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Sunday School Banner.

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The University Extension Idea Applied to the Sunday-School.

BY H. A. ROBERTSON.

No subject is more prominent now in the discussions of secular educators than that of university extension. Indeed, it is "the foremost educational topic of the day." You can hardly pick up a paper or magazine without running across some allusion to it. In this, are not "the children of the world wiser than the children of light?" Are we abreast with the modern secularists? What are our Sunday-schools doing for those who cannot be or are not attendants?

Perhaps the comparison is not so much between that of university extension as what is termed the "Chautauqua idea," as university extension concerns the higher education; but the principle of both is the same—that of reaching out after those who are beyond the immediate tutelage of teachers and professors.

What knowledge is then to be sought after that can be compared with the knowledge of the Bible? We call it "the Book of Books."

And there has been devised a "home department" of the Sunday-school to extend its study. We have kept pace with the secularists in this; but we are behind them in pushing its extension

by "reverting to the original method" of going out with God's Word to them who cannot come, or are coming to us, and seeking to aid and encourage them to study it, not only in youth, but in manhood and old age; for it is the word of infinite wisdom, and will infinitely repay infinite study.

Dr. Duncan says: "The inevitable result of awakening interest in the study of the Bible at home is to bring those into the school who can come. One school increased its attendance in the main department twenty per cent. in three months."

This, in a large measure, is the purpose of the home department—to reach out after those who do not attend Sunday-school. The Chautauqua idea has proved a prolific seed; why may not this? It is not to be haphazard individual study at home, but the study of the regular international series of lessons a half-hour every week. As a home department member of a Sunday-school, furnished with "lesson helps" and systematically contributing an offering, and also a regular weekly report upon the blank provided for the purpose, he is to be looked after, helped and encouraged as a regular member of the Sunday-school, the home department of which is a part of the regularly organized church work.

It is a fact only too apparent to all Christian workers that a large proportion of those who are almost regularly attendant upon the preaching service are not students of the Scriptures, either as members of Sunday-schools or as systematic individual students. Now, if secular educators feel under obligation to seek to kindle in all a desire after knowledge, are we not, as Christians, under a much greater obligation to endeavor to kindle an interest in all in the infinite truths of God? And as, in a measure, a cause of this lack of interest in Bible study, might not another parallel be drawn between the methods of our teachers and preachers and those of secular teachers? Have we kept pace with the modern idea in teaching? The old method was to cram the pupil with facts. He was told that two and two made four, and expected to believe it without any investigation. The modern idea is to investigate the investigation that will proclaim the fact that two and two are four. Now, do we not have too literal preaching? Might we not much more advantageously seek to inspire more of a spirit of investigation into the truth? The question was asked, of one well up in educational methods, who had been in the classroom of another, what criticism he would make of that other's teaching? The reply was: "I would make no criticism. I was delighted. But if I were to make a criticism, it would be, 'too much statement and too little query.'"

Many are the number of those who are not students of God's Word; those whom we may not have in our Sunday-schools, and many we cannot, let us endeavor to get into a home department.—S. S. Times.