

regard for the gentler sex is manifested; he falls in love; he woos; he fails to win. Writings under the agony of disappointed or unrequited affection, he begins a downward course and becomes dissolute, and his friends abandon him. May be the story winds up with the reclamation of the hero from his fall, and his ultimate happy union with the little coquette who caused his grief. One is at loss to find the moral to such a story. In the name of every Sunday-school scholar in the land I protest against this imposition. If they are to have novels to read; if we collect money chiefly through their agency to buy them literature, and we who have the responsibility of selecting and putting books into their hands to read, choose fiction, then, in all charity and honesty let it be fiction that is worth reading. Let us get not the silliest, the cheapest, but the best. The least we can do, then, losing sight of the soul altogether, is to cultivate the mind, and make it conversant with the higher works of fiction, and bring it into contact with pure style. Whence though the necessity for this? Is there nothing sound, wholesome, substantial, religious, that we can give them to study? Why, then, not engender and foster at once a taste for good subjects? If it be said that the children will naturally seek light and fictitious works to read, and that it is better then that we should select and put into their possession such, of this kind, as we think are best for them to have, I answer:

(1) That this is impossible. It is agreed to add one hundred volumes to a Sunday-school library. A committee is appointed to make the purchase. Generally the committee is composed of young persons, who know little or nothing about the stock in market. They meet and go through the store, and select from the shelves, books that make the prettiest appearance on the shelf, or those that have the most attractive frontispieces, or interspersed with the handsomest pictures. May be they have only a catalogue to select from, and the reliability of the publishers is not known—in any event the books will not be read before they are bought. If examined, they cannot be scanned, so that the design and meaning

of the books are matters of ignorance to the committee: and each Sunday the Church is giving out, with her endorsement, to the children, through the Sunday-school, books that it really knows nothing about.

(2) I answer, that if it was possible to make always the best selection of works of fiction for our Sunday-schools, that it is not advisable nor expedient that we should do so. Should the Church procure this kind of literature just because the children naturally seek it? That is to say, we should teach them to do wrong; gratify their depraved appetites and desires because they naturally incline that way. Should we not rather counteract this taste, and cultivate a love for the truth? We were always taught that this was the design of the gospel and the mission of the Church. The Spirit of God wars against the natural inclinations and tendencies of the soul of man. It is just here that the error has been committed against which we write. By whom are these books written? This is very hard to answer in many cases, for they are anonymous. Some may be written by infidels for all we know. They are written for money, and the authors care but little what they do, or do not accomplish, just so they can sell them.

The time is not far distant when there will be a great revolution in regard to this matter. We must have altogether a different class of Sunday-school books. It may not be out of place to state what we would consider a proper catalogue of books for the Sunday-school. We would favor a series of books on Bible biography, another on Bible history, another on Bible doctrines, written in a plain and attractive style. There is nothing in romance so thrilling as the stories of the Bible, and it were infinitely better that one hundred such volumes should be read, than that a thousand such as we have, should be. Another long and interesting series could be written on Christian biography—on those who have been eminent in piety in the church, and have justly merited a record of their lives and works. Then there is the field of natural science, natural history, and astronomy, giving every opportunity to show the goodness and