

when persons joined the church of which he was pastor he made it a point to discover what special fitness for particular work each possessed and then endeavoured to get them enlisted in the service they could most efficiently render. Here, also, discretion is needed, for as Dr. Cuyler says, there are some very shy Christians who will not do much, and some very feeble Christians who cannot do much if they try. Some people would only make blunders and they had better be left alone. Ministers who study character discover that God gives converting grace often to persons to whom He never gave much "gumption."

### THE CONDITION OF RUSSIA.

RUSSIA is pursuing an aggressive Asiatic policy in obedience to traditional instinct and to divert attention from the despotism and misgovernment now crushing the life out of her people. The immense army in a time of peace begins to weary of inaction, ambitious military men covet opportunities to achieve distinction, and the people, on whom heavy taxation presses, are in a measure gratified with the extension of the empire. The governing classes likewise are disposed to regard war as a safety-valve for the deep-seated discontent that prevails from the White Sea to the Crimea, and from Archangel to Tashkend.

Of all existing nationalities, the government of Russia is the most despotic. Modern ideas of constitutional freedom are persistently ignored by the ruling classes. Popular aspirations for liberty are ruthlessly repressed. Every possible manifestation of political or social progress is extinguished. The wells of a truly national life are being poisoned at their source. The Government controls the education of the people, and uses it as an engine of despotic statecraft. The universities, where the free play of intellectual life is usually most vigorous, are now subjected to the most rigid surveillance, and the students who show sympathy with liberal ideas are threatened with Siberian exile.

The Greek Church in Russia is a lifeless Church. It is maintained by the State as a vast ramification of moral police. Spiritual life is all but crushed out of the people, and a vigorous dissent is well nigh impossible. At all events, occasional erratic movements have failed to obtain a popular response. The Russian peasantry are prone to superstition, and the Greek Church makes no serious endeavour to enlighten them. In numerous instances there is a readiness to pander to popular delusions. The Gospel of Jesus Christ in its simplicity and purity has ever been the friend of human progress. It has inspired peoples with the loftiest and the truest patriotism, but a dead faith inspires no man. The painful result of a purely mechanical and formal religion is widespread infidelity. The peasantry remain superstitious, but some intelligent people and the half-informed mass repudiate a form of religion which they have come to regard as a buttress of despotism. Hence the rise and progress of Nihilism with all its blank negations and its murderous spirit.

Another sad feature of the moral condition of Russia, visible enough in the cities, is the rapid growth of a debasing immorality. In St. Petersburg the worst forms of vice are becoming more shameless and obtrusive. The Government that represses freedom with iron hand designedly permits flaunting vice and disgraceful orgies to exist almost without concealment, fondly hoping that the reckless votaries of so-called pleasure will be satisfied with immoral license instead of political and intellectual freedom. Many of the landlords, having few outlets for their activity, too often fall into habits of the grossest intemperance, so that in several respects the moral and spiritual condition of the Russian people is at present about as unpromising as the political situation.

Though the public press is under censorship, and anything like freedom of discussion is almost impossible, Russian aspirations after freedom and hopeful views of the future are beginning to find powerful voices raised in their favour. Noblemen who have espoused from conviction the cause of the people, have by their sacrifices and sufferings gained the public ear, and by their writings are throwing much light on the actual condition of Russia. Stepniak's recent work will aid the cause of Muscovite freedom. The present state of things cannot last. There must either be reform or revolution, and revolution inspired by Nihilism might rival the atrocities of the Terrorists controlled by Marat and Robespierre. More than

anything else Russia needs a religious awakening. With the pure principles of Christianity sincerely believed, a new national life would begin, moral progress be assured, law and order respected, and free institutions would bring a joyous spring-time of hope and prosperity to a great nation now groaning beneath the most gigantic despotism of modern times.

## Books and Magazines.

**ELECTRA.** Edited by Annie E. Wilson and Isabella M. Leyburn. (Courier-Journal Building, Louisville, Ky.)—*Electra* continues to supply, its readers with healthy, refining, and interesting reading for the home circle.

**MIND IN NATURE.** (Chicago: The Cosmic Publishing Co.)—This new competitor for public favour numbers among its contributors such men as Bishop Fallows, of the Reformed Episcopal Church, Dr. David Swing, Dr. Thomas, Bishop Cox, Dr. Lorimer, and a number of well-known scientific writers. The subjects discussed, though speculative, are interesting in character.

**BIBLICAL EXPOSITOR AND PEOPLE'S COMMENTARY.** By Jacob M. Hirschfelder. (Toronto: Rowell & Hutchison.)—A new number, the twenty-seventh, of this admirable work, has made its appearance. The commentary thus far is the work not only of a competent and painstaking Hebrew scholar, but of a sound theologian, who supplies both a defence and exposition of divinely-revealed truth.

On July 1st will be issued from the press of Craig & Barlow, 170 Madison Street, Chicago, a large work, entitled "Fifty Years in the Church of Rome," by the venerable Father Chiniquy, who has spent many years of his life in its production. It will be the most comprehensive presentation of Romanism in all its aspects—civil, social, and religious—heretofore published, and contains facts of thrilling interest to all lovers of liberty. The chapters relating to the assassination of Abraham Lincoln are startling in character. The book is sure to cause controversy. It has been pronounced by eminent statesmen in Great Britain, Canada, the United States, and Australia, who have read advance sheets, as timely and important. It will be sold by subscription only. Price \$5.

THE first article, "The Laocoon of Evolution," in the recent number of the *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* is, we understand, written by the Rev. Professor Bryce, LL.D., of Manitoba College, Winnipeg. It is a powerful criticism of the philosophical utterances of Herbert Spencer regarding the First Cause as set forth in several articles in the *Nineteenth Century*, wherein the genesis of religion is discussed. Dr. Bryce shows by a comparison of Spencer's recent utterances with those of an earlier date that the tendency of his belief is toward the Christian doctrine of an Infinite Eternal Energy, which we Christians simplify by calling God. Frederick Harrison's criticisms of Spencer are also reviewed, and Dr. Bryce in summing up concludes that Harrison, though easily showing the inconsistency of Spencer's statements, gives us but little that is of value in his Religion of Humanity. There are good philosophical reasons for insisting that, taking Spencer's recent utterances as a ground for the existence of religion, he has thereby confessed that there is an All-wise Creator, in whom we can not only believe but whom we also can, though finite mortals, in some degree know, and whom we can rationally love and worship. The article is well worthy of perusal and careful study.

### MONTREAL NOTES.

THE approaching meeting of the General Assembly is being looked forward to with pleasure by the Presbyterian community here. About 320 members are expected and the attendance will probably be larger than at any meeting since the Union of 1875. Montreal is on the whole centrally situated for an assembly comprising representatives from the Maritime Provinces as well as from Ontario and Quebec. Even the members from the North-West, after the Canadian Pacific Railway is open for traffic north of Lake Superior, reach Montreal almost as soon as Toronto or Hamilton, and that without change of cars. Some little difficulty has been experienced in finding houses in private families for all the commissioners. This is owing largely to the fact that the time of meeting of the General Assembly is not the most convenient for

many in this city. Many of our schools close about the 10th or 15th of June, and an increasingly large number of families leave the city immediately afterwards for the seaside or country. Though private houses have not been got for all the members this is owing to no lack of hospitality on the part of Montreal Presbyterians, as is manifested by the fact that nearly \$1,000 have been contributed by those unable to receive guests, wherewith to meet the expense of accommodation. The labour of providing homes for the commissioners has this year largely devolved upon Professor Scrimger, and to him it has evidently been a labour of love.

TAKING advantage of the Assembly meeting in this city this year, the Board of Management of the Presbyterian College, Montreal, have issued invitations to all the Commissioners and their hosts to a conversation in the David Morrice Hall, on Saturday evening, the 13th June, from half-past seven to ten o'clock. This will give the members an opportunity of spending an evening together socially, and also of seeing the college buildings, the whole of which will that evening be lit and thrown open for inspection. A short programme of music is being prepared, and refreshments will be supplied in the dining hall. The expense of this entertainment is being generously met by a few members of the Board individually.

THE Foreign Mission Committee—Western Section—is to meet in Crescent Street Church here, on Tuesday morning at ten o'clock, to consider the question of unification of the Eastern and Western work, and at eleven o'clock for general business.

THE Rev. J. C. Herdman, B.D., late of Campbellton, N. B., with his family, passed through Montreal on Wednesday on his way to Calgary, N.W.T., his future field of labour. Mr. Herdman left a very strongly attached people in Campbellton, who presented him with a farewell address and purse of upwards of \$200 last week. Mr. Herdman will be a great acquisition to the North-West and in Calgary will doubtless do good work for the Church and for the cause of Christ.

A *pro re nata* meeting of the Montreal Presbytery was held on Friday. Mr. Leitch accepted the call to Valleyfield, and his ordination was fixed for Tuesday, 23rd inst., when Rev. D. W. Morison will preside, Rev. L. H. Jordan preach, Rev. R. Campbell, M.A., address the minister; and Rev. J. B. Muir, M.A., the people. The Presbytery also considered a request from the Foreign Mission Committee to ordain Mr. R. C. Murray, missionary elect to India, during the meeting of Assembly. The ordination was appointed, if the way be clear, to take place in St. Paul's Church on Friday, 19th inst., at eight o'clock p.m., the Moderator of Presbytery to preside and to arrange for the other parts of the service.

THE Rev. W. J. Smyth, Ph.D., of Oshawa, has been in the city for the last ten days, supplying the St. Joseph Street Presbyterian Church pulpit.

THE Rev. J. J. Casey, B.D., of Taylor Church, is at present seriously ill with small-pox, contracted, it is supposed, in his visits through his parish in one or two districts chiefly in the east end of the city. The disease prevails to some extent, the papers reporting a number of new cases the other day. Vigorous efforts are being made by the civil authorities to stamp it out, and it is hoped that the efforts will be availing. No cases exist, so far as the writer knows, west of St. Lawrence Main Street,—the section of the city chiefly occupied by the English speaking part of the populations. Mr. Casey is at present slightly better, though he is still in a very critical state. He and his household have the sympathy of very many friends in the city and elsewhere, whose earnest prayer is that God may raise him up and spare him to continue the good work begun by him in Taylor Church.

THE Rev. Mr. Rodger, a licentiate of the Church of Scotland, arrived by last week's steamer with a view to permanent settlement in Canada.

A RECENT Sabbath day plate collection for Foreign Missions in the Cote des Neiges Presbyterian Church, amounted to the handsome sum of \$50. This from a congregation of about forty-five families, chiefly farmers, that support their own minister in full without aid from the Augmentation Scheme, is very creditable indeed. This same congregation also supports a pupil in the Pointe-aux-Trembles schools and contributes largely to all the Schemes of the Church. Under its present pastor, the Rev. J. Bennett, the congregation is progressing most satisfactorily.