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Methodist Book and Publishing House.

C. W. COATES,
2176 St. Catherine St.,
Montreal, Que.

TORONTO.

S. F. HURSTON,
Meth. Book Rooms,
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Sunday School Banner

W. H. WITHROW, D.D., Editor

TORONTO, AUGUST, 1902

Outlook for Sunday School Work.

THE report of the Epworth League and Sunday School Secretary records the fact that in both these important departments of Christian work there has been during the quadrennium just closed a reduction in numbers. It was not surprising that after the first outburst of enthusiasm in the Epworth League there should come something of a reaction. But the League was never doing better work than it is to-day. Those who joined its ranks on mere transient impulse may have grown weary in well doing, but those who continue from principle its active members are factors of permanent power. Like Gideon's army, the League is more strongly consolidated than ever before. One evidence of this is the intense earnestness

of the Forward Missionary Movement, whereby last year over \$20,000 were raised in the Leagues for maintaining new missionaries in the field. This added to the givings of the young people in our Sunday Schools makes the noble sum of over \$40,000 secured by these twin agencies for aggressive missionary work.

Our Sunday Schools report a slight increase in number, and a slight decrease in the number of scholars. The latter fact, however we may explain it, is greatly to be deplored. There are in these days many influences that interfere with the successful prosecution of Sunday School work. As was foreseen when the greed of soulless corporations secured the legal right to run their trolley cars upon the Lord's day, the tendency has been to break down the sanctity of the Sabbath, to multiply allurements for its violation. A gentleman reported to the writer recently that the Toronto Street Railway Company had presented to Riverdale Park a couple of very young lions, and very amply recouped themselves by the enormous Sunday traffic to the new zoo. Thousands of persons, our informant said twenty thousand, crowded the park and jammed the cars during the hours of the Sabbath day. The military and society parades, the allurements of cycle riding in town and country, and other attractions, break down the restraints of Sabbath observance and increase the difficulty of maintaining attendance in the Sunday Schools; all the more need to be earnest and strenuous in safeguarding that best gift to the tolling thousands of our cities, the Christian Sabbath.

We do not sufficiently appreciate the incalculable value to our church of the religious instruction given by the more than thirty thousand faithful teachers in our Sunday Schools. The statistics of our church report that by far the largest number of additions to its membership come from our Sunday Schools, over eight thousand conversions in the Sunday School is, we believe, the record of the last year. Those brought into the church from that nursery of Christian graces, in the very morning of life, will make far more intelligent, devoted, and useful workers in Christ's vineyard than those who enter it only at the eleventh hour. The church of to-morrow is in the schools of to-day. Let us realize more and more the infinite importance of planting wherever it is possible to gather a few children together, and loving hearts to care for them, these nurseries of the church, to give them most sedulous care

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