

makes her début as a University Extension lecturer this year, is giving lectures—or, as she modestly calls them, “talks,”—on Browning, to the evident enjoyment of those who would obtain a clearer insight into the masterpieces of this poet. The second course in January and February will be awaited with great interest from the fact that three St. John editors—J. V. Ellis, M.P., of the *Globe*, Jas. Hannay of the *Telegraph*, and S. D. Scott of the *Sun*—will, in two lectures each, deal with important epochs of Canadian history, and Prof. Stockley will deliver a course of eight lectures on Molière.

At Syracuse, N. Y., the police have arrested five boys, all under sixteen, and all of respectable families, accused of a number of petty burglaries. It seems that the further aspiration of these lads was to go West and become train robbers. No doubt they had all received a good literary education, probably in the Public Schools. Instances of juvenile crime multiply in the United States, and if we are comparatively free from them here, we are not by any means free from juvenile faults which betray a want of moral discipline in the schools. It is a serious drawback from the advantages of our system of public education that it weakens the sense of responsibility in parents and leads to a neglect of home training, without which character cannot well be formed. A school teacher has enough to do in imparting literary instruction to his class, without undertaking to form the characters of individual pupils. The evils of parental indifference consequent on the transfer of responsibility to the state have been strikingly set forth by Dr. J. M. Rice in a work on the American Public Schools, which everyone concerned in popular education ought to read. Meantime, if any citizens caring,

above all things, for the formation of character, choose to send their children to schools of their own, where they think character is better formed, there seems to be no reason why they should be crushed. As taxpayers, they are all the time contributing their full share to the maintenance of the Public School system, though they cannot conscientiously send their children to the Public School. Nor do they fail to impart the literary instruction which the policy of the state requires. This is a free country, let us have the full advantages of freedom, that of free experiment in education among the rest.—*Witness, Montreal.*

#### ASTRONOMICAL NOTES— DECEMBER.

THOS. LINDSAY, TORONTO.

**O**BSERVERS who had been expecting to see the advance guard of the Leonid meteors were quite disappointed during November. The night of Sunday, Nov. 14th, was the time when the earth plunged into the thickest of the stream, but dense clouds obscured the heavens, and even had it been clear, the meteors would have been lost in the bright moonlight. We must wait another year for an opportunity to see a great display.

As we near the close of the year the planets become more favorably situated for observation. Mercury is evening star, and may be seen at greatest elongation east on the evening of Dec. 20th. The planet will be in close conjunction with the new moon on the evening of Dec. 24th. Venus, still morning star, will be seen in the same field of the telescope, with Mars on the morning of Dec. 30th. The observation will be of interest only on account of the positions