

the scholars, and i. admires their self-denial—but somehow or other it regards the Sabbath school as an institution to be left entirely to the minister and the Sabbath school teacher.

We know that these remarks do not apply equally to all congregations. But, after allowing for the deep interest which very many ministers and elders take in the Sabbath schools, is it not true that our Churches, upon the whole, regard them as, in a manner, the private ground of the teachers, and a province of Christian duty with which all who are not themselves teachers have no immediate concern?

This is not as it ought to be. The congregation ought to feel so intimate a connexion with the Sabbath schools, and so deep an interest in them, as to lead them to desire to visit the schools, and ascertain for themselves what it is the teachers are doing in their name. The duty of the Churches to Sabbath schools, then, is, in our opinion, to identify themselves with the teachers, and to take such an interest in the work as can only be maintained and expressed by frequent visits to the schools.

We do not propose that at such visits there should be any interference with the teachers, or any interruption to the ordinary routine of the school. We are not now speaking of visits by those qualified to give the teachers assistance in the work of tuition. What we ask for is, that any member of the congregation feeling a sincere interest in the Sabbath school, and feeling that the Sabbath school teacher is representing the Church to his scholars, should manifest his interest by visiting the school.

If the schools were thus visited, who can doubt that the results to the congregation would be beneficial? Would not their interest in the schools be greatly increased? Would not their Christian sympathies be awakened? Would not their sense of responsibility be quickened? Might they not become impressed at the Sabbath school with the need that exists for a mission of Christian love to the homes of many of the scholars? In short, contact with the Sabbath schools might be of inestimable service to members of a congregation, as it has been to very many of the Sabbath school teachers, both with respect to their own life, and with respect to their usefulness in the world.

The effect of such visits on the teachers would be very important. It would be quite a mistake to suppose that teachers would have any hesitation in hailing such friendly visits. We cannot doubt that not a few teachers have failed in their work for want of some friendly sympathy. With a troublesome and rude class of children, and no apparent effect following from his labours, many a teacher has desponded of success, and been ready to resign the attempt. The visit of some one who sympathised with him in his difficulty might be enough to revive his drooping courage; it

might suffice to remind him of what Sabbath school teachers are too apt to forget in their times of difficulty—that, as servants of Christ, they are never unsupported or alone, for at such times “there standeth One among them whom they know not.” Let it be remembered, too, that Sabbath school teachers, like other people, have their peculiar temptations, to which they will be most apt to yield if they are left entirely to themselves. The constant dealing with the routine of lessons, school management, &c., places the teacher in some danger of becoming a formalist in his duties, and of losing sight of the spiritual aspect of his work. The visit of a pious friend may be of use in counteracting this danger. We may add also that if left too much to themselves, teachers are apt to feel themselves, as it were, a distinct class in the Church, with separate and distinct interests. The evil of this need not be pointed out.

And the effect of such visits will be equally beneficial to the school itself. Is it of little consequence that the scholars see that some importance is attached to the school by others besides those who are engaged in conducting it? They are not surprised that their teachers should desire their constant attendance, and should express great interest in their well-being. They take that as a matter of course. But if something of a similar interest is shewn in them by others, we cannot doubt that many of the counsels addressed to them by their teachers will come home to their hearts with a new degree of authority.

The parents of the scholars, also, may be affected in some degree by the interest shewn in the school by the congregation. The importance of all the teacher is doing for their children may be confirmed to them by the visits of the members of the congregation. The school cannot appear to them an insignificant matter, if others not personally engaged in its management evince so much interest in it.

As to practical improvements in the schools, we look for these to follow from such visits rather indirectly than directly. Under the direction of the minister, the teachers are generally best able to judge of what improvements may be introduced in the management of the schools. On some points, however, the teachers may feel the advantage of having the opinion of an on-looker, and in such cases the visitors may prove of material assistance. One benefit which the schools would certainly receive from such visits as we have alluded to is that discipline would be more easily enforced. Every teacher of a “mission school” knows how difficult it is to maintain strict order in the classes, and how much this difficulty is lessened by the occasional visit of a stranger. This is indeed the point to which we think the attendance of visitors should be first directed. It is obviously in vain to look for good results from a school where the classes are not orderly and quiet.

The calling for absentees is another work in which the visitor might materially assist the teacher. And while speaking to the children of their duty to attend the school, an opportunity would be given to say a few words to the parents upon the duties devolving on them. In this way we can see how the visiting of a Sabbath school might gradually lead to the visiting of a district. And as the Union has recently had the subject of district visitation under discussion, we would ask, if the Sabbath schools might not conveniently, and with some peculiar advantage, be adopted as starting-points for such visitation? The visiting of a district seems a more formidable undertaking than to assist a Sabbath school teacher in visiting his scholars. A person who would not venture upon the former work might undertake the latter; while we feel convinced that, once engaged in visiting for the Sabbath school, the visitor would soon be willing to extend his calls to all the families of the district.

The real prosperity of Sabbath schools must, in so far as human agency is concerned, depend mainly upon the teachers. The minister may direct the whole work, and he may occasionally visit the schools. Even his visits cannot be expected to be very frequent, from the nature of his other occupations on Sabbath. But the teaching and management of the schools must mainly depend upon the teachers themselves. With regard to all details of school management, &c., we think that every security that is desirable will be had, if the teachers meet regularly for friendly conference and for mutual assistance, to consult with one another as to plans and proceedings, and to take what measures they find to be most effective for assisting each other in preparation for their duties in the school. All this let the teachers themselves provide for, under the direction, of course, of the minister.

It seems desirable, also, that the duties of the teachers being so truly religious, there should be occasional meetings among them for prayer, in order that the spiritual aspect of their work may not be lost from their view.

These points the congregation may leave to the teachers, if only the congregation see that the teachers are attending to them.

It appears to us, therefore, that, without interfering in any way with the existing management or system of Sabbath schools, the duty of the congregation towards these institutions is to take a more lively and more intimate interest in them than at present, to realise that they are doing part of the work of the Church, and to prove that the congregation identifies itself with the teachers, by its members paying frequent visits to the schools. The minister and session of a parish may have a committee of their number appointed to take some special supervision of the Sabbath schools, but in our opinion, no provision of this kind ought to be held as doing away with the