

# THE PRESBYTERIAN.

MAY, 1867.



IN the April number of the *Presbyterian*, reference was made to the very unsatisfactory position of the Church, in reference to statistics from the different Congregations. Although the subject has been referred to more than once, yet, as it is of considerable importance, and as the Synod will shortly be held, at which it is to be hoped some decided step will be taken to enforce the collection of information of so much consequence, we do not believe that it is superfluous to call attention again to this topic. It is true that the Agent of the Church will most probably have a report on the condition of the various charges throughout the bounds of the Synod, containing much information of an interesting and useful character, but this will not supply the want we have to complain of. The more full and complete the report of the Agent is, the greater will be the danger that the real deficiency will be allowed to continue. What is wanted, is not so much information collected by dint of enquiries, and details almost forced, it may be, from unwilling informants, as the cheerful compliance with the injunctions of Synod, the full exposition of the operations, prospects, plans and position of each Congregation, given by the office-bearers, fully and fearlessly pointing out the strength and weakness, the advance or falling off, the rise or decline of spiritual life, if that can be obtained, as well as a bald statement of dollars and cents. Were the hearts of our office-bearers in the work, very much information of the highest importance could be given, which no Agent, however painstaking, could obtain, each Congregation having peculiarities of its own, only to be learned by an intimate acquaintance with it. It must not be supposed for a moment that we either expect or desire to have highly coloured descriptions of

spiritual life, sudden revivals, or extraordinary manifestations. As a race, the Scotch are not given to make a display of their feelings, or to show the depths of their hearts, so that those who view them superficially are apt to believe them to be, what indeed they have the reputation of being, cool, plodding, and calculating, with little fire and fervour, although possessing that sort of doggedness which will lead them to overcome difficulties which would deter others of a less determined character. This impression has arisen in a great degree from their undemonstrative nature, which teaches them rather to conceal than to exhibit their deepest emotions. This peculiarity would, therefore, lead those who know them best to distrust stories of sudden awakenings which form so large a staple of reports which aim at giving striking incidents of wholesale revivals. And this point of their character has been well recognized by Sir Walter Scott, in his description of the pent up emotion of Saunders Mucklebackit suddenly bursting forth when all eyes were withdrawn from him, and when he was left alone after the dead body of his drowned son was removed from the house to the grave. The adherents of our Church will not, as a rule, be led blindfold. They must have no concealments, their reason must be convinced, and if cold and unimpressionable when kept in ignorance of the true position of the object for which their sympathies are sought to be enlisted, they enter as enthusiastically into the execution of a project which meets their approval, as those who are led into it by mere appeals to their feelings. Nay, they do so with more earnestness, because they do so on more reasonable grounds and with much better appreciation of the object sought to be attained. This is what has crowned the labours of the Committee of the Orphans' and Widows' Fund with such marked success, and to this Dr. Robertson was in a