

MISSION FIELD.

Literature.

The Knox College Students' Missionary Society has adopted this year a new method of supplying literature to the mission fields.

The Society requests that, instead of sending it to the college, congregations who wish to help in this work, communicate with the Corresponding Secretary, Students Missionary Society, Knox College, and he will send the address of a missionary who desires literature for distribution. This will insure direct communication and will be more satisfactory to all concerned.

As it will be some time yet before the missionaries go to their respective fields, the Secretary will not be able to forward such address for a month or more.

The Society also requests that a careful choice of literature be made, and that it be at as early date as possible.

How to Increase the Efficiency of Missionaries in the Field.*

BY THE REV. R. P. MCKAY.

It is neither assumed nor suggested by this discussion that the spiritual attainments of missionaries are of a low order. On the contrary, it is believed that as a class they have produced a larger number than any other of men whose lives and labors have been an inspiration to the church at large. Such names as Martyn, Carey, Judson, Duff, and many others, at once occur as among the brightest ornaments of our Christian civilization; men whose influence for good continues undimmed by the lapse of time. But even for the best there is a better, which they themselves most readily acknowledge, and our enquiry is whether anything can be done that will result in yet greater efficiency.

Dr. R. N. Cust, who cannot be charged with either timidity or tenderness, says: "Quarrels are specially rife at small stations. Missionaries accustomed to command natives become very dogmatic and desirous to have their own way; thus a mission ceases to be a model of apostolic zeal and self-denial, and becomes a hot-bed of jealousy; small men contending bitterly with each other for the exercise of a feeble power. These quarrels are always, according to themselves, on principle. Through the deceitfulness of the human heart, the workings of self-esteem and jealousy are regarded as zeal for the truth and the advancement of Christ's kingdom." In contrast, we might quote Gen. Lew Wallace, who says: "I have often been asked, 'What of the missionaries of the East? Are they true, and do they serve their Master?' And I have been always a swift witness to say, and I say it solemnly and emphatically, that if anywhere on the face of the earth there exists a band of devout Christian men and women it is these. They live and die in their work—their work is of that kind which will be productive of the greatest good."

Or, we might quote the *Review of Reviews*, which says:

"It is our brave contingent of missionary teachers, and not the present groody quarrels of German and Spanish traders and officials, who have annexed the islands of the Pacific to civilization. Many of them have been completely transformed by the missionaries, whose labors alone have given them commercial importance."

We cannot doubt that the latter is the true characterization of missionaries as a class, although, unhappily, individuals may be deserving of Dr. Cust's strictures. Amongst a community of men as men are constituted, it may seem impossible to avoid all misunderstandings and collisions, yet the elimination of everything that can in any way hinder a work of such supreme importance is worthy of the most strenuous effort. We believe it is possible. Notwithstanding the depressing influences of climate and environment, it is possible by grace to vanquish such infirmities of character, and live in the joy and strength and blessedness of each other's fellowship, and of the fellowship of Christ.

What can be done in order to accomplish this, to cultivate to the highest degree possible the working power of the church's representatives in the foreign field?

(1) See to it that all additions made to the staff are of the desired quality. Foreign missions have won the attention of the church, and great numbers are volunteering for the work, which fact is a cause for gratitude, but brings its accompanying dangers. Numbers are not always strength. A select few, chosen with Gideon-like discrimination, will accomplish more than the great multitude lacking in spiritual attainment. All additions to the staff, of men or women, too weak to resist the adverse influences and temptations of new and trying conditions in which they may be placed, not only disappoint themselves and the church at home, but dilute the strength of others with whom they are associated.

* From *Knox College Monthly*.

The eagerness to send out more workers, and the eagerness on the part of the many who are offering their services, or will do so in the near future, make it imperative that boards should exercise the greatest possible care in making appointments. As to what course should be pursued there may be diversity of opinion, as there is diversity in practice, but no pains should be spared in order to protect the church from the expenditure of consecrated funds upon men who possess neither tact, nor application, nor animation, nor humor, who could not successfully minister to an ordinary country congregation, and would inevitably, in a very short time, be pronounced failures. Such men should not be sent into fields requiring more grace and better gifts than are required at home, and who, perhaps, may be tempted, in some cases, to seek such appointment because the home prospects are not very hopeful. One thing is certain, that unless proper care is taken at this stage no subsequent efforts will counteract the injury done. Neither certification as to standing in college classes, nor testimonials from sympathetic pastors, should be accepted as a sufficient guarantee that the candidate has that experimental knowledge of the power of prayer and the fullness of the Spirit requisite for powerful, effective service in a warfare that is not with flesh and blood. It is not the intention here to emphasize the importance of collegiate training, or intellectual furnishing, which the reference to pastoral work in the home land might seem to imply. It is cordially acknowledged that many who have had no collegiate training have been eminently useful in the foreign field. The object is rather to make prominent the thought that there is a certain spiritual quality, attainable by all, and without which, neither at home nor abroad, can our influence be strong and our lives fruitful, for the want of which there are more disappointed men in the church at home to-day than for any lack in intellectual power or finished scholarship.

(2) Let the home boards cultivate and illustrate the spirit they seek to inculcate, and regard as so indispensable in their representatives in the foreign field. Is there any reason why the committee should be less burdened with the thought of perishing millions than the men and women whom they send forth? Is indifference, or bitterness, or selfishness, more excusable in us than in them? Would the characterization quoted from Dr. Cust be regarded as less inconsistent and less reprehensible if applied to the members of boards than when directed against missionaries in the fields? Surely the officers should be equal to the ranks in courage and loyalty to the Captain of the Lord's hosts. Foreign mission boards should be the expression, the focalization, of the missionary spirit of the whole church. They should be deeply impressed with personal responsibility for the character of the missionaries sent, and for their maintenance, not only as to material wants, but as to spiritual power as well. We should be pre-eminently men of prayer, every movement being begun and carried on in the spirit of dependence and intercession. When Jesus was about to choose His disciples, it is written: "And it came to pass in those days that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God; and when it was day he called unto him his disciples, and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles."

"There were in the church at Antioch certain prophets and teachers, and, as they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands upon them, they sent them away."

These were solemn occasions, fraught with infinite consequences, which the Lord fully understood, and the disciples at Antioch understood in measure. They accordingly wrestled in humiliation and prayer, until the Holy Ghost indicated His will, and then proceeded to the designation of those men whom the Lord had first set apart for this sacred service.

Is there any less solemnity in the performance of similar duties now? And, if not, do boards appreciate, as the early Christians did, their responsibilities in this respect?

If our missionaries always went forth carrying with them such lofty impressions as to the spirituality of the boards upon whom they are expected to lean in days to come, how much more likely is it that they would exercise themselves in a similar manner and manifest a similar spirit when the toils and trials of their work come upon them. The memory of the board would be a perpetual inspiration, a remembrance of duty. Even then, if financial depressions and deficits came upon us, and it were found necessary to write discouragingly of the fields, we could still say, like Peter and John: "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee," and the work would be prosecuted with a faith and courage and success that can only come from living in habitual contact with the eternal, inexhaustible source of all strength.

It certainly goes without saying, it is one of the commonplaces