

## OUR STATISTICS.

Ecclesiastical statistics have elicited no small amount of attention and interest within these few past years, and they promise to occupy, in no long time, a prominent place in the history and literature of the church. It is a matter of surprise that their value was not felt and acknowledged at an earlier period, and that efforts were not made long ago to collect and arrange them, for we doubt not that they would have told powerfully upon the prosperity of the Kingdom of Christ. On this point the children of the world have shown themselves to be wiser than the children of light. Parliamentary representatives and Cabinet Ministers; the originators of certain Legislative enactments, and the opponents of these; the man of commerce and the friend of agriculture; the student of problems bearing on social advancement, and many others, have felt the necessity of statistical information upon the particular subject with which they were engaged, have instituted enquiries to obtain it, and have been led to conclusions at which, in all probability, they could never have arrived had it not been procured. The church was not so ready to perceive the importance of statistics to her welfare and progress; but she has now happily been awakened from her apathy, and the result has already begun to evince itself in the increased public spirit by which she is characterized, in the increased zeal and success with which she is carrying on her appointed aggressive warfare upon the kingdoms of idolatry, superstition, and religious indifference—in the increased spirit with which she is sending forth her appeals throughout the different sections, and in the more liberal response which these appeals receive.

The collecting of statistical information serves a good purpose among congregations individually. When such information is sought from year to year, the interest of those who bear their Zion on their heart, and whose prayer is that peace may be within her walls, and prosperity within her palaces, is strengthened. If improvement is visible that information enables to discern the steps by which it has been attained; if no improvement has taken place—if there has been retrogression instead of progression—that information will enable to discover the false steps that have been adopted, or the canker which is lying at the root exerting its blighting and destructive influence. And is it not the duty of every member of a congregation to take an interest in such information, and endeavour to procure it? There are some, indeed, who care for none of these things. Give them the ordinances of the Sabbath, and they are satisfied. It may be, also, that they like to see crowded pews, and a well-filled sanctuary, to have the Gospel preached in its purity, and to have delineated before them the joys and glories of Immanuel's land, enriched with all the splendid scenery that inspiration has painted, or the imagination can conceive; but as to the positive increase of members during the year, and the sums that have been raised for missionary, benevolent, and other pious purposes, they live in a region in which they do not wish their minds to be disturbed by such matters. Yet do they act on this principle in their worldly business? Does the farmer not look well to the state of his flocks and his herds, and to the increase of his fields? Does not the merchant take stock from time to time, calculate his income, balance his books, and see whether he is