

MARRIAGE REGISTER SIGNED BY MARK.

Of the men married in 1907, 12, or 1·46 in every 1,000, and of the women 25, or 3·05 per 1,000, signed the register by marks.

The illiteracy of the people, as measured by the proportion of married persons who affix marks instead of signatures to the marriage register, has greatly decreased of late, having fallen since 1881 from 32·04 per 1,000 among men to 1·46 per 1,000, and from 57·98 per 1,000 to 3·05 per 1,000 among women. This is shown in a very striking manner by the following table:—

Persons in every 1,000 married who signed by Mark.

Denomination.	1881.		1891.		1901.		1907.	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
Church of England	16·59	27·15	8·29	10·66	1·32	3·29	1·50	..
Presbyterians	10·25	29·61	5·79	8·69	2·68	4·69	0·93	1·86
Methodists	32·41	41·79	8·93	10·71	3·73	3·73	..	2·45
Roman Catholics	117·78	133·33	31·33	18·28	6·23	7·79	1·09	1·09
Other denominations	10·36	20·72	9·26	..	1·61	3·22	..	1·53
By Registrars	39·22	93·51	27·42	43·08	13·77	15·73	4·81	12·82
Total marriages	32·04	57·98	13·93	16·82	4·59	6·23	1·46	3·03

The proportion of illiterates in 1901 and 1907 was greatest among those married before Registrars. Previously the proportion was largest among Roman Catholics; but since 1881 it has, as shown by the table, most remarkably decreased.

AGES OF PERSONS MARRIED.

Of the persons married in 1907, 131 bridegrooms and 1,296 brides were under 21 years of age—one of the bridegrooms was between 16 and 17, and ten between 18 and 19. Of the brides, ten were between 15 and 16, and thirty-four between 16 and 17 years of age. The proportion of men married is greatest at the ages of 25 to 30, and of women at from 21 to 25 years.

The following are the proportions of men and women married at each age-period to every 100 marriages in the years 1891, 1901, and 1907:—

Age.	1891.		1901.		1907.	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
Under 21 years	1·55	20·79	1·93	17·16	1·60	15·82
21 and under 25	26·99	43·99	24·94	39·97	23·63	36·77
25 " " 30	36·19	22·97	37·08	26·89	39·39	29·53
30 " " 40	25·94	8·72	27·12	12·73	27·16	14·11
40 " " 50	6·44	2·71	6·04	2·44	5·07	2·66
50 " " 60	2·26	0·66	1·77	0·57	1·99	0·81
60 " " 70	0·55	0·16	0·92	0·24	0·88	0·28
70 and upwards	0·08	..	0·20	..	0·28	0·02

Registrars of Marriages are prohibited by law from issuing certificates for the marriage of minors without the consent of their parents or lawful guardians, if there be any in New Zealand. If a declaration be made in any case that there is no such parent or lawful guardian resident in the Dominion, then a certificate may be issued after the expiration of fourteen days following the date on which the notice of intended marriage is given.

A marriage may not be solemnised except after the delivery to the minister or Registrar who officiates of a certificate issued by a Registrar authorising such marriage, and if any persons knowingly and wilfully intermarry without such certificate the marriage is null and void; and no clergyman or minister of any denomination is empowered to solemnise marriages until his name has been placed on the Registrar-General's list of officiating ministers for the year.

Marriage with a deceased wife's sister in New Zealand was legalised in the year 1880, and an Act was passed in the year 1900 which legalised marriage with the brother of a deceased husband. This Act is retrospective, including in its provisions marriages between such parties which had previously been solemnised as well as those contracted after the statute was passed, and declaring all these to be valid, and the issue born prior or subsequent to the passing of the Act to be deemed born in lawful wedlock.

The measure was reserved for the signification of her late Majesty's pleasure. The Royal assent has since been given, and the Act came into force in New Zealand by Proclamation dated the 22nd May, 1901.

The ages at which persons may contract binding marriages are the same as in England—12 years for females and 14 for males. Marriage may be contracted at earlier ages than those stated, but would be voidable at the discretion of either of the parties upon reaching the age of 12 or 14, as the case may be, and without the necessity of proceedings in Court.

Although in New Zealand the age at which girls may legally marry is as above, nevertheless, by the criminal law, to unlawfully carnally know a girl under the age of 16 years is now a punishable offence. The age of consent was raised from 15 to 16 by statute passed in 1896.