

any valuable branch of study. All the worse because they were given as good reading matter from the Sabbath-school. There are thousands of children in our schools who read for hours together the fascinating stories of "A. L. O. E.," and others, taking no interest whatever in the moral teaching of the books, but merely skimming along with the writer to discover the development of the plot. Such reading does not strengthen the mind, nor inform the judgment, and rarely raises the heart in grateful praise to heaven.

"OUR LORD SPOKE IN PARABLES !

What beautiful stories he invented to teach gospel truth ; therefore we have his example for works of the imagination." But that furnishes no ground of argument in favor of fictitious narratives. What is a parable ? "A fable or allegorical instruction founded on something real or apparent in nature or history, from which a moral is drawn by comparing it with something in which the people are more immediately concerned."—(*Buck.*) Undoubtedly a parable is a work of the imagination, but that faculty is not necessarily employed in manufacturing the incident, but, it may be, merely in applying it to the lesson which it is designed to impart. In narrative fictions an attempt is made to give an imitation of real life, the perusal of which may affect the reader for good or evil according to the manner in which the story is written. It has been assumed that the parables of our Lord are not narratives of fact, but merely a sort of generic representation of certain ideas and practices common to the times in which He lived. But why should we draw this inference ? There is a marked difference in the form in which the parables are presented. Many are introduced by this expression, "Then began He to speak unto them this parable." Others are introduced in a plain historical manner, as, "There was a certain rich man which was clothed in purple and fine linen, &c." Did no rich man ever live, die, and suffer as this man is said to have done ? Doubtless there was more than one such instance, then Christ knew it, and merely spoke of what had actually happened. But

PARABLES ARE NOT STORIES ;

they merely seize on some feature which life discloses that will serve to illustrate the truth presented, and then the case is left. And can this be pleaded in extenuation of the practice of fabricating a life whose greatest merit consists in being life-like, or a good imitation. For just in so far as a work of this kind departs from the natural, it is subject to condemnation by a discriminating public.

Children used to be punished for telling stories. They were not allowed to say to each other, "you have lied," but they might tone it down, by saying, "that is a story." And this indiscriminate writing of story books in such a way as leads the children to suppose that they are following the footsteps of a real person, seems scarcely in accordance with the principles of truth. Still it is not regarded as objectionable by many, because it is so common, if only a respectable story is told, for after all, perhaps some good may be done by the