

Practical Papers.

FICTION FOR SABBATH SCHOOLS.



WHAT do we understand by Fiction? We reply all works of the imagination, whether prose or poetry; such as fables, allegories and tales, whether issued in book-form or in the current literature of the day.

The application of the term is proper whether the plot be natural and well-sustained, or unnatural and extravagant. A book is fictitious that recounts even in the most life-like manner any occurrence which has not actually taken place. We propose to attempt an answer to the question,—

SHALL WE FURNISH WORKS OF FICTION

for Sabbath School Libraries? We answer yes, and no. Affirmatively in regard to approved fables and allegories, and perhaps a limited number of books of narrative fiction, which have been duly examined; their literary character and moral teachings being beyond suspicion, but whose title pages shall bear the distinct notification, "This is a work of the imagination." But, No, in relation to all fictitious narratives where the child is not by some means put in possession of the knowledge that the story he is reading is merely fictitious. Many care little if the book be well written, free from pernicious doctrine, extravagant incident, and improper language, whether it be fact or fiction. The result is that the great preponderance of our Sabbath-school books at present are of this class. It would be a difficult thing to find at any stationers, in any Canadian city, a hundred Sabbath-school books which have been published during the past ten years, which do not bear this character. Whether right or wrong, therefore, he who would raise his voice in favor of greatly limiting this popular class of literature must calculate on strong opposition: first from the authors, many of whom have earned great distinction in the world of letters; then from publishing houses and booksellers who are securing large profits from the manufacture and sale of such books. It may be said that this is taking low ground, to assume that good men would persist in doing what is improper from purely financial reasons. But it must not be forgotten that in doubtful matters the money interests weigh largely with many business men, who would not for all the gold in Canada tread upon strictly