

and the Ordinances of worship; much to attract them towards Christian companionships. The Sabbath-school has become a great power in the Church. Be on your guard against the growing danger of substituting Sabbath-school instruction for Christian training at home. The best Sabbath-school teacher in the Church, and the most close and regular attendance on his class by a child, can never fulfil parental obligations.

Let us also guard against the danger of entrusting Sabbath-school classes to incompetent teachers. This is a matter which demands special watchfulness on the part of Superintendents, which indeed calls for the oversight of kirk-sessions and even of Presbyteries. The Church has no security for the sufficient training of the young in Christian truth, unless it insists that Sabbath-school teachers shall be qualified by Christian and Biblical knowledge, as well as by natural and religious endowments, for the discharge of duties which, in the interests of the Church, present and future, can be deemed of scarcely lower moment than the preaching of the word. It is satisfactory to know that a movement has been inaugurated looking to the efficient systematic training of Sabbath-school teachers. For this movement, I ask the earnest consideration of every Superintendent and teacher, and of every Elder.

I call attention to another matter which the General Assembly regards as of great importance in the interests of the Church, that, namely of the pastoral oversight of the people.

The ecclesiastical polity under which we are working, makes the fullest provision for such oversight. It is impossible for one minister, however vigorous, to take pastoral charge of any of our larger city or town congregations; such charge, that is, as seems to be demanded by the circumstances in which these congregations are now found. It is not easy for one minister to overtake all the pastoral work in even a moderately-sized congregation. Many of the congregations in rural districts, call for so large an outlay of strength and time for such pastoral duty as is absolutely required—for baptisms, marriages, the visitation of the sick, and funerals—that comparatively little opportunity is afforded for a systematic supervision of the people. It is to Kirk-Sessions that the Church

must look for that efficient oversight of congregations which will hold them together, which will secure their unity, and maintain peace, and which will promote a good understanding between the pastor and his people. I have long thought the great practical weakness of Presbyterianism to be this, that the nature and extent of the office of an Elder in the Church of God, is not understood, that its importance in our Polity is not appreciated, and that its duties even if appreciated, are often insufficiently discharged. That to the kirk-session (Minister and Elders) belongs the supervision of the people, is all that could be desired as a theory. How rarely do we find the theory acted upon! There are instances in which this is done. They are commendable and to be admired. Yet, it may be feared that, as a rule, Elders of the Church take little or no part in the special work for which their office was created, to which the Church has solemnly called and ordained them, and which at their ordination they promised to undertake, namely, the spiritual oversight of the flock of God. Many Elders deem that they fulfil an elder's duty if they take up the Sabbath collections and serve twice or three times a year at the Lord's Table. To visit the sick and pray with them, to direct impenitent men to the Saviour, to go out after the young, beseeching them to yield their hearts to Christ's service, to deal privately, as friends, with those who have been overtaken in a fault, these and such like duties are not thought of by many Elders as pertaining to their office. And so the Church is largely weighted-down by office-bearers who, in some instances, have little appreciation of their duties; in others, little love for them; and in others again, no sufficient knowledge and experience for the competent discharge of them. If our congregations, all of them, were guided and governed by men of faith and prayer, men of quenchless zeal for the Church and glory of God, men of Christian knowledge, men "full of the Holy Ghost," men having "a good report of them that are without," the Presbyterian Church in Canada would become all powerful for the correction of those social vices which largely debase our country, such as theft, lying, commercial and political dishonesty, gambling, drunkenness, profaneness, Sabbath breaking, extravagance; and, more than this,