

ALL SAINTS' DAY.

Once yearly does the Church set apart a day which is specially consecrated to all the Saints in Heaven. Not a day of the year passes without that the feast of some Saint is celebrated; but there are millions of Saints, enjoying God's glory at present, whose names are not even known, nor are the particulars of their lives and deaths recorded. There are hosts of glorified and blessed ones who have never been canonized by the Church, and who are none the less Saints of God. All of these are included in the devotions of the first of November.

Here it might not be out of place to remark that the canonization of a departed person does not make that being a Saint, as it is supposed by some and as many of the opponents of Catholicity attempt to argue. They say "the Church pretends to canonize as it pleases and thereby sent whom it likes to heaven." Not by any means. The canonization is a consequence of the saintliness of the holy dead; but the saintliness is not the result of canonization. In fact, the canonization is nothing other than a public pronouncement by the Church that sufficient evidence has been given to show that such or such a person is now in possession of eternal glory. And that evidence has been sifted most carefully; long years, sometimes centuries, elapse between the first recognized manifestation that indicated sanctity, and the final pronouncement of canonization; no stone is left unturned to establish every doubt that might be reasonably entertained. Consequently, when the Church, after such investigation, declares the evidence sufficient, there can exist no longer any doubt as to the sanctity of the one whose life has been under examination; moreover, the Church being divinely inspired, having the constant presence of the great illuminator and sanctifier—the Holy Ghost—declares that which she knows to be true, and she has never and can never err.

But, as we have already stated, only a certain number of the Saints have been actually canonized, yet there are others of the elect. It is only meet that a day should be chosen whereon the soldiers of the Church Militant might pay homage to and invoke the members of the Church Triumphant. These Saints are not like the other celestial beings, the pure spirits that hover around the throne of God; these Saints have passed through this life; they have felt all the pangs to which humanity is subjected; they lived in a world that is surrounded by an atmosphere of sin; they underwent the same temptations that we daily undergo; they wrestled with the world, the devil and the flesh; they experienced the great necessity of Divine grace and heavenly protection; they gave up their lives for the cause of Christ, and as a result they wear to-day the glorious crowns that have been promised to all who unfalteringly carry their heavy crosses. Therefore, these Saints in heaven know, as well as we do, how difficult the path of salvation is; they know better than we do how much we stand in need of assistance from above; they feel for us, sympathize with us, and are ever ready to befriend us—not only for our own sakes, but especially for the greater glory of God.

To-day they are the bosom friends of the Almighty. By their lives and by their deaths they have sealed forever their eternal happiness and have secured the unbounded love, the unending gratitude (if such a term may be used) of the Creator. It is only natural, then, that their prayers should be most potent and their petitions most readily granted.

For themselves they require nothing more; they now possess in its plenitude the happiness that knows no ending; they are seated in presence of the Beatific Vision, and the cup of their bliss is filled to the brim. But they are ever anxious for the increased glory of God and the happiness of His creatures. The more souls that go from earth to heaven the more will there be to replace the fallen angels and to compensate for the numberless unfortunates who daily descend to fill the caverns of iniquity and undying misery. This thought alone, were there never another one, would suffice to enlist the Saints in our cause and to secure their services beside the Fountain of all Grace. They cannot come to us; but we can go to them. We can ask of them to recall their own severe battles with the envoys of hell; to remember that we are struggling along the same rugged pathway; that our strength is even not as great as was theirs; and that we require the aid of heaven. Especially upon the great Feast of All Saints should we offer up our petitions, and there is not the slightest doubt but that they will receive attention.

Imagine that glorious scene—if the human imagination dare attempt such lofty flight—when the "frontier hosts of heaven take heed," and our prayers are handed from one to the other along that glittering array of Martyrs, Confessors, Virgins, Priests, and Pontiffs, until the "Queen of All Saints" receives them and presents them before the throne of Eternal Glory. Joy celestial flashes from the blissful countenances, and the mansions of God seem—if it were possible—to shine more brilliantly with beams of happiness, as the mandate goes forth, and, in obedience, the Angel of God's Treasury opens the valves and streams of grace of benediction flow down the expanse of heaven, to be scattered, like refreshing rain, upon the parched soil of our thirsty souls. Great is the Feast of All Saints, and wonderful the power of good that these holy ones possess. To-morrow, not one of them will be absent; they will lean over the battlements of heaven to catch every petition that ascends from a human soul. Surely they will not await in vain!

ALL SOULS' DAY.

Friday next, the 2nd November, the Church calls upon the faithful to remember the souls in Purgatory. All Souls' Day is one of the saddest and yet most consoling days of the year. We on that occasion are called upon, in an especial manner, to remember the departed, to help the sufferers who can no longer help themselves, to go to the grave and there hold converse with God in the cause of those dear dead ones, but we have the glorious consolation of knowing that upon All Souls' Day there are countless sufferers who pass from the prison-house of Purgatory into the freedom unending of God's glory; and we know that our prayers, our alms, our sacrifices and our sufferings, if offered up in their behalf, are the keys that unlock the door of their abode. Yes; all this month of November is specially dedicated to the service of the souls in Purgatory. It has been well chosen; for there is a gloom about November that corresponds with the feelings of natural sorrow for the departed; and there is a promise in November—a promise of Christmas joys that are to follow its penitential advent—and it harmonizes well with the promise of a glorious resurrection. On All Souls' Day there is a special pilgrimage to the Cote des Neiges cemetery, and there the faithful, in a body, go around the Stations

of the Cross. "It is a holy and a wholesome thought to pray for the day that they may be released from their sins," says the Book of Holy Writ; let all our readers go on that day—at least in spirit—to Cote des Neiges, and join in that solemn procession. In the meantime we will go to the City of the Dead and gaze upon a scene that is potent with salutary lessons.

Grey, damp and dreary is the atmosphere; sad, solemn and awe-inspiring the surroundings; cold the air, cloudy the sky, sombre the prospect, funereal the picture. Evening is approaching, the short day is dying, the shrill blast shrieks among the leafless branches, the ashen twilight seems to cast a cloak of death upon all nature. Suddenly, in the far west, just on the rim of the horizon, beyond the darkening summit of the last mountain-range, the clouds part for a space, and the rays of the setting sun light up the expanse, paint the faces of the black misty banks with crimson and orange, gold and silver, shoot horizontally over the damp landscape, tip the summits of the cold monuments in the silent city, and shed an unexpected splendor upon a scene of desolation—Hope shining upon the grave!

It is so with the Catholic life. Mournful is the parting, bitter are the tears that are shed for the lost one, at the tomb we kneel and behold disappearing for all time the casket that holds the mortal remains of a beloved being. Life seems desolate and the mist of grief hangs in thick masses along the horizon of the future. So far our non-Catholic friends accompany us; they, too, feel all the intensity of human sorrow, and they ask of God consolation for the living, that they may bear up against all such sad afflictions. But at the barrier of the grave they part entirely from the one that is gone; they turn back into the autumn atmosphere of a dreary world and their dead friend is lost to them for the rest of life. No communion of souls; no relief from pains through the prayers of the living; no blessings conferred upon the dead. It is at that moment, when the evening of life is passing and the night of the grave closing in upon the dead, that the sunburst of promise flashes from beneath the clouds and tells to the Catholic that there is an unbroken chain of union between the souls in Purgatory and the souls on earth. The parting rays of the sun illumine the clouds upon our horizon, but his herald beams proclaim the new day to another hemisphere; the rays of consolation that Faith beholds in that last hour but faintly tinge the clouds of human sorrow, yet we know that other shafts from that same glorious orb already flash upon the hills of eternity.

This great and consoling dogma of Purgatory is one of the best evidences of the Divine foundation of the Catholic Church. No other established religion carries its charities beyond the tomb. The Catholic Church alone possesses the communion of saints. Triumphant in Heaven, suffering in Purgatory and Militant on earth, she is the same wonderful, mystical, universal body, filled with the spirit of Truth, knowing no limitations, indestructible, infallible, binding together the living and the dead, continuing throughout the centuries unchanged and unchangeable, taking in all time, from the beginning of Redemption's work to the closing day of the centuries, taking neither heed of time nor mutations, and opening for man, in this world, only the ante-chambers of her unmeasurable and eternal proportions.

Since we have the consolation of being members of such an institution, and the possessors of a faith that unites us with the dead, let us not forget those suffering

souls, but remember that every prayer or offering that we make in their cause will knock off links from the shackles that bind them and will secure for ourselves countless blessings that their gratitude will shower upon us when comes our hour of need. Moreover, there are to-day countless souls in Purgatory who have no friends to pray for them, or whose friends neglect them. For this reason does the Church call upon the faithful throughout this month of November to offer up prayers for those sufferers. Therefore, we say that while All Souls' Day is one of the saddest, it is also one of the most consoling in the calendar of the Church.

THE HOUSE OF LORDS.

Things in this world are very mutable. Old empires, old kingdoms, old constitutions and old systems are constantly vanishing, while new institutions arise on their ruins. It seems remarkable that the greatest contemplated change in that old power—the British House of Lords—should emanate from one of its own members. The speech of the present Premier, which we publish in this issue, is calculated to set some of the titled legislators a-thinking. It is true he does not go as far as to declare in favor of the abolition of the Upper House, but he certainly leaves the public to understand that radical changes must be made in that body. He clearly points out the manner in which the present prerogatives and powers of the Lords constitute a perpetual menace to the people, that is to the House of Commons representing the people. And he indicates that the policy of the present Government, on this question, will be one very far from favorable to the House of Lords.

The fact of Lord Rosebery committing his Government to a campaign against the Lords, and to a revision of the constitution, indicates most clearly that the wave of democratic sentiment which has been rising for years, and has rolled over the face of Europe, is more powerful than those who oppose its progress are desirous of admitting. Very few high and powerful mountain peaks of autocratic power are left uncovered by that wave to-day; perhaps the House of Lords may be the last summit upon which their ark may rest. But as well strive to stem the St. Lawrence, or to check the tide on Atlantic, as to try to prevent the advance of democratic sentiment the world over. Before this generation has passed away we may expect—and reasonably so—to behold the principle of "laws for the people, by the people," universally recognized. What the immediate effects of Lord Rosebery's attitude may be is more than we can predict; but we feel certain that he has taken the "bull by the horns" and that he will stand or fall by his action in this instance.

As long as the House of Lords remains, or, at least, remains constituted as it is to-day, the Irish people need not expect any permanent triumph for their cause. As long as that Upper House has the power to reject measures for the passage of which months of time and immense amounts have been expended, so long will the Commons, and therefore the people, be unable to attain any grand, necessary, or rational reforms. The great obstructionist body in British legislation is the House of Lords, and while the Premier may not have gone as far in his expression of opposition to that body as some of the more advanced Liberals might like, still he has assumed a position not to be expected from a Lord, and far more democratic and independent than any of his predecessors has ever dared to take. It is evident that the fate of the Lords—at least for the next quarter of a century—depends upon the result of the coming elections.