

# THE Home and Foreign Record

OF

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF THE LOWER PROVINCES.

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## SABBATH SCHOOL BOOKS.

In the United States alone there are about twenty-five publishing houses and Societies engaged in issuing religious and Sabbath School literature. A capital of at least Five Millions of Dollars is invested in this noble work. It gives employment to thousands of industrious hands. The results of all this expenditure of labour and money must be very great. It is impossible to tell how widely and deeply the rising generation has been affected by the books, tracts and papers so abundantly supplied, so diligently circulated, and brought within such easy reach of all who can read. We are sure that good has been done. A taste for reading has been fostered, and mind and heart have been improved, and myriads have been through this instrumentality gathered into the Redeemer's fold.

We dare not say that the good has been unmingled. This were too much to hope for in connection with any human enterprise. Evil has largely mingled with the good. A considerable proportion of the books published for Sabbath School Libraries are "slops" of the most pestilent character, deadening the conscience, depraving the taste, hardening the heart. Upwards of 7000 volumes are now comprehended in the Catalogues of houses and societies publishing for Sabbath Schools. Would it be too much to say that probably one thousand are bad; that five hundred are decidedly good, and that the remaining mass are "indifferent"? Taking this as a tolerably correct judgment, is it not a great blessing to be able to select 500 really good works

that could be cordially commended to our children? Thanks be to God for this great boon.

The prevailing fault of Sabbath School books is dealing in fiction and unreality. The good children are "too good to live" and the bad too bad to find living analogues. The writer's imagination furnishes his facts, or distorts and discolours them to give spice to his story. Life is misrepresented. A taste is fostered if not created that by and by finds its food in detestable dime novels. The best children in these Sabbath School novels almost always die—and thus a most pernicious superstition is fostered, that religion is chiefly for the children that pine away and die, and not at all for strong, healthy, frolicsome children. Dr. Schenck, of the Presbyterian Board of Publication, says in a recent letter, "It is almost incredible what an amount of trash, of nonsense, of godless literature, even of positive error is found on the library shelves of many of our Sabbath Schools. I wish I could have an hour's talk with you, I could give you instances and facts which would amaze you." No man is better qualified to give a trustworthy opinion in the matter. Hence the call for vigilance on the part of the church and the school lest Satan's targs should find a place in our Libraries instead of God's wheat.

But even the Presbyterian Board has been compelled to yield to some extent to the prevailing taste of the day by publishing *Stories*. The Board struggled long and earnestly; but all in vain. Had they not yielded their books would have been left on