

EDITORIAL

MOUNT ATHOS IN ERUPTION.

By DANIEL DE LEON

ALTHO there is substantial truth in Edmund Burke's observation that "religious sects are volcanoes burnt out," here and there one of these sects starts to erupt even in our own days. And well it is that so it happens. The happening tends to refresh the mind on the essential humanness of these allegedly religious bodies.

The "religious bodies" that are just now "giving testimony" are the monasteries of Mt. Athos, located on the Aegean Sea.

As a religious denomination, Mt. Athos is a collective name for about a score of monasteries connected with the Greek Catholic Church, and under the general jurisdiction of the Holy Synod of Russia. Such has for long been the "religious" unction of the about 6,000 monks congregated on the spot, that the prefix "Holy" has become attached to Mt. Athos—Holy Mt. Athos. Now, then, these monks have recently interpreted certain biblical passages according to their own lights, whereupon they pronounced all those who disagreed with them "heretics," and promptly drew from the same anathema upon their own heads. The long and short of the story is that each side of the theological conflict claims to "represent God," and, Holy Mt. Athos being the compacter body, advances its claim with the greater vehemence, and enforces it with the greater prelatical virulence. According to press despatches, there have been physical encounters that have stained red the soil of Holy Mt. Athos.

The present spectacle at Holy Mt. Athos illumines the conduct of all creeds.

Each claims exclusive holiness, and each claims to be the exclusive representative of the divinity. Yet the fact that each consists of human beings, and that, in the last analysis, it is the thoughts and sentiments of human beings that they utter,—that fact speedily demonstrates itself in the human acts of ill nature, of arro-

gance and of violence that they all resort to as their final argument. The “word of God,” which the zealots of Holy Mount Athos claim to utter, is in their instance, as in the instance of all other creeds, the word of the creed-constituents, a present volcano in eruption.

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