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## Sunday School Banner.

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

TORONTO, JANUARY, 1899,

### On the Threshold.

We stand again on the threshold of a new year. Now, if ever, should we pause and render hearty thanks to the giver of every good and perfect gift for the mercies of the past and supplicate his guidance for the future.

"Here we raise our Ebenezer;  
Hither by thy help we've come;  
And we hope, by thy good pleasure,  
Safely to arrive at home."

The close of the year should also be a time of heart searching and inquiry. A young Methodist student at Northwestern University rescued over a score of lives from shipwreck on the stormy coast of Lake Michigan. But he could not rescue all. As he lay battered and bruised after his supreme effort, he said eagerly to his comrades, who were nursing him back to life, "Did I do all I could?" The poor fellow had wrecked his own health and has been an invalid ever since. But he could not be satisfied unless he thought he had done all

that was possible. Let us ask ourselves the question as we look back over the weeks and months of the past, "Have we done what we could?" Have we been instant in season and out of season? Have we watched and toiled and prayed as we will wish that we had when life's warfare is ended?—

"When the struggle and grief are all past,  
And the glory and worth live on."

At the same time we should look not mournfully into the past, but hopefully to the future. If we have wasted our time, let us waste it no longer. If we have made mistakes, let us profit by them. If we have had failures, let us resolve by God's help to succeed in the future. God gives us another opportunity. The book of the new year lies before us, its pages white as the snow upon the fields around us. Let us keep them unsullied and unstained, and write thereon deeds of high enterprise, of noble consecration, of earnest work—deeds that need not be repented of.

The coming year will be for some who read these pages the last opportunity of their lives. Concerning some of us the word may be spoken, Set thy house in order, for this year shalt thou die. What an incentive to increased diligence, to renewed consecration. No ground is there here for melancholy or regret. The soldier does not sorrow at the victory which shall soon be won, nor the sailor that he shall soon reach the haven where he vain would be. While the sentry may not forsake his post, but must stand on guard through the weary hours, he is, nevertheless, glad when the relief comes.

We were profoundly impressed with this thought at the funeral service of the late Rev. W. J. Barkwell, from which we have just returned. Our departed brother was smitten down in midlife, when years of usefulness might have been anticipated. The broken column is the symbol of his broken life, but the crown which lay upon his casket was the symbol of a life rounded and complete. Young though he was, he had faithfully laboured for years, the subject of intense physical suffering. As his comrades laid their tributes of love upon his bier, the words of Mrs. Browning seemed strikingly appropriate:

"With quiet sadness and no gloom I learn to think upon  
him,—  
With meekness that is gratitude to God whose heaven hath  
won him  
Nor ever shall he be, in praise, by wise or good forsaken  
Named softly as the household name of one whom God  
hath taken."