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## Sunday School Banner.

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

TORONTO, AUGUST, 1891.

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### Examinations in St. John's Gospel.

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How shall our Sunday-school teachers make the lessons of the next six months most profitable to their pupils? This is a question which is disturbing the minds of many a conscientious teacher as we take up the study of a new course of lessons? We feel assured, of course, that at this starting-point, every teacher will, in addition to the daily seeking of fresh spiritual aid, devote more time and more intellectual effort to the mastery of the facts and teachings of this gospel. Many will also avail themselves of the opportunities for Bible study by correspondence, which are now well known, notably the American Institute of Sacred Literature.

At the Canadian Chautauqua, Niagara, special prominence is given to Bible study. Under the efficient direction of the Rev. John McEwen, the study of the English Bible, which is a popular feature at every Chautauqua Assembly, has been carried on in past seasons at this Assembly in connection with the Chautauqua Sunday-school "Normal Outlines." Though this course has heretofore been limited to the special purpose of Sunday-school training, it

has incidentally been the means of enabling many to obtain such a comprehensive view of the Bible as they would not otherwise have had. It is this year a more prominent feature in the daily programme, and will be enlarged by the addition of a study of specified portions of the Old and New Testaments, as follows: (1) Rev. A. M. Phillips, B.D., will conduct an inductive study of the Gospel of John, specially adapted for Sunday-school teachers and Bible class leaders. As the International Sunday-school lessons for the latter half of 1891 cover this great book of the New Testament, such a study cannot fail to be of practical benefit to all who can participate in it. (2) W. Houston, M.A., will conduct an inductive study of the book of Job, mainly as a great literary masterpiece, and as the embodiment of a philosophy of human life and destiny. In this study, the Revised Version of the Bible, which is the best and cheapest of all aids to the comprehension of the Authorized Version, will be constantly used. For information, address W. R. Harper, D.D., New Haven, Conn., or A. M. Phillips, B.D., Toronto, Ont.,

All this is of comparatively little avail, however, unless some means can be devised for compelling some responsive study on the part of the pupils. It is a painful truth that the actual facts of the Bible narratives are but a misty dream to a large majority of the Sunday-school pupils of to-day—simply because they have made no personal effort to master these facts. What child is willing to sacrifice even a small amount of time or effort in order that he may learn what he *thinks* he already knows? Nine children out of ten, in response to the question, "What do you go to Sunday-school for?" will answer, "To learn to be good," or "To learn about God." These are great and comprehensive answers, but in the form in which they exist in the mind of the child, they are entirely too indefinite to be of service as an incentive to study. This indefiniteness of aim is not true of the day-school pupil, because under their system certain specific results are required in certain periods of time. Why cannot this principle be applied with corresponding force to Sunday-school work? It can be brought about through a system of examinations and rewards.

An examination upon the Gospel of John, with the study of which our next six months will be occupied, has been offered by the American Institute of Sacred Literature, to which we have referred. The questions in this examination are offered in various grades suited to pupils of all ages, and certificates of varying degree are awarded for meritorious work. The use of the ordinary lesson helps of any evangelical denomination is a sufficient preparation for the lower grades. Is it not the duty of every Sunday-school superintendent and teacher to investigate this plan, and see how it may be best applied to his own work and that of his class?