

The Record.

TORONTO, MAY, 1860.

STATISTICAL AND FINANCIAL RETURNS.

The time for filling up these returns having arrived, it may not be out of place to offer, through the pages of the Record, a few suggestions respecting them.

Great care has been taken to reduce the number of columns, to simplify the Returns, and to render the labor of filling them up as easy as possible. Hitherto the annual statistical statement has shown but an approximation to the real state of the case, and there has thus been in a measure lost to us that vivid picture of ecclesiastical toil and yearly progress, which the figures of the statistical table would have otherwise presented, and which the future historian of our Church will so much desiderate. This defect may be traced to various causes. Some of our ministers, earnestly engaged in spiritual duties, deem it almost beneath them to attend to the material and subluxary facts and figures, which the statistical return demands. With such may we not plead the importance of the duty, the propriety of submitting to ecclesiastical authority, and the apostolic command: *'Let all things be done decently and in order.'* Others again find themselves unable to present a favourable report of the state of their congregations. Their list of communicants has decreased,—the stipend fund and Missionary contributions have fallen off, and a backward progress is exhibited. Unduly sensitive and disheartened under such an unpleasant state of matters, they prefer sending no return, to the forwarding of one that would exhibit their unfavourable condition. Others, partly from a spirit of procrastination and partly from neglect, delay taking up the Synodical collections, until the financial year has expired, and defer their return till the meeting of Synod. Two evils are thus produced, for the return, by being too late, entails additional labour and no little annoyance on the Committee on Statistics, and is moreover painfully incorrect, from its containing statements that properly belong to the report of the subsequent year. It need not therefore seem strange, that year after year the Committee is constrained to give in an imperfect report, and to undergo a large amount of unnecessary and annoying labor. Without suggesting any special remedy, the difficulty might be obviated by a little more attention, punctuality, and method on the part of ministers and officebearers. These constitute but a minority of our Synod, and a minority which

we trust will every year grow smaller and smaller. At the same time we feel constrained to bear testimony to the many carefully prepared returns sent in by many ministers and Presbytery Clerks. Hoping that these remarks will be received in the kindly spirit in which they are offered, we proceed to make a few explanations regarding the return itself.

The first column, entitled the "Number of Families," has occasioned a good deal of perplexity to many from its unavoidable vagueness. "Families" are understood to embrace such as profess to belong to the congregations, whether regular contributors and attendants, or otherwise. The question as to what constitutes a family, must be left to the judgment of each Session. The "Number of Communicants" is intended to include the exact number on the roll, on the 30th April, when the statistical year ends, and therefore involves an annual examination of the roll. The best way of recording the "Diets of Worship" has proved a source of great perplexity to the Committee. These columns have been left as last year, from the difficulty of devising a less objectionable plan. But it is requested that, wherever the afternoon and evening services are held in places distinct from that in which the forenoon diet was conducted, a cross will be put above the former. It is also desired that some attention be given to the statement of the average attendance at each diet of worship, as complaints have been made, that while many are scrupulously correct in framing their average, others, probably from inattention, are less exact and accurate.

The columns for "Weekday Lectures" and "Prayer-meetings" have been merged into one, as practically the old distinction between the two is not rigidly kept up, it being generally customary for others than the minister to lead the devotional exercises at the weekly meeting.

The information, formerly desired respecting the instruction of the young, will be obtained from the series of "Queries" annexed to the Return, and which is to be sent to the Convener of the Sabbath School Committee, the Rev. John Gray of Orillia, on or before the 8th May.

The arrears due to ministers may include, not only those due for the year ending 30th April 1860, but also what is owing for former years. In such cases, however, the deficiency of this year is to be distinguished from that of former years. It was intended at one time to strike out the column for the Synodical Collections, and to take the items from the Agent's Books, but for the present year this course has not been adopted, since many might be unprepared for such a change.

It may however, be necessary to warn the dilatory, that arrangements have been made to have the Statistical Table printed at the opening of the Synod, so that no return sent in then can be included in it.

The heading "Church Property" includes Manse, Glebe, Burial-ground, and whatever other property may belong to the Congregation.

It will save much trouble, if the sums entered in the Financial Return, be stated in dollars and cents.

It will be observed, that a space has been left between the Statistical and Financial Return. The object of this is, that the two may be separated, the former filled up by the Session, and the latter by Deacons' Court or Managers.

It might be advisable for Presbyteries, who have meetings in May, to ascertain, whether or not the Returns have been transmitted to the Presbytery Clerks.

It being of importance, that all vacant Congregations and Mission Stations should be included in the annual statement, and many of them being unknown to the Committee, a number of the Blank Forms of the Return have been sent to Presbytery Clerks, for the purpose of supplying such Stations.

Should any minister mislay his Form of Return, another may be obtained by applying to the Rev. Wm. Reid, Toronto.

We hope that the minuteness of these statements will be excused, as they are deemed necessary to the correct understanding of the Return.

J. G.

NOVA SCOTIA—UNION MOVEMENTS.

Although the subject of Union was not taken up in Nova Scotia until long after negotiations were in progress in Canada, there is the probability that our friends in the East will yet be before us in the actual accomplishment of union. The *Presbyterian Witness* gives the following account of the recent meetings of the joint committees of the two churches:

"We are gratified to learn that the Joint Committees of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia and of the Free Presbyterian Church of this Province have met during the past week, and got satisfactorily through with the matters brought before them, so that we are able to assure our readers that the prospects of an early consummation of the Union were never more promising than at the present moment.

"The Committees met in Poplar Grove Church on Wednesday evening, the 7th inst., Rev. Professor King, Rev. Dr. McLeod, and Rev. Mr. McKnight, on the part of the Free Church, and Rev. Professor Ross, Rev. Messrs. Murdoch, McCulloch, Bayne, Sedgwick, and McGregor, and Messrs. D. McCurdy, and C. Robson, Ruling Elders of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia.