

sent" of those who welcomed your young minister twenty-five years ago, and the many who have since been added to our ranks. May the Master of the Feast make His presence felt by you and me, for I shall be with you in spirit.

I cannot tell you how deeply I have been moved by the loving sympathy expressed by you, my beloved friends, in so many ways to myself. The Lord reward you for all your kindnesses to me and mine!

Need I say how much we owe in present circumstances to our tried friend, Principal Grant, and to Mr. Drummond, and to his congregation, which has acted with rare self-forgetfulness in agreeing to allow its minister to come to us for some months? There are scores of brethren, moreover, who have offered to serve us in any way in their power. More and more do I bless God for the precious human sympathy whose streams are fed from the fountain of His own love.

What the coming years will bring, which of us can tell? The future is in the hands of Him who sees the end from the beginning, and whose Name is Love. "The Lord hath been mindful of us; He will bless us."

"The Lord bless you and keep you. the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you: the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace!"

Yours faithfully,

Fergus, December, 1895,

D. J. MACDONNELL.

THE INCARNATION.

THOUGH this be but little in the thoughts of the multitude, it is really what this season, the sacred festival of Christmas, calls to and ever keeps in mind. It is by far the most transcendently important event which has ever taken place in the history of the human race; it has colored all its history both before it and since, and it marks its most significant epoch. As there is so much connected with it at present in the minds of most, which though not wrong, is yet calculated to give it a trivial character, a few thoughts about it of a more serious kind are surely in place in a religious paper, and ought to be welcome to our readers.

One cannot seriously think of the incarnation, without the mind being filled with the wonder of it, and the longer and more deeply that it is dwelt upon, the more will the wonder of it fill and overpower the reverent, thoughtful mind. What is there to equal in wonder, the second person in the blessed Trinity, the great God, who created with a word and continually upholds all things, who fills immensity with His presence, the Sovereign Ruler and Almighty Lord of all creatures and all worlds, submitting to the limitations of such a nature as ours, to become flesh, to be born of a woman, to grow, to hunger and thirst, to suffer weariness; to leave behind the glories and honor of the heavenly state, to dwell in lowliness and poverty among men, and become a homeless wanderer among the creatures and upon the earth which He called into being; nay, more; to be opposed, oppressed, maligned, persecuted, and at last put to a cruel and shameful death. This is indeed a wonder, the wonder of wonders, but how great it is no finite mind can conceive, much less unfold.

Next to this is the mystery of it. This adds to the wonder. The fact has been so long familiar to us, that it is only when we deliberately think upon the incarnation that the greatness of the mystery takes hold of the mind. It lays hold of and humbles and awes the devout soul, but who can penetrate or explain the mystery of the union of the divine and human natures in one person? Man's insatiable curiosity, and pride of intellect, have indeed grappled again and again with this great mystery, and the multitude of words have only served to make it more inscrutable than it was before. Better would it be to leave its solution unattempted; secret things belong to God. That the Incarnate One was man and yet more, His life of unspotted holiness in a world steeped in sin, His doctrine, His works, His resurrection, and the strange yet mighty influence for good, which these and His unique personality, exhibited during a ministry of three brief years, have everywhere and always exerted upon the human race, in every age, every part of the globe, of every social condition, clearly show, that while He was indeed man, He was none other than what He claimed to be, God manifest in flesh.

The Incarnation which this season reminds us of, reminds us also of God's faithfulness. At the dawn of history the promise of this great event was dimly foreshadowed, and as age after age passed, like the unrolling of some vast curtain, the design grew more and more clear and distinct. What a history grew up around these ever-unfolding, ever-brightening promises, what hopes long deferred, until scoffing scepticism said, "Where is the promise of His

coming?" But God is not slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness. The fullness of time at length arrived, and God sent forth His Son on His divine mission of love and salvation, and His appearance vindicated the veracity of God, and this season, as long and as often as it recurs, adds another and another testimony to His faithfulness, and serves to establish in His people an immovable confidence in His word. Heaven and earth may pass away, but not one jot or tittle of His word will ever pass away. It is well that in a world where all is changeable and uncertain, we should, by the recurrence of this season from time to time, be anew reminded of, and have set before us the unchanging faithfulness of God.

In the incarnation, recalled by this season, we have also a continually repeated remembrance of the divine love. The wonder, the mystery and faithfulness of God at the Christmas season brought afresh before us, are all crowned by the love that shines in this most pregnant and momentous fact in history. A pity, helpfulness and kindness towards man that are infinite as well as divine, shine forth in the incarnation and should make this a season of gratitude, of rekindling love, and renewed consecration to the service of Him who gave Himself for us, who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. The manner and purpose of the Incarnation, and the way in which this divine purpose was carried out, alike proclaim, and write as it were in letters of light on every age of history, and on every act of His providence that "God is love."

There are also a promise and potency for good to the human race in the incarnation, which should at this season be felt like a new inspiration to everything good, and a fresh well-spring of hope and encouragement to all. Even as it is, earth's history has many a sad, blood and tear-stained page. But what would it have been without the incarnation of the Christ of God? It was ushered in with the song of the angelic choir, of "peace on earth and good-will to men." Dark as the picture has too often been even since, yet the only light that has shone athwart the gloom, is that which has radiated from the Sun of righteousness. Wherever the knowledge of the incarnation of God's Son has gone, and the good news it carries with it have been heard, accepted and acted upon, and just in proportion as they have been, have peace and good-will spread their benign influence among men. Contrast the condition of those who are destitute of this transforming, uplifting, saving knowledge with that of those who have it not, and how great is the difference, and to what is it all owing, but to the facts, and the spirit and power of them, of which this time is the commemoration? In proportion as they spread, the darkness and degradation, the misery and hopelessness of life begin to be relieved, and it is only as they spread, are heartily received and incorporated into the very life of society, that the dawn brightens and broadens into the perfect day. The only hope of mankind lies in the promise and potency for good of the incarnation of which Christmas is the memorial, and only when it is known by every people of every race, and tribe, and tongue, and all that this fact of wonder and mystery, and of the love and faithfulness of God implies, will the tears, and woes, and miseries of mankind be exchanged for the glad and ceaseless anthem of praise, which in the purpose of God was inaugurated by the incarnation.

SCHOOL CHILDREN AND PERNICIOUS LITERATURE.

THE dreadful case of matricide by two little boys in England a short time ago, and the fact that their room was found filled with a pile of cheap romances reeking with bloodshed and all modes of criminal horrors, have drawn special attention to the vast mass of sensational and demoralizing literature which is being circulated all over the world, and especially among school boys, and it is even to be added among school girls, to a far greater extent than is generally suspected, or would, when stated, be actually believed. In Britain the circulation of this sort of so-called literature is simply appalling; and not merely in the large centres of population, but even in quiet country towns and villages, as well as in districts entirely rural, and therefore often believed to be perfectly innocent and moral. The same thing is true of the States, in the estimation of many even to a much

greater extent, while we in Canada need not play the Pharisee and raise our thanksgiving of "God, I thank Thee." We may not have so very much of that kind of ware manufactured among ourselves, though there is more even of that than many suspect. But in spite of all the professed caution and supervising care exercised by our Post Office and Customs, the amount of imported mental and moral poison is sufficiently formidable. It is what alone a great many boys and girls as well as young men and women read, so that to many the only benefit derived from going to school, seems to be in their own estimation that it gives them the power to revel in such rubbish. And even when such books are not distinctly profane or indecent, yet they are generally of such a frightfully blood and thunder character, as very naturally and inevitably to unfit their admirers for all the ordinary and actual realities of life and work. Robbers, thieves, highwaymen, train-wreckers, pirates, gamblers, smugglers, and the whole army of blackguards and blacklegs are raised to the position of heroes and demigods, and the one great aspiration of many who follow their fortunes through the well thumbed "penny dreadfuls" is "Let us be like them, with our pockets full of money and our caves crammed with cargoes that never knew the customs." The young blackguards who a few years ago tried their hands at "holding up" some of the bank clerks in this city, were simply specimens of such training and such results. Again and again have indecent books been found in the desks of grown up school girls, even in this Canada of ours, as school teachers and inspectors will often acknowledge with sorrow and regret. Not only so, if we may judge from the indecent posters on the dead walls of our towns and cities, advertising many of the favorite theatrical representations of the day, it is but reasonable to conclude that the virus has spread further, and that men and women are making themselves vile for bread, and, as a result, are getting "bread," and that very abundantly.

The "nude" is popular, and all who object, are sneered at as man-worms, or patronizingly condemned as destitute of "culture." Even *litterateurs*, who would feel horrified if they were looked upon as catering for the gutter, have the most of their heroes and heroines among those who look upon the Ten Commandments, and especially the seventh, as the mere childish traditions of ages of ignorant superstition and meaningless cant. Their "women who did," and their maidens who "desired but durst not," are all of the same kidney, with a philosophy that ends in the sty of Epicurus, and a moral idea that culminates in a female "emancipation," which guarantees this at any rate that the "pure woman" of the hour shall be no more mercenary than the cattle of the field and morally no higher. What is the remedy? Mere suppression by law will do little—some lawyers say can do nothing. What then? Has Christianity lost its power? Is the Sermon on the Mount a helpless tradition? In the meantime the following remarks of an English reviewer of the present month may well be applied on a wider scale than either London or England, and deserves to be pondered seriously on this side the Atlantic as well, by all who wish well to the rising generation whether of the higher or of the lower classes:

"The teachers [in ordinary day schools] have no authority out of school hours, and even in school time are afraid to enforce discipline with properly parental severity, while the parents are either incapable of controlling their own children when at home, except in a most rudimentary manner, or are too much occupied with their own work, and too tired in their leisure hours to attend to them. The consequence is that the children generally lose in both ways an essential element of their education: and, as many of us in London are only too well aware, the smaller side streets are often full, out of school hours, of a mob of loafing children making themselves an arrant nuisance, and picking up just such a set of bad habits as childish liberty necessitates. Is it wonderful that the boys get into mischief, and at a precocious age take the worst specimens of their class for examples, learning such disagreeable and pernicious practices as premature smoking and continual spitting? Nobody stops them. It is nobody's business. Yet every body grumbles and truly, at the way in which the manners of these children are degenerating. It is only a natural result of their compulsory freedom from work which we have demanded, in order that they may attend school and learn to read, and write, and do sums. Manners are not in the curriculum, and while the children are just as prone to wanton mischief, as the little monkeys always have been, rudeness, incivility, indecency and profanity are more than ever features in their speech and behaviour."

Well! "What will ye do with it?" Is the behaviour of many children going to and from Sunday schools much better?