

Suggestion of a Plan for Sunday School Grading and Supplemental Lessons.*

The following is a part of the report of the Sunday School committee adopted by the convention at Amherst last year:—

"That the convention committee on Sunday Schools be requested to provide a suitable plan or system of grading and supplemental lessons for our Sunday Schools, and to take the necessary steps to have the same introduced and adopted in all our Sunday Schools."

As it will probably be impossible for the committee to meet before convention, the chairman proposes to submit a plan, which has already been in use in one Sunday School for several years. The plan of grading and supplemental lessons for the Primary Department is given in this issue to be followed each week by the supplemental lessons for the Intermediate and Junior Departments until all are printed; or at least such parts of them as may be necessary to give the reader a good general idea of what the system is. All interested in Sunday School work, and every one should be, are invited to inspect this plan in order to be familiar with the matter when it is presented in convention and suggest any changes or plans that may be thought desirable.

PLAN OF GRADING.

Primary Dept.	Grade.	Age.
	C	5 and under.
	B	6
	A	7
Intermediate Dept.	1	8
	2	9
	3	10
	4	11
	5	12
	6	13
Junior Dept.		14 to 18
Senior Dept.		18 and over.
Normal Dept.		Not limited.
Reserve Corps of Teachers.		" "
Home Dept.		" "

SUPPLEMENTAL LESSONS FOR PRIMARY DEPARTMENT.

Grade.	Lesson.
C	Twenty-third Psalm and Golden Rule.
B	Review of C. and Lord's Prayer and Beatitudes.
A	Review of B. and C. and Books of the Bible.

* T. H. Stimms, St. John.

Dr. Ashmore on China.

The opinions of Dr. William Ashmore, of Swatow, our senior missionary in China, on Chinese politics and missions are always of wide interest. The Standard has from time to time published articles from his pen. It has been our pleasure to have a personal interview with him during his brief stay in Chicago on his way East. Dr. Ashmore left Swatow a few weeks ago, reaching San Francisco about the middle of April, and decided not to wait there for the Anniversaries, much as he desired to attend them. He will spend the spring and summer in the East, returning to China in the autumn.

In reply to a question whether the present policy of the Chinese empress dowager can be called reactionary, he replied, "Undoubtedly. But there are limits to her reaction. If the empress had her own way, the progress of western civilization and ideas in China would be set back many years. But there is an irresistible pressure behind her that compels her to move on, however slowly. The accounts of an intellectual awakening in China have not been exaggerated. China has in the past been intensely conservative. Her statesmen have nearly all been old fogies. But there have been influences at work for a good many years preparing the way for an intellectual revolution. Foreign intercourse has had its effect; the missionaries have had their effect. The learned class has been learning that western nations derive their power from western ideas and inventions and institutions. All these things have touched but a limited number of the Chinese people, but a very influential class. The war with Japan hastened the coming of the new order; for when the Chinese began to ask how it was that the Japanese, whom they regarded as an inferior people, had conquered them, they decided that it was because Japan had adopted western ways. Merely as a measure of self-preservation, therefore, they wish to do likewise."

"What do you regard as the probable outcome of the present struggle among European powers for the control of China?"

"Russia holds the key to the situation. Great Britain and Germany have of course secured valuable points on the coast, but these are of comparatively little strategic value in case of a struggle. Russia commands the whole northern frontier, in addition to Port Arthur; and with the completion of the Siberian railway will be able to throw troops into China very rapidly. She has already not far from 100,000 troops in readiness. The British and German ports would not help much in a land war or an invasion. Add to this the fact that Russia has a strong hold upon the Chinese because, while they hate her, they regard her as on the whole their safest ally. It is a choice of evils, and they choose 'the trace of the bear.' One of the missionaries in Tien-tsin told me a

year ago that at the time when China borrowed 200,000,000 taels of Russia to pay off the Japanese indemnity, a missionary said to a mandarin, 'You are selling your country to Russia.' The mandarin replied, 'Well, we have got that much money out of her, anyway.' That loan is not likely to be repaid in cash."

"But the vast population of China, with all their latent power—is there no likelihood of their rising to resist foreign aggressions?"

"The common people of China lack leaders. They are quite capable of such a movement if the right men should arise to lead them. Chang Chi-Tung, who has in the past been, with Li Hung-Chang, one of the real rulers of the Chinese, is now too old to undertake anything of the kind. Of course when the powers attempt to push into the interior, there will be local insurrections, of considerable severity; but nothing organized, nothing national."

"What would be the preferences of the missionaries as to European domination?"

"Oh, they want Great Britain, of course. Russia's influence upon missions will probably be disastrous; France's and Germany's not at all favorable."

"Is there any activity in the building of railroads and telegraphs in China?"

"Yes, a good deal. A railroad is being planned to run all the way from Peking to Canton; and many shorter lines."

"What is the present condition of Baptist missions in China?"

"Encouraging. There has been unusual progress in the past year; a greater number of additions than in recent year, and a great willingness on the part of the people to listen to the gospel."

"What can you say about the work of training native preachers?"

"That subject was just opened at the Anniversaries in Rochester—opened, no more. It is a great subject, and deserves all the attention that has been given to it lately in newspaper discussions, but needs to be handled with discretion and by those familiar with the facts. The work of training preachers in China has been carried on at Zow-shing and Swatow. Our training is largely biblical. The Bible is used as the chief text-book—not only for teaching doctrines, but for instruction in logic and in style. There is no book like the Bible to develop the thinking powers of native converts. We teach no English in training our native preachers. Neither do we attempt to give them a smattering of science, western history, etc., as some other denominations do. It would not help them in their work of preaching the gospel. To be sure, it might occasionally gain them the ear of a mandarin who wanted to pick up western learning, but would not materially aid in bringing the gospel to that mandarin. He would get what he wanted and turn a deaf ear to the rest. It has been said that our native preachers cannot reach the mandarin; that they are taught nothing higher than the common dialect, which the mandarins despise. The truth is that while the mandarins, the learned classes, have a literary language, a book style, which they use among themselves, they understood the common language easily enough, and use it when they choose; if they will not listen to our preachers it is not because they object to the preacher's literary style; it is because they do not want his religion."

"Is the enterprise managed by Gilbert Reid and Timothy Richard—the publication and distribution of translations of English works, scientific and religious—reaching a large number of the learned class?"

"Yes, it is reaching a good many, though how large a direct influence it may have upon the feeling toward Christianity is not easy to say. Many of these mandarins will take a book for the history or science there is in it, and will throw away the religion. Of course the printed page can never supersede the living voice in the proclamation of the gospel. Yet these tracts are useful."

"Is there a pressing need for additional money in the China mission?"

"Yes, there is always a pressing need for additional money in any mission. We should found several new stations, equipped with dwellings, etc., and with suitable men to occupy them. Both in central and in southern China there are vast unoccupied fields; so also in the north."

"Do you feel that the executive committee of the union is giving to the China mission as liberal appropriations as its limited finances permit?"

"Yes, perhaps; but in proportion to the vastness of the field and its needs, it hardly seems that we get as large a part as we should."

"How do you feel in regard to the expenses of administration and collection in the Missionary Union?"

"I do not think they are any greater than they are obliged to be so long as the pastors and the people at home need so much urging. Some of this talk about abolishing offices and decreasing salaries remind me of the farmer who thought his two-horse team consumed too much oats, so he took a pole and put on the shafts and used only one horse. He saved oats but he could only haul half as much. The way to economize on

expenses of collection is for the churches to give more money. It is as easy for a district secretary to collect \$20,000 as \$10,000. Increase the totals and you decrease the percentage for collection."

"Would you have the foreign and home mission societies consolidated, or would you have their magazines united?"

"No, the societies are too large and important to be managed by one set of men; and as for the magazines, the Presbyterians tried that experiment, and have not been very well satisfied with it."

"What task should be set before the Commission on Systematic Beneficence? Is there any new principle to be emphasized in developing beneficence, or must we continue to ring the changes on the old ones?"

"Well, there is one great principle that has not been half worked out yet, and that is the ownership of God and its correlative, the stewardship of man. It has been talked about but not much practised. I would not have the commission too much concerned with the specific modes of giving. I would leave the determination of proportions to the local church. Let the secretaries go into the churches and insist on the principle of stewardship, and get the people to giving from principle. Then if foreign missions get three-fourths of the money in one church, and home missions three-fourths in another, all right. It will be all right in the end. The main thing is to get them to give, and the question of division will settle itself."

"What other need can you mention?"

"A regenerated, rejuvenated, reformed missionary literature; better missionary instruction in the seminaries and in the churches; a closer co-operation of the women with the Missionary Union. When the women canvass the churches for their women's societies—and they do it wonderfully well, and should not be interfered with—let them put in good words for the union; let them not forget that it is their union as much as the men's. A woman thoroughly on fire with love for missions can do much to keep the whole church awake on the subject. By no means should the separate women's work be discouraged; but the interest of the women in the general work is to be maintained and increased. Women are leading the way in disseminating information about missions. If they can extend this good work in the churches as a whole, much will be gained."—The Standard.

As to Denominational Lines.

The London Baptists have been discussing the question of Open Membership Churches. It is common among churches of a section of the denomination to receive unbaptized persons into membership. The question has been raised as to the utility of the practice. Does the custom help or hinder Baptist progress? From an American standpoint every one would naturally say that a mixed church would lessen, if not destroy, the effect of Baptist testimony to the New Testament principles of church life and order. Over in England the opinion is divided. Some thinking it weakens denominational loyalty and takes the virility out of Baptist convictions, while others believe it aids the cause of truth and piety, especially in villages where the population is too small to support more than one nonconformist church. It is easy to see that when unbaptized members are numerous in the church the pulpit would speak with hesitation if it speaks at all on the question. A pronounced and aggressive Baptist minister would be likely to forfeit the good opinion of those disagreeing with him on the subject. The village question presents more difficulties than the town and city one. The Church of England is all powerful among village populations, and only by union can the free churches hold their own against the influence of Parson and Squire and the social life which centers in them. The discussion referred to did not bring out the statistical side of the matter. Whether the proportion of pedobaptists in Baptist churches is small or large was not stated. We incline to think it somewhat small. We once heard the late Charles Vince, of Birmingham, say that open membership in his church was advantageous to Baptist views, as most of those who united with it unbaptized soon became convinced of Baptist views and were baptized. Whether this is a common experience, we cannot tell. The strangest thing over in England in matters of this sort is the large number of Baptists found in the Congregational churches, and many of them holding official positions. And this is the case in towns where Baptist churches are within reasonable distance. Frequently a mere preference for a preacher or some social advantage determines church membership. The two denominations are related by their church government and the evangelical and political beliefs they hold in common, so members intermingle with much more freedom than in this country. It must not be supposed, however, that Baptists in America always abide in the Baptist fold. In our suburbs especially the tendency is strong to pass over to other denominations, especially when Baptists have little prestige and when the pulpit is inferior to that of other churches. Many losses to our ranks are due to the mismanagement of our churches and to the contentions that arise among them. Our free and independent government is a doubtful good when it falls into the hands of persons of little knowledge and of narrow spirit. But we must accept the evil with the good and make the best of things that are discouraging. The surest way to keep our members in Baptist churches is to sow and foster the principles we stand for.—The Commonwealth.