

CHURCH STATISTICS.

Presbytery of Kingston, vs. Assembly's Committee.

Editor Presbyterian Review.

I beg leave through the pages of the *PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW* to rectify certain inaccuracies in the elaborate report of the Committee on Statistics presented by the venerable convener of said committee to the General Assembly which met in Winnipeg last June, and to which my attention was called at the meeting of our Presbytery in Kingston on the 21st inst.

They will be found in the very erroneous comparisons set forth on pages 313 and 314 of the appendices to the Assembly Minutes of 1897, under the heading *Synod of Toronto and Kingston*, beginning with the words:—"The Presbytery of Kingston contains 45 churches or stations, etc., etc." All that follows with reference to the Presbytery of Kingston professes to set forth certain comparisons between the condition of things reported in 1895, and the reports of 1896. The comparisons are fallacious simply because a common measure has not been applied.

A note appended to the statistical report of 1895 (Minutes of Assembly 1896, page lii., appendix No. 26) states:—"From the mission stations not in charge of ordained missionaries 20 returns have been received other than those furnished by the Home Mission Committee, although every effort has been put forth to secure such returns as are required by the Assembly's Committee on Statistics and Finance." The returns from mission stations under the charge of ordained missionaries are included with those of the regular charges reporting, and the number of churches and stations, including these, total 60.

For the year 1896 (see Minutes of Assembly 1897, appendices pages 374-379) full reports were received from every settled charge and from all the mission stations in charge of ordained missionaries, with the exception of one or two who had been recently appointed (the fact in each case being set forth in a foot note). The grand total of churches and stations is set forth not as 45, being a decrease of 15; but rather 82, or an increase of 22, as compared with the 60 reporting in 1895.

A closer examination of the statistical report from the Presbytery of Kingston for the year, as printed in the appendix to Assembly Minutes 1897, will show that not only has a fuller return been presented than ever before, but that a more accurate classification has been presented than in previous years, and more accurate than that presented still by other Presbyteries, which like that of Kingston have numerous mission fields within their bounds.

The names of the ordained missionaries laboring within the bounds are given, as are the names of professors, agents of the church, etc., in order of seniority of ordination, among the constituent members of Presbytery, but the reports from the stations to which the ordained missionaries have been appointed are given with the reports from mission stations. Thus all the mission stations are shown, and the character of the supply—whether by ordained missionary or student—is set forth.

Applying a common measure to the reports of 1895 and 1896, I beg to submit the following in lieu of the comparisons framed by the Convener of the Assembly's Committee on Statistics, and published on pages 313 and 314 appendices to Assembly Minutes of 1897:—

The Presbytery of Kingston contains 82 (not 45) churches or stations forming or connected with pastoral charges and mission fields, an increase of 22 (not a decrease of 15) on the number reported in 1895.

In these there are 15,005 (not 13,425) sittings, an increase of 823 (not a decrease of 110); 2,817 (not 2,416) families, an increase of 291 (not a decrease of 110); 602 (not 476) single persons, an increase of 79 (not a decrease of 47); 3,209 (not 4,574) communicants, an increase of 479 (not a decrease of 156). There is no reduction in the number of churches and stations, but a very satisfactory increase in the number reporting, to which express reference was made by the report, the effect of which was plainly visible on all the other entries as reported.

On profession of their faith 326 (not 279) were

received to the privilege of members in full standing, an increase of 91 (not 44), and on certificate (179) (not 155) an increase of 5 (not a decrease of 9).

But why should I ask the editor to wearily plod through a correction of all the errors in detail? Your readers who are interested in the matter can by a comparison of the reports, for themselves, easily learn that instead of retrogression there has been advance along the whole line.

The financial comparison on page 325 (appendices to Assembly's Minutes of 1897) is equally fallacious and for the same reason, viz.: that the reports compared do not cover the same ground.

Dr. Torrance states:—"The 45 churches in the Presbytery of Kingston contributed \$23,193, a decrease of \$1,144 to stipend; \$48,909, a decrease of \$41,932 to all strictly congregational objects; \$7,997, an increase of \$1,665 to the Schemes of the Church; \$61,193, a decrease of \$40,125 to all purposes."

Instead of the foregoing I beg to submit the following amended statement:—The regular charges and mission stations reporting in the Presbytery of Kingston contributed \$25,648 for stipend, an increase, as compared with those reporting in 1895, of \$1,311. To all strictly congregational objects \$52,392, a decrease of \$38,449, from amount reported in 1895, yet an increase of more than \$9,000 over the average amount contributed for such purposes during the previous 10 years. To the Schemes of the Church \$8,157, being an increase of \$1,825. To all purposes \$65,758, being an increase of more than \$10,000 over the average of the preceding 10 years, though a decrease of \$35,540 from the amount reported for all purposes in 1895, the decrease being accounted for by the unusually large sum spent in 1895 to replace churches destroyed by fire, \$34,048 being reported as spent for that purpose by St. Andrew's church, Belleville, and over \$6,000 by St. Peter's church, Madoc.

As Clerk of the Presbytery of Kingston and Convener of its Committee on Statistics and Finance, I am responsible for the returns forwarded to the Assembly's Committee from our Presbytery, and have labored zealously to secure as full and accurate returns as possible. The returns forwarded last year, were the fullest ever obtained—all the settled charges and most of the mission fields reporting.

Although a member of the Assembly's Committee, I am not responsible for the manipulation by that Committee of the returns received from Presbyteries, as I have never seen the reports until submitted to the Assembly or printed in the appendices to the minutes. To avoid the annoyances arising from unduly multiplying the number of schedules sent out, I have urged, but hitherto in vain, that concerted action be taken by the Assembly's Committee on Statistics and the Home Mission Committee with a view to frame such a schedule as may elicit all the information re statistics and finance that may be required by both committees, and that such schedules be sent out by the Convener of the Presbytery's Home Mission Committee, and returned to him duly filled up for his use and that of the Committee on Statistics. The proper filling up of such schedule, for use in our mission fields could be made imperative upon the ordained missionary or student supplying the field.

I am not, I confess, an enthusiast in the matter of gathering and printing statistics, either in the political or ecclesiastical realm, although I faithfully endeavor to supply such information in this respect as is required both by the State and the Church. With the great body of my co-presbyters throughout the wide extent of our Church, however, I admire the extraordinary talent as a statistician possessed by Dr. Torrance, and often wonder how he has escaped transportation to Ottawa, and incarceration in the department buildings there as chief statistician for the Dominion. Even under such an expert as Dr. Torrance, however, the figures may unintentionally become so mixed as to become a delusion. If leading members of the Presbytery of Kingston were deceived by the comparisons set forth in the Assembly's report on Statistics and Finance, as was the case, it may readily be supposed that the impression may prevail elsewhere and throughout the Church that the Presbytery of Kingston is retrograding all along the line in its operations. I have, therefore, to ask as a