

UNIVERSITY OF ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE



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# LOURDES

ITS INHABITANTS, ITS PILGRIMS,  
AND ITS MIRACLES

WITH AN ACCOUNT OF

THE APPARITIONS AT THE GROTTA

AND A SKETCH OF

BERNADETTE'S SUBSEQUENT HISTORY

BY

RICHARD F. CLARKE, S.J.

NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO

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LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

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THE MISSIONARIES AT LOURDES.

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NOTRE DAME DE LOURDES,  
HAUTES PYRÉNÉES, FRANCE.

April 18, 1888.

REV. AND VERY DEAR FATHER:

I have read your articles on Lourdes with the most lively interest, and beg you to accept my sincere and most hearty congratulations.

What has struck me above all is the rigorous exactitude that prevails throughout your story. You have succeeded in catching the true spirit of the place. Yours is not a description: it is rather a photograph of persons, places, and things.

I do not say anything of the masterly way in which you have treated the question of miracles. But I have great pleasure in bearing witness to the correctness of all you narrate. As I have been a member of the *Bureau des Constatations* for several years, I have myself seen and spoken with all the persons whose cures you recount.

I hope you will publish your articles together in a little book. It will be very useful to English speaking visitors, and will be the harbinger of the Devotion to our Lady of Lourdes throughout the United States of America and the wide-spread lands of the British Empire.

Father Superior desires me to express to you the sincere gratitude of our whole community, and to assure you that we will not forget to pray for you to Notre Dame de Lourdes.

I remain, Rev. and very dear Father,

Yours sincerely in Jesus Christ,

N. BUROSSE, M. I. C.,

*English Confessor at Lourdes.*

TO REV. R. F. CLARKE, S. J.



# LOURDES.

## PREFACE TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

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There are very few Americans who cross the Atlantic without paying a visit to fair France's beauteous capital. The strange admixture of virtue and vice, piety and irreligion, which they encounter there, gives them no true idea of the real state of religion in Catholic France. A large city is generally more prone to evil than less populous districts, and, moreover, in a large city vice seems to come to the surface and virtue to hide itself away in nooks and corners where it escapes the stranger's eye. The American or English tourist who goes no further is in danger of leaving Paris with a false or, at all events, a onesided view of the religious condition of the country.

To any one who desires to see the true Catholic faith of France I would strongly recommend a visit to Lourdes. It is without exception the most marvelous of shrines and places of pilgrimage that the world has witnessed in modern times.

Lourdes is very easy of access from the French Capital. It is a journey of some eighteen to twenty hours. The evening express from Paris will bring the traveller to the Grotto by the follow-

ing afternoon. Nor will he be disappointed on his arrival there. Lourdes presents even to the casual visitor a sight unparalleled elsewhere. He will see countless crowds of pious pilgrims gather round the Grotto with a strong and firm faith in the miraculous power to heal of the water that flows there. He will see the assemblage, from every part of France and the neighboring countries, of thousands and tens of thousands who come to ask for some favor from the Mother of God, by reason of her having there manifested herself to a poor peasant girl. He will see the halt and the lame, the blind and the deaf, the victims of almost every incurable disease that afflicts humanity, brought thither that they may be healed. And what is far more wonderful, he will see not a few of these depart in health and strength, cured of those ills that the skilled physician pronounced absolutely incurable. He will see, moreover, thousands of the sons and daughters of Catholic France joining in solemn procession to pray for blessings on their country and to intercede for those who have lost their faith. He will hear them shouting out in sonorous refrain the hymns of Catholic devotion and the heartfelt expressions of Catholic loyalty. Above all, he will see undeniable marks of an earnestness, a sincerity, a strong simplicity of faith, a deeply rooted attachment to religion, which declares France to be still sound at heart, in spite of the vice of her large towns and the Godlessness

of so many, even of those who still call themselves by the name of Catholics.

To all Lourdes must have an intense interest, whether Catholic or non-Catholic, believer or sceptic. But above all to the faithful children of the Church it has an attraction which is something far beyond the natural desire to satisfy religious curiosity. No Catholic who has studied carefully and thoroughly the record of the miracles wrought at Lourdes, and the account of the apparitions of Our Lady to Bernadette Soubirous, can fail to be convinced of the reality both of one and of the other. Such a conviction will carry with it a strong desire to see the spot where these wonders are wrought, to drink of the healthgiving fount, to pray at the shrine where God has thus manifested his power and his love. Even those who have not this conviction will be drawn to Lourdes by a desire to study more closely a phenomenon so remarkable, and to form a judgment from their own personal experience of the causes that have given rise to it.

This little book is written with the hope that it may induce many Americans, and especially many American Catholics, to visit Lourdes and investigate its wonders for themselves. The reader can rely on the accuracy of the facts narrated, since they have been submitted to the good Fathers in charge of the Grotto, who have had the kindness to correct these pages. The courtesy which the writer himself

met with at their hands will be experienced by every visitor. Several of the Fathers are perfectly conversant with English. One of them has been for many years in America. Another has spent some time in England. All of them are ready to afford every facility to the visitor of thoroughly investigating for himself all the wonders that are wrought at Lourdes.

In the various hotels excellent accomodation may be had, and the country around is marked by a picturesque beauty closely resembling that of certain portions of the Bernese Oberland. Lourdes is an excellent centre for excursions into the heart of the Pyrenees, and only a few hours are required to reach the Spanish frontier. Any one travelling from France to Spain will necessarily pass within a short distance of Lourdes, and find it a most convenient halting place.

LONDON,

*Lady Day, 1888.*

# CONTENTS.

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	PAGE
Preface.....	5
CHAPTER	
I. Lourdes and its Inhabitants.....	11
II. Lourdes and its Pilgrims.....	44
III. Lourdes and its Miracles....	77
IV. Some incontrovertible Miracles at Lourdes....	109
V. Some further Miracles at Lourdes.....	141
VI. Bernadette Soubirous and her Visions of Our Lady.....	173
VII. The Subsequent History of Bernadette Soubi- rous.....	206



# LOURDES:

## ITS INHABITANTS, ITS PILGRIMS, AND ITS MIRACLES.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### LOURDES AND ITS INHABITANTS.

**T**HE stranger who disembarks at the railway station at Lourdes soon discovers that he has arrived at a place utterly unlike all other places in the world that he has ever visited heretofore. If he has journeyed thither from Bordeaux, by way of Pau, he will already have had a glimpse of the magic scene across the waters of the Gave; he will have passed immediately in front of the spot which he has come to visit, with the Basilica above and the Grotto below facing him as he looks out of the carriage windows on the right hand side. For the line runs along the valley and skirts the river for some considerable distance, and as it nears the station of Lourdes it is sufficiently raised above its level to give an excellent *coup d'œil* from a vantage-ground of some thirty or

forty feet over the rock of Massabielle, and the little niche where our Lady's statue marks the spot where she appeared to Bernadette, and over the open space which separates the Grotto from the river, and it may be over some hundreds or thousands of pious pilgrims kneeling there and worshipping at the shrine.

But if he has taken the route of Tarbes, he will encounter no new experience until he arrives at the very station itself. There he will observe a separate exit, with the notice painted up, "Sortie des Pèlerins." If it happen to be the season of pilgrimages, it is not improbable that he will find a crowd, who are coming from some distant part of France or returning home when their pilgrimage is over. Often, too, he will see ranged along the platform a row of litters, bath-chairs, invalid carriages, and other means of transport, waiting to bear from the station to the hospital the pilgrims who are sick and who hope to obtain a cure or alleviation of their malady through our Lady's intercession. By the side of each he will see two or more of the noble corps of *brancardiers*, gentlemen who devote themselves to the care of the sick, and of whom we shall have more to say hereafter.

But at least on his exit from the station the visitor will soon be convinced that Lourdes is



not as other towns in France. It is true that there is the usual string of omnibuses, with the usual row of busy touters. Many of them are as elsewhere; Hotel d'Angleterre, Hotel de Belle Vue, Hotel de l'Europe. But beside these there are the Hotel de la Grotte, Hotel Notre Dame, Hotel de l'Immaculée Conception, Hotel de l'Ermitage. As we descend the hill and enter on the line of shops, we notice that the prevailing feature of the place is devotion, and especially devotion to the Holy Mother of God. No commerce ever so devout as the commerce of Lourdes. In every shop window scapulars, rosaries, medals by the thousand, pious pictures innumerable, statues of Our Lady of Lourdes in silver, statues in metal, statues in plaster of Paris, statues of Bernadette Soubirous, statues of all the saints, views of the Grotto of every kind and description, photographs, prints, chromographs, engravings, souvenirs of the Grotto, rings and bracelets and crosses and brooches, and every variety of ornament—but all in some way or other of pious significance, all having some relation to the central idea that reigns at Lourdes, devotion to that Holy Mother who there manifested herself to her humble servant Bernadette, whose presence still lingers there, and whose wonder-working power is mani-

fested there as it is manifested nowhere else in the limits of the wide world.

All this is to be found in the new Lourdes, the Lourdes that has sprung up within the last thirty years. The little town of Lourdes is not wholly pious. There is an old Lourdes, which existed before the apparition, and which remains much as it was a hundred years ago. It has its own parish church and curé, its own trade, its own market-place, and streets differing nothing from any ordinary French country town, its own chateau crowning the valley, once a strong fortress, but now simply a picturesque castellated building that a modern cannon would knock to pieces in an hour. This old town of Lourdes is altogether separate from the recent Lourdes which has sprung up around the Grotto. It has indeed benefited by the devotion, both materially and spiritually. Its numbers have increased, its trade has become more flourishing, and the spirit of piety which centres in the Grotto has extended its graces to all the inhabitants of the town. These southern valleys are all of them remarkable for their Catholic spirit, and they have always kept their faith, in spite of revolution and heresy. But in Lourdes and its neighborhood there were many more of careless and indifferent lives in former days than there are now.

The holy influence has spread far and wide. Go into Lourdes on any Sunday morning, when there are no organized pilgrimages there, and individual pilgrims only a few, watch the stream of country people who are pouring in from every side, peasants for the most part from the outlying hamlets and valleys around, with a certain admixture of the better class. farmers, and tradesmen from the old town, and hotel-keepers, and a few independent residents. Go into the Basilica during the early hours, and see the church well filled at almost every Mass from six till nine or ten, observe the large number of devout communicants, and notice especially how large, both in the church and at the Holy Table, is the proportion of men. One such Sunday, while I was there (the Sunday in the octave of our Lady's Nativity), two of the priests of the Basilica were occupied continuously from five till ten in the morning hearing the confessions of *men only* in the sacristy.

Or look in again at the parish church in the old town on Easter morning. The first Mass is set apart for the Communion of the men of the parish. The law of the Church prescribes that in their parish church the Easter Communion should be made, and we may therefore form a fair estimate of the piety of the

men of Lourdes from those who communicate on that day. We are sometimes told that in France few indeed are the men who make their Easter. Here is a good opportunity of judging of the truth of the assertion. The little town contains not quite six thousand inhabitants, and the statistician will tell us that out of these the males over twelve years of age will be some fourteen or fifteen hundred. What proportion of this number are present? In godless France, I suppose, merely a handful, a hundred or so at most. Why! the church is simply crowded—nothing but men—and all of them come to receive the Body and Blood of Christ our Lord. Let us count them. We reckon up a thousand, and there is still a goodly group remaining, some fifty or so, all of them from the little town of Lourdes, so that, allowing for the sick, for a certain number necessarily absent, the whole of the male population, with a very few exceptions, are not only professing, but practising their religion—not only Catholics, but good Catholics, who faithfully observe the precepts of the Church, and live a godly life.

I asked the good curé who gave me this information whether the influx of visitors had injured the piety of his flock. I remembered the bitter lamentations of one of the priests

of Chamounix over the havoc wrought in the moral tone of his people by the crowds who came thither during the summer, and I was anxious to know whether even at Lourdes the mass of strangers might not have introduced a neglect of religious duties, or at least a too great absorption in wordly interests. No, he thought not at all, for almost all the visitors came on pious thoughts intent. It was not as in a watering-place or village where foreigners resort for pleasure. It was true that a number of strangers had come to settle in Lourdes, hotel-keepers and others, but they were as a rule good pious Catholics, who took care that their servants and *employés* heard Mass and attended to their religious duties. Only one of the hotel-keepers in the place was a Protestant, and his hotel was one of those which bore a name of Catholic devotion, and when the hotel was opened the parish priest had been invited by the Protestant hotel-keeper and his wife solemnly to bless it, *secundum ritum Romanum*. Of course, among the shop-keepers the commercial spirit sometimes prevailed over the religious, and there would be found some whose French politeness, or human respect, or desire to please their visitors, would induce them to talk slightly of the Grotto and its miracles, if they were speak-

ing to one who was a Protestant and a free-thinker. But these were exceptions, and even commercial Lourdes is more satisfactory from a religious point of view than any other commercial town in Europe.

While all this is due in great measure to the holy influence of the place, the parish priests of Lourdes have been untiring and vigilant in their care of their flock. The missionaries of the Basilica have also proved invaluable allies, for while they primarily devote themselves to the pilgrims, and the pilgrimages claim their first care, yet, during the greater part of the year, they are at the service of the good folk of the neighborhood, and spare no pains to render Lourdes, in its devotion to God and purity of life, a fitting home for the Holy Mother of God. No one can visit Lourdes and study its inner life without acquiring a most intense respect and admiration for these good religious, to whose care the Grotto, the Basilica, and all its surroundings, have now for many years been entrusted. Missionaries of the Immaculate Conception, they have earned, by their self-denying devotion and indefatigable zeal, the love of all those who have had the happiness of enjoying familiar intercourse with them. What struck me from the first was the perfection of order within their do-

main. Too many a place of pilgrimage is marred by the importunate mendicant, and still more importunate vender of articles of piety, eatables of all description, memorials, relics, and pictures commemorative of the spot. All this is wholly absent within the large territory over which the Fathers of the Grotto hold sway. Nothing whatever is sold within their precincts except articles of piety, and these only in authorized establishments, duly regulated by them, and the weekly *Journal de Lourdes*, which a little boy, stationed at one of the angles of the path leading to the Grotto, offers to the pilgrims who may desire to know the programme for the week, the services at the Basilica, the various dioceses whence the pilgrimages proceed, the cures that have been lately worked, and other pieces of necessary information which are officially guaranteed by insertion in the official organ of the Grotto. Many things for which a charge might reasonably be made are perfectly gratuitous. To all, whether rich or poor, who desire to plunge into those sacred waters, the well-kept baths are provided free of all cost, with linen and all necessary appurtenances; seats in the Basilica are all free of cost; the various officials employed in and around the Grotto take no fees. No charge is made for anything and

the Apostolic motto is strictly observed: "Freely ye have received, freely give." The stranger may wander at his will all along the well-kept terrace that runs by the side of the Gave, he may ascend the zig-zag path that the Fathers have made at their own expense up the hill, he may stroll around the Basilica, and wander up and down the gardens laid out in front, and across the open space where the busy workmen are building a new church, to supply the increasing needs of the crowds of devout pilgrims—nowhere is he molested, nowhere is he asked for the reluctant fee, nowhere is he attacked by the buyers and sellers and askers of alms, who are the pest of many a pious pilgrimage-place elsewhere.

But all this is only within the domain over which the good Fathers of the Grotto have control. Once outside of it, and the difference is speedily manifested; over the high-road they can exercise no jurisdiction. As you cross the public bridge the nuisance only intensifies the feeling of relief when you are within the sacred inclosure, and makes you appreciate the more the wise regulations which protect the pilgrims from intruders around our Lady's shrine: "M. l'Abbé, un cierge pour brûler à la Grotte! M. l'Abbé, un chapelet pour deux sous!" Then a card



with six little medals on it is thrust into your face and you are invited to purchase them all for a penny. Then comes a seller of little bundles of black sticks, the scent of which makes it unnecessary for the vender to proclaim that he is a seller of vanille; next, a woman accosts you with various cakes, crisp biscuits, and crackers; then comes a little girl with pictures of our Lady appearing to Bernadette; then a seller of fruit; then a boy with a comical sort of tripod, most anxious to black your boots; and lastly, a child who furtively holds out its hand for a sou, looking round, however, lest the dreaded agent of police be near at hand, since at Lourdes, as elsewhere, the visitor is at least partially protected by the general law. *La mendicité est interdite dans cette commune.* We shake ourselves free of those obtrusive applicants and enter once more the peaceful *terrain des Pères*. We are just in front of the Basilica and are anxious as far as we can to give our readers some little idea of the buildings already finished and in course of construction, which crown the rock consecrated by the holy Grotto beneath it.

The Grotto, as every Catholic knows, is on the bank of the River Gave. At the present time there is a large open space between it and the river, but this is mainly artificial. At

the time of the apparitions the Gave ran much nearer the Grotto. There was then, hard by the Grotto, a stream, one affluent of which had its source not far from the row of houses which you pass on your way to the station, running down from a series of springs in the rising ground behind, and providing water enough, even in the late summer and autumn, to enable the *blanchisseuses* of the town to carry on their work by its side, ere it emerges into the valley and runs into the Gave. At the present time this little stream flows almost directly into the river, but at the time of the apparitions it passed through an artificial channel, to a mill which it turned, and it then meandered along the valley, more or less parallel to the Gave, and was not lost in it until it approached close to the rock of Massabielle. It was this stream that Bernadette had to cross on the first occasion when our Lady appeared to her, and she was, as the reader of her story will remember, taking off her shoes and stockings with that intent, at the moment when the wondrous vision broke upon her sight. There was then a very narrow space between the Grotto and the river, and it was only when pilgrims began to flock thither, and cures to be many in number and wondrous in the diversity of their miraculous character,

that this ground was gained from the river immediately under the Grotto, and the water forced into a narrower channel and at a greater distance from the rock.

This open space is covered with benches and seats, and there the pilgrims assemble to offer public or private devotions, to hear Mass when it is said in the Grotto, to listen to the sermons by which bishops and priests stir their devotion to our Lady, and to start on the processions which are a distinctive feature of every pilgrimage. Above the Grotto is a sheer rock of some fifty or sixty feet, and above this a platform on which the Basilica has been most solidly built. Under the Basilica is a crypt, which forms a second church, and provides in some degree for the overflow from the Basilica. But there is nothing like sufficient accommodation at present, and no amount of ingenuity can prevent a most inconvenient crush in the crypt and in the Basilica itself.

To provide for this a second church is being built.\* The Basilica is built along the rock, parallel to the river. In front of the main entrance the ground slopes away rapidly until, at a distance of about one hundred yards, it is but little raised above the river. This slope has been most skilfully made use of by the architect, to complete his magnificent work. Im-

\* This church has been built since the above was written. See page 25

mediately in front of the Basilica, on a level with the entrance to the crypt, he has constructed a terrace, which will pass behind the new church, on a level with the roof of it, and then will sweep round on both sides in a wide curve, gradually descending, until in front of the church the two sloping sides of the terrace will approach one another on a level with the floor of the church, but with a wide interval between them. The whole terrace will be supported on a series of arches, and will describe a sort of flattened circle, complete with the exception of the gap in front.

The space contained within the circle made by the terrace will furnish a magnificent place of assembly for the pilgrims, as it will easily contain many thousands. The terrace itself will be a valuable marching ground for the processions which will pass around it on both sides from the Basilica to the space it encircles. The new church is Byzanto-Roman, surmounted by a cupola essentially Byzantine, but Roman in its arches and general design. The difficulty will be to admit sufficient light, but the frequent windows in the cupola and roof, with such light as can be admitted from the sides, are expected to be sufficient for all practical purposes. It is to be called the Church of the Rosary, and is to contain fif-

teen chapels running all around it, each of them commemorating one of the Mysteries of the Rosary. It will thus add sixteen fresh altars (reckoning in the high altar in the centre) to those already existing in the Basilica and crypt. At present, on occasions of a crowded pilgrimage, it is very difficult to find sufficient altars for all the priests sojourning in Lourdes, even though Masses begin at midnight and continue till midday. The sixteen additional altars will thus not only be a very great convenience to the priests and people, but will enable the Holy Sacrifice to be offered by many who, at some periods of the year, from sheer lack of room, have to forego the privilege of saying Mass from lack of an altar at which to say it.

But we must return to the noble Basilica itself. It is an admirable specimen of modern Gothic, light, and yet substantial, designed, or perhaps constructed undesignedly, to be a most suitable receptacle of the countless offerings, trophies, flags, pictures, *ex votos* of all kinds, that are gathered together within it. Where shall we begin among that dazzling array of chandeliers, lamps, banners, statues, decorations the most varied, differing in every respect, save that each and all are offerings of the grateful hearts of Mary's devout clients?

They come from every quarter of the globe, and from every nation under the sun. As we leave the sacristy to walk round the church, there meets our gaze at once, in a chapel behind the altar, a magnificent banner, just arrived from California, and painted by the pious hands of the Enfants de Marie belonging to the congregation whose parish priest has brought it hither. Enter the choir, and that solid lamp in gold and silver and bronze is the gift of the national pilgrimage of Italy. Hard by, another lamp, girt about with shamrocks, proclaims itself the gift of faithful Ireland; not far off is another, that the English pilgrims have presented to the shrine. Those massive chandeliers have been given by the Belgians. On the walls of the sanctuary are the epaulettes, the jewelled crosses and decorations of a Portuguese general. Conspicuous among the flags that surround the choir is the familiar Union Jack; not far off are the no less familiar Stars and Stripes, the Canadian, Mexican, Hungarian, Belgian, and Spanish flags, while the banners of St. George, and of St. Patrick, and St. Andrew, and many more besides, find themselves in harmony under the shadow of the common Mother of those who, whatever their nation, love our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

But what is that red flag, covered with *ex votos*, veiled in crape in sign of mourning? It is the gift of the pupils of the Jesuits belonging to seven different Colleges in the South of France. They had come together in a common pilgrimage, and had dedicated to our Lady seven *ex voto* hearts, containing their names and fastened on a rich banner of velvet. When their dear Fathers, and friends, and teachers were driven out by ungrateful France, some of them returned to Lourdes on a second pilgrimage, and draped their banner in black crape, in token of their sorrow and distress, yet in the hope that the day may soon come when our Lady may crush the head of the serpent of the Revolution, and restore to the country which she still loves the sons who have fought and suffered in her behalf.

Walk around the church, and you will find a number of wondrous curiosities. What is that frame containing a mass of rich plaited hair, with paper roses planted here and there among its golden tresses. It is a touching gift from five poor women of Hungary. On foot they begged their way from Hungary to Lourdes, taking five months in the journey. After their visit to the shrine, having nothing else to give to Our Lady, they cut off their long beautiful hair, giving of their best to their

dear Mother, inserting the paper roses to hide the places where one series of tresses was united to another. Go a little farther. What is that strange *ex voto*, apparently of twisted horns and horned lumps? It is the gift of a poor woman whose nails and finger-bones had grown strangely around her hand, so sensitive that it was impossible to cut them, while on every joint a hard swelling had formed, which physicians had attempted to remove, but had caused such agony, that they were compelled to desist from the attempt. To Lourdes she had come, with firm and ardent faith. She had bathed in that water of benediction, and lo! the long twisted nails, of their own accord, fell from her hands, and the corns dropped off, leaving those hands, which before were a mass of deformity, clean and beautiful like those of a little child. Go down into the crypt, and there you will find the walls all covered with countless tablets recounting the graces and favors received from Our Lady by her grateful children. Most of them are, of course, in French; but Spanish, Italian, German, and even English inscriptions may be found among them. As we walk around the crypt, we see nothing else, from roof to floor, over and over again, "Reconnaissance a N. D. de Lourdes." "J'ai prié Marie et elle m'a exaucé." "Reconnais-



sance à la Sainte Mère de Dieu. Je lui ai confié mes enfants et elle les a sauvés." "A token of gratitude to Mary for an instantaneous cure." The strain is always the same, save that here and there it is a prayer rather, than a thanksgiving, a constant petition for some grace or favor, ever meeting the eyes of Our Lady as she casts them upon the temple dedicated to her honor.

But in the forefront of the treasures of Lourdes we must place a work of ecclesiastical art, such as in modern days we rarely witness, the monstrance presented to the Basilica by a number of grateful clients of Mary. It consists of mingled gold, silver, and enamel, adorned with countless precious stones. The design is splendid and elaborate. The idea running through it is a very beautiful one—The Immaculate Conception giving to the world God in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. The solid base represents Mount Tabor, on which are depicted the holy angels victorious over the prostrate demon and his rebel allies, their wings forming a sort of triumphal curtain, beneath which are represented the scenes of the Old Testament which are connected with the Immaculate Conception. On one side Adam and Eve kneel at her feet in the terrestrial Paradise, on the other

Esther is crowned by Assuerus, and Judith presents the head of Holofernes to the assembled people of Israel; while opposite to the scene, in Paradise, Pius the Ninth, on the throne of St. Peter, proclaims in the Bull *Ineffabilis* the dogma to the world. At the foot of the monstrance, above the angel's wings, is a rich enamelled crown, on which a number of doves are settling. From the centre of this crown proceeds the palm-tree entwined with roses and lilies, forming the stem of the monstrance and surmounted by four angels whose wings support a large halo of glory, within which the central figure of the monstrance is contained. Needless to say that this figure is Our Lady of Lourdes, as she appeared to Bernadette, a massive figure some two feet high, crowned with a crown of diamonds, while rubies and pearls are distributed around in costly profusion. On the reverse is a similar figure of St. Joseph, with a lily for his sceptre. The nimbus which surrounds our Blessed Lady culminates in the glory of Heaven, which is represented by a ground of blue enamel mixed with pearls and topazes, and in the midst of which is the circular lune destined to contain the Sacred Host, and forming a circle of glory around it. This lune is divided into sixteen compartments, fifteen of

which represent the Mysteries of the Rosary, and the sixteenth our Lady holding the Cross. The figures are rose-colored cameos enamelled on a white ground. Round the lune which contains the Sacred Host are a number of adoring angels, skilfully distributed among the rays of precious stones which proceed from it as their centre, while above the lune is a rose-tree covered with flowers of rubies and diamonds, its branches supporting a pedestal over which four eagles hover, with the inscription, "Wherever the Body is, there shall the eagles be gathered together," and amid them a cross of jewels proclaims the eternal reign of Christ. But it is impossible by any description to give a just idea of this marvellous work of art. Its richness and value may be gathered from the fact that it contains more than one thousand diamonds, about the same number of pearls, and nearly five hundred red topazes. We do not like to venture on any estimate of its value, lest our incredulous readers should think that we exaggerate.

But we have been encroaching somewhat on the subject of our next chapter. We are concerned here with material Lourdes rather than with the spiritual fabric of its pilgrims' prayers and praises. We have wandered a little from the good works wrought by the Fathers of the

Basilica, and must return to the congenial task of describing their *modus agendi* in their difficult task of supplying the countless and varied needs, holding together and preserving in due order the multitudinous interests of those who flock from the various quarters of the earth to obtain the fulfilment of their desires.

Nothing made a deeper impression on me, as I watched day by day the orderly and harmonious arrangement of all things appertaining immediately or remotely to the well-being, comfort, happiness, and devotion of the pilgrims at Lourdes, than the most edifying, practical, and self-sacrificing manner in which the Missionaries of the Immaculate Conception throw themselves personally into every department of the work which they superintend. Instead of employing paid agents, or allowing a little knot of speculative traders to settle on their domain, they themselves undertake, for the love of God, and not for any earthly reward, the management of things temporal as well as things spiritual at Lourdes. I will suppose the case of a priest arriving at Lourdes, to whom all kinds of needs present themselves during his residence there. I am not speaking of one who enjoys their generous hospitality, but of a stranger staying in the town, who has come with a number of pilgrims from some

distant part of France. He arrives at the station with a number of sick who are hoping for a cure. Some of them are paralyzed, others are suffering from ulcers in the feet, others from hernia, from consumption, from various internal diseases. At the station is the long row of litters and couches ready to receive them. Every litter has two volunteer attendants, but the presiding genius of the scene is one of the good Fathers. It is he who arranges it all, provides for all, has a kind and encouraging word for the poor sufferers, directs their painful journey to the hospital, visits them when they are housed there, and superintends the handy nurses who see to all their needs. It is he who personally directs the corps of *brancardiers* who carry them down to the Grotto to pray before Our Lady's shrine. And when the time comes for them to bathe in those holy waters, at the door there is—not a paid attendant or *employé*, but a priest, who, for the love of God, spends his days in the monotonous employment of Guardian of the Piscina, condescending to the details and trivial humble services which such an occupation necessarily entails; all this, too, with an unwearied patience and gentle courtesy and thoughtful interest in each. What else but the love of God and of His Holy Mother would ever induce an

educated gentleman and a priest of the Most High to devote himself to an employment so humble? To nurse the sick, to perform for them the most menial offices, to do the work of a hospital, carries with it a sort of pious *éclat*—but to stand at the door of a bathing establishment, to arrange the time and order of the baths, to furnish to each their linen and all that is required—this is a refinement of self-sacrifice worthy indeed of our heart-felt admiration.

To turn from the wants of the sick and the diseased which our pilgrim priest brings with him to his own. He desires in the morning to say Mass, and with that object makes application at the house of the good Fathers. He is most courteously received by another, specially appointed for the regulation of the Masses, and has a time appointed him. When he arrives the next morning at the crypt, in the sacristy he finds the same Father waiting there. Quietly and patiently he is listening to a crowd of applicants anxious to say Mass. Some have made no arrangement the previous evening—it is difficult, nay, impossible, to find an altar for them—others have found the altar assigned them occupied by some intruder, others have come unprovided with the necessary papers; some have occupied so long a

time over their Mass that the whole series is thrown out, others want to change the time appointed for them ; some have one grievance, others another. But to all the good Father listens with a gentle forbearance, and instead of entrusting to a sacristan the task of getting rid of the often unreasonable and importunate applicants, he has a kind word for each, and sends each away, so far as may be, contented, and satisfies the wishes of each to the utmost extent of his ability, and even beyond it, leaving the sacristy from time to time to give Communion to those who cannot receive it from the priest saying the Mass without a delay that would be inconvenient to his successor, or to make some arrangement in the church which necessitates his personal presence.

And when our pilgrim priest has said his Mass and made his thanksgiving, and desires to know the programme for the day, he has but to visit the Maison des Pères hard by the Basilica, and there upon the door he will find nailed up day by day all necessary information, and much that is useful besides—the time of the trains to neighboring places, the various hours when the various bands of pilgrims will have High Mass sung for them at the Grotto, or will hear Vespers in the church. Then he

will bethink himself of letters from those at home. The *Bureau de Poste* is far away, but here again the thoughtful care of the good Fathers has provided a remedy. A little house on the slope of the hill has been constituted a *Bureau des Renseignements*. There two Fathers are continually occupied in giving every sort of information to the pilgrims. When we remember that there are sometimes from five to ten thousand sojourning there, that for the most part they are strangers, from various parts of France, and often from other countries, that many of them are simple and ignorant, quite at a loss how to proceed in any sort of business or in any of the countless difficulties in which they are sure to be entangled, we may form some idea of the endless variety of inquiries, monetary transactions, applications for all kinds of information, postal and telegraph communications, which continually beset the patient and ever-obliging Fathers who devote themselves to this tiresome and monotonous work. Has a pilgrim lost umbrella or *porte-monnaie*? It is at the *Bureau des Renseignements* that he expects to find it. Does he wish to learn the hours of the trains to some place far or near that he desires to visit? He applies as a matter of course at this same bureau, and search is



made for him with all possible patience in the *Indicateur des Chemins de Fer*. Does he wish to exchange his foreign moneys for French coins? There he will receive the full equivalent for English sovereigns or German crowns. Does he want postage stamps, or postal orders, or telegraph forms? Everything may be had there from the good Fathers, who devote themselves to all the minutiae of such business, for the love of God and in honor of His Holy Mother, that so the pilgrim may, as far as possible, have his every want supplied by their courteous hands, within the domain where their benevolent charity holds sway.

Or perhaps our pilgrim is on the eve of his departure, and desires to carry away some *souvenirs* of Lourdes. In a little shop close to the Grotto he will find a collection of objects of piety, sold by the good Brothers who form a part of the community, and at a cost so low that it is hard to understand how they can recoup themselves for their expenditure. Those little statuettes of our Lady, shining bright as silver, for which in a shop in Paris we should expect to pay fifteen or twenty francs, are sold at less than a quarter of that sum. Those medals of durable white metal, or brass, or platinum, or silver, are ridiculously cheap.

Pictures of our Lady by the hundred, flowers from the Grotto deftly pasted on a card, with indulgenced prayers and a history of the apparitions, crucifixes, holy water stoups, photographs of the Grotto, of the Basilica, of Bernadette Soubirous, flacons carefully incased with wicker-work, and bottles and metal vessels of every shape and description for carrying away the holy water, all these and much beside may be had, for a price which only makes the visitor fear that the missionaries should lose instead of gaining by the advantageous business transactions that he accomplishes.

Before we quit the subject of the Missionaries of the Immaculate Conception, we must remind our readers that their work is not confined to Lourdes alone. After their difficult task of guiding and directing the summer pilgrimages is over, they turn their energies to a fresh field of labor. In every part of France they go hither and thither, giving missions and retreats. Often in this way a pilgrimage to Lourdes produces a double fruit. The priest who brings his pious folk with him, takes occasion to invite one of the missionaries of the Grotto to visit his people, and try to win over the impious and the careless residue of his flock, who have hitherto lived neglectful of

devotion to Our Lady, or, indeed, of any devotion at all. The invitation is joyfully accepted, and our Lady's missionary, carrying with him the graces of the Grotto, is enabled to do a work of mercy which brings to the foot of the Cross many who have lived as the great proportion of the inhabitants of French cities are too prone to live.

But we must not forget above all the generous hospitality exercised by them. Whenever a pilgrimage to Lourdes is announced, their house is at the disposal, so far as space allows, of the priests who are in charge of the pilgrimage. Some of them are lodged within its walls, or in the peaceful chalet which joins for the present the Novitiate. Those for whom room cannot be found eat at their bounteous table, and are received with a courteous kindness which is a proverb in every diocese of France, and in many a diocese beyond.

## CHAPTER II

### LOURDES AND ITS PILGRIMS.

**I**T is quite a mistake to suppose that Lourdes is always thronged with crowds of devout pilgrims. They are present in any considerable numbers only during a very limited period of the year. During the long winter months they amount to a mere handful of individuals. Even during the greater part of the summer Lourdes is comparatively empty. In fact, it has its season just as much as a fashionable watering-place, or rather it has a series of little seasons clustering round certain festivals of the year.

If any one desire to see the devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes at its highest, he should be present there, if possible, during the chief of all the pilgrimages, the national pilgrimage of France. It takes place during the week following the Assumption of Our Lady, that is between the 16th and 22d of August. It does not follow that at this time there is present at Lourdes the largest total of pilgrims, since at other times there may happen to be several pilgrimages from various parts of



France and other countries present there on the same day or days. But it is the largest individual pilgrimage. It is, moreover, the one which Our Lady seems to favor more than all the rest—it is generally during its continuance that the largest number of cures takes place. “If you want to see some good miracles,” I was told several times, “come during the national pilgrimage of France.” It is only what we should expect—Our Lady loves the French nation. In spite of their faults and follies, in spite of the numbers who have fallen away from their faith, in spite of the wickedness and godlessness of the cities and big towns, she still has a soft place in her heart (if one may be forgiven such an expression respecting one who is at heart all tenderness and love) for the nation whose sons, in days gone by, fought so bravely the battle of the Church, and which, even in the present day, is still the chief herald of the faith in every corner of the earth.

But one who cannot visit Lourdes in the middle of August will find the following month scarce a less favorable time for witnessing the devotion and fervor of the pilgrims. There is generally a succession of pilgrimages clustering around the feast of Our Lady’s Nativity and continuing up to the 20th or 25th

of September. The pilgrims remain about three days, coming for the most part on Monday or Tuesday, so as to be at home again on the following Sunday. This is the general rule, but nevertheless has many exceptions. Towards the end of the month the pilgrims begin to be few and far between, and by the beginning of October the pilgrimage season is over. Most of the diocesan pilgrimages from various parts choose September for the time of their visit. During the September of the present year there were pilgrimages from Bordeaux, Tours, Avignon, Nantes, Angoulême, Toulouse, Lille, Burgundy, Alsace, Angers, Rouen, Nîmes, besides the Spanish national pilgrimage at the beginning of the month, and the Belgian national pilgrimage towards the end of it, and a number of others from smaller centres. In the week succeeding Our Lady's Nativity there were some seven or eight thousand pilgrims present in Lourdes, and on the feast itself nearly the same number.

But failing August or September, our inquirer will do well to come, if he can, in the month of May. We naturally look to Our Lady's own month as a season when her faithful children would gather around her shrine, and when she would be more liberal than ever in the favors and graces she accords. Yet the

time of year is one when the majority of mankind, of whatever station and degree, find it difficult to leave their homes. Priests have to attend to May devotions at home. Men of business are at their busiest. Agriculturists and farm laborers are constantly employed in the fields. The wealthy have their duties or their pleasures in their own social circle; the poor have to make the most of the summer time. Hence there is not such a continuous succession of pilgrimages as one might have expected. There are generally several at the beginning of the month, but not many towards the end of it. In the present year, Holland sent 300 pilgrims on May 3, Lyons 1,300 on the 5th, Antwerp 350 on the 13th. These were all the organized pilgrimages, though there were hundreds more who came as individuals on their own account from all parts of the world. But those who had the good fortune to be present at Lourdes during May had reason to remember their visit. The miraculous cures that took place were more numerous than usual, and the marked improvements in health were to be counted by dozens. A local journal (*Journal de Fourvières*) records no less than thirty important cures among the Lyons pilgrims only, while out of twelve sick who came with the Dutch pilgrimage no less than

four were completely cured. But when May is over the pilgrimages do not cease. June, the Month of the Sacred Heart, witnessed a number nearly equal to that of the Month of Mary. During July there were several, and one or two of importance, and during the whole of August they were very numerous, culminating in the national pilgrimage already mentioned.

The presence of a large pilgrimage completely changes the face of the little town of Lourdes. The greater proportion of the inhabitants of Lourdes are dependent on the Grotto and its pilgrims. Out they come when the railway pours forth the pious travellers, gathering around them as the bees gather around the limes when the trees are in bloom. They have but a short time wherein to avail themselves of the presence of the strangers, as pilgrims rarely remain for more than three days, but during that time the harvest reaped extends to almost every dweller in the town. If five thousand have to be lodged in a place which contains about the same number of regular inhabitants, there must needs be a very great demand for lodging, and a still greater demand for all kinds of provisions. There are very few, too, who will not burn one or more candles at the Grotto, and scarcely



any who will not need a candle for the evening procession and a paper sheath to guard it against the wind. Moreover, every pilgrim is sure to carry away some mementoes of Lourdes, at the least one or two objects of piety, and sometimes whole packets of pictures, rosaries, medals, statuettes, etc. Add to this the pilgrims who need some slight refreshment, and whose needs are supplied by frequent venders of cakes and fruit, the pilgrims who will want their boots blacked, the pilgrims who need the aid of a coiffeur, and all the multitudinous wants that arise wherever tourists or excursionists are wont to congregate.

But it is the pilgrims themselves who are the objects of our interest. Such a curious motley crowd!—of course the majority belong to the pious female sex—*cela va sans dire*—not only because religion is more naturally attractive to women's dependent nature, but because it is far more easy for women to absent themselves from their homes than for the breadwinner of the family. Yet the proportion of men is a very good one, differing however with different pilgrimages, far larger for instance among the pious Bretons than among the comers from Lyons or from Lille. Of course, too, the large majority, nay, almost the entire body, consists of the humble class.

Everywhere the poor are more numerous than the rich, especially in all religious assemblies. Not in the congregation of Anglican churches, it is true, but I hope I shall not be regarded as narrow if I scarcely include them among religious assemblies properly so-called. To Lourdes, moreover, those who are well-to-do often prefer to come on their own account and at their own convenience, rather than amid the bustle and crowd and *tapage* of a pilgrimage; not wisely, I fancy, since He who says, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them," seems to bestow upon the crowd a collective blessing to be parcelled out among the individuals composing it, as well as an individual blessing for every one who is there; not wisely, too, by reason of the sweet incense of the cloud of prayers and devotions that ascends to Heaven from the gathered company, and moves the heart of Our Lady to obtain signal graces and favors, rarely granted to isolated prayers, unless offered by a saint; not wisely, too, because the mere presence of a crowd of devout worshippers, who have but one end and aim, the honor of God and Our Lady, creates an atmosphere of devotion that must needs influence one who is a witness of and partaker in their supplications to God, and disposes his

soul for the reception of grace as it would not be disposed if he were alone.

Still, wisely or not, the better class are not as largely represented in most of the pilgrimages as we might expect when we remember their greater leisure and superior facilities of travel. Yet the crowd is essentially a mixed one. There are plenty of peasants in their blouses and working men in their Sunday clothes, and when many pilgrimages come together from various parts of France or the surrounding countries, there is a picturesque diversity of costumes, and especially of head-dresses among the women. For Lourdes is quite cosmopolitan in its notions of costume. You may go about in any garb you like, and nobody will be surprised. If you are a foreign ecclesiastic, or have a soutane different from the ordinary French cut, with its *rabat* and the flat shovel hat universal in France, you are recognized as a stranger from abroad, or supposed to belong to some Order or Congregation not familiar to the ordinary Frenchman; if you are a layman, you have scarcely less liberty, and certainly it would be regarded as a sufficient explanation of any eccentricity of costume in a Frenchman's eyes that the wearer was an Englishman or an English "meess." But in point of fact diversities

of costume are scarcely noticed, unless they are very marked, in a place where the object of one and all is the service of God and the honor of Our Lady and the benefit of their own souls, not the amusement of criticising one's neighbors, or displaying in one's own person the latest costumes of Paris and Madrid.

But in what consists a pilgrimage, and how do the pilgrims pass their time at Lourdes? A pilgrimage does not mean in these modern days a long pedestrian journey on foot, though occasionally, by way of penance, devout pilgrims make their way on foot, and that from towns and villages far distant. Much less does it mean that the pilgrim is to live on alms during his journey, and we fear that if this was a condition necessary for a true pilgrimage, even Lourdes would have few visitants. Of those who should make the attempt a good many would be snapped up by police-agents, and the severity of modern anti-mendicity thus would add to their self-imposed penance the further penance of a week, or a fortnight, or a month in some provincial gaol. In the present day pilgrimages are made by rail. First-class express in many cases, if the pilgrim can afford it, if not, second, or third, according to his means, with all the comforts

and conveniences of modern travel, and some pleasant sightseeing perhaps on the road. Oh, miserable degeneracy of modern times! Are these the children of the pilgrims who would beg their way to the shrine of the Apostles in days gone by, barefooted, or with peas in their shoes? Where are the ancient discipline and the heroic mortifications that once were practised, both by peasant and by peer? Yet, after all, it may be that the degeneracy is more apparent than real. Penances are not the less real because they do not meet the eyes of men. It is no mark of decadence to avail oneself of the benefits of modern civilization. Mortification has not ceased to be, but has taken a new form—bodily penances do not cost very much when compared with the interior desolation and anguish of soul that the greater strain of modern life seems to bring with it, and which often makes it a duty to seek recreation and pleasure, even comfort, as some little alleviation for the humor that weighs down the soul. In former days both body and soul seem to have been less sensitive, and have a greater capacity for pain, or rather, the pain was less felt, and what would be torture to the modern, was regarded as of little account by the more stalwart or perhaps more tough-skinned heroes of mediæval times.

We are not so sure, however, that the comfort is altogether on the side of modern days. If there is a penance for most men, and still more for most women, it is a long railway journey, and especially one that involves travel by night as well as by day. The organized pilgrimages from distant parts of France always involve the grievous discomfort of one or two days and nights spent in the painful weariness of a third-class carriage, often with long delays on the road, and shunting on to many a siding. For pilgrim trains, like excursion trains in England, have to give way to the pleasure seeking express and train *dé luxe*, justly so called. Many a poor pilgrim arrives at Lourdes with aching bones and limbs cramped from the confinement, and with the prostration resulting from sleepless nights, and a general sense of painful weariness. We must not forget, moreover, how many start on their journey already weighed down with some mental sorrow or bodily disease. How often we hear of those for whom their friends and relatives fear that they will not survive the journey! They, at least, do penance for the rest. In ancient days the pilgrimage on foot or mule could not be undertaken by the poor sufferer, who now conveys himself painfully by rail to Lourdes. The penance which we im-

agine to have been so clear a mark of a higher standard of holiness was limited for the most part to the strong and healthy. And was it even a penance? If there is one form of travel which, in spite of all its inconveniences, seems to cheer the traveller and disperse the ill-humors of the body and darkness of the soul, and fill his buoyant mind with gladness and content, it is pedestrian travel. The life of a tramp, in spite of the terrors of police, and workhouse, and prison, which surround it, and the chance of semi-starvation that is its invariable accompaniment, has a wonderful attraction for hundreds of mankind, and the life of a pilgrim in Catholic days was in every respect beyond all compare superior from a mundane and material point of view to that of the modern tramp. We have no wish to depreciate the mediæval pilgrims, but we are anxious that the modern pilgrim should not be unduly disparaged, or treated as if he scarce deserved the name, because, forsooth, he is whirled along at railroad pace, and takes a day and a half instead of a month and a half over his journey.

But to return to our pilgrims. Arrived at Lourdes, they generally march straight to the Grotto or the church, if the hour of their arrival permit of it, to pay their first devotion at our Lady's shrine, and then seek for them-

selves a lodging. It is wonderful how the little town manages to find accommodation for the thronging thousands. *Les malades*—the contingent of sick belonging to the pilgrimage, are provided with lodging in the hospital, at the expense of the Committee by whom the pilgrimage is organized. Every cottage in Lourdes is at such times turned into a hotel, and with its wonderful power of contrivance French ingenuity provides, at a very trifling cost, board and lodging for a crowd of hungry and tired pilgrims, and provides for them, too, with at least a sufficiency of comfort and good cheer. The sick who accompany the pilgrimage go as a matter of course to the hospital. We must dwell a little more at length on the means adopted to alleviate their sufferings and provide for their wants. ▼

I have already mentioned how the arrival of an organized pilgrimage at the railway station at Lourdes finds waiting on the platform a long row of carriages, litters, chairs, and beds, for the conveyance of the sick to the hospital. Standing by the side of each there are two or more *brancardiers*, or attendants who are told off to take charge of the sick person who is to be conveyed therein during his stay at Lourdes. They will first carry him to the hospital, and then, after he has sufficiently



rested, will bring him to the Grotto, and if the doctor allows it, to the Piscina for a bath in the miraculous spring. These *brancardiers* are no paid hirelings, but an organized body of volunteers, recruited partly from a little corps who reside for a time at Lourdes in order to devote themselves to this work of charity, partly from the stalwart and able among the members of the pilgrimage to which the sick belong. Nothing can be more edifying than to see the pious and loving care with which these *brancardiers* devote themselves to their work. From early dawn till evening, they are employed in carrying the poor sufferers to and from the hospital to the Grotto. Often they have to crawl along at foot-pace, making many a halt on the road. Often they fear lest their charge should scarce survive to reach the healing waters. Long hours they remain at the Grotto, waiting patiently for their return, and occupying the time with keeping order in the crowd, and answering their inquiries, and supplying their many wants. At the head of the *brancardiers* is one of the Fathers of the Grotto, who assembles them from time to time to explain their duties, and to see that all is carried out in due order. No easy task, when we remember that the greater proportion of these volunteers belong to the several pilgrim-

ages, and arrive with plenty of good-will, but in utter ignorance of the work they have to do. But, somehow, the organization is admirable, and they soon learn their duties under the guidance of a few permanent members of the corps, or of those whose leisure enables them to devote some weeks or months to this pious and self-sacrificing work. During the whole time that I was there, I noticed two who were especially conspicuous among the rest. One of them was a young Frenchman, whose gentle bearing and thoughtful courtesy were remarkable, even when all was gentle and courteous; the other a stalwart young Irishman, educated at one of our English Colleges, who was studying forestry by practical work in the forests of the Jura, and had sacrificed his vacation to what in the eyes of men was the stupid and monotonous work of carrying sick men down to the Grotto of Lourdes and back again. If a cup of cold water given in charity's name is to earn its eternal reward, what must be the reward earned by those who for weeks together minister to the sick for His sake, under circumstances which involve continual inconvenience and self-sacrifice, and an exclusive devotion that is all the more admirable because it involves a heroism that makes no show and attracts no notice.

These *brancardiers* are but a section of a larger body—the *hospitaliers*, who make it their business to see to the general wants of the poor pilgrims who are brought to Lourdes in the hope of a cure. The *hospitaliers* belong for the most part to the good old French nobility, and have for their President the Vicomte de Pouy, formerly an officer in the Pontifical Zouaves, and who has now taken up his residence at Lourdes with this pious object. To them is joined another association, exercising that portion of their pious work that belongs to the gentler sex. The *hospitalières* are a corps of ladies who form a distinct branch of the same noble body of volunteers, and who devote themselves to the exterior care of the sick. For in the hospital itself a congregation of religious women, les Sœurs de Notre Dame des Sept Douleurs, tend the inmates with the loving gentleness which is one of the graces that seems to belong to those who undertake the care of the sick poor. Active among the ladies who act as *hospitalières* and aid the good Sisters within and without the hospital, is the wife of the French gentleman aforementioned who acts as President of the *hospitaliers*.

This lady is an English woman. To her is entrusted the most important post of presid-

ing over the baths of the women. How important the post is can only be understood when we remember the extreme responsibility of her duties and the constant care and tenderness, the prudence and the power of sympathy required of her. The water is extremely cold—not perhaps of the same icy temperature that marks the well of St. Winifred in North Wales, but yet sufficiently cold to try the fortitude even of those who are in good health. But the majority of those who bathe are sick—some of them sick unto death—all of them quite unfit in the natural order for a sudden plunge into a cold bath. The first point that has to be settled (and on this the doctor of the Grotto has to pronounce sentence) is whether it is prudent to allow the sick pilgrim to bathe. If this is decided in the affirmative, a good deal of persuasion is often necessary; even those who are full of faith sometimes shrink back at the water's edge. Few of the sick are able to bathe without assistance—some of them are quite helpless, and have simply to be lifted in and out like babies. The utmost care has to be taken to alleviate as far as possible the shock which the plunge necessarily involves and to see that every precaution is taken to prevent any evil consequences. Not that evil consequences are

wont to ensue ; even those who at first feel the water the coldest experience after a time a genial warmth that gradually creeps over them. I believe no case has ever been known of any one having received any sort of physical harm from the bath. Yet precautions are always taken as if there were no supernatural influence present there. Thus the whole process is one which demands a firm will, a kind heart, a gentle manner, and a prudent judgment—qualities which I do not hesitate to say, and that without any flattery, are most happily combined in Madame la Vicomtesse.

From those who have charge of the pilgrims we turn to the pilgrims themselves. Perhaps our best method of giving our readers any idea of what a pilgrimage is, will be to go through an ordinary pilgrimage day and describe how it is spent. We will suppose our pilgrims to have arrived on the previous day from Brittany. Their pilgrimage is not the only one present at Lourdes—there are others from La Touraine, La Franche-Comté, **Marseilles**, etc. In all, there are some seven thousand pilgrims in the place. The arrangement for the day is that the Breton pilgrims are to assemble at the Grotto at seven for Holy Mass, which is to be said by the Bishop who accompanies them ; at eight and **nine**

there are to be other Masses, ending with a grand High Mass at ten. The altar is erected within the rails which shut in the Grotto: all the people kneel outside, for the most part on the bare ground, and no one except those who take part in the services is admitted into the Grotto as long as Mass is going on. Between seven and eight we make our way down the zigzag path that leads from the Basilica to the Grotto beneath. What a beautiful sight presents itself to us as we emerge on the bank of the murmuring Gave! More than two thousand people are assembled there—standing or kneeling, as the case may be—many saying their beads, others praying aloud; all unmistakably in earnest. Some there are who cannot refrain the tears of devotion which are trickling from their cheeks, others are praying with their arms extended. At the moment of Consecration, what a thrill of reverence pervades the crowd! One might go through every church in Christendom and scarcely find so devout a congregation. At length the bell rings for the Communion, and the communicants come up to the iron grille.

The good Bishop now comes out with the ciborium into the space outside the Grotto, and gives Holy Communion to the sick—first of all to a poor boy whose spine is diseased and who

can only lie flat on the litter in which he is brought down by the *brancardiers*; then to a girl in a bath-chair, who, to judge from appearances, is in an advanced stage of consumption; then to a poor cripple; then to a little child with her head supported on a pillow, suffering from a contraction of the muscles of the neck, and who cannot move her head without agony; and so on for several more. A touching sight it is, and the kind prelate can scarce hold back his tears of sympathy. But he soon re-enters the Grotto, gives Communion to two or three rows, and then returns to the altar, while two priests take his place to communicate the throng. The Mass over, the Vicar-General of the diocese to which the pilgrims belong ascends a pulpit erected just outside the grille and announces the programme for the day. There will be Vespers in the Basilica for the Breton pilgrimage at 2, and there will be (wind and weather permitting) a torchlight procession at 7.30. That morning, from 10 to 12, the sick belonging to the pilgrimage will bathe in the Grotto, and he invites all the pilgrims to assemble outside the Piscina, in order to implore the assistance of our Lady for them and to ask that, if it is the will of God, many cures may be wrought for His glory and for the honor of His Holy Mother. He then

preaches a little *fervorino*, the subject of which is naturally and almost necessarily devotion to Our Lady. He warns them against thinking that a momentary fervor will take the place of a solid piety, and reminds them that it is not enough to carry away a sweet souvenir of their visit to Lourdes, unless that souvenir shows itself in a higher standard of virtue in their daily lives.

The *fervorino* over, the Rosary is said, the preacher who leads setting forth before each decade some intention connected with the pilgrimage: "Premier Mystère Glorieux, La Resurrection de Notre Seigneur. Nous allons dire cette dizaine en honneur de Notre Dame de Lourdes, pour demander qu'elle nous obtienne beaucoup de grâces, et surtout la grâce, que nous sommes venus demander dans ce pèlerinage. Deuxième mystère, etc.: Nous allons dire cette dizaine pour les pécheurs endurcis." After the Rosary a few words are said and one or two practical counsels are given to the pilgrims.

One piece of advice is mournfully practical. Even at Lourdes the evil mingles with the good, and among the pious pilgrims are to be found knaves and pickpockets, who sometimes make a rich harvest before their presence is discovered. During a recent pilgrimage nearly



a hundred persons lost their purses. The police carefully scrutinized the well dressed women to see if any Paris thieves or suspicious looking characters were to be found among them, but all in vain. But at one of the quiet hotels of the town three nuns were stopping, whose proceedings excited the suspicion of the hotel proprietor. Their conduct was scarcely conformable with the modesty of religious women, and they had acquaintances of a not very reputable appearance staying in another hotel. The police were communicated with, but too late. The pseudo-nuns had got wind of their danger, and had hastily changed their dress and fled with their associates. It turned out that most of their deceptions had been committed in the church, and, horrible to relate, at the very altar-rails. They used to plant themselves one on each side of some lady. One of them accidentally nudged her on one side, and while she turned instinctively in that direction, the other whipt her purse out of her pocket. One or two persons afterwards said that they had felt sure that they had seen these miserable creatures going to Communion several times in a day, but thought that their eyes must be deceiving them. Nor was this the only instance during the last few months. The greatest vigilance is

needed to protect the pilgrims, many of them good simple country people, who would naturally regard themselves as perfectly secure at Lourdes, and would as soon think of suspecting an angel of picking pockets as a woman dressed in the religious garb of one consecrated to God. Hence it is very necessary to put pilgrims on their guard, and on the first occasion when the pilgrimage assembles its members are warned to look most carefully to their pockets and keep a guard over their porte-monnaies in all places where pilgrims do congregate.

At length the assembly breaks up, to make way for another set of pilgrims awaiting their turn to be present at the Holy Sacrifice. But meanwhile there has been no cessation of the distribution of Holy Communion, which the bishop began and the two priests have been carrying on ever since. One long line of pilgrims after another has planted itself at the grille, or iron railings of the Grotto, until the priests have to be relieved of their pious task from sheer weariness. One morning I myself gave Holy Communion for over an hour, until I feared I should drop the Sacred Hosts, or get confused in the words to be repeated, especially as the communicants were outside the iron gates and the priest had to stretch his

hand through the railings in order to communicate them. But after a time the stream slackens, and the last of the Breton pilgrims retire to make their thanksgiving, and a fresh assembly has already occupied the benches, and a fresh Mass is being said by one of the priests accompanying it. This will go on continually until the Solemn High Mass at 10.30, when the crowd will be denser than ever. After it Benediction will be given, and the Blessed Sacrament will be carried back in solemn procession and placed in the tabernacle of the Basilica.

In the Basilica there has been during this same period a succession of Masses, to which only those are admitted who belong to the pilgrimage for whom Mass is being said. This is a necessary rule to prevent over-crowding and confusion, and has also the advantage of keeping the members of a pilgrimage together and binding them into one by means of their common devotions and the common sacrifice they offer. Often the Mass of the pilgrimage will be said on one day in the Basilica, on the next in the Grotto, then again in the Basilica, supposing that it is a three days' pilgrimage. Nor are the Masses confined to the Basilica and the Grotto. There is also the church of the crypt, with its central altar of

Our Lady and a number of side altars around. At many of these Mass is said almost continuously from the early dawn until noon. At the altar of Our Lady in the crypt I myself said Mass during my stay. Each morning I had some difficulty in making my way to the sacristy, and from the sacristy to the altar. My server had simply to thrust the people aside in order to open a path through the unbroken crowd. Here, too, it was necessary to have a priest specially appointed to give Communion, else the Mass would often have extended over an hour or more. Here, too, as everywhere at Lourdes, there was that irresistible tide of devotion that seemed to act on all present in spite of themselves, and to carry away priest and people alike in the direction of Heaven and things divine.

I have supposed the Breton pilgrimage, the proceedings of which I am describing, to have been summoned for ten o'clock to the Piscina, to be present during the bathing of the sick. At eleven o'clock I stroll down thither, and as I draw near, the familiar pilgrimage songs greet my ears in loud and earnest tones. Round about the door of the Piscina is the general crowd, in front of the crowd the beds and litters on which the sick are stretched—all save one or two who are in the bath. Between

the sick and the crowd are some three or four priests, strong-lunged, stalwart-voiced, who are leading the singing. Presently it ceases, and one of the priests mounts a little pulpit, and addresses the crowd in a few earnest words, urging them to pray with all their might and main that they may not depart without some cures having been wrought. Then the Rosary is said aloud, then the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, next more hymns, and then again more prayers, and then another little address, and so on for nearly two hours ; the change from prayer to praise, from hymns to Rosary, from their own supplications to the short addresses of the priest, making the time pass pleasantly enough for the pilgrims who are gathered there. But look ! there is a sudden stir, a movement in the crowd, what has happened ? Out of the bath come one and another, excited, and eager to tell their news. A few moments after there appears at the door, walking and leaping and praising God, a poor woman whom they had a short time before seen lying prostrate in one of the now empty litters. Painfully and with an effort she had dragged herself, or rather had been dragged by strong arms that supported her, into the bath, with one side paralyzed, and unable to move a step without her crutches. Who would believe

that that active nimble woman is the same as the poor helpless cripple of half an hour since? Yes, it is: Our Lady has obtained mercy for her. Briskly she steps out among the crowd: takes in one hand the proffered crutches, and, carrying them as tokens of victory, literally runs with them to the Grotto, followed by an eager and a joyous crowd. There she hands them to one of the attendants, and kneeling down at Our Lady's feet, pours out her soul in gratitude to God and to His Holy Mother, while the excited crowd kneel outside giving thanks with her. After a time, she comes forth brighter and more joyful than ever, and with the tears of grateful emotion running down her cheeks. At the door of exit the attendant offers her her crutches. "Merci bien, Monsieur, je n'en ai plus besoin," she says with half-amused surprise, and mingling once more with her happy friends, adds one more to the many wonders of that wonder-working fount.

I must reserve for a future chapter any further account of the miracles of Lourdes. It is impossible to describe a pilgrimage without mentioning the graces, blessings, improvements in health, and positive cures which are granted, now more, now less, to almost every pilgrimage. Sometimes, it may be, the

pilgrims depart without any notable cure or even change for the better in the sick who are brought there. But this is the exception, not the rule, and a more careful inquiry will generally discover some corporal or spiritual work of mercy in every pilgrimage. Often shyness or modesty or a feeling of delicacy will prevent the receiver of the favor from discovering the wonder wrought. Sometimes it is sheer humility, though mistaken humility, that produces an unwillingness to tell of so great a work done in one who deems himself so unworthy. Anyhow, there are many cures that are only discovered when the sick persons return to their relations and the change wrought cannot be concealed.

At twelve our pilgrims scatter for their mid-day meal, mostly to the various restaurants and boarding-houses scattered over the town. Some, however, retire to a sequestered nook in the neighborhood of the Grotto, or seat themselves on the benches which run along the bank of the Gave, and there from a basket produce their economic stores. Let us stop opposite one of these benches and see, if they will forgive our rudeness, of what the family meal consists. There are five of them altogether, father and mother, two big girls, and a boy of about seven—an average French

family. They are evidently working people in their Sunday best, towns-people too, for the girls are smart as becomes those who live in a city. First of all a clean, coarse cloth comes forth, in which the long crisp loaf, the bottom of which is not unspotted by cinders, has been wrapped to keep it fresh. This serves as table-cloth and family napkin. Next comes a substantial *saucisson*, or big sausage (dear to the soul of Frenchmen), a bottle of *vin ordinaire*, a lump of cheese and the necessary condiments, and a knife and a glass. The knife carves bread, sausage, and cheese alike, being, however, carefully wiped on the bread when its use is transferred from sausage to bread, or when it passes from hand to hand. The meal is evidently eaten with great relish. All the fragments are carefully collected and put away, and, we suspect, will be made to suffice for supper at six. No one of the passers-by notices this little party, no one stares at them, and they eat their meal quite as pleasantly, and perhaps a good deal more pleasantly, than in the little sitting-room in their home at Rennes, or wherever it may be.

At two o'clock all the pilgrims assemble for Vespers in the Basilica. After Vespers they march back to the Grotto in procession, singing the accustomed hymns; then there is



another little sermon, and before four they break up again, after being reminded of the ceremony which is to crown the day, the torchlight procession at half-past seven. We will leave them to wander here and there, to pray at the Grotto, to make their little purchases, to visit the Calvary on the hill and the caves on the ascent behind the Grotto, until their supper is over. They are to re-assemble *en masse* in front of the Grotto a little after seven.

We have spoken of the torchlight procession as the crowning ceremony of the day, and though, of course, it is by no means the most important, yet it is by far the most striking to the external eye. It is early in September, and the darkness is fast falling as the hour for the procession draws nigh. By the kindness of one of the Fathers we take our place on the private terrace which runs round the Basilica and looks down directly on the space in front of the Grotto. Not the Breton pilgrims alone, but all the pilgrims present at Lourdes are united in that vast assemblage. As we watch them growing indistinct in the dim twilight, the signal is given for the lighting of the torches. Every one has a torch—a candle inclosed in a paper sheath to protect it from the wind. On the paper is stamped in

blue-and-white the figure of Our Lady. As the candles are lighted the crowd becomes simply a sea of light, or rather a sea of stars. It looks as if all the stars had come down from heaven and gathered there to honor the Queen of Heaven. At half-past seven word is given to march, and from one point in that sea of stars a thin streak or band of light appears to emerge as we watch it from above, and this band gradually spreads up the zigzag path leading up to the Basilica, until there is a zigzag stream of moving stars marching in curious zigzag pattern up the side of the hill. But these stars do not twinkle silently. They are very noisy stars indeed. Loudly through the evening air rises the sound of the hymns they are singing, keeping time as best they can in their distant lines. There is the *Ave Maria*—never too often repeated, there is the familiar *Nous voulons Dieu*, there is the hearty vigorous Breton refrain *Catholique et Breton toujours*.

At length the stream emerges in the upper road, and makes its way down the gentle slope that sweeps past the Basilica. We leave our terrace, and seek a fresh vantage-ground in the heights above, leading up to the Calvary. Thence we have a splendid view of the procession as a whole, as it passes along the road into

the grounds laid out in front of the Basilica, winds around a cross lighted up, which forms a goal at a distance of some two hundred yards, and then returns along a path on the other side to the open space in front of the new church of which I spoke in my last chapter, to re-assemble before a large statue of Our Lady, beautifully illuminated with tiny tapers which cover it. Already some have arrived at their destination, while the rear ranks have not yet emerged from the zigzag path. All along the plain one traces a brilliant pattern of dazzling light, formed by the moving stars upon their way. Altogether there are nigh seven thousand persons taking part in it, all singing lustily. In the midst is a brass band, which varies the harmony, but is sometimes a trifle too noisy, and drowns the voices in its vicinity. The effect of the body of sound rising simultaneously from all points of the procession is most curious and most effective.

At length, little by little, the moving line of stars gathers at the trysting-place, the zigzag path is deserted, then the road, and after a time there is a new sea of light, into which the stragglers hurry up at double-quick time, until all are there. Then there is a short pause, and on that still autumn evening there rise through the air the vigorous tones of a Bishop

belonging to one of the pilgrimages. It is so quiet that I can catch most of what he says, though he must be a quarter of a mile away. The topic is ever the same, Our dear Lady, Our Lady of Lourdes. From time to time he pauses, and calls on his hearers to express their loyalty in ringing tone. At once a shout rises up to Heaven, *Vive Notre Dame de Lourdes!* Then again, *Vive Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ!* *Vive l'Église Apostolique, Catholique et Romaine!* *Vive la France Chrétienne!* and *Vive Notre Dame de Lourdes!* once more. And when all is over, and the venerable Prelate has given his benediction, a fresh voice suggests a new shout, which is echoed with hearty loyalty, *Vive Monseigneur l'Evêque!* By this time it is past ten, and the assembly breaks up to refresh their weary limbs with sweet repose.

Such is a pilgrim's day at Lourdes as I witnessed once and again its accustomed occupations. If I have attempted to give the reader some notion of it, it is necessarily a very incomplete one. It is only to be realized by a visit to the spot, and by taking part in the supernatural life that breathes through everything connected with that sanctuary of benedictions.

## CHAPTER III.

### LOURDES AND ITS MIRACLES.

**I**N my previous chapter I related how I had the privilege of being present on the occasion of one of those manifestations of the power of God that may well be regarded as miraculous. When a paralysis that has destroyed all power to move a step without the aid of crutches, disappears in an instant, and the patient is able to use her limbs as nimbly as one in perfect health, so sudden and wonderful a change is at least on the borders of a miracle. Yet it is one of those cases which continually occur at the Grotto of Lourdes, but respecting which I should hesitate before I pronounced any decided opinion. When we approach the border-land of the miraculous we have to exercise the greatest possible caution. If it seems ungrateful to question Our Lady's wonder-working power by any attempt to explain, on natural grounds, a change of the supernatural character of which there seems to be very little doubt, yet, on the other hand, in this critical and sceptical age it is very injurious to religion if its advocates lay claim

to a direct intervention of God's wonder-working power where the ordinary laws of nature may possibly have produced the phenomena under investigation.

If, therefore, I seem to be a minimizer in the matter of the miracles of Lourdes, it is because I believe that an attitude of watchful caution and a disposition to examine closely into the claims of any cure to be regarded as miraculous, tend more to the honor of the Holy Mother of God than too ready an acceptance of alleged miracles. If this was my opinion before my visit to Lourdes, much more is it my opinion after spending some time there, and investigating more carefully than I had ever done before this important and delicate question. The admission of a single cure into the list of miracles without sufficient proof might do very serious harm. The least tendency to adopt a supernatural explanation of what may be accounted for by natural means, would be taken up by the enemies of the Church and turned into ridicule. The assertion in a single instance of a sudden cure where there was no cure at all, but simply a temporary relief produced by imagination or religious fervor, or the excitement of the moment, would furnish a text to the ready pen of the sceptic, anxious to find an excuse for re-

jecting alike the presence at the Grotto of a special supernatural influence and the vision vouchsafed to Bernadette, as well as the many corporal and spiritual favors granted to pilgrims who visit the Grotto or bathe in its life-giving fount of water.

Perhaps the best introduction of my subject will be to ask the reader to accompany me to the *Bureau de Consultations*, or Office of examination into cures alleged to be miraculous, on the banks of the Gave, at a short distance from the Grotto. Every afternoon, at four o'clock, the doctor specially attached to the Grotto is in attendance there to examine those who are said to have been healed, and to receive the details of their malady. M. le Baron de St. Maclou is a distinguished man of science who made his studies at the University of Louvain, and has a good knowledge of philosophy as well as of medicine. During some years he paid special attention to nervous diseases, imaginary maladies, and the varied forms of hysteria. For the last three years he has been resident at Lourdes, and has made a careful study of every alleged cure. Needless to say that he is a courteous, well-bred gentleman, and, moreover, an excellent Christian. His kindness and courtesy to the sick and suffering are well known to all visitors to Lourdes,

and especially to the sick poor, who are an invariable accompaniment of every pilgrimage. Very much in need of all possible kindness and courtesy are these unfortunate sufferers! What misery they have endured during the long railway journey, a misery sometimes almost intolerable! What piteous objects they are, as they are slowly carried down from the hospital by the careful charity of the *brancardiers*, who have to stop from time to time because their pain is almost too great to bear! What a melancholy spectacle they present, as they lie in their beds and litters in front of the Grotto, or wait their turn at the door of the bath to be carried in, and plunged painfully in its icy waters. Perhaps the saddest sight of all is to see them when they return without having obtained any relief or cure, and go back to their homes to endure in patience the painful malady which they had hoped it might please God to cure through Our Lady's intercession during their visit to her shrine. For it is a great mistake to suppose that any large proportion of the sick who are brought to Lourdes are healed there. The percentage of those who are completely freed from their maladies there is very small indeed. I scarcely like to venture on any sort of conjectural average, but I imagine that, if five per cent of



the sick are cured in any given pilgrimage, the average would be regarded as a very large one. Sometimes there are no cures at all, or at least none that reach the ears of the Fathers of the Grotto, or the doctor, or the heads of the pilgrimage. Often there are merely one or two cures, which may or may not be miraculous, and perhaps a few *ameliorations* or improvements in the condition of the sick, which do not at all deserve the name of cures. But one benefit, I do not hesitate to say, attaches to every pilgrimage, that the sick, even if they are not healed, even if no improvement takes place in their condition, invariably go away comforted, and with fresh grace to bear with patient resignation the sickness which it has pleased God to inflict upon them. After all, this is often a far more permanent benefit, a far more real mercy, than if bodily pain disappeared, or disabled limbs regained their full force and strength.

It is on a fine afternoon in September that I am invited by M. de St. Maclou to be present when the sick who have received benefit from their visit come to make their statements at his bureau. The little building is plain and simple enough. An outer waiting-room, in which those who have come to report themselves to the physician remain until their turn

comes for their interview—two little rooms within, one of them the examination-room, and the other a little consulting room, where the inspection of wounds and sores and healed or unhealed takes place apart. For hither come not only those who have to report themselves as cured, but others whose malady is such that the good Sisters at the hospital, or the members of the committee of *hospitaliers* and *hospitalières* doubt whether it is prudent for them to enter the bath. All such are sent down to the doctor for examination, that his skill and prudence may decide whether they are strong enough to undergo the ordeal of a plunge into the water.

Nor do these two classes exhaust the list of those who present themselves each afternoon at the *Bureau de Consultations*. Very few who receive the grace of a cure fail to pay a second visit to the shrine—a pilgrimage of gratitude is the almost invariable rule—and one of the duties and privileges of such a pilgrimage is to interview the doctor and convince him of the reality and permanence of the miracle wrought upon them. Thus, when many pilgrims are at Lourdes, there is often quite a little crowd waiting at the bureau to see M. le Médecin, especially as friends and relations all expect to be present. Not unfrequently,

too, the priest who has charge of the pilgrimage comes to take part in the examination, or to bear witness to the condition of the patient before the visit which has worked the change; and more often still some medical man, Christian or sceptic, comes to listen to the account of the malady and its cure, and to the examination into previous symptoms and subsequent condition, and sometimes himself to cross-question, at the invitation of M. de St. Maclou, the persons cured, and form his own opinion as to their accuracy of statement and the character of the marvels said to be wrought in them. For such critical investigation is courted not by the doctor only, but by the Missionaries of the Immaculate Conception (for so the Fathers of the Grotto are entitled), and by all who are connected with it. There is no fear of the light of day, no dread lest the moral scalpel of the skilled investigator should detect a weak point in the cures wrought. Nay, the more light, the better; the more publicity, the better; the more scientific investigation, the better; the more visits of sceptical men of science, the better; so long as they come in the spirit of a *sceptic* rather in its etymological than in its generally received meaning; in a candid and unprejudiced spirit of honest inquiry, and not with foregone conclusions and

an opinion to which they are beforehand resolved to cling, even though facts be against them, and the evidence opposed to their previously conceived hypotheses.

I take my seat at the table, near M. de St. Maclou, and the first of the persons to be examined is introduced. She is an Augustinian nun, from the neighborhood of Tours, belonging to a community who devote themselves to nursing the sick. She is a little pale, but otherwise seems in perfect health, walks with ease, and is suffering no pain. It was but that very morning that the good Sister was carried down, utterly helpless, to the bath. The *brancardier* who was one of her escort described to me her state of complete prostration, and the difficulty they experienced in bearing her along without causing her severe pain. She could not walk a step without assistance, could not retain her food, and the painful sickness that was caused by any attempt to eat produced a vomiting of blood at the same time. She suffered, moreover, from gall-stones, which caused her acute agony; and an affection of the liver, which was the result of these, completed the list of her miseries. Needless to say that she was reduced to a condition of extreme weakness and emaciation, and that her recovery was despaired of. For the last

six years her maladies had been growing upon her, and instead of being able to do anything in the way of nursing, she had been, to her great sorrow, a burden on the community almost from the very day of her profession.

But when all human means had failed in alleviating her sufferings, there still remained the hope that the Holy Mother of God would intervene in behalf of one who had consecrated herself to the service of God. When arrangements were made for a pilgrimage from Tours, the poor Sister accepted with joy the proposal that she should take part in it and see whether it was the will of God that she should be cured. The journey cost her indescribable suffering. Three times she swooned in the railway carriage, and her companions began to doubt whether she would live to reach her destination. But she arrived at last, and, after a night's rest, was carried down painfully and in an almost desperate condition to the bath. No sooner had she plunged in that life-giving water than she felt a sort of revolution in her whole body: one moment of agonizing pain, and after that the calm, tranquil content that is the effect of sudden relief from long-continued agony. All the pain was gone; she began to move her limbs, and found them supple, like those of a little child; the sensa-

tion of nausea was replaced by a healthy longing for food—she was cured! A basin of soup was brought her, and she drank it with relish; no subsequent sickness, no discomfort. No further need of the litter, or of the guiding crutch, or of the assisting arms of the Sisters who had brought her thither. She is able to walk unsupported, and with the agile step of health. She is still somewhat pale and thin, it is true; but it is not part of a miracle to give back all at once the accidentals of health; rosy cheeks and firm flesh will come back only by degrees. But the essentials are there: the organs which refused to do their work have resumed their normal action. Full of quiet joy and gratitude, the good Sister tells her story, and each detail is confirmed by the companion who has escorted her on her journey, and who has been the witness of her sudden cure.

As I sat there and watched the scene, while my interest centred in the object of Our Lady's healing power, I could not help being struck with the attitude of the doctor. I know that I should listen to an intelligent and scientific interrogation, and that he would ascertain with professional skill all the details of the malady, or rather of the maladies, under which the patient had been suffering. But there

was an element in his method of inquiry for which I certainly was not prepared. I had expected (if the honest truth must be told) that there would be a sort of predisposition to find the miraculous in the details narrated, and a certain *pia credulitas*, a leaning of the pious will to belief in the cure having been worked by supernatural influences. My previous acquaintance with M. de St. Maclou had quite convinced me that I should find him accurate, unprejudiced, dispassionate in his criticism, an honest, impartial, exact judge of the symptoms and the manner of their disappearance; but I was not prepared, I confess, for the attitude that he assumed, not only in the above case, but in all that came before him. He was not only exact, but most exacting. Not only did he manifest no sort of partiality for a miraculous explanation of the change wrought, but he gave the appearance of one who had a distinct partiality for any explanation which would banish the miraculous. If I had not known him to be a most excellent and pious Catholic, if I had been suddenly introduced into the room without any previous acquaintance with him, I should have taken him, from the manner of his examination, for a sceptic who was determined on finding some natural solution for every cure

that came before him. Perhaps I may be so bold as to attempt to give a brief illustration of the manner of his interrogatory, at the same time making all possible apologies for my very imperfect reproduction from memory of the details, which it is impossible (especially for a foreigner) faithfully to reproduce with all the vivid coloring of the original scene.

“Well, my dear Sister, you have been a great sufferer.”

“I have indeed, Doctor.”

“How long have you been ill?”

“Eight years, Doctor, and I have been much worse since last Christmas.”

“I think you said you have lost the use of your right side.”

“I did not lose it entirely at first, but the difficulty of using both the right arm and the right side has continually increased.”

Here the doctor turned to me with a sort of satisfaction. “Ah!” he said significantly, “*paralysie nerveuse!*” Then, turning to the Sister:

“And you had no appetite?”

“No, Doctor, nothing would remain in my stomach.”

“After eating you always vomited?”

“Yes, always.”

Here again he turned to me with the trium-



phant air of a man who has made a discovery. "A—h!" he said, pronouncing the interjection with a protracted emphasis peculiarly French, "vous voyez, mon Père, vomissements hystériques!" Then, again addressing the Sister:

"And you felt a lump that seemed to come up into your throat?"

"Indeed, I did, and it almost suffocated me."

"A—h" (turning to me again with the same air of triumph): "boule hystérique!"

"Sometimes you lost all sensation in your hands?"

"Yes, Doctor, and when they ran a pin into me, I did not feel it."

"But there were other parts of your body that hurt you if they were touched?"

"Yes, I could not bear the slightest touch on them."

Once more the good doctor turned to me: "Remarquez le bien, mon Père. *Anesthésie et hyperesthésie!*"

Besides this nervous affection, M. de St. Maclou discovered, as the diagnosis proceeded, something more. There were symptoms which could only be explained by the existence of some disease of the liver. This made the worthy doctor take a more serious view of the case. Such symptoms could scarcely be due to nervous hysteria. But he reserved his

judgment, acting and speaking with a prudence and a caution which at first astonished me, until a little reflection opened my eyes to the prudence of the attitude assumed and the confidence engendered by it in his decision respecting the cases submitted to him.

In the case of which I am speaking, the clearly-proved existence of a complication of disorders induced him to listen—I will not say with more patience (for he was always patient), but with a greater belief in their value—to these symptoms of partial or total paralysis, feeling of suffocation, continual retching, inability to take food, anesthesia or hyperesthesia, and the other symptoms familiar to physicians as the accompaniments of hysteria. But in many other cases, examined in my presence, where symptoms like these formed the whole or chief part of the diagnosis, he brushed aside the evidence without the slightest hesitation, and dismissed the persons cured with a few kind words of encouragement, telling them that they had every reason to thank Almighty God for His goodness to them, but warning them that what they had received was a grace rather than a miracle. Over and over again, where it seemed to me that no natural means could have produced the sudden change, on my asking his opinion respecting the nature

of the malady and the cause of its disappearance, he would answer firmly: "Nervous affection, my dear Sir! There is nothing here that authorizes me to declare the cure miraculous, although it is quite true that there *may* have been a miracle;" and he then told me how a sudden shock, or a strong faith, or a powerful imagination, or a state of religious excitement would often be the occasion of at least a temporary cessation of the most marked and inveterate symptoms resulting from hysteria. As I have said, this attitude of his astonished me a little at first, but it gave me a confidence in Dr. de St. Maclou's verdict that I should never otherwise have had. It was a great satisfaction to know that in some respects he out-Heroded Herod in his sceptical and critical spirit, and that a case that was passed by him must carry with it such incontrovertible marks of the miraculous that no intelligent man, unless blinded by invincible prejudice, could refuse to accept it with unhesitating assurance of its truth.

In addition to the interrogation of the patient, there was an indispensable condition exacted, without which M. de St. Maclou seemed to lose the greater part of his interest in the case before him, or at least to refuse to give any confidence to the testimony of the

sufferer, until the want could be supplied. Unless the alleged recipients of miracles brought a written statement of their case—its gravity, symptoms, and dangerous or incurable nature—from the physician who had been attending them previous to their visit, he evidently regarded their belief in the miraculous nature of their cure as of little or no value. If the case was a remarkable one, he would give them strict instructions to send him, as soon as they arrived at home, the written testimonial, which ought to have been an accompaniment of their pilgrimage. Even so he did not show the same willingness to accept their evidence as if the statement could be produced in the first instance. In point of fact, the proportion of such statements subsequently forwarded was not very large—carelessness, or ignorance, or the unwillingness of the sceptical physician to contribute any aid to what he regarded as a superstition, generally prevented any such document from being received, when once the subject of the cure had gone his way.

But I will continue my historical or quasi-historical narrative. I call it quasi-historical, because I do not profess to be perfectly accurate in the grouping of the cases which I shall attempt to portray. I spent several afternoons in M. de St. Maclou's bureau, and

I select two or three instances which I regard as more or less typical. They did not present themselves altogether or in the order I narrate them, but they are correct in their main details, as I am not relying on memory alone, but have by my side the notes taken on the spot.

When the Augustinian Sister had gone away rejoicing, a man came in of between fifty and sixty years, fresh-looking and robust, evidently belonging to the working class. He was a mason from the North of France. He had come with the pilgrimage from Rouen, and his visit was one of thanksgiving. Two years before he had been carried to the Grotto, suffering from a paralysis that the doctors had pronounced incurable. On bathing in the spring the use of his limbs gradually returned to him, and on his third bath they had completely regained their full force and activity. The doctor's records were consulted and were found to correspond exactly with the man's description of himself. "Have you had any attack since then?" "Absolutely none. I can work now, M. le Docteur, as well as when I was twenty. Look at me and see how completely Our Lady has done her work. But I want to know why my cure has never been recorded in the *Annales*. I think it is not right that such a wonderful cure as mine should be

omitted. You took the notes of it at the time, and you told me to send you the certificate of the doctor at home three months afterwards. I did so; and I quite expected to see the case reported, and I want you to tell me why you have left it out." Our good friend was assured that his case had not been omitted through any oversight, but because there were so many cases of paralysis that it was impossible to report them all; and by way of consolation, he was advised to get M. le Curé to give an account of his cure in a local religious journal in Normandy, where he would be known, and attention called to the wonder Our Lady had worked in his behalf. But he went away still half grumbling, and evidently under the impression that Our Lady had been badly treated in so notable a miracle having been omitted.

There was another reason, in all probability, why the *Annales de Lourdes* did not report this worthy mason's cure. Every physician knows that there is no disease so often caused by a purely nervous affection as the various forms of paralysis, numbness, aphasia, and the like. In such cases, imagination often plays a very important part, both in the disease and in its cure. Our classical readers will remember the story in Herodotus, of the son of Croesus,

who was dumb from infancy, but who found his voice in his distress at seeing a soldier about to plunge his sword into his father's breast, not knowing who he was, and cried out "Man, will you kill the King?" In temporary paralysis, a sudden shock will frequently restore the use of limbs long useless. On one of our coasting steamers a paralytic lady was lying on the deck. As the ship approached the mouth of the harbor it struck on a rock; there was a panic among the passengers and a rush to the boats. Nimblest among those who ran to seek safety for herself was the poor paralytic, whose limbs, under the guiding influence of the excited imagination, recovered completely for a time their power to move. Hence, among the recorded miracles of Lourdes, the cure of paralysis, pure and simple, is always treated with some suspicion, and is now but rarely inserted where it stands alone. We say among the *recorded* miracles, for there is probably no single disease so often cured at the Grotto as this. From the very nature of things there is no class of persons who are so frequently found at Lourdes as sufferers from nervous paralysis. A New Zealand physician who has made a special study of the miracles of Lourdes, puts this extremely well.

“It must be evident that the reputation of such a shrine as that of Lourdes would naturally attract to it vast numbers of patients affected with functional disorders of the nervous system, which had resisted all known means of cure. How often does one meet in practice with some nervous or hysterical woman, or some hypochondriacal man, who has taken all the nervine tonics, tried cold bathing, perhaps undergone a regular course of water cure, has been galvanized, has tried homœopathy and every other form of quackery, and yet has no organic disease, no functional disease which a powerful mental emotion might not cure for a time. For the root of all these cases is a *morbid egotism*, an egotism which swallows up every other consideration. These wretched creatures, so well known in the profession, are deeply to be pitied; to them the whole world is nothing, compared with the symptoms of their disease. When they have wearied out one doctor, they go to another. When they can find sympathy in no other way, and their circumstances allow it, they get up some infirmity which keeps them bedridden; they have paralysis, or contraction of one limb, or hysterical vomiting of every kind of food, no matter what.

Now imagine a woman of this kind (for



women form the majority of such cases) who is a Catholic. She is, we will say, bedridden ; and she has had for five, six, or even ten years, hysterical paralysis of one side. ✓ She tells you in her history that the doctors have thrust pins or knives into the paralyzed limb without her feeling it ; not knowing that this very fact is, according to Charcot, an almost certain proof that the hemiplegia is hysterical. Perhaps, in addition, she is reduced to a mere skeleton by hysterical vomiting. The doctors have given her up. They have done everything for her ; and if they are French doctors, they have most probably done a great deal too much. Leeches, blisters, cuppings, moxas, galvanism, iodine, bromides, quinine, iron, zinc, phosphorus, all the tonics that have ever been invented, seem to have been tried in some of these cases—all are useless. The disease only grows worse, as might naturally be expected. At last the patient, or the patient's friends, thinks of Lourdes. Probably she is a very fervid Catholic. The question excites an intense interest in her mind, for it is something about herself. It becomes the subject of frequent and warm discussion. Her friends, who are certainly getting tired of her, and who have heard or read of miraculous cures in similar cases, think that there is just a

chance that she may be one of the cured. Difficulties occur, but they are surmounted; every difficulty, every discussion, has served but to make the cure more probable. For the first time for years, perhaps, the patient thinks she *may* be cured. For the first time perhaps for years the patient really *wants* to be cured. She undertakes devotions to this end, novenas are said, the journey is begun; every day, every hour that brings her nearer to the miraculous shrine exalts her faith, intensifies her conviction that she will be cured, and in reality is curing her by provoking a healthy action of the nervous system. All the discomforts and the pains of the journey conduce to this end; *they are new sensations*; the very jolting of the train brings into action muscles that had been quiescent for years; the change of air, of climate, of scenery, are all giving new life and new vigor to the nervous system.

At last she reaches Lourdes; perhaps before she reaches the Grotto, the cure is effected; perhaps the first bath does it, and she walks out exclaiming, "*Je suis guérie.*" Possibly it may require three or four baths, but before she leaves she is cured. In all this there is nothing supernatural." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "*A Medical Investigation of the Cures by the Lourdes Water.*"  
By R. H. BAKEWELL, M. D. (*New Zealand Tablet*, February 13, 1885.)

Now I do not pretend to judge whether in the majority of the countless cases in which hysterical paralysis is cured at Lourdes there is a miracle or not. It is often impossible to tell where the natural ends and the supernatural begins. Besides miracles of healing, properly so called, there are what we may call subjective, or indirect miracles, where the supernatural influences of the place produce so powerful an effect on the mind of the patient, such graces are received into the soul, that the mind, through the imagination, acts on the body with curative effects, and nerves long helpless, and limbs supposed to be powerless, recover their wonted energy and strength. When such influences are at work, nervous affections may be cured by Almighty God in an extraordinary way, that is not however supernatural, in that He produces in the sick person an impression that can by *natural* means bring about the cure. In these cases there is a *grace*, not a miracle properly so called, in that there is nothing in the physical order that is altogether beyond the ordinary forces of nature. Even cures that *may* be miraculous must, if any natural explanation is possible, be altogether omitted from our list of miracles.

If the various forms of hysteria and paral-

ysis were the only diseases healed, we should be inclined to join hands with the sceptic, or at least to acknowledge that there is no clear and incontestable evidence of the power of God acting directly and immediately on the body. Unless we concede this, we are liable to render our own position indefensible. Just as a man who asserts that the chronological arrangement of the events recorded in the various Gospels is exactly in accordance with the order in which they actually took place, is but a sorry advocate of the inspiration of Holy Scripture, in that he attempts to prove too much, and thus renders his position an untenable one, so a man who should declare the numberless cures of nervous maladies at Lourdes to be all of them due to Our Lady's wonder-working power to heal, may be a pious enthusiast, but is neither a prudent man nor a trustworthy advocate of the cause he is defending. His weapons may be shattered in his hands. An exact parallel to any of the cases he alleges may be produced, where the cure was clearly due to natural means, and then his whole fabric falls. It involves in the ruin certain, as well as doubtful, miracles, and the sceptic departs with a well-earned triumph, and naturally exclaims, *Ex uno disce omnes*—I have shattered one miracle which my

enthusiastic friend declared to be incontrovertible, and I am justified in the conclusion that all the rest are of the same character.

This is why the critical attitude of the doctor of the Grotto towards all reported miracles is so re-assuring a fact in the history of Lourdes. It is their intimate conviction of the importance of excluding all doubtful cases from their records that gives the Catholic world so just a confidence in the Fathers who have charge of the Grotto. Why should they admit a doubtful case, when there are so many which are absolutely incontestable? I will presently give the details of one or two of these undeniable miracles which have occurred recently. But I must first proceed, after a digression for which I apologize to my readers, to the cures (I do not say miracles, for I saw none that would pass M. de St. Maclou's severe test) that fell under my own immediate observation.

The next incomers into the Doctor's bureau were a French lady and two nice little girls. They too, like the mason, were on a pilgrimage of thanksgiving. The lady was not, as we at first supposed, the mother of the two children, but their aunt (or cousin, I forget which), who had had charge of them since their mother's death, and had been a mother to them. She told her story to the doctor,

which was as follows : Some two years since (in November, 1885) Suzanne M —, the elder of the two little maidens, then aged ten years, had her ears pierced for the insertion of earrings. Unfortunately she caught cold at the time, and after a few days the cold settled in her neck. What was thought at first to be an ordinary stiff-neck proved to be an inflammation and consequent contraction of the muscles of the neck, accompanied with a large swelling and an inflammation of the joints of the spinal column. The poor child could not move her head without suffering the most acute pain, and the contraction of the muscles had dragged it down almost on to her right shoulder ; the upper part of her body was also twisted on one side. All the remedies tried effected nothing, and seemed only to make her worse. There was every probability of her becoming a permanent invalid and a constant sufferer. On which her pious aunt bethought her of Lourdes, and with difficulty, and at the cost of some suffering, she was brought thither, and bathed five times in the spring. Little by little the pain dissappeared, and when the time for their departure arrived, she could turn her head—not easily, but without the torture that every movement had previously cost her. She could move it slowly

and with some discomfort, and in this condition returned home. But the aunt was not satisfied at Our Lady's work being only half done, and when the feast of the Annunciation drew near, they all made a novena together at their own home for the girl's complete recovery. On the 25th of March, when the novena was ended, all traces of her malady were found to be ended also. No contraction of the muscles, no stiffness, no discomfort, no twisting of the head on one side, no swelling of the neck. Six months had passed since then, and no vestige of the disease, and when the child presented herself before the doctor at Lourdes, she shook her head merrily, and twisted it rapidly from side to side without the slightest inconvenience. The doctor took notes of her present condition, and told her to thank Our Lady for the favor she had received, but without committing himself to any declaration of its miraculous character.

After this little family there came in a stout, intelligent, determined looking woman of thirty, from St. Briec, in Brittany. Fourteen years before she had had a severe attack of pleurisy, which had left her in a very miserable state of health. Her spinal column was affected, and after a time her legs had become heavy under her. She suffered from cramp in

the stomach, and most painful fits of coughing. From time to time she had lost her voice, sometimes for a period of several months. Four years ago the numbness and heaviness in her legs had issued in a complete paralysis. Some parts of her body had lost all power of feeling, others were over-sensitive. Her arms had always remained strong, but she could only drag her legs feebly after her, supporting herself on her crutches. Two days ago she came to Lourdes. Bathed the day before, and felt a little better, bathed again this morning, and feels perfectly well. All this was told in a perfectly straightforward, matter-of-fact way. "Walk across the room," said the doctor, and she walks with perfect ease. "Any traces left of your paralysis?" "I think not." A further examination reveals some sensitiveness in the back and arms. "*Il faut attendre,*" said the careful physician. "You are much better, my child, but you are not well. At all events, you must wait a few weeks. After that time, send me a certificate of your condition from the doctor who attended you during those past years. Tell him to state in detail what was your state when you left home to come to Lourdes, and also, whether he can bear witness to a total disappearance of all unfavorable symptoms."



One more visitor to the bureau must bring to a close our list of patients. There were plenty of other cases, but they had not anything sufficiently distinctive in them to call for special notice. Among those who on the various occasions that I was there came to report themselves, there was a good curé who had been cured of rheumatism ; a woman who had long suffered from bronchitis and general prostration, and after bathing in the spring experienced a complete relief ; and a stout, well-looking girl of the middle class, who had been unable for a long time past to swallow her food without great difficulty, and had suffered great pains after her meals. None of these cases made much impression on the doctor, and the women for the most part were convicted of nervous hysteria in some form or other. But there was one other visitor whose case was one of peculiar interest, and who must be the last of the little company whose cases I have been attempting to describe. He was an *ancien militaire*, fifty years old, though he looked ten years older. He had fought in the Franco-Prussian War, and had been taken prisoner outside Paris ; carried off to Prussia, he had endured great hardships ; the food of the prisoners had been scanty and their lodging bad. During their march, the prisoners

had had to sleep in the open air on the damp ground, and the cold had struck into his system, and he had been attacked with severe rheumatism and swelling in the feet and legs. Returned home, he had with some difficulty continued his former work (he had been a farm-laborer), but after some years he became quite crippled with ulcers that had broken out in his feet and eaten into the flesh to the very bone. They were exceedingly painful, and he soon became unable to walk a step or even put his feet to the ground. For five or six years one ulcer had succeeded another, and no medical treatment had done anything to heal them. But he had come by the advice of M. le Curé to Lourdes with the pilgrimage from Angers, and that very morning had bathed in the spring.

On coming out of the water the ulcers were almost entirely healed, and for the first time for three or four years he could walk without any pain. Of course, the first thing in such a case as this was a careful examination of the parts affected. Shoes and stockings are taken off, and feet and legs submitted to the doctor's scrutiny. The doctor looked at them, felt them, and shook his head.

“Vous n'êtes pas encore guéri, mon ami. Cette plaie (pointing to one of the ulcers) est ouverte. Elle coule encore.”

“ Mais, M. le Docteur, je puis marcher sans douleur.”

“ Eh bien, remerciez le bon Dieu. Baignez-vous encore. Peut-être la Sainte Vierge complètera ce qu'elle a commencé.”

This was, in fact, one of the many cases of *amelioration*, rather than of cure. The skin had formed again over one or two of the sores, and the purulent discharge had almost ceased.

The extreme tenderness had disappeared, and the feet could be pressed without causing pain, and could support the weight of the body. But it was not at all the sort of case that would pass the ordeal of Medical Lourdes, or be put down as certainly surpassing the ordinary laws of nature.

I cannot attempt in my present chapter to conclude the subject of the miracles of Lourdes. The reader will observe that I have been recording rather what are *not* reckoned as miracles, than those that are admitted into the category of the supernatural. In my next chapter I shall bring forward a few recent examples which are quite incontrovertible, and point out wherein it is that the strength of the evidence really lies. If the accepted miracles were merely cases in which hysterical women had suddenly recovered, if they were limited to diseases in which the imagination

plays a large part, if it were merely paralysis, numbness, faintness, sickness, indigestion, headaches, cramps, over-sensitiveness in some parts of the body joined to deadness in others, which are healed at Our Lady's Grotto, there would be some ground for the incredulity of the sceptic and for the abstention of the pious Catholic from giving in his adherence to the reality of the miracles at Lourdes.

## CHAPTER IV.

### SOME INCONTROVERTIBLE MIRACLES AT LOURDES.

**I**T is an article of Catholic Faith that the wonderworking power of God has ever remained in the Church from the days of the Apostles, and will remain until the day when Christ shall come again to judge the living and the dead. But beyond this no acceptance of miracles is required of the Catholic in order that he may avoid the charge of heresy. He may deny each and every miracle from the time of the Apostles; he may assert that the power of working miracles has never been exercised from then till now; he may even thrust aside all ecclesiastical miracles as pious fables, and modern miracles as the offspring of a fervid imagination, or as a deliberate imposture. Yet he does not thereby forfeit his claim to the name of Catholic. He cannot, indeed, escape the charge of rashness, disloyalty, and scandal—he can scarcely be excused from a mortal sin against faith. If he denies the miracles contained in a Papal decree canonizing the Saint who performed them, he is drawing near to the verge of heresy. But to draw

near the verge of heresy is not to be a heretic. To sin against the Faith is not to deny the Faith, or cut oneself off from the Church of Christ.

Such a position, however, is rather an imaginary than a real one. The attacks on miracles, when made by Catholics, do not fall on miracles generally, but on a certain class of miracles ; on miracles performed on a certain occasion or in a certain place ; on miracles of a certain kind, which appear to the assailant to be without motive or to have in them an element of the ludicrous. The disposition of a good Catholic will combine a loyal readiness to accept any well-attested miracle with a prudent reserve and suspicion where the evidence shows signs of weakness. In some cases suspicion is not only justifiable, but a mark of prudence and sound sense. One who is prepared to gulp down everything as miraculous is no true friend to the cause that he supports. No one should accept a miracle as true unless he has such evidence of its reality as would be sufficient to carry conviction with it on any ordinary subject into which inquiry should be made. It ought to be the sort of proof that would satisfy a judge of the guilt or innocence of a prisoner, or that would induce a prudent man to invest money on the strength of its

validity, or an exceptionally careful and cautious man to pledge himself to it without hesitation. Without this he will be quite justified in rejecting it, or at least in regarding it with suspicion, as lacking sufficient evidence to establish its miraculous and supernatural character.

We are not here concerned with the amount of weight that attaches to the authority of ecclesiastical tribunals in their declaration of the reality of a miracle, or to the still higher authority of a Papal utterance on the subject. There has been no decision respecting the miracles of Lourdes which binds the consciences of the faithful. They have, indeed, the authority of bishops without number in their favor, and the Holy Father himself has given his formal approbation of the pilgrimages to Our Lady's wonder-working shrine. But as there has been nothing which can be claimed as absolutely decisive of the question, we will leave out all such considerations and will simply examine into their reality on the ground of the evidence adduced in their favor. We will treat them like any other facts, and see whether there is any sort of escape from the conclusion that there is some supernatural agency at work, over and above the ordinary laws of nature.

In our investigation we shall have three different questions to examine :

1. Can we find among the various cures wrought at Lourdes instances which are absolutely inexplicable on any other hypothesis except that of a miracle ?

2. In those cures which might possibly seem to be explicable in other ways, is there any special characteristic that renders such explanation inadmissible ?

3. Is the number of cures of an extraordinary kind sufficient to remove all possibility of fraud or of mere imagination, or of any other natural solution of the effects produced ?

If we can answer the first of these three questions in the affirmative, the reality of the miraculous character of the power that is at work at Lourdes will be sufficiently established. At the same time, if there were only one or two or even half a dozen such apparent miracles, standing alone and unaccompanied by a vast number of other cases which may possibly be explicable on natural grounds, we should be justified in regarding such exceptional cases with considerable suspicion. We should call them freaks of nature, and should look out for parallels to them (though we should look in vain) in the course of medical or other ordinary experience. We should say that they were



very wonderful, and that we were completely puzzled by them, and could not understand or explain them ; but when we had said this and exclaimed, " Very extraordinary indeed ! " we should shake off the impression that they made, if they stood alone as singular phenomena. But if, on the contrary, these absolutely inexplicable facts were accompanied by a crowd of others, not perhaps absolutely inexplicable, but yet so difficult to explain by any natural laws as to afford a very strong presumption that they were miraculous, the proof would be not a little strengthened. If, moreover, there be added to these a further set of facts, which could indeed be explained naturally, and to which certain parallels might be adduced from the confessedly natural order, but which were nevertheless very wonderful and extraordinary when regarded in their collective entirety, then we assert that any man of sober sense, free from pre-existing prejudice and from any conscious or unconscious determination not to believe, would accept those various facts as containing among them many true and genuine miracles. He would divide such facts into three classes : (1) Those undoubtedly supernatural, (2) Those probably supernatural, but not so clearly above the powers of nature as to enable us to

found an argument upon them in themselves. This class would be valuable as affording evidence or confirmation of the reality of the miracles belonging to the first class, but would have no other value. (3) Those which might indeed be explained on purely natural grounds, but which, nevertheless, by reason of some curious coincidence or concurrent circumstances, assume a quasi-supernatural character.

For instance, if I have been suffering for weeks from a severe and unremitting headache, and on the occasion of drinking a little water and saying at the same time certain prayers, my headache suddenly and entirely disappears, it is of course possible that the coincidence of the drinking of the water and saying of the prayers with the disappearance of the headache may be an entirely fortuitous circumstance, but we should at the same time regard it as at least a curious coincidence, and if there were to be a number of such coincidences we should be right in attributing them to some other cause than chance, whatever that cause might be.

I have already brought forward several instances of cures which fall under the second and third of these three classes. But I should have no right to claim from any one an absolute adherence to the miraculous character of

the healing influence at work at Lourdes, unless I could adduce some specimens of the first class. I am going to limit myself to recent instances, and shall bring forward only such as have happened within the last few years. I do not pretend that these undoubted miracles are very numerous; it is not likely that they would be, considering the wonderful power to heal that exists in the natural order, and therefore the comparatively small number of cures of which we can say that it is an absolute impossibility that any natural means could have produced them. I will give one or two about which there seems to me no possibility of doubt.

Our first example belongs to the class of diseases that are the furthest removed of all from any possible connection with hysteria or nervous affections. The cure took place in the year 1885. It is described in the *Annales de Lourdes*,<sup>1</sup> as one of the most remarkable of the year, and we might add that it seems one of the most wonderful that even Lourdes has witnessed. *Marie Marcellin*, a woman of thirty-five, of Marseilles, arrived at Lourdes on June 6, 1885, with the pilgrimage from that city. She was suffering from a chronic tumor on the left side of the stomach. It was accompanied

<sup>1</sup> October, 1885, p. 225.

by an internal abscess, fever, vomiting, etc., and her life was in danger. There was a further complication arising from enlargement of the heart. Her physician considered her journey to Lourdes a piece of madness, and sought in vain to dissuade her from it. But the good woman had greater confidence in the power of Our Lady than in the skill of physicians. The journey, needless to say, caused her agony. Vomiting, increased local pain, fever which mounted her pulse up to 120,<sup>o</sup> made it a matter of no small difficulty to bring her alive to Lourdes. Carried to the hospital, she was examined by Dr. Audibert, a physician of Marseilles, who had accompanied the pilgrimage, and who reports the existence, on Sunday morning, June 7, of a very large tumor on the left side of the stomach, spreading however to the right side as well. The tumor was hard and resisted pressure. On the right side it extended beyond the walls of the abdomen, and was larger than the palm of the hand. On the left it was larger still and excessively sensitive, on account of the inflammation of the membrane, and the patient could not bear to have it touched.

The careful doctor advised her to keep very quiet, but Marie had determined that Our Lady was to cure her. That very morning, at

nine o'clock, she was carried to the spring, and with the aid of the kind *hospitalières* managed to bathe, though at the cost of severe pain. The doctor visited her almost immediately after her bath, found her rather worse than better, pulse more feeble, and extremities quite cold. At ten A. M. she was by his orders put to bed.

At five in the afternoon he again visited the hospital. To his intense astonishment, his patient, whom he had left in bed, utterly prostrate, was standing in the middle of a group of listeners, talking with the greatest animation. She ran to meet him. "I'm cured, doctor. See how I can walk! Not a bit of pain left!" Her easy movement bore witness to the truth of her words. But this did not satisfy the doctor. "Go back to bed, and let me examine you." A careful and minute investigation showed a complete disappearance of any sort of swelling. The right side perfectly normal, the left side, where the swelling had been enormous, no less so. The parts which were previously so sensitive that a touch caused excessive pain, could now be struck smartly with the hand without causing any inconvenience—not a sore point, not a lump of any sort or kind.

The next day Dr. de St. Maclou, whose

prudent reserve I commemorated in my last chapter, examined her in company with the doctor aforesaid. The result was that they could report everything in good order—wonderful appetite, excellent digestion, all functions regular, while she had slept as soundly as a child.

But the reader will be interested in the details of the actual cure, as related by the Vicomtesse de Pouy, of whom we have already heard as the directress of the benevolent ladies who take charge of the sick and nurse them with their own hands, with tender and thoughtful charity, during the delicate process of bathing in the spring. Our English readers will listen to her account with all the more interest, on account of the fact already mentioned that this noble and noble-hearted lady is an Englishwoman. Her testimony is so interesting and important that we must give it in full. It is addressed to M. de St. Maclou.

“Monsieur le Docteur,—At your request and at the wish of the Fathers of the Grotto, I break the silence that I think ought to be the distinguishing mark of those who tend the sick in the piscina, and am going very simply to relate the circumstances that accompanied Marie Marcellin’s cure. These have remained so much the more easily impressed on my

memory from the fact that I took a particular interest in her on account of her having been recommended to me by a lady at Marseilles, who wrote me a letter containing a number of details respecting her malady.

“She was taken to the piscina on Sunday, the 7th of June, about 9 A. M. At the time she was suffering terrible pain from a tumor on the left side of the abdomen. The weight of the tumor was so considerable that she was obliged to hold it up with her hand. I was able to judge of its weight for a moment while I undertook the task of supporting it, but the slightest touch caused her fearful pain. We had laid her on a sheet, in order to lower her into the bath, for she was too weak to support herself. When she had come out of the water and dressed, we placed her in the carriage which had brought her, but unfortunately without any improvement being observed; on the contrary, she seemed to be worse. Scarcely had she left the bath, when the doctor who accompanied the pilgrimage entered hastily, and asked me for a cordial to give to her. Later on, he told me he thought she was worse. When she got back to the hospital, they were obliged to put her to bed.

“In the afternoon, about three o'clock, she was brought back to the bath. We laid her

again on the sheet, and let her down into the water. Scarcely had we done so, when she began to rub the parts affected with all her might. I thought I had better do the same, and then I discovered, to my astonishment, that all the swelling had disappeared!

“I was afraid of being under a delusion, so I left her for a moment, to look after the other sick persons. A few minutes later, Marie Marcellin, who had been dressed by the other attendant ladies, came up to me, her face beaming with joy, and gaily shaking her dress about, cried out, “See Madam, there is nothing the matter with me now!” (*il n’y a plus rien*). The next morning, after going on foot from the hospital to the Basilica, to be present at the general Communion of the pilgrimage, she returned, still on foot, to the bath. She wished to bathe again by way of thanksgiving, because, as she said, her legs were still a little weak. There was no longer any possible doubt about the wonderful grace bestowed upon her. It was after this last bath that I took her to you to be examined. In the course of the day she returned to the bath, not to bathe again, but to help the sick, and she did the same on the very morning that the pilgrimage left.

“It is not for me, I know, to prejudge the question of a miracle, but in face of the facts



I have related, witnessed with my own eyes, and to the truth of which I pledge myself, you must allow me to say, from the bottom of my heart, Glory be to God! Eternal gratitude to Mary Immaculate!

I remain, M. le Docteur,

Yours, etc.,

M. VICOMTESSE DE POUY."

We think that this ought to convince the most sceptical. But if the captious objector should refuse to accept the testimony of the writer of the above letter, on account of her connection with the establishment at Lourdes and previous conviction of Our Lady's wonder-working power, we are able to adduce the official report of the Marseilles doctor who examined her two months after her return home. We give a literal translation of the document:

"I, the undersigned, Doctor of Medicine, declare that for several years I have attended Mdlle. Marie Marcellin, who is about thirty-five years old and lives at Rue Villeneuve, 16. At first I attended her for enlargement of the heart, and later on for an enormous ovarian tumor situate on her left side. Three times in the space of eighteen months this tumor resulted in the formation of an abscess, which opened

across the intestine, without however causing much diminution in the size of the tumor.

“About two months ago (at the end of May) symptoms of peritonitis made their appearance, with intense fever, vomiting, and severe pain. The swelling of the abdomen was very great. The general state of my patient and the increasing affliction of the heart made me fear that it would soon prove fatal to her. It was at this time that Marie Marcellin declared her intention of going to Lourdes.

“I tried to dissuade her, feeling sure that she could not bear the journey. But she had the courage and energy to carry out her resolution and get herself carried to Lourdes.

“I saw Marie Marcellin after the pilgrimage and her return to Marseilles, and I can bear witness, together with my honored *confrère*, M. le Dr. Audibert, that all swelling of the stomach had disappeared, and that there did not even remain any trace of the hardness that might have rendered the seat of the tumor recognizable. I, moreover, ascertained that the enlargement of the heart had ceased and that she had become quite stout.

“I have seen her again lately, and I declare that her cure seems to me completely confirmed.

Dr. A. MAUREL.”

Marseilles, Aug. 9, 1885.

We have, moreover, a still more recent report from the hands of Dr. Audibert. On March 16, 1887, after nearly two years had elapsed, he again examined his patient, and attests the continued absence of any trace of the tumor which was instantaneously cured in the bath at Lourdes. He repeats once more his conviction that no natural explanation is possible of her sudden cure. "I can bear witness," he says, "to the presence of the tumor on the morning (of June 7, 1885), and that I found in the evening that it was gone. I cannot explain its immediate and complete disappearance by the action of any natural healing power, or by any means whatever belonging to the order of nature."<sup>1</sup> ✓

Now, if any one who reads these pages has hitherto doubted of the reality of the miracles of Lourdes, it seems to me impossible for him to do so reasonably in the face of the facts I have just related, and the testimony I have adduced. Human science is absolutely unable to account for such a cure as Marie Marcellin's. Admit the facts, and there is no reasonable hypothesis which can explain them save that of the supernatural power of God setting aside the ordinary laws of nature. Deny the facts, and you have gratuitously to reject a

<sup>1</sup> *Annales de Lourdes*, March 30, 1887, p. 277.

concurrent testimony of eye-witnesses, sufficient of itself to place the matter beyond all doubt, and the evidence of men of science corroborating the testimony of those who with their own eyes beheld the miracle take place. Step by step, each point is established, in a way that admits no possible escape, even for the most versatile of unbelievers. No amount of imagination can imagine the existence of an enormous tumor, the reality of which doctors unhesitatingly attest. No affection of the nerves can produce it, no faith, however intense, can cause its instantaneous disappearance. The whole story is a simple, plain, straightforward narrative. If any one refuses to accept it, any attempt to convince him by any evidence whatever may be given up once for all as hopeless. There is no imaginable hypothesis that can account for it, except the hypothesis of conscious fraud. Such an hypothesis is the last resort of the puzzled sceptic. It has the advantage of being one which, even in its most absurd and ridiculous form, never admits of demonstrable refutation. If a man, when he hears a story, says it is a lie on the part of the narrator, all that can be done is to adduce the evidence of other credible persons who were eye-witnesses of the fact. If he denounces these eye-witnesses as also guil-

ty of deception, the only chance of meeting his gratuitous calumnies is to bring forward scientific, medical, or other professional testimony to the truth and reality of the fact. If the persistent sceptic declares the doctor also to be in the plot, there is nothing further to be done. Our incredulous objector must be left in his incredulous credulity. There is no possibility of answering him. He must be left to deny the veracity of every witness who asserts a fact in conflict with his own preconceived opinions. When the facts tell against him, he simply replies, "So much the worse for the facts." There is nothing more that we can say to him.

But even the most pertinacious sceptic can scarcely get rid of the miracles of Lourdes by denying the veracity of the witnesses. If they all came from one part of the world, or were all of them feeble in mind, or proved unworthy of credence in other matters; if they had any motive for deceit, or broke down under cross-examination, there might be some excuse for incredulity. But their testimony is strong all round, it is corroborated by independent witnesses, it stands the test of severest cross-examination, it proceeds from men and women of blameless character. If no other motive ensured their truthfulness, their dread of the

just judgment of God and of the penalties that would be incurred by such sacrilegious fraud, would of itself be quite enough to justify us in trusting them. It is quite impossible to set them aside without admitting suppositions opposed to all the experience of mankind and in themselves contradictory.

Our second example shall be of an altogether different disease. *Caries*, or decay of the tissue of the bones, is the result of a chronic inflammation in which an abscess forms on the bone affected, discharging externally, the matter being sometimes mingled with decayed pieces of bone. In its advanced stages the bone becomes dead (*necrosis*), and it is then almost incurable. Under any circumstances, it heals but slowly, and even when they are most favorable, months are required for the complete cure of a case of the aggravated form of the disease. If, therefore, we have reliable evidence of such a malady being cured within a space of a day or two, we are justified in asserting with absolute confidence that such a cure cannot be due to any natural means.

In May, 1883, Mdlle. Monseur, a young woman of twenty-six, living near Liège, broke the bone of her right thigh. It became inflamed, and a deep abscess formed where the

fracture had taken place, from which a continual discharge began to flow, accompanied with little pieces of decayed bone. After suffering terribly for more than a year, she came with the Belgian pilgrimage to Lourdes, in September, 1885. Her doctor bears witness to her condition on the 15th of August. He describes her disease as inflammation and gangrene of the thigh (*carie-nécrose du fémur*). Up to this date, he adds, more than forty pieces of decayed bone had been extracted.

On Friday, the 10th of September, she arrived at Lourdes. On that very afternoon three pieces of bone came out of the wound. On Sunday, the 12th, the abscess was carefully sounded, and a French physician (Dr. Duhamel, of Obernai, Alsace) who was present at Lourdes at the time, testifies to the existence of a discharging abscess (*trajet fistuleux*) situated on the external and upper portion of the thigh, and about two inches long.

Meanwhile, the good Belgian pilgrims were praying earnestly that God would grant them some miraculous favor. It was to Mdlle. Monseur that this favor was granted. The poor girl, who on the Sunday was a helpless cripple and an apparently incurable sufferer, presented herself at the *Bureau des Constata\**

tions on the Monday. The doctors assembled, Dr. de St. Maclou, Dr. de Duhamel, and others. Can it be the poor invalid of the previous day? She walks with perfect ease; not a trace of lameness or of pain. The diseased limb is examined. Diseased? It is as sound as the other; the abscess has completely disappeared, and has left no trace save a surface scar! Our Lady has listened to the supplications of the devout pilgrims, and has worked a cure which none can refuse to accept as a most wondrous miracle. This is no case of hysteria, no nervous pain without any external trace of the alleged disease. Here is palpable evidence. A suppurating ulcer, a decaying bone, cannot be due to fancy. It has never been known since the creation of the world, or ever will be known as long as it continues, that in a single day decay and abscess have alike been cured, unless indeed God intervenes and by His miraculous power does in an instant what no natural forces could have effected, save by a long process of weeks or months.

When Mdlle. Monseur returned home, she presented herself immediately before the doctor who had watched her disease from the very time of her accident. The following is his report on the case:—

“ I, the undersigned, Dr. of Medicine, declare



that I have examined Mdlle. Adolphine Monsieur, on her return from the pilgrimage to N. D. de Lourdes, and that I have ascertained that the decay and gangrene of the thigh (*carie-nécrose du cuisse*), with which she had been attacked, is entirely cured.

“The two lower limbs are in all points alike, both in length, shape, and movement. Walking, which has been impossible for several months, is now easy. There exists no pain, either spontaneous or when the thigh is pressed. Of the two abscesses which existed in the thigh, from which I have taken more than fifty bits of bone of various lengths, and whence flowed continually a noisome discharge, there now remains nothing but two red scars completely covered with skin.”

“For these reasons, I do not hesitate to declare that this complete and sudden cure of so serious a disorder (*délabrement si considérable*) surpasses human understanding.”

Our third instance is of a disease which is one of the most obstinate and difficult to cure of all those which fall within the ordinary experience of the physician. Chronic articular rheumatism, when it is constitutional and not merely the result of exposure to cold or damp, is rarely, if ever, driven out completely from the system. Generally a medical man is well

satisfied if he can bring about a permanent alleviation of the attacks. In the rare instances in which it is entirely cured, the cure is a work of time. To expel it from every joint in a moment, never to return, is an exploit which the most skilful of physicians would declare to be not only beyond his power, but that of all the natural means within our reach. It is true that its cure is not so striking to the looker-on as that of some disease which externally manifests itself; it does not make the impression on our imagination that is made by tumor, ulcer, or gangrene, and therefore its sudden cure does not impress itself upon us as an equally wonderful and supernatural phenomenon. But when we set our reason to work instead of our imagination, when we consider the difficulty of the cure as testified to by medical skill, we are obliged to confess that a case of immediate healing of chronic rheumatism is as clearly due to the immediate power of God as that of any more palpable malady.

A young ecclesiastic, M. l'Abbé Lieber, had his first acute attack of articular rheumatism in March, 1882, while making his theological studies in the Seminary of Verdun. He kept his bed for five weeks, and after that could only walk with the help of a stick. But he soon had a relapse, and the greater part of a

year was spent by him in his room. In May, 1883, he got a little better, but he could not walk without help, and the doctor who attended him throughout his sickness declared that the disease was incurable, and that all that he could hope for was some alleviation of its intensity.

Still, M. Lieber did not lose hope. In November of the same year he felt decidedly better and was ordained subdeacon. The change, however, was of short duration. In December he was worse again and had to return home for several weeks, and though he struggled on at the seminary during the following spring, in order to complete his studies, yet it was a painful effort, as he could not move a step without the support of his stick. Never for a moment did the pain leave him. Sometimes it was almost intolerable, at other times comparatively slight, but he was never free from it altogether.

The month of May brought him, as before, a considerable relief; he spent the summer at home, and though he was never well, yet he was so much better, that in December, 1884, he was ordained priest. In the following month he was appointed curate at Varennes.

The exercise of his ministry in a very short time became impossible. He was again con-

fined to his bed for several weeks. The difficulty of walking became greater than ever, and to his other sufferings was added a disgust for all food and a complete inability to take more than a few mouthfuls. The pains about the heart became much more violent. A Paris physician was consulted, but only made matters worse, and M. Lieber determined that it was useless to consult any more doctors, and that he must resign himself to his fate.

At this conjuncture there happened to be a pilgrimage from Varennes to Lourdes, and some one suggested to him that he should join it. In spite of his devotion to Our Lady, he somehow shrank from the idea. It seemed quite an impracticable one on account of the suffering it would cause him. Every movement caused him pain. How could he undertake a long railway journey? But all of a sudden a strong desire to join the pilgrimage came over him, a sort of internal force urging him to it. He had not any hope of being cured, but he felt certain that he would suffer no ill consequences from the journey. Accordingly he took his ticket eight days before the pilgrimage started. We will let him tell the rest of his story in his own words.

“The journey was something frightful, as I expected. During the last day I had to remain

stretched on the seat of the carriage. When I got to Lourdes, August 19, 1886, I spent the rest of the day in bed, suffering from a series of fainting fits one after the other.

“On the Friday morning, about seven, I dragged myself down to the bath, aided by some persons who had come with me, for we could not get a carriage. At the bath nothing extraordinary happened. But when I came out I discovered, to my astonishment, that I could stand upright, and that the pain was all gone. No more pain in the joints, no more pain in the spine, no more pain in the heart. All that was left was a sort of dull aching of the muscles, the result, I suppose, of fatigue, for it disappeared entirely on the following Monday.

“I went to the Grotto to pray, but I had not finished the first decade of my rosary when I felt such an appetite that I thought for a moment that I should fall down from sheer inanition. I hastened back to the town, ate and drank heartily without any feeling of satiety. I no longer felt any inconvenience from wine, and my stomach digested with perfect ease the Friday fare that was set before me.

“I spent the rest of the day at the Grotto, standing or kneeling, and in the evening, after joining in the torchlight procession, I came

home without feeling the least tired, and slept soundly till the morning. Never since I had been ill had I known such a sleep as that.

“I was urged the next day to make a statement of what had happened to me. I thought it wiser to keep silence for the time. Not that I had any doubt about it. I considered my cure as an irreversible fact from the moment I left the bath. If I had been a layman, it would have been different, but as a priest I was bound to greater caution. I therefore put off my statement till a later period, when the lapse of time should have confirmed my cure, and there could be no longer any possible doubt about it.

“Since my return from Lourdes (now nine months ago), my old pains have not returned, and yet I have given them plenty of opportunities of doing so. I have walked a great deal, sometimes thirteen or fourteen miles at a stretch, without feeling anything except ordinary fatigue. I have also exposed myself to cold and rain without any scruple. I have made two fairly long journeys, both in the depth of winter, without any inconvenience. All my friends, even the most incredulous, are obliged to confess that I am completely cured.

J. LIEBER,  
Curate of Vigneulles, Meuse.”

We cannot refrain from adding a fourth instance, which belongs essentially to the class of cures absolutely incapable of any natural explanation. We must make our excuses to our readers for trespassing on their patience. But the cure is so wonderful a one, that we cannot well omit it, and we are sure that we shall be pardoned for inserting it. Sister Eugenia, a nursing-sister of the Bon Secours Convent, had a bad attack of peritonitis in 1878. This was followed by a chronic inflammation of the *iliac fossa*, followed by an abscess, the purulent matter from which found its way by ulceration partly into the bladder, partly into the intestines. A complication of various painful symptoms ensued, including utter prostration of strength and want of power to use the lower limbs, acute pain in the whole lumbar region and in the legs, and an external swelling corresponding to the internal abscess.<sup>1</sup>

The doctors vainly attempted to stop the formation of the abscesses, which followed one after the other. The poor Sister was confined to her bed for months together, and from time

<sup>1</sup> We give, for the benefit of the learned, M. Delpech's diagnosis of the case: "May 7, 1880.—Antéflexion utérine considérable. Phlegmon ancien de la fosse iliaque droite, suite d'une péritonite, terminé par un abcès limité par des adhérences. Ouverture dans la vessie au mois de novembre dernier. Persistance de douleurs iléopelviennes et crurales. Affaiblissement, par action réflexe, des membres inférieurs. Névrosisme, dysménorrhée, dyspepsie."

to time was in proximate danger of death. In May and June, 1883, she got worse, and could take nothing but a little soup and milk. But the time of the national pilgrimage was drawing near, and Sister Eugenia had a strong faith in Our Lady's power to restore her to health. Her Superior wrote to the doctor of the convent, asking if she might go, and obtained the following reply:—

“Your Sister Eugenia is suffering from a peri-uterine inflammation, with an abscess that opens on one side into the bladder, on the other into the colon (a part of the great intestines). The condition of the patient at the present time does not allow of her making a long railway journey.”

But Almighty God, who had designs of mercy waiting for our good Sister, allowed her to persuade herself that she was quite able to travel, and she obtained permission from her Superior to join the national pilgrimage.

When she was carried to the omnibus that was to convey her to the station, she swooned and seemed at the point of death. On the journey a priest was sent for to give her the last sacraments. However, she managed to arrive at Lourdes alive. It was on the 21st of August. Her eyes were half closed, yet she had strength enough to ask to be carried to the



Grotto, where she received Holy Communion as Viaticum. After receiving it she remarked to her Superior, who was with her, "I do not feel near so much pain now. I am better."

The same afternoon she bathed in the miraculous water. It appeared madness to expose her to the shock, and as a matter of fact she fainted away as soon as she was dipped in the water. But she came to herself in a moment. "What do you ask of Our Lady?" said her Superior to her. "Health, good Mother, if it is God's will and not to the detriment of my soul." Then she added, "Will you leave me a little? I feel so well!"

Those who were present recited a "Hail Mary" together for her. After this blessed prayer, which never ceases to re-echo in Our Lady's sanctuary, an event incredible, but nevertheless true, happened in the bath where Mary was invoked by her faithful servants to exert her healing powers. She who that morning had been at the point of death rose up, and without any assistance came out of the water perfectly cured! Unaided she dresses herself, unaided she stands and walks, unaided she makes every movement without the least inconvenience. The external swelling had disappeared, the abscess with its continual discharge had left no trace of its existence—all

the pain, all the morbid symptoms, were gone. The stomach was soft and supple, and no inconvenience resulted from pressure of the part which before could not bear a touch. A careful medical investigation made shortly after established that nothing was left save a little weakness, which gradually disappeared. Even the next day there was scarcely a trace of the previous prostration. She was still delicate in appearance when she presented herself at the *Bureau des Constatations*, but the disease was gone, appetite was good, and general health excellent.

A week later she who for years had been a feeble invalid was following the ordinary rule of the community, doing her work just like the rest, nursing the sick, and sitting up at night without feeling any special fatigue. In March, 1881, eight months after her cure, M. Decornière, a surgeon attached to the hospital at Lesieux, gave the following certificate of her condition :

“I, the undersigned, testify that Sister Eugenia, Religious of the Bon-Secours at Troyes, is at the present time suffering from no organic disease whatever, and has no symptoms which could afford reason for supposing any to exist.

“I also testify that all the functions are regular, that there is no sort of swelling on the

stomach, and no trace of dropsy or tympanismus.

“I also testify that the general state of the Sister above named is excellent, and that she is even beginning to grow a little stout.”

It would be superfluous to add anything to this simple statement of facts. We do not see how the ingenious sceptic can escape from the conclusion that a miracle was worked, except on the impossible hypothesis of a conspiracy to deceive—a conspiracy on the part of skilled physicians, on the one hand, and good pious nuns on the other! of physicians whose veracity is above all suspicion, and of devoted women who would shrink, as from a sacrilege, from the least deviation from the truth in the matter! Of physicians of long experience, and of nuns whose religious profession requires of them that they should be skilled nurses! Of physicians who have watched the case day by day, and of nurses who have watched it more closely still! Of physicians whose professional honor requires the utmost exactitude, and of nuns whose religious profession binds them still more closely to the most scrupulous reverence for truth! A conspiracy to deceive! *Credat Judæus Apella, non ego!*

Let not the reader think that I have ex-

hausted the list of these undeniable instances of Our Lady's power to heal, even during the years to which I have limited myself. There are plenty more, did I not fear to grow wearisome. I have still a different class of miracles to adduce, which form a background for such as I have already brought forward. I have also to show why many cures, not necessarily miraculous when looked at as isolated and momentary facts, and capable perhaps of an easy explanation, are raised by certain surrounding and accompanying details to the region of at least the probably miraculous. But this I must postpone to my concluding chapter.

## CHAPTER V.

### SOME FURTHER MIRACLES AT LOURDES.

**I**T must be allowed that, however wonderful or interesting miracles may be, they very soon become tedious to any one who reads the details of a long series even of the most wonderful of them. Many readers of the Lives of the Saints are in the habit of skipping the whole, or the greater part, of the chapter which narrates the miracles performed by them, at their tomb and elsewhere, after their death. The isolated facts, without any unity, save that of being beyond the powers of nature, and having been performed through the intervention of the Saint in whose life they are narrated, soon pall upon the mental palate, and cease to make any impression, save an impression of weariness. For this reason I intend to spare my readers any detailed account of more than one or two more of the countless miracles performed at Lourdes. I prefer rather to insist on the general character of the wonders performed there, and to point out why it is that we are compelled to regard cures as miraculous which, taken one

by one and piecemeal, may possibly have each several circumstance explained, or explainable, by some natural law. The miracles I shall adduce in the present chapter will be by way illustration of my thesis, and in proof of the assertions that I shall have cause to make.

I have already adduced three or four cures which I think the candid reader will allow to be absolutely and entirely beyond the powers of nature. Yet I said that if these stood alone, we might have reason to doubt of their miraculous character. We might fairly regard them as freaks of nature, if they were not accompanied by a number of other marvels, not quite so marvellous as they, but nevertheless so strange, and almost impossible (save on the supposition of a miracle), as to furnish a solid support and confirmation of those that are in themselves quite unaccountable. If we find a number of these of every degree, some so utterly inexplicable on any natural grounds as to be practically impossible, yet admitting of some little loophole which renders them in themselves insufficient as testimony to the miraculous, others more easily explained without the intervention of the supernatural, but yet, by reason of the surrounding circumstances, making it at least a very wonderful thing that they should have happened when

and where they did, then we shall be justified in regarding the whole body of cures as indubitably of a miraculous character. I do not say that they are necessarily miraculous in every single instance (for we cannot deny the possibility of error in one or two rare and exceptional cases), but necessarily miraculous in their general aspect. We shall have sufficient proof that the finger of God is in them. We shall not only have a probability of Divine intervention, but an absolute certainty of it. We shall have an argument which ought to convince all who have the facts before them, if they are open to conviction. We shall have an array of facts which, when looked at in their combined strength, cannot possibly be accounted for by any existing natural laws, nor by the hypothesis of imposture, nor by the influence of imagination, nor by some unknown laws to be discovered and explained by a future generation.

Here I venture to say a word in answer to this recourse of the sceptic to hidden laws of nature, which are at present a mystery to us. It is a plausible way of evading the difficulty. To run away under cover of a mist is very satisfactory to those who desire to escape from the pursuer, whether the fugitive be a heathen deity, hard pressed by Greek or Trojan war-

rior, or the modern sceptic, whom the Catholic disputant threatens to transfix with the sword of undoubted facts. It is very convenient to say that, though we may not be acquainted with the laws which govern the mysterious and curative powers of nature, yet that there may be many beyond our ken, working secretly and out of sight. Do not, we are asked, the recent discoveries respecting hypnotism show that the will may be enslaved and the whole nature transformed by the mysterious influence of the mesmerist or hypnotiser? Does not the nervous system often receive from the startled or excited imagination a shock which affects the bodily powers, makes the lame to walk and the dumb to speak? Why then may not we suppose that these or like influences may account even for those miracles of Lourdes which appear the strangest?

It is in this strain that Professor Buchanan writes in the *Lancet* of June 20, 1885 :—

“I believe that the simple visit to the Grotto by persons who believe in it, and the whole surroundings of the place, might have such an effect on the mind, that a sudden change of the nerve-condition might result in immediate improvement in cases where there is no real change of structure, but where the malady is a functional imitation of organic disease.



Such cases are familiar to all medical men, and are the most intractable they have to deal with, the disorder being in the imagination, and not in the part." (p. 1118)

He then narrates two cases, of which we give only one for brevity's sake, as the two are almost exactly alike :—

“About two years ago a carriage and pair arrived at my door from the country. In it was a woman about twenty-five years of age, her limb bound up in a splint and resting on the seat opposite to that on which she sat. She was accompanied by her father and brother, who, with the assistance of the coachman, carried her into my house and laid her on the sofa of my consulting-room. She told me she had been confined to bed for four or five months with disease of the knee, but that it had lasted longer than that. It was only the last few months that her medical attendant had enjoined absolute rest in bed, had used blisters and other applications, and had in the end secured it from movement by the application of a splint. She said the pain was very severe, increased on any movement, and was worse at night. There was little if any swelling, but the symptoms were very characteristic of disease of the cartilages of the knee-joint, and undoubtedly she was being treated for

that affection. On manipulating her knee, whilst I engaged her attention by asking her questions, I became aware that she did not shrink from my touch, as she did when I asked her if she felt pain on pressure; and I was soon convinced that I had to do, not with an organic disease of the joint, but with that strange, painful, and intractable condition which, for want of a better name, we call 'hysterical knee.' I turned to her, and said decidedly, 'Your knee is quite well; get up and walk.' She at first objected, in consequence of the fear of pain; but when I said, 'You will walk quite easily, without pain,' she got up, and, to her own surprise, as well as that of her companions, she walked across my room, saying, 'You are quite right; I have no pain, and my knee is cured.' A few minutes after she left the house, got into the carriage without much assistance, and drove away. About a month afterwards a person from the same country town had occasion to call on me, and spoke of the extraordinary instantaneous cure. I asked if he knew how the person was, and he said she was a friend of his own, and just the day before he had seen her walking as if nothing was wrong with her limb. And he knew that she had been confined to bed with her knee for months." (page 1118)

Dr. Buchanan then proceeds in a strain in which he is more candid than consistent with himself :

“ I cannot pretend to explain these two cases ; they are certainly not miracles. But they are just as miraculous as any of the cures alleged to have been performed at Lourdes or elsewhere. Of the many thousands annually attracted to that spot a great number must be cases analogous to those I have related, and the alleged sudden cures are not more numerous in proportion than those which have occurred in medical practice. There are, however, some cases which cannot be included along with those to which I have referred. Cases in which instantaneous cure has taken place, or is alleged to have taken place, in such maladies as ulcers, sinuses, and easily recognized disintegration of bone. Such examples have been reported and vouched for by several French medical men, and are referred to in an article in the *Nineteenth Century* for 1882 ; and I admit that the explanation is not applicable to them. I have not seen the official reports of the cases, so that I cannot admit or deny their accuracy. If there is no fallacy in them, they are beyond my understanding. But in the meanwhile the purpose of my paper is served if I have shown that

many sudden cures may be explained without admitting miraculous interposition." (p. 1118)

But we have already shown how extremely careful, I had almost said, how extraordinarily anxious M. de St. Maclou, the learned physician resident at Lourdes, is to set aside all cases of hysteria as inadmissible for the purpose of proving a miracle. His object, as I have remarked, seems to be to discover, if possible, some natural explanation, for any case which comes before him. No sceptic could be more irreproachably sceptical, no unbeliever could look out with greater diligence for weak points in cures alleged to be miraculous. No one present at his daily examination at the *Bureau des Constatations* of those who have been healed could hesitate for a moment as to the thoroughness of his diagnosis or the critical character of his judgment. But when he has eliminated with the greatest care all the cures which are in any way explicable, as Dr. Buchanan would explain them, there is still a large surplus of those in which no amount of imagination, no influence exerted on the nerves, can explain the cure. First of all we are told that the cases of hysteria narrated by Dr. Buchanan from his own experience *are just as miraculous* as any of the cures performed at Lourdes. Then, from the statement of what

is, Dr. Buchanan proceeds to what he imagines *must be*, "a great number *must be* cases analogous to those I have related." Finally he allows that there are instantaneous cases of cures which *cannot be included with those to which he has referred*, and allows that such cases, if correctly reported, are beyond his understanding. In other words, he says that the defenders of the supernatural have no case at all, then he says that their case *must be* a weak one, then that it is so strong that it is quite beyond his comprehension. Verily Dr. Buchanan is not a very valuable ally to the assailants of the miracles of Lourdes! But we are quite ready to allow that a great number of the cures at Lourdes are of maladies like those Dr. Buchanan alleges himself to have cured. Hysteria is the complaint of perhaps a majority of those who come to be healed. If they were *all* of this character, if *all* the cures at Lourdes were exerted on some form or other of hysteria, we should allow the justice of his argument.

Let us hear a physician who has written a treatise on miracles from a medical point of view :—

"Diseases," says M. G. Marmisse "may be divided into two classes, those in which no appreciable organic injury exists, and those

where such injuries are evident. Among the first, which are called in medicine diseases *sine materia*, it is sometimes only the nervous system that is affected, though it is impossible to say in what the change consists. It is certain in this case that a vivid impression made on the moral nature of a sick person does, though the cases are rare, modify his nervous system. This is the explanation of some cures that have so astonished by their close resemblance to the miraculous.”<sup>1</sup>

Now, all that Professor Buchanan has to say against the miracles of Lourdes is applicable only to those diseases in which there is no appreciable organic injury. But his theory fails utterly in the face of the miracles given in our last chapter, or of the following, which I give in brief, but which is none the less wonderful.

Marie Drossing, a girl living at Tongres, in Belgium, came on April 30, 1885, with the Belgian pilgrimage to Lourdes. For some time past a tumor had been forming on her right breast. At the time of her visit it was about the size of an egg, and of a cancerous nature, causing her the most acute pain. The tumor had been examined by a doctor some

<sup>1</sup> *Merveilles évangéliques éclairées par les sciences médicales*, p. 333.

months previously, who bears witness in his written certificate to its serious nature and size, and up to the time of her journey it remained the same. On the 1st of May she bathed in the Piscina. On coming out of the bath the pain had entirely disappeared, though the tumor had not at all diminished. So far the change might have been due to imagination. But the following day bore witness to a change that no imagination could have effected. On Saturday she bathed again, and on coming out of the bath the tumor itself had entirely vanished.

On her return to Belgium she paid a visit to the doctor, who gave her the following certificate:—

“I, the undersigned, Doctor of Medicine at Tongres, declare that the said Marie Drossing was suffering in September last from cancer in the right breast, and from a swelling that caused her great pain.

“I declare that to-day (May 9) the swelling has completely disappeared.

FR. TEUWEN.”

Tongres, May 9, 1885.

Will hysteria account for the sudden disappearance of a cancerous tumor? Will any shock given to the nervous system cause an

ulcer suddenly to heal in the way I described in my last chapter? Will any unknown laws of nature cause inflammation and gangrene of the thigh to vanish in a moment, and restore to the carious bone its soundness and its strength? The wildest enemy of the miraculous never ventured on asserting this, and therefore the wildest enemy of the miraculous cannot deny the reality of the miracles of Lourdes, unless, as I have said, he supposes all the skilled physicians and honorable men and women who bear witness to them to be a pack of impostors. Other alternative, it seems to me, there is none.

But I am now concerned with what I have called subsidiary miracles, by which I mean those less absolutely conclusive than the cure of rotting bone, and noisome ulcer, and cancerous tumor, and other organic injuries, but still sufficiently conclusive to afford a very strong piece of evidence. Of these cures I have two remarks to make.

1. That, even where the symptoms, or some of the symptoms, may be the result of hysteria, the unvarying permanence of the cures is something altogether unknown in the case where a sudden shock, or the influence of a stronger will, has produced a change which was so wonderful as to resemble the miraculous.



This it is which differentiates the supernatural from the natural cure of nervous diseases. The malady very frequently returns after a time, where the cure is sudden, if it be in the natural order; it is almost invariably<sup>1</sup> permanent, if it is in the supernatural order.

No cure is admitted to be of any value as evidence by the authorities of Lourdes until it has stood the test of time. The sufferer must send after some months, not only an attestation that the disease has not returned, but a medical certificate to that effect.

2. That, even where the individual instances may be explicable on some possible action of natural forces, the accumulation of them renders such explanation impossible. This is true even in the case of hysteria and nervous symptoms. A. has suffered from lameness, which may possibly be a purely nervous affection. He comes to Lourdes, and is suddenly cured. Religious excitement and the influence of the imagination may possibly have wrought the cure. It is not likely, but it is not impossible. But B. has had an affection of the spine which may also possibly have proceeded from a sim-

<sup>1</sup> We say *almost invariably*, because we have sufficient evidence in the case of such cures at Lourdes and elsewhere to assert this in the great majority of cases, but we do not pretend to be able to lay down an universal law, and there may be instances in which, through some fault of the person healed, or from some other cause, the malady has returned.

ilar cause. He, too, comes to Lourdes and is similarly cured. C. has suffered from partial paralysis, D. from rheumatism of the joints, E. from contraction of the muscles, F. from intense pain in the hip (*coxalgia*). All have come, and prayed, and washed, and been healed. Are we to assert that all these had their maladies removed by the influence of their imagination, stirred to activity by the religious atmosphere of Lourdes? In a single case it is improbable; when a second is added, it becomes highly improbable; when a third occurs, we must pronounce the hypothesis practically inadmissible. But when not only a fourth, fifth, and sixth occur, but such cases are reckoned up by dozens and by hundreds, the improbability becomes a downright impossibility. I may in a single instance cure a nervous patient by a good dose of castor oil; perhaps a second case may occur, but who would believe me if I said that I had cured fifty nervous patients suffering from the above diseases by the imaginary (or other) effect of castor oil upon them. Yet this is practically equivalent to the assertion of the sceptics, that the force of imagination is the source of most of the wonders of Lourdes.

Having premised this, I now proceed to give a few instances of these subsidiary miracles, second class, third class, fourth class miracles,

if I may so call them, without infringing on the nomenclature of Benedict the XIV., and I divide them under three several heads, asking the reader to remember that we do not rely on these alone, or on these principally, or on these at all, as an absolute proof of the miraculous power at work at Lourdes.

1. The first class consists of the cures where the disease is not of a nervous or hysterical character, nor on the other hand where there is osseous *caries* or a cancerous tumor, but where there is a certain amount of organic lesion, yet nothing that might not be removed in time by the gradual working of nature's laws. Here the miracle consists, not in the fact of recovery, but in the suddenness of recovery. In an instant a change takes place which would require weeks or months, according to the ordinary processes of nature. We will illustrate this by an instance of a very painful disease, and one which it is difficult, though not impossible, to cure.

Sister Adèle, one of the Filles de Marie at Pesches-lez-Couvin, near Namur, had for some years been suffering from an effusion of serous fluid into the knee joint (*hydrarthrose fémoro-tibiale*). She was fifty years old, and had tried all kinds of remedies, but in vain. She walked with great difficulty, and had to support her-

self on the arms of companions. The doctor who attended her certifies that she was suffering from a chronic inflammation of the joint, accompanied by an effusion in the synovial membrane. He states, moreover, that for eighteen months he and other physicians had tried various remedies, but that the disease had resisted them all. But where the physicians had effected nothing in the course of long months, Our Lady worked a perfect cure in a moment. Sister Adèle came to Lourdes with the Belgian pilgrimage of 1887, and bathed in the sacred fount. The first two immersions produced no result, but during the third the pain disappeared, the swelling of the knee vanished, the joints resumed their former suppleness, and the Sister walked unaided with perfect ease! On her return the doctor declared that she was perfectly cured (*je constate la parfaite guérison de la Sœur Adèle*). Here is a case in which the disease was not absolutely incurable. We cannot say that the healing of the joints affected certainly surpassed the ordinary powers of nature. Such cures have been effected by time and careful treatment. But no such cure was ever wrought by natural means in an instant. Weeks or months are needed to bring it about. It altogether surpasses the powers of nature to effect it within

the space of a few minutes. We are justified in pronouncing the cure miraculous, not *quoad substantiam*, to use the theological expression, but *quoad modum*, not in respect of its nature in itself, but in respect of the manner in which it was wrought.

Perhaps I may be allowed to quote on other instance of the same kind.

Mlle. de Couronnel, a young lady aged seventeen, living in Paris, had been suffering for nearly two years from extreme shortness of breath and oppression, palpitation, anæmia. The doctors at first suspected *chlorosis* (a particular form of anæmia in which there is a deficiency of the red and white particles of the blood), but afterwards attributed the symptoms to Basedow's disease<sup>1</sup> (*exophthalmic goître*). Electricity and other remedies were tried without effect, and the breathlessness became so bad that the patient could not lie down, and had to be kept continually in a sitting posture. Such was her condition when she came to Lourdes, on August 29, 1887, with the pilgrimage of Limoges.

On the 31st of August she bathed in the well. On coming out from the bath she was

<sup>1</sup> Respecting this disease Dr. Lander Brunton writes in *Quains Dictionary of Medicine*: "The disease rarely disappears altogether, though after continuing for some years it may gradually improve." (*sub v.* Exophthalmic Gôître.

completely changed. Her mother, the Comtesse de Couronnel, writes as follows :—

“From that moment she never experienced the least discomfort. She runs up stairs with perfect ease, can walk several miles without fatigue, sleeps wonderfully well, and is able to resume her studies : has become, in fact, both mentally and physically, what she was three years ago, and has not a trace of her long sufferings. Before quitting the Pyrenees she made the Stations of the Cross at Betharram (up a steep hill), though on arriving at Lourdes it was with great difficulty that she walked, even with help, from the carriage to the bath.”

Here is a case in which it is the suddenness of the cure that we pronounce miraculous. That the disease “may gradually improve under medical treatment,” is the utmost hope that physicians can hold out to those who are afflicted with it. That the disease disappears all at once, is the happy experience of one who has resort to Our Lady’s power to heal. But I must pass on to the second class of cures.

2. The second class consists of cures in which some change suddenly takes place, which in itself might possibly be effected at any moment by the forces of nature, but which is justly regarded as miraculous on account of the circumstances under which it happens.

Our first example shall be one where the cure is effected, not by any disappearance of morbid symptoms or organic lesion, but by the unaccountable exit of the external substance that had produced the evil by its presence in the body. The case has special interest on account of its having been the subject of a formal commission of inquiry, instituted by the Bishop of the diocese, to examine its details and its reality. Nothing can have been more careful and guarded than the manner of proceeding pursued by this commission. No statement was admitted on the sole testimony of the person cured, and every sort of natural explanation of the facts, however utterly improbable, was thoroughly discussed, in order to guard against any possibility of delusion. After the investigation was completed, the facts were submitted to two distinguished physicians, in order that they might decide whether medical science could suggest any possible explanation based on the operation of merely natural laws.

In October, 1879, Celestine Dubois, a woman living in the service of one of her relations, M. Hériot, at Troyes, was washing a dress, when a needle concealed in the stuff ran into her hand, penetrating the ball of the left thumb. Mme. Hériot, hearing her cry of pain,

took hold of the end of the needle that was still sticking out to a length sufficient to enable her to grasp it with her fingers in order to draw it out. But unfortunately it broke in her fingers, and half the needle remained in the thumb. The next day the hand was a little swollen, but there was no external mark of the entrance of the needle, and the doctor who was consulted did not think it necessary to open the thumb. For two years Celestine let the matter rest. From time to time she suffered acute pain for two or three weeks, especially at night. Then the pain disappeared for several months. She could not bear her thumb to be touched, and sometimes it was so painful that she would get up and plunge her hand in hot or cold water, in order to obtain relief.

Two years after the accident happened she again consulted a doctor. He said he could feel the needle, but he did not advise an operation. Celestine, however, having been told by several persons that it would end in her being quite disabled, insisted on the needle being extracted. An incision was made, but the efforts of the physician, repeated during several weeks, were in vain. In his certificate, Dr. Hervey attests that he could feel the needle in the flesh without being able to extract it.



The poor woman, after this, resigned herself to her affliction, and saw no more doctors. Her hand was sometimes swollen, sometimes quite stiff, and from time to time exceedingly painful. Often she was quite unable to do her household work, and sometimes could not even dress or undress herself.

In 1886, she resolved to see whether it would please God to effect by supernatural means, at Our Lady's intercession, what had baffled the skill of the physicians to bring about. The national pilgrimage to Lourdes counted among its members Mdlle. Celestine Dubois. At the time of her departure she was in a condition of severe suffering, but full of confidence that she was going to be cured. A day or two before she started, both M. Hériot and one of the Sisters of Charity distinctly felt the needle in the place it had always occupied, amid the fleshy part of the thumb.

The pilgrimage arrived on Friday, the 20th of August, about eight o'clock. Celestine went at once to the Grotto, and prayed there all the morning. Then she went and held her hand under one of the taps, but without any effect, except that the pain was rather greater than usual. The same afternoon she repeated the experiment, with the same result.

About half-past four, a friend of hers from Troyes, Mdle. Recoing, met her, and they went together to the bath, and entered a little room called the *Piscine des petits bains*. The room was very light, and contained a tub of very cold water from the spring. Celestine plunged her hand into the water, but drew it back at once, crying out with pain. Her friend took hold of her wrist, and plunged it again in the water, holding it there nearly two minutes. Mdle. Dubois continued to cry out with pain; her face was covered with perspiration and tears. When Mdle. Recoing drew out her hand she examined it under the light. The fingers were straight, but the thumb was doubled up. She could see no trace of the needle.

A second time she plunged Celestine's hand into the water, and held it there about a minute, despite the cries and tears of the patient. When she drew it out the thumb was quite straight, and under the skin she could distinctly see nearly the whole length of the needle.

A third time she dipped the hand, this time for some thirty seconds. This time the needle had made its way to the end of the thumb, and the point was sticking out. Mdle. Recoing took hold of it, and drew it out quite easily!

All this is confirmed by a third witness, Mdlle. Cornet, a lady living at Paris, who at the time had care of the room and had entered without the others noticing her. She had distinctly observed the spontaneous movement of the needle along the thumb until the point stuck out at the end of it. No sooner was the needle extracted, than Mdlle. Dubois told her friend that the pain was all gone. She could move her fingers with the greatest ease, but the hand was still a little swollen and stiff.

After visiting the Grotto and the Basilica, Mdlle. Dubois was conducted to the *Bureau des Constatations médicales*. Four doctors examined her. In an account written by one of them for the episcopal commission he describes the result of their examination. They were able to trace the line followed by the needle as it worked its way from the fleshy part in which it was imbedded to the point of exit at the end of the thumb. This line was about two and a half inches long, and consisted of two parts of a red line between the epidermis and the skin of about an inch long, extending from the point where the needle had entered to the lowest joint of the thumb, and a reddish line under the skin, from the lowest joint of the thumb to the place at the top where the needle had come out. There

was one break in the line, occurring at the bend of the thumb. The needle, in making its way, had come out from under the epidermis and re-entered a little further on. No blood came when the thumb was pressed, and the pressure caused no pain.

But the hand was still a little swollen, and Mdlle. Dubois was advised to try the effect of again dipping her hand in the water of the Grotto. She did so the next morning, the swelling being still very perceptible. She kept it in the water for about ten minutes, and on drawing it out all the swelling had disappeared; the hand, instead of being white and cold, as it had been before, had resumed, and henceforward retained, its natural warmth and color.

On her return to Troyes, her hand was examined by the doctors who had previously attended her, and the needle that they had been unable to extract was shown to them. They were both astonished at the sight of her thumb. When a needle comes out of a limb by any ordinary means, it leaves the mark of its exit, and not a scratch along the skin, and the scar ought not to have remained so marked as had been the case. One of the doctors proposed to cover up the thumb, the result of which was that the hand became

swollen and painful, and there was a sort of discharge from the scar. When the bandage was removed, the pain ceased, and the hand resumed its healthy condition. Mdlle. Dubois has ever since her cure (a period of twelve months) been able to do her ordinary work with perfect ease, is free from every suffering, and can use her left hand as if she had never had anything whatever the matter with it.

These are the facts of the case. The evidence for them is so strong that the hypothesis of deception can scarcely be admitted, and I imagine that the alternative of the sceptic would be to account for the exit of the needle by natural causes. By some chance coincidence, I imagine, he would say, the needle worked its way out at the very time that the hand was plunged into the spring; possibly some unconscious movement, or the icy coldness of the water, favored its exit. But its passage along the thumb under the epidermis renders this explanation absolutely inadmissible: no muscular action, no contraction of the sinews, could by any possibility bring it out of the fleshy lobe of the thumb, in which it had been buried, and cause it to pass within the space of a few minutes over a distance of nearly three inches to the point of exit at the end of it. Anyhow, the very coincidence would

be in itself a miracle. That the needle should, after refusing to be dislodged for seven years, choose that particular moment for its exit, is so wonderful a coincidence, that he who believes it to be a mere chance, or that it was the result of the hand being plunged for a few moments in cold water, must be another of our credulous sceptics.

Our second is of a malady altogether different from any of which we have as yet spoken.

Octavie Bureau, a child of seven, had been deaf and dumb from her birth. She had never given the least indication of hearing what was said to her, and had never uttered a word. In August, 1885, her mother promised Our Lady to take her to Lourdes. Subsequently to this promise the child uttered, or her mother fancied she uttered, certain inarticulate sounds. But in 1886 the vow was performed. Octavie was taken to Lourdes and plunged into the sacred water. On coming out of the bath she could hear the gentlest sounds, and could repeat any words spoken to her as if she had always had the use of her tongue. In a very short time she learned to talk, without going through the gradual stages of indistinct utterance which are the invariable accompaniment, not only of a child's first attempt to speak, but of any attempt to speak

a language the sounds of which differ from those we are accustomed to utter. The local doctor certifies that he had examined Octavie in the previous January, and found her deaf and dumb ; but on her return from Lourdes, in the September of the following year, she heard perfectly the softest sounds, and repeated correctly what was said to her, though she did not understand its meaning.

Now, we do not deny that those who have been apparently deaf and dumb for years do sometimes suddenly speak under the influence of some sudden shock. We mentioned in a previous chapter the instance of the son of Cræsus, narrated by Herodotus. Of course this cannot be the case when the Eustachian tubes are destroyed, or when there is some other physical disorder of the apparatus of hearing. But it may happen that there has been some paralysis of the acoustic nerves, and that this may be all at once removed.

We therefore regard this cure as a miracle only because it happened at the moment that the child was dipped in the water. Our sceptical friends cannot talk of the influence of imagination in such a case as this. If they tell us that hearing and speech naturally returned on account of the shock of the cold water, we should venture to regard them as

some of our credulous sceptics, ready to jump at any hypothesis in order to avoid admitting the true solution of the cure. But even then they have not accounted for the persistency of the cure. The abnormal effect of a sudden shock disappears when the excitement it causes is past, whereas Octavie heard as well and spoke better on her return home than at the moment of her cure.

3. Last of all, there is a third and a very large class of cures which are valuable as confirming those better established, more on account of their number and the absence of any external cause, than because they are in themselves so very extraordinary. Regarding these taken separately, we allow that Doctor Buchanan's argument holds good, and the parallels he adduces are insufficient only because he has but a few instances to oppose to the hundreds that we find in the history of Lourdes.

These include all cures of the multiform diseases resulting from *hysteria*, whether they be spasms, convulsions, partial or total paralysis, anæsthesia, hypæsthesia, ataxy, gastralgia, insomnia, or any other of the countless disorders resulting from an affection of the nerves or a diseased imagination. Of all such maladies, Benedict XIV.<sup>1</sup> prudently says that,

<sup>1</sup> *De Canon. Sanct.*, iv. 1, 33, 21, n. 23.



as imagination has a great power to produce diseases in the body, so we cannot doubt that imagination has a great power to cure them, and quotes the opinion of Muretanus, who says that, where the disease is a nervous one, the excitement of the imagination, which is greatly moved by the hope of recovery, may cause a cure that seems to be a miracle. He further adds that, especially in the case of women, a real malady may be relieved for a time by some sudden impulse given to the fancy, but that in that case the cure almost invariably lasts only as long as the impulse which has produced it; but sometimes, where the disease is imaginary, there may be a permanent cure that is also the result of imagination. Of this class of miracles (if miracles they are) we will give only one instance, as it is time to come to a close.

Mdlle. Marie Thérèse Louiesloux, aged twenty-eight, lives at Lourdes itself. In February, 1885, she was attacked by severe pains in the hip joint; she had great difficulty in moving, one leg seemed longer than the other, and she could not stand or walk without a stick. After eighteen months of suffering, she was carried to the Grotto, bathed in the well, and found in an instant that all her pain

was gone, and she could walk with perfect ease. The medical certificate declares that she had been suffering from *chloro-ancæmia*, and that a painful affection of the hip had supervened, possibly in consequence of a fall, and that on the 16th of July the symptoms above narrated were observed by him after an examination of the patient; that on the 24th of August all trace of lameness had disappeared; and that the parts which before could not bear a touch could be pressed without causing any inconvenience; that the joints had become quite supple, and could be bent with perfect ease.

Here is an instance of cures which occur by the dozen at Lourdes. We do not say they are miracles, and the authorities of the Grotto carefully disown reckoning them as such. Of the above, the *Annales de Lourdes* expressly says: "Nous ne prétendons pas que cette guérison constitue un miracle." It may have been a purely imaginative malady, cured, as it was caused, by the force of imagination. But if it has disappeared never to return, if the same nervous derangement does not again assail the patient, then of this, and all such cures, we may say that at least they are wonderful graces, and that, when they occur in numbers, they are something more than we can account for on any natural grounds.

To sum up: Lourdes abounds in cures which the pious soul attributes to the special mercy and grace of God. The great mass of these are not beyond the forces of nature, when we take them one by one ;—but in a large proportion of them there is at least something remarkable and extraordinary. In a certain number there are circumstances which justify us in regarding them as *probably* the immediate work of God at Our Lady's intercession, beyond and beside the natural laws which govern the healing process, though perhaps each in itself might admit of a natural explanation. But when we exert ourselves to the utmost to give such explanation to as many as possible, there still remain a few in which it is absolutely impossible to deny that God has set aside all ordinary laws and natural processes, and has worked wonders of which we can only say, "O God, how wonderful are Thy ways. The earth is full of Thy praise!"

I have said nothing of the moral and spiritual miracles wrought at Lourdes, a thousand times more wonderful than any physical cures. If the lips of the good Fathers of the Grotto were to be unsealed, what hundreds and thousands of instances they could relate of the return to God of sinners so deeply steeped in sin that it seemed as if even the wonder-work-

ing grace of God could scarcely bring them back to the paths of virtue. None but God, and Our Lady, and the saints in Heaven know, or ever can know, of all the murders, sacrileges, adulteries, blasphemies, outrages of the Divine Majesty of every sort and description, which have been forgiven at Lourdes at Our Lady's intercession. The physical miracle makes an impression upon our imagination, and we adore with grateful, astonished gratitude the wondrous power of Mary's prayers, but no disease was ever so hard to cure, no painful malady so apparently hopeless, as that of the countless souls in mortal sin who have come to Lourdes laden with the heavy burden of sin, and have returned with a light heart and clear conscience, exclaiming, "Glory be to God! eternal thanks to His Immaculate Mother!"

## CHAPTER VI.

### BERNADETTE SOUBIROUS AND HER VISIONS OF OUR LADY.

**M**ANY of my readers are probably familiar with M. Lasserre's picturesque account of the appearance of Our Lady to Bernadette, and of the early history of the Grotto at Lourdes. If I had nothing more to tell, I should hesitate about writing the story of that favored child of Heaven. But years have passed since M. Lasserre devoted his skilful pen to the service of Our Lady of Lourdes. Bernadette's work is over, and she has gone to behold for ever, face to face, the dazzling beauty of the Queen of Heaven, who deigned to manifest herself to her by the flowing waters of the Gave. Time, that tries all things, has tried the truth of Bernadette's story, and every succeeding year has rooted more deeply in the minds of Catholics all over the world the conviction that it was Our Lady herself who, in her condescending love, deigned to appear to the poor peasant girl of Lourdes. The words of Our Lady to her respecting her own future history have been exactly verified, and perhaps one of the most curious confirma-

tions of the reality of the appearances to Bernadette is that she lived and died obscure and unknown; that in the convent where her latter years were spent she was a continual sufferer; that there she lived the most ordinary, matter-of-fact, commonplace life; and that up to the moment of her death, she never pretended to any sort of extraordinary favor, or vision, or revelation after the last appearance by the Grotto. If the miracles that have been worked there had never happened, there is sufficient evidence in the conduct of Bernadette to establish in the minds of any impartial witness the truth of what she saw. But we are anticipating, and must leave our readers to judge of the facts narrated as we proceed.

Bernadette was the child of two pious peasants who lived near the Grotto of Lourdes, very poor, but very honest and simple. She was rather below the average in intelligence, but largely endowed with that candor and innocence of soul that God loves.

On February 11, 1858, when Bernadette was fourteen years old, she was sent with her sister, Marie, and another companion, to pick up for firing pieces of wood that had floated down the stream, and that were wont to drift into the shore just under the Grotto of Massabielle. To reach the spot, it was necessary to cross the

bed of the mill-stream, which flowed into the Gave, and which was then almost empty of water, because of the repairs going on at the mill. Her two companions had doffed their wooden clogs and crossed the little stream. Bernadette, who was rather delicate, and wore stockings, waited behind to take them off. She was leaning up against a rock to do so, when she heard a sound as of a rushing wind. She looked up at the trees, but to her surprise their branches were not moved by it. She then turned towards the Grotto, and noticed that a magnificent wild rose-tree, or briar, which was rooted in a niche in the rock, and the branches of which hung down to the ground, was being gently shaken. All of a sudden, around the niche, an oval ring of brilliant golden light appeared, and within the niche she saw standing a Lady of unspeakable beauty, with her feet, which were covered by two large roses,<sup>1</sup> resting lightly on the wild rose-tree. She was dressed in pure white, with a light blue girdle; a white veil covered her head, and on her arm was hanging a rosary with a cross of gold. The Lady, as if to encourage Bernadette, made a big sign of the Cross with the cross at the end of the rosary, and began to pass the beads

<sup>1</sup> In most statues of Our Lady of Lourdes these roses are incorrectly represented as small in size, and resting almost on the instep, whereas in point of fact they were very large, and covered the front of the foot.

through her fingers. The child, half frightened, yet conscious of the presence of something supernatural and Divine, fell on her knees, and instinctively took the rosary she had with her, made the sign of the Cross, as did her celestial visitor, and said her beads. When she had finished, the vision was gone.

She arose, and ran after her companions. "Have you seen anything?" she asked.—"No," they had seen nothing. "And you?"—Bernadette knew not what to answer, but after they had made up their little bundle of sticks, and were on their way home, they noticed something strange about her, and she told them the story in all simplicity. Arrived at home, they told her mother, who scolded her for talking nonsense, and ordered the children not to go to the Grotto to pick up their wood.

From the moment that the vision had disappeared, Bernadette had been longing to see it again, but she obeyed her mother, and kept away from the place. But her sister and some of their little neighbors, moved by curiosity, persuaded their mother to withdraw her prohibition, and allow them to go there on the next Saturday. The children, who knew that evil spirits sometimes appear and deceive men, agreed that they would take with them some holy water. Thus armed,



they went to the Grotto, knelt down, and began their rosary. They had scarcely commenced it, when Bernadette's countenance was suddenly transformed, her features seemed to be lit up with a light from Heaven: there was an expression in her face of unspeakable joy and happiness. In general she was a very ordinary sort of child, but now there was something extraordinary and supernatural in her expression. She saw the same beautiful Lady, with her feet resting on the rock, in the same niche as on the previous occasion, dressed in just the same manner, and surrounded by the same circle of golden light. Beaming with joy, she exclaimed to her companions, "There she is!" But the other children, whose eyes were not opened as were Bernadette's, saw nothing but the bare rock and the wild rose-tree. But yet they did not doubt about the apparition to Bernadette, and one of them placed in her hands the bottle of holy water. The child took it, advanced a step, and throwing some holy water towards the Grotto, cried out, "If you come from God, come nearer!" At these words, the Lady smiled, and advanced to the very edge of the rock, as if to meet Bernadette, who thereupon, reassured by her advance and by the gracious expression of her face, fell on her knees as

before, and said the rosary as before. When it was over, the vision disappeared at once.

The report of this second apparition soon spread throughout the town, and people came to the house of the Soubirous and cross-questioned Bernadette. Her precise and unhesitating answers astonished them. It was enough to see and hear her to be convinced of her good faith.

On the following Thursday, the 18th of February, two good women of the neighborhood, anxious to convince themselves of the truth of her story, offered to accompany her to the Grotto. "Ask the Lady," they said, "who she is and what she wants; let her explain it to you, or better still, as you may not understand very well what she means, ask her to write it down for you." On the road to the Grotto the child, in her eagerness, got ahead of her companions, arrived at the Grotto, knelt down in front of it with her eyes upon the niche, and began to say her beads. She was thus employed when her companions arrived. All at once a cry of joy escapes her lips: "There she is!" she exclaims. The expression of her features changes: her face lights up with the same heavenly brightness as before: no one can doubt that she is in the presence of something mysterious, unseen by others, and

that she is experiencing an extraordinary joy and happiness. The two women kneel down by her side and light a blessed candle that they have brought, then they produce their pen and ink: "Go up to the Lady," they say, "and ask her to write down who she is and what she wants."

Bernadette, not a bit afraid, went right up to the wild rose-tree in which Our Lady was standing, held up her paper and ink bottle, and stood there looking up at the niche. Our Lady smiled. "*It is not necessary to write down what I have to say to you. Do me the kindness to come here every day for a fortnight.*" "Yes, I will," said Bernadette. Then Our Lady added: "*And on my part, I promise to make you happy, not in this world but in the next.*"

Strange promise, that no girl of fourteen would have invented! Promise, too, strangely fulfilled. As we shall see, Bernadette's life was not what we should call a happy one. All her life long she was the victim of continual ill-health. Her chest was weak; she had a chronic asthma, which often caused her most intense suffering, and as she grew up a large tumor formed on her knee, and her bones were attacked by *caries*. She had also all sorts of external crosses and persecutions to endure, and, moreover, in her own soul there

was, to the very end, little of joy and internal consolation. Hers was a dull, monotonous, struggling existence till the very day of her death; matter of fact from first to last, with none of that excitement or enthusiasm, such as is wont to accompany fancied visions and celestial visitations, sprung of an overwrought imagination.

“Ask her,” said one of Bernadette’s companions, “if she minds our coming with you.” “No,” was the reply, “*they may come if they like.*” Then the vision disappeared. When the child returned to the town she told her parents that the Lady had made her promise to come to the rock every day for a fortnight. The next day her mother went with her, and a number of other women accompanied her. They all noticed the same wonderful expression that came over the child’s features as soon as Our Lady appeared to her.

During the next few days the number of spectators increased. The story spread from mouth to mouth. No one would think that the child was trying to deceive them. She might be under an illusion, the victim of a highly-wrought imagination, but she was no impostor. It was wonderful to see her as she knelt day by day amid the crowd, with a taper in one hand and her rosary in the other, while

a religious silence prevailed. Some mysterious influence secured and held all present spell-bound. After a few days there was a crowd of some thousands present at the scene long before sunrise. All the best points of observation were occupied by spectators, in spite of the piercing cold. What strange attraction could there be in watching a poor peasant girl kneeling and saying her beads?

Each morning was the same: an increasing crowd, praying, chattering, waiting, struggling for a good place. Then all at once there was a movement in the crowd. "Here she comes!" and Bernadette walks through the midst of them. They make a way for that poor, humble, insignificant peasant girl, with marks of the greatest respect, the men uncovering their heads as she passes. After her the crowd closes up and follows her, noisy and struggling, till she reaches the Grotto, where she kneels down on a flat piece of rock surrounded by sand, which is always left free, however great the throng, as "Bernadette's place." Then she kneels down and all eyes are fixed upon her. She begins her rosary as if there were no one there. All at once she raises her hands: her appearance changes: the indescribable expression creeps over her face, and a murmur breaks from the crowd, "now she

sees her!" Meanwhile she continues her rosary, while those present gaze on her entranced. Her eyes are fixed on the niche in the rock: a sweet smile spreads itself over her countenance, on which love, admiration, joy, respect mingle together, and testify to the presence of one who to the kneeling throng around is invisible. From time to time tears like great drops of dew roll down her cheeks, tears of intense joy, bearing witness to a new, indescribable, and delicious happiness.

What did she see? First of all a soft light illuminating the niche and the rock, then an increasing brightness, then, over the wild rose-tree, appeared the Lady. A Lady of wondrous beauty, with all the freshness of early youth combined with the tenderness of a mother, of unspeakable benevolence in her looks, and a majesty which cannot be described. "Was the Lady as beautiful as certain ladies of remarkable beauty who had come to see her?" The child looked at them with a sort of disdain: "Ever so much more beautiful than they! The Lady, moreover, was surrounded with a circle of light." "What sort of light? Was it like the light of a large fire, or of the stars, or of the moon, or of the sun dazzling us in its mid-day glory?" "No, there was no light on earth resembling it; it was quite dif-

ferent from these and far more beautiful."

During the time of her ecstasy Bernadette saw nothing and heard nothing of what went on around her. If the crowd grew noisy and impatient she was not conscious of it. During that hour of Our Lady's presence she was deaf and blind to all save the vision of the Queen of Heaven.

One day the wind threatened to put out Bernadette's candle; instinctively she put up her hand to shelter the flame. All of a sudden a sweeping gust turned it towards her open hand and the flame passed between her fingers.

"She'll be burnt, poor child!" said the bystanders in pity. But there was not a sign of pain on her face or any shrinking movement of her hand. The fire left no trace: it had not harmed her.

In her ordinary state, Bernadette did not seem to be much pre-occupied with this daily favor granted by God to her. She said but little about it, and her parents did not ask her many questions. But when the hour of the apparition drew near, she seemed to be in the possession of a power superior to her own, and the attraction to the Grotto became irresistible. Go to the Grotto she must. When her parents, urged by the police, as we shall presently see, asked her not to go, she told them

she could not help going. At last they positively forbade her visits to the Grotto, and on the 22d she reluctantly obeyed. In the morning she attended the parish school as usual, but in the afternoon she could not resist the secret influence of within that called her, and she went down to the Grotto. As usual she knelt down and said her rosary, but the Lady visited her not.

After this, in reply to threats and prohibitions, she calmly answered, "I can't promise you not to return to the Grotto; something tells me I ought to go; it drives me thither. I must follow the impulse within me." Her parents, recognizing in the influence that urged her one to which they were bound to submit, made no further opposition. Henceforward her mother generally accompanied her to the Grotto.

The next day (Tuesday, the 23d of February), the crowd came down as usual to the banks of the Gave. Bernadette appeared in due time, knelt down with a lighted taper in her hand, and began to say her beads. On this day Our Lady had two communications to make to her—one was a secret message concerning herself which she was told never to reveal, the other was a command which was to be obeyed in a way that even Bernadette



never expected. "Go," said Our Lady, "to the priests, and tell them that it is my wish that they should build me a chapel here, and that they ought to come here in procession."

Who that gazes at the magnificent basilica that now adorns the rock of Massabielle, and watches the thousands of pious pilgrims streaming along the road to the Grotto in solemn procession, can fail to recognize the power of Mary's word? Her *fiat*, now as ever, echoes in Heaven and is obeyed on earth.

One of the following mornings witnessed a new feature in the apparitions. As Bernadette knelt in her ecstasy amid the assembled crowd, all at once she was seen to kiss the ground and then drag herself along on her knees towards the niche, touching the earth from time to time with her lips. She dragged herself up the steep ascent in front of the Grotto, entered it, and remained for a short time immovable, looking up in the direction of the niche. Then she turned to the crowd, drew herself up to her full height, and with wonderful authority and energy cried out:

"You, too, are to kiss the ground!"

Then she knelt down again, and herself set the example. What had Our Lady said to her? She had heard these words, "*You will pray*

182 *Bernadette Soubirous' Visions of Our Lady.*

*God for sinners ; you will kiss the earth for the conversion of sinners."*

On several subsequent mornings the same command was given to Bernadette. On these occasions she described Our Lady's countenance as veiled in an expression of infinite sadness, which, however, did not mar her look of perfect happiness and joy. Once the child kept murmuring, "Penance, penance, penance!" but in general she remained silent throughout her ecstasy.

Thursday, the 25th of February, was one of the most notable days in the history of the Grotto. All of a sudden, in the midst of her ecstasy, she moved as if summoned somewhere, and rising turned her steps towards the corner of the Grotto. Our Lady had said to her : "*Go and drink in the spring and wash yourself there, and eat some of the little plant growing there.*"

The child had seen no spring, and thought it was meant that she should go to the Gave. But with her eyes and her outstretched arm Our Lady pointed to the corner of the Grotto. Bernadette accordingly began to move thither, while the crowd made way for her. A mass of sand and rock blocked up the entrance, and sloped upwards until the level within was six feet above the level of the earth without. She

mounted the slope and looked for the spring. But spring there was none, not even a drop of water—only the moist ground with some herbs growing in it. She looked up at Our Lady, and at a sign from her began to scrape with her fingers in the earth. As she scraped, the hole she made began to fill with muddy water. She looked up again at the vision, and then took some of the water in her hollow hand and tried to drink it. Three times her courage failed her, so dirty was the water; but after another look towards the niche she succeeded in overcoming her repugnance, and swallowed it. Then she stooped down again, and again filling her hand with the dirty water, which was now bubbling up in abundance, she dashed it over her face, and then rose up.

A movement of surprise ran through the crowd. "Look at her! how dirty she is making herself, poor child!"

Bernadette meantime picked some leaves of a sort of cress that was growing in the wet ground, and ate them.

"What is she doing? is she mad?" asked the spectators of each other as they watched her. No, not mad, but humbling herself before the world, doing what was repugnant to nature, and so earning blessings innumerable for all the sinners and sick who were to wash

in that wondrous fountain. For this was the miraculous water of Lourdes, now famous throughout the Catholic world. God regarded the humility of His handmaiden, and the flowing water began to stream forth where that poor child's fingers had, in obedience to Our Lady's word, scraped away the earth and sand. Already it had overflowed the little basin she had made, and a little stream began gently to run down the slope from the summit of which it had bubbled up.

The next day the crowd came and Bernadette came, but Our Lady did not appear—a clear sign, if any were wanting, that hers was no imposture or effect of imagination.

During all the remainder of the fourteen days the vision appeared each day at the accustomed hour. Each day the crowd increased, and each day the little stream of water became larger than before. Was there a spring of water there before Bernadette's fingers had scraped at the soil? No one had ever suspected one. Even supposing there had been one (which was very unlikely) was it not a miracle that the poor, ignorant peasant girl should light upon it in so strange a way? Was it not also a miracle that a large, ever-increasing body of water should pour forth from so unexpected a place? People began to

say, "There will be some extraordinary virtue in that water."

So thought a good stone-cutter of Lourdes, named Louis Barriette, the sight of one of whose eyes had been entirely destroyed by an explosion in a mine. One day he very sensibly said to himself: "If it is Our Lady who comes to the Grotto, I think she will cure me by means of that water that Bernadette discovered." So he sent his little daughter to get a jug of it, said some prayers, and bathed with the water the eye of which the sight was gone. All of a sudden he utters a loud cry. He can see as well with this eye as with the one that had never been injured!

He goes out of his house and in the town meets the doctor of Lourdes. "Doctor," he cries, "I am cured!"

"Impossible!" answered Dr. Dojous, "your eye has an organic injury which renders it incurable;" and with these words he takes out his pocket-book and writes down a sentence, which he holds before Barriette's damaged eye, carefully covering the other with his hand.

People began to gather round while the workman with his blind eye reads out loud these words: "Barriette has an incurable amaurosis. He will never recover his sight."

Dr. Dojous was simply stupefied. "Well, that is a real miracle. It upsets all my theories, and I can only confess the presence of a higher power."

The town soon resounds with the story. A miracle has been worked, and it is Our Lady who has worked it, for the sick man was healed by invoking her holy name. Other wonders follow, which space forbids our telling in detail. A woman whose hand had been paralyzed for ten years plunged it into the water and was instantly cured. A little child of two years old was at the point of death. The deadly pallor on its little face showed that all hope was gone. "It is dead," said its father, "it has already ceased to breathe." The agonized mother, taking it from its cradle, carries it to the newly flowing spring and plunges it into the cold water. "Holy Mother of God, I shall hold my baby here till you cure it." After a short time the child shows signs of life. The happy mother carries it back, rejoicing, but still trembling. But, see! the death pallor is gone, and the tints of health return. It eagerly takes the breast, and two days later is running about perfectly well.

But now the fortnight during which Our Lady has asked for Bernadette's presence at the Grotto is almost over. It is the last morn-

ing, and there is an enormous crowd—soldiers, police, government officials, men of science, unbelievers, priests, and pious women without end, all assembled to watch a poor little peasant girl kneeling and saying her beads. Let us hear the testimony of one of the Government officials :—

“I got there,” he says, “disposed to laugh heartily at what I regarded as a lot of rubbish. An immense multitude had assembled around the Grotto. I was in the front row when Bernadette arrived. I was close to her, and noticed on her childish features that stamp of sweetness, innocence, and profound repose that had already struck me when she was questioned before the Inspector of Police. She knelt down naturally, without any fuss, just as if she had been alone. She took out her beads and began to pray. Soon her look seemed to receive and reflect an unknown brightness, and became fixed, and fastened itself, radiant with happiness and full of wonder and delight, on the niche in the rock. I looked there also, and saw nothing but the branches of the wild briar. Yet, in the presence of the transformation of that child, all my previous prejudices, philosophical difficulties, preconceived objections fell to the ground at once and gave place to a sentiment that took possession of me in spite

of myself. I felt a certitude, I had a sort of intuition that I could not withstand, that some mysterious being was present there. My eyes saw it not, but my intellect, and that of the countless spectators present there, saw it by the interior light of the evidence before us. Yes, I must declare my conviction that the Blessed Virgin was there. Bernadette was suddenly and completely transfigured. She was no longer Bernadette. She was an angel from Heaven, plunged in an ecstasy that words cannot describe. Her face was no longer the same. She opened wide her eyes, insatiate of what they saw; she smiled to one we saw not, and her whole appearance gave a clear notion of ecstatic and intense happiness."

At last the fourteen days during which Our Lady had asked Bernadette to present herself at the Grotto were over. On the last morning (the 4th of March) an enormous crowd had collected long before daybreak. There was great excitement among the people. "Something will happen to that child," said the wiseacres of Lourdes; "she will be carried away by Our Lady, or fall dead on the spot." Her parents were quite frightened; still they determined that she should go all the same. So Bernadette, as usual, heard Mass, and came down to the Grotto. Officers of police, gen-



darmes, soldiers, were there to keep order in the assembled multitude. A gendarme was waiting for Bernadette, with a drawn sword, to make way for her through the crowd ; without this it would have been almost impossible for her to get through the dense mass that had assembled. She knelt down as usual, and soon the vision appeared to her. She drank at the fountain, kissed the ground as usual. Our Lady smiled her farewell, and the vision disappeared. Bernadette got up and went home, and the crowd gradually dispersed.

The next day Bernadette came as usual, and the spectators came too. She knelt and said her beads, but no apparition. The same thing on the next day, and the next. No voice within her summoned her to the Grotto: her visions were apparently at an end. But on the 25th of March (Lady Day) she felt once more the internal impulse. Joyous she hastened to the Grotto, knelt down, and had scarce begun her Rosary when a sudden start and the transformation of her features announced that the Lady had reappeared. As soon as she saw her, in obedience to the instruction given her by the parish priest, she asked her to tell her her name. The answer was a smile. "Madam," asked Bernadette again, "will you tell me who you are?" Our Lady raised her

hands and eyes to Heaven, and answered, "I am the Immaculate Conception"<sup>1</sup> and then instantly disappeared. The ignorant child did not know what the words meant, but on her way back to the town she repeated them continually, lest she should forget them. Instead of going home she went straight to the presbytery, and learned from the priest that the words she had heard were those that proclaim the singular privilege that has raised Mary above all the saints and angels on earth and in Heaven. Radiant with joy, she carries home the news that the Lady who has appeared to her is indeed, without doubt, the Holy Mother of God.

The next twelve days were a blank for Bernadette, as far as any vision was concerned; but on the 7th of April (Wednesday in Easter week) the inner voice once more informed her that Our Lady was going to visit her that day. Arrived at the Grotto, she was not disappointed; she had no sooner commenced her Rosary than Our Lady appeared. On this occasion there was a fresh wonder.

During the ecstasy she had a lighted candle in her hand, which she was resting on the rock in front of her, and, absorbed in what she saw, she gradually raised the hand that was

<sup>1</sup> The words actually spoken were, in the patois of the country. "Soy l'Immaculada Conception." (Je suis l'Immaculée Conception).

holding the candle and lightly joined her two hands immediately above the flame. The flame passed through her fingers, its summit appearing above them, but she moved not, and gave no sign of pain. A cry ran through the crowd: "She is burning herself!" Still Bernadette moved not.

A doctor was standing close by. He took out his watch to see how long the wonder would last. For more than a quarter of an hour the flame continued to burn on, and her hands remained in the midst of it. No sign of pain—the same sweet smile playing on her lips. A thousand eyes watched the scene, and distinctly saw the flame passing through her fingers.

At length her hands opened. The doctor took hold of them, and examined them. *They were quite white, neither scorched nor blackened by the flame!*

Then softly through the crowd went the whisper. "A miracle, a miracle!"

A few moments after Bernadette came out of her ecstasy, and the doctor, taking hold of her hand, quietly held it over the candle.

"You're hurting me! you're burning me!" she cried, pulling her hand away.

There could be no doubt, after this, about the miracle.

Here the curtain falls on what may be called Our Lady's public apparitions to Bernadette. Once again she saw her, but long after, and when she was almost alone.

But we must now turn to the contradictions which every work of God has to encounter. While there was a continually increasing number of those whose prudent reserve and wise discretion at first had gradually made way for a firm belief in the supernatural character of the wonders wrought, there was a still larger number who were determined to be sceptical. At first they accused the child of being a skilful actor and hypocrite, and when such an hypothesis was proved by facts to be impossible, they fell back on the theory of hallucination. Bernadette was a poor silly thing, with feeble powers, cataleptic tendencies, and strong imagination. Unfortunately, the doctors who examined her said she had no sort of disposition to catalepsy, that she was remarkably matter-of-fact, sensible, and very unimaginative.

The police of Lourdes were decidedly on the side of the opposition, and thought it their duty to throw all the obstacles they could in the way of the apparitions at the Grotto. Bernadette was threatened, and then her parents. The authorities talked about imprison-

ment, and said that the crowds that assembled each morning threatened to disturb the peace of the town.

The Prefect of the department, who was a good Catholic, was at first under the impression that the whole business was an imposture, and that real harm would be done to religion if it were allowed to continue. This gave the local police fresh courage in their persecution of Bernadette. One day the inspector and sergeant of police placed themselves at her side, and attempted to disturb her. But her godmother compelled them to desist: the child was doing no wrong, and they had no right to interfere.

To keep up the charge of fraud became impossible, so they sent some doctors to examine her, with the intention of sending her to a lunatic asylum, if any trace of madness could be discovered in her. But the medical reports declared her intellect to be perfectly clear and sound. Thus their attempt to take any personal measures against Bernadette failed for the time.

But if Bernadette could not be assailed, they could at least prevent the growing superstition that was taking place at Lourdes. During the month of May succeeding the apparitions, crowds of pilgrims had resorted

to the Grotto. The crevices in the rock were filled with little statues and bouquets of flowers, and the Grotto was lighted up with a continual illumination of wax candles. On the 8th of June, the police carried off all the objects that had been deposited in the Grotto, and boarded it up. On the rock a notice was put up, *No one is allowed to enter these grounds (Défense d'entrer sur cette propriété)*. A number of police were posted around the Grotto to enforce this notice, but pious people managed to evade it, and though there were a good many summonses issued, no one was actually punished for disobeying it.

One morning, however, when the first policeman came down to his post, he found to his dismay that the Government hoarding had been broken down during the night, and the planks composing it laid in a great heap in front of the Grotto. There was no trace of the offenders, who consisted of workmen belonging to Lourdes, who had watched their opportunity, and before the dawn had completed the work of destruction. The authorities were not a little annoyed, and promptly replaced the barrier, and for several nights watched for any intruders. But all in vain, and so they left off their nocturnal guard. The very next morning the hoarding had once more

disappeared. This time the prudent workmen had not given the adversary a chance of rebuilding with the same materials. The planks had all been thrown into the Gave, and by the time that the police came to the place, had been carried miles down the stream by the obliging waters.

Meanwhile, an ever-increasing stream of pilgrims came to Lourdes, and cures which could not be explained by any natural laws began to be multiplied. It was impossible to deny the facts. Bernadette was summoned before the Prefect of Police, questioned, cross-questioned, threatened with prison. Every means was taken to frighten her, to discourage her, to shake her calm, clear, oft-repeated assertion of the reality of what she saw. She remained perfectly quiet and at her ease throughout all the vexatious interrogations and menaces of punishment. "They won't do what they say," she used to repeat. "God is stronger than they. Don't be afraid! If they put me in prison, they will only have to let me out again."

The Prefect at length, foiled in his direct attempts, had recourse to the Bishop of Tarbes, and urged upon him a judicial inquiry, to put an end to this nonsense, if nonsense it was. At the same time the popular voice and a

number of the clergy begged his Lordship, for the honor of Our Lady, and the promotion of devotion to her, to issue a commission to investigate all that had happened. But the prudent and wise Prelate was not going to act in a hurry—he watched and waited. Sceptical at first as to the reality of the apparition, he had gradually been won over by the irresistible force of the accumulating evidence in favor of it, but nevertheless he still waited. May, June, July passed, but he refused to take any steps.

From the 5th of April till the 16th of July, Bernadette had visited the scene of the apparitions nearly every day, but she had never felt the interior impulse which was the precursor of a visit from Our Lady, and had simply knelt and said her beads among the other pilgrims. But on the 16th of July, the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the mysterious attraction once more called her to the Grotto. It was closed at the time by the police, and Bernadette even more than others would be promptly sent back. So she crossed the Gave, and went down through the meadows on the other side to the bank of the river exactly opposite the Grotto, and there knelt down with two women who accompanied her, to say her Rosary. Presently she made a movement which made her companions suspect that she saw the vis-




ion once again. It was getting dark, so one of them lighted a candle they had brought with them, and they saw the same indications of her ecstasy that had been often observed before—the kindling brightness of her eye, the supernatural beauty of expression, the radiant transparency of her countenance. They watched her in silence for a quarter of an hour, while the child was drinking of that delicious draught of heavenly sweetness of which the Wise Man tells in the Cantic of Canticles: “Drink, O my friends, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved.”<sup>1</sup> Never, said Bernadette, had Our Lady appeared so glorious as then, the light around her never so dazzling, her face never so beautiful and majestic. The moment the first ray of this heavenly light fell upon her, all was forgotten—the river, the Grotto, the barrier, all around her simply disappeared. She was absorbed in the contemplation of the celestial vision; for her there existed nothing else on earth save the apparition that stood before her.

But it was the last time. Never again, until she beheld her in the Paradise of God, was Bernadette to be favored with another sight of the Queen of Heaven.

<sup>1</sup> Cant. v. 1.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE SUBSEQUENT HISTORY OF BERNADETTE SOUBIROUS.

N July 28, 1858, the Bishop of Tarbes issued a pastoral (*mandement*) in which he said that ecclesiastical authority was going to occupy itself with the Grotto at Lourdes, and that a commission was charged to make an official inquiry. The commission had for its object to furnish an answer to the following questions :

1. Were the cures wrought by means of the waters of Lourdes natural or supernatural?
2. Were Bernadette's visions real? and were they natural or supernatural?
3. Did the spring exist previously to the visions?

On the 17th of November, a Sub-commission of five persons came to Lourdes to make personal inquiries on the spot. They added to their number Dr. Vergez, a physician of Montpellier, of long experience and high reputation as a man of science. The resident doctor at Lourdes, Dr. Dojous, was of course

in constant communication with the Commission; as he had watched Bernadette during her ecstasies, and had examined all the alleged cures, his evidence was invaluable.

When the Commission was authorized by the Bishop, he had hoped that the civil authorities would leave the matter in his hands. But the Prefect had by this time made up his mind that the whole business was a mere imposture, or superstition, and continued to persecute Bernadette and watch the pilgrims as much as ever. Happily, however, a higher authority interfered. The Emperor heard the story, and at once sent word (October, 1858) that all opposition was to cease. Thenceforward barriers, boarding, police interference, summonses to trespassers, were all at an end. Bernadette, her parents, and the pilgrims, were left in peace.

The Commission continued its labors for nearly three years. During the first two years Bernadette continued to go to the parish school, and at the end of that time (she was then sixteen years old) was received as a boarder into the Convent of the Sisters of Nevers. It is needless to say that she had innumerable visitors. What was the general impression she made upon them?

The Heavenly Visitation she had enjoyed

had not changed her to outward appearance. She was still rather below the average in intelligence, very wanting in imagination, and not at all expansive. She had no power to describe what she saw or to interest visitors. When she told her story she did so with wonderful conciseness and almost coldness. People sometimes said to her, "How can you talk so coldly of such wonderful things?" Yet she was gentle, good, simple, innocent, and some visitors were charmed with her. If she was questioned, there was something in her answers that showed how sure she was of her facts. Questions, instead of embarrassing her, seemed to make her more at her ease. But it was when any one attempted to argue the point with her, and raised all kinds of objections to what she said, that Bernadette showed to the best advantage. That passionless, matter-of-fact child seemed to be no longer the same person when she had to defend the truth of her story, or when the honor of Our Lady of Lourdes seemed to her to be at stake. Contradiction roused her: she always had plenty to answer, and the readiness and justice of her replies were most remarkable. In spite of her mediocre intelligence, she often astonished and put to silence clever men who cross-questioned

her. They "could not resist the spirit and the wisdom with which she spoke."

There were other features in her conduct that were very much in her favor. Never would she take any sort of gift for herself or for any of her family. They were miserably poor, and visitors offered them money without end, but it was invariably refused. Indeed, it is not unlikely that this prohibition to receive anything was one of the commands imposed upon her by Our Lady.

Her early simplicity, too, was in no way affected by the crowds who sought her. If she had not been under the special guidance of God, she could not have failed to have her head turned by the notice taken of her and the flattery that was poured into her ear. People called her a saint; asked her to put her hand on pious objects, and so make relics of them; but she always answered, "Why, *I can't bless anything.*" It all made no impression upon her, and she never seemed to take to herself any of the compliments paid her, but all went to Our Lady, who had regarded the humility of her handmaiden.

Another curious fact told very much in her favor, and was strong evidence of the reality of her visions. Contact with her seemed to kindle devotion, and had a wonderful power to

strengthen in her visitors their faith in the supernatural. Men of the world who listened to her story could not help believing, often in spite of themselves. "I don't know about the miracles," said a Protestant magistrate who visited Lourdes; "it is that child who astonishes me and goes to my heart. I am sure there must be something in her story." In fact, Bernadette, the ignorant, matter-of-fact, rather dull, undemonstrative Bernadette, exercised a regular apostolate in the impulse she gave to devotion to Our Lady and to belief in the supernatural.

We must hasten on. The Episcopal Commission did its work most thoroughly, and at length made its formal report to the Bishop. He took some months to consider it, but at length, on January 18, 1862, was published the Pastoral of the Bishop of Tarbes respecting the apparition at Lourdes. We regret that our space does not permit us to give it in full. Enough to say that it discusses, with admirable clearness and good sense, apparitions, miracles, pilgrims, Bernadette, and sets forward the following as the result of the official investigation made by the Commission :

"We give sentence (*nous jugeons*) that Mary Immaculate, Mother of God, has really appeared to Bernadette Soubirous on February

11, 1858, and the following days, to the number of eighteen times, in the Grotto of Massabielle, near the town of Lourdes; that this apparition carries with it all the marks of truth, and that the faithful have good ground (*sont fondés*) for believing it certain."

We left Bernadette, at the age of sixteen, confided to the care of the Sisters of Nevers. In their convent she remained as a boarder till she was twenty-two. She was allowed to receive visitors in the parlor there. Her life was, during a greater part of the year, nothing but a series of receptions. She was at the beck and call of any one who came to see her. On feast-days it was with some difficulty that she got time for her meals. She did not like the publicity that was forced upon her, and got away as soon as she could. She had to give up all her free time: the continual talking was painful to her. She had poor health and a weak chest. Yet she knew that she was doing God's will. She never complained, she never refused to see those who asked for her. The only sign of her dislike for her continual flow of visitors was a slight shrug of the shoulders when a new visitor was unexpectedly announced. But her time and strength were well spent; she was accomplishing her

mission ; she had become the apostle of Mary Immaculate.

But the time was drawing near when Our Lord was calling her to a higher life. In 1863, Mgr. Forçade, Bishop of Nevers, to whose jurisdiction the Sisters of Nevers were subject, came to Lourdes and asked to see Bernadette. She was in the kitchen, scraping carrots for the dinner of the community, sitting on a stool in the corner of the fire-place. The Bishop sent for her after dinner, and after talking a little about the apparitions, asked her what she was going to do with herself.

“ Nothing,” was her answer.

“ My dear child, you must do something in the world.”

“ Why, I am with these good Sisters, and I’m quite content.”

“ I have no doubt you are, but you can’t remain here always. They only took you for a time, out of charity.”

“ Why can’t I stay here always ? ”

“ Because you are not a Sister and not a servant.”

“ I don’t think I should do for a Sister. I have no dowry, and I am no good. I know nothing, and am good for nothing.”

“ You do not appreciate your talents. I saw



this morning that you are good for something."

"Good for what?"

"Why, for scraping carrots!" answered the Bishop, seriously.

Bernadette burst out laughing. "That isn't very difficult!"

"Never mind; if God gives you a vocation, the Sisters will find work for you, and in the novitiate will teach you to do a number of things of which you are ignorant at present.

"Well, I'll think about it."

A year later Bernadette asked to be admitted to the novitiate.

Her entrance was put off for two years on account of the miserable state of her health. She had always been a sufferer, her incurable maladies preyed without ceasing on her feeble frame, and from time to time there supervened crises which brought her to the door of death. But in July, 1866, it was decided not to keep her waiting any longer, and on the 8th she was admitted into the novitiate.

The main feature of her novitiate was her total silence respecting the apparitions of Lourdes among her fellow-novices. They had been told not to speak to her on the subject, and though many of them would fain have questioned her, yet they faithfully obeyed the injunction given them. Bernadette herself

never broached the subject, and it was only when one of her Superiors spoke to her about it, or some privileged visitor, that any one could have discovered that this ordinary sort of novice, about whom there was nothing remarkable except her constant sickness, was one who had received from Heaven favors beyond compare.

Bernadette was regular and edifying, but just like the rest as far as externals went. No ecstasies, no wonderful gift of prayer, no outward marks of extraordinary piety. Several times the Bishop of Nevers asked her, "Tell me, Bernadette, have you seen Our Lady again since the last of those visions by the rock of Massabielle, or have you received any other extraordinary graces?"—"No," was her invariable answer, "up to now I am just the same as anybody else."—"Yet," adds the Bishop, "she was not just the same as anybody else. The most marked feature in her was her desire to live unknown and to be counted as a nobody. This is rare enough, even among souls that tend to perfection. No one put into practice better than Bernadette that beautiful precept of the *Imitation*, Love to be unknown and esteemed of no account." This is high praise from the mouth of the Prelate who was the Superior of the whole community. What im-

postor, nay, what hysterical or imaginative enthusiast, would have been willing thus to sink into obscurity and oblivion? It shows a strange ignorance of human nature to believe that one who was laboring under the delusions of an overwrought fancy would consent to be snuffed out, nay, would desire above all things to disappear, and never be remembered more by the world that had once run after her as a saint.

We have said that the apparitions left Bernadette just the same as she had been before. But this is scarcely true. In the novitiate she showed far more intelligence than one would have gathered from her childish years. The change may have arisen from her contact with so many visitors, and we do not pretend that it was anything beyond a mere natural development. But there was also in her face, from time to time, a beauty of expression, an indescribable brightness, which those who associated with her fancied she had gained from having gazed on the unapproachable beauty of the Queen of Heaven.

In October, 1866, Sister Marie Bernard, for such was Bernadette's name in religion, had one of those asthmatic crises that brought her near to death's door. But she recovered from it, and a year later was professed. On this oc-

casian it is the custom of the Sisters to assign some special employment to each of those professed. What was to be assigned to poor Bernadette? When she came before the Bishop on the day of profession, the Superior, in order to test her humility, rose in the presence of all and said publicly, that really they did not know what was to be done with Sister Marie Bernard, as she was good for nothing. The Bishop called her, and made her kneel before him.

“Is it true,” he asked Sister Marie Bernard, “that you are of no use in the community?”

“Reverend mother is perfectly right; it is quite true.”

“But, my poor child, what are we to do with you, and of what good is it to admit you into the Congregation?”

“That is just what I told you at Lourdes, my Lord, and you answered that this would not make any difference.”

The Bishop did not expect such an answer as this, and the Superior came to the rescue.

“If you like, Monseigneur, we can keep her out of charity and employ her in the infirmary. As she is almost always sick, it will be just the place for her. She can begin by keeping it clean, and if we are able to teach her,

perhaps she will be able to make up the cough-mixtures later on."

Certainly this speech was the reverse of flattering to poor Bernadette. What could have been more humbling, more calculated to wound self-love? What greater proof of the reality of the poor girl's vision of Our Lady, than that, after all the wondrous favors she had received, after all the flattery heaped upon her, the honor shown her, the presents offered her, the homage received by her from the most noble and the most distinguished personages, she, nevertheless, accepted with joy the reputation of being a useless burden on a small community, to be employed in a post sufficiently humble in itself and imposed upon her in terms that made it more humble still. Here was a test that pride could never have stood; here was the true spirit of her who said: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word."

To clean an infirmary is not only an humble but a very disagreeable employment. Yet she entered upon it without making the least objection, never complained, and did her best as long as she kept it. After some years she was, by the doctor's orders, transferred to the sacristy to be under-sacristan, and this post she retained until her death.

For twelve years after her profession she continued to serve her Sisters in these lowly offices. All the time she frequently suffered the most agonizing pains, and sometimes the crises of pain were almost unbearable. She was indeed a victim of expiation for sin. She had the privilege of being one of those who fill up what is wanting in the Sufferings of Christ, who share the Dolours of the Queen of Sorrows. Bernadette was not perfect, and sometimes the suffering forced from her, in spite of herself, an expression of impatience and ill-temper. But it was only on the surface, and in the depths of her soul she remained none the less submissive and resigned, full of joy and gratitude to God. When the crisis was over, the impatient word gave her an occasion of humbling herself before the whole community, of which she was always eager to avail herself. So passed her life from 1866 to 1878. On the 12th of December she had to appear before the representatives of the Bishops of Nancy and Tarbes, and renew again the depositions she had made, twenty years before, respecting the apparitions at the Grotto. She told her story with the same simplicity as ever, and answered the questions put to her with the same satisfactory clearness and precision.

Bernadette's work was now nearly done—her multiplied ailments had become worse and worse. The asthma, which had been the cross of her life, recurred with crises more frequent and more violent than ever. Her chest became more and more feeble; a large tumor had formed on her knee, and her bones were gradually rotting away with *caries*, while wounds were appearing over her whole body. This had been her condition more or less for years, and now the end was not far off. On St. Joseph's feast the Chaplain of the Convent asked her what favor she had asked of the Saint, and she at once replied: "The grace of a good death." A week later she was so much worse that she received Viaticum. But she partially recovered, and in the brief respites from suffering that she enjoyed from time to time she had all the light-heartedness of a child. She was full of little jokes and bits of fun. But these intervals were but short, and her normal state during the last few weeks of her life was one of intense and agonizing pain. She was, moreover, almost suffocated by phlegm, and the cough that tore her chest did not relieve her. One day the Chaplain said: "Courage, Sister! remember Mary's promise: joy, recompense, happiness, at the end of all this."—"Yes," said poor Bernadette, "but the

end is a long time coming." A few minutes afterwards one of the Sisters, seeing how terrible her suffering was, said: "I wonder, Sister, you don't ask to be cured."—"No," she answered, "I am not going to. I'm not going to ask for that; our Lord would come and say: 'Look at that little nun! she is not willing to suffer anything for Me, Who have suffered so much for her!'"

During Holy Week her sufferings redoubled. Easter came and still no relief. Horrible temptations assailed her, but the invocation of the Holy Names chased the evil one away. On Tuesday she cried out, in her agony, to one of the Sisters: "Sister, I'm so afraid! I have received so many graces and I fear I have made so little use of them." But soon after this she became quite calm, and though her bodily sufferings continued to the last, she had peace and quiet in her soul. One of her companions said to her: "I am going to ask Our Lady to give you some consolation."—"No," she answered, "not consolation, but strength and patience."

A short time before her death she made an attempt to rise, fixed her eyes intently as if on some unseen object, and over her face there crept an expression of surprise and sweet emotion which reminded the bystanders of



the change that came over her as she knelt in ecstasy by the waters of the Gave. "My God!" she cried, "I love Thee with my whole heart, my whole soul, and my whole strength!"

One of the Sisters said to her, "Our Lady, whom you have loved and served all your life long, will come and meet you at the moment of your death, and will escort you to Paradise."—"Yes," said the dying girl, in a tone of confidence and love, "*I hope so.*"

Then, a few moments after, "God of mercy, Jesus Crucified, have pity on me! . . . Mary Immaculate, do not forsake your child!" Then she begged pardon of one of the Sisters for all the trouble she had given her, took her crucifix, and kissed most lovingly the five Sacred Wounds of Jesus; asked for something to drink, took the cup in her hands, made a large sign of the Cross after the fashion that Our Lady had taught her at the rock of Massabielle, drank a few drops, and peacefully composed herself to die. Those by her bedside went on saying some prayers for her. Twice she repeated after them faintly the second half of the Hail Mary, and the third time, after uttering the words "Holy Mary, Mother of God," she found herself unable to pronounce the rest, raised her eyes to Heaven, bowed her head in death, and so went to behold for ever,

before the Throne of God, the majesty of Mary Immaculate.

\* \* \* \* \*

Brief and very imperfect is the above sketch of Bernadette Soubirous. I have not attempted to write her Life; my object has been to bring out such details as show her character, attainments, and disposition. My study of her life has deepened and strengthened in me—I will not say my conviction of the reality of Bernadette's visions, for that needed no strengthening—but my appreciation of the great value of the independent evidence in their favor that her life affords. If there had been no miracles at Lourdes to establish incontestably the presence of a supernatural power working there—if the bubbling spring had not forced its way upwards through the earth in such unexpected fashion under the hand of Bernadette—if the water had not restored sight to the blind and life to the dying—still the story of Bernadette's life proves her incontestably to have been neither impostor nor enthusiast. The former hypothesis is out of the question; the latter is utterly at variance with her matter-of-fact, unimaginative, unimpressionable character; it is in contradiction with the whole tenor of her life; it is utterly incompe-

tent to account for the facts of the case. If Bernadette had been a mere visionary, she would never have drawn down crowds to watch her as she knelt in prayer; men of the world would not have been forced by her appearance and demeanor to believe, in spite of previous prejudices and a determination not to be convinced; she would not have stood the test of questioning and cross-questioning; she would not have carried the day against every sort of opposition and contradiction; she would not have been willing to retire out of sight and be utterly unknown and obscure; she would not have courted contempt and humiliation; she would not have joyfully accepted the most humble of all possible offices in a small religious community; she would not have lived so holy a life or died so holy a death. Above all, time, that tries all things, proves day by day more certainly the truth of her story. No fancied visions ever stood the test of time. No mere hallucinations of a pious enthusiast have ever prevailed in the long run against the force of criticism and careful investigation; whereas the severest critics are compelled to confess themselves baffled before the narrative of Lourdes; and honest investigation bears its joyful testimony to the presence of the power of God working His marvels through the poor

peasant girl of Lourdes. *Infirma mundi elegit Deus.* God loves to choose the weak things of this world, and poor weak Bernadette has confounded and will confound, as long as the world lasts, all the wisdom of the philosopher, all the sneers of the sceptic, all the attempts of the unbeliever to set aside or explain away the miracles wrought through her at Lourdes.

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