

sentations of the manger: an infant in the cradle, surrounded by Mary and Joseph, by cherubs, and Eastern Magi.

In most of the Protestant Churches, the day is observed in thanksgiving to the Father for his infinite love in the gift of his only-begotten Son.

Among English people, the festival is strongly interwoven with the whole texture of popular and family life. It has been regarded not only as a religious, but a domestic and merry-making time. Hear how the day was celebrated in Merrie Old England :

“ On Christmas eve the bells were rung ;
 On Christmas eve the mass was sung ;
 That only night in all the year,
 Saw the stoled priest the chalice rear.
 Then opened wide the baron’s hall,
 To vassal, tenant, serf, and all ;
 J’ower laid its rod of rule aside,
 And ceremony doffed his pride.
 The heir, with roses in his shoes,
 That night might village partner choose.
 All hailed with uncontrolled delight
 And general voice, the happy night
 That to the cottage or the crown
 Brought tidings of salvation down.
 England was merry England when
 Old Christmas brought his sports again.
 ’Twas Christmas broach’d the mightiest ale ;
 ’Twas Christmas told the merriest tale ;
 A Christmas gambol oft would cheer
 A poor man’s heart through half the year.”

We wish to call the attention of our readers for a little while to the *erent* with which the day is occupied. Aside from our family gatherings and re-unions of friends, what living meaning has this festival-day to us, amid the cares and struggles and disappointments of life ?

The event which we commemorate is the *Incarnation*, the mystery of mysteries, the wonder of heaven and earth. We can conceive one of the grandly gifted of our race seeking his home and dwelling-place among the poor and lowly, or the monarch of millions abdicating his throne voluntarily to assume poverty and share the bread of destitution. Still further, we can rise to the conception of a mighty Angel, the presiding minister over a population of superior beings, laying aside his splendors, and finding his way to this little corner of the universe to meditate our welfare and dwell among us for a time. Yet the very thought of it is overwhelming, and stirs our nature to its profoundest depths. But when we think of the Most High,—the ever-living, ever-present God, the Creator and Upholder of all things, the Brightness of the Father’s Glory, the express image of his person,—leaving the radiant spheres above to dwell upon this rebellious earth, taking the form of a servant and the likeness of sinful flesh, that he might lift us and all our race into His own light and glory—I confess that we well may stand aghast and stagger, as we seek to grasp the stupendous conception. The Incarnation of God ! How it transcends our weak capacity ! The *fact* of