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NOTE AND COMMENT

Siberia is not all ice. Out of a total of 19,727,000 acres in that district the greater part is cultivated, and 11,685,000 acres are this year under crops.

By actual count 1732 persons have already been added to the Boston churches that were in the group covered by the Chapman evangelistic meetings. The spiritual life and activity of the churches have generally been stimulated.

Rumor in Winnipeg says that the three North-West Mounted Police who returned to Winnipeg from the far north last week have discovered valuable deposits of gold and other minerals. The members of the party, however, were not inclined to make any statements.

Although church attendance is declining in Scotland, says "The Congregationalist," church membership appears to be increasing. Half a century ago about one person in seven of the population was a communicant church member. To-day one-fourth of the population have their names on church rolls.

At the celebration of the birthday of D. L. Moody by the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, the announcement was made that the foundation of a new men's dormitory would be laid this spring. This is the first of a group of three new buildings required by the growth of the Institute, the cost of which will be about \$350,000.

A cheerful note is sounded in the last number of the Labor Gazette. The number of unemployed is much less than it was this time a year ago. The building outlook is more promising than it was, and there is a noticeable improvement in manufacturing and transportation conditions. For all of which let us be duly thankful.

Stanley's "Through Darkest Africa," written many years ago, still ranks as a great book, of permanent value. It is not designed primarily as a missionary work, yet its picture of Livingstone's character is profoundly impressive. For there in the heart of Africa the life of the missionary made a Christian of the traveler and journalist.

At a meeting recently held in Sheffield, the Rev. F. B. Meyer in a voice tremulous with emotion, expressed his extreme sorrow that the Bishop of Durham had, in the administration of the Eucharist, put on Eucharistic vestments. If the most evangelical of the Bishops did this, the call for the Gospel of the Free Churches was more imperative than ever.

In reports from St. Louis, Mo., Gipsy Smith is quoted as saying while laboring there, that church music in the United States was the worst he ever heard; in fact, he had heard very little real music in any of their churches. He declared that "heart" music was conspicuous by its absence, and he urged the congregations to "do" their music themselves, instead of hiring others to sing for them. Probably Gipsy Smith is very near the truth, says the Christian Guardian. No amount of gold can put "heart" into music, and when a congregation hires others to do its singing, and forgets to sing itself, it misses more than it realizes of the divine blessing.

Sir Andrew Fraser, formerly Lieut.-Governor of Bengal, who has arrived at New York, on his way to the Laymen's Missionary Convention in Toronto, expects no general uprising in India, in spite of the sensational stories. The feeling against present conditions, he says, is undefined and the revolutionist element small.

Women have apparently been advancing in the esteem of men in Austria in recent years. It used to be no unusual thing to see a woman and a cow or a dog pulling together a cart or plow. But a man in Prague has been sentenced to six months' imprisonment for harnessing his wife with his dog in a vegetable cart, although she pleaded that she liked the job.

The Rev. John Hugh Smyth Pigott, head of the Spaxton Agapemone, was publicly deposed from Holy Orders in the Cathedral of Wells on Saturday afternoon by the Lord Bishop of the diocese. The public degradation from the priestly office took place at a solemn and special service within the choir of the venerable Somerset Cathedral. It is many centuries since a service of such a character has taken place within this historic edifice.

It is stated that over one hundred ministers of the United Free Church of Scotland preached on a late occasion on the subject of "Our Church and Social Questions." This is commendable, because the Church and the Ministry are expected to give light and leading to the people. Socialism, so called, has so many sides, economic and moral, that many people may be misled into false notions about it, very careful public instruction on the matter should be given just now in all Christian Churches.

The immoral or suggestive play is responsible for many of the crimes which so frequently shock the community. It is good news therefore to learn that the syndicate of managers of theatres in the United States, which comprises ninety per cent. of those in the business, have entered into an agreement to bar all impure and immoral plays. A good deal has been done in Canada in eliminating immoral and gross theatrical posters, and something in censoring the plays which shall be presented. Let this supervision be fully carried out, and the occasion for much that is urged against the evil of the theatre will be removed.

In moving a vote of thanks to Dr. Harper, Allos, when he had delivered the last of his Chalmers lectures at the New College, Professor Paterson quoted a public declaration by Dr. Chalmers, showing his position regarding secular education. In answer to a question by Sir John Russell as to his opinion regarding national education Dr. Chalmers said: After gathering all information and considering every aspect of the question, I have education. Dr. Chalmers said: "After gathering all information and considering every aspect of the question, I have come to the conclusion that the element of religion, most precious though it is, must not stand in the way of a common national education, rather than this, it is better to leave religion to its natural guardians under God, to parents, friends, and ministers, and apply the national funds solely to secular branches of education."

Says the British Weekly: The prospect of peace in the Near East has improved during the week owing to the submissive reply which Serbia has sent to the Russian Minister. Russia had advised the Serbian Government to relinquish all claims to compensation, either in territory or money, and to place herself in the hands of the Powers. In the reply sent from Belgrade, Serbia promised to renounce her claims, and to demobilize her troops, provided that Austria would do the same. The powerful influence of Russia has, for the second time in recent weeks, been exerted on the side of peace. When the troubles in Bulgaria were at their height Russia stepped in to settle the money difficulty, and there can be no doubt that Russia's intervention has made war between Austria and Serbia improbable. A heavy responsibility now rests upon Austria. If she is bent upon a conflict the situation is hopeless.

The Sultan of Turkey has made a speech from the throne which may mean much to his empire. It may result in little. It is chiefly noteworthy as displaying the reach and sweep of the "solidarity of nations" which is a real thing, and to which our own country has contributed a part. Here is a sample of what the Turk said: "When I first proclaimed a constitution, thirty-two years ago, there were many difficulties in the way of its execution, and I was advised to suspend it momentarily. In the interval great efforts were made toward popular education and for the establishment of institutions of a nature calculated to elevate public enlightenment. I am now happy to know that the people are more able to understand the benefits of a constitution, and I was heartily glad to restore it, notwithstanding influential advice to the contrary. My will is definite and unalterable, and henceforth the constitution will regulate the affairs of the nation. The Cabinet which Emil Pasha has formed will fulfill our decision."

It is often said, in ignorant and shallow criticism of the missionaries, that few of them ever command an oriental language sufficiently well to enable them to become effective preachers. The charge has been refuted by an overwhelming array of facts. Even an imperfect knowledge of the native tongue may enable one to convey great truths to heathen hearts. A missionary who had been in China only a year and a half, was preaching on the street. In his poor broken Chinese he happened to say, "God can convert even the opium smoker." A victim of the habit, hungering for release, heard the words as he was passing by. He stopped. He inquired. He learned. He was converted. He became at once a preacher of the Gospel. He went down into his own province and there proclaimed the truth with great power. He was persecuted, assaulted again and again, on one occasion beaten almost to death. He was carefully treated and brought back to health by a Christian physician. He then returned to Soo Chow and preached more mightily than before. Hundreds, thousands, above ten thousand Chinese have already been converted by that man's preaching. The work of that man has been the greatest ever accomplished by any individual in the entire history of the church in China. And he was won to Christ by the halting, faltering words of a novice in the ways of Chinese speech, whose soul was filled with the love of God.