

their good works, that they are of the Lord's right hand planting, evidence will not be wanting that real progress has been made ; and now that many of our older churches have attained more strength, a larger increase should be aimed at, and intelligently hoped for.

The second point demanding notice in the statistical statement just given, is the *rate of increase in our membership*. The net increase in 1872 over the membership in 1855, according to the printed tables, was 1,159. An important fact has here, however, to be taken into account. In 1855, out of 69 churches, 59 reported ; while in 1872, out of 83 churches, only 60 reported. We have thus 23 unreported churches against 10 in 1855 ; in other words, we have the membership of 60 churches against 59, with, notwithstanding, an increase of 1,159 members. It will at once be apparent that, although the increase of membership even on this inadequate basis is far from discouraging, it would have been much more satisfactory had we been able to get at the actual membership of the 23 churches, or say, of the 13, the net difference of unreported churches of 1855 and 1872.

There are other considerations which must be taken into account in rightly dealing with this matter. It is a well-known fact that, until within the last few years, the number of Congregationalists who have emigrated to Canada has been extremely limited, and, when compared with the accessions gained by other denominations from this source, relatively insignificant. The small number of sister churches in the country, already adverted to, has greatly checked the increase of our membership. The incessant change of population which marks our social history, produced by the removal of persons from one place to another, has, of course, been shared in by those connected with our churches ; and very many, on removing to other parts of the country, have found no church belonging to the body, and have either been absorbed by other denominations or have remained unconnected with any church ; and, in either case, so far as numerical strength is concerned, have been lost to us. Another fact not generally recognized has also operated injuriously on the increase of our membership. In many instances, persons have united with our churches who have not done so from an enlightened conviction of the greater scripturalness of our principles, but from the force of circumstances, or personal attachment to the church or its ministry. Hence, when a change has taken place in the pastorate, or when the individual has gone to another locality, another denomination has been preferred ; and it must be also painfully admitted, that Congregationalists who have belonged to the more influential churches, when they have by removal found themselves confronted with a small and struggling interest, have not only wrecked the legitimate hopes of their suffering brethren, but, by uniting with a more fashionable church, have brought with them weakness, rather than strength, and discouragement, instead of cheer. The progress made, instead of exciting surprise that more has not been gained, when everything is taken into consideration, should rather excite our wonder that so much has been achieved ; and as our churches multiply, and their influence deepens and enlarges, we have reason to believe that our progress will be accelerative.

The third and last point, in the statistical statement given, demanding great attention, is the *surprising increase in the pecuniary ability and liberality of the churches*.

It is certainly wonderful to find that, during the period under review, the value of church property should have risen from \$145,520 to \$286,090 ; that, in other words, the churches should have raised the sum of \$140,570 for the erection or improvement of church edifices or of parsonages, within the short space of 16 years. But it is still more wonderful that the *annual income* should have risen from \$28,584 in 1855, to \$68,701 in 1872. We very much question if any other denomination in the country can present a more satisfactory pecuniary report, or indicate a liberality more munificent.

With no real ground for discouragement from our progress in the past, with a sure footing in all of our cities, and in many of our towns, with no small amount