

let the question be put, "How comes it to pass that for eighteen centuries, the best, wisest, most learned, as well as the overwhelming mass of the undistinguished among civilised humanity have kept high festival on a day made sacred solely by the birth of a Jew peasant's baby!" One hears much of that word "rationalism." It would be well for those who use this as a flimsy veil to cover the utter lack of rational, common sense in their negative creed, to try to give us a rational, that is a reasonable answer to this question, the problem would be abandoned in despair.

On this Christmas eve, amid the solemn stillness, the steps to every bell tower in Christendom are being mounted by ringers. Soon as the chime of midnight ceases, the hill sides, the myriad aced plains, the calm valleys, the vast cities of Europe will be vocal with Christmas carillons. The Catholic Church holds at this hour a peal of bells ready for their music, her sons of many races stand around the belfry floor, one thought filling every mind, one emotion thrilling every heart. Hark! the hour bell's twelfth stroke fades into silence, then round after round, harmony lacing into harmony, on go the rolling bells beating out from their clanging sides a gladsome Christmas peal. Night is vocal with the carol of the bells, and watching souls take up their strain,

"JESUS CHRIST is born to-day. Hallelujah!"

Now from one point and now another mingling with the chimes, we catch the carollers' note of song, "Christians awake, salute the happy morn," the noblest of Christmas hymns in words as well as music. If happily we are in a Yorkshire town, there is added the rich colouring of instruments to the picture harmonies. As we lay listening to these bright instrumental strains, so solemn, so touching, coming up out of the darkness of a winter night, we realize how truly "All the works of the Lord" may praise their Maker, and how dead matter touched by God-given skill can stir the soul with thoughts too deep for tears, awaken sweet memories of the beloved dead, and open out bright anticipations of heavenly re-union in the eternal Christmastide. Sleep woos in vain the spirits of those whose hearts are tuned to these holy customs by immemorial usage or personal love of Him whose birth is the theme and occasion of all this festive music which heralds the dawn of Christmas Day. As morning breaks, the carollers hymn with the "tabret and harp" of modern days dies away. Then along the pavement we hear the faint clatter of tiny feet, the chirping hum of children's talk and glee, a piping voice is heard at the door, the keyhole possibly used to convey the message with which the little heart is full, from which comes up the incense of kindly good will, the happy neighbourly greeting, "I wish you a merry Christmas and happy New Year." So goes on the early morn, one shrill voice after another singing forth the season's good wishes; rich and poor blending sympathies, forgetting divisions in the atmosphere of brotherhood which fills the air.

Let Puritan sneer in concert with his Agnostic brother, let men scoff whose lives are a mere mill-horse round of money grinding, to the Christian world, to the Church Catholic and Apostolic, Christmas is irresistibly fascinating. As the influence of the sects weakens by the broadening culture which is their bane and which will be their ruin, Christendom will, if it be possible, raise the Festival of Christmas still higher in honour and love by recognizing it as the lamp of the Incarnation, the light by which our fallen race is led out of darkness to Him who on this holy day re-sancti-

fied humanity by assuming its conditions, thus supremely glorifying mankind by exhibiting, manifesting, setting forth before the universe the fact of our being indeed made in the image of God and capable of a Godlike-life.

Would that men would ponder over this Christmas fact, this Christmas lesson, that the cradle of Jesus in the manger was the cradle not of a creed, but of man's redemption. How insufferably paltry does the hair splitting, muddled metaphysics, chop logic and illiterate misreading of texts on which every sect is based and in which they all glory, glory in their shame; how mean is all this compared to the simple and tender, yet profound and sublime teaching of the Christmas Festival in the Church of Jesus. The Church strikes a chord this season which lies in the very heart's core of humanity, and thus all true hearts vibrate sympathetically when it is touched. The pathos of Mary's story, the Babe in the manger, have thrilled more deeply our race than all the works of literary genius ever penned. To obliterate Bethlehem from Art would leave a ghastly blank. In the elevation of the Incarnation to its due place lies the only hope of Christianity, for while the root is forgotten the plant will never flourish in fullest beauty. This is the secret of the ostentatious slighting of Christmas by the sects, the lesson of this season is alien to their dogmatism and its spirit is for them a spirit which would cast out their particular demon in preparation for the Spirit of Christ. Imagine the temper of men owning ostensibly Jesus as their Lord, who treat His Incarnation day with contempt, while they honour like a Sabbath the heathen day marking a new year, preparing to spend Christ's birth-day at work rather than in meditations upon His advent, loving better the mart than the sanctuary.

Let us who follow the Babe of Bethlehem take up then the festive strains and customary observances which are consecrated by fifteen hundred years of pious usage in the mother land. Let us leave the puritan churl to his avarice, and the Calvinist to his store and his desk, while we rejoice and are glad at the Church's call, "Let us go to the house of the Lord" to offer up to Jesus a memorial of love, and in His name and in His spirit cultivate those earthly affections of family and kind which have made Christmas not alone the Festival of the Church but by being the very bond of peace and the symbol of charity, is established as the most enduring, most joyous Festival of mankind.

THE REFORMED EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

We quote a few extracts from the eighth "General Council (I) of the Reformed Episcopal Church."

"Bishop" Nicholson said in his report (p. 36): "As a Church we have been passing through a severely sifting process. . . . I cannot but think that God has been chastening us for our vanity, our ambition, our haste, to become, as a Church, a great power in the world. . . . In fine, I fear that while being outwardly Reformed Episcopalians, we have not been sufficiently so evangelically and spiritually."

"Bishop" Wilson, of Canada, says (p. 43): "The peculiar and afflictive circumstances through which our Church has been called to pass in Canada has arrested the previous signs of hopeful progress to a very considerable extent. Added to this the intelligent sympathy that was watching our movement, and causing in the minds of many a strong disposition to unite with us, has been temporarily withdrawn."

"Bishop" Sugden, of Great Britain says (p. 49): "It will occasion no surprise to those who have closely watched the course of events here in England to be honestly told that our progress during the past year has not been very marked. Our strength and

our wisdom, in matters simply ecclesiastical, have been to sit still. . . . Never was the advocacy of the principles of the Reformed Episcopal Church more needed. . . . Even in the Evangelical Churches the black academic gown is fast yielding to the surplice, and the people are betrayed by the fascinations of a merely æsthetic and unspiritual service. Even if the work of the Reformed Episcopal Church in this country should prove but an interim work, a course of testimony, it will still issue in the purification of the Church of our fathers, and in the furtherance of the Gospel."

"Bishop" Latane says (p. 60): "In reviewing the work in the field especially assigned to me, I cannot but express the regret that so much valuable time was lost to it by my having to devote six months, immediately after my election, to the work in Canada. I was assigned to the work in the South at a very critical time in its history. In proof of this, let some of the facts be recalled. The church in Louisville, Ky., the first and for a long time the strongest organization within the jurisdiction of the South, had then very recently failed and been disbanded. The Bishop Cummins Memorial church, Baltimore, had barely escaped the auctioneer's hammer, and was still in a state of perfectly hopeless indebtedness. The church at Jacksonville, Florida, had suspended services and little remained of it but a half completed structure on a heavily mortgaged lot of ground. The church in Washington city had been rent in twain by miserable internal dissensions, and was practically worse than dead. And the other churches were in such a state of collapse that in the entire jurisdiction there was but one church, Christ church, Cumberland, Md., which was really self-supporting. The whole outlook for the Church in the southern jurisdiction was therefore most discouraging, as I very clearly saw, at the time of my acceptance of that charge, and of course it was still more so at the end of six months, when I found myself at liberty to give myself to the work there. Since then some eighteen months have passed, and though the ground previously lost has not been recovered, unquestionably the things that remained have been greatly strengthened. All our churches have taken deeper root and become more firmly established during the past winter, and especially have they recently been greatly encouraged and strengthened by a generous gift of \$12,000 to the Bishop Cummins Memorial church from Mrs. Thomas H. Powers. By this munificent gift, that church has been relieved of its most pressing burden and happily saved to the cause, and both the other churches in Baltimore greatly helped. We trust at the next meeting of the council you will receive, by the blessing of the Lord, a brighter and more cheering report from the missionary jurisdiction of the South."

The number of all the clergy in the "Reformed Episcopal Church" is 72; number of "bishops," 10; showing plainly that however they differ from the Episcopal Church in doctrine and worship, they believe in episcopacy.

Diocesan Intelligence.

MONTREAL.

From Our Own Correspondent.

DUNHAM.—This parish has had a series of ecclesiastical engagements this week. This Bishop preached on Wednesday. On Thursday was held the visitation of the Ladies' College by the Lord Bishop and Ven. Archdeacon Lindsay, with other clergy of the deanery, and a brilliant gathering of talent and beauty for a social, literary, and musical entertainment in the evening. On Sunday his Lordship holds a confirmation in the parish church, and another in East Durham. In the evening he preaches again in the parish church, when he is to induct formally, the Rev. John Kerr, who has been actually in possession nigh unto six months. On the assumption that it will give an impressive lesson to the people on the due relation of clergyman and congregation to each other, the saying: "Better late than never," will probably apply.

The Coffee Room, first broached by the Cathedral Band of Hope, has taken shape, and is now in working order. The Ladies' Aid, in connection with the Cathedral, realized over \$800 by their bazaar. They took the field early, and have profited accordingly.

Great preparations are being made by the Independents and Methodists for the remembrance of Christmas by their Sunday-schools, so far as feasting and giving gifts to their children will tend to do so. In many places they out do Church people in this matter. As it has often been remarked of late years, great is the change that has come over them, es-