

pulsory Education Act, but it will not affect the thousands who are already beyond what is known as school age, and who are likely to continue in our midst and become our future ratepayers and school trustees.

Moreover, the Act will effect little in rural sections for some time to come, except where schools are centralized, because there is deep prejudice against summary action on the part of neighbours, not to say relatives. It is surprising that in towns and cities in New Brunswick truants who are refractory are to be sent to jail. Surely the law, if invoked at all, can only be of service by securing *education*, not punishment. Nova Scotia contemplates an industrial school, where a boy will be compelled to learn the rudiments of a trade, or get some acquaintance with agriculture; at any rate, such delinquents are to be cared for, and not demoralized by the stigma of the common jail.

We wish, however, to see something done for those who desire to remain in the common school, but are compelled to be content with short terms, and those who have become conscious of inadequate training, but can never go to high schools or colleges. Every country that is progressive has its rural problem, and some, notably Denmark, have afforded good solutions; but before venturing on suggestions in this direction it is well, perhaps, to bring our needs into clearer prominence.

In the Month of December.

BY ELEANOR ROBINSON.

All the other days of this month must give place to Christmas Day. Our Anglo-Saxon forefathers called the month itself *Heilig Monat*, that is, Holy Month, and a German name for December is *Christmonat*, because it is the month when we celebrate the Birth of Christ.

Ever since the fourth century, the festival of the Nativity has been kept on the 25th of December. It matters little whether this is the actual date of our Lord's birth or not. In all Christian lands and times men have felt that it is right and fitting to set apart one day in the year in special memory of the coming of Christ to earth, and to celebrate it by rest from labour, thanksgiving and adoration to God, and general rejoicing. The opening words of an ancient prayer express this feeling: "Oh, God, which makest us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of Thy only Son, Jesus Christ." The holy angels were the first to give words to their adoration and rejoicing, when, as the tidings of

great joy were told, the heavenly host broke forth in the hymn, "Glory to God in the highest;" the shepherds returned from the manger at Bethlehem glorifying and praising God; and so down the ages the angelic song has still been echoed.

"The whole world," says a modern writer, "has recognized this event as the single point of history in which every age, every country, every living man, has an interest. It is to the Nativity of our Lord that all the pages of the Bible point as the centre on which everything there recorded turns. Kings have lived and died; empires have arisen and crumbled away; great cities have been built and destroyed; countries peopled and again laid desert; and all this is to us almost as if it had never been. Great as past events of history were to the generations in which they occurred, to us they are of less practical importance than the every-day circumstances of our common life. But the event which gives us the festival of Christmas was one whose interest is universal and unfading; one with which we are as much concerned as were the shepherds of Bethlehem; and which will be of no less importance to the last generation of men than it is to us. For it was in the birth of Christ that earth was reunited to heaven, and both made one kingdom of God above and below—as they were at the first creation. In it separation of man from God was done away, for one appeared who, in His own single person, was God, belonging to heaven, and Man, belonging to earth. It was not only the beginning of a new era, but it was the centre of all human history, the point of time to which the ages that were gone had looked forward, and to which the ages that were to come after must all look back; the one day of days which gathered all other times into itself, and stretching its influence through every hour of human existence, from the fall to the judgment, makes for itself a history, by connection with which only can other histories have an eternal interest. And so even beyond the immediate influence of the church it is found that the Christmas gladness of the church is reflected in the world around; and a common instinct of regenerated human nature teaches that world to recognize in Christmas a season of unity and fellowship and good-will, of happiness and peace."

Immediately after Christmas Day come the three days on which are commemorated, respectively, St. Stephen, the first martyr, St. John the Evangelist, and the Holy Innocents. It has been observed that there are three kinds of martyrs remembered by the