

APPENDIX O.

REPORT ON STATISTICS.

The Presbytery of Montreal, to whom the Synod last year remitted two Overtures on Statistics, beg leave to report on the subject as follows:—

They have taken the matter into their careful and serious consideration, and are unanimously of opinion that with proper management it would tend greatly to advance the interests of our Church, if the Synod required an annual return to be made of such facts as would show, in so far as statistics are capable of showing, the state and operations of each congregation under its jurisdiction. The following occur to the Presbytery as some of the principal advantages to be derived from this measure.

The Synod would be put in possession of the knowledge which, as a court of review, it ought to have, of the condition of the whole Church. It could proceed with greater confidence in the framing of legislative enactments. It would be in a position to commend whatever is praiseworthy in existing congregational arrangements; to detect abuses when they arise; to suggest amendments and the manner in which they might be effected. A judicious selection of statistics would supply the grounds on which a system, as nearly uniform as present circumstances will permit, might be based for the effective carrying out of our Presbyterian form of government, and for the calling forth and directing of congregational and individual effort in the accomplishment of purposes, whether of a more local or more general character and bearing. By the prosecution of this measure each congregation would become acquainted with the state of every other congregation, and in this way such Christian feelings as a knowledge of the circumstances in which others are placed is calculated to excite, might be brought into profitable operation. Congregations that are behind might be stimulated to imitate the example of those that are more advanced, while to every prayerful and benevolent member of our Church there would be furnished details that would give point and fervency to his supplications at the throne of grace, and that would be useful in determining the extent and direction of his liberality. The possession of statistics for reference would be valuable, and the annual compilation of them would enable our Church to expose immediately and effectively any injurious misrepresentations of our strength, such as were made in the Census of 1851. In fine, it is believed that, whether as supplying information for present use and action, or as preserving it in a form easily accessible for future reference and comparison, a report of the state of the Church, presented annually to the Synod, would awaken a most salutary interest throughout the Church, and would lead to many beneficial results.

In prosecuting a measure of this kind, the Presbytery are persuaded that the simpler the arrangements the better; and in those they now submit they have endeavored to preserve the character of simplicity, as far as they could consistently with utility.