

Correspondence.

Augmentation Fund.

Editor PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW:

SIR,—The Augmentation Fund seems to be on its trial this year, and you will allow me to say a few things in its behalf. This is not a fund to give ministers large salaries, as some suppose, but a fund to assist weak congregations to secure and support pastors. With us, in the west, last year augmented congregations gave \$10.50 per member for salaries alone, and the average, for salary, for all congregations in the Church was only \$4.65. The whole of the augmented congregation (W. D.) gave for salary \$675 per communicant—and twenty of them gave \$2,800 for Schemes one \$300. But notwithstanding the liberality shown by themselves, they cannot, without assistance, support a pastor. This fund helps them. It is Presbyterian to do so, for the Church is a unit—a body—not a sand heap. It is scriptural, for the strong are *enjoined* to help to bear the burdens of the weak. Were the Augmentation Fund abolished these congregations must close their doors or be put on the H. M. list. To close their doors would be a distinct loss to the Church, to the cause of true religion and even to morals. It is well known that the drift of our rural population is city wards. Close our weak country churches and our people will join other communions. When the children of such people come to our cities they will go to swell the membership of the churches that cared for them in the country, and our Church, lacking such accessions, must decline relatively. The battle for the cities must be fought out in the country. And if Presbyterian services are not within reach some people will attend no other, and such are apt to lapse. Such things have happened and will happen again. Are Presbyterian people with their general good sense to risk this for the sake of a few cents each year? But why not put these augmented congregations on the H. M. list? Because the additional burden would swamp that fund. The H. M. C. is asking \$79,000 to carry on its work this year. Could it get \$31,000 additional to support the augmented congregations if on the list? We shall never get for one Fund what we are getting for the two. Last year fourteen city congregations gave \$7,762 or $\frac{1}{3}$ of all given for augmentation, and seven congregations gave \$5,600 or an average of \$800 each. Would they give these large sums to Home Missions in addition to present contributions? I trow not. And would the congregations that now refuse to contribute to Augmentation make up this loss? I doubt it.

At large expense, the Church is carrying on a work to evangelize the French in Quebec. The Augmentation Fund is helping a number of struggling Protestant settlements in Quebec to maintain ordinances, and prevent the people being absorbed by the Church of Rome. Withdraw this help and these people must move out or be left for the Romish Church to operate on. Is there any sense in allowing our own people and their children to turn Roman Catholics, while we are trying to convert the French to Protestantism? And if our people leave Quebec, the Romish Church is strengthened for aggressive work, and an important bulwark against her advance into Ontario removed. How can sound Protestant congregations refuse to support Augmentation and yet give liberal help to French Evangelization?

Others have shown that this fund has helped since its inception, 225 congregations to become self-supporting, and some of these are giving valuable help to the Schemes of the Church. Ten such congregations, west of Lake Superior, gave last year to the Schemes \$10,742 or \$1,074 each on an average. Let us rear more of these if we wish a strong Church.

In Western Canada, Augmentation is simply Home Missions in its more advanced stage. A group of stations has reached the point when they can promise a pastor \$600, and they ask the Augmentation Committee to give them a small grant for a few years, till they can support him themselves. These people want a man of their own choice, they will do more to support him than if appointed

by the H. M. C. He feels more confident when called, can summon his people better to his help, can lay out his work to better advantage and do more and better service. Why not grant these people's request?

Moreover, many of our frontier districts are supplied by men supported by the Augmentation Fund. Comox, the most remote of our missions in B. C., called a pastor and is on the Aug. list. For years Edmonton, the most northern district in the territories occupied by our Church, and Prince Albert also on the North Saskatchewan have been aided by this fund; and both nearly to the point of self-support. And places that are now central and strong were not long ago remote and weak, and the Augmentation Fund helped to put them on their feet. Portage la Prairie, Gladstone, Neepawa, Brandon, Port Arthur, Fort William, Regina, Morden, Pilot Mound, Calgary, and the rest have graduated from the Augmentation Fund. To-day twenty-eight are on the list and thirty-five have become self-sustaining in Western Canada. It is difficult to get suitable men to occupy our missions; not quite so difficult to get men to accept calls to augmented congregations; encourage a scheme that helps to get the best men.

Going through the Church one hears objections to the Fund; these, there is no space here to consider. Suffice it to say that they are not to be mentioned in comparison with the arguments in favor of the Fund. This is the deliberate judgment of the General Assembly. The Western Section last year gave about an average of sixteen cents per communicant for this Fund; grant that one-fifth of this money was not judiciously expended—which is not the case—and that four-fifths was properly placed, surely no Presbyterian conscience is so constituted that it can wreck the Fund for three cents a year! Let an average of one cent a fortnight be given to the Fund and it can be well sustained and continue to be a blessing to the Church.

J. ROBERTSON.

Winnipeg, Man.

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Mr. Joseph Neilly

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