

## Our Contributors.

### The Grading of Sabbath Schools.

We have read a great deal upon the subject of grading our Sabbath schools and arranging for the promotion of scholars from grade to grade upon the passing of an examination. In the *Congregationalist* we find a condensed outline of the plan as follows:

Some simple plan is much to be desired by which pupils may become promoted upon suitable qualifications from one grade to another in the Sunday School. . . . Pupils passing examination on one grade are promoted to the next higher. . . . Pastors and superintendents should examine these studies, and arrange to make promotion from one department to another conditional on successful examinations. This plan can be followed without disturbance of existing methods and would result in the classification of the scholars on the basis of their intelligent understanding of the main facts and doctrines of Christianity.

This whole proposition rests upon the assumption that there is no grading in our Sunday schools. For good reasons the grading is not made conspicuous, but every good superintendent has it. He has a Bible class for adults; he has the youth of "high school" age grouped in classes, and the youth of "grammar school" advancement grouped in other classes. And he has the kindergarten children gathered in a primary class. And he habitually promotes scholars from the primary to the group above it, and so on from group to group, from time to time, as they are able to take the lessons. The assumption of a lack of system in the arrangement of the Sabbath school is not borne out by the facts. The structure that is built upon this baseless assumption is not a good one.

Another proposition is that promotions should be based on regular examinations. This may be well in day schools where the main object is to develop the mental faculties. But even in these the idea of promotion "on examination" is less in favor than formerly, and an increasing number of the promotions are on the basis of a teacher's certificate of general faithfulness in study. In the Sabbath school, however, the main object of the service is not instruction or mental development, but the training of the heart in love to God. The Bible knowledge is but the tool wherewith to warm the heart toward the Saviour. This end may be attained in other ways than by proficiency in the facts of history.

We are not deprecating faithful, systematic study of the Bible. On the contrary, we esteem it as the best means of securing growth in grace. Our hesitancy is about giving to the means a degree of importance in the eyes of the pupil greater than the end to be attained.

If we understand the scheme of the *Congregationalists*, it would involve an annual transfer of pupils from teacher to teacher. This we hardly regard as desirable, both from the trouble which it might cause in the corps of teachers, and from the effect upon pupils. The teachers and many of the scholars are volunteers, and will act on this basis. As soon as we should begin to assign to the several teachers, positions of superiority, etc., the superintendent would find himself in trouble from that quarter. As soon as he should attempt to sever pupils from a beloved teacher and assign them to a stranger, he would find many scholars

absenting themselves. There would be many such difficulties. But a greater difficulty would lie in the loss of personal influence. A particular teacher has won the confidence of his pupils, and is accepted as an adviser. Two or three years of loving care has been expended in securing this confidence. Change teachers and this influence is lost; two or three years may be used by the new teacher in securing this affectionate confidence. And let it be remembered that this confidence is often the instrumentality of conversion, or of the overcoming of evil habits or of development in Christian manhood. So far as the teacher is competent of promotion from group to group, it may be well to promote teacher and pupils together without severing the bond. And if the teacher is not competent to handle advanced studies, it is easier for the superintendent to make the change needed in a quiet, informal way, asking him to undertake some new class or work, than to make it by a formal, conspicuous transfer.

By all means let the Sunday school have high aims; by all means let us recognize that teachers generally, and pupils generally, do not put half enough study on the lessons. Let us not fail to note the fact that some pupils lose heart and even quit the Sunday school because they do not feel that they are making progress or learning anything. Let the superintendent study to work into it all the systematic organization that is practicable;—and the practicable is a different thing in different localities. The point to be guarded is that we do not attempt to introduce a rigidity of system which, while beautiful in outward view, may prove a hindrance to the great work of converting sinners and of developing in the regenerate a high Christian life. —Christian Observer.

### Our Own S S Publications.

From the announcement of the Sabbath School Publications for 1902, it is evident that no pains are being spared to keep pace with the requirements of the schools.

In pursuance of the policy of the Committee to apply the profits to the improvement of the Lesson Helps and Papers, the Teachers Monthly, Home Study Quarterly and Primary Quarterly are to appear in enlarged form at the New Year, and the Home Study Quarterly is to be freely illustrated. The superior illustrations in the Primary Quarterly have been one of its marked features, and have helped to secure for it a phenomenal increase in circulation.

In addition to the lesson writers whose work now appears in the Teachers Monthly, the names of the following are mentioned, as amongst others, for 1902—Revs. Professor R. A. Falconer, LL. D., Halifax, Professor McFayden, M. A., B. A. (Oxon.) Toronto, A. S. Morton, B. D., St. Stephen, N. B., C. B. Wilson, Ph. D., Winnipeg.

For the King's Own a new serial by J. Macdonald Oxley is announced, and by a rearrangement of the type the reading matter in that favorite paper of the boys and girls will be increased by about one fourth. The missionary feature will be retained and strengthened, a point being made, as heretofore, to have something original from one of our own missions or missionaries in every number.

### Minister's Widows' and Orphans' Fund

Mr. Joseph Henderson, Convener of the Committee having to do with this important but too often neglected fund, has issued the following circular, directing attention to its special needs.

Sabbath, October 20th, is the day named by the General Assembly for the annual collection on behalf of the Ministers' Widows' and Orphans' Fund. As you are aware, the object of this Fund is to provide a small annuity for the widows and children of ministers of the Church. At present, there are 118 widows and 79 orphans upon the Fund. The annuity of a widow is \$150. Many of the present annuitants are dependent for their support largely upon what they receive from the fund. They are the widows of ministers who labored in the earlier years of the country's history, when salaries were much smaller than now, so that they were unable to save anything. It was in those early years that the fund was established, and the Church then entered into an agreement with these ministers, promising that it would see to the partial support of their widows, on condition that they themselves contributed an annual fixed rate towards the fund. It is therefore incumbent upon the Church to fulfil the agreement, and many of the best people of our congregations regard it a privilege to aid in providing a maintenance for those aged servants of Christ, who cheerfully shared the privations of their husbands in giving the gospel to the earlier settlers of our Dominion.

At the General Assembly this year, the elders present spontaneously held a meeting to consider the claims of this fund, as well as the Aged and Infirm Ministers' Fund. They adopted a series of resolutions which will be found in the appendix to the Minutes of Assembly, page 519. They there expressed the opinion that the laity of the Church are prepared to give generous support to both these funds, if properly explained, and their claims rightly presented. Referring to the sense of delicacy upon the part of the ministers to give prominence to the claims, these elders pledged themselves individually to support their ministers in kirk session, as well as before the congregations, in securing a more hearty support for these funds.

The expenditure of the fund has greatly increased of recent years, because of the large number of deaths in the ministry; the amount required this year is \$22,000. The revenue is derived from congregational contributions, ministers' annual rates, and interest from endowment money. The amount annually derived from interest is about \$6,000, and from ministers' rates, \$2,800, leaving fully \$13,000 to be got from the congregations of the Church. As you will notice by the statement presented to last Assembly, the committee reported a deficit of \$3,302. The year previous, the shortage was only \$1,533. Notwithstanding legacies of \$1,550, the actual income last year was \$1,760 less than the expenditure.

Permit me, in the name of the committee, to emphasize two points:—

(1) That a contribution be received from every congregation and mission station. Last year many failed to respond to the appeal.

(2) That the contribution be proportionate to the amount required. An