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Sunday School Banner

W. H. WITHROW, D.D., Editor

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Church Libraries.

AT a recent convention some disparaging remarks were made about Sunday School libraries. This may have arisen from the class of books which are not acceptable to the scholars, or from the fact that the members of the school are not readers, or are spending their time on newspapers and magazines, at any rate the remedy lies with the school itself. It is quite easy to have a small committee appointed to be on the lookout during the year for the most suitable books and to add to them as funds are available. If there are good books in the library, then it is the duty of the teacher to know something about them and to recommend them to the members of his class. It is always in

place for a minister to recommend a good book from the pulpit. It is the duty of the church and Sunday School to mould character, and books strengthen or undermine manhood, and much of the flabbiness of will and the low ideals of youth are due to the fact that there is no one directing the selection of books, and the reading is scrappy and light.

Are we as moulders of character to allow this condition of things to go on? Visit the homes of the people and look at the family library. The people have no strong thoughts on theology, because our sermons are no longer doctrinal, and there are no theological works in the family library. We are greatly in need of church libraries, one in every church, and open on prayer-meeting nights, where strong books, such as the people do not buy, but which they ought to read, may be found. The theological habit of mind existing among Presbyterians is due in a great measure to the church libraries in connection with even the smallest churches in the old land. We have in mind a man who was nonplussed by an atheistic fellow-workman, who, whilst acknowledging defeat, went to the church library and secured Watson's Institutes of Theology, and studied the volumes, and then returned to gain a victory over his opponent.

We have known many working men who became local preachers, who could pass a severe examination on Wesley, Watson and Fletcher, but where will we find that to-day? We must not leave the world of books to the devil. Christ has his place in literature and he is speaking in much of the fiction of to-day, and while many of our people may not read the religious books of fifty years ago, there are classics of devotion and great biographies which will never grow old. How are the people, young and old, to know about these stimulating books in biography, history, sermons, essays and fiction unless some one instructs them, and who is better qualified to do it, and upon whom does the duty devolve but the minister and the Sunday School teacher. A dozen books may form a church library, and an address on books and reading at the prayer-meeting will give it a start, and one year's service will prove that it is beneficial, by more intelligent and interested Christians, better sermons and better hearers and greater work done for Christ. Enlarge, refine, and strengthen the library in the school, and help the people with a library in the church.

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