

Board of Superintendence.

The Report (printed in last *Record*) was approved, and the Synod sanctioned the course taken by the Board in postponing the attempt to augment our invested funds. In present circumstances that order was discharged.

It was agreed to record the gratification of Synod at the increase in the number and amount of contributions of congregations and individuals, bringing our income for the year past nearly up to our outlay; also to express thanks to the gentlemen who aided by giving prizes or bursaries for the encouragement of Students.

Attention being called to the reception of a Licentiate after a two years' course of Theological study, as a Probationer; in order that the will of Synod might be known, it was agreed that the law of the Church requiring three years' study of Theology as a preparation for the ministry be adhered to in future.

STATE OF RELIGION.

An admirable report on this subject was submitted by Rev. S. Houston.

The Report is as follows :—

REPORT ON THE STATE OF RELIGION.

The Synod at its last annual meeting resolved that Presbyteries be recommended to hold conferences on the State of Religion, and report the results to the Convener of this Committee early in the year 1872. At the time of drawing up this Report, one week only before the meeting of Synod, but four of the ten Presbyteries had sent in returns. These are Halifax, St. John, Tatamagouche, and Lunenburg and Yarmouth. Two days later the report of the Island Presbytery came to hand. Hence, as the Synod will see, the materials for a Report have been very imperfectly furnished.

IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT.

It would be but uttering a truism to assert the great importance of the subject which has been given to this Committee. The state in which religion lies behind and beneath all the other subjects discussed in our annual meeting, it is the spring from which they flow, whatever affects it either for good or for evil affects them. To originate Divine life in the soul and to nourish and promote that life in a healthy manner is surely the great end of all the

organizations which the Church has in operation. Leave that life out of sight, and what is the Church or what is its design? It sinks to the level of human societies and human organizations. But let spiritual life be aimed at as the end of our thought and effort, and let that life be manifest as permeating the mass of which the Church is composed, then the result will be that the streams which flow in all directions to irrigate humanity will be fresh and generous in their flow. Church work in general, missions at home and abroad, must be vigorous and flourishing.

DIFFICULTY.

While the importance of the subject will not be disputed, there is however another phase presented which is patent to all. All of us are deeply and solemnly impressed in presence of the grave difficulty that there is in ascertaining in any definite manner whether Divine life does exist, and what its measurement is when it does exist. Life in the soul is an entity which is exceedingly intangible. Immediately we cannot come into contact with it at all as an element of knowledge. Whether it is there or not is known by its fruit and by its fruit alone, and when once it is known to be there it is by its fruit and by its fruit alone that we know whether it is growing or declining. And so imperfect are our capacities of knowledge and so possible is it to produce fruit that is exceedingly like being real and yet is not real that we are seldom absolutely sure, if ever we are, that the inferences we draw are altogether legitimate. In short, the difficulties that beset the subject so far as the duties of the Committee are concerned are so grave in character and many in number that some shrink from the subject altogether and hold that the inquiry is useless. The action of the Synod in the premises, however proves that such an opinion does not prevail among its members. It may be that the attempt to ascertain such facts as the existence of life in the soul, and whether there be growth intensively and extensively or not, even though the endeavour to reach anything tangible fail, will prove to be of great service to those that engage earnestly in such an investigation. Such an inquiry may be the precursor of blessings, may deepen the reality of the life that we already possess.

SUMMARY OF REPORTS.

None of the reports that Presbyteries sent forward speak of growth of a marked character. There are no revivals recorded as having taken place or now going on, no gatherings in of an extensive kind. Work, much of it has been done, in many cases more than the usual activity has been in