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Toronto, September 28, 1893.

Advice to Vacant Congregations.

OUR contemporary, the Congregationalist, gives some plain advice to pastorless churches. Among the three evils which usually threatens these churches are, a spirit of criticism, division and spiritual dearth, to avoid which we are furnished with excellent advice. There must be a good supply committee whose first duty should be to secure some acceptable preacher, not a possible candidate, to supply the pulpit regularly until a pastor shall be secured, the understanding being that he will step aside for a Sabbath or two whenever the committee shall wish to present a candidate. If possible let this same supply be present at the weekly prayer meeting and hold himself ready to do all needed pastoral work. It may not be best for him to live on the ground, still he should be within easy call. Such supplies are not hard to find—men of ability and wisdom, who will keep the church to at least its usual activities, and so far save it from division and spiritual dearth. Having thus placed the Church in a safe position let the committee begin its search for a pastor. Out of the two or three score applicatory and recommendatory letters which will speedily be received let it be remembered that, as a rule, ministers who write applications for themselves to church clerks who are strangers are those whose merits other churches, and sometimes many others, have already failed to appreciate.

A faithful canvass of the candidates upon the list will probably reduce the number to at most three or four. Now let the committee guard well the unity of the church by never placing but one candidate at a time before it for consideration. As a rule, the attempt to choose between two means, in the end, two parties in the congregation, for some "will hate the one and love the other," while others "will hold to the one and despise the other." To avoid this evil let the committee first be unanimous as to the candidate to be presented, for a divided committee imperils the future unity of the church. Then let it at once recommend the man of its choice to the favourable action of the church, stating clearly and concisely the reason. Happy the church which has confidence enough in its supply committee to adopt unanimously their unanimous report! But where this confidence does not exist and the democratic spirit does, instead of reporting to the church let the committee arrange for the candidate to come before the congre-

gation, giving him at least two consecutive Sabbaths, three if possible, then, if the general sentiment seems to warrant farther action, let a meeting of the church be called to act in relation to this particular candidate, with the clear understanding that the action will be final as far as his case is concerned. Of course, before action is taken the committee will report fully the results of its investigation of the man, so that the church can act intelligently regarding him. If the church extends a call, well and good; if it declines let the committee, in due time, and in the same manner as before, present the second man of its unanimous choice, and thus on until the desired end is reached, never permitting one candidate to come into competition with another.

To this is added—A pastorless church can ill afford to be a prayerless one. The fathers were wise as well as devout when they observed a day of solemn fasting and prayer as the first step toward securing a pastor, and we of to day could do vastly worse than to follow their example.

The Opium Commission.

THE Royal Commission appointed to enquire into the opium trade between India and China has got to work. The first witness was an important man, Sir Joseph Pease M.P., president of the Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade. The evidence he gave was strongly in favour of the suppression of the traffic and made a deep impression. He considered the trade immoral because it is carried on to the detriment of the human race. It was a curious fact that, with rare exceptions, opium had never been cultivated in India for medical purposes. Our supply of medical opium came from Persia and Turkey. Indian opium, in fact, was simply grown for purposes of debauchery. The revenue had gone down in eleven years by three millions of tens of rupees, so that the Government had to do without that sum. He had had constantly placed before him in his capacity of President of the Anti-Opium Society communications from all parts of the East, nearly all strengthening the view he had taken. The question had two entirely different sides, the international consumption and the export to China. The export was far the most important. He could see no way of stopping the evil except the total prohibition of the cultivation of the poppy, except for medicinal purposes.

Our Young Men.

ONE of the most important, as it is one of the most difficult, problems the Church has to face, is that of how to keep our young men. Thoughtful pastors are much exercised over the question, but, so far, experience has not pointed out a distinct line of action for the Church as a whole. It must be admitted that to some extent some of the best efforts of earnest pastors and preachers have failed in interesting the young men in the work of the Church, as they have been interested by one or two sister denominations. Has the Sabbath school failed to send recruits in sufficient numbers to the Bible class and the young people's societies? Or are the Church services found to be uninteresting? These questions are being asked, and no answer is forthcoming. Yet it is not to be supposed that no solution of the difficulty is available. The one great cure for indifference to Church work, on the part of members and of the young, is to instil into their hearts a consuming love for souls. When the love of Christ constrains