

INFECTIOUS NOVELS.

By Dean Harris.

Last month his Grace the Archbishop after administering the Sacrament of Confirmation to a class of boys and girls at St. Paul's Church, Toronto, addressed them on the pernicious influence of bad books. The Archbishop is eminently practical in his discourses to children. With a perception, almost intuitive, he measures their mental capacity, the extent of their understanding and grasp of a subject, and with a felicitous power of adaptation, accommodates himself to their tender years. After warning the children against bad books, the Archbishop addressed himself to the parents. "The sensational novel" he added "is dangerous, scandalous, and utterly unfit for Christian parents to suffer their children to read." This is not the first time his Grace called to his flock to "stand on guard" before this stealthy foe. In several of his pastorals he earnestly, and at times pathetically appealed to fathers and mothers, to protect their children against this destructive enemy to morality, by excluding from their homes every book or periodical bearing the "Zola Mark" that is the mark of indecency, pruriency or lecherousness.

Unfortunately there is a class of readers, chiefly thoughtless and giddy young girls, who complain, that as the clergy are not familiar with the light literature of the times, they are scarcely competent witnesses to testify for or against the modern novel. If the pastor occasionally reminds his people, as

his conscience and his duty oblige him, of the danger of indiscriminate novel reading, he will notice, if he be an observant man, that the eyebrows of some of his fair hearers, take on an upward curve, indicative of mild surprise, or their shapely heads are jauntily jerked to one side as much as to say "Why what can you know about it?" With all other vices he is supposed to be theoretically familiar and to speak "as one having authority" but of the modern novel he is presumed to be as innocent as the suckling babe. No doubt this assumption is a compliment unconsciously paid to the reverend gentleman, for it is assumed that he has too much good sense, and too little time to spare, to devote himself to the modern novel.

As the priest by reason of his education ought to be a scholarly man, it is incumbent on him to be in a measure familiar with the current literature of the day, and as he is the spiritual guardian of his people, he must in some sense be familiar with the evil as well as the good literature of his times. That the readers of Walsh's Magazine may appreciate the timely warning of his Grace the Archbishop, we will review a few of the novels taken at hazard from the book shelves of a city stationer. For reasons self-evident to the thoughtful reader, we change the titles of the works touched upon.

II.

There is a school of novelists which would seem, deliberately and