

total of Protestant Sunday Schools throughout the world of 100,000 ; teachers, 1,000,000 ; and scholars, between 8 and 9 millions. For these cheering facts, and for this noble army enrolled under the banners of our Great King, we should thank God and take courage! How inspiring is this record of facts—so eloquent of the “past success” of this grand enterprise;—how should it animate us to go forward,—and how honoured should we feel in being permitted to take part in so noble a work!

Thus much for the material progress of Sunday Schools. So far as our own provinces are concerned the retrospect is encouraging ; though the results are far below what they ought to be in a country which, theoretically, so fully recognizes the duty of “teaching diligently” to the children the words of eternal life. Even yet, the whole number of Sunday Schools in the two provinces does not reach 3,000, while the number of public schools exceeds 8,000.*

HIGHER EVIDENCES OF THE “SUCCESS” OF SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

We will now briefly refer to a few of those higher evidences of “success” in the great work of Sunday School instruction, which its past history and legitimate progress will fairly warrant us in presenting to you. And first, bearing in mind that the legitimate results produced by the working of a system, are rather to be relied upon, than even gratifying statistical indications of its progress, we would group together our evidences of the “success” of Sunday Schools as follows,—which we cannot but regard as the legitimate fruit of Sunday School work.

1st. Our Sunday Schools have provided not only the best *Training Schools for Christian Workers*, but the best elementary *Training School for the Pulpit*, that has been developed in any of the great Christian benevolent enterprises of the day.

2nd. Another evidence of success, is, the powerful *reflex influence of Sunday School teaching in the family*.

3rd. A third great result of Sunday School teaching is, the *bulwark which it throws around the sacredness of the Sabbath day*, and the powerful auxiliary which it is to the Pulpit in preserving the sanctity of that day.

4th. Another striking evidence of the success of Sunday Schools is, the *promotion of spiritual life among the scholars* ; and the number which through its instrumentality, have, with God’s blessing been brought into His Church.

5th. The fifth and last evidence of the success of Sunday Schools which I will adduce, is the great and glorious one that so many thousands of precious souls have, through the infinite merits of the Saviour, *passed from the Sunday School directly into the presence of their loving Father*,—which, but for its instrumentality and God’s blessing, might never have known the way of salvation.

Our time being limited, we can only touch upon each of these five points briefly :

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL THE BEST TRAINING SCHOOL FOR CHRISTIAN WORKERS.

And first, we cannot but regard the Sunday School as having provided, not only the best training School for Christian workers, but the best elementary Training School for the Pulpit, that has been produced under any other system of Christian effort.

These two features of the work I regard apart from the work itself. They are its legitimate outgrowth, and are among the most useful and valuable of its achievements.

There is reason to believe, that the extensive development which active Christian effort has reached in England and the United States at the present day, is due, under God, to the spirit and zeal with which Sunday School work is prosecuted in these countries. The young neophyte in Christian work feels that in the Sunday School there is a field of labour not beyond his untried skill, and of a kind just suited to develop his benevolent desires to do good to others. If superadded to this, his heart is aglow with love to the Saviour, and filled with a desire to bring the immortal minds entrusted to his Christian culture, into close contact with Him, who not only “forbids them not,” but who lovingly invites them to his arms, then there is implanted in his heart the germ of the largest Christian philanthropy, and of the most expansive Christian benevolence.

THE GREAT RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TEACHER.

And who can venture to sit down before a class of little precious souls to talk to them of the Saviour—of His gracious words—and of His loving message, who does not himself acknowledge that Saviour to be his ; who never listened with swelling heart to His

gracious words, and who never believingly received His loving message? And yet, alas ! how many do so, apparently unconscious of the awful responsibility of teaching immortal souls to believe, what they themselves practically deny ! Oh, how fervently ought teachers to pray every time they sit down before their classes, that Divine light would illuminate their minds, and that its bright rays would shine through their words into the hearts of the dear little ones committed to their instruction and care!

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL THE BEST ELEMENTARY TRAINING SCHOOL FOR THE PULPIT.

And, then, how natural is the transition from the simpler teaching of the Sunday School to the higher teaching of the pulpit ! There (in the Sunday School), to the unconscious possessor, is often discovered the germs of those higher qualifications for teaching others which receive their largest development in the sacred desk. Who that fully enters into the work and spirit of the Sunday School, is a laggard in other departments of Christian work ? His heart expands towards each new enterprise for doing good—practice makes him familiar with some of the hidden secrets of power over others—experience warns him against doubtful success—difficulties conquered animate him—love for Christ in his heart impels him to labour, and when it is abundant and overflowing, it “constrains” him, as it did the great apostle, “to do all things” for Christ, who strengthens him for the effort—sustains him in every difficulty, and crowns his labor with abundant success !

Thus we see that the very spirit of the Sunday School enterprise—its specific work of teaching others their duty to God, and their duty to their neighbour—its enkindling of love to the Saviour and devotion to His cause—the active personal effort which it requires—the mutual sympathy which it calls forth—the working with and for others,—and the higher Christian motive which inspires and prompts its whole design—all unite to make the Sunday School the great training school of Christian effort ; while the spirit of power and love thus gained by the Christian teacher fully demonstrates to him, in his toil and labour, the reality of the gracious and reviving promise that “he that watereth others shall be watered also himself !”

REFLEX INFLUENCE OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL IN THE FAMILY.

Another evidence of “success” in the Sunday School is the reflex influence of its teaching in the Family,—silent, it is true,—but, when accompanied by faith and prayer, no less potent in its persuasive power as an auxiliary, to the pulpit in its special mission.

ALLEGED INTERFERENCE OF SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHING WITH PARENTAL INSTRUCTION.

And here, I am aware, many will feel that in some respects the Sunday School usurps the legitimate functions of parental teaching. Would that there were better grounds for the charge ! But I am not going just now to discuss this question. The popular fallacy in the statement has been fully exposed in recent Church Congresses, Conferences, and Sunday School Conventions. I would simply say, that were that parental teaching which is so desirable more practised, we should then be better able to discuss the question on its merits. I can speak only of the facts of the case : that parental teaching is not generally given, I am sorry to say, even where it might and could be given. And then look at the many sad and lamentable cases in which the parents are either wholly unable or utterly unfit to give it. Were it not for the open doors of the Sunday School, the children of such parents would grow up in utter ignorance of the blessed Saviour, and of the winning words of invitation which He has given to them to “come” to Him.

THE GREAT LEAVEN OF RELIGIOUS TRUTH BROUGHT INTO THE HOUSEHOLD FROM THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

In speaking of the reflex influence of Sunday School teaching in the family, I do not so much refer to the lack of service on the part of the parent which it supplies. But I refer more particularly to the great leaven of religious truth and teaching, which it silently brings into the household. The out-spoken utterances of childhood—the unceasing inquiries which they make in regard to any subject which occupies their mind—(and which is always a reality to them)—is sure to bring to bear directly, or incidentally, the teachings of the Sunday lesson upon the other members of the household. Thus home teaching is supplemented ; and where it does not exist, the good seed is often silently dropped into a heart—sometimes careless—often hard, but generally tender and loving towards the little speaker. If the teacher is earnest in his work, and has drawn out the young heart and filled it with love to the Saviour, oh how touching and persuasive a sermon may that teacher often preach in many a household through the earnest eyes and loving lips of his

* In Ontario the number of public Schools reported for 1869 was 4,524. In the Province of Quebec the number of “institutions” reported by the Minister of Public Instruction for 1868, the latest published was 3,913 ; total for both provinces, 8,437.