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W. H. WITTHROW, D.D., EDITOR.

TORONTO, APRIL, 1899.

The Home Department.*

The trend of most modern movements is to bring the privileges of the few into the possession of the many. Higher education is within the reach of every man of earnest will. Books were once the possession of the few. The Bible was chained to the reading desk. Great libraries were guarded like king's treasures. Now a centrifugal movement sends libraries travelling around to the homes of the people.

The great Sunday-school agency is an illustration of this diffusive energy. Begun as a narrow movement to take the ragged children off the street, it has spread throughout English-speaking lands, and has opened its doors to all who will come in. It has enrolled over

twenty million Bible students and two million Bible teachers. It has created a great and comprehensive literature; it has condensed commentaries into pamphlets and pages, which are scattered

"Thick as autumnal leaves that strew
the brooks
In Vallombrosa."

It has enlisted the co-operation of a great army of loving hearts, of consecrated souls. In the parlours of elegant churches, in the slums of the cities, on the boundless prairies, in the backwoods, in the fishing village, in the lumber and mining camp, amid the cotton fields and cane brakes of the Black Belt, it gathers every week twenty millions of souls for the study of the Word of Life.

The magnificent conception of a uniform international system—the teaching of the same lessons on the same day throughout all Bible-reading lands—has made possible this marvellous achievement. The Sunday-school system is entering upon a period of new development. It is sharing the trend of the times. It is feeling the pervasive influence of the divine heaven which is leavening the whole world. It is entering upon a great extension movement which, in the providence of God, shall have larger sweep and greater range than anything yet attained.

ITS BEGINNINGS.

Nothing could be more obscure than the beginning of the Sunday-school Home Department. In 1881 a Christian woman in New York State collected a group of boys and girls upon a porch to study the Sunday-school lesson. She asked "the same recognition and help as a teacher as was accorded to other teachers." But these were withheld because she was not in the same building at the same time with the other teachers, instructing her class under the personal supervision of the superintendent."

Dr. William Duncan, a Congregational layman, saw the large possibilities of extending the boundaries of the Sunday-school from the narrow walls of the school-room to the furthest reach of the parish. At the New York State Sunday-school Association he announced the vital truth: "Where there is a parlour, a kitchen, an empty room in the barn; where there is a tree which God has made to throw shade upon the earth; where there is a Christian mother who loves her sons and daughters; where

*The substance of a paper presented by the Editor at the Sunday-school Convention, Peterboro'.