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**Sunday School Banner.**

W. H. WITHROW, D.D., EDITOR.

TORONTO, NOVEMBER, 1896.

**The Meaning of the Plebiscite.**

The plebiscite of September 29th was the greatest moral victory ever won for the cause of prohibition. For the first time in the history of the world, over a country as large as the whole of Europe, the will of the people was declared in one day on this question. Every province in the Dominion, save one, gave a majority in favour of prohibition. The vote was not a light one, but a very large one, and a majority at the time of writing of 18,000 is recorded as in favour of the most stringent prohibition of the manufacture, importation, or sale not only of whiskey, rum and brandy, but of ale, wine, beer and cider.

When this vote is examined, its true significance will be seen. It is the vote of the most intelligent, law-abiding and well-to-do portions of the community.

The people of the Maritime Provinces, than whom there are no more intelligent in the Dominion, who have had large experience for years of local prohibition in many of their counties and know its worth, gave a very large majority for it of about 40,000. But this is offset by the almost solid vote of the French Roman Catholic population of Quebec, the most illiterate in the Dominion. Thousands of them can neither read nor write, and many thousands more can speak no language but French, and are completely under the influence of their priests. Leading men of their race had on the Sunday before the plebiscite, harangued the people from the steps of the churches and urged them to vote against prohibition. A special ground of opposition was that this was a movement chiefly instigated and supported by the Protestant churches to force a yoke of bondage on the French Catholic people.

This vote is the harbinger of a brighter day. It heralds the dawn of a new era. The discussion from pulpit, platform, and in the press is a great moral education of the people. The majority is confessedly not great enough to furnish a mandate to the Government to bring in a prohibitory bill. But it is the hand-writing on the wall that this guilty traffic is weighed in the balance and found wanting. It is a warning to the liquor trade to set its house in order, to divert its capital to productive instead of destructive industry. It is the presage and the prophecy of the time—early, we hope, in the twentieth century—when this nefarious business shall be no longer known among us.

The people of Canada have failed to rise to the grandeur of their privilege and obligation. The apathy of many professed Christians and so-called temperance men, and the intense and mercenary activity, and in many cases corrupt practices, of the liquor traffic, have conspired to retard for a time the prohibition cause. It is only for a time. It is the temporary ebb of the tide, which shall rise, and in its resistless might and majesty sweep away the God-dishonouring, soul-destroying traffic.

Every selfish, sordid and sinister motive was appealed to by the liquor interest. The unnatural thirst for strong drink, the plea of so-called personal liberty, the mercenary menace of direct taxation—although the country pays six times as much for its drink bill as the wretched

revenue more huge of children. But, are a story is rise or

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