact of William Farr having had three brothers, James, Thomas, and Henry, and one sister, Anne. James was born in 1816, but of the other three we are unable to fix the precise date of birth. From all that we have been able to gather, however, Mr. Price's provision, at all events his posthumous provision so far as this family is concerned, was confined to the one child William. The others, who it would appear had not the same advantages in their early manhood, failed to make the same headway in after life. James developed into a cooper, remaining at Dorrington, where he died in 1857. Thomas and Henry we learn were connected in business as coach-builders at Newcastle-on-Tyne, both having died at a comparatively early age, the former in London, and the latter at Shrewsbury. Anne, who was engaged as a dressmaker at Shrewsbury, died there of typhus fever. Mr. Price bequeathed the handsome sum of 500*l.* for the further education and apprenticeship of his *protégé*. Farr was articed by Mr. Price to Dr. Webster, a distinguished physician of the Salop Infirmary, who also (in 1837) left him 500*l.*, and a valuable collection of books to boot. Having served his articles, and walked the Infirmary, he proceeded (1829) to Paris University, where he fell in with Dr. W. P. Bain, of Blackwall, who, at

the end of a life-long friendship, survives him, and writes in a letter addressed to the editor of the "Daily News" some few months since, "I, who have known him intimately from " the time of our association at the University of Paris in " 1829-31 up to the present time (16th April, 1883), ask " leave to bear testimony to his wonderful power of mind, " &c." The second Revolution breaking out in July, 1830, Farr was near being shot in the gardens of the Palais Royal, but, escaping with his life, fled to Calais, and so managed to get safely back on English soil. After some short stay in London, during which, we are disposed to think, he passed one term at the University College, Gower Street, he returned to Shrewsbury at a time when a Mr. Higgins was acting as house surgeon to the Infirmary, but who, not having the double qualification, was ineligible to take indoor pupils, the fee for each of whom was 300 guineas, of which the institution would receive the lion's share. Such being the case, the Directors allowed Higgins six months to obtain the Hall diploma. Through the influence of Dr. Webster, Farr was appointed his *locum tenens*; and, while so acting, was presented by the pupils with a handsome silver snuff-box. At the expiration of six months, Mr. Higgins returned without the diploma. At this time, unfortunately, or, writing in the light of after events, we should rather say fortunately, for Farr, he held no diploma; for, had he, there can be little doubt, he would have been elected to fill the vacant post; for he was much esteemed by the medical and surgical staff as well as by the patients. But the directors, being compelled to appoint a man holding the two diplomas, selected a Mr. Yardley, brother of the present Vicar of St. Chad's, Shrewsbury.

Thus enlightened, Farr lost no time in qualifying for practice. He proceeded to London, passed examination and obtained his L.S.A. at Apothecaries' Hall, 29th March, 1832, and continued his course at Gower Street during the academical years 1832-33 to 1834-35. But he does not appear to have gained college honours, which, possibly, at those dates were not given. In 1833 he married a Miss Langford, the daughter of a farmer and miller at Pool Quay on the Severn, between Welshpool and Shrewsbury. The young couple rented for residence the house numbered 8 in Grafton Street, Fitzroy Square. Here the young licentiate entered into the real battle of life, practising and teaching

medicine. Patients were few and far between, and to the necessity thus arising of adopting additional means of eking out a subsistence, may clearly be traced the development of his taste for figures in the shape of vital statistics. Sometimes he was grinding, sometimes writing for the medical journals, and sometimes letting apartments. It was at this time, 1835-39, that he edited the "Medical Annual," and "the British Annals of Medicine," and wrote his well-known articles on "Vital Statistics" in McCulloch's "Statistics of the British Empire," and "On Benevolent Funds and Life Assurance in Health and Sickness" in the "Lancet." Mr. James Bratton, surgeon, of Claremont Hill, Shrewsbury, writes that he was a pupil of Farr's, residing in his house at Grafton Street, in 1836, and helped him in his statistics by logarithms, in which he was so much absorbed that at night, instead of reading medicine with him, he helped him in his calculations as long as he could, and rather neglected his Latin, but has had no cause to regret it.

The late hours to which Farr's wife was subjected in assisting him to revise papers for the press proved too much for her strength, and she soon fell a victim to consumption. By a touching coincidence this happened to be the juncture when Sir James Clarke wanted a reviser for his work on consumption, which he was preparing for the press. Farr was selected for this task; and it was through this learned author's influence, backed by the reputation he had gained from his medical and statistical writings in the Journals before referred to, that he subsequently obtained the post of Compiler of Abstracts in the registrar-general's office in 1838, which, by the way, had only been created in the year previous. The then registrar-general was Mr. T. H. Lister, who owed his appointment to the Whig interest under Lord Melbourne. In his first report to the Home Secretary, that gentleman refers to the appendix as containing a letter from Mr. Farr explanatory of the "Nosology" (from *νοσος*, disease), or scientific nomenclature which has been adopted in the classification of the causes of death. In 1841 Mr. Farr was consulted by the commissioners for taking the census of that year; but unfortunately his recommendations were not adopted. The volumes of the Post Office Directory have been searched without discovering the house which, we have been told, Farr inhabited after leaving Grafton Street, and before going to live at Stoke

Newington; but we have learnt for certain that he was residing at the latter place prior to marrying (1st January, 1842) his second wife, a Miss M. E. Whittall, daughter of Joseph Whittall, of Union Row, Deal, formerly of Shropshire, by whom he had eight children, five of whom, one son and four daughters, are now living. He occupied a nice little dwelling, now if not then, known as No. 2, Percy Villas, Lordship Road. We have visited the cosy retreat, seen the mahogany cupboard which he set up in the after sitting-room, and looked upon the pretty garden through the back window. In this neighbourhood he is remembered by a very respectable practitioner in Church Street as having belonged to a local medical society, whose members met in rotation at each other's houses; among whom was Dr. William Boyd Carpenter. Our learned informant recalls the meetings he himself attended at Farr's rural abode, and describes him as a man full of knowledge, no longer seeking practice, though not withholding his advice without fee in cases of poverty and helplessness. From the time of his becoming connected with the General Register Office, Farr may be accounted a statistician rather than a physician, and his history to have been made up of his varied and useful work, comprising, in addition to those interesting and lucid letters addressed to the registrar-general, which for forty years accompanied that official's annual report to the Home Secretary, and did so much in preparing the way for the sanitary legislation of 1872 and 1875, his English Life Table No. I, bound in with the fifth report, which was published in 1843 (after Major Graham, brother of the then Home Secretary, Sir J. R. G. Graham, had succeeded to the registrarship), being formed from the deaths occurring in 1841 compared with the census of that year. One of his most valuable pieces on mortality tables, though in it he did scant justice to Dr. Price, is to be found in the appendix to the eighth report. In 1852 he produced his report on the mortality from cholera in England, 1848-49. During 1851-54 he was engaged as one of the assistant commissioners for the census of the former year, contributing the sections bearing upon population, occupation, conjugal condition, and so forth. In 1853 he drew up the English Life Table No. II, which was published with the twelfth report of the registrar-general, and was based on the deaths occurring in the *seven* years 1838-44 and the census of 1841. In 1859 he

submitted to the Royal Society a paper on the construction of life tables, illustrated by a new life table of the healthy districts of England. During 1861-65 he was engaged as one of the assistant commissioners for the census of the former year, and wrote the greater part of the report in connection therewith. In 1864 he published as a distinct work the English Life Table No. 3, formed from the census returns of 1841 and 1851 and 6,470,720 deaths occurring during the seventeen years 1838-54, prefaced by a very elegant treatise and an interesting account of the (Babbage) calculating machine constructed by Messrs. Scheutz. In 1865 he prepared a memorandum for the guidance of the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Gladstone) in the development of the Post Office Insurance scheme. In 1868 he made a report on the cholera epidemic of 1866 in England, published by way of supplement to the twenty-ninth report of the registrar-general. In 1871 he had the honour of being appointed one of the commissioners-in-chief for taking the census of that year, the greater part of the report having reference thereto being of his putting together, while the supplement to the report for 1875 was the last great article from his prolific pen and never-resting brain.

Assuming that his work in connection with the census enumerations, which were taken subsequent to his having entered the office, was the most important, as it was the principal of his life, it will naturally be expected that some particular mention should be made of it, notwithstanding that by reason of the numerous articles which have, from time to time, appeared in the *Statistical Journal*, expressly devoted to the subject, it is not to be supposed that in the few lines now at our disposal for the purpose, we can attempt to outdo or even compare with what has already been done in this direction. Neither does it concern our present object to enter minutely into what we conceive to have been the deficiencies in the censuses of 1841, 1851, 1861, and 1871, inasmuch as Dr. Farr can in no way be held responsible for these. In fact, with most, if not with all, of the suggestions which emanated from the Committee of the Statistical Society, or may otherwise have found expression in the pages of that Society's Journal, Dr. Farr fully concurred; while not a few of them, as may readily be imagined, actually originated with him, he having been an active Fellow of the Society preeminently conversant with

the subject. But it was one thing for the distinguished superintendent of the statistical department, through the registrar-general, to make suggestions with regard to taking the census and to the extension of its inquiry, and quite another thing for the government of the day to agree to their adoption. In 1841, with the exception of the "ages of the people," which had most foolishly been discontinued in 1831, having been again resumed, Farr's suggestions were practically ignored. In 1851 not merely the statistics of parishes, and more completely of boroughs, but also separately those of such large towns in England and Scotland as appeared of sufficient importance, were collected. In addition also to the inquiry respecting occupation, age, and birthplace, the various relationships (such as husband, wife, son, and daughter) were gone into, as likewise the civil condition (as married, unmarried, widower, or widow), and the number of persons blind, or deaf and dumb. The educational and religious census was restricted by the government to being conducted on the voluntary principle. The suggestive point in the history of the people of this era, and the key to the most important social changes, consists in its having been ascertained that, while in the century ending 1800 the population of England and Wales had just doubled in a hundred years, in 1851 on comparing the then numbers with those of 1801, they had again doubled, but this time in fifty years. At the beginning of the nineteenth century we were in a transition state from a preponderance of agriculture to a preponderance of manufacture. Previous to the census of 1861, Dr. Farr we believe to have suggested several points for further development, especially as regards sickness and infirmity, and the number of rooms in each house, besides recommending the infliction of a penalty for the non-registration of births, it being impossible to disclose the exact natural increase of population unless *all* births are registered; but the principal changes actually carried out were confined to a compulsory religious census in Ireland, most satisfactory in its results, and some important information as to "house accommodation" in Scotland. Prior to 1871, Dr. Farr urged the renewal of the educational and religious census of 1851, asking that it should be made compulsory, and was in favour of a uniform system for England, Scotland, and Ireland. He also contemplated an inquiry into the wages of the working classes, and an *annual*

enumeration of the number and ages of the people in the cities and principal towns, in addition to other points which he had previously pressed but to no purpose. The government then in power could not be brought to view matters from Dr. Farr's standpoint; so, with a few alterations in minor points, but without any important improvement, the plan of 1861 was adhered to. Passing from the obtainance to the arrangement of the statistics, we find, speaking generally, which is the only fair way of speaking of such vast work, that the multitudinous tables were admirably well-constructed, almost compelling those under whose eye they come to take an interest in them, though, in some few instances, we find tables comprising similar facts differing in form and arrangement, thus necessitating needless trouble to those interested in conducting comparisons. We conclude, then, that the much esteemed subject of these remarks was very keen in discovering new and valuable ends which the census inquiries might be made to serve; that he showed equal acumen in (so far as he was allowed his own way) mapping out how the information might be best collected; that his medical knowledge stood him in good stead in classifying the causes of death; and that his taste for figures, combined with a rare intelligence, was made manifest in his clear system of tabulation; while, by his lucid and picturesque style of writing, he may be said to have made the subject of vital statistics comparatively light reading. Notwithstanding his many merits, merits of originality among the rest, it must be confessed, even by his warmest admirers, that he was at times somewhat hasty in the avowal of an impression not sufficiently weighed in the balance even of his own mind, and occasionally gave expression to opinions and judgments in respect of which he had not taken time to compare notes with men not inferior to himself in that profession which he engrafted upon the advantageous stock of a medical training, joined to a certain amount of medical experience. For instance, he was slow to recall a too little qualified opinion on the effect of density of population upon health, attributing exclusively to that cause the greater mortality in cities and large towns over and above that obtaining in country districts, overlooking, or at all events not giving due weight to the "fast" debauched living and the sedentary occupation in confined buildings met with in the former. Mere density of population, within certain limits, does not

appear to have any adverse effect on the rate of mortality—in fact, we are by no means satisfied it may not indirectly tend to improve it. At all events, we find that the rate of mortality in this country, taken as a whole, is decreasing; while the population, notwithstanding emigration, is increasing. This holding to his own opinion, without sufficiently consulting, and at times deferring to that of others, is again met with if we turn from his statistical to what may be termed his actuarial career. Witness his improper use of the term “rate of mortality,” to denote that which is usually and rightly named the “force of mortality.” In the blue book on the Sanitary State of the Army in India, he says, “In the reports upon the Indian fund, the probability of dying is incorrectly called the rate of mortality, so as to mislead the unwary reader. Thus, if on an average out of 100 men living at the beginning of a year, there are 10 deaths in the year following, the probability of dying is expressed by the fraction $\frac{10}{100}$, which is incorrectly called in the reports ‘the rate of mortality;’ but the rate of mortality is $\frac{10}{95}$; for the numbers living at the end of the year are 90, and the years of life are $90 + 10$ half-years, which, it may be assumed, are lived by the 10 who died in the course of the year.” This is much as though he had said if a man lost 5% out of a 100% in the course of a year, his rate of loss would not be 5 per cent. per annum, but $\frac{5}{102\frac{1}{2}}$. Other similar innovations were his definition of “Annuity,” and his substitution of S_x , N_x , &c., for the S_{x-1} , N_{x-1} , &c., of Mr. Griffith Davies; which latter must have proved not a little perplexing and annoying to those who may have essayed to use his Commutation Tables without being aware of the fact. If even his reasons for making the change had been good, which, in our opinion, they certainly were not, he should at least have used \bar{N} or some other distinctive symbol, instead of adhering to the plain N of Mr. Davies. With all his admitted knowledge, he was without doubt what may be termed a self-centred man. One of his great crotchets, which must have cost him dear pecuniarily, if not also something in reputation, was the investment of life assurance companies’ reserves in consols. It goes, however, to show that he had the courage to support his views. Clever men of the world knew the doctor’s weaknesses, and by praising his crotchet and playing on his ambition, “used” him, his name, his official position, and his money, to answer their own ends, at the cost of his and other people’s disaster.

With regard to his life tables, the formation of which we have already described, while giving the learned compiler every credit for the immense industry they exhibit, it must be conceded that they are too purely theoretical in their character ever to become of much practical utility. There were remarkable fluctuations in the raw materials which were summarily disposed of, and Gompertz's hypothesis—that the power to oppose destruction in the human frame loses equal proportions in equal times, and that consequently the logarithmic probability of living a year at successive ages will form a series in geometrical progression, so that $l_x = dg^{ax}$ —applied to bring out a uniform table, which may show the general mortality of the country well enough, but is not to be relied on when not so much the general as the relative mortality at different periods of life has to be investigated. Table No. III is the most scientific of the three, and judging from the remarkable evenness in which the mortality experience of the Prudential Assurance Company has been found to run with it, it would appear, as indeed might have been expected (from the preponderance of the lives observed upon having been those in the lower walks of life), to be more fitted to the use of industrial offices. We have never had much occasion to use the monetary values ourselves; but in doing so some time since, we discovered several inaccuracies in the $\frac{C_x}{D_x}$ column of p. 53 from age 78 to the end of the table, which, being at such advanced ages, are not perhaps of very great practical importance, yet are sufficient to shake confidence, for which the computers, and not Dr. Farr himself, must be held responsible. It may be well, perhaps, also to record here a slight error in connection with the Life Table No. I, the value of an annuity at age 35 (4 per cent.) being given as 15.6645, whereas it should be 15.7006.

In addition to his work at the general register office, and his contributions to the journals of the various societies already referred to, Dr. Farr rendered the State much valuable service in many royal commissions and in Parliamentary Committees of Inquiry on sanitary and other subjects. He perhaps subjected himself to the severest test of manipulative skill, while he came triumphantly out of it, when he undertook to explain, before one of the most learned and scientific audiences ever called together, the applicability of

Scheutz's calculating and printing machine to the valuation of annuities. He was one of the representatives of Great Britain at the several International Statistical Congresses which have been held at intervals in the various capitals of Europe since 1851; in connection with one of which he had the honour of being presented with a diamond ring by the late hapless Emperor of Russia. Dr. Farr was among the earliest and most valued supporters of the British, the British Medical, and the Social Science Associations, whose journals bear evidence of his untiring diligence and devotion in statistical work. Indeed, to the influence of Dr. Farr, the section of statistics and economical science in the British Association may be said to owe its origin.

We now pass from his writings and other work to the honours which they so deservedly earned for him. Although the unpretending diploma of L.S.A., London, 1832, was the only degree he took in the ordinary way, numerous learned bodies were quick to recognise the zeal, learning, and intelligence he displayed. We have not the date when he was made a Corresponding Member of the Institute of France. Of all his other honours we have accounts, and without exception they turn upon his unrivalled labours and unsurpassed success in the matter of "Vital Statistics." Even his medical doctor's degree is traceable to this motive. In 1839 he joined the Statistical Society, with which, begun as it was but five years before, he was closely connected to the end of his days, being Treasurer from 1855 to 1867, Vice-President from 1869 to 1870, President from 1871 to 1872, a valued contributor to the pages of the *Journal*, and a frequent donor to the library. The honorary degree of M.D. was attached to his name from New York in 1847. In 1849 he was elected a Fellow of the Institute of Actuaries, being made an Honorary Member in 1852. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society on 7th June, 1855, as being distinguished for his acquaintance with the science of statistics and life annuity principles, and eminent as an author on statistical subjects. On 10th February, 1857, he was made an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society, being elected at the same time as Rudolph Virchow, M.D., A. Velpeau, Louis Stromeyer, Paul Dubois, Bernard Langenbeck, and A. F. Chomel, of whom only Virchow and Langenbeck survive. He was chosen as a physician not in practice (English physicians in practice not

being eligible for the honorary fellowship), whose services to the science of vital statistics had been of a "very important character." He received the degree of D.C.L. (honorary) at the Oxford Encœnia, 1857. In 1867 he was proposed as Honorary Fellow of the K.Q.C.P. by the late Sir Dominic Corrigan, seconded by the late Dr. Burke, and was elected in October on the ground of "high scientific attainments." From this date (1867) onwards, in the pages of the "Medical Directory" we find M.D., T.C.D. (honorary) 1867, attached to his name, but on communicating with the college authorities at Dublin, we found that the degree had never been conferred upon him by them. The explanation is, we think, of sufficient interest to warrant us in giving it *in extenso*. It appears that up to 1867 the King's and Queen's College of Physicians maintained that the Charter of William and Mary, and the Act of the Irish Parliament 1 George III, cap. xiv, conferred on their Fellows and Licentiates the title of M.D., T.C.D. In 1868 the claim was legally contested and disallowed; so that when the Honorary Fellowship of the K.Q.C.P. was conferred on Dr. Farr and other eminent members of the profession, it was believed to carry with it the title of M.D., T.C.D., and to that extent Dr. Farr was entitled to its assumption. Finally, in 1880, while the late Lord Beaconsfield was in office, he had the honour of being gazetted C.B.

In or about 1846 he removed from Stoke Newington to Melina Place, St. John's Wood, and in 1860 to Southlands Road, Bickley, where his aged father, who had for some time been living with him, amusing himself with his old handicraft of "gardening," died in 1864, age 81. The doctor's mother died in 1845. On a tombstone in Dorrington Churchyard are the following inscriptions:—

In Memory of
CATHERINE FARR,
 WIFE OF JOHN FARR,
 WHO DIED 10TH SEPTEMBER, 1845,
 AGED 65 YEARS;
 ALSO JAMES FARR, HER SON,
 WHO DIED 5TH JANUARY, 1857,
 AGED 41 YEARS;
JOHN FARR,
 AGED 81,
 DIED 4TH MARCH, 1864,
 UNDER HIS SON'S ROOF AT SOUTHLANDS,
 BICKLEY, KENT.

Catherine Farr was the first person buried in Dorrington Churchyard, her death having happened in the year in which the church itself was built. It was at Bickley that the Doctor lost his second wife. She died 18th December, 1876, and was buried at Bromley Common, her husband testifying of her that she was "a good wife; a devoted "mother." In 1879 he removed to Portsdown Road, Maida Vale, where he was residing at the time of his death. It was in this year that the registrar-generalship became vacant by reason of the resignation of Major Graham, who, in his last report (1879), thus describes Dr. Farr's services:— "To his scientific researches I attribute any reputation that "may have accrued to the General Register Office of "England and Wales from the time I accepted office in the "department." Probably this was written in anticipation of Dr. Farr offering himself as a candidate for the appointment, which he at once did. But on its being given to Sir Brydges Henniker, who is married to a sister of Lady John Manners, and was formerly Secretary to Mr. Sclater-Booth, late President of the Local Government Board, the doctor, under the influence of his disappointment, resigned. A very general feeling of surprise and even of annoyance was evoked in scientific circles, when it became known that Dr. Farr was not to be promoted, some attributing the fact to there having "arisen a new king over Egypt which knew not "Joseph." But apart from the natural tendency of the conservatives then in power to use this piece of patronage on behalf of one so closely connected with a leading man of their party, it is quite open to question whether the Doctor, notwithstanding his high and undisputed qualifications, would have been the right man to take the lead. Forgetful and absent-minded, he was probably as unfitted for the administration of a governmental department as he felt himself to be for the life of a medical practitioner. He was distinctly of studious and not of business tastes and habits. Scientists rarely make good administrators. The registrarship is after all a quasi-political office, which to fill quite satisfactorily the occupant should be somewhat of a diplomatist; and this for a man addicted to himself as Dr. Farr undoubtedly was, it is impossible to be. It was all very well for him to air his views in appendices to the registrar-general's reports, but it would not have done to embody

them in the reports themselves. By such a course the government would be laid open to a torrent of questioning on the part of a watchful, not to say captious Opposition.

The Doctor's disappointment was however great; not that he could have coveted the promotion from a pecuniary point of view, the salary he was then receiving (namely 1,100*l.*) being within 100*l.* a year of the registrar's own income. Again, if we may judge from the following letter addressed by the Doctor himself to the editor of "The Times," he can scarcely have looked forward to being able to hold the post for more than a few years. No; the fact, we take it, was this: his scientific friends on the Continent had for some time past been accustomed to look upon him as virtually the registrar-general of England; and when the post became vacant, they would feel surprise at his not being elected as the successor. In a word, it was Dr. Farr's ambition to become registrar-general before he died; but fate and Lord Beaconsfield decreed otherwise. In the letter we have alluded to, after some courteous, if not even generous, reference to Major Graham, he continues: "Although warned "by the recent state of my health that I was in want of rest "rather than of increased duties and responsibilities, I was "induced by the hope of enlarged opportunities of rendering "assistance in the approaching census and in the promotion "of public health and sanitary statistics, to become a can- "didate for the post of registrar-general. Failing to obtain "that promotion, I no longer hesitated to seek that retire- "ment which my friends had previously urged upon me." Instead of promotion came superannuation, and the eminent vital statistician retired into private life, as hundreds had done before him, to sigh and to sing the "*Sic vos non vobis*," which is so often the præhumous dirge of disappointed merit. Of Dr. William Farr it may be said he earned a sort of martyr's crown, and belongs to the long roll of men who have sacrificed themselves upon the altar of public usefulness. Soon after, if indeed not before, his retirement there appeared symptoms of "dying atop." Dr. Radcliffe was consulted, and pronounced his patient to be suffering from paralysis of the brain, which gradually grew upon him, rendering him quite childish for some months prior to the close, hastened by an attack of bronchitis, a complaint to which he was subject, and for which he was at this time

attended by Mr. E. Metcalfe, F.R.C.S., but without avail. The only surviving son of the lowly Dorrington couple died on Saturday night, the 14th April, 1883, at Portsdown Road, Maida Vale, London, and was buried Friday, 20th April, at Bromley Common Church, by the side of the "good wife and devoted mother." Large numbers of private and professional friends attended to show a worthy and literally worn-out man the last mark of affection, honour, and respect. The decease of one whose name and memory are everlastingly bound up with our records of mortality, was in its turn duly registered in these words: "Cerebral, three years; bronchitis, eight days." Since his decease a testimonial fund has been raised by voluntary subscription, which at present amounts to about 1,000*l.* To a suggestion that a public pension ought to be granted to his three unmarried daughters, it has been officially answered that it is not in the power of government to comply, but ministers are willing to make a grant of 400*l.* It appears that he left four daughters and one son, one of the four daughters being married to Mr. H. M. Paget, and a second, a confirmed invalid, for whom he made a small special bequest. The whole estate consisting almost entirely of policies of assurance, is sworn under 3,800*l.*, his son, Lieutenant Farr, of H.M.S. "Hector," his brother-in-law, Mr. J. Whittall, and his friend, Mr. Hammick, of Lincoln's Inn, being appointed joint executors.

It only remains to summarise his best and greatest works. While his series of English Life Tables may perhaps be the greatest monuments of his untiring industry, especially when we bear in mind that in mathematics he was wholly self-taught, they can never rank as the most perfect of his numerous contributions to the practical utility of statistical science. His most enduring work was that which he achieved as a pioneer of the sanitary legislation of the years 1872 and 1875, and which has already improved the health and extended the longevity of the British people.

We cannot take leave of the subject without offering our warm thanks to the several gentlemen by whom we have been assisted, particularly the Rev. E. Cargill, Rector of Kenley, and William Roderick, Esq., surgeon, of Oswestry.



