

of good citizens in circumstances of extreme difficulty and peril. Revivals of religion, accompanying and following special services, have taken place in connection with the Church of England in extensive districts of London and other English cities, and more recently in New York in the Episcopalian churches there. Similar religious movements are in progress in other churches. It cannot be that the Presbyterian Church in Canada shall be unvisited by "showers of blessings." We know that this winter, as in previous winters, special evangelistic services are being held in very many of our churches. The lesson of the past year, as of all years, is that no labour for the Lord is ever useless or worthless.

Missionary Cabinet.

COLUMBA, PRESBYTER-ABBOT OF IONA.

ST. COLUMBA has two biographers, monks of his own order, who lived sufficiently near his time to enable them to acquire authentic information respecting him. One of these, Cumin, wrote his life in Latin, about sixty years, the other, Adamnan, about sixty-five years after the saint's death. We do not profess to have seen either of them, but many others have, and have recited in intelligible language the thrilling story which we now present to our readers in condensed form. If Scotland gave Ireland her apostle St. Patrick, Ireland amply repaid the debt when she sent Columba to Scotland, or rather we should say to "Albyn," for the story carries us back to the days when "Scotia" was the name which Ireland bore, and when "England" was as yet unknown by that appellation. Very little is known of the actual condition of things in Britain in the times of Columba. "One thing, however, is pretty certain, that the northernmost parts of the island had scarcely been touched, much less influenced by Christianity. The people were still "heathen barbarians," who delighted to adorn themselves with war-paint; separated into clans they waged perpetual war with each other, subsisting chiefly by the chase, and worshipping "unknown gods." Tradition has, indeed, handed down the name of St. Servanus, or "Serf," bishop of the Orkneys, and of a St. Tanar, who are

supposed to have preached the gospel in some dark corners of the north about this time, but nothing authentic is known regarding them. Next to St. Ninian, Columba and Kentigern are the first Christian missionaries in Scotland whose names have become historic.

COLUMBA was born at Gartan, in the county of Donegal, in December, 521. His father, Fedilmoth McFergus, belonged to the O'Neills, a reigning family of the Irish Scots. His mother, Eithné, was descended from the Leinster line of Irish kings. There can be no doubt that his "high birth," coupled with intellectual gifts of no ordinary kind, was of immense advantage to him all through his life. From boyhood he was given to the study of the Scriptures. In early youth he was sent to the monastery of Movilla in County Down, and afterwards to that of Clonard, where he completed a liberal education under Finian, bishop of Clonfert, by whom he was ordained deacon, and by the still more famous Ciaran and other fathers of the Irish church. In these monasteries he had access to the best learning of that time. Returning to the north at 25 years of age, in 546, he founded the monastery of *Doire Calgaic* on an eminence crowned with oaks, where now stands the city of Londonderry. A few years later he founded the monastery of Durrow upon a large scale in the centre of Ireland. A monastery in those days was not merely a pious retreat, but a school of the prophets, well organized and equipped. To have established two such institutions was a grand life's-work for any ordinary man in those days, or now. But Columba was not an ordinary man, and this was but the beginning of a career that has few parallels in history, ancient or modern.

Why did he leave Ireland? Different reasons are given. 1. That he was implicated in some of the feuds of his times, and that, forgetting his sacred calling, he had rallied his clan and led them on to attack their enemies, who were overthrown with a slaughter of more than 3,000 men, and that for this bloody transaction he was excommunicated, and was advised to go into voluntary exile. 2. Others credit him with a purely missionary purpose in crossing to Scotland, where many of his countrymen had gone, and who were known to be living without any religious instruction. It was