

We must meet this emergency with faith and courage—with a consecrated audacity in humble reliance upon the grace and help of God.

HOW TO TURN THE TIDE.

Our Sunday School Aid Fund has been a most potent factor in our Sunday School growth in the past. Since its formation it has expended over \$50,000 in Sunday School extension. Still, so urgent were the claims for help that eight years ago it had overdrawn its income by over a thousand dollars. During the last two quadrenniums that overdraft has been paid, and from unavoidable causes it has not been able to devote so much money directly to Sunday School extension as before.

Largely by means of this Fund, 1,945 new schools in all have been organized increasing the number from 1,512 in 1874, to 3,425 in 1902, or more than double, and many hundreds of weak schools have been greatly helped.*

The income of our Sunday School Aid Fund for the last quadrennium was \$10,576, and schools receiving aid paid in part therefor \$4,183.91.

ONLY TWO PER CENT.

This fund needs to be greatly increased. An advance of only two per cent. on the over half a million dollars paid for school purposes (\$545,261), would double this income for the quadrennium, furnishing, together with its present income, a fund of over \$20,000, or say \$5,000 a year, for Sunday School extension. A grant of \$25.00, or less, will furnish books and papers for a year for a school of thirty to forty scholars. After a year they would probably become self-sustaining, and many of them would doubtless contribute part payment from the very beginning. This would make possible an increase of 800 schools during the next quadrennium instead of 80 schools as in the last one. There is no danger of overdoing this work, for we require 1,169 additional schools for the number of present preaching places which are without any Methodist school.

I have no present means for ascertaining the number of schools planted in Manitoba and the North-West by the aid

of this Fund, but I know that it very generously helped that Conference, and I remember that one of the ministers established eight schools in, I think, a single year. Many of the new schools will at first be held in private houses, or school houses, but out of many of these will soon grow a congregation and a church. What potent influences will the circulation of good reading exert in many isolated homes, and how many young lives will be brought to the Saviour and made a permanent blessing to themselves and to the church and to the world.

LOCAL INITIATIVE.

I deem it of the utmost importance to encourage local initiative by the offer of aid to every school which may be organized. I believe that under wide and wise co-operation and inspiration of pastors and Sunday School officers our schools in older Canada would rise to the needs of the present crisis, and send generous aid to their kinsfolk in New Ontario and the great North-West, and to the strangers within the gate, without lessening any other fund. With a Sunday School Aid Fund of about \$3,500 a year, and a less urgent need, 298 schools were established in one quadrennium, 278 in another, and many weak schools were greatly aided. Could any expenditure of so small an amount yield so rich results?

Few factors will be more important in meeting the religious needs of our country than the Sunday School. It is often the antecedent of the church—the germ from which it grows. The rapid growth of Methodism in the North-West has been greatly aided by the wide planting of Sunday Schools. The church that wins the children will gain the country. The aid of a most important lay agency can be thus secured for moulding its young life. Wherever a group of children can be gathered, and a loving heart found to teach them, a Sunday School should be begun. A devoted layman, Stephen Paxson, planted over twelve hundred Sunday Schools, with 60,000 scholars and teachers, in the great West of the United States, many of which have grown into vigorous churches. The church of tomorrow is in the school of to-day.

A SEPARATE SUNDAY SCHOOL BOARD.

In order more adequately to meet the crisis before us, and to follow promptly the leadings of divine providence, I venture to suggest—

1. That a central Sunday School Board be organized, with standing Sunday

*For the statistics published in this document we are indebted to the very full tabular reports published in the Epworth Era for August, 1902, and to Rev. Dr. Cornish's Statistical Report furnished the General Conference.