

EVILS OF "SPECIAL OBJECT" GIVING.

Two hindrances to the best results in mission work have grown up with modern missionary giving, hindrances due largely to the zeal of generous-hearted men and women who do not realize that much depends upon how they give, as well as how much they give.

One of these hindrances is the giving to irresponsible parties, more or less genuine, who make touching appeals for work which they claim to be doing. I have seen it stated recently that there are fifteen hundred such, chiefly Orientals, on the Continent of America, many of them finding it a fertile pasture-ground.

The other hindrance is the selection of some special object in our own mission work, instead of giving to the Fund which supports it, and allowing the Committee in charge of it, and that knows most about it, to use the gift to the best advantage of the work as a whole.

The latter evil received special attention at the Annual Conference of Foreign Mission Boards of the United States and Canada, embracing about ninety missionary societies and churches, which met in New York on the 11th of January. As one of the ninety, our own Church was represented by Revs. Dr. Warden and R. P. Mackay.

The object of the Annual Conference is to study the best, most economical, and most successful methods of carrying on Foreign Mission work, to learn, all from each, and, if possible, to bring all up to the best of each, in short, to make the Foreign Mission work of the Churches of this Continent yield the largest results in the world's uplift.

A Committee of the Conference on "Special objects" had been gathering information during the year, and their report is very full and complete. This Committee had sent to the Mission Boards of the Continent a series of seventeen questions, such as: *Question 1.* "What approximate proportion of your work is supported by special object-giving?" *Q. 7.* "Do you discourage your missionaries from directly appealing for gifts to their friends at home?" *Q. 15.* Do you regard special object giving as, on the whole, advantageous, and therefore to be encouraged, or as a necessary evil, to be restricted as far as possible," etc.

A large majority of answers agree in substance as to the disadvantage of such giving, and that it should be turned into the regular channels as far as possible.

After an exhaustive summing up of the

answers to the various questions, the Committee say:

"If we believe that the tendency toward indiscriminate special object giving is fraught with embarrassment and peril, why not say so? The Boards are presumably composed of men who know the work of their particular sphere, and it is distinctly within their province to kindly and persuasively seek to show the people the more excellent way. Why not frankly explain to them the practical difficulties which develop in connection with this form of missionary support?"

Let us boldly emphasize the truth that the supreme motive for giving should not be interest in a particular person or institution, but loving obedience to the command of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, who has directed His followers to preach the Gospel to every creature, and the further fact that of the money given for this purpose the Boards are the duly appointed administrators.

These Boards have been constituted by the churches themselves for this express purpose. In reliance upon the gifts of the people, and with no other human resource, most of the Boards, at the beginning of each fiscal year, make large appropriations for the salaries and work of the missionaries, and absolutely guarantee their full and prompt payment. This policy is only just to distant and isolated missionaries, but it would be impossible for the Boards to maintain it if they could not control the gifts of the churches, which are their sole source of supply.

They have a wide outlook over the whole field. They are in constant correspondence with the missionaries in every part of it. They know elements in the situation, which, from the nature of the case, are not known to the churches. Not, therefore, because they are any wiser in themselves, but simply because of their special relation to the work and their experience in conducting it, they are in a position to judge better than others where money can be used to the best advantage.

The donor does not usually suspect the difficulties in his selection of a special object. He naturally chooses the most attractive phases of the work, while others less attractive but equally important are ignored.

Still less does it occur to him that it has an unfortunate influence on native helpers to know that they are specially supported in America. Probably he has not been reminded that centuries of poverty and oppression predispose them to an undue reliance upon the missionary, and that experience has shown that extraordinary care