

Current Topics and Events.



ALEXANDER III., EMPEROR
OF RUSSIA.

THE RUSSIAN FAMINE.

The condition of Russia is at the present time attracting the attention of the civilized world. It is one of the saddest spectacles in history, that of twenty or thirty millions of people suffering from the pangs of hunger. Yet, just as the darkest night brings out more brightly the stars of heaven, so this background of despair makes more beautiful the sweet charities of the civilized world. From many parts of Christendom contributions are being forwarded for the relief of these suffering millions. Many of the Russian people, like Count Tolstoi and his family, are devoting themselves with intense energy to the relief of the suffering. Ladies of high position and of delicate nurture and widest culture are toiling strenuously to abate as much as is in their power the wretchedness of the people.

There are shadows, however, that deepen the darkness, and that is the fraud and speculation that has taken place in connection with the distribution of charity. Much that was contributed in St. Petersburg never

reached the famine-stricken people at all, and much of the relief that did reach them was in the form of grain so adulterated as to be unfit for human food. As is always the case, the dreadful ogre, famine, has been followed by its twin-sister, fever, and while famine slew its thousands plague and pestilence slew their tens of thousands.

What makes it more difficult to sympathize as one ought with these suffering people is the bitter persecution and intolerance exercised by Russian officials towards the unfortunate Jews, who were driven from the country with the utmost cruelty. Nor are the Jews the only victims of this bigotry. There has grown up in Russia a remarkable society known as the Stundists, a religious sect who have revolted from the superstitions of the Greek Church, and adopted tenets very much resembling in their Scriptural purity those of the Methodist Church. Indeed, these Stundists are known as the Russian Methodists. These, too, are being banished from that land. Of these persecutions we give an account on another page.

It has been said that the Government of Russia is a despotism tempered by assassination. This is unhappily only too true a description. The fate of the late Czar haunts like a spectre his unhappy son, who has to hide himself in an impregnable fortress, and is almost as much of a prisoner as some of the victims of his tyranny.

THE GREAT BAPTIST PREACHER.

The very full article by Rev. S. P. Rose in this MAGAZINE renders unnecessary much comment on the death of Charles H. Spurgeon on this page. A prince and a great man in Israel has fallen. Spurgeon was not remarkable for his learning,