


NOVEMBER THOUGHTS.

HE most melancholy month of the year is precisely that which the Church has set aside for special devotion to the dead. Just when the brilliant yellow and scarlet of October, its late flowers, its mellow sunlight have given place to branches stripped of their foliage, to sunless days, to swiftly darkening afternoons, the Church puts up her voice of supplication. November opens with the feast of the dead; churches draped in black, hymns of weird solemnity, kneeling multitudes all fill the mind with the sense of the close communion which exists between the Catholic Christian and the souls of the departed. Those he has loved have but crossed the borders to another country: a country, indeed, of which he knows nothing, of which maps have never been drawn out, of which no explorations have been made, and at whose boundaries science falls back powerless. But the eye of faith follows the soul beloved, beholds him with the Church suffering, crying aloud for prayer and sacrifice from those who in life, would have saved him at any cost one hour's pain, or perceives above in the celestial choir, the familiar figure, freed, perhaps, by the prayers of the Church, from purgatorial flame, radiant with the glory of heaven, rejoicing in the triumphant end of weariness and pain, secure forever from pain or loss. Every prayer of the Church on that Feast of Souls, the very wording of the hymns speak of secure hope, a positive faith, and a charity that has gone far beyond the invisible barrier of the grave. The "just shall be in everlasting remembrance," says the Missal. "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." And following the solemn promise: "The hour cometh when the dead shall hear the voice of the son of God: and they that hear shall live." And the supplication, in that sublime canticle that like a cry of sorrow, rises in beseeching tones to the very throne of that *Rex tremendæ majestatis*.

Recollect, O Lord divine,
'Twas for this lost sheep of thine
Thou thy glory didst resign:

Sattest wearied seeking me;
Sufferedst upon the tree:
Let not vain thy labor be.

Judge of practice, hear my prayer;
Spare me, Lord, in mercy spare;
Ere the reckoning day appear.

And the *Libera*, that hymn of unearthly solemnity, which seems to be as the voice of the shrouded dead, crying from their place of rest, for pardon and for mercy.

The Feast of All Souls fitly ushers in a month, of which no day passes without some remembrance of those gone

before on the part of the faithful Catholic. A little prayer, speculative it may be, a Rosary, a Mass heard, the Way of the Cross made, a Communion received, something goes every day into the Treasury of the Church, is applied to some suffering soul, and ushers it perhaps into heaven. Every class of souls is remembered during this month. As, for instance, those, who dying out of the visible pale of the Church, may, by some secret of God's mercy, be saved and sent to Purgatory. Who is to pray for them? Not their own friends who do not believe in intercession for the dead. Must they, then, suffer on, perhaps to the end of time, beholding each day their brethren of the suffering Church released by prayer and sacrifice and hastened into the glory of the blessed abode. The Church during this month of the dead, prays in a special manner for all "who have none upon earth to remember or pray for them." Her divine charity looks with special consideration on these forsaken ones.

Prayer for the dead is the closest bond of union we can have with those we have loved on earth. Though we shall never see on earth, again, the smile that was once our sunlight, though the eyes that looked upon us with so pure affection are closed forever, though the heart that beat so warmly and so truly, is shut beneath a coffin lid, and separated from us by a mound of earth; though the hand so often outstretched to clasp our own in moments of sorrow, of doubt or peril, is cold and rigid, still we can repay the dear ones now as we never could on earth for all we owe them. Every word of affection, every good counsel, we can return to them a hundredfold. Though we are ever so poor, though while they lived our gratitude, or kindly impulse towards them was often checked by the iron hand of circumstance, we are rich in their regard, the moment we have laid them in the grave. And, then, they go up to Heaven our debtors, and it is their due turn to begin the work of repaying us—a work which they never cease until we stand side by side with them in the kingdom of God.

Thus do the flowers of love grow upon a Catholic grave. Every thought of the departed becomes a prayer. The sight of a beautiful sunset recalls to us at once, the one who is gone, how his past soul had kindled, how his sympathetic heart had felt its beauty. Remembering we breathe a prayer, God rest his soul, or may he rest in peace. The calm of a summer starlight or the frosty splendor of a full moon in winter, brings back some far off July or January when he, sleeping now within the darkness of the grave, shut out forever from such sights, had looked with us on such a scene. But faith awakes. The grave has not engulfed the soul. To our lips arises again the prayer for mercy, and we seem to see the loved one drawing nearer, nearer as we pray, to a place of ineffable beauty.

"Where our pale joys will seem a dream forgotten,
Our sun a darkness, and our day a night."

So music, touching deep chords within us, some inspirations of art, which once we enjoyed together, become now the mighty impulses which bid us pray, which bid us labor to gain heaven for our beloved. Here on earth how often