

Report of Secretary of S. S. Board.

THE operations of the Sunday-school Board of the Methodist Church during the past year exhibit a very gratifying increase in extent and usefulness. The income of the Sunday-school Aid and Extension Fund has been considerably larger than that of any previous year. The Fund has, therefore, been enabled to assist with grants of books and papers a larger number of poor schools than ever before, and to promote to a greater extent the establishment of schools in destitute neighbourhoods where none previously existed. The collections in the schools in behalf of this Fund are taken up much more uniformly than heretofore, although there are still a number of circuits and influential schools that neglect the Disciplinary requirement in this respect. On some circuits, too, the amount collected is very meagre—as low as twenty-five cents—while the large number returning the round sums of one dollar or two dollars, seems to indicate that these sums are a substitute for collections in the schools. Nevertheless, the increase in income is very gratifying, being \$1,623.61 as against \$1,270 of the previous year.

The number of grants to poor schools was to 208, reaching the amount of \$1,872, as against \$1,005 of the previous year. The amount of correspondence in connection with this work has been very great, reaching nearly 600 distinct communications. Schools applying for aid are encouraged to pay, if possible, something toward the grant given them. In this way the schools assisted have during the year paid \$511.81, as against \$278.33 the previous year. With each school receiving aid a separate account is kept, which also involves a large amount of work.

The Fund pays also for printing and mailing the Sunday-school schedules, circulars, and reports, and for express charges and postage on donations of Sunday-school libraries. About 3,000 volumes of second-hand Sunday-school libraries, donated by schools, have been gratuitously distributed during the year. For these there are always several applications, and schools replenishing their libraries can do much good by sending the undersigned their old ones.

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS.

The number of schools in the seven western Conferences is 2,495, with 22,902 officers and 180,712 scholars. As the past year is the first of the organization of the united Methodist Church, it is impossible to institute any comparison with the returns of previous year.

The most gratifying feature of all in connection with our schools is, that the truths taught therein prove, in thousands of instances, "the power of God unto salvation." The number of conversions of scholars reported is, 12,418. To God be all the praise. Of the scholars, 27,588 are reported as meeting in class.

TEMPERANCE.

The important subject of temperance is more and more attracting public attention. It is

cause for congratulation that the Methodist Church is in the forefront of this temperance agitation. And Methodist schools are not a whit behind in the deep interest manifested in this great reform. Our statistical tables present a record of 34,107 who, during the year, have taken the pledge against the twin evils liquor and tobacco. This number added to those previously recorded makes a great army of pledged abstainers who in a very few years will exert a strong influence in public and private life—at the polls and in the homes—against the national evil and crime, the liquor traffic.

The magnitude of the Sunday-school operations of our Church, and the depth of the interest felt in those operations, is shown by the fact that during the year \$73,503 have been expended in the maintenance of those schools. This is in addition to the amounts raised by the schools for missions and for the Sunday-school Aid and Extension Fund.

MISSIONS.

For missions the amount returned is \$15,905. But this is very inadequately distributed. The Montreal Conference raises \$5,748, the Montreal District alone raising \$3,375. The Toronto Conference raised \$3,635, and Toronto District \$1,946. These two Conferences thus raise \$9,383, and all the other Conferences only \$6,622. This shows what may be done by systematic organization. The entire amount raised by the schools for maintenance of missions and Extension Fund is \$91,058, an average of over forty-four cents each for the whole number of officers, teachers, and scholars.

LIBRARIES.

The work accomplished by our schools in supplying instructive and interesting reading, often of a direct religious tendency, to the people is often overlooked or underestimated. The number of books in the libraries is reported at 253,135. In many cases these are almost the only books accessible in families and communities where the schools exist.

PERIODICALS.

In addition to these is the ever-increasing circulation of our Sunday-school periodicals. That circulation has reached an aggregate of over 220,000 copies, or considerably over one copy for every scholar in our schools. The total issues of these papers is over 30,000,000 pages per year—over 100,000 during every working day, or 10,000 per hour. The moral influence of this amount of directly religious teaching pouring forth in a ceaseless stream from the press, and being diligently taught to the rising generation, is simply incalculable. Only the Great Day shall reveal it. The kind co-operation of the brethren, both clerical and lay, is earnestly asked to place the periodicals of the Methodist Church in all Methodist schools. In order to meet a felt want an additional Sunday-school paper, to alternate with *The Sunbeam*, will be issued. Neither labour nor expense shall be spared in making them the best, the most attractive, and the cheapest lesson helps and Sunday-school papers in the world.