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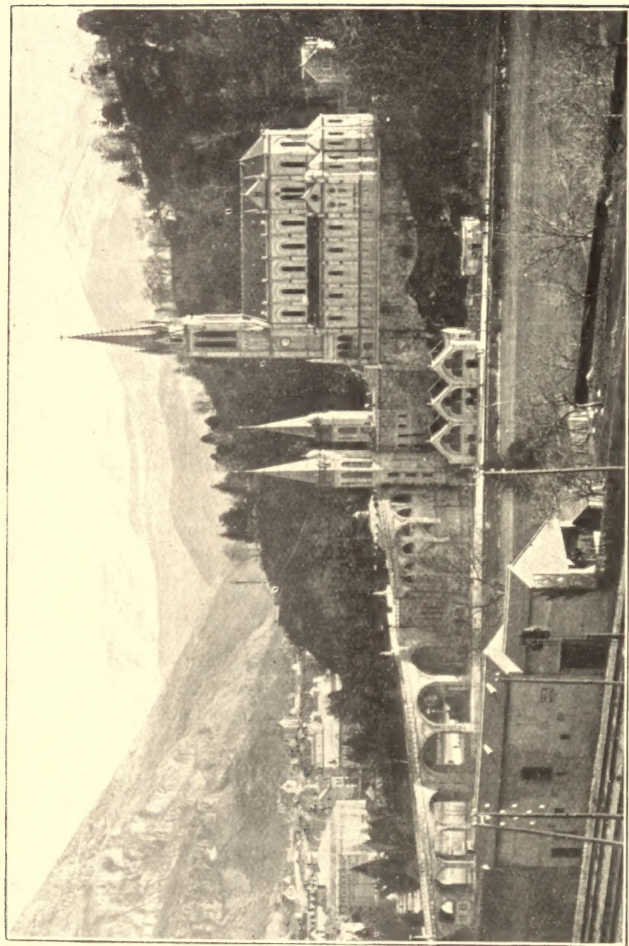
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THE GLORIES OF LOURDES

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Section

Number



Frontispice.

THE GLORIES OF LOURDES

By the CHANOINE JUSTIN ROUSSEIL

*Formerly Professor of Philosophy ; Curé of 'Les Saintes
Hosties' at Pèzilla-la-Rivière, Pyrénées-Orientales,
France*

Translated from the Second Edition by the
REV. JOSEPH MURPHY, S.J.

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Nihil Obstat.

STANISLAUS ST. JOHN, S.J.

HENRICUS S. BOWDEN,

CENSOR DEPUTATUS.

Imprimatur.

EDM. CANONICUS SURMONT,

VICARIUS GENERALIS.

WESTMONASTERII,

Die 13 Septembris, 1909.

TO
MY MOTHER,

ABOVE ALL, MY HEAVENLY MOTHER,
TO WHOM I DECLARE THAT I OWE EVERYTHING,
AS I OFFER EVERYTHING;
SECONDLY, MY EARTHLY MOTHER,
WHOM HEAVEN HAS LATELY TAKEN FROM ME,
AND FROM WHOSE DYING LIPS I RECEIVED THE WISH,
DOUBLY SACRED TO ME, OF WRITING A BOOK,
A HUMBLE TOKEN OF OUR GRATITUDE,
IN HONOUR OF THE MADONNA OF THE PYRÉNÉES.

J. R.

THIS important work, blessed by the Pope, praised by two Cardinals, approved by three Bishops, honoured by a letter from the Abbé Bertrin and a preface by Dr. Boissarie, is universally admitted by the Catholic press in France to be the last word, whether historical, poetical or mystical, on the events of the famous Grotto of Massabielle.

LETTER TO THE AUTHOR FROM MGR. SCHOEPFER, BISHOP

ERRATA

Page 183, footnote, line 5, *for* '1,500' *read* '118.'

Page 259, line 6, *for* '1,500' *read* '115.'

The title you have chosen sums up everything in a nutshell. "The Glories of Lourdes"—how many promises are contained in these words! And you do not disappoint the reader's expectation. The origin of our shrines, the marvels which accompany and follow the Apparitions of the Immaculate Virgin, the prodigies which the piety of the faithful works in answer to the miracle of Divine power wrought by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, the whole world hastening to the Grotto of Massabielle and multiplying the manifestations of faith capable of moving mountains, since they very often touch the hearts most hardened to supernatural influence—this is what you represent and depict in a series

By .

word, whether nistoc.

the events of the famous Grotto or nistoc.

LETTER TO THE AUTHOR
FROM MGR. SCHOEPFER, BISHOP
OF TARBES

NOTRE DAME DE LOURDES,
May 4, 1908.

MY DEAR CANON,

Following my beloved and venerable colleague, the Bishop of Perpignan, I am happy to congratulate you on the beautiful book which you have devoted to the glory of Our Madonna.

The title you have chosen sums up everything in a nutshell. "The Glories of Lourdes"—how many promises are contained in these words! And you do not disappoint the reader's expectation. The origin of our shrines, the marvels which accompany and follow the Apparitions of the Immaculate Virgin, the prodigies which the piety of the faithful works in answer to the miracle of Divine power wrought by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, the whole world hastening to the Grotto of Massabielle and multiplying the manifestations of faith capable of moving mountains, since they very often touch the hearts most hardened to supernatural influence—this is what you represent and depict in a series

of pictures animated with colours of life the most intense, and, I might add, *the most glorious*.

In justifying the boldness of the title of your work, you have attained the object which your priestly zeal had in view—that is, to help to spread the devotion paid to Our Lady of Lourdes. Worthy compeer of her illustrious historians—Estrade, Lasserre, Boissarie, Bertrin—you will have, like them, the joy of making our Mother in Heaven more and more known and beloved.

Pray accept, my dear Canon, my congratulations, and the assurance of my affectionate and devoted regards.

✠ F. XAVIER,

Bishop of Tarbes.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS - - - - -	x
DECLARATION OF THE AUTHOR - - - - -	xi
PREFACE TO ENGLISH TRANSLATION - - - - -	xii
PREFACE - - - - -	xv
LETTER FROM THE CHANOINE BERTRIN - - - - -	xx
LETTER FROM DR. BOISSARIE - - - - -	xxi
CHAPTER	
I. HOLY GROUND - - - - -	1
II. THE APPARITIONS - - - - -	29
III. BERNADETTE SOUBIROUS - - - - -	83
IV. PROVIDENTIAL OPPORTUNITY - - - - -	112
V. THE POWERS OF DARKNESS - - - - -	147
VI. THE ENTHUSIASM OF THE WORLD - - - - -	178
VII. THE ABBÉ PEYRAMALE - - - - -	209
VIII. MONSEIGNEUR LAURENCE - - - - -	221
IX. HENRI LASSERRE - - - - -	229
X. A GLORIOUS DIPTYCH - - - - -	246
XI. THE LITURGY OF THE APPARITION - - - - -	265
XII. THE FESTIVITIES OF THE GOLDEN JUBILEE - - - - -	283
EPILOGUE: ANALYSIS OF THREE SERMONS	
PREACHED BY MGR. IZART, JULY 14-16, 1908 -	300

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
LOURDES - - - - -	<i>Frontispiece</i>
BATHS OF THE INVALIDS - - - - -	16
THE GROTTA OF LOURDES - - - - -	138
PROCESSION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT OUTSIDE THE	
ROSARY CHAPEL - - - - -	199
INTERIOR OF THE BASILICA - - - - -	271
CROWNED STATUE OF OUR LADY AND THE OLD	
FORTRESS - - - - -	299

DECLARATION OF THE AUTHOR

ALTHOUGH (conformably to Article 13 of the Apostolic Constitution, *Officiorum*, and to the recent prescriptions of the Encyclical, *Pascendi dominici gregis*) the text of the present work appears with the approval of those whom God has appointed to be judges in this matter, I am, and always will be, ready to reject everything which may be pointed out to me by rightful authority as involving an error, or at variance with the prescriptions of the Church's authority. Moreover, to conform entirely to the decrees of Urban VIII. (May 13, 1625, and June 4, 1632), I declare that, if I have sometimes used the words 'miracle,' 'supernatural,' 'revelation,' 'saint,' 'prophet,' 'wonder-worker,' and any other similar term, I have nowise intended to claim for the words so used, in a relative and popular sense, the Catholic faith due to those truths only which the Church teaches as revealed, not wishing, on any account, to confuse facts known by private witnesses with the wonders which Religion puts before us in the Old and New Testaments, and never having had the intention of pronouncing a judgment on these matters, which belongs only to the Holy Roman Apostolic See, in perfect communion with which I wish to live and die.

J. M. ROUSSEIL,
Priest.

PREFACE TO ENGLISH TRANSLATION

THIS work was first published in France last year, on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the Apparitions at Lourdes. The author, in his Preface, gives the reasons which led him to add another book to the many already written about Lourdes. However, the fact that the first edition was exhausted in eight months, and the chorus of praise with which it was greeted by the Catholic press in France, seem to contradict the author's modest estimate of his work, and to show that it has not proved superfluous. Moreover, it has won the praise of His Holiness Pius X., of two Cardinals, and of the Bishops of Perpignan, Tarbes, and Pamiers. The letters of these Bishops were given in full in the French edition, but reasons of space have unfortunately compelled us to omit two of them, as well as a long list of French journals and reviews which gave this work very high praise. The notice from that important periodical, *L'Ami du Clergé*, omitted here for the same reasons, described this book as a brilliant work of science, apologetics, and eloquence (October 29, 1908).

Moreover, by the advice of authority, it has been translated into the four principal languages of Europe, in the hope that, as it had met with so favourable a reception in France, it might prove interesting to a wider circle of readers in other countries, as giving a complete history on broad lines of the famous Grotto of Lourdes during the last fifty years. Though there are many books in English on this subject, yet 'in the case of a sanctuary still prolific in wonders, later books have certain natural advantages over earlier ones; . . . each year adds to the number and variety of the marvels effected there.'* Many, therefore, will read this book with pleasure who have never had the opportunity of visiting Lourdes themselves, but are interested in the wonderful manifestations of Our Lady's power there. Again, there are many Catholics who have observed with sorrow the relentless persecution which the Church is now undergoing in France. They will perhaps learn from these pages that there is a bright side to the picture, and that, though the forces of Atheism and Irreligion seem at the present moment to have overthrown the Catholic religion in that country, yet there are unseen influences at work which will eventually counteract and frustrate the unjust and ruthless policy of the French Government, and lead to a revival of Catholic faith and practice in that once Christian nation.

Besides giving an interesting and graphic account of Lourdes, this book may help to spread devotion to Our Blessed Lady, especially in our own country,

* The *Month*, June, 1909.

which was once known as 'Our Lady's Dowry,' and thus it will happily fulfil the pious wish of the author, in his Preface to the second edition, that 'these pale "Glories" may cause to shine in the mirror of many minds, and, still better, in the depths of many hearts, the gentle and victorious image of Our Lady of Massabielle.'

J. MURPHY, S.J.

CLITHEROE,

August 15, 1909.

PREFACE

'For fifty years the Immaculate Virgin has reigned at Lourdes—fifty years of graces, wonders, and benefits; fifty years of a people's love, of pilgrimages from every quarter of the world—such is the great event, the solemn anniversary of 1908.'—MGR. SCHOEPPER.

'The world hath agéd fifty years
Since Mary first her child did greet,
And Bernadette, with ravished ears,
First heard those heavenly accents sweet.'

L. FEILLET.

LOURDES, since Heaven first visited it, has won a world-wide and lasting fame. Yet many are not aware that for the last half-century this Grotto, which fascinates men despite modern criticism, has inspired over 200 volumes in prose and verse (not counting a host of articles in magazines and weekly and daily papers), partly hostile, but mostly in defence of it, while many are really interesting either from an historical or critical or scientific point of view, apart from the literary merit of many of them.

In truth, hardly any men of culture in the last half-century can be pointed out who, on so interesting a subject, have not taken up their pen to defend it or (more rarely) to raise objections to it. Those

whom the present generation regards as oracles of free-thought have not been able to keep out of the universal current; thus a Bernheim, a Charcot, a Luys, or a Berillon, have in turn taken part in the discussion about Lourdes, and often with a sympathy bordering almost on veneration, proving thereby that in the presence of the Mother, as of the Son, no one can remain indifferent. History will always be proud to place in its front rank Henry Lasserre, whose book is the most elaborate memorial yet devoted to the Virgin of the Pyrénées. How many other writers of various merit have followed in his steps, to add their quota in their own way to the story of the most famous Apparitions of the Christian era!

In the department of criticism there have been a Boissarie and a Bertrin, pre-eminent among their fellows, the former a doctor and philosopher, who is, as all admit, equally learned and conscientious; while the latter is an unrivalled advocate by his power of arguing, and an unequalled statistician in the extent and accuracy of his survey. The first, who has already written five works on the 'Great Cures,' has earned the title of *Le Clinicien de Notre Dame*; while the Bishop of Tarbes, a good judge, has said of the latter that his book was 'Reason's last word' on the miracles at Massabielle. Having spoken sufficiently of him elsewhere, in our 'Esquisses sur l'Art Marial,' we will add nothing further, but the reader will gladly remember that for Lourdes this priest-doctor remains its greatest advocate.*

* 'A better and more eloquent advocate than M. Bertrin could hardly be imagined.'—*Westminster Gazette*.

As regards novelists (for this department of literature, not usually associated with piety, must also pay its tribute), to make up for the scurrility of Zola, we have had the poetic idyll of a Pouvillon, the vivid drama of a Huysmans, and the graceful descriptions of a Boyer d'Agen.

As we cannot go over the whole field of books written on Lourdes, having mentioned the most important of them, we may add the following as our predecessors in this realm, whose works have given us pleasure and profit: Estrade, 'Souvenirs d'un Témoin'; Dozous, 'La Grotte'; Vergez, 'Rapport Médical d'après la Commission d'Enquête'; Mgr. Laurence, 'Mandement Doctrinal'; R. P. Cros, 'La Grotte Mystérieuse'; les PP. Missionnaires, 'Annales'; V. Fourcade, 'L'Apparition'; Jean Barbet, 'Le Guide de Lourdes'; Guy de Pierrefeu, 'Le Triomphe de Lourdes'; Mgr. Forcade, 'Mémoires sur Bernadette'; Mgr. Ricard, 'La Vraie Bernadette'; Joseph Crestey, 'Critique d'un Roman'; D. Barbé, 'Lourdes Hier, Aujourd'hui, et Demain'; Clavé, 'L'Immaculée Conception'; Rascol, 'Étude Critique'; Archelet, 'À Lourdes'; Bretonneau, 'L'Âme de Lourdes.'

After such a catalogue of authors and their works another book might seem superfluous, if we had not taken up our pen in the service of one whose praises, according to the *Magnificat*, can never be too often proclaimed—*nunquam satis*.

Hence this little work is not so much a book as an *ex voto*—a votive offering of gratitude that cannot pay its debt. It was not for the sake of writing, but

'our heart' had to 'utter a good word' (to quote the Psalmist's vivid phrase)—words of grateful love. Knowing full well our weakness, we had to discharge our debt, while satisfying our piety, to say what we thought and felt of the beauty and goodness of this ideal Queen.

Hence our small 'reed' has become in a wonderful way the swift pen of the writer in Holy Writ, who tempered his phrases to the rhythms of his heart (Ps. xlv.).

Another and simpler reason is to be found in the present occasion. This year is the Golden Jubilee of Massabielle. Such coincidences, rare enough in a man's lifetime, are a sufficient justification, we think, for the boldness of one who becomes an author to preserve precious memories from oblivion.

Let him, therefore, who has never felt the poetry of a Jubilee, and especially of such a Jubilee, be the first to condemn us. We shall be hardly bested if, after choosing a subject and a title so glorious, we should eventually prove unequal to the weight of so much glory. Since February 11—a date we can never forget, when in the Grotto the idea suggested itself to us—a secret voice has kept ringing in our ears: '*Quantum potes, tantum aude.*'

Hence we thought that, in view of such wonders, for which the ancients would certainly have chanted a *Carmen Sæculare*, the least a priest of Mary could do was, instead of a bulky volume, to relate her 'Glories.'

May this most indulgent Mother deign to look at the intention rather than the deed, to smile

graciously upon the worker, to bless his readers, and employ these humble pages, dictated more by the heart than by the head, for the spread of her sweet reign, as her Son makes use of the frail elements held in our hands to accomplish His adorable Sacrament.

JUSTIN M. ROUSSEIL.

ST. NAZAIRE,
May, 8, 1908.

LETTER FROM THE CHANOINE BERTRIN

PARIS,
October 30, 1908.

MY DEAR CONFRÈRE,

I received the 'Glories of Lourdes,' which, in your letter, you informed me you were sending me. I began without delay to read the book, and I could soon see that you touched on a part of the subject which I had not dealt with myself.

You show, in fact, the part which men have played in the work of Lourdes, and you do justice to all those whom God has been pleased to choose as co-operators in His designs. You judge them with a sympathetic insight, and award them unstinted praise.

I myself benefit in several places from your flattering sympathy, for which I am very grateful to you.

Pray accept, my dear Canon, my thanks and best wishes, together with the assurance of the keen interest which I have felt in perusing your pages.

GEORGES BERTRIN.

LETTER FROM DR. BOISSARIE

LOURDES,
January 10, 1909.

MY DEAR CANON,

You have just written a very personal work. The history of Lourdes and the story of the Apparitions derive from your pen quite a novel interest.

My colleagues and myself have perused your pages, charmed by your style, so full of colour and poetry.

The different works written of late years about Lourdes consist for the most part in reproducing the accounts of Estrade and the records of the cures published by the Bureau Médical. You have departed from this plan, not liking to follow the beaten track. In tracing in your own way the broad lines of the history of Lourdes, you have succeeded, moreover, in bringing before our eyes the principal authors who have left their mark on our annals, from Lasserre to Huysmans, and even to Professor Vincent, of Lyons. No writer and no event is forgotten. You are aware that for twenty years I have been living in touch with all these men, and in the midst of all these scenes. So you will allow me to look back a moment with you on the part which

they have played, each in his degree, this last half-century.

Lasserre first filled with his name the history of the early years. He had a mission from Heaven, and we can say that he proved himself equal to it. Towards the end of his career his disputes and controversies cast a shadow over his life. But at this distance of time, in reading you, we forget all this, and only remember the matchless historian. Everything has been said on Zola and his work on Lourdes without his ignorance and bad faith having been sufficiently branded. It is now a little over sixteen years since I welcomed him to my Bureau. At that time our Society made a great fuss about this man. They expected to hear from him a decisive verdict! To-day the self-imposed task of this overrated novelist would be no longer possible. I do not see him pronouncing his verdict in the midst of *six hundred* doctors, who took part in our meetings this Jubilee year.

You told us with good reason that Heaven, to console us for Zola, has deigned to give us Huysmans. I will not say that you are too lenient towards him, for I share your leniency. I saw him for two years studying our cures with the conscientiousness he brought to all his works. He loved to breathe this supernatural atmosphere, which wrought upon him so strongly, and gradually transformed him.

Without doubt, as you justly observe, he could not change his nature. Always retaining an exaggerated love of art, he could not tone down the too glaring colours of his brush.

But, instead, what descriptions that cling to the memory of the Grotto, the processions, and the sick people! He is our foremost Christian novelist. Retté, whom you mention, is prepared (they say) to follow him. They will both penetrate into regions which are closed to the men of mere science or mere faith.

You mention also Baraduc, a sincere man, but the victim of his illusions. He has had the sorrow to lose his son, while seeking vainly to catch 'the emanations of grace on his photographic plates'!

Lastly, you recall very appositely the splendid plebiscite of my colleague at Lyons, Dr. Vincent. Yes, my dear Canon, he it is who had the honour and joy of bringing to our hospital three thousand signatures of doctors, coming forward thus to reply to the equivocal attacks of a certain journalist, whose object was, on the plea of 'hygiene,' to have Lourdes closed.

It is in truth one of the most beautiful episodes in the history of the *Bureau des Constatations*. I thank you for having referred to it in your book.

I have lingered too long over all these names to be able to tell you in detail how you interpret the great facts of Lourdes, and the procession of persons cured, whom you call the 'rescued ones' of Our Lady, and all the feasts of the Jubilee, of which you will continue to give us an account in succeeding editions.

The Bishop of Perpignan, my compatriot and dear friend, says very truly that the Catholics on both sides of the Pyrénées are grateful to you for

the homage which you lay at the feet of the august Queen of the Grotto. For myself, I will add: All the lovers of Lourdes can only thank you for this new jewel which you set in her glorious crown. They open their ranks to receive you among them *as one of her best historians.*

Pray accept, my dear Canon, the expression of my kindest wishes.

DR. BOISSARIE,

President of the Bureau des Constatations.

THE GLORIES OF LOURDES

CHAPTER I

HOLY GROUND

‘The world flocks here, in every clime thou’rt known,
In thy pure light the world much brighter grows ;
For Christ hath made this land His Mother’s throne—
A fount of life to heal all human woes.’

It is universally admitted that as there are holy seasons in men’s calendars, so we find holy places in their geographical records. This is owing to our very nature, which, being essentially religious, feels the need and the duty of consecrating by religious observance space not less than time, those twin conditions of our earthly existence.

Hence we cannot mention a country nor an age which has not had special festivals as well as hallowed places, that, in these topographical or chronological resting-places of our individual and social life, the creature, forgetting for a brief space the environment of contingent things, might feel itself nearer to its Creator.

This is why—confining ourselves merely to sacred

sites—the more civilized the peoples were, even though pagan, the more they obeyed this great law of human psychology. The Brahmins and Buddhists of India pointed out with emotion their sacred rivers, the Indus or Ganges, along whose banks the Spirit from above sometimes passed. In the Greece of the philosophers, poets, and artists, the temple of Delos, pride of the Cyclades; that of Delphi, a marble wonder among the laurels of Parnassus; but especially the matchless Parthenon at Athens, were official sanctuaries, where the god dwelt. Even Rome, so materialistic, had its Capitol and *immobile saxum*, which served as a visible tripod for the deities of Olympus, while the Gallic and German Druids sacrificed to the Teutates in the depths of their silent forests.

In another way, we know, the authentic communications of men with God during forty centuries took place on the glorious mountains of Palestine. While, in one respect, this chosen country was one vast *Holy Land*, since the shadow of Jehovah wrought there such incessant prodigies, yet there were favoured spots which His mysterious presence filled more lovingly; such were Bethel, Sinai, Horeb, Carmel, Moriah, and Hermon. How could Christianity also, when completely developed, be without its great religious centres—Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Calvary—famous above all other holy places, where the supernatural seems with the goodness of God our Saviour especially to linger? The Church, which is the social organization of the Christian idea, in its turn did not fail to attach to

certain points of its territory, as of its calendar, pious associations, by which it lived. It had at first its holy places in the East, then in the West—Jerusalem, Ephesus, and Antioch, soon afterwards Rome and Provence, the Crypt of Toulouse, and, later, St. James of Compostella, Mont Martre at Paris, and the House of Loretto. If I mentioned more names, this chapter would expand into a volume.

What is most remarkable is that the Most High in person has always, since the unfolding of Revelation, taken the initiative in these kinds of predilections.

Who does not know the refrain of the mystical chauvinism of the Hebrews?—‘The Lord loveth the gates of Sion above all the tabernacles of Jacob.’* In fact, it is on *this* particular hill of Judæa that He manifested His glory rather than on any other. Christ also, when God dwelt amongst mortal men, did not eschew such preferences. If we consider His friendships, Bethany was dear to Him; when He would pray, He chose the Garden of Gethsemani; and when He would do penance, He retired into the desert. Since His glorification at His Ascension, we cannot notice any change in the way of acting of the Man-God; and if He wishes anew to manifest in this world His power, or justice, or love, He selects a glorious Pathmos, or a blood-stained Alverné, or a gracious Paray-le-Monial. For we can be sure that these heavenly preferences are always in harmony with the places which are so singularly honoured. If we notice from this point of view the

* Ps. lxxxvi. 2.

various celebrated places already mentioned, we shall find that between them and the supernatural manifestations of which they were the scene there existed, so to speak, a 'pre-established harmony.' The positivism of the present day would fain explain this in its off-hand way in suggesting 'the influence of the means.'* But a Gerbert and a Lacordaire, in accordance with Christian ideas, have been more philosophical in discerning in this fact the workings of a true Predestination. The former wrote: 'Providence has prepared great places for great events;' while the latter said: 'There are places blessed as the result of a choice, which is concealed in the decrees of Infinite Wisdom.'

Both these writers, who were philosophers and poets, have clearly shown the exquisite sensitiveness with which the records of Time and Space among mortals respond in all times and places to the harmonies of the sovereign Musician, whose unerring bow sways mortal destinies.

Leaving aside mysticism, and still more fatalism, we believe there is a Divine predetermination of times and places as well as of men themselves, who move among their fellows and influence some rather than others. The word *chance*, as applied to lifeless geography or living history, is a word without a meaning, which unbelievers use to screen their folly, as well as their bad faith. There is nothing unforeseen in this well-ordered world. There is no date without a meaning, no place without some purpose, just as not a hair falls from our head without the

* 'L'influence des milieux.'

knowledge of our Heavenly Father. As applied to individuals or nations, we call it Vocation, but as applied to the two 'Categories' of Time and Space, which, as Aristotle says, limit man under one form of the conditioned, it is Providence. On this ground Providence rules all things here below. Clearly, therefore, there are more particularly certain points of Space and Time which had the honour, from the beginning, of playing an important rôle in the eternal designs of Providence.

Now, such a spot *par excellence* Lourdes certainly seems to be in France, the land of heavenly visitations. Accordingly, Divine power is so visible since the Mother of God descended here that I venture to say that, after Jerusalem, city of sacrifice, and Rome, city of strength, Lourdes, the city of grace, is the holiest spot on earth. Facts will prove this more eloquently than entire treatises.

Meanwhile, as a description of the site explains historical events more clearly, let us study this land of miracles under the double light of topography and history.

When, after leaving Tarbes, we pass the lofty tablelands which stretch like the last terraces of Lanmezan, a glorious vista is suddenly unfolded before our eyes—a smiling valley which, in its mystic isolation, seems enveloped in a serene atmosphere of sublime poetry. It is the gracious Lourdes in the heart of Lavedan.

A wonderful landscape! Let us take a closer view of it. That far-off circle of weather-beaten

mountains, sharpened like arrow-heads, and lifting their bare summits above vast plains of snow, resembles the noble vestibule of some visionary temple.

They are the towering Pyrénées, reaching in these magnificent solitudes their highest elevation. Hail to these giants!—Ardiden, not unlike a pyramid; Néouvieille, with its jagged horn; Vignemale, on its four peaks upholding the glacier of Montferrat; and nearer to us the peak of Jer, the cupola of Bécout, Espenettes, Espélugues, shutting in the market-town, like so many sentinels of granite, which, proud of their crown of hoar-frost and their canopy of blue, seem to be keeping watch and ward for the passing of some Faerie Queene. . . .

Nearer, showing their outline against the sky, admire the beautiful hills of Bigourdain, rounding off by gentle slopes their harmonious tops. You see there the last buttresses of the Mountain of fire, which begins imperceptibly to grow smaller, as though before some unsuspected grandeur; while towards its base, half-way down, begin the forests of fir-trees, scented with raspberries and whortleberries, till soon we see the rhododendrons, and all the vegetation beloved of sheep, scattered over the ever-green grass.

Now at the place where the seven valleys end, before the lofty heights suddenly opening out, at the very spot of the romantic gorge, which by various defiles leads to the famous hot springs, we see, delightfully situated in a refreshing oasis, at the very foot of its fortress, which guards it while frowning

down upon it, the predestined town of Mary. It shines like a pearl—the pearl of the Pyrénées—among the meadows, green as the water which bathes them, on the country of Spanish corn, of white hoods, and of grey bonnets.

All around the landscape becomes more and more clothed with tufted grasses and flowers that

‘With rich inlay
Broider the ground,’

rivalling in colour those of Luz or Argelès, but more homely, you would say.

To wash its base, the Gave of Pau, the most famous of the Gaves, with its restless foaming waves, describes a semicircle to the east, then runs in a straight line, and dashes wildly along the base of the neighbouring hill, filling the gloomy precincts of its caverns with its joyous murmurs. Towards these flowery banks, where the scent of the apple-trees is wafted, the peaceful city displays like an amphitheatre its irregular roofs, somewhat like a figure prostrate in prayer before the glorious mountains.

‘Little town of great renown’ is a proverb often applied to Bethlehem and Nazareth. It suits Lourdes equally well, for if in numbers and size it has always been somewhat obscure, what fame does not the capital of the obscure Bigorre enjoy by its associations! It is not generally known that its history goes back to very early times, according to legend.

In the time of Moses there lived a young and beautiful Princess of Ethiopia, named Tarbis, who,

seeing her throne and hand rejected by the Law-giver of the Hebrews, to forget her sorrow as a Queen and woman, travelled from the shining East to the frozen banks of the Adour. This country of tears by degrees so took her fancy that she built a town there, which she called Tarbes, after her own name. As for Lapurda, her elder sister, who wished to follow her in her strange wanderings, she sent her to build another city at the end of the neighbouring hills—the ancient Lapurdum, whence is derived the modern Lourdes.

If this quasi-Biblical tradition does not affect you, there is another which carries us farther back into the dim twilight of history. They speak of a famous town, built long ago in this same glen among the mountains, coeval with the mysterious city of Is, every trace of which, even its name, was swept away by the overflowing of a lake, which submerged it, leaving behind a story as romantic as it is terrible. Still, I prefer the story about Tarbes, in which Holy Scripture modifies mythology and explains the etymology.

Coming nearer to historical times, we read that Crassus, Cæsar's lieutenant, at the end of a difficult siege, took by storm this stronghold of Lourdes, (*Castrum Lapurdense*), which, even then, possessing some importance and having withstood more than one siege, had at length to submit for five centuries to the Roman dominion, symbolized there on its guardian cliff by the huge and squarely-built citadel.

After the Romans, the Visigoths will guard the key of so valuable an outpost to the advantage of

the new Faith. In A.D. 406, as history relates, between Tarbes and Lourdes, but somewhat nearer Lourdes, the fierce Vandals sustained a crushing defeat. It only needed a monk and priest, Mesclin, the saint of Bigorre, to stir up the uncouth inhabitants against these hordes of freebooters (as they would be roused up at the present day if the despoiling hand of the Government made any attempt against this shrine).

A little later, when the Arians, vanquished at Poitiers, tried to rally their disorganized forces in Occitania, they found themselves obliged, as ancient records tell us, to come to terms before Lourdes.

Again, the Saracens were driven for ever from French soil in A.D. 732, being routed in the plain of Ossun, hard by that fateful town on which already rested the promises of the future.

The verdict of history assigns to the Moors, and not to the Goths of Aquitania, the actual building towering high above the town, about 150 feet high (besides many other buildings in the Pyrénées), like a vulture guarding the entrance of the pass. All, however, agree in saying that the famous Mirat, one of the most renowned leaders of Islam, took refuge in this inaccessible stronghold. From this splendid position the son of the prophet defied the power of Charlemagne so successfully that to subdue him the great Emperor with the bushy beard could not find any other means than converting him. At least, Lourdes was long called 'Mirabel,' 'beautiful to look upon.' Moreover, the local records tell of a siege more renowned than any other, which

may be identified with the one of which we speak, and apparently the first escutcheon of the city was derived from this incident—‘a golden eagle holding in its beak a silver trout,’ with reference, no doubt, to the eagle which the astute Mussulman let loose from his fortress, that, when returning from fishing in the lake hard by, it might let some of its booty fall among the besiegers. And this incident gave them the impression that a fortress which could thus throw away its provisions could still hold out for a long time, and made the army of the Christians raise the siege, at least for a time.

In the thirteenth century, under the historic walls of Lourdes, we see the last remnants of the Albigensian heresy, already demoralized on the fields of Muret, overthrown by a handful of the true believers.

A century later we see the men of Lavedan holding their own against the troops of Charles V., commanded by the Duke of Anjou in person, to defend their autonomy, which was once again in danger. As regards the history of Lourdes during the Middle Ages, as the reader can well imagine, it is centred round its feudal castle, where we must gather it from the ‘flowers in the crannied wall,’ from which the blood of epic contests was so often shed in the name of a sublime but ferocious chivalry. Amid all its varied vicissitudes the old castle remained ever aloft in its wild solitude, the inviolate refuge of the faith and traditions of Béarn.

It was Eleonora of Aquitaine who betrayed at the price of her marriage with a Plantagenet the fortunes of this citadel, which had been able to

resist force of arms, but knew no surrender, thus truly deserving to blazon on its escutcheon this device: 'Bigourdain plus féal qu'un chien.'

After this, how can we describe all its fortunes, as it passed successively from the Duke of Lancaster and the Black Prince into the hands of Simon de Montfort, or a Count of Toulouse, or a Seigneur de Bigorre? The sad Treaty of Brétigny handed over Lourdes and its castle by a written deed to the English (as far as such acts of injustice can bind). Later on Bertrand du Guesclin came to show his patriotism beneath this fort, to restore it to its traditional masters, but in vain. Only in 1408, after a tragic siege of two years, our ancestors won it back finally and for ever (as we trust). When in the following century the people of Béarn, following their rulers, adopted the so-called Reformed Faith, those of Lavedan had the courage to remain faithful to the traditions of their forefathers. Here, as elsewhere, under the plea of a pure Gospel, they engaged in civil strife. The Protestants soon saw, as was natural, in the site of Lourdes a prize worth having, as it would make them masters of the country. But the commander of the garrison only gave to Villars, their leader, who, unable to reduce it, tried to come to terms with the besieged, this answer, not unworthy of the heroes of old: 'Go and tell him who has sent you that I am placed in this post of honour not to surrender, but to defend it!' It was a Catholic, and a Frenchman, too, who spoke thus. . . .

The ruthless Joan of Navarre, misled by Calvin-

istic fanaticism, in 1567, set fire to the town of Lourdes, in the hope of thus destroying the last refuge of Roman 'impiety,' but to no purpose. The castle remained unscathed, like the Faith of its defenders. And when, towards the middle of this troublous sixteenth century, the surrounding country fell under the influence of Calvin, this giant of granite stood firm then, as ever. Henry IV. had to renounce his Protestantism ere this loyal-hearted little place would recognize the standard of the d'Albrets, who, tempted by epic memories more, perhaps, than by the charms of the country, were not long in fixing their residence there.

Too soon afterwards, having no more liberties to defend, the stronghold of Lourdes, shorn of its secular glory, became an ordinary State prison, the Bastile of the rebellious Seigneurs of Gascony. The revolution and the forms of government which followed did not leave it deprived of political masters. To-day, in spite of the loyal vigilance of local patriotism, the ancient castle is but a phantom, the empty shadow of its former glories, rearing still with some pride the crumbling remains of its mediæval walls, no longer as a rampart against the enemies of home and altar, but as a landmark for the grotto of Espéluques, which in the mysterious designs of Providence was to be the harbinger of a new world.

We see, then, how brightly for twenty centuries the star of Lourdes has shone in the firmament of history. The reader must not deem this meagre sketch a waste of time. All that belongs to the soil of France has an interest of its own; and,

moreover, it shows at least that this favoured country was never like other countries.

I will refrain, even at the sacrifice of some picturesque details, from entering on the thorny ground of popular legend, and describing in turn the bloody rites which the inexorable religion of the Druids offered, doubtless for many centuries, on the menhirs or dolmens of Massabielle, 'to the Virgin who was to bear a child'; and the eerie sabbaths of the fairy enchantresses, who loved to perform their weird rites in these horrid glens; and, in a word, the hordes of demons, from which the malice of the Evil One does not seem to have spared such places, taking early possession of a wilderness which he doubtless foresaw would one day pass into the hands of his deadliest foe. . . .

Whatever truth there may be in these stories, this, at least, is certain: that since the dawn of its history, every assault and every heresy has spent itself in vain against Lourdes. Is not this surely a sign of Predestination? If the framework explains the meaning of events, how much they, as they are unwound from the spindle of Destiny, attest and foreshadow the designs of Providence, while they pave the way for them! But to return to Lourdes.

In this town, whose history is so glorious, where the supernatural seemed to be in the air, it will be interesting to visit the place where the heroine of the nineteenth century, who has done more to make Lapurdum famous than all its past heroes put together, fared to her heavenly visions.

Passing along the Rue des Petit Fossés, near the middle of which was her wretched home, and presently leaving the hamlet behind at the lane du Baous, Bernadette had to cross the old and worm-eaten bridge of the Gave. Then she passed for a moment along the field Laffite, near the place where the river bends to enclose with the blue cordon of its waves that vast and gracious domain, which owes its increased fertility to an ingenious network of canals. The chief canal was that of Sâvy, which worked several mills built in these places, especially that of the Nicolau family, where François Soubirous sometimes laboured. This stream flowed nearly parallel to the road of the wood of Subercarrière, or, rather, the rocky path, nearly always ascending, and hewn out of the solid rock. You had to take this path if you wished to avoid the water, in order to reach, with some difficulty, and sometimes slipping on the steep incline, the excavations there, known by the generic name of 'Massabielle.'

Here stood an enormous rock, a solid block, rising to a point in front of you, not far from the Gave. Here the visitor can enter a natural cavern, about 39 feet wide, and from 26 to 30 feet high. It was like a natural oratory, the nave of which, all jagged, was shrouded in dark shadows, while its ample draperies of stone shut it in all round.

This was the famous cavern which for many generations was the subject of many awe-inspiring tales. Few sites seemed to be so fitted for mysterious rites as this troubled solitude, and few people

approached this dreaded place for fear of the Evil One. Only when surprised by the storm or to shelter from the sun's heat would the shepherds of the country, first arming themselves with the sign of the cross, sometimes pen their flocks here. Yet they had to bring drinking-water here for their sheep, for the interior was absolutely dry. No one had ever seen water there, save rain sometimes trickling down its walls, and inside the grotto a small pool of moist mud at the level of the river. Over the vault, pierced through the solid rock, a sort of window opened out, which narrowed into a pointed bay, which admitted the light of day. Below this cleft the massive rock, somewhat square in shape, was hung with a severe tapestry of moss, lichen, and briers, in winter falling in stunted cascades, but in summer clothed with an abundance of wild blossoms.

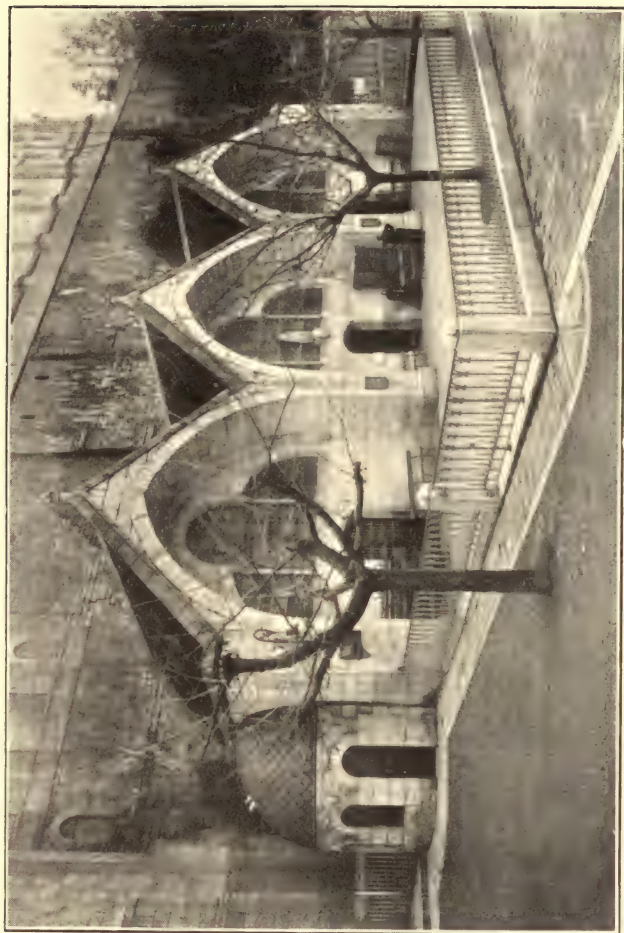
And evermore past its granite base sweeps the boisterous Gave, noisily wreathing into garlands its flowers of flashing foam.

So this wonderful cave, like that of Endor or Cumæ, stood in this spot, which at the touch of a magician's wand was destined to become the shining Thabor of the Queen of Virgins.

Since the Mother of God has hallowed these places, what a change has taken place! Above all, among the wonders revealed under her influence we must mention, in the very niche in which Mary appeared eighteen times, the fountain which gushed forth at her coming, and which is the jewel of her grotto, as the grotto is the jewel of Lourdes.

It is not unlikely that it was already there buried under the sand without anyone having ever perceived or suspected it, though many are inclined to think that it came into existence on February 25, 1858, after the ninth apparition. The miracle lies in the wonderful discovery of this spring and in its sudden and increasing discharge, which amounts to 26,852 gallons in twenty-four hours ; moreover, this spring never ceases, even when the sultry dog-star parches the earth, to pour from some mysterious reservoir a fresh and crystal stream, the overflow from which fills the 'Baths of the Invalids.' For there are the baths of Our Lady, as well as her hospital—baths where their souls must first be sanctified ere their bodies can be healed, and a hospital where the most exacting science is represented by the most relentless of physicians, who spends his time in investigating the Supernatural, only admitting those cures as miraculous which cannot be explained in any other way.

We know that Catholic symbolism would fain see special relations between this element and the Madonna at Lourdes. Our liturgists rightly affirm that there are hardly any holy things which have not some connection with this precious element. Thus, the Spirit moved over the waters in the beginning to render the earth fruitful. The water of the Deluge came later as a terrible sacrament of universal renovation. In the Temple ablutions always preceded the Divine rites. At Siloë every human infirmity was plunged in the famous Pool with the five gates, when the angel moved its waters. On the banks of the Jordan the water of St. John the



BATHS OF THE INVALIDS (*LES PISCINES*)

[To face p. 16.]

Baptist endeavoured to impart new life to a degenerate people. Above all, from the wounded heart of the Man-God the Church came forth in a symbolical effusion of blood and water, that in our religion everything may be regenerated by water as it was redeemed by blood, as is seen in the Holy Eucharist, where the Precious Blood lies hidden, and in Baptism, which unceasingly pours over souls its healing waters.

Thus the fountain is the most amiable and expressive type of grace from above pouring into our souls, to spring up into everlasting life. Now, between Our Lady and this element there are striking analogies, which Grillot de Givry has published in a suggestive volume. According to him, Lourdes with its pools is a 'sacred town,' such as existed in Palestine and ancient Asia, where Heaven imparted to the water that sprang up for this purpose a healing power sufficient for all cures of soul or body.

I much prefer this ingenious theory, both from a rational and Christian point of view, to the absurd theory of Baraduc, which I will speak of in another place,* who lately explained to us the wonders on the banks of the Gave by *radiographic plates*!

The Lady of Light said distinctly to Bernadette, and through her to all mankind: 'Go and drink of my fountain, and wash there;' moreover, the mere contact with this liquid, in which (as chemical analysis has proved) no other healing power is

* In a study on 'Le Surnaturel à Lourdes,' which we hope soon to be able to publish.

present save that of miracles, gives health to the body and entirely renews the soul.

Can such virtue surprise us, when we reflect that this water is not only a gracious boon given by Heaven to earth, but also the type *par excellence* of the Mother of God? In how many inspired passages the Holy Ghost calls Mary the '*Fountain of God*'! Besides, what more gracious messenger could be found for gifts always ready to be showered on us from the heart and the hands of the Mother of all mercy? Hence we can understand the reason why, wherever she had altars in the countless shrines which the love of her children has dedicated to her, 'from her feet a fountain of life always began to flow.'

Perhaps the prophet Joel was thinking of the little rill of Massabielle when he sang ages ago: 'From the house of the Lord shall a fountain come forth, and shall water the torrent of thorns.'* The reader will make his own application of this text. Listen to Ezekiel declaring in rapture still more explicitly: 'I saw waters coming forth from the Temple on the right side, and all those to whom these waters came were saved.'† But I think no one has foreseen more clearly the mystery of Our Lady's fountain suddenly gushing forth in the solitude of Béarn than Isaias. Let us glance at the thirty-fifth chapter. After having welcomed the approach of the Divine influence over the gladdened wilderness, praised the glory of these places and the beauty of the worship which would

* Joel iii. 18.

† Ezek. xlvii.

henceforth be given to the Lord, the Prophet describes to his people the vision of the sick people of the future, proclaiming to each of the faint-hearted Jews the hope that strengthens—a hope which was fulfilled by after-events, since the Prophet's scroll records, almost like the register of a Boissarie, the names of the infirmities healed.

'Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall be free.' But whence shall all these wonders proceed? From the fountain of the Almâh, whom the Seer even now glorifies. 'For waters are broken out in the desert, and streams in the wilderness; and that which was dry land shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water,' ever flowing to refresh the parched wayfarer. This is no paraphrase, but the Prophet's own words.

In his vision of the future the Seer of Israel goes on to foretell the holy caravans which will wend to these holy waters: 'The path' (to the waters) 'shall be called a holy way; the unclean shall not pass over it'—such as profane tourists, those hornets of our pilgrimages. Lourdes, with its mysterious cavern, its white Lady, its sacred fountain, will be the only bourne for the pilgrims who hasten thither on the wings of faith and love. 'As to fools'—worldly people, doubtless, who go on the pretext of 'taking the waters'—they have no business there. What could they do there? The power of the Evil One himself will be harmless at the threshold of Our Lady's realm. 'No lion shall be there, nor

shall any mischievous beast go up by it, nor be found there.'

So, according to the Prophet, this predestined country is the classic land of the perfect liberty of the children of God, where no tyranny shall fetter the aspirations of their religious devotion. 'And they shall walk *there* that shall be delivered.' And at the sight of all the wonders that shall be seen and wrought there, even great sinners, if they are sincere, will be converted, remembering the price at which they are redeemed, both by the blood of a God and the tears of His Mother. 'And the redeemed of the Lord shall return.' And because the true mission of Lourdes, its crowning glory, is the praise of God, they will be seen on this esplanade, along which wind so many triumphal processions in God's honour, coming to the new Sion with songs upon their lips: 'They shall come into Sion with praise.' Hence, as its distinctive feature, joy of soul and body alike will thrill through the hearts of the pious pilgrims, which nothing can take away. 'And everlasting joy shall be upon their heads.' Lourdes, then, will be for mortals a 'Paradise Regained,' from which suffering—the effect of sin—will flee away before the gracious smile of Our Lady, and where, for some days at least, you will no longer hear, as though you were rapt to the third Heavens, the sad sighs of this valley of tears: 'And sorrow and mourning shall flee away.' For even if they return with their miseries, the poor invalids will take back from thence, by the highest miracle of all, gentle resignation and holy hope.

After such a description of the benefits of the Grotto, penned nearly 3,000 years ago by this sublime writer (and the lyric beauty of the Prophet's words must excuse the length of the foregoing extract), we cannot wonder that the face of the holy Rock is covered with *ex-voto* offerings.

Does not the natural instinct of our heart prompt us to show by external signs our pent-up joy and gratitude for some remarkable deliverance from evil? Thus the patriarchs of old, those patterns of religious men, taught almost from God's own lips, never failed to build altars, or at least to erect pillars, in return for some signal favour of Heaven. 'They were the prayers,' Holy Writ tells us, 'which they offered to the Most High.'

Pagan antiquity also, both among the Greeks and Romans, was no exception to this law of Nature, and we see those touching manifestations, the fruits of their piety, in the pillars of all the temples of polytheism.

In raising gratitude to the dignity of religion, of which it constitutes one of the most essential notes, Christianity was not mistaken in authorizing and encouraging a similar practice, in order that the gratitude of the faithful might thus be eternally blazoned on the walls of her churches.

Hitherto I have endeavoured to delineate the picturesque side, so to speak, of this famous Grotto of the Pyrénées. But how can I express the hidden virtue which emanates from this hewn-out rock? Shall I say that through this granite

hollow there is something beyond which is seen and felt?

Massabielle is truly the gate of Heaven, the threshold of the Infinite, quite as venerable as the See of Tarbes, or the Cathedral of Paris, or even the Pillar of Saragossa. See, then, how, in this tabernacle of Mary, with mankind earth is forgotten—the smiling Pyrénées, and the sky ever blue, and the solemn Gave, and this dreamy landscape—so much does this mysterious hollow of rock attract our eyes as it wins our hearts. When the white statue is seen aloft, as though living, in its spotless marble, to smile upon the crowds, you would fancy that its sightless eyes gleamed with pleasure upon each pilgrim! Might it not be the radiance of eternal life which descended once upon this altar, and which gleamed still through inert matter? and in the gloomy depths of the cave might there not linger some trace of the ideal woman—

‘Our tainted nature’s solitary boast’?

But no; human poetry has no place here. The simple and glorious truth is that, since the Immaculate Queen, who is also all-holy, appeared fifty years ago in this hollow of blessed rock by this slope, that dates from the creation of the world, this ground is holy, hallowing those who tread upon it, so that there is no place for atheists here.

Zola felt himself one day ‘gasping for breath.’ Huysmans says, in one of his happy phrases, that ‘to venture to remain there without compunction one would need the spotless soul of a Bernadette,’ one feels so unworthy—‘somewhat ashamed even to walk there.’

Even were it possible not to breathe in the supernatural at Our Lady's feet, a sceptic could not help feeling it there. Is it not truly a visible miracle of Heaven, which has made a new creation, as it were, spring up all around you? If you visited these places fifty years ago and revisit them to-day, you must admit that some quickening influence has passed over them.

What, then, despite its glorious past, was this sleepy little town, of 4,000 or 5,000 inhabitants, in 1858, hidden in this far-off boundary of France, so that many had doubts of its very existence? It is true that in the season Lourdes became each year the halting-place of Europeans going to fashionable resorts, but as there was nothing to see, people did not stop there, the coach depositing them at night-fall, only to start again next morning. Even the undeniable beauty of the country could not detain an hour longer the modern man of civilization, panting for excitement. But in a few years this 'halting-place' will become a centre, a focus, an international rendezvous, whither the infirm people of the Old and New Worlds will have themselves carried, forgetting all the attractive watering-places. And great events will take place there—by one of Time's revenges, known only to Heaven—to be followed by national pilgrimages, which will become an annual occurrence, a wave of prayer and penance, to which the festivals of olden times cannot be compared.

Such will be the change among the visitors. Notice that of the inhabitants. What has happened

to those old and ruinous thatched houses on these new boulevards where everyone is now walking? The straggling Scriptural village, so decrepit and sleepy, has vanished as if by magic, with its thatched roofs and moss-grown walls! Garrets, shops, and plough-lands, all have had to vanish and give way to an imaginary city, not dreamt of yesterday. Everything, down to the headlong and boisterous torrent, has been compelled to alter its course, and so you find the eternal mountains have 'skipped like the lambs,' of which a Prophet speaks, opening at first their marble sides, whence the materials for a new world have been quarried; then being gradually hewn and fashioned into fine streets and broad avenues, where Progress pours along with all her up-to-date magnificence.

Meanwhile, from the station, which witnesses every year the arrival of nearly a million pilgrims, to the esplanade—a sort of cosmopolitan place which can hold 100,000 human beings—count, if you can, all the hotels, palaces, and endless rows of wealthy shops and rich warehouses, wearing everywhere an unmistakable stamp of religion, side by side with this display of opulence, which, as nowhere else in the world, makes you forget Paris, and is a relief from London.

Such is the wonderful city, springing up suddenly in our days in these deserted swamps, where lately the fetid stream of Lapaca and the treacherous Merlasse rushed together to blend their murmurs more sonorously with the meeting waters of Azun and Gazost, and Isabie and Gavarnie.

In truth, there are three Lourdes—the ancient one, still loyal (to its credit !) to its traditions not less than to its white hoods and its bonnets, but narrowing more and more on the side of the Fort, the circle of its original physiognomy ; then the new one, that vies with the great capitals, though within a narrow compass ; lastly, the other town, which, as it comes from God, is neither old nor new, and on which everything converges.

Withdrawn behind the shelter of its trees, as if the better to enjoy unutterable ecstasies, encircling its treasure with a green mantle and invisible guardians, whose leader is St. Michael, we can say that it is epitomized in its three temples, which, like three lilies, have sprung up from the earthy bulb of the Grotto.

What a wonder of stone is this glorious edifice, rising in successive tiers one after another, like the gradual ascents of faith, hope, and charity ! First, there is the Rosary Chapel, with its Byzantine narthex, its solitary arch, its spacious dome, and its campanile admitting the light of day through twenty shining rose-windows. Then, on the first terraces, we see the Crypt, entirely scooped out of the rock—a truly Cyclopean work, opening with a single eye, along a narrow passage, on the splendour of the holy of holies, where the gleam of lamps round the golden altar harmonizes with the silence of souls ; venerable shrine, which corresponds to the very centre of the holy cavern, and towards which for the last half-century so many mourners flock silently, but return full of hope. Lastly, behold the shining Basilica,

that glory of Parthenic architecture, lifting up like a prayer its white elegance as high as genius can carry it in the pursuit of the ideal—a true exaltation of the Immaculate Virgin, her *Magnificat* in granite, as natural, and bold, and lyrical as the enthusiasm which inspired it; a matchless poem, the filigree work of which seems a smile of Heaven as each of its stones is a loving gift of Earth!

After noticing the exterior, what splendour within! But what pen could fitly describe this row of banners—scarves of gold, embroidery, and silk—and this gleam of tapers, this profusion of pictures, this galaxy of statues, and this efflorescence of bas-reliefs? What richness everywhere—below, in the middle, and above! In the circular basement go round, as an artist as well as a Catholic, the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary, which are an object-lesson both in art and theology. Stop, half-way up the church, before each of these works of sculptor's, engraver's, and jeweller's art, as wonderful as they are modestly hidden. But above all, in the lofty cathedral you will be enraptured, like Bernadette herself, in presence of this Virgin crowned with twelve stars in the midst of decorations truly heavenly. '*Signum magnum apparuit in celo!*'

And what worship we see here—only to be seen at St. Peter's, Rome! Literally, the services at Lourdes by their beauty and devotion are a foretaste of Heaven. In proof of this, at the Matins of February 10, 1908, and at the Pontifical High Mass next day, you would have fancied yourself in the midst of the hosannahs of the Heavenly City!

Lights innumerable, flowers from every clime, shining tapers, glorious windows, sweet chimes of bells, wonderful organ music, beautiful singing—nothing was wanting to give you the idea, as happened to one of the most ancient Kings of France, of being in Paradise! What is undoubtedly still more beautiful to the observer than all this liturgical pomp is the prayer, tempered with sorrow, idealized by resignation, and borne upwards on the wings of sweet confidence. This is ‘music sent up to God,’ sweeter than that of pealing organs, or of the heavenly spheres wheeling in faultless harmony in the starry skies of Lourdes. For all will agree, I think, that people pray well chiefly in these places, whether in the heart of the moving crowds, whose murmur is the praise of God, like that of the waves, or, better still, perhaps, in the silent hours when, above the holy deserted Rock, the eagles soar, and from the dizzy heights of the towers the bells peal forth their musical chime, *Ave Maria*.

What virtue at these moments comes forth from the hollow of the Rock, to supernaturalize man and transform the multitudes! How happily in one of his recent pastorals the Bishop of Perpignan called this Grotto ‘a second Baptistery of Rheims’!

Was I wrong, then, in saying that there are here below special sites eternally predestined for the designs of Almighty God?

Thus Providence stamps on each of the works, which It makes Its own in a special manner, a symbolism, which is only the reflex of His infinite wisdom; for it is by the avenues of symbolism that

rational creatures pass from this world into the Unseen. Lourdes, however, realizes in a special way this law of Divine Providence. As it was to be the scene of the triumphs of the Queen of Heaven, the Thabor of the Immaculate Conception, it was necessary that Nature and Art, human history and Divine grace, should be in harmony by a smile of peace and beauty, sympathy and love, with this peerless central figure.

But we must leave this theme, though it be but half told. Having viewed the place and the surroundings, we must now study the wonderful events which were to happen there.

CHAPTER II

THE APPARITIONS

FIRST APPARITION.—It was February 11—Shrove Thursday for the world, but the Feast of the Shepherdess Geneviève for the Diocese of Tarbes—just before the noonday Angelus. Clothed in a black frock, quite threadbare and patched, with the white hood on her shoulders, thick fir-wood sabots on her feet, the little Soubirous—whose first name, Bernadette, was destined ere long to become world-famous, rivalling even the greatest—descended the steps of the steep town in the piercing cold of a grey foggy morning, accompanied by her younger sister and Jeanne Abadie, a neighbour, like herself, little more than thirteen years of age. They were going to the banks of the Gave to collect dry brush-wood.

Unconscious of the destiny awaiting her, and even of her own self, she tripped along in the rustic charm of her innocence, more pleasing to the soul than to the eye by that secret radiance of a spotless nature in which candour was much enhanced by simplicity. Small for her age, with delicate features that betokened a rather frail constitution, her com-

plexion somewhat bronzed by the bracing air of the country of Bartrès, where she had spent part of her childhood behind the sheep of her foster-father, she had an appearance quite in keeping with her humble condition, her kerchief tied in Bigourdain fashion, hardly showing her fine black hair, yet not completely hiding that beautiful forehead, so bright and innocent, that seemed the reflex of Heaven. Her eyebrows arched, her eyes brown, but calm and bright, her mouth peculiarly adapted to express kindness or compassion, her features marked by gentleness, and also a certain intellectual fire, which, perhaps, in her was only the reflexion of strong common-sense, she walked along in the charming innocence of childhood and the shy bashfulness of her humble condition—the daughter of a miller without corn, who, ignorant of her A, B, C, like any other shepherd-girl, only seemed fit to carry a shepherd's crook, or else, perhaps, to turn a spinning-wheel.

You know what happened—the loud hurricane which overtook her twice on the bank of the canal of Sâvy, yet not a leaf stirred among the poplars on the banks beside her; the dazzling light which suddenly surrounded her at the same time in front of the lonely rock of Massabielle; and, lastly, in a hollow niche of the Pyrenean granite, the heavenly vision of a Lady of surpassing beauty—such

‘ Radiant state she spreads
In circle round her shining throne ’—

and breathing an indefinable sweetness from her whole person; a real Being, at least, and not an

airy phantom, since the child, amazed and enraptured, distinctly saw her turn, look, smile, and sometimes move her lips, as though in mysterious converse with the Unseen.

Before such a sight what could a native peasant do save instinctively fall on her knees ?

Meanwhile 'the Lady' (for so the child ever afterwards called her), as she advanced to the edge of the hollow, seemed to become more beautiful and gracious. Strange to say, her brightness, like a golden cloud, though so glorious, did not dazzle or pain the eyes. Even so softly the day-star, that harbinger of peace,

'Flames in the forehead of the morning sky.'

She seemed to be of middle height, and about sixteen or seventeen years of age, for a certain spring-tide grace in her was joined to something eternal, as though she, the ideal Woman,

'So perfect and so peerless, were create
Of every creature's best.'

To what type of earth or Heaven could our 'rough and all-unable pen' compare this Form Divine? We cannot describe that which surpasses description. Let us at least say, to satisfy our devotion, while gratifying our curiosity as far as possible, that, according to Bernadette's account, the oval curve of the face of the Unknown was in perfect harmony; her blue eyes had an irresistible charm; her lips breathed gentleness; her majestic forehead seemed like the seat of Wisdom or the throne of Virtue.

Her robe was white as the driven snow still glittering on the horizon ; her white veil fell in simple and chaste folds down to her bare feet, bedecked with two roses, which were fairer far than those of the wild rose-tree when they unfold to the warm south winds, and which had now the honour of serving as footstool for the Vision. She wore no diadem, necklace, or jewels of any kind. For a girdle she wore a sky-blue ribbon tied at her waist. A rosary with milk-white beads hung down by a shining gold chain from her alabaster fingers, which seemed to be telling the beads. And with an ineffable kindness the shining Vision looked at the humble shepherdess, who was now rapt in an ecstasy of delight. Soon the Lady, to encourage her, made with a sweet and stately gesture the sign of the cross, on seeing which the child wished to imitate her. From this moment she was able to converse familiarly with the Stranger without any feeling of nervousness.

Yet what a sight was presented to her enraptured gaze ! Bernadette, on coming out of this ecstasy of about fifteen minutes, could truly have said, what the Apostle wrote of his supernatural revelations, that 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man,' to see the like. Henceforth no external object, however attractive it might be, could claim a share in her undivided love ; and whenever any remarkable form of a woman was pointed out to her as perhaps resembling 'the Lady,' she would only make a significant pout of disdain. Thus, when Fabisch, the famous sculptor of Lyons, one day unveiled before the untaught peasant of

Lourdes his masterpiece, hoping, after so many efforts, to have caught the likeness which would best represent the sublime Original, the child, evidently disappointed, only made this answer: 'It is very beautiful, sir, but it is not her.' She had seen face to face essential beauty—at least, as far as mortal can—shine on the forehead of that peerless Being, whom a certain Father calls 'the wonderful statue that came endowed with life from the hands of the eternal Artist, with a sovereign perfection.'

She was in very truth the actual or ideal archetype of all æsthetic art, who had just appeared to the child, and psychologists have justly concluded from the very fact of such a vision, because surpassing the conception of genius itself, that it was supernatural. Hallucination—since certain sinister spirits have not shrunk from this stony impeachment—is limited to reproducing, in fantastic and usually grotesque combinations, something already seen, but it never creates anything; still less could it conceive what never dawned on a Raphael, or a da Vinci, or the master of Fiesole himself. To add another detail, which confirms the authenticity of this ecstasy. Of all the pictures of Our Lady ever shown to little Soubirous as possibly resembling her, none pleased her of those which our classic taste exalts to the skies (even including the frescoes of Fra Angelico), except one only, which was a copy of the famous canvas attributed by tradition to St. Luke, the inspired painter of the 'Almâh.'

We know well that, after this February noon, the heart of the shepherdess, or, rather, her whole being,

captivated, remained at this Grotto, which had become for her the gate of Paradise. The fascination which all pilgrims have since felt for this strange rock—what is it compared to the mysterious magnetism which will henceforth rivet the poor child to it? The presence of the Divine had taken possession of her for ever. Appetite and sleep were gone. Neither the fear of her family nor threats of the police will succeed in keeping her from this mysterious cavern. What is it in truth to have once seen the supernatural here below, and what will it be like when the full glory of the Immaculate will begin to shine on us in Heaven? *Nec oculus vidit*. . . . You should have seen now the motionless and prostrate child, like the image of the contemplative before this new Sinai or the second Thabor. As soon as she was able to return there, an angel's smile upon her lips, the halo of the blessed around her face, ineffably transfigured, she looked so beautiful at this moment that the most sceptical could not fail to recognize the supernatural, so clearly reflected in her peasant features. And though the glistening Lady was only visible to her favoured child, yet, 'with those clear rays which she infused on her,' all could conjecture the brightness of Mary, so much did this wonderful change in her become afterwards the best means of judging.

SECOND APPARITION.—On the 14th (Quinquagesima Sunday), on coming away from High Mass, an interior voice irresistibly urged the child (like Joan of Arc long ago) to set off towards Espéluques.

She arrived there a little before one o'clock, accompanied by five or six young companions, who took the simple precaution beforehand of bringing some holy water with them, doubtless to drive away evil spirits, should it be necessary. All this band of children had to promise the mother of Soubirous to be back in time for Vespers.

Having come to the bleak and desolate Rock, all, copying their model, knelt down and began to say the Rosary, each by herself; when at the third decade our favoured child, under sudden influence of the Divine Form, cried out with an outburst of joy: 'There she is! There she is!' Then, as if moved by a strong impulse, the child rises, and boldly ascends to the crypt all streaming with light; and, just as on the previous Thursday, her soul, body, and all her senses were dissolved into an ecstasy of sublime joy. A big stone thrown suddenly from the top of the Grotto by Jeanne Abadie could not interrupt it.

Such was the visible change that took place in the person of the shepherd-girl that her friends, who had never before mentioned it fully, became very uneasy about her. To make her recover her senses, and to guard her personally against all possible harm, they begged Bernadette to sprinkle holy water on the Vision, according to the manner and words of country-folk. It was Marie Hillot who handed her the holy water, and when, rather to humour her than from fear, the child, hardly turning from her heavenly trance, timidly threw some drops of holy water on the Lady, who was decidedly too

beautiful to be harmful, the latter approved of it, and smiled even more sweetly, and did not move. It was a good sign; soon the ecstasy completely absorbed her, and in the company of this poor ignorant girl thus lost in God, each one (even the miller's son, called in to break the spell) felt that religious awe so natural to the human heart under the influence of mystery. . . .

Alas! an hour later, when she returned to humdrum, everyday life, what a rude awakening awaited the little Saint, now like any ordinary person, though in her heart of hearts she jealously guarded the blessed Vision. The sudden and brutal entrance of her mother into Nicolau's mill, where they managed to carry her, could not efface it. But Providence, seeing this momentary persecution by her family, which was only the precursor of one much more serious, did not fail, according to His wont, to raise up a support and defence in the shape of the miller's wife, who cried out to Louise Castérot, about to raise a stick: 'Do not strike her, hapless woman; your daughter is an angel!'

By the evening all the town had learnt about the strange affair, and the gossips, as usual, discussed it, some already believing it to be a supernatural manifestation, whilst the rest—the majority—were loath to see anything in it save some morbid dream of a poor child suffering from hallucination, or else some profane joke in very bad taste.

THIRD APPARITION.—We have now come to the 18th, the Thursday after Ash Wednesday, eight

days after the first apparition. At daybreak the child, having heard Mass in the parish church, went quickly down to the Grotto, escorted this time by two good Catholic women—Madame Millet and Mademoiselle Peyret. One of them carried in her hand a candle blessed at Candlemas, the other concealed under her woollen kerchief a sheet of paper, pen, and ink; the former meant to light the candle before the mysterious Being, and the latter to give her the means of writing her name, and the purpose of her troubling visitations.

Impatient of delay, the child quickly outran them, tripping like a hart, though so demure and always troubled with asthma, over the somewhat dangerous slopes of the steep hill, over which a temporary flooding of the canal of Merlasse obliged them to pass this day. When these pious women arrived, she had already been praying for ten minutes, and, doubtless in reward for so much zeal, the white Lady did not allow her to wait.

Heralded, as usual, by the shining light, which quickly filled the sacred cavern, and which only gradually paled as the Vision vanished, she appeared with a gracious smile above the kneeling child, beckoning to her to draw yet nearer, and even familiarly addressing her by her pet name, a name which must have greatly pleased the Queen of Heaven! At this very moment the two others entered the Grotto. Naturally, no more than the casual witnesses of the former scenes did they see or hear anything of what was happening. As for Bernadette, she was entirely transfigured, and once

more she seemed less a child of men than an angel of glory. Her companions, moved to tears, bade her ask the invisible Form if they might remain; the reply was that she earnestly wished for people—many people there, including in this loving invitation the pilgrims of the future. The worthy Lourdes women in their turn bent down on the earth strewn with brushwood, as though on holy ground, and then lit the blessed candle. It was evidently the first time since the world began that religious light had shone in such a solitude. We know that, like the water which was soon to murmur there, light is to true believers full of symbolism, and forms an integral part of their worship. Nevermore was it to be quenched there. From its flame so many material, and, better still, spiritual torches would be kindled, which have for half a century changed this gloomy cavern into the brightest of shrines.

Meanwhile the child, encouraged by the increasing kindness of the Lady, standing up, ventured to present to her the famous paper, asking her to write on it her behest. This suggestion made her smile, but with such kindness that it caused her no confusion; then, to show that this naïve expedient was not according to her wishes, she vanished out of sight for a moment, only to show herself again soon, and at length speak distinctly. How sweet did the voice of this heavenly turtle-dove beginning to coo in the hollow of the marble Rock sound in the ears of the chaste shepherd-girl! What musical inflexions it had! compared with which all harmony,

even that of pure spirits, is only a jarring discord. Bernadette was particularly touched that so majestic a Form addressed her in the plural, 'you,' and also that, to be better understood and make herself more beloved, she deigned to speak in a patois—'in the dialect of Lourdes, even!' she remarked later. We know the substance of the first discourse heard from another world. 'My child,' the Vision first asked, 'will you do me the favour of coming here for fifteen days?' What a dignity, but yet what a courtesy, truly Divine! It is written that Our Lord always treats human liberty with reverence. The child having consented, the unknown Lady in return added with a motherly smile, full of hope: 'And I promise to make you happy, not here below, but in Heaven.' After these words, which were equivalent, as has often been said, to a decree of canonization beforehand, the enchanting Vision vanished in the fairy brightness of Massabielle.

As this Thursday was market-day in the little town of Bigorre, there went abroad, doubtless, a rumour from Espéluques to Marcadal, which soon spread through all the countries which the Gaves water with their blue waves.

FOURTH APPARITION.—On the morrow, the 19th, the first day of the mysterious fortnight, Louise Castérot, whose heart was deeply stirred by all the strange news which report brought to her cottage, determined to go herself with her daughter to the Grotto. At daybreak, therefore, both of them, accompanied by her Aunt Bernarde, godmother of

the child, carefully traversed the Rue des Petits-Fossés, well wrapped up in their hoods, for the north wind was bitterly cold. In a short time quite a retinue had joined them on the river-banks, the first-fruits of those 'crowds of Lourdes'* who will nevermore cease to flock there in ever-increasing numbers, with the tendency peculiar to all such gatherings, some suspecting an artifice of the Evil One in so sensational an event, others inclined to see in it only some selfish trickery, or maybe morbid hallucination, while the majority were beginning to see in it the finger of God. What happened before the eyes of the family just now come? After the usual rites (bows, prostrations, and prayer), the little child, as before, was rapt in ecstasy, more sensibly than on previous occasions. When the overjoyed housewife saw her Bernadette thus supernaturalized, and as if carried away by angelic bliss, with those unearthly smiles that lit up her countenance, usually so very plain, with transports of unearthly joy, which made her frail body tremble, she wept, she grew anxious, and complained that they had changed her child, whilst around her the stupefied bystanders said to one another, pointing at the young wonder-worker: 'How beautiful she is!' The transport lasted nearly half an hour, amid the respectful silence of the crowd. When Bernadette returned to herself, calm, but visibly moved, her first greetings were for her mother, thus proving that religion, even when rapt to the heavens, so far from checking

* 'Les Foules de Lourdes,' the well-known book by M. Huysmans.

the lawful feelings of Nature, only makes them stronger, while purifying them.

And whilst she came to her side, amid the friendly cortège, whose astonishment began to show itself by veneration, the child-seer, becoming the poor, ragged daughter of a miller, informed them that, pleased with her punctuality, the beautiful Lady was going shortly to confide to her important revelations. She told them also that this morning, when their conversation was most interesting, a hubbub of uncouth noises, contrasting hideously with the sweet voice of the unknown Lady, had sounded quite close to them, as if coming from underground near the waters of the canal; and these voices, wrangling, shouting together, and disputing, like the discordant cries of a mob quarrelling, filled the air with barbarous dissonance. At one time, even, one of these voices, harsh and grating, cried out, doubtless to terrify the timid child: 'Save yourself! save yourself!' But the glistening Lady had only to raise her head, frown with displeasure, and with an imperious glance turn towards the river, and at once this horrible discord, undoubtedly from hell, ceased as if by magic. Could the Evil One have foreseen at this hour that this spot of earth, fraught with destiny, was going to pass from under his sway, where he had hitherto performed his horrid rites? and was he not then trying to thwart the designs of Providence, as he will eventually try in so many ways, either by violence or craft? Only what avails the insolence of the bad angels, joined to their fury, in the presence of her who, 'terrible as an army in battle array,' has the

eternal task of crushing the legions of hell beneath her victorious feet?

FIFTH APPARITION.—Next day (Saturday), when the young saint appeared on the scene of these wonders, again accompanied by her mother, the approaches to Massabielle were already black with people, yet this crowd, of which all eyes were turned towards her, did not seem to embarrass or surprise her. As though no one was present, Bernadette went simply and knelt in her usual place—a stone near the centre of the excavation—and, taking her Rosary, began to pray. She said the ‘Hail Marys’ as she let drop bead after bead for some minutes, when, lo! the punctual Messenger is at hand. At once the shepherd-girl began to return her smiles by smiles, and welcome by greetings, not knowing what to do in order to express better her reverent and affectionate homage, and she did this with such grace that her mother, Louisa, more bewildered than content, said to those within ear-shot: ‘In truth, I no longer recognize my little child.’ In fact, the ecstasy to-day filled her completely. They came close to her; they stood up most reverently, not uttering a word, and holding their breath, in order to follow the marvel. Unable to discover anything, alas! on the side of the Grotto, lighted up and tenanted for the child alone, they deemed themselves happy to be able to see the wonderful reflection on the face of the child that seemed like an angel’s. After this too short scene, hardly lasting forty minutes, Bernadette declared that her Lady had deigned, becoming a teacher of Catechism, to

teach her, *word for word*, a special prayer for her own use. How glad should we be to know and repeat this prayer that came from the heart of the Mother of God! O Mary, teach us to pray in like manner! . . .

SIXTH APPARITION.—From the dawn of this first Sunday in Lent the number of sightseers who had come by night to the appointed rendezvous was so great along the banks of the Gave that at six o'clock the little Soubirous had difficulty in making her way amid greetings that waxed ever more enthusiastic.

Now, among the spectators, a doctor, notorious for his scepticism no less than for his skill, had come here this day. Convinced himself that the child who claimed to have seen visions was only subject to some nervous complaint, he resolved to come in person, in the secret hope of demolishing by a word, in the name of Science, all this childish display of pathological mysticism. But at the mere view of the ecstatic child lost in her wonderful vision, he soon recognized a case without a parallel, which doubtless it would not be easy to explain on medical grounds. So he returned to the Grotto several times in succession, always more attentive . . . and more nonplussed. Everyone knows that, as the grace of God is never wanting to a man of good-will, Doctor Dozous (for it was he) ended by seeing everything in its true light. Recognizing, with a fairness and an independence not often met with, that the facts at Massabielle were supernatural, he was publicly converted. He was thus the first man of science

won over by Bernadette—he would certainly not be the last. When, then, the doctor had stated that the child, in the midst of her heavenly ecstasy, did not lose her self-possession, remaining ever calm and tranquil, and handing her candle, blown out by the wind, two or three times to her neighbour to be relit, her pulse remaining calm the whole time, her breathing normal, her circulation regular, and showing no signs of nervous excitement, his conscience forced him to confess that the finger of God was there.

It is only fair to say that this Æsculapius of Lourdes was treated by Heaven as a privileged witness, since at this very date he was enabled to perceive, besides the almost beatific joy of Bernadette, her deep sorrow. In truth, the child became very sad for a moment, and the doctor saw two large tears roll down her flushed cheeks. Soon they learnt the meaning of this: the Vision, having been gracious and winning as ever to her dear confidant, suddenly wore a sorrowful and pained look, when she gazed into the far distance, as though, beyond the limited horizon of Béarn, she discerned sights that saddened her. They were (as she explained at once to the alarmed child) the sins of the world—already far too great—which came to dim accidentally the essential happiness of the Queen of Heaven, and imprint an unutterable sadness on that face, the glorious peace of which fills the Seraphim with joy. The conclusion of this tearful episode was that it behoved them ‘to pray much for poor sinners.’ Yet we should not have expected to find there, in her Paradise of the Pyrenees, as on the top

of a new Calvary, the Immaculate Conception liable to the fear of moral suffering. Those, however, who are glad to speak of the poetry of this unparalleled site, the sweetness one feels there, and the spiritual benefit one derives from it, have not caught the spirit of Lourdes, for they forget that the Mother of Sorrows (*Mater Dolorosa*), present wherever there are tears to shed, has wept here on their account! Reparation and Atonement on the banks of the Gave—this is the chief idea (too little dreamt of hitherto) of our pilgrimages. God grant that the pious caravans may be more and more filled with this idea, in proportion as the evils of the present time wax greater! Then verily this Thabor, changed for the nonce into a Golgotha, will become what Mary desires—the mountain of a national Transfiguration.

But the Divine joy did not long remain absent from the heart and face of the Lady, who, smiling graciously and happily as before, disappeared in the reflexion of her own brightness.

As for Bernadette, the same evening of this memorable day, when she had witnessed the tears of the Mother of Christ, a terrible trial was about to befall her. Hardly had she returned to her wretched abode before she was led off between two gendarmes to the police-station, there to hear herself bitterly reproached, and even threatened, by the Procureur-Impérial, and distinctly forbidden to go near the too-famous rocks any more. This scene is wonderfully like that of the Pretorium, at which, nineteen centuries ago, the holiest of Victims had to

appear. The new Caiphas, M. Dutour, employed his wiliest artifices to no purpose, in the hope of shaking her firm resolve, alleging by turns that the public order was imperilled, the majesty of the law disregarded—nay, the sanctity of religion compromised. Quite as uselessly the police magistrate, Jacomet, of unhappy memory, added his persuasions, at first harsh, then mild and insinuating. The witness of Our Lady found answers to every question—answers as natural as they were to the point—without being frightened by brutality or won over by blandishments, or ever losing her self-possession, despite the deliberate falsification of her previous replies, and every kind of false testimony.

M. Estrade, a collector of indirect taxes—an intelligent, thoughtful man, if ever there was one—was present either by chance or by the will of Providence at her examination. He became so indignant on account of it that he was inclined to take her part, rightly deeming that such an attitude on the part of an ignorant child of thirteen years before this display of civil authority was decidedly supernatural. The sudden arrival of her father, whom the timidity natural to poor people urged to add his involuntary veto to the severity of the law, could not shake the heart of the shepherdess in her firm resolve to revisit Massabielle, whither she felt irresistibly drawn in spite of herself, as soon as circumstances would allow her.

How sad must this cold Sunday evening have been under the roof of the Soubiraous', especially to the heart of the little child! *Foris pugna, intus*

timores. For it is needless to say that mental anguish was from this time added to external trials. On the one hand the Apparition invited her, yet she saw herself restrained from going there by filial reverence. What was she to do? Was she going to the enchanting Vision, so good and sweet, at the sacrifice of duty—duty which was sanctioned by the solemn authority of the Decalogue? It was indeed a cruel dilemma! . . .

Whilst waiting till it should please the shining Lady itself to settle this conflict of conscience, Bernadette, like a good Christian, went early next day, the 22nd, not to the Grotto, as she had longed to do hitherto, but to the school.

In the evening, when she had to return to the Sisters, a strange thing happened. Arriving, with her little basket on her arm, at the two paths leading to the hospice, she feels, as it were, an invisible but real barrier, which holds her back. Several time she tries, indeed, to go whither obedience calls her, but in vain! Then, thinking she knows, in her childish conscience, that Heaven is calling her towards the Gave, she allows herself to go rather than walks of her own accord there, as though moved automatically by an irresistible force; and though she would have taken a more retired pathway, so as to pass unobserved, she was not long, as you may imagine, in reaching the rocks. The police were also soon on her track. Let us give the gendarme this credit, who was somewhat perplexed: he had, at least, the good sense not to interrupt the long prayer of the holy child. But a new trial

was in store for her ; this time there was no vision or transfiguration ! What could such a disappointment mean ? Did Heaven intend, by this sudden and unexpected refusal, to punish a fault more physical than moral, or had the Lady of glory already forgotten her solemn engagements ? *Lamma sabacthani* ? Thus, in the depths of a similar cavern, the Saviour in person had already been abandoned ; thus, too, on the desolate slopes of Golgotha, the daughter of Sion had been seen one mournful evening, abandoned to herself, without anyone offering to comfort her bitterness, vast and deep as the ocean. But for us, who, in the light of later events, can grasp the true significance of it, instead of finding fault, how can we fail to admire in this the extreme delicacy of the Blessed Virgin, anxious to respect (by keeping away, though very reluctantly) paternal authority, even to the point in which it was in open conflict with her dearest wishes ?

On the other hand, because it is the rule of Providence to draw good from evil, it came to pass that the grievous chagrin of the child arose from the involuntary severity of François Soubirous ; and what might have been the chief obstacle finally made everything easy for her, the father henceforth giving leave to his unhappy child to go to Massabielle as often as she liked.

Meanwhile the free-thinkers of the town did not see it in this light ; and already they were carelessly scoffing, observing to their friends, with a hearty laugh, that ‘the Lady was afraid of gendarmes,’ adding that ‘because that fox Jacomet had made a

few inquiries into the matter, she had decided to change her residence. . . .’

SEVENTH APPARITION.—Unfortunately for carnal wisdom, its calculations always turn out wrong in some point. This is proved by the fact that next day—the 23rd—the vision occurred as before. Among the countless spectators whom the disappointment of the previous day had not discouraged, she had as witness to-day the same M. Estrade who, as we saw, was so overcome by the incidents at the police-station, and whom the event of the day finally made a firm believer. After a fervent prayer, in which she seemed to beg her unknown Friend to show herself anew, on a sudden the humble shepherd-girl makes a start of admiration, as if a strong light had flashed on her, and seems born to a new life. Let us watch her now in her converse with the superior Being; this half-hour, more like Heaven than earth, how can human words describe it? It is better to ask this Government official himself, who portrayed exactly on the spot, in immortal traits, the external details of this ecstasy, how the eyes of the little Saint were lit up, whilst her lips were wreathed with angelic smiles, and in her whole figure shone a beauty undreamt of here below! . . . You would then have truly said that this glorious soul, too straitened in the frail prison of its body, was striving to shine forth and let its interior gladness be seen.

While these heavenly moments lasted, Bernadette was no longer herself. ‘She was rather,’ says the

first of the historians of Massabielle, 'one of those privileged Beings of supernatural form whom the Apostle, the seer of great visions, depicts for us in ecstasy at the foot of God's throne.'

At such a sight, a cry of faith rose from all the bystanders, including the official above mentioned. For him, as for his boon companion, the doctor, the hour had come, not to theorize or to scoff, but to see the truth. First the medical man, then the Government official—what splendid triumphs for a little shepherd-girl! In their train, as disciples of the lowly child, were to come gradually members of the Academy and politicians, disregarding the pleadings of ease or of wealth, for, as we see nowadays, Lourdes has only two enemies. All who are disinterested and pure (and free, we must add in these days) find their way to this Rock, like the eagles to their eyry. Yet the favoured child, though overwrought with the delirium of this vision, suddenly became like one who listens to, and then answers, questions, either smiling or grave, now nodding approval, and again seeming to ask for explanations.

When the Lady spoke, an intense joy—the joy of Lourdes—thrilled through her confidant; on the other hand, when she addressed questions or prayers, her attitude assumed a humility moved even to tears. At times the conversation ceased; then the child-seer returned to her Rosary, but not without casting a wistful glance at the blessed niche. Then the mountain-girl offered her homage to her Queen—'homage so noble that you could not find the like in the whole world,' says M. Estrade. As to the

sign of the Cross which Bernadette made several times, the same eye-witness 'thinks that if this holy sign is made in Heaven, it would not be made more religiously.'

At length, after nearly an hour's converse with the Invisible, they saw the child move forward on her knees to the top of the Grotto, there bow more deeply than ever, kiss the ground with evident compunction, and afterwards return in the same way to where she had knelt. And a parting ray illumined her features, which, gradually losing the reflections of the other world, again wore their everyday, though amiable, expression.

The unknown peasant-girl then mixed with the crowd, from which she nowise differed in appearance. Questioned on all sides, she replied that her royal Visitant had confided to her three secrets regarding herself alone, the mystery of which, despite many thoughtless attempts made by inquisitive persons, lies buried with their possessor in the monastic vault at Nevers.

All that Bernadette ever revealed about them was, that the Lady, while confiding them to her, spoke to her 'less through her ears than through her heart'—*mente cordis sui*.

EIGHTH APPARITION. — On Wednesday, February 24, the child in the morning had to pass through human barriers, and receive homage she little understood, ere she could reach her granite *prie-dieu*. Everything, at first, happened as usual—that is, blissfully. But soon over the sweet brightness of

ecstasy there rolled, as it were, a cloud of sadness. Once they saw the child drop her arms, like one who has just heard some bad news, and tears coursed down her burning cheeks. She then rose up, her face full of sorrow, to ascend the slope of the Grotto, pressing her quivering lips to the earth each time she knelt. Having reached the wild rose-tree which hung from above, she made fresh reverences to the invisible Being, and raised her head as though to hear her commands, whereupon, turning to the crowd, deeply touched by her actions, her unearthly countenance moist with tears, she cried out thrice, sobbing: 'Penance! penance! penance!'—words of sadness, like the faults which they deplore, stern as the repentance which they require, and yet full of light, like the hope in God which they imply. The conclusion of this touching scene was the command which the Vision gave to her confidant to 'pray for poor sinners.' And the dialogue ended by the revelation of a fourth secret, which, like the others, we, the uninitiated, shall only learn in the clear light of eternity.

Having returned to her place, the child-seer found there her accustomed peace, which the untimely and burlesque appearance of a sergeant failed to disturb, though he came, he said, 'in the name of the law, to put a stop to all this nonsense.' He only provoked the indignation of the spectators, as you can well imagine, whose menacing anger soon put to flight this over-zealous officer.

The reader can easily imagine the effect produced on all by the touching appeal of the child in ecstasy.

Each on coming away asked himself if such an indictment on the part of Heaven did not imply the approach of grave trials, in view of their serious crimes, unless the Divine justice were appeased by an adequate satisfaction, clearly hinted at by the triple cry of the prophetess. . . . I venture to add that in enjoining on us such a severe penance, on the very eve of national events, the weight of which was about to aggravate so much, alas! our national responsibility, and by a recoil only too well merited, threaten the integrity of our empire, the Queen of France, while from the height of her watch-tower on the Pyrénées she cast a tearful glance during these tragic hours on her chosen people, disclosed, then, beyond doubt, the abomination of desolation in our midst—I mean the fatal war of 1870, the effect of our past sins, but also the cause of our present misfortunes, and that shameful régime which disloyalty, in league with the stranger, the enemy, has set up on our smoking ruins, to be ‘not a government, but a chastisement’; nay, also the doubly impious rupture of the *Concordat*, that masterpiece of international Freemasonry, which, in banishing God from His home in our midst, is preparing the impending obsequies of the fairest of kingdoms upon earth.

I submit this formidable problem to my contemporaries, to those who, forgetting the lessons of Lourdes, and also of la Salette, or of the Gospel, which is the same thing, seem, in spite of every warning, to have taken for their motto: ‘Let the morrow take care of itself.’

Let those dilettanti of the flowery banks of the Gave and of sentimental piety understand that, save by 'Penance, penance, penance,' there is no salvation for nations any more than for individuals.

NINTH APPARITION. — It was on Thursday, February 25. This morning there was an extraordinary crowd of people collecting together in the vicinity of Massabielle, overflowing on to the island, covering the crests of the hill, and climbing up the trees by the bank. After her usual prayers, Bernadette rose by herself as if she were alone in the heart of this crowd, went to the interior of this cavern flooded with light, and, moving aside the tough branches, kissed the rock at the place which served as a pedestal for the Queen of Angels. Then, once at her rocky *prie-dieu*, she beheld for nearly a quarter of an hour the most blissful of visions. Suddenly she looked puzzled. Hesitating, she turned towards the river, took several steps forward as if to go there, but soon she stopped, looked behind at the sign made to her, listened attentively, nodded affirmatively, and again walked, not to the bed of the river, but towards the left corner of the excavation. There she was seen to stop, look undecidedly several times all round her, and once more turn her eyes to the shining niche, doubtless to ask a question; then she promptly bent down in that place, and with her weak fingers she began to scoop out the soil. At the end of a few seconds, the little hole she had just hollowed out was seen to be full of water. True, it was at first rather muddy, and it was only

after much hesitation that the young child took a little in her hand, drank it, bathed her face with it, and finished this curious scene by eating a portion of the plant, the *golden saxifrage*,* which grew beside it.

What was the object of all this ceremonial of a new kind, so calculated to puzzle the spectators, or to fill them with doubts regarding the state of mind of their little compatriot ?

Happily the child was not long in providing the key to this riddle. We know now that in inviting her to drink and to wash, not in the Gave, but in the mysterious basin, which was going to spring up at the touch of her servant, the Lady, with a mother's love, intended to open there, by means of a great miracle, the true fountain of youth, whither men's bodies would come to be refreshed, purified, and quickened. What an expressive symbol of that other salutary pool, which would here entice souls to be born anew in the mysterious waters of the Sacrament of Penance ! As to her so strangely eating of the golden saxifrage, how much it showed in the mind of the prophetic Woman the need which sinners, typified by poor little Bernadette, have of being healed by mortification !

Thus it is that confession and satisfaction, those two planks of souls spiritually shipwrecked, were this day signified at Lourdes by the Mother of God herself through one of those living allegories which the Hebrew Prophets of yore loved to employ.

* The *chrysoplenium* ; in French, *la dorine*.

Soon, however (to speak in the manner of Ecclesiasticus), the little basin became a great stream, and the great stream was seen to be a beautiful river, and this river proved to be like a sea. A proof of this is the great increase of the water from the Grotto, the outflow of which is 26,852 gallons in twenty-four hours; its virtue never ceases to multiply cures, of the body, and also of the soul—a thousand times more precious—but on condition that we must first, like the innocent child, ‘feed’ on the bitter plant of repentance and suffering, without which the souls of sinners cannot recover their health, any more than without a severe régime the body can regain its strength. The Virgin of Massabielle this day extolled the virtue of self-denial, which alone has always produced great Saints and also great men.

When these evolutions, strange in appearance, produced a bad impression on a crowd of witnesses, this only showed that little is needed to make ‘the prudence of the prudent’ become sceptical before the secrets of Heaven. It seems also that, deceived and discontented, the people departed, as the faint-hearted followers of the Galilæan Teacher went away long ago when He told them to eat His flesh and drink His blood. The carnal man is everywhere the same. Nevertheless, the pious child continued to enjoy the Divine Vision, with the eternal smile of Heaven on her lips, and on her forehead an angelic gleam, till about eight o’clock, when the ineffable Vision usually ended.

Still the supernatural stream of water continued

to flow silently, ever waxing in volume. Towards evening of this famous day great was the wonder of some strayed travellers to see a crystal rill flowing from the top of the slope, which visibly increased every minute so as to form in its course a fairly large stream, as it rushed to meet again the waters below, singing its melodious refrain.

When the people of Lourdes heard of this they were astonished and perplexed, knowing very well that within the memory of man no trace of water had ever been seen in these places; and this was the oft-repeated opinion of visitors, whether pious Catholics or merely sight-seers. Even the most sceptical confessed that nothing more was needed to restore the child's credit in the fickle public opinion. Moreover, the amazing cures wrought by means of this wonderful water had the effect of completely vindicating her good faith. Meanwhile no one could deny that the Lady of the Grotto, more powerful than Moses striking the Arabian rock with his rod to draw the Heaven-sent water from it, had caused pure and refreshing waters to spring from this Pyrenean granite, or perhaps 'from the fountains of the great abyss,' as the Psalmist says, which, like the river in Holy Writ, would rejoice 'the city of Mary,' strengthening men's faith, soothing their sorrow, disarming science, banishing all evil, and drawing down all good. What a beautiful canto of a Divine epic would the history of such a spring truly be, if a poet or an angel wished to tell us all its strange vicissitudes since its mysterious bubbling up from nothing to the nameless and countless wonders

of which it is still among us the efficient and gracious cause ! *

On the 26th, when the child returned, there were 6,000 persons in front of Espéluques, who had flocked from all sides for the sole purpose of seeing her and acclaiming her 'blessed,' which shows that with the crowd people are just as easily canonized as condemned. This enthusiasm, quite natural under the circumstances, concealed, nevertheless, a danger—the danger of popular favour, which, following a thoughtless act of injustice, might spoil her simplicity and humility, more important even than the gift of miracles. But Heaven took pity on our heroine, and though her prayer this morning was not less fervent than before, nothing unusual—*i.e.*, supernatural—happened, to the great disappointment of everyone. However, these occasional failures had this advantage—they showed that the apparitions depended on other causes than the 'self-suggestion' of a child of morbid temperament, since it was precisely when Bernadette, as well as the crowd, was most anxious for them that they did *not* take place.

* The famous water-diviner, Richard de Montlieu, spent eight days at the Grotto to study the source or origin of this water, and his conclusion was that this spring already existed, like a treasure of Nature destined in due season to show forth the munificence of grace. This does not mean, he adds, that as this spring *was invisible*, and *even absolutely impossible for a child to discover*, 'a special and supernatural inspiration was not needed.' *There* lies the miracle, as we cannot fail to see it also in its enormous outflow, and still more in the miraculous effects it has never ceased to produce.

TENTH APPARITION.—On Saturday, the 27th, the child-seer, with the idea of remaining at her favourite post, came and knelt at the place where, at Our Lady's bidding, she had scooped out the earth the previous day and made a muddy pool ooze up. Seeing this water, clear and abundant, without showing the least surprise, she makes the sign of the Cross, drinks, and then bathes her face. That was to be, beyond all doubt, the rite of all good pilgrims in the future. Returning to her rock, already she was flooded with ecstatic bliss, when the well-known voice, suddenly sorrowful, said to her: 'Bernadette, kiss the earth for sinners!' Oh, that solicitude for sinners is never absent from her thoughts! You would think that the more pure and bright and dazzling she shines at Massabielle, the more she is mercifully interested in all that is sinful in this world; and as though it were not enough to pray for the intention of poor sinners, she wills that in their favour her agent should perform a series of penitential acts, such as applying her chaste lips to the ground trampled by every wayfarer, a thing naturally repugnant.

This mortification, added to her humiliation, was not difficult for the pious shepherdess. But soon, not content with having done it on her own behalf, she is seen fearlessly climbing the rose-tree, with tears in her eyes, as though on a moving pulpit, the better to invite all the crowd to kiss the ground in the same way; and (the strange influence of virtue in the weakest of beings) at the bidding of this peasant-girl, acting as the oracle of Heaven, every

forehead was bent to the ground, just as in the autumn fields the proud ears of corn bow before the caresses of the winds.

This was (for the good of the crowd as well as of the favoured child) a gradual initiation in the trying ordeal of the purgative life, until the fullest revelation they could desire should be possible. Thus the spiritual work of Lourdes was harmoniously fulfilled, and already, by the striking conversions that followed one after another, and the inexplicable cures that frequently took place, souls came to be caught on all sides in the toils of infinite love.

ELEVENTH APPARITION.—On the morning of the 28th, the last day of the month, the shining Vision, after loading her confidant with favours, seemed to retire. Then, breaking the solemn silence, always the prelude of something great, she said to the child: ‘Go and tell the priests that a chapel must be built here.’ What an unforeseen task! Bernadette was at first puzzled by it. It was no easy task, she thought, to face this rough man, the Curé of Lourdes, who by his crabbed ways ‘had the knack of making her more frightened than two gendarmes.’ But since the Lady had spoken, she could only obey. The little child, then, after resting a little at her house, screws up her courage and goes to the presbytery. With such a personage she could not feel at her ease. The poor child trembled from head to foot. At length, when, after some words not very reassuring, she was asked to explain herself clearly, she told him at once about the shrine to be built.

Irony was mixed with objections, and even rebukes came from M. Peyramale's lips. It is true the priest did not long keep up this assumed severity before his daring sheep, for she gave respectfully, but firmly and cleverly, a reply to every question, and so clearly that the man of God was amazed by it. He wished then to know from the child herself this strange affair from the very beginning, and whilst the humble but unfaltering interpreter of Heaven unfolded with unerring precision her marvellous tale, he eyed her keenly, almost religiously, without losing a single word or a single movement of her unusual physiognomy, reflecting truly that he had before him 'a soul of crystal' in which Heaven was mirrored.

Yet the building of the chapel was a great crux to him. He soon returned to this delicate point, the gist of the message, and with his sharp manner said to his visitor: 'You will tell the Lady that if I am to listen to her, she must first prove to me who she is, and what claims she has to such a request.'

Clearly wisdom spoke here by the priest's mouth. In the Church of God, since revelation in the strict sense is finished, private supernatural revelation is admitted *only when there is no means of acting otherwise*. The little messenger had certainly enough Christian sense to understand it. She politely bowed and went away, leaving in the soul of the worthy priest a heavenly odour of sanctity, as it were, together with much religious uneasiness.

TWELFTH APPARITION.—Next day several thousands of people were waiting at dawn for the arrival

of the child-seer at Massabielle. She came there at her usual hour, in her modest Sunday attire, having her aunt Lucile with her, and tripping along like one who hastens to enjoy a favourite feast. Soon around her was a sea of human heads, extending along both banks—a moving amphitheatre—from which emerged the figure of the peasant-child, who, amidst an impressive silence, shed over this multitude the glorious reflection of the other world, for the Lady did not keep them long waiting. But this morning there were only personal communications, that had no reference to the people. Apparently they were made for the private direction of Bernadette, whose education and interior progress was not to be neglected amidst so many episodes of every kind. When, at the end of these sacred colloquies, the little girl wished to approach the foot of the Rock to perform her final devotions, she could not advance a step, so dense was the crowd; and two friendly soldiers, who had come there from the Fortress, had to make a way for her. Her duties finished, the child, who was escorted with an ever-increasing respect by countless throngs, went straight to the old church, to hear Sunday Mass there, as if to show that the sublimest ecstasies cannot dispense even the Saints from the ordinary duties of the Christian life.

THIRTEENTH APPARITION.—It was now March 1. An incident, apparently trivial, but very instructive in reality, marked the beginning of the interview. Ever amiable, Bernadette, to please a neighbour,

had already in her hand a borrowed Rosary in order to say it in place of her own. The Vision blamed her for it, asking her only to use her own Rosary, and thereby suggesting to us the pious respect and jealous care we should have for the place of every blessed object, especially of that which, enriched with the indulgences of the Church, is both the chief instrument of our spiritual profit and, like a golden chain, binds us as children in the service of Mary.

But this unlucky exchange caused among the bystanders a slight misunderstanding. Those who were wont to copy, as far as possible, all the actions of their model began to lay aside their Rosaries, thinking they were thus joining in some new kind of prayer. But the child by a sign quickly corrected this mistake, which, in the words of Scripture, might have prevented 'the Divine harmonies' which she was already enjoying. As to the Lady, she could read the hearts of each too well to be offended in the least by such a mistake. It was sufficient to have given a precious lesson thus to her votary, and, doubtless, through her to everyone.

FOURTEENTH APPARITION.—On Tuesday, March 2, events at first happened as usual—prayer, transfiguration, spiritual joy, which was reflected in the features of the shepherd-girl. Yet, after her ecstasy, her aunt Basile was struck by the anxious look of her niece, and asked her the reason. The reason she gave was that again, in answer to Monsieur le Curé, the Vision had just charged her to give him

her embarrassing request about building an oratory ! This now troubled the messenger, and with reason. In order to give herself more courage, she made her good relative accompany her to the priest's house. Her reception was scarcely warmer than before, especially when the pastor heard that, in addition to the building required, the visionary Lady wished them to come there 'in procession.'

Was it not interior worship and social solemnity that this mysterious Being required ? Now the Abbé Peyramale saw that to expect from him such liturgical exhibitions was simply to be ignorant of religious affairs ; for it is never a simple priest, but a Bishop, who must take the first steps in such matters. He next declared that such-like novelties, far from favouring Christian sentiment, would only injure it in the mind of his people, and with his pitiless and somewhat brusque logic, he concluded that these wishes or orders could not come from the true Queen of Heaven. The child's replies could not set at rest these priestly doubts, so afraid was the man of God of being deceived ! He shuddered at the bare thought of some sacrilege and ridiculous absurdity. What was he to do ? Suddenly a bright idea (so he thought it, at least) crossed his mind : 'Go and tell her who sends you to make the rose-bush at the Grotto blossom at once before the assembled crowd, and then I will be her humble servant.'

The two poor visitors smiled. Clearly nothing remained for them but to withdraw. Honest heart of the priest, who wished in this way to reduce the

Supernatural, so energetic for the last fortnight at Massabielle, to the level of an ordinary botanical curiosity! He did not then see that such a miracle would only have been puerile, because so short-lived, and also useless to prove anything to those who are aware that Nature sometimes causes this premature growth; lastly, and principally, because between the various things of which this Grotto was the scene, and the fact of a rose-tree putting forth leaves at the end of winter, there was no sufficient relation to show the meaning of these events.

By what right could a mortal—even a Dean or a Canon—require Providence to work *this* particular miracle? Was it that at Espélugues there were no miracles in the moral order, that he should so obstinately persist in requiring one in the physical order? As if all these well-known conversions, and all this wonderful commotion, caused by prayer not less than by enthusiasm, were not doubtless something more important than the premature blossoming of a wild rose-tree! Well, since at all costs this formidable theologian wanted visible and tangible facts, what else, pray, were the transfigurations of Bernadette, and the insensibility of her hand held with impunity for a quarter of an hour in the lambent flame of a taper, and the spring gushing forth of its own accord, and, above all, the numerous cases of wonderful cures already obtained by Our Lady's spring, but *facts*? . . .

But M. le Curé, so severe, wanted flowers! . . . The day following this fruitless audience, March 3, was to prove a day of trial for the young Soubirous.

No visions, no communications! This bitter disappointment, perhaps, in atonement for the extreme scepticism of the priest, did not bate a jot of the fervour of this his child. In humility and self-denial, she might make up for it at least by a fuller prayer; then, having kissed the ground, as she was wont, and traced the sign of the cross, she quietly made her way back to the Rues des Petits-Fossés.

The crowd, disappointed in their hopes, showed less resignation. They made out especially that the period of the apparitions was now over. 'Not at all,' replied the little Seer, with the sturdy candour of her faith, 'because one is still wanting.'

FIFTEENTH APPARITION. — In fact, the morrow, which was the last of the wonderful fifteen days, was marked by an extraordinary gathering. From every quarter, in view of what would certainly prove extraordinary in this wonderful episode, caravans flocked there by night, so that the Mayor of Lourdes thought it prudent to call in troops to reinforce the local gendarmes.

But the crowds of Lourdes did not need any persons in uniform. Up to the psychological moment (7 a.m.) we can say that veritable waves of humanity poured incessantly into the too narrow glen where Heaven held commune with this earth. When Bernadette arrived, there had come to see her, question her, kiss the hem of her humble robe, and to raise to her a colossal Hosanna, nearly 30,000 pilgrims—a really portentous number, con-

sidering the severity of the winter, and also that the railway did not yet traverse the steep Pyrénées mountains. Police and soldiers were on duty, but there was no need of them. From beginning to end, not a shadow of an accident or incident called for their services.

But amid the general commotion what were the Soubirous family doing, whose name flew from mouth to mouth? What had become of their child, the focus of all this religious excitement? They were, as usual, silently occupied in their obscure work, that barely sufficed to earn a piece of brown bread for the little ones. She, having finished her morning prayer before her copper crucifix, that hung above her wretched pallet, feeling her time draw near, took her Rosary, and calm, recollected, without noticing the immense crowd, directed her steps to the Grotto.

As soon as her well-known outline was perceived on the threshold of her damp home, an electric thrill seemed to pass through the crowd, as this password was handed on from group to group: 'The Seer! the Seer!' Thence all along this new *Via Sacra* gendarmes had to guard the modest heroine against the outburst of a mystical delirium, who, after her audience with the Queen of the Earth, would only have a plate of porridge* for her meal in her kitchen. Immersed in God and in the Lady of her dreams, she passed along, her head hidden in

* Literally, 'boiled maize,' a common dish among the French peasantry.

her white hood (as Henri Lasserre once told us) 'like simplicity, quite unconscious of itself.'

Meanwhile, the familiar scene was soon taking place as usual: the child crossed herself, kissed the earth, drank at the spring, ate the herb, extended her arms in the form of a cross, said her Rosary. . . . She was beginning the second decade, when the sudden transfiguration of her whole being told the crowds closely watching her that she was rapt in ecstasy. It was during this delightful transport that a third time she was bidden to go, as the messenger of Heaven, to ask for the chapel and procession from the proper authority. But to-day, as the prudence of the priests must exceed their devotion (it seems), authority never stirred, either at Lourdes or at Tarbes, at the risk of scandalizing the conscience of Catholics, preferring to wait and pray, inquire into the matter, and thus gain time, which (we may remark in parenthesis) was truly the best method of acting for the accomplishment of the Divine wishes; and from this point of view—the true one—the attitude, or, if you prefer it, the way of acting, of a Laurence and a Peyramale was remarkably providential. Just as, according to St. Augustine, the first incredulity of Thomas has done more for the faith of the world than the enthusiasm of St. Peter or the poesy of St. John, so by hesitating so long about the supernatural at Massabielle, these two religious leaders, whom Heaven had placed there for that very reason, paved the way undoubtedly for its more rational triumph. It is true that the civil power

showed much less circumspection—speaking of putting an end to the imposture or folly, guarding the Grotto and its approaches *manu militari*, even threatening to imprison the Seer. . . . But what availed all the *ukases* of the so-called liberal Empire against the decrees of Heaven? But to return to the Vision.

Whilst it continued a little longer than usual, it was not marked this time by any particular circumstance. It seemed that in these final days it was more to strengthen and console, than to instruct her, that Paradise opened above the head of Bernadette, in proportion as her inevitable martyrdom drew near. Meanwhile, the mere sight of her sweet Queen, even when she remained silent, was enough to thrill this innocent soul, inspiring her with courage and a surpassing peace. Providence has always a foretaste of delights for its chosen workers, especially when trials are near.

All these cures, which followed rapidly in the footsteps of Bernadette—what a charter they were for her mission! Already people were everywhere talking about the amazing cures of Louis Bourriette, Justin Bouhohorts, Blaise Maumus, Thérèse Crozat, Marie Daube, Bernande Soubies, Jeanne Crassus, Benoîte Cazeaux, Blaisette Soupenné, etc. So unmistakably, I may say, from the beginning Divine Power entered on the scene to throw down the gauntlet to sage Incredulity and inscrutable Policy.

Confronted by this mass of evidence, what did the swashbucklers of local cynicism do? In order to

discredit the true miracles by ridicule they invented false ones. Already, ye freethinkers—bond-slaves of Reason—this is your work! Only, as it is always the fate of iniquity to lie to itself, it so happened that these startling phenomena were witnessed not merely by a people full of enthusiasm, but by cold and calculating men of science—a Dozous, a Peyrus, or a Vergez—whose relentless official reports, made on the spot, sounded the death-knell of materialism at length brought to bay, and who thus started at this date that *Criticism of the Supernatural* which learned and conscientious doctors like Saint-Maclou and Boissarie have brought to its present high level under the eyes of a scepticism that is completely baffled.

Before taking leave of the Lady to visit once more the Curé Peyramale, the child who, even in her ecstasies, never lost the use of her reason, ventured this morning to ask her name. The moment was not yet come for this final revelation, and the disappearance of the shining Form was her only reply for the present.

From now till March 25 there were no more apparitions, but this did not deter Bernadette from frequently repairing to Massabielle. How often, when school was over, she would slip away from her schoolmates, and hasten by stealth to the holy rocks to say her prayers there! When there was a holiday she took the opportunity of spending sweet hours in the crypt, where her heart was now centred. Already, by the piety of the people, the interior of the cave had quite changed its appearance; a rustic altar

had been reared there, on which stood the statue of the Blessed Virgin, and all around it were sweet-smelling flowers and burning tapers, with the almost uninterrupted strains of fervent prayers or melodious hymns. With a view to the chapel soon to be built there, alms poured in from all sides into the hollow, and no profane hand ever dared to steal the smallest coin from it ; for everyone, high and low, was fain to look upon this favoured spot as the vestibule of Heaven !

SIXTEENTH APPARITION.—While these three long weeks wore slowly away the general opinion was that the Lady had not uttered her last word ; and as the eve of the Annunciation drew near everyone at Lourdes (both the inhabitants and the numerous visitors whom the desire to witness these wonders kept there) declared their conviction, due to some vague presentiment, that on the morrow there would be a fresh revelation, for it was going to be the great Feast of Our Lady.

But it was Bernadette herself who in her heart of hearts most fondly cherished this hope. Soon she began to hear distinctly the voice from Heaven, and great must have been her gladness to feel herself thus summoned again to offer her greetings to the Queen of Heaven on the blessed day on which the Archangel had honoured her.

On the evening of the 24th, at the family hearth she told her delighted parents of her proposed visit. What an ideal vigil under this roof-tree more enviable than the palaces of kings, and how different

to another not very far away, where she had been forbidden to go! The night was passed without sleep, but not without joy! How many sighs were breathed by this seraphic soul, precursors of her morning greetings as reverent and loving as those of Gabriel!

The most joyous of solemn feasts was dawning on the earth, one which would remind everyone of the heavenly scene at Nazareth. It was also the great day which the Blessed Virgin had lovingly chosen in order to give her votary a feast more exquisite than any other.

This morning, by the banks of the Gave, the air was clear and bright. On the surrounding mountains the last snows were glittering, which the rising sun was slowly melting with his warm rays, and on every side, at the approach of spring, the earth was beginning to grow green. You would have said that, to herald the coming Easter, Nature was rising again, and showing forth her hidden powers, that through

‘All the rapturous heart of things’

she might sing the canticle of Love to the Woman before whom the pure spirits bow down.

As soon as Bernadette, who seemed to have wings, began her morning pilgrimage, her reception amid the universal joy was warmer than ever, and soon, by the glamour of her presence, Lourdes was hushed in a sense of mystery.

But this time the beautiful Lady could not wait for Bernadette's arrival, as though divinely im-

patient to impart her bliss to the child. Great must have been the surprise and confusion of the latter when, on crossing the threshold of the Grotto, she found that the majestic Form was already on her throne, sweetly smiling and enchanting her. She seemed to have become whiter and more dazzling than ever, but, above all, more gracious, doubtless in memory of all her glories, which were celebrated on this feast.

Perhaps, too, by this unwonted display of splendour she wished to excite the child to ask once more the burning question, in order at length to answer it. The first act of the ravished and humble shepherdess was to beg pardon for her delay. But the blissful Vision replied that she need not excuse herself. Then, after having bowed and prostrated herself, the little Contemplative said the 'Hail Marys' on her rude Rosary with a fervour she had never felt before. Suddenly the thought struck her, perhaps inspired by Heaven, to ask this charming and kindly Lady to reveal her name. Twice successively no answer was given her. The Unknown, 'smiling with immortal countenance,'* as only Lourdes and Heaven have seen her smile, kept unbroken silence, while the features of the peerless Virgin showed a keener pleasure, and she kept her hands joined over her heart, as if to contain its emotion.

When, at length, through this apparent reluctance, the child's pious wishes grew stronger, and her soul was better prepared to hear the heavenly news, then

* Sappho, *μειδιάσαις' ἀθανάτῳ προσώπῳ*.

the third time the glistening Lady, unfolding her arms, extending her hands towards the child in ecstasy, raising her eyes and clasping her hands in front of her breast, uttered these words, through which all Heaven seemed to thrill :

‘ Qué soy l’Immaculé Councepciou !’ *

For, as everyone knows, it was in the Bigourdain patois, or dialect, that the Mother of God deigned to speak about herself to the ignorant shepherd-girl, after the example of her Divine Son, Who always, even when uttering the sublimest truths, spoke in Aramæan, to put Himself more on a level with the intelligence of ordinary men.

But what did the form matter, when the message had at length been delivered, this secret of secrets, this ineffable Sacrament hardly understood by Angels in the mystery of eternal predestination, and which, defined lately for men by the Infallible Teacher, would henceforth owe its full popularity to the agency of the feeble daughter of the Soubirous ?

O most fortunate shepherd-girl, who deserved then, alone of mortals, to learn from Mary’s lips the most touching and luminous formula, perhaps, of all Catholic dogma, one which, in throwing light on the Past, consoles the Present and augurs happily for the Future.

At this hour, in the heaven of the Grotto, better still than in that of Patmos, or even in that of Eden, the promised Woman, clothed with the sun as with a garment, having the moon beneath her feet in token of her dominion, and bearing on her head a

* ‘ I am the Immaculate Conception.’

crown of twelve stars, the shining token of her royal maternity, appeared at length in all the splendour of her natural, preternatural, and supernatural grace, such as had been dreamed of by the Cherubim, yearned for by the patriarchs, foretold by the prophets, sung by the poets, and welcomed by the sibyls. *Signum magnum apparuit in cælo!*

Just as ages ago the earthly paradise leapt up at the tragic moment when the first promise of the redemption resounded amid the judgments of man's Fall, that *Annunciation* of better times typified already in the far-off figure of the true Eve; just as on his barren rock in Asia Minor the Seer of the Apocalypse felt himself filled with ineffable joy when he saw the Immaculate One, before whom the dragon fled away—much more must our Pyrenean solitudes have leapt up, as active as the rams in Scripture,* when, hearing the heavenly definition, they could re-echo the inimitable sound of it from peak to peak and from valley to valley. O beloved native mountains, you are not the highest nor the most famous in France, but still you are, methinks, the most hallowed, since eighteen times in succession the Queen of Time and of Eternity has trodden you with her virginal feet; above all, since you have been found worthy to re-echo, as it were, the enchanting music which the blessed enjoy in Heaven, for which mortals yearn in this valley of tears.

What could be the splendour of the Immaculate at the solemn hour when she thus shed her rays

* Ps. cxiii.

over the Thabor of Bigorre, we cannot conceive, much less say. The marvellous child did not believe her eyes; and when, at the bidding of superiors, she had ere long to explain herself, the terms and comparisons and the hyperboles of our feeble dialects were clearly inadequate to express her thoughts.

It is because she whose glory she had just greeted, face to face, this memorable morn is essentially the summit of all possible perfection after infinite Perfection.

As to the delightful voice of Our Lady, you may imagine how it diffused at once waves of light, peace, and gladness in the child's being. What the Spouse says of the voice of His beloved in the Divine Book of the Canticles is nothing compared to the music of the voice of the Almâh. It was truly the music of the mysterious dove, whose chaste cooings, better than the strains of Orpheus' lute, made the rocks listen, and melted the soul of Bernadette with happiness. When anyone, more privileged than St. Paul, has seen such glory, heard such harmonies, and tasted joy so keen, what pleasure could he find in this world so stale and wearisome? Is it not best to go and hide the mystery of the Queen 'in the hollow of the rock'—I mean, in the silence of the cloister? Yes; but meanwhile it remained for the shepherd-girl to announce abroad what had been revealed to her. It was no small task for her to preserve unchanged in her memory the holy and unfamiliar words of which she was appointed the messenger. Everyone knows that in order not to

lose a syllable of them she kept repeating them from the Grotto to the Curé's house, not without sometimes altering the hidden meaning of them. The one who was most astonished by her news was M. le Doyen de Lourdes, who soon understood that such language was decidedly too much above the wit of a poor peasant-girl (the most backward of mountaineers) not to come directly from God, or from His Mother.

At Massabielle, after this glorious vision, nothing remained for the young Bernadette, and for the others, save a lifeless mass of dull granite. I am wrong; henceforth this cavern, as solemn as Sinai, since God's power was authentically shown forth there, was going to become the 'great attraction' of the world, drawn thither less by the visible marvels of every description which daily increase, than by the powerful charms of the Immaculate Conception.

Meanwhile the crowd, kneeling before the narrow cleft while these sublime things were taking place, in a mysterious way were filled with a special joy. They had no doubt that close by among this brush-wood she was smiling on them, the sight of whom is the joy of Angels, and that the Virgin Mother was speaking, whose voice is the eternal joy of the Thrice Blessed Trinity. Why must we add that when, on her way to the priest's house, the child had partly revealed the secret she met people dull enough to declare themselves disappointed, this abstract term conveying no meaning to their sluggish minds?

The majority, however, trusting the child-Seer, could recognize the living portrait of the heavenly

Madonna, and an emotion overcame all the glad villagers when they learnt that Mary came on this earth not only to show herself, but also to declare her name; and all wished now to kiss the granite which had served her as a resting-place or pedestal, to bind as relics the dry heather which she had used as a support, without daring to trample too much on a soil hallowed for evermore, on which the supernatural seemed everywhere so perceptible.

SEVENTEENTH APPARITION.—After this wonderful interview, it seemed as though all was finished at Massabielle, but the end was not yet. On April 7, the Wednesday after Easter, the Mother of God, doubtless deeming it just to impart to her little child some Easter joys, drew her to the Grotto. There, by her sweet presence, Bernadette was the object of a phenomenon *sui generis*, gracious and symbolical, but, above all, full of meaning. As the child in one hand held her beads, and with the other a lighted taper resting on the ground, she did not notice, in the joy of her ecstasy, that the flame, mounting straight upwards, burnt within an inch of her skin. The flame was burning her for a full quarter of an hour, without her noticing it, and, still more wonderful, her skin did not show the least sign of burning! Dr. Dozous, who, by the designs of Providence, was present at this episode, and held his watch in his hand the whole time, to see how long this wonder lasted, could not get over it. As he said afterwards, the marvel was not that she had felt no pain (as catalepsy sometimes produces this

effect), but that the tissues remained so long quite unharmed, since fire naturally destroys every organ it catches, and would even reduce a corpse to cinders. This was evidently, by the testimony of the most sceptical doctors, a true miracle—first-class miracle—without reckoning that a little later, to test it, when the said doctor tried secretly to apply the flame of the same candle to the hand of the peasant-girl, now in her normal state, she quickly cried out, ‘Oh, sir, you are burning me!’

EIGHTEENTH APPARITION.—It was July 16, Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, which was to mark the close of so many wonders.

A month and a half had elapsed since Bernadette had made her First Communion, with the purity and love which the Seraphim would have, could they partake of the mystical banquet. This final vision seemed to come on this beautiful day as the crown and seal of the favours vouchsafed to her for half a year by the Mother of the Emmanuel. This very morning Bernadette had had the grace of receiving for the third time Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Of these two delights, to eat the Bread of Angels or see the Queen of Angels, which would be greater in the eyes of the favoured child? Such blessings are united rather than opposed to one another, just as we see rainbows mixing together to bathe the sky with greater splendour. This was the reply of the peasant-child to a devout questioner: ‘These things go together.’ Exact and profound theology; for how can we separate the Son from the Mother,

the Immaculate One from the Blessed Sacrament? Towards the end of this holy day—linking together the Eucharist and Our Lady—while the child was praying in her parish church, a familiar voice whispered again in her inmost heart. At this very hour the evening *Angelus* was ringing from the romantic belfry. Immediately the young maiden of Lourdes arose, as long ago the maid of Israel arose to go to the Hebron, and calling for her more active aunt, Basile, she soon reached the heavenly trysting-place. For a long time now—nearly three months and a half—everything there had remained in shadow and silence! Doubtless on this beautiful night Heaven would reveal itself in a wondrous fashion. Unfortunately an Administration, growing ever more perverse, had increased the obstacles near the Grotto, as though the Emperor would forbid God to work miracles there! But what of that? Religion is more ingenious than tyranny. To obey the call of Heaven without also breaking the laws of man, the child very simply hastened to kneel on the other side of the Gave, in front of the blessed rock, and in a short time there was a circle of devout women round her. Just as on the happiest days, no sooner had the angelic child turned her wistful eyes to the well-known cleft, than her features began to light up, and she was heard once again to cry out in the transport of her whole being: ‘There she is! There she is! She is looking at us, she greets us, she smiles on us above the palisade.’ It was chiefly to the child that these ineffable looks, smiles, and greetings were directed. Had she not well deserved them in

meeting nothing but suffering from those in authority, especially since March? What reproaches had they not heaped upon her in the vain hope of crushing her rising work? And how much yet remained for her to suffer, according to that inexorable law, that in this world, to win heaven, we must 'pay the price'? Soon her mother would die in poverty, and she would have to say farewell to her dear nuns of the Hospice where she had lived; to lose sight of the hills of Bartrès, which had gladdened her childhood's days; to leave Lourdes, a true holy land, to which her soul was henceforth riveted after these sacred events; to tear herself away from the beloved Grotto, worth all the world to her; and to go far, far away into an unknown country, and be immured behind the grating of a strange convent, where suffering both of soul and body awaited her! Did not all this merit some special boon from the merciful Lady? And then to such an unparalleled tragedy the ending must be in keeping with its heavenly character. While the rustic heroine knelt here this peaceful summer eve, ever fervent and courageous, amid the flowery meadows watered by the Gave, the hour seemed supremely happy. Already below the horizon of red jewel and furnace flame the sun had gone down in a halo of glory, and over the solitudes of Massabielle the gathering shades of the gloaming threw a mysterious charm. . . . A last look of the Mother on her child, a last farewell, a last smile, so gentle and expressive that the child thought she had never beheld the like. . . .

It was—too soon, alas!—her sad farewell to this earth, or rather, it was her glad *au revoir* till the eternity of Paradise, where the Immaculate Conception had solemnly promised one day to make happy her most pure, humble, and faithful Confidant.

CHAPTER III

BERNADETTE SOUBIROUS

AFTER this record of Heaven's visitations, we must turn to its earthly heroine. Unfortunately we have no regular biography of Bernadette. Even Henri Lasserre in his inimitable style wrote rather of Our Lady. Pouvillon, with his romantic idealism, has given us less a biographical account than a delightful romance, full of poetry and tenderness. As for Mgr. Ricard, who took up his pen to refute the most hypocritical blasphemies ever written about Lourdes, he was too much engaged in refuting objections to write a 'Life' properly so called. I know, however, a holy and fruitful retreat beyond the mountains, at the base of which Heaven fashioned Massabielle, where someone, in spite of the rigours of old age and exile, is compiling living documents on all the wonderful career of Bernadette, which promise to be a revelation to us. Till the hour comes for the greater glory of the Pyrenean shepherd-girl, or, at least, till her biographer shall arise amongst us, the numerous admirers of the amiable child-Seer will doubtless not be sorry to read here, even from our humble pen, a meagre sketch as accurate as possible

of her who was to impress her own and future ages with the lustre of her virtues and her heavenly mission.

This child of election was born at Lourdes, at the mill of Boly, near the spot where the river of Lapaca joins the Gave, on January 7, 1844, her parents being François Soubirous and Louise Castérot, a young couple, good Catholics, who derived a comfortable livelihood from their paternal mill, although the want of thrift and energy in the husband gave reasons for anxiety about the future.

Baptized, as is the grace of many holy people, the day after her birth, the child received from her maternal aunt, Bernarde—a pious girl in whose arms she was held at the baptismal font—the names of the Blessed Virgin herself and of the sweet-tongued Doctor who has spoken most the praises of the Mother of Christ here below—Marie Bernard! Names even more prophetic than harmonious, which, softened further by one of those contractions which people adopt in everyday life, were once again to become immortal. To the eldest of a household which only inspired sympathy, neighbours gave a hearty welcome, and there were rejoicings around this first cradle. *Quæ putas puella ista erit?* . . .

At the end of six months, on the birth of another child, they had to entrust 'Bernadette' to Marie Aravant, a good Catholic of Bartrès, a small village less than two miles away from Lourdes, who, mourning recently for the loss of her own child, was very glad to nurse the first-born of the Soubirous.

The devoted care of the nurse lasted nearly two years, after which she had to restore the child to the care of its relatives. They were not slow to observe that her sojourn among the mountains had not exactly strengthened their dear little one. Rather pale and sickly, she seemed henceforth troubled with asthma, perhaps congenital, which was to be the trial of all her existence. The misfortune was that too quickly her parents, whose want of thrift was more and more compromising their appearance, did not find the means to secure for her enfeebled health the necessary extra nourishment.

It is, then, in the midst of trials that the young delicate child had to vegetate rather than develope, for whom Heaven had such great designs in store.

To crown all, in 1855 (when the child, who had four other brothers and sisters, was entering on her eleventh year) misfortune already foreseen came ruthlessly to drive the family from their paternal mill, and force them to inhabit one of the most wretched cottages in the quarter of Lapaca. Henceforth the livelihood of the entire household would only depend on the spasmodic efforts of the father, who could no longer grind corn on his own account, but would hire out his services from day to day without being too successful in staving off privations from their unsettled hearth. So keen would their poverty become in a short time that they would have to forsake this humble lodging, and thanks to the timely assistance of an old uncle, get shelter in a wretched hovel in the Rue des Petits-Fossés.

I was anxious to visit it the day after the glorious festival of the Jubilee, entering it as you would enter a hallowed shrine. But at the sight of this solitary, gloomy apartment, damp, unhealthy, with crumbling walls and worn-out flagstones, before these precious implements of misery, while reverence forced me to kneel down, I felt a tear of religious pity fall from my eyes at the thought of the Confidant of Heaven who had to spend here such years of hardship!

You think how, in the gloom of this unhealthy abode, almost as bare as that of Bethlehem, the child saw her chronic ailment gradually growing worse; not that the Soubirous, who worshipped her, did not do their best to pay every attention to her, buying her, under the pretext of porridge—the ordinary pittance of the poor—white bread, wine, and sugar. Thus they wished her, besides, to be clothed more warmly than the others, and that she should wear woollen stockings, preferences as justifiable as, alas! they were incapable of restoring her lost vigour, and which, moreover, did not fail to provoke the jealousy, often the blows, even of the younger children.

For all that, from the following winter the aunt-godmother was anxious to take home with her her godchild, for the sole purpose, she explained, of ‘feeding her up a little.’

When seven or eight months of this régime, as sensible as it was affectionate, seemed to have had a good result, Bernadette herself asked to return to the squalid household. From henceforth, also, the sufferings of the sick child began again with need,

so that to help her not to die of hunger she often lent her willing services in the house of a neighbour. Her great compensation, at least (seeing she was very pious from her infancy), was to be able to practise every evening under the ruined roof the virtues of Job in dealing with her unfortunate parents. Well, what could they have been reproached with? Did not François show courage in working hard at manual labour? And did Louise cease, amid such penury, to be the 'valiant woman' praised by Holy Scripture? Every night, after the scantiest of suppers, they said prayers together. It was the pure and delicate voice of the eldest child, who recited the time-honoured Bigourdain prayers, cheering by her touching inflexions the sadness of this cheerless abode. On Sunday the whole family went to the church services, and when Palm Sunday came, father and mother showed their children beforehand, by their example, the way to the Holy Table, where the share of the poor is many times more bountiful than that of the rich.

Yet, about the Feast of St. John in 1857, the nurse having occasion to look for a young guardian for her sheep, appealed to the supposed aptitude of the dear citizen.

So we now see the little child, already in her thirteenth year, coming back to Bartrès, the delightful little country of her early childhood, which she had in truth never lost sight of, and where she was certainly not forgotten. In the cottage at Lourdes there were, we can well imagine, many tears shed on both sides at the moment of parting. But poverty

has its own graces to make up for these sacrifices of feeling, which are required by the poverty of the homestead. Her new compatriots had soon recognized, noticed, and loved the little shepherdess, whose cheerful modesty and exquisite frankness seemed at first like the benediction of their solitary lands. So she never went out leading her sheep without being greeted on all sides with words of kindness, to which she replied with that frank simplicity which added so much to the charms of her diminutive person. 'Truly,' the Curé of the village said one day to the schoolmaster about her, 'if any child brings to mind the two shepherds of the Apparition of the Alps, it is indeed this shepherd-girl.' Bernadette and Melanie—La Salette and Lourdes—what an association already full of prophetic truth!

As a matter of fact, Bernadette was not at this period of her life a precocious child; she possessed neither a great intelligence, nor lively imagination, nor a quick memory. The elements of Catechism, which her foster-mother tried to teach her every evening, did not enter her mind easily, and still less easily remained there. She was always the ordinary peasant, who in her native country, apart from her occasional presence at the lessons on Christian doctrine, had not been able to attract the notice of the priests, because she remained on her bench in the last place, and could never give any reply to the least question.

Such was the obscure being whom Providence had chosen, and kept in reserve, and prepared in

secret, without any external sign, to accomplish wonderful things in and through His chosen one. For if human knowledge glided off the surface of her soul, we must beware of thinking that the Spirit of God, that wondrous Master of new natures, did not develope in her, at an early age, 'the science of the Saints,' which is derived much less from books than from prayer, and reveals itself, if not always by flashes of genius, at least by the spontaneous growth of all the Christian virtues.

I have mentioned the great word 'prayer.' But the poor daughter of the penniless miller did not occupy the highest pinnacles of prayer. To the close of her life, at the Convent of Nevers, will she not declare that she always felt herself unable to meditate? Only in her mountaineer's Rosary (the only book, except the sight of the fields and the heavens, which she could read) she experienced, almost unwittingly, the clearness of faith together with the fervour of devotion—all divinely adapted to her rank, and age, and forthcoming mission. So that in every respect it was a happy and fruitful period, though brief, that Bernadette spent behind the sheep of her adopted parents, or more correctly at the school of the invisible Teacher. Is it not thus that, since Abel and David, the chosen mortals have been brought up? Geneviève of Nanterre and Jeanne of Domremy, who were to save France—the one from a barbarian invasion, the other from an English conquest—were two shepherdesses before becoming the Angels of their country and the Saints of our altars. Similarly, under the secret

influence of grace, their sister from Béarn was trained for her work during her idyllic childhood, in which (so much the supernatural emanated from her whole person) the Angels seem to have wafted her on their wings in heavenly flights.

But it was time that this youthful flower should at length go to meet the Spouse of virgins, who rejoices the young and chaste heart by feeding it with His Flesh and Blood. This was the reason why the mother, Soubirous, to satisfy her daughter's desire not less than her own scruples, on learning that Bartrès was left without any priest because the good Abbé Ader had entered religion, recalled her absent child to her home to prepare her for First Communion.

It was on January 10, 1858, that she returned to the wretched family roof. Before continuing the thread of this history, already fragrant in its obscurity like the lives of the Saints even, let us pause to ask ourselves what she was like at this solemn hour, for whom the most remarkable vocation was destined.

‘Simple, sweet, pure, and good’—such are the four characteristic traits which the last survivors of the rustic hamlet agree in attributing to their young fellow-citizen of a brief space.

Her physical traits were commonplace, though amiable. But to make up for this—her beautiful conscience! Everything in this soul—let us repeat it, the better to hold the key of many things—was whiteness like the lilies in the valleys hard by or the snows on the heights above. At the age of fourteen

(as the Abbé Pomian, her confessor, tells us), when she approached her God, she had not lost any of the charms of baptismal innocence. She felt no slight confusion, she has told us, on the approach of the great day, at being able to find only 'six venial sins' to be sorry for at her confessor's feet. And such sins, besides, which in the eyes of many others would almost pass for virtues!

We see her at the beginning of the severe winter of 1858, setting off to the task which her strength allowed her, quite cramped in her poor cloak, with her heavily pleated dress, and the flat bodice, and black silk kerchief tied in a point under her chin, so as to frame her pale face as it were in a lancet-window. . . . You would call her a young and delicate novice! But be careful! under this very emaciation what an ardent soul! Mystery in truth gleams strongly from those eyes, virgin lakes a thousand times more clear than those nameless meres lost on the lofty summits, wherein all the glories of the Pyrenean sky are silently reflected. You see how her thin and quivering lips half open with a quiet smile, which seems truly the untiring expression of compassionate goodness.

Like her compeer of Lorraine, ignorant of her A, B, C, Bernadette makes up for it at least as much as she can on her beloved Rosary, accompanying her daily toil with numerous and devout *Ave Marias*. At the hour of rest you come upon her, between her crook and distaff, playing like a child with wild flowers, shining stones, the running water, and better still with the youngest of her white lambkins,

while her rough-haired dog, 'Montagne,' from jealousy, comes to lick her hands. Moreover, the mere semblance of evil, from what quarter soever, made her shudder. On the contrary, as soon as her task allows her some leisure, she instinctively turns to everything that seems to her small, poor, pitiful, ignorant, and pure like herself.

Thus this unearthly being unfolded herself now as she grew to womanhood, who, with a healthy and vigorous soul lodged in a body of suffering, was distinctly more pleasing by the simplicity diffused through her whole person than by superior gifts, with nothing extraordinary about her—the child, if you will, the least likely for ecstasies and visions, or again (as we once heard Henri Lasserre say so justly to the Curé of Lourdes), 'simplicity utterly unconscious of itself.'

Such was her state of soul and body when, being now at home a month with her own family, she set off to look for dry brushwood in the direction of the Grotto one cold winter afternoon, shivering at the breath of the north wind, though heavily clad and stockinged with warm wool in her mountain sabots, with the usual hood thrown carelessly over the kerchief on her head. . . .

I have already related what happened less than an hour afterwards. . . .

Now that the bucolic poetry of Bartrès had come to an end for ever, it was the epic of Lourdes which had just unrolled itself before her, as startling as a flash of lightning, until (to complete the trilogy of the Bigourdain peasant like that of the Cham-

penoise) there began the drama of Nevers. Yes, bucolic poetry in all its rustic charm—an epic poem inwrought with radiance from heaven—a supreme drama evolving by the offering of willing sacrifice on the pyre of a religious holocaust—such is the holy triptych, which will henceforth hold the reader breathless as long as history will last.

Also, I must add, to imagine that her trials began only with the cloister is to have a wrong idea of our heroine. In truth, she who was born in suffering suffered always, but above all from the day when she beheld herself admitted in the wild Espéluques to hold converse so directly and personally with the Divine. Such intimacy, of which a Moses and an Elias in their time were afraid, is always dearly bought here on earth! Bernadette's first struggle, as we have seen, was against herself, her fears, hesitations, and doubts; then she had a rude assault to endure on the part of her own family, who, dreading the ridicule of the world, but, above all, the chicanery of the law, tried at first to forbid her to go to her irresistible rendezvous; afterwards she had to struggle against the civil power, whose brutal and ridiculous pretensions would fain have denied to God the right of working miracles in His world; then it was the turn of science, of a sort of science, to oppose systematically the experimental certitude of the shy child by mountains of objections and treacherous pitfalls; lastly (why should we not add it without shame?), there were priests of the Church, who by their incomprehensible but necessary hesitation caused her much anguish. I nearly forgot

Freemasonry, whose dark hand one is almost certain to trace wherever there is wickedness to be carried out. Here, shielded by the Prefecture of Tarbes, and giving the tone to several journals of the capital, even of the country, it threw aside, under the impulse of its father, Satan, its usual mask, applying the terms 'lying, hysterical, victim of delusions, comic actress, laughing-stock of the priests, or of pride, or of avarice,' to the calmest, most candid, and disinterested maiden in France.

Poor Bernadette! frail reed shaken by the storm, without any other support save conscience and the memory of the smiles of the Madonna! What insults she had to undergo throughout this splendid six months of apparitions, and even long afterwards! She was spared nothing that can dishearten an ignorant, wretched child of the people—neither captious questions, nor violent inquiries, nor subtle flatteries, nor, lastly, open threats. That pitiable police magistrate, Jacomet, and that unworthy Prefect, Massy, especially seemed to vie with each other in harshness towards this innocent. And there met together a Sanhedrin of Doctors, in the pay of the State or of the Lodges (which were already identical), to declare the ecstatic child insane, and to demand that she should be confined in a cell, even when at the most impartial medical examination there appeared no trace of injury to the brain, or, rather, we should say, when no psycho-physical temperament was ever found (notwithstanding the complaint we have mentioned) in more perfect equilibrium. Thus the learned Faculty diagnosed

at all costs, like Balaam's ass of yore. But what can all verdicts avail against sectarian prejudice? An almighty intervention was needed with the imperial Pilate, who was then occupied in 'washing his hands' of attempts otherwise sensational, for which he still remains responsible—that of the virtuous Eugenie, alarmed by the danger of death, sudden and perplexing, of the young Prince, in order that the throne should issue a decree not to persecute the Confidant of the Sovereign of Heaven any longer.* Religion, in its turn, sufficiently enlightened by the course of events, abandoned its customary reserve, or apparent diffidence, which had caused such scandal; and, in the person first of the Abbé Peyramale, then of Mgr. Laurence, took the part of the young shepherdess. This pastoral letter of January 18, 1862, while proclaiming that 'all these wonderful phenomena of Massabielle, *looked at from the young child's point of view*, could not be explained except as due to a Divine cause,' came opportunely, after such a storm, like a refreshing godsend; we might add that the Chief of the Universal Church himself was soon anxious to add his supreme sanction to the too just *amende*. The reader will probably call to mind the famous brief of Pius IX., which put definitely on the work, and then on the person of Bernadette, the first canonical approval. Two years later (April 4, 1864) the inauguration of the chapel, so often asked for by the Lady, and which it cost

* The Emperor, who was staying at Biarritz, ordered the Prefect Massy to have the palisades removed, and to allow the people to come to the Grotto.

her so much to obtain, took place at the foot of the cavern. It was observed with great magnificence. Only by one of those actions of Heaven which, on behalf of its elect, always mingles thorns with the flowers, she whom they had seen for six years together at the labour did not share in the reward, any more than the Curé himself, who had become her right hand. Both of them, evidently marked out to be in some way victims to the end of this superhuman affair, instead of being at the Grotto on this day, the sweetest of their lives, in order to sing at the head of a rapturous multitude the Hosanna of victory, were lying on a bed of pain, the one in his lonely presbytery, the other at the Hospice of the nuns, whither a return of her malady had obliged her to take refuge. 'And all that,' says Scripture, 'that no flesh should glory in His sight.'*

Yet the Christian people, little understanding these inevitable trials, did not refrain from more and more honouring the child-Seer. As though a supernatural virtue emanated from her with magnetic power, everyone wished to see, hear, and touch her. Who can tell the number, and so often the quality of her visitors? Men like Dupanloup, Donnet, Landriot, de Mérode, Prince Chigi, Louis Veuillot, and Admiral de Bruat. They say that the Bishop of Orleans, ever impetuous, knelt down before the child to receive a blessing from her, which proceeding annoyed with good reason the wise parish priest. What strikes us most is, that in all these tiring 'interviews' our Seer remained ever calm, free,

* 1 Cor. i. 29.

simple, and natural. In spite of her evident lack of culture and even of intelligence, as soon as she came to the 'tale divine,' she showed herself wonderfully ready in discourse, as well as clever, and often even witty in her answers. Above all, such conviction escaped from her virgin lips that it became impossible to listen to her without believing. By turns naïve, spiritual, grave or gay, according to her story, she won over everyone—bishops, priests, monks, journalists, professors, doctors, and psychologists—ever remaining the same simple, gentle, and modest child. So, too, that other French shepherdess of the fifteenth century had appeared (with whom Bernadette inevitably suggests comparison), when the Law, the School, and the Church in turn sat in judgment before her disconcerting simplicity.

At Lourdes, as at Chinon, all diplomatic arts failed before such upright candour, and it is not the least miracle that nothing could ever spoil her—neither sincere praise, nor insidious flattery, nor tempting offers. To the last this angelic being had the grace of remaining a child—of that class of children, I mean, to whom the Kingdom of Heaven truly belongs, and on whose lips God is pleased to put perfect praise.

But let us continue this spiritual character-sketch. By the side of such self-denial, what severe and unrelenting detachment!

It happened that a rich Catholic family, attracted by the heavenly halo which her virtue not less than her prodigies already formed around her brow, proposed from the very first to the pious child to adopt

her. She shrank with horror from the thought. Holy Poverty, companion of lowly Simplicity, captivated too much her naturally great soul for any earthly advantage to attract her. That gentleman also learnt a lesson later on who, even in the parlour of the convent, dared, in a mystical Quixotic spirit, to make her the dazzling offer of his hand and fortune!

It is precisely by this complete denial of 'self' that in the depth of external tribulations she found the secret of never losing interior peace; for it is only those divested of all things who are masters of themselves and of the universe.

And yet can we imagine that this loving child, so devoted to the Madonna, did not feel a particular grief at seeing the holy Grotto profaned by force for nearly six months?

While the child was there, on this spot so full of sweet memories, where she loved so much to return, an impious cart (the only one that could be procured in the whole town) carried off before her eyes, dimmed with tears, the already numerous *ex-votos* of the gratitude of the crowds. Even those numerous tapers lit one morning in the flame of her ecstasy had been brutally extinguished one after another; and as a crowning act of defiance, they lost no time in barring all approach to the stream and to the crypt by means of barricades; while the Civil Power was helped from time to time by some pedantic Doctor, such as Voisin, Diday, and, later, Charcot and Bernheim, who made out that the undeniable cures wrought through this fountain were due to its

mineral properties, as though there only had been hot springs like those of Barèges or Cauterets!

It is true this did not damp the ardour of the pious caravans. The Vision had asked for 'people, crowds of people'; and Bernadette already saw multitudes flocking there. It was ever thus with her—fluctuations of joy and sorrow, which were destined to form the chequered tissue of her life.

Meanwhile, on Corpus Christi, 1858, at length the long-wished-for day of her First Communion dawned for the daughter of Soubirous. To teach us what was this solemn and intimate union of Innocence with Love would need the lyre of a Eugenie de Guérin or the brush of the angel of Fiesole. When this peasant who had been favoured with glimpses of eternal glory returned from the altar, radiant, inflamed, and modest, the whole parish understood truly that God had just given Himself to her as He does not usually do in this world.

Why was it necessary that she should be awakened so soon from this ecstasy, which made her most beautiful days live again, by persecution withheld for a moment by a sort of truce with the Eucharist? At present, unable to blame the miraculous water or the prophetess who had made it spring up from the dry sand, they hit upon the expedient, under the pretext of public interest, of forbidding trespassers on the land of Massabielle as being town property; palisades were erected there, gendarmes secretly posted, numerous summonses and heavy penalties given, which naturally threw Lourdes and the country

into a state of great excitement. What hatred, then, the Evil One bore to this Grotto, and how he must have feared it !

So many different trials, added to much fatigue, told on the health of the child, whom they thought it prudent to send to Caunterets, not to take the waters, but for a rest and change of scene. Three weeks later she returned to the family hearth, not being able to stay away from the *Holy Land*.

It was the time when people of quality, both from France and abroad, bound for all the fashionable health-resorts, were passing by the country village that had become so famous.

It was written that this child was to serve as a 'witness' to the Supernatural before the great ones of this earth, and by the sport of circumstances the fame of the city of Mary went on spreading gradually over the world. At the hospital of the Sisters, and at the new abode of the Soubirous, between which Bernadette now divided her time, the instructions were to give admission to all sight-seers. We must here add that, since the last crisis for the asthmatic child, the saintly Curé, M. Peyramale, for fear her health, now so precious, should finally give way, was careful to remove the poor household, without any request on their part, from their hovel, and house them in a dwelling humble enough, but more healthy, in the Rue du Bourg.

As I had been to the 'Dungeon,' I wished on February 11, by way of completing my pilgrimage, to visit the last dwelling on earth of the Confidant of Heaven, whither for nearly eight years the leading

Catholics and also infidels of the nineteenth century had resorted.

Picture to yourself, reader, at the bottom of a slight depression in the ground, a plain building externally unadorned and irregular within, which belongs to the town, or rather is 'a relic of the town'; no porter stands at the doorway; the traveller may enter, as of yore, into the paternal mill. Yet what is there to mind? There is no guide—your piety is lynx-eyed enough to discover many things not given in Bottin—no gratuities: the soul of the pious child, which seems to haunt these rooms, would be grieved by it. Here at once you get an idea of poverty, if not of actual want, in her primitive abode. The house consists of two rooms: a ground-floor—a sort of old stable, which still betrays its original purpose—and the upper room, to which you ascend by a staircase half worm-eaten, a little shapeless room which had to serve for kitchen and bedroom, since you see here some rickety chairs, a table of white deal, that needs propping up, like that of Philemon and Baucis, two humble beds, and a bedstead still more humble, guarded by a circular grating against any acts of pious Vandalism. Let us kneel down, for here rested from time to time the maid of the Pyrénées, who conversed with the glorious Queen of the world. More than once her parents heard her by night conversing with some invisible Being. Then see those pious images, those flowers of coloured paper, those faded ribbons—the quaint ornaments and finery of one who lacked bare subsistence—calculated rather to

emphasize the surrounding bareness than to screen it! But does not the true value of these precious relics lie in their having existed with, and, as it were, been associates of the peerless child who saw them in the same place—nay, perhaps hung them there—with whom they lived in that mysterious bond of union which often subsists between great natures and the merest trifles?

But it is time to leave, together with our heroine, the land of visions, in which she would have henceforth nothing more to do, since she had finished her share in the sublime work of which she was only for a brief space the instrument of Heaven.

Her farewell to the holy Rock was nevertheless particularly heart-rending, as my friend, the Abbé Archelet, has lately told, besides so many others, in his beautiful book on Lourdes. Was not leaving this cavern for Bernadette to quit the very threshold of Paradise?

Heaven so arranged matters that it was on July 16, 1866, the day of a blissful anniversary, that under the immemorial names of Sister Marie-Bernard, hardly twenty-two years old, she entered the novitiate at the mother-house of the Sisters of Charity of Nevers (having been a postulant already in their house at Lourdes itself).

The Superior-General of this admirable institute, devoted to the instruction of children and the care of the sick, was then the Reverend Mother Imbert, a wise and prudent woman, who was experienced, it was said, in training souls. The Bishop of the

diocese was Mgr. Forcade, a prelate whose piety was only equalled by his wisdom—two persons chosen now by Providence to take part in a history in which everything is really providential. The beginnings were such as they ought to be with such a chosen soul. Soon the entire community, piously proud of this flower of the field, as the Bible says, enjoyed the fragrance of the sweet odour of her virtues. Not that the eldest of the Soubirous-Castérot family was extraordinary in anything any more than in her native country. The same simplicity which marked her of yore in her visions on the banks of the Gave surrounded her still in the Convent of St. Gildard; and if anything distinguished her from her companions, it was, besides an unaffected humility, good sense and unfailing moderation, by which she soon won the esteem of the nuns, as she had previously attracted the crowds, and all this unknown to herself! So when the new spiritual Father of the young nun, who knew of the harmonious growth of this soul, learnt that at Paris, in the hospital school, a famous pathologist had just had enough levity or bad faith to say that the late Seer of Massabielle had had to be confined in a mad-house at Nièvre, Mgr. Forcade addressed him this quiet but pithy reply: ‘I can and must affirm that Bernadette, admitted to the noviceship of the Dames des Nevers, has always from the very first day shown no ordinary wisdom, and a calmness which cannot be equalled.’ The evidence given by the doctors of the house was absolutely the same.

Here we have a clear proof of her health of mind and body; but regarding her soul—how can we depict it to the thoughtless and profane, when through heroic concealment it escaped the notice in great measure of her neighbours in the choir? Happily, to reveal the special action of Heaven in this young nun, there was suffering whose traces are unmistakable in such cases—suffering both of body and mind, compared with which her previous trials were a mere trifle. For twelve years in succession this second life was only a long series of incurable infirmities that baffled the skill of doctors—a sort of dolorous passion, which in her innocent body and spotless soul ‘filled up’ (to use the strong word of St. Paul) the sufferings, that wrought redemption, of the Man-God.*

The greatest wonder is that the victim was offered up at every breath and movement of her body, continually and silently. To see this insignificant Sister passing along the corridors or garden, or wasting away on her sick-bed, no one could have doubted that here was the Apostle of the Immaculate Conception, to whom (as to St. John) Heaven had whispered its secrets.

So in the cloister, as at Espélugues, because she remained the same simple child, God continued to visit His servant; only, as it became necessary for the perfection of her peerless virtue, it was henceforth less by ecstasy—which is a grace freely given for the sake of others—than by suffering, which becomes the most fruitful source of merits and personal sanctity.

* Col. i. 24.

Her sufferings, in breaking out afresh, would only have served to bring into stronger relief before the community the patience—ever serene and often cheerful—of the sweet victim, as they had been a blessing. If at this second Gethsemani, Nature, taken by surprise in the excess of pain, allowed a furtive cry of complaint, or, rather, distress to escape, soon the '*Fiat!*' of sublime resignation returned with humility and regret in her heart and on her lips.

We may add that, the lowest of all by her own choice, she was also kept there, whether sad or cheerful, as though by the mysterious conspiracy of all, equals and superiors tacitly agreeing to pay little respect to her outwardly, while there was not one who did not worship her in her heart.

For her part, in the divine work in which she had co-operated, she never breathed a word, unless she were asked by a Superior. Then you would have said she spoke as if inspired, so much confidence, ease, and even dignity, she displayed. So every time that duty called her to the parlour, where the most distinguished visitors came, one after another, to see her and hear her speak but one word, what a trial it was to her, who loved obscurity and silence, or the company of her beloved sick! For the weakest nun at St. Gildard had been before long appointed infirmarian, and by common consent she made an ideal nurse, as if holy obedience, for which and through which she lived, had given her the aptitude which till then she had never suspected. The reason is, because in her eyes to obey, after

suffering, was to live. Obscurity had no less attractions for her. She was only happy when she could pass unobserved. 'Now, at least,' she said to the Bishop, 'I am like anyone else.' Not altogether, unearthly child! To tell the truth, even from the natural point of view, if you observed her closely, she was no ordinary person. Some signs certainly remained of her surpassing visions.

We will try to sketch the portrait of the little nun, according to what eyewitnesses have told us. Her eyes were dark, but clear, and possessing always an indefinable charm, her face pleasing because so seraphic, her intelligence sensibly developed, less by the refinement of the cloister than in the school of the most clever of teachers. Shall I add (to show she had not wasted her time with all her ecstasies) that at times Sister Marie-Bernard, not content with having succeeded in reading the Little Office, and writing to her nephews, showed wit, all the better because it unconsciously showed itself in smart repartees or pleasant sallies. And that the triumph of grace might be fully manifest, the shepherdess of Bartrès, the spinner of Lourdes, showed herself at Nevers very clever with her hands, a perfect needlewoman, a faultless cook, an unrivalled nurse, and a good sacristan. So, though she had said, on entering religion, 'I will only be useful for paring carrots,' the Holy Ghost was pleased literally to make her a 'vessel of election' (*vas electionis*).

As regards the whiteness of her soul, without which, as a Father of the Church says, no soul can please the mysterious Lover, she, in truth, eclipsing

that of the snows and lilies amid which her childhood had unfolded, breathed forth in this hothouse of religious life all her sweet fragrance, more of heaven than of earth, like the incense of our altars, when it mounts upwards in clouds of sweetness to the throne of the Lamb, who feedeth in the midst of eternal lilies.

What recollection, whether in her ordinary work or in racking pain, in this being made for the unseen world, whose every heart-beat and every breath seemed a murmur of prayer or a sigh of love! Then that prayer of the nun, sometimes behind the holy grille, sometimes alone in her cell. . . .

Long ago the jealous Angels had wondered at her, raising up her mind and heart far beyond the boisterous waters of the Gave, beyond the flowery hills of Espéluques, beyond the picturesque lands of Bartrès, beyond the white gulls floating above the horizon of the Pyrénées, beyond the sky itself, so blue, which in the distance seemed to lose itself in infinite space. . . . But since, in the cells of the Grotto and the Convent, Bernadette had learnt the art of arts—that of prayer—or, rather, since she received the infused knowledge of prayer—the spirit of prayer—who could describe to us the sublimity of one of her *Paters*, or the sweetness of each of her countless ‘Hail Marys’?

And how could her love not bear comparison even with that of the pure spirits? Did not this perfect maiden love with all her heart, in which nothing human had a share, God, and the Son whom He has sent into the world, and His ineffable Mother,

who carries Jesus in her arms, and on earth, in them, by them, and for them, everything worthy of love, which is not too often found ?

It was in truth the love of the Spouse of the Canticles, the love naked, poor, barefooted, which long ago had filled the soul of her dear patron, the Abbot of Cluny, and caused the old man of Assisi to shed burning tears, making the stigmata sweet and giving a splendour to rags, which otherwise does not belong to royal purple.

So, to love, pray, obey, suffer, work, and be silent, and move about like a shadow—this was her life in a nutshell, which was inaugurated by the idyll of the country, transfigured by the epic on the banks of the river, and completed by the mystical drama of the far-off Convent.

Just as in the natural order a flower, a ray of the sun, or a butterfly's wing, bear witness to creative power as much as, and more than, a granite boulder, so natures like that of Soubirous's daughter exemplify by all their external and interior history the workings of Divine Providence in the secrecy of certain chosen souls. 'God,' says a famous mystical writer, *'sometimes takes a fresh soul whom He wishes by successive trials to draw slowly to Himself. He sends it from time to time consolations, but more often He nourishes it with tears which no one suspects, and makes it suffer for love. His adorable strictness never relaxes. The soul would fain have peace—He troubles it. And if He sees it at the last hour faithful and uncomplaining, He holds out His arms lovingly to it from the threshold of eternal happiness.'*

It is thus, in His dealings with men, that the Most High trains those souls whom He marks out for great designs by first of all annihilating them! Now that Bernadette had passed through the ordeal of the most generous self-denial for thirty-six years, death, the guerdon of God, could come.

It was on December 11, 1878 (during the Octave of the Immaculate Conception), that Sister Marie-Bernard had to take to her bed of suffering in the infirmary, only to leave it for her flight to Heaven. In the intervals of her malady, which lasted four long months, they often heard her recalling the visions of Massabielle, confirming all that she had ever said about them, and repeating to herself the promises made to her. She was not spared the agony of the Garden of Olives. The Evil One, moreover, kept troubling her. She shuddered at the thought of death; above all, she was afraid of so many graces received. At the anniversary of each of the apparitions her being seemed to be revived. Holy Week was strangely sorrowful. From Tuesday evening after Easter, after the holy Viaticum, there was peace. Next day the dying child wished again to receive absolution and gain the plenary indulgence which Pius IX. had granted to her at her last hour. Then she was anointed, and the prayers for the dying said for her. She joined in them in an attitude of fervour and singular confidence. The crucifix was always near her. She kissed it frequently with the words—the only ones she could utter—‘I love it! I love it!’ Soon she asked to drink ‘some Lourdes water,’ which she

did very religiously, making first the big sign of the cross, which had formerly so impressed the crowds. At length she sweetly expired, as she uttered the last words of her beloved *Angelus*. Everything betokened that in her room, at this very moment, Heaven had again opened for her, and the glory of the Immaculate Mother began again to shine on her, nevermore to vanish out of sight! It was three o'clock in the afternoon, Easter Wednesday, April 16, 1878.

It was just twenty-one years ago that, on a similar feast, she held before the Madonna a lighted candle between her fingers without being burnt by the flame. Now, too, Death was grazing her sainted body with his pinion, and did not harm it. *Ubi est, mors, stimulus tuus? ubi est, mors, victoria tua?* Or, rather, this young temple of God, once lifeless, appeared to shine more brightly than ever, as though with a light from beyond the grave—perhaps the same that had shone on the forehead of the Seer at the Grotto. . . . For three days, without a shadow of change, the limbs retained their suppleness; the bier of the Saint—so they began instinctively to call her—became like a triumphal couch, past which the people of Nevers filed in order. Everyone, even the least piously inclined, was anxious to kiss these holy relics. It was in truth the testimony of the people that she was a Saint, or, rather, first whispered at Lourdes, it was only being more openly declared by the people around her bier, transformed almost into a throne. The following Saturday the funeral was performed

with solemn rites, amid an immense concourse of people, by Mgr. Lelong himself, who had hastened for this purpose from the other end of his diocese. Owing to the exceptional occasion, the Bishop delivered the funeral oration, or, rather, the panegyric of the dead child. Then, after the last absolution, 'the cortège to the grave,' writes an eyewitness, 'was more like a procession of the Blessed Sacrament.'

It is in the little chapel of St. Joseph, in the middle of the Convent garden, that the child of miracles was buried. By one of those happy coincidences with which the biography I have just briefly sketched abounds, the liturgy of the Institute directed that over the humble mound of the glorious child that sleeps beneath the anthem, *Salve Regina, Mater Misericordiæ*, like the *novissima verba* of the ancients, should be sung, which all her life had been such a joy to her. And when the crowd dispersed, as though the *De Profundis* were out of place at such a burial, they intoned a joyous *Magnificat*. . . .

We also, we especially, have good hopes that the too modest mausoleum of St. Gildard is only for a time. The fitting place for the body—in any case, for the heart—of Bernadette is at Massabielle, or, rather (I venture to assert it with all the humility of the humblest son of Holy Church, but at the same time with all the fervour which such a history has kindled within me), *the* place for her (when it shall please God) is upon our altars!

CHAPTER IV

PROVIDENTIAL OPPORTUNITY

IT will be admitted that no more suitable time could have been chosen by Heaven for such a person to serve as the instrument for such miracles.

It was, in fact, the time with us when Science, breaking away from the bonds of Faith, and quite smitten with itself, was endeavouring to take the Creator from His creation, under the sacrilegious pretext that if we must, at all events, admit God as 'the Category of the Ideal,' at least this metaphysical and unknowable Being has not to intervene in the determinist evolution of Cosmos, everything happening here below as if there was nothing higher, as if the supernatural order, superstitiously added by the old schools to the order of Nature, was only an old-fashioned legend.

Such was 'Renanism,' a sort of lay State-religion, reaching its full-blown maturity in the official academies, to filter down from them, alas! through all the avenues of an Atheistic (or Liberal) press to the lower *stratum* of the people, who thought they were thus mounting to the light.

Because there is verily nothing new under the

sun, at the root of this system which now came into fashion we cannot fail to recognize two of the most fundamental errors, the children of the pagan Renaissance and of the philosophy of Rousseau—viz., the denial of Man's Fall, and consequently of the Messianic Redemption.

In point of fact these two heresies, which are really one, while they sap the very foundations of revealed dogma, contain in themselves, if you notice carefully, all the poison of the Non-religion, or rather Impiety, of the day. It is truly an unmitigated, essential, and complete 'anti-Christianity,' raised to the dignity of an intellectual doctrine and code of morals.

A tragic crisis, the most serious that human thought has ever yet passed through, and one of which our age is literally dying, which, refusing to believe any longer in evil, puts its good wherever it happens to find it; and which, refusing to admit a Saviour of the world, can only cause the present revolt to be followed by an eternal one—a gospel of despair!

Such was the spiritual state of human society in 1858. But (notice how wisely Providence arranges all things) at this very time the proclamation of the most salutary of all dogmas suddenly took place, first at Rome, then at Massabielle—the dogma which, raising the ideal Virgin above all mankind by her exemption from even original sin, came to sum up in one peerless being the two essential truths—a catastrophe in the beginning, followed by a deliverance—when victorious Agnosticism was making

great inroads with such bitterness. Hence we see that the dogmatic decree of Pius IX. and the historic fact of Lourdes were truly providential.

Let no one say that since the voice of Infallibility had, through the Pope of the Immaculate Conception, affirmed this truth by definition, it was quite unnecessary that the voice of the Church should be reinforced by so unwonted a manifestation as that which took place in the valley of Espéluques. Doubtless, for the faith of Christians, the voice of Peter was quite sufficient for Rome and the whole world; but for the love of their Mother, for her irresistible desire to bring help to the great distress of her children, should not the blessed revelation be manifested in bodily form, if I may say so, that it might become more tangible and so more effectual?

To explain the matter more clearly, when the glorious Lady appeared on the happy banks of the Gave, four years had elapsed since the Holy See had uttered its dogmatic decree about her. Now (excepting professional theologians), how many at that time in the world knew the meaning or even the statement of the new doctrine (I call it new in its development, in the sense of Vincent of Lerins, though it is ancient and eternal in itself, *quoad se*)? The proof is that to the mind of Bernadette, though pious and devoted to Mary, these four words, '*Qué soy l'Immaculé Councepciou*,' on coming to her ears, remained a complete enigma; in the same way those to whom she had soon to repeat them, not without hesitating and making mistakes also, declared themselves amazed, almost disappointed, by them. The

reason is that in all this little city of Lourdes, where the time-honoured devotion to the Madonna had always flourished, no one had hitherto ever spoken or heard such language. There, as in so many other corners of France, it could only be the parish priest, to whom an adequate knowledge of theology made such a phrase familiar; besides, everyone knew that M. Peyramale, with his large practical sense, had always carefully avoided such abstract terms in his Sunday discourses. What he must have said, what he certainly did say, was: 'Unlike all of us, the unhappy heirs of original sin, the Mother of God alone has come into this world without a shadow of sin, man's fatal Fall not having been able to touch her from the first moment of her being.' To this popular theology—to render it easier to their devotion—he merely added the beautiful expression in vogue since the miraculous medal was introduced: 'O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.' But, about the middle of the last century, neither priests nor people, as a rule, spoke of the 'Immaculate Conception.' This was an esoteric term, as though this abstract but fundamental dogma had not had time, since its promulgation by the Vatican, to pass from the science of theology into the conscience of the faithful, from the region of speculation into the common use of everyday life.

Yet, as we have seen, it became more and more important, in view of the ever-increasing doctrinal evil, which had soon become social evil, that the doctrine should at length be solemnly disclosed, as

being the specific and most suitable remedy, which, taking somehow a material shape in a visible drama, would stem the flood of contrary errors by the two-fold truth which it would bring into clear relief.

How effectively, from the day when she was personified in the providential dogma, the glorious Form who appeared in the cleft of the rock as in a chair of state (a chair certainly not opposed to the *cathedra Petri*, but set up there to confirm its irrevocable definitions) would, in the first place, emphasize it, then adorn its metaphysical abstruseness with all the charms of a Vision divinely entrancing !

This is the meaning of Lourdes for society, and its benefit to mankind ! It has made familiar and natural to our minds what tongue cannot utter, almost what the mind cannot conceive, by clothing it in a tangible form, and, above all, by giving it a smile, a voice, a gesture, which have profoundly stirred the mind and heart of the nineteenth century even more than the favoured corner of Bigorre.

And since this date, one of the greatest in the annals of mankind, the 'Immaculate Conception' has become universally, not only a matter of faith, but also of popular devotion, and you would not find a child in France as simple as the simple shepherdess who with equal assurance and fervour could not spell the heavenly phrase : 'Bénie soit la sainte et immaculée Conception de la glorieuse Vierge Marie !' *

* 'Blessed be the holy and Immaculate Conception of the glorious Virgin Mary.'

Again, as the rule of prayer always supposes the rule of faith—as the rule of faith is everywhere the rule of action—how can we fail to see beforehand in the apparently unimportant fact of a mysterious Woman revealing herself to a peasant-girl a revolution as useful as it is necessary?

Let us rather examine this question: Since the events we now speak of, which took place as though to bring into operation—I nearly said, to put to the test—the teaching of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, if the two principal heads of the infernal Hydra have not been cut off at a blow (in truth, they will remain to the end of the world for the trial of the good and the ruin of the wicked), this, at least, is certain, that the poison so deadly to men's souls, whether because infecting their ideas or perverting their moral standard, has been found to be considerably limited in its range, and also sensibly abated in its virulence.

Yes, beyond a shadow of doubt, thanks to Lourdes, only those die of the bite of the eternal Dragon who refuse to look at the Almâh, their deliverer; as the Israelites of old, in order to live in the desert, had to raise their eyes to the prophetic sign.* Moreover, can we deny that in our days a true awakening of religious faith and practice has begun?

Nowhere is this more clearly shown than on the banks of the river of Mary, a lasting witness of the wonderful manifestations caused by the new movement in the land of philosophers and politicians. This affords us grounds for hoping—nay, for declaring

* Num. xxi. 8.

with our latest Popes—that the future will emerge gloriously from this Grotto. ‘Lourdes,’ Leo XIII. was fond of repeating, ‘will save France.’ As for Pius X., everyone knows how, in a remarkable Encyclical—the first written by this wonderful Pontiff after ascending the chair of Peter—he declared that her speedy deliverance must come to us through the Immaculate Virgin of Massabielle. Whilst waiting for this blessed day—which our present trials make to appear very far off—it would be base ingratitude not to recognize at this moment the great service we owe to the ethereal Visitant from the point of view which we are considering.

What this Queen of Angels really meant in revealing herself in a wild mountain ravine to a shepherdess of our nation—almost in the same way that of yore, on the mountain of Judæa, God revealed Himself to a Hebrew shepherd—was much less to show her glory than to bear witness before an apostate generation, whose entire misfortune arose from no longer believing the certain real existence of original sin weighing on all mankind, to the exception of a single creature who for that had called herself so happily the ‘Immaculate Conception,’ and, consequently, to recall to those modern men who are fascinated by the idol of Progress, that deceitful trifle, in virtue of the holy Redemption, an invisible world more real and more desirable from which she descended in a straight line with a whole retinue of glories and graces, for the sole purpose of teaching us again the way, and drawing us there by enlightening our minds with the essential truths of which she

was the official messenger, by warming our hearts through contact with her winning virtues, by reconciling us with the austerities of the cross of her Son, which are the necessary prelude to the unfading joys of our Eternal Home.

It is, then, because Lourdes has had the task of bringing home to mankind—in opposition to the impious negations which have already done so much harm to modern society—the sublime assertions of doctrine and morality, by which alone salvation can be won, that Lourdes deserves to be hailed as the presage of better times, in proportion as men, before such a revelation of Divine power, imbue their thoughts and lives more deeply with its reality, instead of scoffing in the spirit of Voltaire, or blaspheming like Rousseau, or sneering in the unhappy company of Renan. In this way, the prophecy of 'a great servant of Mary, the Blessed Grignon de Montfort, made over a hundred years ago—viz., that the twentieth century would mark by a very special devotion to the Mother of Christ a notable return of society to the kingdom of her Son—seems, after all, not so far from fulfilment. Now, it is undoubtedly at the Grotto of the Pyrénées that this happy movement of Christian reaction has been started. How so? Since the Lady, most reverently asked by her confidant to reveal her name, declares that she is called the 'Immaculate Conception,' is not that clearly her proper name, her personal quality, her exclusive and special mark? The conclusion naturally follows, therefore, that since she alone has been conceived without sin,

all of us, as members of the human race, are born in sin, and in the vivid words of Bossuet, a faithful echo of all Scripture and all history, 'Qui nous engendre, nous tue.'*

Hence the well-known Original Sin is not a fable or legend, but a heart-piercing reality; hence it is only too true that by an incomprehensible but terrible law of heredity all the children of Adam are beings fallen, wounded to the quick, incurably sick, foredoomed to death, forlorn children of wrath, as in the mournful burden of the Apostle's complaint, unless, as mankind hoped for 4,000 years, at length, some day or other, a Deliverer should arise to repair the misfortune by sacrificing himself. . . .†

It is a touching fact that the glistening Virgin, the day she revealed herself to Bernadette, recognized at least implicitly that she herself was the first of mankind to benefit by redeeming grace. Not that she had ever had need of being rescued from the Fall (the Precious Blood of the Lamb having been shed by anticipation for her, to prevent her falling), but there is no doubt that it is to the sacrifice of Calvary that she owed from all eternity her preservation, as we in time owe to it our redemption.

Thereby Mary appears gloriously at the head of the Redeemed, but, as the Bull '*Ineffabilis*' says, in a nobler and more perfect way (*nobiliori perfectiorique modo*). . . . Yet is it not true that when in the vision at Massabielle this peerless creature declared herself to be what she attests, she implicitly

* 'From our parents we receive life and death.'

† Cf. 'Apologia' (Newman), ch. v., pp. 241 *sqq.*

shows us more clearly than anyone else that where iniquity hath abounded, grace hath still more abounded?

It is thus, we repeat, that our two chief dogmas, without which there is an end to all reason and religion, find in Lourdes their crowning triumph.

Hence it appears that as peoples, like individuals, live by truth more than by science or other secondary matters, Our Lady, in promulgating a doctrine so important, saves them much more certainly than by any other means. For this reason the definition is the Labarum* of modern times. Having slept unnoticed through all the earlier centuries, and only inscribed three or four years previously on the catalogue of faith, such a declaration from the very lips of the Queen of Heaven was evidently reserved for the epoch most liable to the deadly errors which were to find in it their merited overthrow.

Had the Doctors and Fathers of the Church, from the earliest centuries, any presentiment of what would happen one day in this 'quiet limit' of the Kingdom of Our Lady, when they were pleased to call her the great Vanquisher of all the heresies summed up in these two heresies? *Tu cunctas hæreses sola interimisti in universo mundo. . . .*

How many salutary results, in fact, were to flow from this privilege of the Immaculate, results all conspiring to restore truth and virtue in this world! For observe—we cannot, especially at the present

* The Labarum was the standard of Constantine the Great, on which was depicted the figure of Christ.—TRANSLATOR.

time, be too well acquainted with such a theology—if it is true that the Divine Virgin, through an unparalleled grace, was found exempted from the inherited stain, it is because the human race is neither pure nor holy in its origin, as Rousseau pretended, following the Pelagians, but is born guilty and prone to evil: to become holy again it needs a Redeemer.

If the aforesaid exemption of the daughter of St. Anne was only due to the personal merits of the perfect Man whose mother she was to be, it follows that Christ is not a myth, as Strauss asserted, but an historical Person; not even a humanitarian philosopher, as Renan maintained, but God in person living in our nature.

If it is the sufferings of Jesus which have purchased beforehand this singular and supernatural privilege, it follows that the Man-God has not entered this world to fulfil an earthly mission, philanthropical or philosophical, as those luminaries of Rationalism lately affirmed, Jouffroy, Cousin, and *id genus omne*, but a part pre-eminently spiritual and heavenly. . . .

Listen, therefore, O all ye wiseacres of the present day! the essential good which Jesus Christ has brought us is neither science, nor civilization, nor progress, properly so-called, but faith, grace, and charity—the life of the soul; hence the Church, which carries on His work, must have in view the eternal salvation of men much more than the gaining of a purely temporal happiness, which, far from being the criterion of the true religion, as a narrow

Positivism would have us believe, becomes too often an obstacle to its triumph.

From this the duty follows for all who are baptized—instead of giving the rein to their passions, to heal which the blood of the holy Victim has been shed—to fight against them by the practice of the evangelical virtues, above all by the practice of penance, which means that all the self-denial and mortification by which the sufferings of our adorable Head are ‘filled up’ in us are not an excess of mysticism, as the Americanist sect not long ago insinuated, but truly genuine and necessary Christianity.

Moreover, since man comes into the world prone to evil, we must conclude that he is not independent by nature (although the freethinkers repeat it *ad nauseam*), but remains all his life subject to an earlier and higher Law. Thus the boasted ‘Absolute Autonomy’ of the human being, from which they allowed themselves to deduce some vague and shadowy ‘rights of man,’ to the prejudice of the sole true rights of God, falls to the ground.

Such are the conclusions, both theoretical and practical, which flow logically from the fact of Lourdes. Was I wrong, then, in maintaining that it was the most merciful lesson of ideas and truths which the Queen of France could give her people at the very time when every contradictory negation was completely sapping her strength?

So what the definition of her Divine Maternity was, long ago at Ephesus, may we not think the declaration of the Immaculate Conception, in a sense, will prove in our own day, first at Rome by the ap-

pointed organ of the Apostolic See, and a little later at Massabielle, by the extraordinary ministry of the Mother of the Redeemer herself? To the θεοτόκος of the fourth century—to crown the glorious synthesis of our faith—the beautiful formula has been added which fifty years ago the shepherdess of the Pyrénées heard. Nay, more: from this point of view we cannot doubt that the apparition of March 25, 1858, is more important than anything which happened previously in Christian history—even the famous vision with which St. John was cheered at Patmos. For this only happened once, and, moreover, it was purely prophetic; whilst the former, occurring on eighteen different occasions, implied the very reality of the peerless Being, who allowed herself to be seen, and by her sight—and still more by her words—overthrew all the prevailing errors. At that time (we cannot too often repeat it), when the Rationalistic fever, intensified by paradoxical idealism, reached its zenith of blasphemy amongst us, on this spot of earth, by no means the most central or best known (which proves that God has no need of our poor resources), the Great Sign appeared in the heavens of Lourdes. *Signum magnum apparuit in celo!* And with what state and splendour! In the Grotto of the Pyrénées, as formerly in the desert of Asia Minor, this woman who was ‘the Woman’ (*Mulier*) had verily the Sun for a garment. For one who possesses the honour of being the Immaculate Conception—*i.e.*, who is bathed from her eternal cradle in the very splendour of all truth—what blending could there be of light and darkness? Sin,

as the Gospel says, is night. But the Elect of the Most High dwelt, from her first creation, in a region of perfect clearness, where the shadow of a cloud could not arise. This is why at the tragic hour when the Prince of heavenly spirits by his pride was hurled with the crash of a thunderbolt into the abyss of darkness; at that other hour, not less sad, when mankind by its weakness was undergoing the lamentable calamity from which we continually suffer, it was fitting that she, the All Pure, the All Fair, the Immaculate One, on the shining peaks of her glory, should remain impervious to every shameful failing, clothed with the appanages of nature, grace, and glory, as with a garment of light. *Mulier amicta sole*. We may remark aside, does not this garment of light at once recall the dazzling robe, woven of whiteness, with which the Madonna of the Apparitions at the Grotto was apparelled?

The Prophet of the Apocalypse saw her, moreover, treading underfoot the moon, a symbol of the fickleness and inconsistency inborn in every creature (whether his name be Lucifer or Adam), save only her whose unshakable foundations were from the first on the peaks of the holy mountains.* Doubtless, also, for this reason, in the valley of Béarn, on a beautiful spring morning, the unearthly Virgin stood upright on her pedestal of granite, to show that her position above earthly frailties remained, shielded from the humiliating aberrations of our free-will, firm and unshaken, like the predestination of God Himself. *Et luna sub pedibus ejus*.

* Ps. lxxxvi.

As to the crown of twelve stars which St. John and doubtless Bernadette saw shining on the forehead of Mary, who can fail to see this was the proper diadem of the Immaculate Conception—a diadem composed of all the gifts, natural, preternatural and supernatural, which from the first dawn of her existence created to rule, marked her being, making her a world apart, a creation a thousand times more glorious than all those, though so perfect and so numerous, of the Empyrean?

We must leave these giddy heights, and humbly pursue our train of thought—the providential opportuneness of Massabielle.

In a word, therefore, should you ask me why Mary came down from her abode of eternal happiness to Lourdes—a town more obscure than Nazareth, more poor than Bethlehem—I should at once reply, ‘Above all, to save France thereby; and through France, modern society, by manifesting here—as an antidote to the two terrible heresies which, theoretically and practically, are destroying them—the two primary virtues by which, both socially and philosophically, individuals and nations live.’

Shall I also add that it was in truth only to apply this last remedy to human evil, that had become painfully acute under the influence of many causes (especially of the Protestant sociology of Rousseau, rendered more deadly by the equally Protestant ideology of Kant, those two Arch-heretics of modern times), that the gracious Queen of Angels so often laid aside her regal majesty to satisfy her mother’s love?

In reality, therefore, the apparition of March 25,

when Our Lady uttered her name, is the climax of merciful acts which, for nearly six months, the Lady did not cease to perform on the banks of the Gave; the fifteen previous ones being only a preparation for this, as the two following were intended to confirm it by the overwhelming proof that she whose lips uttered such words was not 'the baseless fabric of a vision,' but the living and abiding personality of the Mother of the Saviour. It is our duty, then, since Bernadette has been faithful to the end to her blessed mission, to derive from it more and more the lessons for our faith and our daily life, after half a century's experience, taught us by this event, 'the most extraordinary' (and the most salutary) 'in all history,' as Henri Joli lately wrote, since the Incarnation of the Word, who appeared in a Grotto likewise two thousand years ago to raise us up, by His manger and His cross, from our primeval Fall.

This is not, moreover, the sole benefit we owe to Lourdes. There are others, though this seems to comprise them all.

Is it not evident, for example, that, from the ineffable dialogue of the Madonna with the shepherd-girl, the teaching authority of the Head of the Church receives a timely vindication, since what the Supreme Shepherd had so gloriously defined on that memorable date, December 8, 1854, regarding Our Lady's fundamental privilege, the Blessed Virgin re-words it in her turn, not less gloriously from the height of her Pyrenean throne, which resembles, in its surpassing majesty, the chair of the Vatican itself? Now,

could there be a more absolute confirmation of the Church's Word on this earth? Such is clearly the significance of the events we are considering; they endorse her infallible teaching in so far as it needs it not in itself, but as regards us. And how felicitously it happened at an hour so threatening for the whole Church, but especially for the Holy See! It was the unhappy moment when the tide was flowing strongly against Rome. In France especially, confronting that sublime Pius IX., who had faith and love strong enough to rescue the modern world from shipwreck by lashing it to the bark of Peter, was there not the Carbonarism of an Emperor, a philosophical dreamer, who courted the factions that lived by spoliation, and again the Gallicanism of a politico-religious coterie, whose strange policy tended to limit as much as possible the public and doctrinal influence of the Pope, as it had tried to minimize the social rights of Jesus Christ?

At this critical time, when French soil was still smouldering with the fires of a social revolution, when that of Europe was already trembling as though on the verge of a terrible upheaval, in which the ruins of the temporal power of the Popes would be mingled with the tears and blood of the eldest daughter of the Church, there suddenly appears the Queen of Heaven, coming on purpose, as we see, to try and turn aside from her beloved France the scourges which so many crimes had stored up for it, but also—perhaps chiefly—to restore to the Bishop of Rome, the essential oracle of the Catholic Faith, his rightful prestige, and so pave the way for

the declaration of an article of faith which, old as the Church herself, had slept from the beginning in the hearts of the faithful, but which would soon have to be solemnly defined because of our present misfortunes. We mean, of course, the infallibility of God's Vicar on earth, the most important prerogative of the Apostolic ministry, especially in these dreary times, when (in a famous phrase) it is harder to know one's duty than to do it! But that which is contained already in the Gospel was attested at the Grotto of Massabielle, before it was defined by the Vatican Council; and probably no one would care to deny that it was only approved by the Fathers of 1870 because it was first so marvellously brought before men's minds by the Apparition of 1858.

How well the two things mutually correspond! Pius IX., of his own accord, and without any conciliar meeting, fully aware of his high behest, one day placed on the brow of the Immaculate the fairest of diadems. In return, and almost without delay, what does the chivalrous Lady do? She reveals herself in the silence of a wilderness, because the beaten tracks of modern civilization are unworthy to be trodden by her virginal feet, in order to teach the world that what the Vicar of her Son has defined concerning her is the very truth written from all eternity in the Book of Life above. Thus love for love, measure for measure! For the present the Vatican Council, the most august and numerous ever assembled,* could wait. The Immaculate

* The Vatican Council was made up of 764 Bishops, representing over thirty nations.—TRANSLATOR.

Conception having sounded at Lourdes the trumpet-call of Papal Infallibility, the time was evidently ripe to utter at length that immortal decision which was to become, even more than the exaltation of the Papacy, the glory of the Church and the salvation of the future.

A third and no less real benefit of Lourdes is to have restored 'miracles' in the eyes of the people. A miracle! We know only too well how our modernist age would fain deal with them, because of its claim to be modern. In vain the eternal Gospel rises up, ever youthful with Divine inspiration and human certitude, to record its undeniable miracles on every page. This history—whilst on its critical side it is no different from other histories, and, on the whole, offers more 'motives of credibility' than any profane history—has no weight in the eyes of the modern 'Intellectualists,' as soon as it treats of 'the miraculous—*i.e.*, the impossible, or, at least, what cannot be proved.'

Well, let that pass. Since in the name of contemporary philosophy all the past of the Bible, with its wonders, is ruled out of court, the present rises with a galaxy of phenomena so remarkable that they are nowise inferior to the wonderful gifts of which the primitive Church could boast. It was the fashion to say often, tauntingly, in certain so-called advanced circles: 'We no longer live in the days when the blind saw, the deaf heard, the dumb spoke, paralytic folk walked. Divinity in its old age has doubtless exhausted its first power, or, rather, this sudden

cessation of miracles coinciding with the upward rising of the modern spirit is a clear proof that all these prodigies of a year ago were only a pious delusion bred of ignorance.'

So the critics of yesterday reasoned in their pernicious little books, as though from the Reformation down to Ernest Renan or Alfred Loisy no historical miracles had ever been wrought! . . .

Even granting that, for one reason or another, modern times have been less favoured in this respect than the Middle Ages, when the Supernatural seemed to flourish under the footsteps of believers, we have in Lourdes, at any rate for half a century, a case in point, which affords the most crushing reply to this reckless assertion, due more to prejudice than conviction. There in truth, on the banks of the famous river, amazing events of every kind are becoming more and more the rule. This time, I suspect, Neo-Renanism at bay will not go to seek an excuse for not admitting them in the uncertainty of distance, which admits of errors. For you see phenomena taking place before your eyes, numerous and startling, which cannot be gainsaid. As they take place in the broad light of day, before countless thousands of spectators, everyone can go there to see to his heart's content, with ample leisure to observe, investigate, inquire, and even make experiments, and especially with the full right of contradicting, whenever his sagacity can detect any trace either of simple delusion or fraudulent trickery. In fact, let him count the unceasing caravans of doctors, professors, reasoners of every degree, who, disdainfully

passing through the kneeling crowds, have for half a century been coming to these strange regions to measure their strength against mystery, only to retire from so pathetic a duel completely foiled, if not, as so often happens, confessing the truth.

Thus it is that, by the gentle irony of Fate, miracles, thanks to Lourdes, banished from History and Science, force themselves so irresistibly on the notice of the sceptical twentieth century! Just as, in olden times, to prove motion a shrewd philosopher *walked*, so in our days, to prove that miracles can and do occur, the Virgin of Massabielle has begun to work them—miracles such that even a Charcot and a Bernheim have had to admit them, and even Zola was forced to exclaim, ‘These things take away my breath!’ And they have occurred not once or twice, but almost daily for the last fifty years, often several times a day, and under conditions of publicity or scientific scrutiny so rigorous that the most stubborn of antagonists would never have dared to require as much. To see this, the reader should consult the various books of Boissarie, or that of Bertrin, which is worth a hundred. They say that the high-priest of learned ungodliness once expressed the rash wish that a miracle might be worked in the presence of the academic body so as to win credence! But observe, M. Renan! hundreds and thousands of them will presently be worked before the most mixed tribunal that can be imagined, in which philosophers and pastors, doctors and monks, believers and agnostics, will rub shoulders together. Is not this jury as good as an academy?

But that is not all. When, on the vast Esplanade, Heaven has wrought before the eyes of representatives of the whole world some of its wonders, so surprising that all are simply astounded by them, then the medical Bureau is opened—it is not a chapel with closed doors, but an areopagus open to all-comers. There anyone is admitted, whatever be his philosophy or creed, who can show that he possesses some knowledge of the difficult problems, which are there openly discussed and debated with a freedom you could seek elsewhere in vain. Pause a moment to consider this international Sanhedrin of Science, which has always been anxious to gather its best interpreters from every school and from every country. When they have thoroughly examined a miracle—ten miracles—in every way and from every point of view, they are forced to acknowledge the results so obtained instantaneously, thoroughly, and definitely, without the help of any healing agent, surpassing all known laws, as they are a challenge to all the recognized methods.

I know perfectly well that, rather than make such an admission, freethinkers (so styled, doubtless, because they are in bondage to a party) have thought of every means, however absurd or dishonest, to explain what is above human intelligence. They said, 'The water of Lourdes has mineral properties'; and Professor Filhol, an unbeliever, came to discover in the chemical analysis that there were no more salts in this wonderful water than in that of the Gave or the Seine. Others sought to ascribe everything to 'the healing influence of the crowds,'

yet we see cures taking place far from all the assemblies of men—*e.g.*, in a solitary church, or in the privacy of a room in an hotel, or in a train just starting, or even at the ends of the earth, without the person cured having ever set foot on this predestined soil. Later on, it became the fashion to speak of 'Suggestive Force,' but the authors of this theory, that has more sound than sense, uttering their oracles at Salpêtrière, or at the Hospital of Nancy, had soon to admit that it only holds good in cases of hysteria, while in general it can never (it is Bernheim who speaks, and Charcot agrees with him) 'reset a dislocated limb, or heal inflammation of the chest, or arrest the growth of a tumour, or destroy microbes, or cicatrize the ulcerated coat of the stomach,' all of which cures are wrought at Lourdes frequently and spontaneously. So, however little honesty and good sense they possess, what answer in truth can they give, save that 'the finger of God is here'?

This is truly the opinion of all these multitudes, representing every phase of modern thought, who, returning home, gladly sing a hymn to the miracle they have seen with their eyes, heard with their ears, and touched with their hands. *This* indeed is the immense service which Lourdes renders to poor modern society, stifled by the incubus of a senseless unbelief. Then that unhappily numerous band of persons who have had the dire misfortune to lose their faith in the prevailing atmosphere find it again here, provided they will be honest with themselves, and those who possess it already draw from

it a fresh argument (one that has weight) to preserve the Faith in their heart, to defend it on every occasion, to spread it in the face of an unblushing materialism, which was already flattering itself on having blotted out the notion of God in this world. Let us hope that the hour will soon sound for these self-deluded mortals to be enlightened by the clearness of such proofs ; for how can they fail some day or other to admit the evidential value of miracles ? Has not Renan himself recognized this, when these words escaped from him, ‘ Show me a miracle, a true miracle, to which the rules of scientific investigation can be applied, and I will believe it ’ ? Unhappy man ! he need only have gone to Lourdes, as so many other representatives of science have gone there, more competent than this fanciful *savant*, and who have returned with the *Credo* on their lips. Was not that Professor Vergez well qualified to judge of the superhuman nature of the cures, the great light of the Medical Faculty at Montpellier, who, when dying like a Saint, cried aloud : ‘ At Lourdes I have seen, touched, and heard the Supernatural ’ ? The pity of it is that a certain number of our freethinkers (poor thralls of reason !) prefer to scoff at a safe distance rather than come and see for themselves on the spot. Now, I ask, is such a way of acting scientific ? It is not even fair or natural. It comes rather from the Evil One, the father of all deceits and artifices. The reader may remember the order he tried already in the beginning to impose on Bernadette. Foreseeing, as we said, what reverses and losses awaited him in this fatal Grotto, wishing from the first to counteract

the rising work by destroying its first earthly instrument, did he not make bold at the fifth apparition to cry out to the gentle child amidst a hideous din, 'Save yourself! save yourself!'

Such hath been ever since the battle-cry of the Angel of Darkness in addressing his own. The chief thing he enjoins on them, when they pass under his yoke, is not to go to Lourdes—this at all costs. 'Save yourself! save yourself!' And we notice how men, otherwise intelligent, eager for knowledge, anxious to inquire, will take care not to go, not even once, before these rocks, which, magnet-like, draw the whole world. Charcot was never seen there, who nevertheless (it is on record) used to send patients there when he could not cure them. I do not think Bernheim was anxious to go there. . . . Yet even from the purely technical point of view it is (as all masters declare) the most fascinating amphitheatre which can be imagined! Yes, but that is the watchword: 'Shun Lourdes!' As though unable to kill it by the radiance of Science, they hoped to hush it up in the darkness of silence! The fear, too, haunts them (we might add)—the hideous and diabolical fear of having to work out their salvation, by faith and virtue, in going to Lourdes; and therefore *they save themselves* . . . by keeping away, far away, from it. . . . This is termed, it seems, independent philosophy. Let us rather say, it is the blinding of man's mind, if we do not call it the hardening or corruption of his heart, and therein, as the Gospel testifies, lies their crowning misfortune, for it is the sin that cannot be forgiven.

In any case, it will not be the foolish or dishonest prejudice of all our official Homais, which will do much harm to the religion based to-day, as two thousand—nay, six thousand—years ago, on miracles.

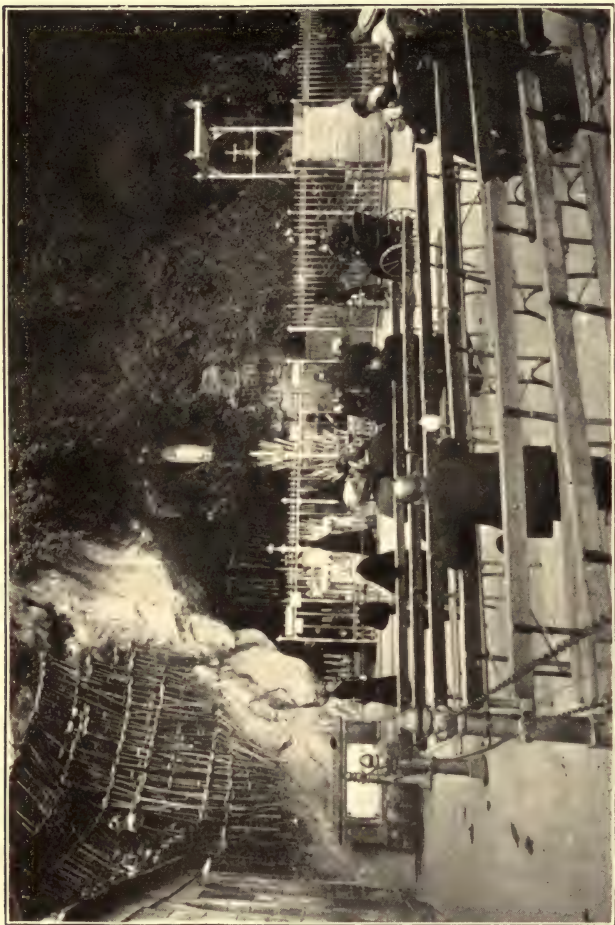
Thanks to Lourdes, those become ever more numerous who, after the example of M. Pasteur, not only do not start back in terror before the shadowy outline of the other world, but who also pronounce without displeasure the word ‘Divine’ as one of those indispensable terms to which Science really worthy of the name ought to give its full rights. Materialism will scoff and rage in vain. ‘From the banks of the Gave,’ wrote Georges Bertrin, ‘a powerful influence has gone forth which compels the truly serious men of our time to raise their heads and look at Heaven!’

Shall I add that Lourdes has brought back among our people the practice of the Christian life, so highly valued by our pious forefathers? What is the twofold law of this life? It is prayer and penance.

Otherwise you cannot live the life of a Catholic. Now go to Massabielle, and tell me if this valley of grace is not such just because men pray very much there and do wonderful penance. To give you an idea of how they pray at Massabielle, I should say that it seems like a revival of the earliest ages. In such a way they would have besought Our Lord before the images of Mary, during the pagan persecutions, in the holy catacombs. Oh, that truly unparalleled sight of those kneeling multitudes, their arms crossed, their eyes turned to Heaven, their heart in the heart of their mother! They are indeed the

'crowds of Lourdes,' the mystical meaning of which Huysmans has perhaps imperfectly understood. Observe them ; under a burning sun, or in storms of rain, no one there is distracted from his contemplation, everyone being spellbound, as it were, by sensible contact with the mysterious, their souls united in a sublime, intense, all-absorbing communion, which expresses itself sometimes by canticles of joy, sometimes by ineffable litanies, or else by tears and silence ; while a hundred yards away the eternal moaning of the Gave continues, rippling monotonously, like the echo of the people's prayers. We know, too, that this prayer, starting with the dawn, hardly ceases till nightfall, beginning with the first mass at daybreak, only to end with the innumerable 'Hail Marys' of the procession with lights. Meanwhile, how can we estimate or weigh all the sighs and prayers, public or private, spoken or whispered, with which the air of Espéluques is filled ? That doctor of electro-therapeutics who came—in jest, no doubt—to lecture us on some fluid discharges or other determined by the faith of the pilgrims in the sky of the Grotto was not so far wrong after all ! Yes, indeed, prayer here has 'discharges,' which, without breaking any cloud, because their power is purely spiritual, penetrate the Heaven of heavens, and while causing man's great misery to ascend there, often draw down its great mercy.

As for penance, it is enough to have beheld once that piteous freight of all human ills brought to Lourdes from the four quarters of the suffering



THE GROTTO OF LOURDES.

world, like the ransom of our sins, to see that this land of wondrous changes is also one of sacrifice. What sights of suffering all round these rocks, and before the sacred cavern, whence the healing of the sick seems to flow with the crystal wave, which gives them such happiness, and by the edge of those mysterious pools, where every infirmity is laid, as at Bethsaida, in the hope that God's angel will appear in the shape either of a noble sick-bearer or a gentle nurse, to dip them in the healing waters; and on this boulevard of the Rosary chapel, where often there are a thousand sick persons waiting on their couches for the passing of Christ in the Eucharist, to remind Him of the ancient days of Palestine, as they cry out to Him with repeated sobs, 'Son of David, have pity on us'!

The merciful Lady once begged very earnestly that men should there do 'penance, penance, penance.' . . . Have the wishes of the Madonna been complied with, and does it not seem that, of all the praises she receives in this land of prodigies, those appeal most to her forgiving heart which come to her sorrowfully from this place of miracles, obtaining wondrous cures at the price of such misery? For we see that, while the well-known instances of penance recorded in Holy Writ, or in the bright ages of Christianity, are here re-enacted, God's anger in Heaven is appeased, His justice satisfied, His punishments stayed, an era of grace and forgiveness is begun with marvels of every kind—healing of the body and sanctification of the soul, individuals are raised up—whilst we await (soon, as we hope) the deliverance of the

whole nation. Such does Lourdes seem to be in fact, regarded under its mystical aspect, which is the most real of all. 'Lourdes,' the illustrious coadjutor of Cambrai lately observed, 'is the convincing proof that the gifts of Heaven are given to us without repentance.' Is the outburst of patriotism, pray, that sends to this centre of French regeneration a people who are loth to die nothing but *mere devotion*? And has not Heaven shown itself infinitely solicitous of our needs in opening for us in the land of Bigorre such a centre of vitality, where the children of the ancient Franks will find again in tears the eternal Christ of their history?

It is an inexorable law that joy must come from the Cross and thrive in misfortune. At Lourdes the poor 'eldest daughter of the Church,' too long tried by tyrants both contemptible and hateful, whom she has allowed for more than a century to usurp the place of her time-honoured King, Jesus, will live again like the tree in the Gospel pruned by the sickle, and we shall see the outburst of a national spring, such as the former centuries have never witnessed.

Again, in case that for this renovation, so much desired and so necessary, the prayers daily rising and the tears daily shed at Lourdes were not enough, there would still be charity to complete them, that unfailing sign of spiritual health. Had I the pen of the latest apologists of Massabielle, what a chapter I would have to write on the heroes and heroines

who there look after the victims of the 'National Debt'!

Let me say most earnestly that, since from forth her granite throne the Mother of mercy draws all suffering to her, she diffuses love in every heart. Yes, here in truth is the kingdom of universal fellowship and Christian brotherhood. Here you find realized—more than realized—the dream of Plato; nay, the fact of the Gospel, *cor unum et anima una*, is here repeated in a lasting way. If, after the sufferings of those who are there racked with pain, something is still wanting to redeem guilty France, will it not be the lovingkindness of this army of brothers and sisters of Sorrow, the chivalry of Our Lady, who nurse their patients so tenderly? As to those who are spoilt by the new civilization, for whom miracles are a farce, they need only go, if they were worthy, to see how men suffer on the banks of the Gave, how they are encouraged to believe in charity, and then in Our Lady, the Queen of mercy and of power.

But prayer, which is the avowal of man's misery, and the appeal of his weakness to God's power; penance, which punishes the pride of sin, and pays the debt of the guilty to infinite Justice; in fine, charity wearing itself out amid our earthly egotisms without ever growing weary, after the pattern of the adorable Benefactor, who went about among His exiled brethren doing good—what is all this but religious life in its highest form? That learned Benedictine, Thomas Wieckert, was not wrong when he lately defined Lourdes as 'a bridge thrown over the

chasm between the Natural and the Supernatural.' Moreover, because God is nowhere loved more than there, both in Himself and in the person of all those who carry His cross, nowhere else is one better off, even humanly speaking, than in this oasis of the Pyrénées. It is 'the ideal Fatherland' of all, and those who can spend a few days there find no trouble in forgetting the land where they can only persecute and blaspheme, blaspheme and persecute. What a 'haven' for all the mourners in existence! Infirm in body, or sick in soul, who has not felt a special benefit there? Who, in drowning his tears at the living spring, has not gained peace and strength there? When you have been once, you go there again; if you are not healed, you go away at least resigned, hopeful, and better. For everyone, after the pilgrimage to the Grotto life's pilgrimage seems less weary. Henceforth they will ascend better the steps of earth's Calvary, having learned at this divine school to suffer in prayer, to pray in suffering, to bear to the end their burden of sorrow, whilst forgetting themselves, living for others, seeking happiness 'not in this world, but in the next,' as 'the Lady' taught her client, whose Christian motto was always, 'To do my duty, and to walk bravely along my path.' This, too, is not the least useful of all the lessons we can learn at Lourdes.

We must not quit this ideal state of things without observing that Lourdes has conferred another great benefit in destroying Human Respect. Here the reader will notice that I speak chiefly of the men of

France, those grandsons of the Crusaders, who a little more than a century ago, fearing the sardonic laugh of the disciples of Voltaire, would too often slink away ashamed from before Our Lady's statue. To-day you see, in this land of miracles, spiritual more often than physical, these same men, with a taper in their hand, accompanying without fear and reproach the Blessed Sacrament in the winding procession; going to Confession, in the crowded churches or in some recess, to the first priest they meet; going to communion together in the open air; saying the 'Rosary of old women' kneeling, with their arms crossed; bowing down, kissing the earth, striking their breast, shedding tears, uttering cries of joy, or groans of repentance, or Hosannahs of victory, as the Blessed Sacrament passes by. . . . What a change has been wrought here! Who could have hoped for that fifty years ago, when in good society, to have a veneer of polished ungodliness was the mark of good breeding? From this point of view, nothing can compare truly with what took place during our Men's Pilgrimages! In 1899 they numbered 60,000, and in 1903 quite a *corps d'armée* flocked from the furthest bounds of France, under the banners of the Faith, to give to their immortal King, Jesus Christ, the most magnificent ovation that a Sovereign could wish for. At this very moment of writing everything indicates that, this year especially, they will come in still greater numbers to the banks of the Gave.

Should they not, therefore, while their country is in mourning, make a national 'Act of Reparation'

here which will hasten the day of their deliverance? What a beautiful sight it is truly in these degenerate days, in which we endure such relentless persecution! How can we fail to draw consolation and hope from it? If only all the good Frenchmen of our nation would come to Lourdes for this Jubilee, this hope would truly seem on the eve of fulfilment!

To whom should the honour of this phenomenon be ascribed, which perplexes our petty psychologists, unless to Lourdes? The mistress of the house, so clever because so good ('because so motherly,' St. Ambrose would say), began fifty years ago to attract people by the glamour of her personal charms; then—gradually, mark!—she has directed all to her Divine Son, for whom, you will notice, she has not ceased to work in fact since the first apparition. And thus it is that insensibly this secluded valley has been transformed into the classic land of Faith, the dominion of God, where the boldest manifestations of the piety of our forefathers are the order of the day; where to pray and to sing are as natural as to breathe; where no one is ashamed to avow himself a Catholic in faith and practice; where he who would not be such would have to hide and flee away, like the hapless author of 'Nana,' who *saved himself*, unhappy man! at the supreme moment of grace by declaring he could stay there no longer. . . .

Therefore, is it not true that since the Crusades, when every baptized person was a soldier of Christ, nothing like it has been seen on earth? Moreover, it is in the age of electricity, when an aged Berthelot

makes chemical compounds, and a young Viviani is engaged in blotting out one by one the stars of Heaven, that such sights are witnessed here !

The greatest triumph is that these good pilgrims, when they return home, become apostles. Just as formerly they seemed to apologize for their Creed, and the Decalogue, by keeping it in the background, now they publicly display it. And it is the work of the great gatherings at the foot of Massabielle to sow, when far away, the seeds of the Gospel.

Herein exactly lies the secret of this recent turning of the soul of France to Heaven, which we mentioned just now. The clever Lady was well aware what she wanted when she asked for 'a chapel' and 'processions' in the desert. Her maternal heart was prophetic ! In the light of God it had seen that from this focus of supernatural life not only would innumerable graces flow—graces given through *her*—but a whole crowd of apostles would go forth thence, who would hasten to bring the good news to their brethren buried in the shadows of death.

It is through winning converts, therefore, that Lourdes powerfully helps to save our unfortunate country. So those who obstinately look upon this Grotto as a luxury of mysticism understand nothing of the social movement of the hour, so important and decisive. They overlook the fact that, but for Lourdes, it would have long since been all over with Christian France, and even with France as a nation. But mark ! not only does the Woman who reigns there hold in check the Beast from hell, always ready to spring on the eldest daughter of the Church ; but

the children of Mary also, who come there one after another without remission (nearly half of our most Christian nation has come there during fifty years), carry away, with their baptismal grace renewed, a sense of their dignity as men and an influence as Christian apostles that are active and wide enough to save this people at length from the excesses of their rulers, who only seem to hold power one after another in order to ruin more effectually the fairest kingdom on earth.

Lourdes, the Palladium of France ! Such is the verdict of contemporary history ; and these matters, however delicate, should be mentioned in this year of Jubilee, to pay a national debt of justice to the Queen in our midst, and in the height of the storm to fill our sails yet more with the breath of all patriotic hopes.

Our Lady of Massabielle, who hast already done so much for thy beloved country, complete thy work by making each of thy clients an apostle, and our dear France will become once again what, under thy auspices, it was for so many centuries—the foremost nation of all the world !

CHAPTER V

THE POWERS OF DARKNESS

THE greater a good work is here on earth, the more certain it is to meet with opposition or persecution. Such is, in fact, the authentic seal of every good work here below. Its condition, since divided allegiance created two camps in this world, is ever a warfare. 'Because thou wast acceptable to God,' said the Angel to Tobias, 'it was necessary that temptation should prove thee.'* Lourdes, which for fifty years is the source of health more than any other place in the world, is no exception to the law of Providence. On it especially, since it is the chief headquarters of grace for France, the storm was doomed to burst.

The reader will remember that this did not fail to happen at the very beginning, in a most strange and unpleasant way. The assault having failed through those 'threatening voices,' the Evil One did not delay to stir up against the holy Grotto all the prejudices of the neighbourhood, both of the spirit, and of the flesh—I mean, the market-place. You should have heard in the evening,

* Tobias xii. 13.

to whet their curiosity, the well-known gossips of the town discussing, from various motives, miracles in general, and the visions of Soubirous in particular. Soon official Science and the Government took cognizance of it, as we have seen, giving by turns their explanations or their ukases. Then there was quite an uproar in this humble Landerneau of Catholic mysticism.

Then when, on this new ground, success again failed the presumption of some and the bigotry of others, they organized against the unlucky Rock the sage conspiracy of silence. Thenceforward, in the world of liberal thought, the rule was that not even the name of Massabielle should be mentioned by the 'Intellectualists.'

Heaven, however, was *not* silent here below, never ceasing to declare itself with an urgency and a forcibleness that daily increased, and so plainly that the champions of local liberalism had to reply to it, relying this time on the precious verdict of professional men like Diday and Voisin. 'Medicinal qualities of the water,' 'hallucinations of a child'—this was, however, once again, the only argument these clever practitioners could bring forward. Truly impiety is not fertile in expedients. Still, two men, who represented at this time, not without distinction, modern medicine in its relations to psychology, were soon to come to the rescue. They were the Doctors Charcot and Bernheim. The first was recognized at Salpêtrière as the high-priest of hypnotism, obtaining in this novel field, by the ingenuity of his methods, results truly marvellous;

the second, less known, perhaps, was no less active in investigating at the famous school of Nancy the vexed question of 'Auto-suggestion.' Both these men, as you might naturally expect, met together at the outset to define, from the eminence of their infallible dogmatism, that the strange cures on the banks of the Gave (if they were really genuine) ought not to differ specifically from those obtained in their respective hospitals. And for a long time it will be the fashion, even among our Deist philosophers (I dare not reckon certain Catholics among them), to go on repeating, on the strength of these authorities, that Lourdes was a 'Psycho-therapeia,' or 'soul-healing' place, like any other. . . .

Yes, but fortunately Heaven always raises up a champion against every adversary. Just as Professor Filhol in the beginning exploded the convenient theory of 'mineral salts' by his analysis, and Professor Vergez, in the name of Physiology, destroyed the gratuitous and harmful fable based on 'nervous affection,' so in God's mercy, to reply to these two oracles of the prevalent materialism, genuine interpreters of the psycho-therapeutic science came forward to reply to such lofty assurance. Thus, among many others, Dr. Julien Besançon, an eminent physician of Paris, and director of the *Journal de Médecine Interne*, fearlessly threw cold water on the arrogant enthusiasm of the hypnotic specialists. 'When there is question,' he wrote, 'of nervous affections simply functional, the cure can depend on Suggestion. But the "suggestive" methods employed by doctors have never gone so

far as to replace in a few hours the losses of extended substances, or to cicatrize in a moment old ulcers. Yet it is certain that such visible changes take place at Lourdes.' This was very apposite, I think, since thereby 'the engineer was hoist with his own petard.'

Moreover, the evidence for these supernatural phenomena became more and more so overwhelming at Massabielle that our adversaries found themselves forced to make a qualified admission, not without trying, by means of crafty evasions, to save their face as well as they could.

Let us hear the learned Jew Bernheim: 'Yes, the facts of Lourdes exist—splendid, undeniable. . . . Our sole task is to strip them of their miraculous character.' That is, indeed, the vital point!

As for Charcot, whose testimonies on this point are legion, here is still stronger evidence. Asked by some English people about the usefulness of the pilgrimage to Espéluques, he did not deny, but he confessed and declared, the following—he, the great worker of lay miracles, whose surgical hall rose proudly in front of this obscure Grotto: 'The pool certainly cures, the shrine certainly cures, Faith certainly cures.' We know that he finally wrote a sensational book on this Faith-cure. I do not forget that by that term now, as ever, the master only understood the wonderful power of Suggestion, or Auto-suggestion. . . . Yet the result was that this prince of medical atheism was soon compelled to admit—no small concession for him—that at Lourdes cures are certified which no science

or method could have obtained. *Habemus confitentem reum.*

It is a well-known fact that the incomparable Charcot himself, when he could not manage to cure his patients, sent them, like a good confrère, to the Madonna of the Pyrénées. What do all the M. Homais* of high and low degree say about that? The time is past for scoffing at Lourdes and the cures which a vain people attribute to it, since the head of contemporary therapeutics has modestly to recognize its effective power, and look to it as an aid to his own genius! Yet what an instance it is of the irony of Fate! Moreover, not only are such people compelled to attribute to the hospital of Our Lady many wonderful cures, but they must also allow the fairness of the conditions in which they always see them performed. 'Here,' Dr. Berillon, director of an important psycho-therapeutic review, said lately in the *Bureau des Constatations*, 'the good faith is above suspicion, the sincerity absolute, and no stage effects.' What further, or what better, could be desired?

All this could not prevent Zola, about this time—a man who knew as little of medicine as of philosophy, hence the least qualified to intervene in so delicate a discussion—from going there with a malicious intent against the wonders of the Grotto.

* M. Homais is a character in French fiction, the apothecary and philosopher of the village, who, having a little acquaintance with chemistry and medicine, ventures to deny God, miracles, and everything supernatural.—TRANSLATOR.

Moreover, by his past career as a third-rate writer of so-called 'experimental' Naturalism, he, who could only blaspheme at every step, was well fitted to be chosen in his time as the tool of Satan to fling mud at the Queen of all graces. In fact, how could such a reprobate have understood the mystery of heavenly love and superhuman life that breathes in this unearthly cavern, who, a mere slave to his instincts, and blind to higher things, had travestied or outraged everything in this world? With a soul essentially base, whose only pleasure was to 'prey on garbage,' and under the influence of official personages, from whom he expected recompense, absolutely incapable of appreciating the lofty notions, and still less the lofty sentiments, of duty, virtue and self-denial, the sad author of the sad 'Nana' could not fail to be the sworn enemy of Lourdes, apart from the fact that this disgraceful task assigned to him by the Lodges was to be richly rewarded, like all the infamous works which have come from their hands these thirty years with the seal of State approval.

To get fuller knowledge (as he claimed or fancied), we see the leader of the 'Nature School' on the bank of the famous river of Béarn; he sees everything, hears everything, asks all manner of questions, takes notes, makes inquiries, thoroughly examines the depositions of people cured. Every door is open to him; they show him everything wherever he goes; he is treated like one of the family. He sits in the areopagus of the leaders of science; he is present in the best place at the Holy Offices of the liturgy; he

is seen walking gravely behind the golden monstrance in the procession of the Blessed Sacrament. Then, such is the vividness of the impression made on him in spite of himself that he writes to the *Temps*: 'You see here sick people, who, hitherto unable to move, suddenly stand up and walk;' and to the *Journal de Paris*: 'What I here witness takes away my breath!'*

Might he have sketched there, so to speak, the first stage of his conversion? At all events, good and noble souls, who were interested in him, could hope so for a time, especially as the sweet features of Bernadette wonderfully attracted his romantic nature. Everything about her filled him with emotion. He wanted to go and study her, and breathe her in, he would say, on the spot, wherever she had dwelt. For that purpose he made a journey—I will almost say 'a pilgrimage'—to Bartres, interviewing there, as he did in the Rue de Petits-Fossés, or the Rue de Bourg, anyone who had known the child, and could help to depict this incomparable figure, by which he was evidently fascinated—so much so, it seems, that the new volume at these charming hours should have for its title the bright name of the Bigourdain shepherdess! What a beautiful idyll it would be from the pen of the author of 'Le Rêve'!

Alas! these holy places were for only too short a time for the noisy blusterer on the road to Damascus, where God's grace had certainly lain in wait for him on his journey.

Everyone has heard how 'the fair-haired Monsieur

* 'Me serre à la gorge.'

of Paris' returned from the classic land of mystery more unbelieving, or more infidel, than ever. Is it not written that for certain deceived souls Heaven finally draws a veil before their eyes? 'They have eyes,' says the Prophet, 'and see not, and ears to hear, and hear not; they feel, and do not take hold.' It is to them also that Pascal's terrible 'Thought' applies regarding the sufficient amount of light afforded by Religion to enlighten sincere hearts, but also of obscurity, which ends by darkening the others. . . .

There is no doubt now, after half a century of unassailable proofs, that all mankind would have long since been on its knees before the sublime Grotto if only they were willing to be impartial. Only Christianity would then have no enemies, its enemies being always recruited wherever passion stirs up hatred against it, unless it be stupidity, which gives rise to prejudice.

Whereas, when a man is in good faith, this man, 'naturally Christian,' seeks the faith of his own accord, and in our miracles and doctrines finds higher harmonies, instead of meeting with the pretended inconsistencies which Freethinkers—or, rather, Free-livers—absurdly complain of.

As for the long-promised History, it was nothing more, as you could imagine, than an odious and ill-digested pamphlet of over 500 pages—a sacrilegious caricature of our holy places of France rather than a conscientious and honest portrayal of them; the revolting production of one of those unclean creatures who dare to trample brutally over the precious

pearls of which the Gospel speaks! *Nolite mittere margaritas ante porcos*. Naturally, the aim of the writer (not critical, but prejudiced) was to inflict a decisive blow at the apparitions by calling them the result of hysteria, and at the cures by ascribing them to some almighty 'influence' or other of the crowds, which was, in fact, nothing else than Charcot's theory of 'Self-suggestion' reduced to a system and adorned with poetry and beautiful diction, so as to seem brilliant at times.*

With the masses it was, at all events, the most insidious attempt made by the Evil One for more than half a century. Such a great name, a writer so famous, so much art put at the service of so much bigotry—what more was needed to put an end for ever to the 'superstition' of Lourdes, that scandalous anachronism in the heart of all modern Progress?

So the anti-Romans hoped, who raised a great storm on the question of 'Lourdes,' as the anti-militarists had done before in the case of the 'Débâcle,' and the anti-patriots were to do before long concerning the author of 'J'accuse.' Is it not in every case the same school of national insanity, whose god is Dreyfus, and prophet Zola?

It must be admitted, however, that if the successful sale of a book is a criterion of its value, this work, thanks to unlimited bribery and puffing,

* As an example of Zola's 'good faith,' Marie Lebranchu ('Grivotte') was cured at Lourdes in 1892 of pulmonary consumption in the third stage, whom the novelist *falsely* represents as dying on her return home, and whom he tried afterwards to *bribe* (M. Bertrin, p. 347).

would seem not to be deficient in merit. But let us say at the same time that, as regards the effect produced, it was a huge fiasco. Besides, from a literary point of view, true connoisseurs (more numerous than you would think), in spite of some remarkable descriptions, considered this bulky volume loosely constructed, deficient not merely in scientific accuracy, but also in good taste, arrangement, and proportion—those qualities so eminently French, which nothing can atone for in the opinion of foreigners — not even a Machiavellian perfidy nor Government protection. As for overthrowing the Bastille of the Church's belief, the new catapult, on the contrary, only strengthened it by the reaction of disgust which it provoked. From this time, in truth, thanks to the most unexpected of advertisements, the fame of Lourdes has never ceased to grow wherever the big bad book has been circulated; and faith in its miracles has in these days taken still deeper root in men's minds. *Salutem ex inimicis nostris!*

It is thus that the Evil One is from time to time caught in his own snares. The original conspiracy of silence would have been an advantage to him. But it pleased God, the better to glorify His chosen creature, to employ an Emile Zola, just as He made use, long ago, of the jawbone of an ass. The coarseness or wickedness of the instrument matters little in the clever hands of Providence.

Let us add, for the credit of French literature, and for the eternal salvation of his soul, this man, if covetousness and pride had not stifled his good inspirations at Bartrès, could have written splendidly

on the wonders of Lourdes. That would have been far better for him than to be buried in the Pantheon, which is enough to make the dead there turn in their graves.

We must thank Heaven for having deigned to console the lovers of Massabielle for Zola by giving them a Huysmans! How, in the course of our sketches, could we fail to greet with deep gratitude the figure of this virtuoso of Art, whom sincerity compelled to write in defence of Lourdes, and who, before 'suffering' so terribly his work of Christian mysticism, wished to sum it up in a judicial and bold way in his 'Foules de Lourdes'?

For him, too, this remarkable volume was to be the last; as if, after having spoken of the Madonna, either in dithyrambic praise, or in reviling her, the writer's task was ended! Thus devotion to Mary is the crown of all good on this earth, just as hatred of Our Lady, alas! is, even in this world, a mark of eternal reprobation.

Whatever may be said of certain minor details, which I do not undertake to defend as altogether appropriate, though they may seem natural enough to the character of the author, it cannot be denied that the work in question has proved, in its day, more useful than a fine or a literary work such as was then required on the boulevard of Paris, for which especially an author wrote. It is precisely because he came from *Là-bas**—from such depths,

* The title of one of Huysman's earlier works before his conversion.—TRANSLATOR.

with so many blemishes still remaining—that the former guest of the suppers of Médan could be an avenger with a double right—his talents and his antecedents—the anti-Zola (if you will) of the beginning of the twentieth century, Positivist, Realist, Naturalist, as much as you like in external form, but so full of faith, and zealous and militant at heart! For in this ruthless critic of all paltry sentimentalities and false æsthetics we have a true mystic who, on the banks of the Gave, thrills like an Æolian harp, and makes us thrill, to all the influences of Heaven. I quite admit that, being an inexperienced neophyte, he has not always caught the most subtle pulsations of the *soul of Lourdes*. Polyeuctes* did not argue as a theologian, and his terms had not always the orthodox correctness which an old theologian would have given them, yet what a champion of the supernatural, and especially of miracles, is this clever writer!—independent even to fierceness, a reasoner of great subtlety, prosaic even to the verge of dulness, but all the more convincing, because everywhere he seems to us converted by the evidence as much as by grace. So we cannot rise up from reading these pages (whatever prejudices may have crept into them) without thinking: ‘Miracles truly are not so childish as they are made out, since an intellect so powerful has ended by finding in them peace of mind and joy of heart.’

Was it, then, a small service to bring an apostate generation to see that a man can possess a keen

* Polyeuctes, a neophyte, more full of zeal than learning. Cf. Corneille’s drama, ‘Polyeucte.’—TRANSLATOR.

intellect and still believe in miracles? In this way I would not hesitate to maintain that Huysmans has been a sort of instrument chosen by Providence at the right moment to baffle and confound the academic or scientific enemies of the mysterious Grotto. Perhaps it was for this reason that the gentle Madonna of Bigorre, of whom he wrote such beautiful and pious thoughts, cured him twice in succession, first of spiritual darkness, then of physical blindness, that, enlightened by Our Lady, he might in turn enlighten others. Few people know of this second benefit, which he has narrated for us himself. Yet it is indeed worth all those whom his matchless prose has made known and refuted. At the hour when his 'Foules' wanted only the final touches, in this upper room of the Rue de Sèvres, a sudden and cruel ophthalmia made further work impossible. Stretched on a bed of pain in the corner of a dim room, where a subdued light was burning before a medieval image of the Mother of God, our poor M. J. Kloris was henceforth absolutely unable to read or write, praying, meditating, suffering, and resigning himself to God's will (not without smoking many cigarettes), when one evening, at Easter-time, his sight suddenly returned to him, strong and perfect. His doctor was astonished at it. 'Wonderful! wonderful!' were the only words he could utter. Huysmans felt that it was a signal favour of Heaven. In thanksgiving, therefore, he resumed his work, his great work, that for which he must have been specially set apart—nav. miraculously cured.

The appearance of these pages, which the public had long been anxiously waiting for, was as much a religious event as a literary feast. Fashionable society, already permeated with the poison of Zolaism, regaled itself on this delicious banquet, in which the flavour of dogma was so pleasantly blended with an indefinable after-taste of the world, and everyone read Huysmans to the great advantage of Our Lady, who by means of her eccentric apostle multiplied her converts.

The author's design, I repeat, was to deliver the supernatural from the foolish attacks of a certain 'Science,' not so much by arguing with it according to the spirit of the method now in vogue as by exposing it—I was going to say, by examining it and dissecting it in the light of common sense, rightly convinced with Joseph de Maistre that God reveals Himself more by some of His startling portents than by all the syllogisms of Aristotle or inductions of Bacon.

The history of Lourdes, the flocking thither of the crowds, the liturgy of its shrines, and Christian symbolism, are there depicted with the simplicity and accuracy of a quattrocentist.* You perceive a soul taken up with the supernatural through the candour which prayer or worship suggest to him in their manifold forms. With what a brush, often larger and more sincere than that of his profane master, he too can depict the ever-changing kaleidoscope of vast swarms of humanity! On Catholic æsthetics,

* Name applied to the Flemish school of painters in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.—TRANSLATOR.

on symbolism, on healing, what striking facts he reveals to us! If Zola was anything but an artist, you see everywhere here that his disciple was one in the full sense of the word. But what chiefly makes him hold his breath are the cures—those perplexing cures—of which he had the privilege of being an eyewitness, and so he is glad to make himself, in his own way, the painter and historian, the critic and apostle, to his generation.

After such a work, was not the man of letters quite right in burning all that remained of his profane sketches, like these old troubadours of the Middle Ages, his brethren, who, tired of gaiety and violence, and moved to repentance, before their death began (they say) to sing the praises of My Lady, Holy Mary, and wished to forget everything else here below?

Much will have been forgiven this panegyrist of the eleventh hour, who, though ugliness under all its earthly forms once enthralled him, veered completely round to the Heavenly ideal. On this new path, of which the brilliant stages were called 'En Route,' 'La Cathédrale,' 'L'Oblat,' 'Sainte Liwine de Schiédam,' he ended, to our joy and edification, by finding Jesus at length in the arms of Mary in the 'Foules de Lourdes,' and on that day there would have been great joy before the angels of Heaven.

Why, then, should we be shocked more than is necessary by a certain naturalism in him? Our stylist had it in his blood. His education and surroundings, and his life of stress and strain, could not fail to bring it out more clearly. Is it a fault too

great for pardon, and must a man write in our days as in the time of Massillon or Pascal? It is owing to a similar cast or tendency of mind (it would be unjust to forget it) that Huysmans owed his style, so highly polished, yet careless of conventions, which suited his temperament, his tastes, and his caprices as a subtle 'impressionist,' but also (we repeat) to his special audience, who would not otherwise have tolerated his pleading on behalf of miracles. So much the better, then, that this genuine Flemish author—who was in every respect the polar opposite of the Venetian exaggerator, who neither in mind nor heart was French—has thus brought to our modern prose and our Christianity the temperament of his race, whose chief aim was always to paint through a magnifying-glass, but with infinite care and pitiless truth. By dint of having been wrought and carved, the style of the 'Foules' has become the wonderful metal to which nothing can compare, and which, while shining on the reader's intelligence, warms his heart, and forces its way so as to subdue his will. I know readers who have risen from this book as believers through the idea—I almost said the feeling—of the Divine which they found in it.

Poor 'des Esseintes'!* Is that not his highest praise? He who formerly, alas! was only bent on depicting infamous vice was completely changed by a winning smile of the most pure Virgin, deserving to sing before his astonished and misguided contemporaries the endless mercies of the Mother of Christ, the

* 'Des Esseintes' was the pen-name by which Huysmans often signed his writings.—TRANSLATOR.

bright haven of all human repentance ! So when he shows us, in his masterly style, ulcers and cancers disappearing as if by magic beneath the gracious hand of the merciful Lady, all this seems to me as nothing compared with the cure of the spiritual canker from which he himself had been delivered at Massabielle. What a great day it was for Lourdes when this remarkable 'subject,' who was a mixture of qualities the most opposed—senseless depravity and indomitable striving after virtue, ruthless negation and sublime ecstasies, gross blasphemies, and fervour worthy of the greatest penitents—became thus the object of the most beautiful of miracles ! All lovers of the sacred Grotto, the workshop of so many secret conversions, can only doubly rejoice at this signal favour of the sweet Mother, to sing whose glories it was fitting that our famous 'rescued' hero should henceforth dedicate his last writings as the touching *ex-voto* of his memorable deliverance. . . .

Shall I add that, thus drawn by Our Lady, Huysmans was a changed man, from a dilettante becoming a contemplative, and from an admirer a believer, as though with the new spirit the speculative and practical sense of the beauty of Christianity had been infused into him ? Who has spoken better than the author of the 'Foules' of the grandeur of prayer ; of the secrets of the 'illuminative' or 'unitive' way ; of the social meaning of trials ; lastly, of the second redemption by means of pain ?

It is certainly no great harm that, preserving always — not for effect, but from conscience — his

former tone of bold freedom, he does not shrink from irreverent jesting with regard to venerable persons or things which, perhaps, rather lend themselves to it, nor from sharp criticisms of our miniature ecclesiastical art, or of our rubrics, sometimes too modernized. That, I repeat, was 'the old Adam,' which grace does not supplant when it comes to adapt itself to nature. He, whose good name I am so pleased to vindicate for the love of the Almâh, sufficiently atoned for these defects of character by the ridicule and reproaches he poured on the land of witless incredulity—still more, perhaps, by the suspicion of irony which he gave to more than one of his new co-religionists whilst waiting till his last agony should soon end his sufferings.

Whatever the case may be, as regards Lourdes, at least, Huysmans arose, we might say, like a light, at a critical time of its conflict with the powers of darkness, for, we cannot be tired of repeating, to the prestige of his great and undeniable talent, this neo-apologist had to add that of a long personal experience. When he treats of supernatural mysteries with that conviction, and even unction, not unmixed with coarseness, how can we refuse to believe a witness who comes from such depths? In truth, did not the Immaculate One need this agnostic, this libertine, this myrmidon of Satan, suddenly transformed into a confessor, and even a martyr?

So much the worse for Zola if, having had the same chance, he preferred, under the incentive of lust and pride, to turn his back on the advances of the merciful Virgin, and to remain hopelessly the

scavenger who, having left nothing but moral ugliness in his path, wished, by the height of superhuman impudence, to sully the most glorious work of God—His Mother! We know the end of this cynical insulter of the ‘Woman above all women glorified’: by a too evident punishment, one morning he was found lying dead on the floor, confounded with unutterable slime! . . . Thus Nestorius long ago, the first personal enemy of the Almâh, had to be picked up, suffocated, from the depths of a sewer. Such endings are quite in keeping with the baseness of the unfortunate beings who provoked them; whereas our writer, having barely finished giving to religion and literature his harmonious swan-song, purified by a purgatory of eighteen months, died like a Saint.

I might also add that before death, while he was slowly wasting away, he had the ineffable joy of seeing the soul of his dear friend, the atheist and anarchist poet, soar upwards in its turn to the light of faith under Mary’s motherly influence. The sublime ecstasies of a Bernadette had won over a Dozous; was it the patient suffering and the beautiful book of a Huysmans that reclaimed Adolphe Retté?

After that, is it not true that we could behold with equanimity a Goliath of the stature of Jean de Bonnefon arise, a short time ago, to undo completely the work of such apologists? Everyone is aware, indeed, that this writer sprung from the very heart of the Church—which at the outset makes him a traitor and apostate—was anxious to smite with his sledge-

hammer the immovable rock of Massabielle, hoping, doubtless, that after *that* there would not remain a stone upon a stone. The poor man! Would you believe that, in order to succeed better where a Diday, a Voisin, a Charcot, a Bernheim, a Zola, had failed, one after another, Beelzebub, ever spiteful, put it into his head to pose as a 'hygienist'? We see, then, our impresario, in the name of scientific and democratic Hygiene (the only idol, saving Progress, of the actual hour), collecting from every quarter a grotesque and hateful referendum regarding the *healthiness* of our holy places of Bigorre!

In the sudden astonishment caused by this manifesto, people at first could not help laughing. Next, the medical body, diagnosing in this a disquieting wave of hysterical bigotry—*morbus hystericus*—thought it better to answer the ridiculous inquiry of this unauthorized and incompetent individual.

Dr. Vincent, the eminent head-surgeon of the *Hôpital de la Charité* at Lyons, having taken the trouble, or the pleasure, to collect all the votes of his fellow-doctors, can the reader guess how many votes in favour of Lourdes he received in less than two months? Three thousand! *Nubes testium*. . . . Yes, 3,000 representatives of the science and art of Hippocrates declared with one accord that Lourdes is not an unhealthy place; further, that Lourdes, by its spiritual influence, and also by its bodily cures, renders great service to the crowds of sufferers there; that to wish to close Lourdes, therefore, on the plea of public health would be an unpardonable act of folly. Such was the solemn,

widespread, and explicit verdict of almost all our physicians. Among them figure the greatest names—15 members of the Académie de Médecine, 40 professors of the Faculty, 20 professors of the Écoles de Médecine, 130 physicians or surgeons of the hospital, 60 hospital head-surgeons, 80 former students of the hospitals of Paris, Lyons, Bordeaux, Toulouse, Montpellier, etc. In all, 3,000 professional authorities (the most unimpeachable by reason of their knowledge, rank, and philosophical or acknowledged fairness) gave their votes—some asserting it, others taking it for granted, a few waiving the question—for the free play of the Supernatural on the banks of the Gave; whereas (I hasten to point out the ridiculous contrast), in a spirit of malevolence, the journalist of the *Matin*, in which so many absurdities abound, succeeded in enlisting altogether 184 partisans, of whom a good number, clearly ashamed of the mean task in which politics and party spirit had involved them, contented themselves with a vague assent without supporting it by the least scientific motive.

It is true that the proud knight of the trowel, worthy descendant of Zola, who misrepresented the dead and buried the living,* could make up for the rather low figure by alleging on his behalf imaginary witnesses—*i.e.*, the certificate of a ‘Dr. Evrard, physician at Château du Loir, Sarthe,’ who, on inquiries being made, was found never to have existed! For the modest journalist, who had lately thundered so virtuously against the ‘knavery’ of

* See note on p. 155.

the Grotto, the episode was not happy. Pshaw! are not these people the disciples of him who remarked, with his diabolical cynicism, 'Lie always; something is sure to stick'?

Whether he would or no, our scandalmonger had perforce to rest content with the votes, more or less convincing, of his 184 supernumeraries.

This must have seemed to him small, nevertheless, compared to our bead-roll of true Science, in which so many and such genuine examples occur from all the medical authorities, with one accord replying to this impostor that his list is only an immense hoax, apart from the fact (I repeat) that most of these masters profit by such a fortunate circumstance to proclaim the power of prayer, and also the reality of the miracles, at Massabielle. The more timid (or less believing) are at least anxious to recognize, with a frankness and liberty which honours them more than Lourdes itself, that there 'unhoped-for cures are obtained in great numbers by a *special* action, of which Science does not know the secret, nor even a reasonable explanation based on the sole forces of Nature.' (Extract from the beautiful letter, published in the papers, of Dr. Henri Danchez, Chef de Clinique, a former student of the hospitals of Paris.)

Another of the many replies is so touching, and, moreover, so apposite that I cannot refrain from quoting it in full. It is that of Dr. Fleury, a physician of Cluses (Eure-et-Loir):

'I know Lourdes, and I declare that Lourdes is, from the medical point of view, a benefit. In proof

of it, I take my own family. One of my sons, then fourteen years old, seriously ill, was attended by *eleven* masters of Science, all professors ; now he was given up as incurable by all. The case was very complicated, and, it seems, unknown in the annals of medicine.

‘Well, this child, given up as incurable, was cured *almost instantaneously* at Lourdes. This son is to-day twenty-nine years of age, and he is a credit to the medical profession’ (Cf. the very suggestive volume of Dr. Vincent, of Lyons, ‘Should Lourdes be Closed?’). But the following is still better : it is the tablet hung in the principal hall of the *Bureau des Constatations*, where so many distinguished names of the medical Faculty pay a public and solemn homage to Our Lady of Lourdes in the following terms :

‘(a) The undersigned are of opinion that, whatever may be a man’s party or opinions, he could not allege or prove a single serious fact which justifies the closing of this famous Shrine, and which would entitle the public authorities to forbid invalids to come here from every quarter of the world. The sick who go to seek at Lourdes a cure, which we are powerless to obtain for them, ought to enjoy their full right, just as those who go freely to watering-places, to air-cures, to hot-springs, and fashionable health-resorts.

‘(b) The undersigned declare, moreover, that they fully agree with the authorized declaration of Dr. Boissarie and of the honourable physicians of Lourdes, who have followed closely the pilgrim-

ages, and appreciated the facts produced during them.

‘(c) To our knowledge, not a single case of contagion since 1858 has yet been observed which can be imputed to the pilgrimages of Lourdes, whether during the journey, or at the hospital, or in the pools.

‘*Conclusion.*—The undersigned deem it their duty to recognize boldly that unexpected cures are wrought in great numbers at Lourdes by a particular action, of which Science has not yet been able to discover the secret, nor even an explanation reasonably based on the sole forces of Nature. They attest, therefore, that Lourdes, far from being a public danger, seems to them a universal benefit. In their opinion it would be a crime against humanity to close a refuge where so many sufferings are soothed and so many wounded souls relieved.’

Such is the testimony of hundreds and thousands of doctors, among whom many, we repeat, are of great eminence. This is not, then, an apocryphal document furnished by a renegade after having been cooked in the Masonic dens; but we can truly say that we have here, beyond all dispute and ambiguity, the signature of contemporary Science in witness of the miracles of Lourdes. This is the upshot of the intriguing of the aforesaid Monsieur Bonnefon!

Shameless quill-driver! who, without any capacity or business to do so, dared to question this honourable body of men on a point so highly technical, are you satisfied now? Since you read formerly the

Holy Scriptures before writing to the *Matin*, allow me to cull a 'spiritual bouquet' for you in the shape of a text from the Psalms: '*Mentita est iniquitas sibi*' (Iniquity has once again lied to itself). So, with all your alarmist outcry on the plea of health, you hoped to close Lourdes, and it is Lourdes, sorry Paladin of Acacia,* that has enclosed *you* in a vicious circle. Still, you should know—you better than anyone else—that such is the fate of everyone who makes an attack on the Lady of Promises. Now nothing remains for you, considering the evidence of the authority, which is borne out by the authority of the evidence, but to go and tell your employers, the high-priests of Freemasonry, that if they still mean to block up the threshold of our glorious cavern they must use force, since they cannot employ Science; only in that case beware of the pitchforks of Béarn and Gascony, or, more correctly, beware of the uprising of the true France and the execrations of Christendom; above all, beware of the curse of all the sufferers—that curse which never bodes anyone any good! But we need not fear. Before the heavenly Madonna, who has no other rampart save her benefits and favours, the naturalist republic will give way as the Liberal Empire had once to yield. *O Benigna! O Regina! O Maria!* with your maternal kindness, O Mary, and your royal grace, O Immaculate, you are truly strong *as an army ranged in battle array*, overriding every plot, confounding every artifice, making sport of every threat, putting

* *I.e.*, freemason. The acacia flower is the botanical symbol of masonry.—TRANSLATOR.

your sovereign foot on all the artifices of Hell. All the same, what honour those pay you, in the Devil's fashion, who, in trying to overcome you, have recourse to such base devices !

But let us not sing too soon a pæan of victory, for the powers of darkness have not said their last word ; now behold, in the person of M. Baraduc, the Dr. Faust manipulating his plates and his phials to frustrate the gentle Wonder-worker of the Pyrénées.

This worthy man, who is not without merit, it seems, in his own sphere of biometry, has had the misfortune at length (more from a spirit of systematizing, I love to think, than from a feeling of enmity) to claim to reduce the splendid cures of Lourdes to some purely natural energy. So he turns round, and with the utmost seriousness, in a confidential whisper, informs us that he has recorded there 'the impress' of the 'healing Force, both biological and cosmical,' on a whole series of 'sensitive radiographic plates.' . . .

After which explanation, forsooth, he examines 'the attributes of the supernatural cosmogonical plan, which produces the phenomena, the sidereal conditions of the movement of the motive force, as well as the conditions of receptivity which in the patients sometimes favour and sometimes prevent a cure' (?).

If the reader finds that all this is not as clear as crystal, my answer is that it is not altogether my fault. The pages of which I have here extracted

the quintessence would doubtless seem to him still less clear.

But the worst of it is (and this seems very surprising for a doctor of such eminence) that all this picturesque theory rests, as you have already perceived, merely on 'hypotheses.'

What, pray, is this famous 'healing Force' rendered sensible to radio-active plates by 'the polarization' of '50,000 prayers which ascend to Heaven,' except the curious coinage of his own capricious fancy? Once again, that isn't bad for a positivist! Beneath all this turgid bombast, which is deemed scientific, we see here, too, the desire to drag down the supernatural—our Supernatural—to the level of nature, chemical or mechanical, which will thus eliminate the Divine element in this history.

What can we think of the last wish which the author utters to instal a laboratory near the Grotto, which will allow Science to investigate the higher forces of the cosmos in their relation to our organism? But, M. Baraduc, this laboratory exists under the name of the *Bureau des Constatations*, and we are tired of repeating that already, for a quarter of a century, all the names of any account in the world of medicine, philosophy, or criticism have come there to find out that what goes on there exceeds the laws of Nature, and is quite different to all the recognized methods. Instead of hypnotizing yourself on radiographic plates, doctor, on which the invisible cannot be depicted (what an idea!), go with an unprejudiced mind and spend a few hours in the midst of this areopagus of your distinguished con-

frères, in which every shade of opinion, every degree of learning, is represented; and if your plates have not completely crazed you, you will judge with common-sense, and, besides, you will speak like the rest of men.

Meanwhile, rest assured that your so-called 'psychology' of miracle is only the coarse and comical mechanism of it. Charcot reduced the superhuman cures to emotions, while you trace them back to vibrations. Allow me to say that I like your theory still less than his. That shrewd observer, Huysmans, though he knew nothing of medicine, perceived better than you, doctor, the peculiar influence which energizes at Lourdes. I do not mean the influence of the atmosphere, but that of prayer. Read him without any bias. Yes, there is truly on the banks of the Gave a perpetual exchange of disturbances between Heaven and earth. It is the earnest pleading of human sorrow, which continually ascends, sometimes solitary and humble, sometimes public and conspicuous, with irresistible accents, rising to Heaven, which ends at length by forcing the hand of the Lawgiver of the universe, and draws down a miracle. That is, indeed, the victorious weapon of which the author of 'Les Foules,' in an admirable page, has seen the poetic but expressive emblem in the galaxy of tapers, of all sizes and kinds, which are continually burning before the Grotto.

In proportion as the sorrow-laden prayers mount upwards like fire, so pitying mercy descends. This is verily the magic of Lourdes and its *electricity*, of

a nature wholly spiritual and supernatural. I defy you to register a trace of it on your docile instruments. No one will dispute the fact that they are sensitive to the impressions of the surrounding multitudes; but as for maintaining that you can with such apparatus decipher the influence *sui generis* (an influence mystical and nowise magnetic), which is developed there in the midst of universal prayer, that is, forsooth, a joke quite unworthy of a serious man like yourself. It is chiefly souls which at Massabielle are the field of supernatural favours, at which the world declares itself astonished when they are manifested, so often and so incomprehensibly, by bodily cures. If you wish men to consider you sane, do not search after the explanation in the recesses of your dark chamber. Pascal and good sense would tell you they are 'things of a higher order'—the good sense which does not always coincide, it seems, with a certain kind of science.

You dream philanthropically of a sanatorium at Lourdes, with all the latest conveniences of modern progress, that the 'healing force' may work under still more favourable conditions. Indeed, with your carnal wisdom (as St. Paul calls it), you understand nothing of the things of God. 'The Spirit breathes where He wills.' It is the ineffable sighs of humble and contrite prayer which draw Him near. Take care lest all this foolish paraphernalia of photographic and biometric appliances should only result, to the grief of those who mourn, in frightening away for ever the Heavenly Dove, whom so much foolish arrogance would banish beyond recall.

But no, it will not be the superfine or naïve theory of M. Baraduc which will pulverize the rock of Massabielle !

What is quite clear about this matter—far clearer than this doctor supposes—is that Lourdes is a great crux to a certain type of Science, in love with its own proud materialism. That unique spectacle of sweet joy, of peaceful happiness, of sublime hope, of calm resignation, of consciences healed, of worship in the open air, of never-ending processions, of brotherly love, and also (to pass to material objects) those glorious monuments reared on the soil at the request of a poor peasant-girl, to hide with the Queen of Heaven all earth's woes, those countless throngs coming without remission from every quarter of the globe, in an unbroken unity of faith, of hope, and of love, and those immersions in the icy water from the miraculous spring, and those startling cures witnessed on the spot by numbers of doctors of every degree—how could this fail to perplex free-thought now brought to bay? What can it do? To speak poetically, does the swarthy inhabitant of the desert, by his savage cries, prevent the shining star from sending forth its light?

Whether you will or no, whoever has the courage, or the consistency, or the fairness to repair to Massabielle, must there have a perception of the unseen world, just as, by the testimony of Pasteur, before the notions of Space and Time, every unbiassed mind shrinks back in fear, only to bow down before the sense of the Infinite. Such is the con-

clusion we cannot avoid, unless we take leave of common sense.

In this way there has been at Lourdes for fifty years, through God's mercy, a wonderful current of hidden power, not biometric, or hydrometric, or fluid, but Divine, which no human analysis that is merely such will ever be in a position to measure, no unholy violence will ever succeed in destroying, and no material improvement will ever intensify. On the contrary, this current, transmitted straight from the heights of Heaven, will only continue to gather strength against all the sacrilegious barriers which a Jacobin policy, or a science in the pay of the enemy, will try to erect against it, like our mountain torrents, which in their own time break down the dams and sweep them away in their impetuous swirl. As to the stubbornness of the freethinkers in their disdain or fury, we must admit, with Élie Méric, that there is truly nothing on earth more pitiable in presence of so many sublime marvels than 'the loud whistle of these sophists, who, instead of nobly yielding, prefer to dishonour themselves by the pettiness of their unreasoning pride.'

At all events, in thus breaking away from the faith by an *à priori* reasoning that does them no credit, they do not even remain in harmony with reason. *Nullus sapiens nisi credens*, Tertullian was fond of saying : 'The truly wise man is the believer.'

CHAPTER VI

THE ENTHUSIASM OF THE WORLD

ALL the hatred of Hell has not been able to harm the popularity of Massabielle, but, on the contrary, it has increased it. This statement alone obliges our enemies themselves to admit that there must be something supernatural in it. 'If something *extraordinary* did not take place there,' said a freemason deputy some fifteen years ago to Mgr. Freppel, 'we should have long ago demolished your good Virgin, and no one would speak any longer of Lourdes.'

Now, not only the whole world still speaks of it after half a century—a long period for mortal things—but the magic glamour of this mysterious cave is more marked, and becomes more widely known every day.

The reader might prefer figures rather than mere statements. On February 18, 1858, at the Third Apparition, the Lady asked for 'people' (*du monde*). Next day, at the foot of the Rock, there were fully 100 persons; the day after at least 500 were seen there; on the 21st there were several thousands; on the last day of the famous Fifteen, March 4, 30,000

human beings stood for hours together in front of this granite Rock. Everyone knows that now hundreds and hundreds of thousands of pilgrims hasten every year to visit the Virgin of the Pyrénées.

It was especially at the beginning of our misfortunes that the gradual increase took place. It seemed then that the glorious Grotto was our 'Cavadonga,' to which our country confided itself by the inspiration of Heaven. Thus, in 1872, when the Queen of Nations emerged with difficulty from unprecedented disasters, there were gathered on one occasion around the Espéluques as many as 100,000 Frenchmen from France. May I here recall an episode as vivid as it is sweet? On May 8 of this memorable year, on the double feast of our Archangel and our Deliverer, there arrived at Massabielle the national Embassy, composed of a great number of representatives of the people. It was impossible to count the many-coloured banners which came with it from all the shrines in our country to this mysterious crypt, at that dark hour when the glorious past, in order to have more faith in the future, came to greet a present so rich in promises. Now, among these humbled banners there were those of Alsace and Lorraine, covered with crape, whose tragic woe seemed to cry aloud to Mary, 'Help us!' and to our country, 'Remember!' There we had, in truth, the first of our great public manifestations. The prophets in politics and philosophy, who had lately predicted that 'the pilgrimages had fallen into disfavour,' were amazed by it. The Power, which the spectre of clericalism already maddened, was alarmed

by it. But there was no disorder or mishap, not even a cry beyond the vast murmur of prayer. Kneeling at the feet of their historical Queen, the eldest daughter of the Church, bruised and contrite, had something else to do than to plan seditions. Had she not to implore her Mother for the moral and material relief of the 'holy kingdom'?

I have read that from 1873 to 1903, in thirty years, 4,371 important pilgrimages brought to the banks of the Gave 3,817,000 of our nation, without mentioning so many other pilgrims, either singly or in anonymous groups. And the living waves from our midst have not ceased from that time to break at Lourdes, always more laden with prayers and more rich in penances. Journals of every shade of opinion (but in particular the *Annals* of the work, the official organ of these sacred places) give, in their degree, striking proof of it. They show especially that the 'National,' in discharging every year there, for over a quarter of a century, its fifty or sixty thousand pilgrims, is like a crusade of Christian people to their old fervour, thanks to which (since love of God and of their country is continually spreading) half of the country will ere long have visited the magic realm of the sweet Madonna.

You would say that when this annual caravan comes, bringing to 'the Virgin, who has a child,' the soul of the old Gauls, all that still remains of the race is stirred with religious emulation, and wishes to go and swell the happy procession. Not to lose ourselves in a labyrinth of figures, nor to mention dates too remote, we may remark that (not counting

private pilgrims) the year 1906 has witnessed eighty-five French pilgrimages, with an approximate total of 760,358 persons, to convey whom the companies had to employ more than 250 special trains. But they have never counted so many people as in 1907. The exact census of the tickets collected at Lourdes Station indicates, we are told, 900,000 travellers. If we deduct tourists and business people, the number of pilgrims to Our Lady's shrine amounts to 850,000 from France, within the space of 365 days, to kiss her maternal sceptre. In 1908 still more, by reason of the Jubilee celebrations, which made 'every day a feast,' like a perpetual banquet—*juge convivium*—everyone foresaw that the crowds would exceed anything hitherto witnessed. Already, on February 11, there were 70,000 of us who came in a body, despite the severity of the weather and many other obstacles, to greet the Immaculate Conception. We were told on good authority that, in view of the extraordinary celebrations in August, twenty-five trains had been already announced, which would be followed by many others. Then they talked of a pilgrimage of men, who, still more numerous than those which have already come here, were to make their 'national Easter duties' in the middle of May. This event would not prove unimportant, and we desired that all our fellow-citizens who love their country and their Queen should be there. . . . In any case this, added to the rest, allowed us already to conjecture for the summer a total of over a million visitors! Listen to this catalogue, which sounds almost Homeric: Trains from Bordeaux,

Angers, Luçon, Bayonne, Perpignan, Tarbes, Nevers, Toulouse, Albi, Lyons, Belley, Mende, Bourges, Paris, Chartres, Amiens, Mans, Rodez, Angoulême, Arras, Grenoble, Moulins, Langres, Nancy, Verdun, Evreux, Poitiers, Cambrai, Besançon, Troyes, Montpellier, Narbonne, Montauban, Brittany, Normandy, Guyenne, Gascony, Provence, Roussillon, Languedoc, etc.

But it is each province, each diocese, each town, almost each parish, which we should really have to include in our reckoning. What a spectacle it was of life and movement which met together in this sort of geographical parade! What a panorama of every local costume, and what a chorus of every idiom of our native land! It would need a powerful painter like Zola, or a refined artist like Huysmans, to try and describe it. Let the reader try to picture to himself this unrivalled pageant: see (as far as I remember from former years) the Breton women with their wide headdress, like the sails of a ship in a storm. Further on you see the daughters of Bigorre, proud of their little silk kerchief wound round like a bird's nest; next come the women of Ossun, decked like sphinxes in their white hoods; then behold the women of Catalonia, with their coloured bonnets set so elegantly on their brow like a diadem; then let us welcome the Alsatians, on whose head there hovers, alas! the trappings of woe.*

* This was written in 1908. The statistics of Lourdes' Golden Jubilee year are as follows: The pilgrims amounted to little short of 2,000,000, among whom there were 4 Cardinals,

Thus the France of yesterday, which remains, after all, the France of to-day, is represented on this truly national Esplanade. You would really believe a bird's-eye view of all our assembled nation lay before you. From the corner of the venerable hollow, where I love so much to kneel, breathing the liturgical fragrance of burning tapers, how often have I felt the earnest pleading of the French soul, praying as in their own country, and singing one by one in twenty different metres the most varied hymns, of which the common refrain is, 'Christ! Mary! dear France!'

Let us hear the lyrics of Armorica :

' Nous venons en chœur du pays d'Arvor,
Où le sol est dur, où le cœur est fort ;
Fiers de notre foi, notre seul trésor,
Nous venons du pays d'Arvor. . . '

Now listen to these sonorous lines, written in the very language of the immortal bard of Maillane :

' Prouvençau tant que saren
Catouli nous monstraren
Sens rên cregne cantaren
Lou front aut, lou cor seren. . . '

But what is that poetry, rising like the sun of the Pyrénées, and rivalling in harmony the fountains of

170 Archbishops and Bishops, and innumerable other prelates from all parts of the world; 94,500 Masses were celebrated, 1,066,400 communions distributed, 131,261 persons were bathed in the miraculous fountain, 4,400 offered their services to the sick (*brancardiers*), and about 1,500 cures were registered by the doctors (only a portion of the cures actually obtained at the Grotto).—TRANSLATOR.

the glorious Mont Saint-Martin? Listen; it is Jacinto Verdaguer, the poet-priest, the Marian Pindar of Catalonia, who breathes his *leit-motif* to the Lady of France :

‘ Blanca sou, O Immaculada,
Com la neu del Canigó!
Desde eixa cora sagrada
Benehiu lo Roselló . . . ’

Such enthusiasm is not to be wondered at when we remember that the kingdom of France was always styled the kingdom of Mary—*Regnum Galliæ Regnum Mariæ*—just as Britain in the bright ages claimed for itself the proud title of ‘ Our Ladye’s Dowry.’ This is proved true first from the baptistery at Rheims, where, blazoned on the shining window, the Gallo-Frankish Madonna even then smiles so gloriously on our cradle. Since then the heavenly Patron has shown herself each time that our forefathers passed through any serious crisis in their dramatic history—at Paris, when a young girl, consecrated to Our Lady’s service, was miraculously raised up to withstand Attila; at Orleans, at the critical moment when, to drive away the foreigner, the good child of Lorraine received that invincible sword which came straight from Our Lady’s altar; in many places when modern heresy, more deadly than all the invasions of old, tried to poison the minds of the faithful with the sophisms of Calvin, and freeze their hearts with the severe doctrines of Port Royal; and when, against the threat of the one and the danger of the other, that gentle nun of Paray arose—the child of Our Lady of the Visitation—who, by reveal-

ing the Sacred Heart, suddenly helped so much to preserve among our forefathers the integrity of the faith no less than the just claims of love.

It is not generally known, moreover, that in the middle of the seventeenth century, to guard religion from the attacks of a neo-paganism which from literature was fast spreading into the manners of the people, the Valley of Laus was honoured with several apparitions of Our Lady, and the seer was then a poor Alpine shepherdess, who became later on a nun (and Venerable) under the name of Sister Benoîte. The epoch of Voltaire does not seem to have known such privileges, doubtless because at that time France was less the domain of Mary than a valley of Hell, desolated by every wicked breath of philosophism till the bloodshed of the Reign of Terror began. But our assertion is proved more conclusively than ever in our own century, when *twenty-one times at least* the Queen of Heaven revealed herself to her chosen people. It was at first in 1832 that she came to bring the miraculous medal as the presage of the dawn of better times; then, in 1846, when she showed herself with tears of reconciliation on the icy crests of La Salette; then in 1871, when she showed herself, like a gleam of hope, to the enraptured gaze of the children of Pontmain. Still, the chief sign of the predilection of the Mother of Christ for France is undoubtedly *Lourdes*—Lourdes, where she revealed herself much more marvellously than anywhere else to the lowly daughter of Soubirous.

How singularly favoured has our country and, we must add, our generation been! 'Without wishing

to make out our nation better than it is '—we repeat the words of Louis Veuillot—' we Catholics, whom so many graces of the Blessed Virgin have preserved from manifold dangers or faults, and who, after frequent falls, have seen ourselves brought back by her motherly hand to the path of salvation—how can we help feeling proud?' 'Methinks,' the same able writer elsewhere observes, 'the era which followed that of the Encyclopædists could well be styled, by a wonderful reaction, with us the age of Mary.' From this point of view let us here retrace, in a few lines that are genuine history, and glorious beyond compare with the most brilliant exploits, the destiny of our people.

In the distant ages preceding civilization, to stem the flood of barbarian invasion, we see the shepherdess of Nanterre arise—the first gift of the Madonna. Later, when our hereditary foes pushed their victorious aggression so far as to impose an Anglo-Saxon King on us, the Pucelle arises, heroic envoy of the Virgin of Bermont and Fierbois, to drive out the English, and to make the lilies once more bloom in the garden of Our Blessed Lady. Later still, when, happily escaping from the rank corruption of the Reformation, the fortune of this country, sinking under the too heavy burden of its triumphs, pride, and prosperity, seemed again compromised by that fatal error within her, Jansenism, aggravated by Gallicanism, notice how, in the heart of a Burgundy cloister, it is once again a child of the Divine Protectress who is the leader of the most salutary of Catholic reactions. Lately (to come

at once to the main point of this digression), when, faithless even to the secular attentions of their Mother, the grandsons of the Crusaders had so far forgotten themselves as to follow the teaching of a Renan, before the coming of Zola, is it not Bernadette, the compeer of St. Geneviève, Blessed Joan of Arc, and Blessed Margaret Mary, who, drawn like them from their native obscurity by the hand of a Queen, becomes, more truly than them, her wonderful instrument, and thus mystically saves France, then more than ever on the verge of destruction? . . .

Should not our national hymn therefore be the words of the Prophet: *Non fecit taliter omni nationi*?

No, Mary has not acted in the same way towards any other nation, showing herself so often in France in order to prove that she loves to dwell in our midst; treading our earth with delight, as if to acquire more completely by this preference the rights she has already acquired by conquest; gazing with sympathy on our skies, which seem, as it were, to remind her of those from whence she comes for our sake; hallowing our mountains, which are truly the chosen pillars of her kingdom of love on this earth; blessing our valleys, where she is pleased to make the rills gush forth and the flowers bloom, as though in her earthly paradise; striving from her lofty altar-throne with her mother's heart to win the love of her dear France! And during these rare visits it is to one of ourselves, a child of our race, akin to us all by blood, faith, and language, the daughter of the Bigourdain miller, the shepherd-girl of the hills of Béarn, who is chosen to see the

Queen of the universe, to hear her voice, to share in her secrets, to receive her behests, to offer her prayers to her, to mingle with this almighty Intercessor* her tears for the evil to be washed away, her prayers for the good to be obtained, her heavenly smiles, too, as the blessed harbinger of the conversions soon to follow; while on the clear forehead of the child the inspirations of Heaven shone amid celestial glory, causing the Lady's white veil to quiver, and while our Lady, by her emblematic vesture, displayed the colours of earth! But the prodigy of love has not been exhausted by all these meetings, truly unheard of in the history of mankind. For fifty years, in the little corner of her ancestral home, Our Lady, unseen, but ever present, stands unweariedly in her granite watch-tower, for the sole purpose of seeing better her dear land of adoption, of hearing better the cry of great pity, and of coming to our rescue—now, by those cures of every kind, an earnest of the spiritual renovation which will restore at length to the hands of the immortal nation the sword with which of yore they upheld the honour of God in this world!

Is it not true, then, that when a people believes this, it ought to be the first, from chivalry (if I may say so), as well as gratitude, to mount guard at the foot of the Pyrenean Rock where their Suzerain, outdoing all her former mercies, has lately come to visit them so repeatedly? Certainly this pre-eminence in the service of Mary, in which Heaven desires all nations to take part, is a very precious favour for us.

* St. Bernard, 'Omnipotentia supplex.'

We shall never sufficiently bless God that, by an evident arrangement of His will, all the other nations, rivals or jealous of us, are obliged to lay aside their enmity, and to use our thoroughfares to pay their homage to her whom all generations must call Blessed. Clearly, then, thanks to such a design, this kind of providential association links our country's name with the memory of the spotless Madonna. 'You cannot greet Mary without greeting at the same time her kingdom,' a great orator has declared, so inseparably are the two things united, which, in brief, is for us a nobler pre-eminence, not merely a Platonic satisfaction, and a recovery, in a sense, of our ancient moral supremacy. How could men fail to esteem or love a people to whose society Heaven descends with such gladness, and to whom they must go to feel the noblest emotions which can be experienced in this world? Seen thus at home, men appreciate better from the four quarters of the earth what our French nation is, which is ever on such intimate terms with the Mother of God, and so they judge what it will become to-morrow, when Lourdes will have borne its full fruit amongst us. What everyone should, at all events, conclude from this sublime fact is that, just as Israel possessed the Ark of the Covenant to be the focus of ancient civilization, so to France has been given the Grotto of Massabielle to be, or become once again, the soul of the modern world.

This being said from a sense of duty, the reader might like to see now, in the footsteps of this France, that draws peoples after her, the whole world

flocking to the Espélugues. Here again, in order not to lose ourselves in an endless catalogue of names, we must confine ourselves to the enumeration of groups: Pilgrimages from Italy, Germany, Spain, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, Portugal, Algeria; companies from Strasburg, Palma, Tunis, Namur, Tournay, Florence, etc. Lourdes can be called 'a living Pentecost.' It is not uncommon, in other words, to hear, at this place of the Apparitions, your neighbours on your right saying the Rosary in Flemish, whilst those on your left say it in Czech, Low German, or Gaelic. Lately, when I arrived at this many-languaged town, I saw the staunch Catholics of Cologne departing, and those of Buda-Pesth, so friendly, arriving. They were expecting on the morrow the pious Catholics from Holland, and a distinguished company of Greek Catholics. Here are the English pilgrims; make way for them! For them especially there are no Pyrénées. What fervour they bring us instead! The highest peer of their realm, the Duke of Norfolk, loves to pay frequent visits here, as costly as they are edifying. This is a fact not generally known, and worth mentioning: it was last year, I think, that the first official pilgrimage from Great Britain came here with a 'freight' of sick people. Shades of Henry VIII.! Why may we not hope that this 'port' of the Virgin, crowned by the Pope, will become before long for the Anglo-Saxon race the royal road that leads to Rome? That could be worth for us in return an *entente cordiale* far more solid than any based on stock-jobbing or political grounds.

And schismatic Russia, Lutheran Scandinavia; America, with its modern 'trusts'; the ancient East, with its immemorial traditions of caste; Oceania, still buried in paganism; darkest Africa, ever degraded by its fetishes; the empires of the Far East, and the sea-girt isles shining like pearls in the Indian Ocean—from every side mortals hasten to this Grotto, the precious promise of harvests that are whitening, under the influence of a charm, which we can regard as an earnest of untold future conversions. *Ex omni tribu et populo et lingua et natione.*

Since nothing speaks so eloquently as figures, we will quote some. In the last thirty years there have been seen on the banks of Our Lady's river 1,200 pilgrimages from abroad, led by 577 Prelates of various countries and different rites, all glad to join verily in the 'most Catholic' communion conceivable with France, for whom (as all allow) Heaven does what it never did for any other people. It is true that it can also greet fraternally all mankind at its international shrine, where there are no strangers, because all feel like brothers at *her* feet, who is more truly a mother, according to St. Ambrose, than any other mother. *Nulla tam mater.*

Notice, also, it is usually persons of high rank in the Church and society who lead hither the great bands of pilgrims. Here are some distinguished names which I have picked at random in late years: His Eminence Cardinal Katschthaler, Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg; His Excellency Mgr. Tonti, Apostolic Nuncio at Lisbon; forty-six Archbishops

or Bishops ; M. Lusterziez, member of the German Reichstag, and sick-bearer ; M. Sustersich, member of the Austrian Reichstadt, and also sick-bearer ; Daris Urzua, Professor of Law in the University of Chili, etc. Generals, Admirals, Ministers and Ambassadors move here and there among the pilgrims. You see here Princes of the blood, Queens as gracious as they are devout, and no one has yet forgotten how last year a young royal couple came from over the Pyrénées to place their love and their throne under the protection of the universal Madonna. Moreover, if these endless processions show truly their eagerness to come here, these facts show the fervour of their souls. To take only one year as a sample : in 1907 there were said at the three churches of Lourdes 45,820 Masses, and 550,145 Communion were given. The number of intentions recommended was 1,970,683 ; there were 61,559 requests for thanksgiving. They despatched 98,600 bottles of miraculous water. The Mistress of the Grotto received nearly two thousand *ex-votos* of every shape and value.

Thus, always and everywhere, the figures are huge and almost fantastic.

On the other hand, the reader must not think that in the ' Studio ' of Our Lady all activity is at a standstill. What artistic life this last year has witnessed, when, after the huge outlay of nearly a million pounds, any further adornment would seem to be impossible there ! Thus, the central passage of the Crypt has been adorned with several shining panels. In the Rosary Chapel the choir has been enriched with a magnificent episcopal throne of marble,

bronze, and enamels, and with beautiful stalls of old oak richly carved. Five chapels have received marble altar-rails; one of them, besides, has been beautified with a splendid mosaic, *The Assumption*, given by the Slavs of Bohemia. We must notice also the cartoons of *The Crowning of the Virgin* and a *Carrying of the Cross*; lastly, the two bell-turrets, the stones of which have been quarried from the sides of Béout, and which spire upwards to guard the Rosary Chapel, while framing the Basilica. In the latter, General Vargas, Minister-Plenipotentiary of Colombia, lately placed, in the name of his people, a glorious silk flag, of yellow, blue, and red, that it might be left in the wondrous Shrine as a tribute of homage from the Republic of Colombia. A republic happy indeed! Not all of them are so happily inspired. . . . Lastly, on the Calvary, which will soon look like a museum of Our Lord's Passion, four new stations of great value have been set up, the last of which is a gift from Catholic Germany.

But I must refrain from giving further statistics of all kinds. Do we not seem to be dreaming in the presence of all these splendours, especially of the wonderful gatherings which are seen there? Neither the famous migrations of ancient peoples, shepherds or warriors, nor the sacred theories of artistic Greece and philosophical Egypt, nor the campaigns, more religious than warlike, of the Middle Ages, nor the imposing expeditions of Islam to its holy *Kabaas*, nor the ritual processions of Buddhists and Brahmins along the banks of their sacred rivers, bear any resemblance to the extraordinary impulse which thus

bears mankind along to the land of the Grotto of Béarn. It is useless to point to Jerusalem or Rome, Mecca or Benares. This hollow of our Pyrénées, more than any other spot on earth, is the meeting-place of the world, the chief boulevard of history, or, rather, the capital of Divine favour, towards which, from pole to pole, all nations now look with reverent, perhaps wistful, eyes. O Blessed Virgin, you desired crowds at Lourdes. Behold them! Are you not satisfied? In the odour of your perfumes, and by the glamour of your charms, behold, the world is carried away, and the pilgrimage, which at your behest Bernadette performed eighteen times, has been repeated by the whole world; and the procession which you so earnestly desired has not ceased for a single day during fifty years; and the chapel which you humbly asked for has perforce grown into a triple cathedral, to serve as a refuge for souls from every country. Truly, O Woman, O Queen, O Mother, from the height of your woodland citadel you are the great cynosure of our age, as your theologian and champion, St. Bernard, calls you, 'the great affair of all ages.' *Magnum negotium sæculorum.*

So it is just to add that there Mary rewards her children by showing herself solicitous of all needs, but specially mindful of the manifold ills which seem the lot of too many in this world. During the twenty-five years since it started, few, perhaps, are aware that the 'National'—a true work of 'salvation'—has brought to the supernatural rocks 28,680 poor

sufferers, of whom many have gone back cured, and all with hope, or, at least, resignation. Every year there arrives the 'sacred battalion' of a *thousand invalids*. In 1883, at the time of the Silver Jubilee, they reckoned before the Grotto, assembled from north, south, east and west, for a solemn thanksgiving, 325 persons miraculously cured, each bearing his badge and his banner. They made a unique procession, which, by reason of so much gratitude, was followed by such a host of fresh cures that men had never witnessed so many at once.

And, for so great a work, what instrument did she employ? We know well now—a poor, ignorant, ordinary child. But consider this. Is not the want of proportion between the means and the end the characteristic note of Lourdes? The most surprising miracle, in truth, is not the bead-roll of blind men who see, of deaf who hear, of dumb who talk, of paralytics who walk, but the simple fact that with such slight means God or Our Blessed Lady should have stirred the world so profoundly.

Yes, we cannot insist too much on this point—in the extraordinary confluence of pilgrims which, through the influence of a humble peasant, is bringing the world to the predestined Grotto by some secret spiritual magnetism, there is a marvel much more reason-bewildering than all those which these places have witnessed from the beginning. For it is contrary to the nature of things (all will grant)—nay, contrary also to all the laws of human psychology—that the mere word of a feeble shepherd-

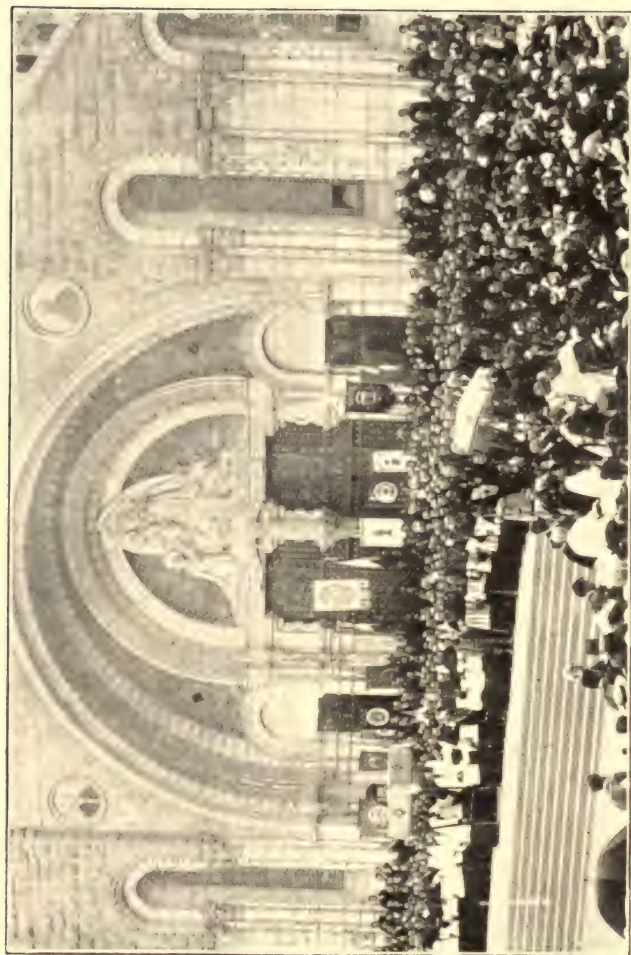
girl, fourteen years old, should have the power to attract the people of to-day, so proud and sceptical, with that religious enthusiasm which, instead of abating, has, in spite of every obstacle, only gone on increasing these last fifty years. We are literally astounded when we have to confess that the cause of a movement so far-reaching was so feeble an instrument, which effected at once what neither the ambition of a Napoleon nor the genius of an Archimedes could ever have dared to attempt. The latter only dreamed of lifting this physical earth, while the former confessed, not without a pang of jealous sadness, that the soul which carries other souls along with it in its irresistible flight is mightier than the conqueror, who only leads armed masses behind his triumphal car. Let no one here, following a fashion which with some people gradually becomes a mania, venture to suggest hallucination. For so insignificant a child, suffering from hallucination, to have stirred the world so profoundly, it would be necessary for our planet to be peopled by madmen. Would he care to say that? Every serious and fair-minded thinker who has studied the strange moral problem of Lourdes has had to acknowledge that obsession (*i.e.*, chronic hysteria that resembles obsession) does not produce such prolonged or widespread reverberations. For, notice, this movement has now gone on for fifty years, and it is still spreading. During this long period, not only has the renown of the Grotto taken deep root in our nation, but it has crossed all known boundaries, pushing further, if I may say so, than Alexander's battalions

or Cæsar's legions its conquest of the inhabited world. Looking back now over the last fifty years, if you take up a map of civilization, and even of the regions beyond its pale, you will see (as we have tried to show briefly) that from north to south, from east to west, in every land and by the shores of every sea, there is no Catholic body, however small or recent, which does not couple with the love of our Blessed Lord the glorious name of Our Lady of Lourdes. M. Homais may therefore argue till doomsday in the midst of his medicines; the free-thinkers, who succeeded the ministry of the Freemasons, may try in their day to hide with their triangle the image of the Madonna; the 'Pharisees,' who reject all dogma, are at liberty to feel scandalized while the trains of numerous pilgrims from all nations pass over our railways. The fact remains that such enthusiasm is too much above and beyond all ordinary laws to allow us to doubt or deny that the Spirit of God, more than the feeble voice of a shepherd-girl, is animating them, drawing mankind to this miraculous cave. *Spiritus Dei erat in votis.*

And by the irony of Fate it is the modern spirit of Progress, that exclusive deity, who will bear no other gods near its throne, which at the bidding of a power, gentle though mighty, conveys all these crowds, drawn thither by a seer of visions. It puts at their disposal its thoroughfares by land and sea, its carriages and vessels, its speed and conveniences, as if for the century since it first began to make discoveries and to find out still newer inventions it were only labouring that Bernadette and her mis-

tress might be better obeyed. *Sic vos, non vobis*. . . . This is all, you will admit, very strange, and, in the position of the freethinkers, we should feel uneasy about it. True, those people are imperturbable when they set about devising explanations still more miraculous than the miracles they so obstinately deny.

Lastly (since we must reluctantly leave this subject), what do these multitudes go out to see in the wilderness of Bigorre? What is it that has drawn them from such a distance? It is certainly not this sky of Western France, nor the Swiss-like country, nor the clearness of its atmosphere, nor the freshness of its water, nor the poetry of its mountains, nor the stillness of its valleys hushed in calm repose; nor, again, is it the rather repulsive sight of so many festering sores, of so many sufferers groaning there, nor even the sight, however affecting it may be, of so many cures wrought there. . . . You get used to all that in time; besides, such sights may be seen, to some extent, elsewhere. But what here holds everyone captive by a spell, which is overpowering, they say, is *Something* which you do not see, nor hear, nor feel, nor hear echoes of, outside this glen, and even here you must have the faith of the pilgrims—their good faith, at least—to perceive it; in a word, it is *the Divine* at Lourdes! But that, for the man who comes with an unprejudiced mind, is in the air, everywhere. From first to last you breathe it in the three churches, where solemn worship never ceases, enhanced much more by the supernatural than by external splendour. You find it at the *Pools*, where



PROCESSION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT OUTSIDE THE ROSARY CHAPEL.

[*Th face p. 199.*

the holy Rosary of Our Lady makes us forget, in its musical rhythm, the sufferers racked with pain, and the river which hardly dares to ripple, ready, like the Jordan, to hush its murmurs by standing still ; it is felt most powerfully in the Grotto, amid those myriads of burning tapers, whose flame is but the pale emblem of the love of those hearts ; but (we all know) where its influence is most perceptible, where its triumph seems most unearthly, is truly on the evening of the two successive processions—the one of the Blessed Sacrament being the climax of our pilgrimages, the other, with its moving lights and melodies blending together, their inimitable poetry.

If you ask me what they go to Lourdes for, *this* is what they find: the Supernatural—that Supernatural which causes a strange uneasiness to our generation in spite of itself. A woman in the crowd once said to me: ‘Here we meet with God *in nature*.’ And if we understand it in a spiritual sense, it is the very truth. Nowhere else is the Unseen so perceptible as here. Did not Pius X., who felt regret at not being able to come here and offer up his prayers, lately declare that ‘if the Supernatural could be lost in this world, we should have to find it again here’? O all ye who assert so positively, with a knowing air, that Lourdes is a summer resort for the use of devout people, know that the day when, in the name of your new-fangled liberty, men can no longer pray, or weep, or hope, or give thanks—in a word, no longer join their soul in sensible communion with God under the pitying glance of the Queen of Heaven—on that day the people, disappointed in

their sore need, will quickly unlearn the direction of the country of this Shrine, and the city of marvels will ere long slumber in its glory, as of yore so many other famous towns have slept unknown through their shrines being at length forgotten.

But no (let the mighty ones be quite certain and the wiseacres never forget), Lourdes must never pass away (any more than Shakespeare or Racine)—Lourdes will never pass away! The years may leave behind a little dust on its churches; the granite of the Grotto, too, will show the wear and tear of age, or of pious lips, perhaps; the colours of the countless banners hanging from these solemn vaults may gradually fade. . . . Lourdes itself will last for ever! Why? Chiefly because Our Lady said that she wished it to be her abode; because, as long as there will be in our valley of exile eyes that weep, limbs that suffer, and souls which hunger and thirst after higher things, France and the whole world will continue to go there as to the very centre of their life, their 'corner of Heaven,' even in this world of sadness. . . .

Inasmuch, then, as this unique Event, which seems a real challenge to our age of Positivism by overruling the contingencies of the world and of history, continues now for half a century to upset the most cherished theories of Rationalism or Materialism, and to baffle the diagnosis and the most vaunted axioms of Medicine, it will none the less remain the great historic *fact*, to which all serious, thinking minds are directed and all sorrowful hearts especially yearn. Nothing—not even the strength of the mighty—will hush it up. What could you do, puny

boasters, to tear away the human soul from the mysterious Crypt—the soul which, in this recurring wave of the miraculous, which meets its eyes or ears, is so happy to find clear proofs of the Supreme Being glancing an eye of pity on the sufferings of poor mortals?

What an outrage, then, against suffering in all its forms—even more, as three thousand doctors recently affirmed, than against the religion, art, liberty, and prosperity of a small country—would be the closing of a place from which so much good has come, and still more will come in the future! Can the reader guess at how many, approximately, the number of Communions has been reckoned, received in thirty years (from 1870 to 1900), at the Shrine of the Immaculate? Answer, 6,853,180. And how many Masses said? Answer, 761,720. This total is absolutely colossal, much more by its moral influence than by its huge figures.

With the twentieth century the figures in this, as in every other good work, increase year by year, and this although everything else tends to diminish them.

What a triumph it is for spirituality—I should rather say, for Christian faith in the presence of the Unbelief, or, rather, Impiety, of the Government, which, apparently overlooking this Grotto, boasted lately of having blotted out all our stars! The protestation of Lourdes, crying out through all the voices of the Christian conscience, 'We want God!' is truly the antagonist to baffle and overthrow the present evil!

Thus Massabielle, in its eternal youth, stands there to confront their blasphemies, which are more stupid than wicked, and ere long its influence will have grown so great that it will overshadow the ruins of all those artificial temples of free-thought, so repugnant to nature that they are already beginning to crumble away amid the universal awakening.

Moreover, who can say what the world already owes to this cave, from which, in a constant stream, flow the light of truth, the fragrance of virtue, and the exhalations of manifold grace? We need not be surprised if the crowds instinctively hastened there from the very beginning, for the people—in spite of the blighting influences to which they are exposed—retain the sense of truth, of beauty, and of goodness as the privilege of their baptism.

Again, though Our Lady has clearly a preference for certain people—the most wretched—is it not universally true there is no Christian, or even man (not even Zola himself, as we have seen), who has not some time or other derived some secret benefit from this Grotto? You could say of it, in due proportion, what doctors say of our holy Tabernacles—viz., that no one comes near them with impunity—*i.e.*, succeeds in shielding himself entirely from their radiance of Life. *Nec est qui se abscondat a calore ejus.*

All men were included in the merciful design whereby the Queen of Heaven descended eighteen times to this spot, hitherto unknown—yes, to all, the lessons and practical examples which she wished to impart there were addressed by the gentle medium of a peasant-child. For all, directly or indirectly,

some special virtue issues from this hollow in the Rock, which tends to heal their bodies, if not to convert or sanctify their souls (an equally precious favour).

The spiritual misery of our age must have been great indeed—far greater than all those human ills gathered for fifty years round about the Rock—for the Most High to have thus consented to draw aside the veil of mystery; to suspend (dare I say it?) the reign of Faith, in order to open so decisively the flood-gates of the Supernatural, so palpable on these banks that it ‘takes away the breath’ of even the most hardened atheists. . . . Not that the act of adoration should be wrung from them unwillingly. Let him only who wills, adore God with his whole soul, in spirit and in truth. But, at all events, when the man who is godless on principle returns from Lourdes his pride is humbled. To make up for this, how can we enumerate all those who have here regained their early faith without mentioning many others who have happily recovered their baptismal innocence? How many consciences have been healed at Lourdes! How many lives reformed! How many individual or domestic or public virtues date from that period! How many crimes, either personal or against society, have been avoided by it! I just now called Massabielle a *mercy-seat* appeasing Heaven, and warding off punishments from this earth; it is also truly a spiritual *sanatorium*, infinitely more so than a place of bodily cures. The mere sight of all the acts of devotion, which are so frequent there, of all the acts of that Christian charity which ‘makes the whole world kin,’ and

flourishes as though on its native soil, should make every sincere philanthropist bless it. And what, pray, would the world be to-day, crossed by currents nnumerable of errors, vices, egotism and hatred, without Lourdes? What, above all, would our poor France be like? If there is still amongst us, despite much evil, much good; if the faith among the better people has not been tarnished by the inanities, as unscientific as they are anti-religious, in which too many schools of thought are involved; if there remain to-day, amid this weltering chaos of materialism, souls capable of soaring like the chaste dove of the Espélugues on the wings of purity and love; if for a good number of French people duty, by God's mercy, is not regarded as an anachronism, and their country is something more than an idol, it is to you, O Queen of the Pyrénées, that my country owes it.

Shall we add that, in safeguarding the present, Lourdes is forming the future, not merely of France, but also the future of the world? How? I know not, not being a sharer in the secrets of the Apparition. But this I *do* know: the Child-seer more than once gave us to understand as much; and this belief is in the air, or, rather, in every heart. Now in such matters the instinct of men is never far wrong. Moreover, for some time past (it is a sign of the times), you will never find in France a Bishop's Pastoral, or a discourse from a preacher, or a polemical or apologetic work, that does not point to the same conclusion. Even the infallible organ of the Church, in its addresses—*i.e.*, encyclicals—is our warrant that Lourdes has not said its last

word, that it is the task of Lourdes to work out the salvation of present society. What is equally certain is that Lourdes, whatever unexpected form its influence may take, will be the *Counter-Revolution*, because it is precisely the Revolution, ever living in its spirit as in its works, which is ruining France, and, through France, the civilized world. This tragic duel will be a fight to the death! The political journalist, who lately took for the motto of his Jacobinism, *Ceci tuera cela*,* is nearer the truth than he suspects, only *ceci* will be Lourdes and *cela* will be Freemasonry, embittered for over forty years by its work of destruction under the name of the Republic. What a moving drama we ourselves are likely to witness! For it must needs be that the great battle, *prælium magnum*, which from the beginning the Woman has waged against the Beast, should be fought out at length, in our days of pressing need, between the Virgin of Massabielle and the Serpent, whose hatred, violent and crafty by turns, seems at present to be perfidiously concentrated in 'Modernism,' that 'synthesis of all heresies.' Behold, then, the Leader, whom Providence has given us to lead all true believers to the storming of the stronghold of the Evil One! Is it not he who, brave as he is pious, will be surnamed by history 'the Pope of Our Lady of Lourdes'? What a blow he has just dealt at the monster of Hell by the famous Bull, which is known the whole world over—such a blow that the monster will die from it, is dying—nay, is practically dead! . . . Here is a

* 'The one will kill the other.'

point worth noticing! This providential document bears the date of September 8, Feast of Our Lady, and the venerable writer, well aware of the task of deliverer, which he fulfils, strong with the assistance of her with and for whom he was fighting so fearlessly, does not fail towards the close, in a pathetic prayer, to invoke the Immaculate Conception.

It is thus that Mary, of whom the liturgical texts tell us that she is more powerful than an army arrayed for battle, and that she alone destroys all heresies, will set her foot at Lourdes once for all on the forehead of the Evil One, thereby ridding the Church, France, and the world of the three great scourges to which our epoch must inevitably succumb: Naturalism, which is the pride of the flesh; Rationalism, which is the impurity of the mind; and Liberalism, which is the pride of life, both for individuals and for society at large. Such, in fact, is the triple head of this Revolution, old as Lucifer, but which in our own days has sprung up rankly once more because of the boldness of some, the weakness of others, and the infidelity of all. Without being a prophet, we can augur truly by that which happens on the banks of the Gave—above all, by that which shines from the holy cavern—that the hour is not far off when, by the help of the glistening Lady, our deliverance will be wrought. All are so thoroughly convinced of it that the wicked fret in impotent fury, but the good—or those who wish to become good—hasten from every side to Lourdes, as if to the certain focus of national and universal regeneration. Sienkiewicz, in ‘The

Deluge,' has described the sad plight of Poland towards the middle of the seventeenth century, when the Swedes, with the swiftness which distinguished the armies of Gustave Adolphus, achieved the conquest of the country. Everywhere treason, discouragement, panic, and then defeat, befell them. Varsovie was captured, Cracow had just surrendered, their King, John Casimir, was fleeing to Siberia. Already the remaining fortresses were opening their gates. One, however, still held out, and around this noble band other patriotic means of resistance were soon organized. Now what was this forlorn hope of their country in its utmost need? It was a shrine, a place of pilgrimage, *Czestochowa*, and the leader of this just insurrection was a monk—a monk holding up before their eyes the Madonna of their ancestors to reanimate their failing courage! This image of Mary became the symbol of the awakening of the Polish spirit. All felt sure that the Blessed Virgin would help them against the heretical invader, so the nobles took up their swords, the peasants their sickles, John Casimir returned, and the Swedes, despite their heroic efforts, saw themselves driven out of the devoted kingdom. What an evident allegory lies before us in this page of history! Is not *our* *Czestochowa* the Grotto of the Pyrénées, whence salvation will come—when we wish it—when we look to Our Lady with faith, and love, and confidence? Then also, what a new Jerusalem will emerge from the heart of this wilderness, radiant with glory! 'A people that possesses Massabielle,' said an American doctor

lately, on the last evening of a national pilgrimage, 'can have great hopes of the future.' Wherefore, O Lady of Lourdes, Health of the sick, come quickly to our aid from forth your shining empyrean. *Veni adjutrix, pia Virgo, cælo lapsa sereno.* Israel had its Ark, Athens its Palladium, Rome its Capitol. We, more privileged than any nation of ancient or modern times—we have your Rock, whither the world hastens. May the spiritual transformation of France ere long be wrought from the hollow of this national Rock, of which that of Bernadette, under thy heavenly smiles, O Mary, was only the prophetic symbol!

CHAPTER VII

THE ABBÉ PEYRAMALE

FOR the whole world to become acquainted with the marvellous episode of Massabielle, and to draw from it all the heavenly profit which it affords, there was needed, we think, a *Father*, to protect the feeble child-Seer against herself and others; a *Judge*, to authorize so extraordinary a mission; and, lastly, an *Historian*, to record and spread the unparalleled story of it.

Heaven eventually provided well for this necessity when it grouped round Bernadette three men—a priest, a Bishop, and an historian—who were never more to be separated from her. Our sketches of Lourdes would be very incomplete if we did not here say a few words about each of these important personages, since they will doubtless show better than we have hitherto been able how admirable has been the working of Providence in the whole course of this holy affair.

First of all, the Father. Most people are aware that he was called the ABBÉ PEYRAMALE. Born at Momères, May 11, 1811, he received in baptism

the somewhat suggestive names of Marie-Dominique. His parents, very virtuous and of the better class, had nine children, of whom he was the sixth. The eldest succeeded to his father's property; the youngest entered the Civil Service; the third became an attaché of the Embassy; another was appointed tutor to the King's pages; another became a doctor; another, whose profession we have forgotten (apparently he joined the army), had for son-in-law the brother of Garcia Moreno, the heroic and saintly President of the Republic of Ecuador, who died a martyr of the Sacred Heart by the dagger of international Freemasonry.

Of a candid mind and thoughtful disposition, the young Dominique could have risen high in the world. He preferred to turn to the altar, for the service of which his soul, naturally pious, felt from his very cradle a clear call. After pursuing his studies successively at Saint-Pé and Tarbes, he went to the Diocesan Grand Séminaire in October, 1830, without the feverish unrest of the hour—even more anti-Christian than anti-social—being able to cool his piety. Five years later, the levite, nearly perfect in everything, was ordained priest, and was sent as assistant to Vic, and soon afterwards to the episcopal city. A few years later—in 1843, we think—his superiors entrusted to him the parish of Aubarède, whence he had to return to the capital of the *département*, to fill the post of civil and military almoner. Lastly, from this obscure post of zeal, where he was worshipped by the sick, he came six years later to the parish of Lourdes, where such an eventful work was in store for him.

They say that on his first coming to the little capital of Bigorre he won the esteem of all, as everywhere else, and soon their sympathy. The new doyen was clearly meant to be a ruler of men, and especially a director of souls. Of herculean stature, naturally majestic, with a touch of austerity about him which at first sight might seem harsh, but was tempered by a genuine fund of good-nature, a quick mind, an eagle eye, a sonorous voice, a prodigious memory, unfailing good sense, the adviser of the great, and the idol of the poor—such were the moral and physical traits of this by no means ordinary pastor whom Providence had chosen for its designs there. As a priest, not many could be mentioned who were more learned or more orthodox in every respect, or who possessed such solid piety under a calm exterior. The interesting spot of earth allotted to him by obedience soon absorbed all his priestly energies, placed from the first at the service of a zeal which knew no bounds save those of an ever-watchful prudence. So this parish, which had ever borne the reputation of piety, might soon be taken as a model. The practice of religion flourished there, the people were virtuous, blasphemy hardly saddened its peaceful activity, and, except for a small band of “intellectualists,” whom the *civilization* of neighbouring towns had perverted, we might say that this chosen people gave promise of becoming a living copy of their pastor. His church very bare, his poor often *very* poor, and his favourite books the standard authors—these three words sum up the priestly activity of M. Peyramale. In his church he

preached the Word of God zealously, sometimes sternly, but always with great prudence.

To his flock he seemed the pattern of the kindness and charity of his Divine Master. Among his books he increased his store of learning, while continually perfecting in this way his splendid ecclesiastical spirit. It is to this familiarity, even more than to empty knowledge, that he owed that spirit of moderation in everything which was not incompatible with original thought, or lofty sentiments, or subtlety, and even wit, in preaching.

In a word, when the great events happened after ten years of this work, the instrument (subordinate, but still necessary) was ready: his constitution of "oak smoothed by the axe," as M. Bertrin says, inured him for stubborn conflicts; his native goodness made him ever mindful of weakness oppressed, and by his ripe judgment, rare training, and habit of prayer, he seemed able to undertake the most delicate causes. So the miraculous might now take place. Providence had stationed someone there who would never lose his self-possession. And this was of the utmost importance, first, in order not to compromise religion, which some are always apt to ridicule, especially in times of difficulty, by blaming the actions of its ministers; secondly, on behalf of the little child, who throughout her coming exaltation, combined with a living martyrdom, would have no other support save the man of God. If, then, at the opening of this heavenly drama, the Abbé Peyramale showed himself cold, reserved, almost discouraging, it was a way of acting which quite suited

the occasion, and was evidently inspired by Heaven. Had he manifested too soon the least sympathy with the child, the freethinkers of the village, whose jealous, prying eyes ever followed him about, would have certainly suspected some dark schemes afoot between the sacristy and the poor household of the Soubirous for the furtherance of superstition. But by this way of acting the good pastor tested his sheep, and by this wise method of fatherly restraint kept her calm and tranquil amid her sublime ecstasies. Lastly, a priest less calm and shrewd and patient might have spoilt everything by his very anxiety to acknowledge the miracle or canonize the chosen child. He, on the contrary, began by looking askance at these strange novelties, never setting foot in the Grotto, forbidding his three curates to show themselves there, not giving it any official sanction, receiving rather courteously the extraordinary messenger, which did not prevent him meanwhile from listening, noting, studying, and praying, thus leaving to the Supernatural (if it really was that at Massabielle) the duty of declaring itself and of developing by its own power. . . .

On the other hand, we must in fairness say, as soon as Heaven had shown its credentials by miracles, and the diocesan authority had thereupon intervened, the worthy priest could abandon his original tactics. In proportion as he had seemed indifferent and even distrustful, so henceforth, with his wonted courage, he will take the part of the child, which was now to declare himself for God in person. This is why, on learning that the police,

ever godless and spiteful, were thinking of arresting his spiritual child, her ghostly Father was changed into the rude mountaineer. Drawing himself up to his full height before the *Procureur-Impérial*, he said to him in tones by no means courteous: 'Make inquiries as much as you like, but the man that touches a hair of her head will have to reckon with me.' Thus he entered on the scene to challenge official bigotry, whom Zola had to call 'a great, sincere man of upright mind and undaunted heart.' The Curé of Lourdes was fully and clearly revealed in this reply to the minions of authority, strong as a lion, gentle and compassionate as a mother.

The reader can imagine that the legal and civil authorities took him at his word, at least for the present.

By this firmness, prompted by courtesy as much as by faith, Bernadette had just escaped the asylum, to which the odious Massy had dared to sentence her (on the plea of dangerous hallucination), encouraged by his assistant, Rouland, who in due course ended by being so severely rebuked himself.

When, a little later, the persecution broke out afresh, she entered too evidently into the designs of Providence for her representative to be able to overlook her. But all through, from beginning to end, you could see beside the inspired shepherdess her energetic and kind protector. Was not that his chief mission?

Whilst watching over the worker, the envoy of Heaven must not lose sight of the work, for it was to him, as the head of religion in the parish, that

Our Lady had wished her request to be made known. Therefore it remained for the Abbé Peyramale, now that he was doubly assured that the message came from Heaven, to devote his generous soul to its execution. Everyone knows that no one showed himself more determined than he did to give full satisfaction to the Queen of Heaven. His motto from the first was, 'Do everything great.' As architect, he engaged the most eminent man he knew in the district. 'Spare no expense,' he said to M. Durant, 'and be our Michael Angelo.' They say that he happened to tear in pieces and throw into the Gave a first design that did not fall in with his ideas. 'I want,' he cried out, 'a marble temple which shall cover the whole plateau of the rocks.' 'But the money?' they objected to him. 'The Blessed Virgin will take care of that.' You would have truly thought that the conception of his task had inspired his prosaic nature with poetry.

He mounted upon the scaffolding, overlooking everything and directing everything, like the soul which animates the frame. I have heard it said that more than once he worked as a labourer. He it was who planned the splendid gardens adjoining the Grotto, planted the trees, sowed the lawns, and, after having opened the crypt and crowned the Basilica with its airy spire, built also the house for priests and the *châlet* for Bishops. For himself what did he take? Nothing. I am wrong. In his supernatural enthusiasm he began to dream, in the depths of his old ruinous chapel, of a parish church worthy of its fellow-churches at Massabielle. It

seems that this was to prove his misfortune or his fault. Meanwhile the undaunted builder rejoiced with the joy of the saint more than of the artist at these twin churches, the children of his faith. The first, corresponding to the centre of the cavern, well represented the 'chapel' asked for by the Apparition. This marble oratory, so impressive in its mystery, became thus, as it were, the centre of the work of Lourdes, all the rest being only in due proportion its gradual and harmonious development. It was there that he felt the deep pulsations of the heart of Massabielle; there the influence of the white Madonna rained down most visibly. We know, as a matter of fact, that in this original Holy of holies the most beautiful miracles from the beginning were wrought—*e.g.*, that of the Abbé de Bussy, the blind priest, recorded by Lasserre. It is also well known that it is especially in this silent catacomb, honeycombed on every side with confessionals, that those strange stirrings of conscience take place which Huysmans has related perhaps a little too picturesquely.

M. Peyramale from the first loved this spot above all others. He found, too, and with good reason, that nowhere else in the world would the intimate (and piteous) prayer of the heart of her children reveal itself better to the heart of the Mother, who descended eighteen times on this famous Rock.

Alas, that his lawful satisfaction could not be complete! The day (I well remember it) when the dedication of the new church was solemnly performed, the pastor, whose career henceforth was to be over-

shadowed by the cross, like that of his client also, was lying on a bed of suffering, while Bernadette also, disappointed in the natural consolation of sharing in the reward, who had borne so much of the labour, was passing through a crisis of her asthma in a poor room of the infirmary.

Such is the lot of those who co-operate with God in His holiest designs! As their true value, since Calvary, is only in tears and blood, it is necessary that the blood and tears should be inexorably shed. Such was truly the lot of Dominique Peyramale, as of Bernadette Soubirous. Both of them, mystically united for the divinest of apostolic works, had to be, in the first place, martyrs. The affairs of Heaven are carried out in no other way; we promote truth by a self-sacrifice.

It does not enter, fortunately, into the scope of this modest work, which is more a defence of Lourdes than a history, to relate one by one the troubles we should prefer to bury for ever in oblivion. I do not maintain that this dauntless worker of Our Lady was perfect in every respect. The best here on earth have their faults. Perhaps the subject of this chapter was not sufficiently free from what I venture to call his holy 'megalomania,' though the purity of his intentions justified it so much beforehand; perhaps with his unyielding character he did not always use sufficiently the oil of evangelical unction to lessen the inevitable friction of certain wheels; perhaps, also, with his inflexible and iron will, his strong determination in good did not allow him the means of guarding himself as much as we should

have wished against unhappy misunderstandings. These are human matters, essentially delicate, and belong much more to God's judgment than to a poor passing critic. It remains none the less true that, when the indefatigable priest began, in spite of much opposition, to provide for his people a church more befitting its new importance, everyone agreed with him. All felt that a costly monument, reared thus in the very heart of the city of Mary, would be the happy sequel of the holy places of Massabielle, and that the annual pilgrimages of the nations would naturally end there. Those who had the right to think otherwise did not conceal their just disquietude, and even (it seems) their resistance, in view of the excessively large proportions the new building soon assumed. The servant of God went further. As he had stretched out his hand for the Grotto, he became a mendicant for his parish. Offerings once more poured in, numerous, rich, some even princely; and the walls rose and the vault was finished, and already the overjoyed Onias, on whose shoulders the mantle of *Monsignore* had just fallen unknown to himself, almost against his will, took a pleasure in showing to delighted visitors the forthcoming decorations, when, on a sudden, by one of those unforeseen reverses which Providence mysteriously decrees, everything was changed. Rome was silent; the Bishop (a Jourdan had lately succeeded a Langénieux) became stern; the Fathers of Garaison, who had taken the Curé's place in the management of the temporal and spiritual interests of the work, showed themselves, from wisdom, and not through jealousy

(as some foolish or unjust writers have ventured to make out), colder than ever; his near or distant friends discouraged him, excepting two or three, who remained loyal to him to the end; and, all help failing him, his splendid scheme, the harmonious sequel of the glories of the Grotto, had to be stopped. Another blow—*Lamma sabacthani!* . . . The agony felt by Bernadette so many times before human tribunals, and even at the sacred Rock, it was now the turn of Peyramale to endure in his lonely house, or on his bed of suffering. To fail in his heavenly mission through the ill-will of certain people (so he thought, at least), and after having stirred the world, to end in failure—was anything further needed to break down so much physical energy joined to so much moral courage? To the Curé of Lourdes, overcome by Fate, but venerated by the whole world, there was nothing else in store except to die far from this dear Grotto, where they would never again behold him during the great festivals; farther still, alas! from his beloved parish church, which was vanishing for him now in a dismal nightmare. What was there for him to do here below, when his child and companion, the Seer, severed too from all earthly satisfactions, had been torn from the land of ecstasies to go and bury herself in the silence of a cloister's pale; when his destiny likewise—his only true destiny—seemed quite fulfilled, since now at length the heavenly Lady saw the crowds daily flocking there, processions winding along, prayer waxing more fervent, her service increasing, and by miracles raining down from her maternal hands,

Lourdes was by this time the great Fact of the day, or, to speak more correctly, of history? As soon as an instrument is of no more use to God, God breaks it if it has proved untrustworthy, but takes it to Himself if it has proved obedient to the end. It was certainly the case with this much-enduring priest. The Blessed Virgin, for whose glory he had always striven so supernaturally, and who, besides, had intimated to him that he would only have to suffer on earth, granted him the precious boon, better than all our fleeting triumphs, of calling him to the foot of her throne, more glorious even than that of Espéluques, on September 8, 1877, the happy feast of her Nativity, unsullied as her Conception.

It is now thirty-two years that the immortal Curé of the Apparitions has slept his last earthly sleep in the crypt—alas! not of Massabielle, but—of his church which hastened his end, and which Providence, out of respect for his memory, willed to be completed despite all obstacles. They say that at the marble sepulchre where his remains repose, awaiting the glorious Resurrection, admiring and grateful souls still come at times to pray. . . .

CHAPTER VIII

MONSEIGNEUR LAURENCE

NEXT comes the Judge. With BERTRAND SÉVÈRE LAURENCE, born at Oroix, September 7, 1790, of poor but Christian yeomen, the designs of Heaven will only be, if possible, shown still more clearly. Forasmuch as the priest, who was to be the father, had received every necessary qualification for this pathetic duty, so much—nay, more—did he who, as Bishop, had the task of placing the seal of authentic certainty on the Divine affair seem accordingly marked out in the highest degree for so important a work. Although the gifts of mind and heart had been generously bestowed on the young villager, the poverty of his family seemed at first to condemn him hopelessly to the obscurity of the country, when a good country doctor, M. Jacques Dusserm, whose practice was in this neighbourhood, won by the bright countenance of the boy, whose wisdom and intelligence everyone boasted of, proposed to take him with him, and have him educated. Of course, the family accepted with eagerness and gratitude, though not without feeling deeply the pain of parting.

We see, then, by the visible action of Providence, our little peasant taken from his beloved native toil to come to Juncalas, the town close to Lourdes, to grind at the thorny elements of French at the house of the doctor, who hoped to make him a second edition of himself. Meanwhile, in order to be of some little use to his host, Laurence had between the lessons to shave the customers of the place, as was then the custom with our rural surgeons, born barbers, like the famous one of Seville, which was doubtless signified by the vague and honourable title of *chirurgien*, with which they were usually dignified.

Now—how can we not admire the mysterious chain of events?—the Curé of the modest commune had no difficulty in discerning better than his parishioner, the disciple of Æsculapius, that the newcomer was not exactly born to trim beards, unless it were those, at a later date, of the Prefect of Tarbes and the Minister at Paris. ‘Mon ami,’ the Abbé Cazenavette said to him one day, as he emerged quite rejuvenated from his deft hands, ‘would you like to become a priest?’ This straightforward question did not embarrass the ‘prentice-student—perhaps he had already felt within himself a responsive call—and with equal readiness and joy he replied: ‘I would ask for nothing better, Monsieur le Recteur.’ No sooner said than done. That very evening the happy peasant lad came to the presbytery, and under the guidance of the devoted priest he set foot, not without emotion, into the tangled thickets of the Latin grammar. Up

to the age of twenty (he was then fully fifteen) the toil was unremitting. His chance professor laboured as hard as the pupil to keep up with a progress which vanquished every obstacle, and at the end of a *lustrum* (to use a classical word) this 'obscurantist' had made of the little barber's boy a solid and even brilliant scholar. All hail to these admirable little country priests, modest in their tastes and position, whose zeal, unable to find any other outlet, contrives to perpetuate itself by raising up in the calm of a fruitful solitude some unsuspected vocation, which will one day, perhaps, become the glory of the Church! Thus Elias, carried up to Heaven, was proud to leave his mantle (and his spirit) to Eliseus.

When, then, he had to leave the poor Bigourdain presbytery to go to the seminary at Aire, and follow the course of logic and theology, the separation for both seemed a great wrench. Those years of intellectual companionship, equally useful to the master and disciple, had passed by so pleasantly. The human reward for M. Cazenavette was before long to learn that by his real knowledge, his great facility in picking up learning, and, above all, his remarkable judgment, combined with sterling piety, the tiller of Oroix, the barber of Juncalas, the Latin pupil of the humble village Curé, was at the top of his class. He continued the same all through his studies. The proof of this is that, on the very day of his ordination the Abbé Laurence was made Superior of the new ecclesiastic establishment of St. Pé, of which he may be regarded as the founder, inasmuch as he devoted to it all the natural and

supernatural resources of his vigorous youth. These important duties lasted for eight years. Numerous were the boys of the Pyrénées, whose souls he cultivated with a view to the priesthood, charmed by the glamour both of his talents and his virtues. Too soon for his liking, towards the beginning of 1830, his superiors, who were well aware of the value of such a subject, entrusted to him the beautiful parish of . . . Lourdes. He was only destined merely to pass through it, this brief contact being already sufficient to forge between his heart and that of the fateful parish links which the future would only rivet more firmly. We see him, then, hardly forty years old, Vicar-General in the diocese of Tarbes, which he will never more leave. As might be supposed, this new office, the second in the diocese, would soon bring into prominence, besides so many other priestly qualities, the administrative powers of the young auxiliary of Mgr. Double.

A mind more than ordinarily gifted, upright and practical sense—such appeared at first more than ever the chosen priest, before whom even Zola bent in reverence, styling him ‘the man of calm, cold intellect and sound culture.’ Real goodness verging even on compassion came to tone down in him the stiffness of manner which was probably due less to his character than to that regard both for doctrine and discipline of which M. Laurence seemed always the living exponent.

With regard to those who, as apparently happens everywhere, thought they had reason to complain of his *severity* (he was not christened *Sévère* without

reason), they had to admit that no one had better notions in every case of distributive justice, just as no one knew better how to stand aloof from unhappy disputes and discord. As he was thoroughly an enemy to the illusions of imagination, as well as to the weaknesses of feeling or outbursts of enthusiasm, people could be sure of receiving truth and justice from this superior—‘the very reverse,’ they said, ‘of an enthusiast.’

So when the old Bishop of the See of Tarbes died, the voice of the people, an echo of Heaven’s designs, proclaimed the name of its chief priest, whom a fairly long management of affairs had finally qualified for the leadership of the Church of which he was the son and glory. A few years had elapsed of this rule, both useful and beloved, when the events happened which we have related in a previous chapter. The first move of the Bishop, agreeing in this as in everything else with the Curé of Lourdes (those two souls, so thoroughly ecclesiastical, seemed like one), was to act very cautiously. Perhaps the so-called visions at Espéluques were only the dream of a poor nervous child, or else the device of a little blackmailer to swindle people, or even the entrance on the scene of a suspicious occultism? All these points needed examination, which the Prelate did not fail at the outset to ask himself with his calm mind, being otherwise too prudent a theologian not to know that, regarding the supernatural properly so-called, before the Church could lawfully allow it, it must furnish its own complete proof, according to the advice of one Apostle to the chiefs of the Church ‘not to

believe every spirit,' and of another, warning them to 'prove them.' *

So the Bishop, acting in concert with his doyen, began by acting with extreme slowness, reserve, and even hostility, in presence of the wonders of Massabielle, at the risk (as we have seen) of shocking, and even scandalizing, men's minds. But let us repeat—and the future, besides, would prove it—it was exactly this attitude that was all-important at the beginning, Providence only having raised up someone to temporize like this, that he might be, in the eyes of all, the impartial judge. Is it not from so much wisdom that, after four long years of waiting, prayer, and study, the solemn act owed its importance, by which the Ordinary concluded at length that the facts at Lourdes were superhuman? Imagine as Curé instead of Peyramale—the pattern of good sense—an enthusiast, and as Bishop instead of a Laurence—the soul of prudence—a poet; why, the work of Massabielle, however heavenly, would have perished prematurely. But God was watching from eternity over this Grotto, which He wished to make the cradle of social renovation, and just as He had arranged the sites for the merciful drama of the future, so He took care to train the characters for it.

Moreover, as soon as it became quite clear (in consequence of a host of cures, which the Commission of Inquiry proved to be absolutely certain) that the finger of God was there, then this conscience of a true Bishop hesitated no longer, and soon there appeared that admirable Pastoral of January 18, 1862, which, deciding a question, both doctrinal and his-

* 1 John iv. 1.

torical, of such importance, declared at length that the Apparitions at Lourdes were supernatural, and that the cures also, of which this Grotto had continually been the favoured theatre, were miraculous.

After such a verdict—a monument of reason no less than of faith, more valuable than the splendid churches, which could never have risen on the soil without it—it remained in the name of piety and logic to carry out the desire of the noble Lady. The Bishop was equal to the task. Hardly was winter over when the works were begun under his active patronage. The money, as we said, flowed in from all sides, so thoroughly did the world understand, as soon as the head of the Church had spoken by a Brief which proclaimed the ‘striking evidence’ of the supernatural, that this work was from God. So, after a short time, Religion could take official possession of these holy places. Henceforth, in proportion as basilicas are reared there, there will be unparalleled rejoicings, in which the liturgy will be anxious to mingle its splendour with that of art, to pay greater honour to the Heavenly Queen. It is thus (to proceed with our story) that, in the consecration of the upper temple, thirty-five Bishops or Archbishops took part, among whom there was a Cardinal, Mgr. Guibert, and the Papal Nuncio, Mgr. Mégliä. Never since our old Bishops inaugurated in the Middle Ages their Gothic cathedrals had France seen such solemnities at a dedication. They counted no less than 3,000 priests and 100,000 of the faithful. The great preacher of that day, Mgr. Mermillod, gave the sermon before this

assembly, the vastest and most distinguished that could be imagined : *In die illa erit canticum*. Next day our immortal Pius, of Poitiers, made himself heard (and applauded) at the crowning of the statue of the Blessed Virgin. Thus were begun the feasts of Lourdes—those feasts of which we can say that by the beauty of the surroundings, the richness of the decorations, the grandeur of the ceremonies, and the concourse of people, they are unparalleled in the whole world.

As to Mgr. Laurence—because it was written that none of the original workers of Massabielle would have a complete triumph here on earth—the reader can surmise that he did not taste the joy of such happy days. When he had done his life-work—*i.e.*, approved of Lourdes, and started the great movement which was never to stop—Pius IX., whose great soul was henceforth turned towards this Grotto, called him to his presence to learn from such a witness the wonders of the Pyrénées.

The first Bishop of Our Lady of Lourdes had been two months in the eternal city, when death surprised him on January 30, 1870, at the age of eighty years ; or, rather, so prudent a saint did not allow himself to be surprised, ready as he had been for a long while to see in Heaven this glorious Madonna, of whom he had had the honour of being the guardian and advocate on earth. In her maternal kindness Mary wished, at least, that her Bishop, full of merits even more than of years, should journey to his true native country from Rome itself, in the shadow of the throne of him whom history has already surnamed the Pope of the Immaculate Conception.

CHAPTER IX

HENRI LASSERRE

LASTLY, the Historian. In an age when, even in religious matters, the Press forms public opinion even more than the voice of the priests of the Church, a master in the art of writing was needed who, by the lustre of his talents, would make known and bring into vogue from pole to pole the heavenly story of Massabielle. The reader will presently judge whether, in this matter also, Heaven knew how to choose the right person.

Born at Carlux, near Périgueux, on February 25, 1828, of a noble and very religious family of partly foreign extraction, HENRI PAUL JOSEPH LASSERRE DE MONZIE was baptized the same day in the modest church of the village where his parents were then living for a time, until next year they should take up their residence in the Château des Bretoux, in the commune of Coux, on the poetical banks of the River Dordogne. It was there that the elect of the Most High spent his childhood, gay and light-hearted, but pure, and much more fascinated by the charm of the fields than by that of books. At the age of eleven, being already proficient in grammar and

Christian knowledge, he was sent to a boarding-school at Sarlat, then to the College of Cahors, where, despite the difference of religion, he formed a friendship with the young Protestant, Charles de Freycinet, which was destined to become historical. At length he went to finish his brilliant studies at the Lycée de Périgueux, during which the racy prose-writer and (it seems) clever mathematician showed himself more than once a charming poet.

Towards his seventeenth spring, having gained the distinction of *Bachelier-ès-Arts*, doubt (that terrible evil of Jouffroy and so many other young philosophers of the period) came to assail him. He seems to have suffered for some time from it, although his ardent and loving nature was formed for the higher joys of faith. But this is what heightened so much his keen sorrow, this chosen soul having to pass through the furnace of a humiliating scepticism before bathing one day in the certainty of supernatural faith. Three books gradually restored to him moral peace as well as intellectual light, though not as yet the fullness of the Christian life—viz., the “*Essai sur l’Indifférence*,” by Lamennais; the “*Études Philosophiques*,” by Auguste Nicolas; and especially the “*Imitation of Christ*,” that Divine refuge of all consciences in affliction.

Soon, what speculative thought had not been able to merit, almsgiving—an alms wellnigh heroic given by the young man to an old Polish wanderer on his estate—won for him: so true is it that man flies to God better on the wings of generosity and love than on those of learning and controversy. From that

time forth this soul, as if a single act had formed a habit in it, remained always keen and energetic in doing good. To give charity, to perform kind actions—this was his craving and his chief delight.

The day following this beautiful day, which marked, so to speak, his conversion once for all, the young Lasserre left for Saint Acheul, where, at the good school of the Jesuit Fathers, he laid the foundations, firm and unshakable, of that religious spirit, so enlightened and so devout, which was to make him not only one of the greatest Christians of the nineteenth century, but also the panegyrist of the Mother of God.

Meanwhile, in his twentieth year, we see him entering the capital to follow the course of the School of Law. As quick as he was hard-working, he was successful in all his examinations. In turn Licentiate and Doctor, at the age of twenty-five he was called to the Bar at Paris. Hardly had he begun practising there when the Revolution of February broke out. On the stormy night which witnessed the fall of an unpopular Royalty and the proclamation of a fancy Republic, the little advocate, more from provincial curiosity than from political zeal, found himself at the Town Hall, where he had the doubtful honour (as he felt it himself) of sitting at the table of the members of the Provisional Government, and of drinking out of Lamartine's own glass.

Still, in these difficult times, despite a merely passing acquaintance, he no more thought of concealing his political views than his religious beliefs. This parading of his Christian and Legitimist aims,

which was to make its mark and also his popularity, he calmly kept up in the midst of the people of Basoche all through the feverish excitement of the easy life to which his fine, inbred sense of humour, not less than his buoyant good-nature, disposed him too much. His comrades hardly called him anything else but *Henri the Catholic*, which, he quickly retorted, obliged him still more to uphold steadfastly the standard of all holy causes. It was his charity which, in the full life of the world, always safeguarded his faith—the same charity which had restored it to him under his father's roof in a sorrowful hour. For the barrister of Paris, like the student of Dordogne, remained unalterably the man of good works. He who, during his vacation in the country, had one day, it is said, thanks to the muscles of his strong arm, saved the life of an unfortunate miller on whom the enraged peasants were about to wreak their vengeance for his professional thefts, gave himself up in the big city to the constant exercise of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, visiting, after the manner of Ozanam, the sick who wept under their roof of misery, assisting them even with his purse, inspiring in them something of his faith, honouring them with a sort of supernatural devotion, prompted by pity and reverence—*e.g.*, the sick old woman of the Quartier Latin, the widow Vassal, whom he helped like a son to suffer, and even to cure her—to cure her marvelously . . . since it was just at the end of a novena, made by the brilliant thinker and the poor widow together in honour of St. Geneviève, that her health was perfectly restored. Thus the man whom

Providence marked out as the authentic chronicler of so many miracles met with the miraculous at the outset of his thrilling career.

All this did not, however, prevent Henri Lasserre from possessing the most enviable circle of friends in the world. Being on intimate terms with the young Count Léonce Dubos de Pesquidoux, he shared with him an apartment in the Rue de Seine, which for seven years was frequented by the élite of Parisian young men, such as a Henri d'Ideville, an Armand Ravelet, a Leon Gautier. There also came men already famous, or soon to win fame, as Louis Veuillot, Laurantie, Théophile Sylvestre, Raymond Brucker, Poujoulat, Eugène Loudun, Adolphe Thiers, Henri de Riancey, Barbey d'Aurevilly, Arthur de Boissieu, Edouard Drumont, and the faithful Charles de Freycinet.

But, as the author of 'France Juive' tells us, the most attractive of this illustrious areopagus was the master of the house—our hero. And yet this splendid mixture of keen intellectualism and elegant worldliness did not exempt him from the 'inexorable ennui' of which Bossuet speaks. Rich, educated, talented, blessed by the unfortunate, praised by the happy, seeing a splendid future opening out before him, the son of the manorial lords of Bretoux had still, at the age of twenty-eight, to find his true vocation! More than once the vision of the priesthood, or even of the cloister, seemed to attract him. To examine his dispositions, he made retreat after retreat in all the well-known monasteries. His accidental meeting with Dom Guéranger was

specially fruitful to him. If it did not win him a religious vocation, at least he owed to it that wonderful impress of practical and militant faith which made him henceforth the 'knight-errant of justice'—*comes justitiæ*—the device blazoned on the prophetic scutcheon of his ancestors.

Lasserre found himself at this very hour, without in the least suspecting it, at the turning-point of his career, at that solemn moment when, having consistently done good by his words, his fortune and his example, it remained for him to bring to it the assistance of his pen.

This was in truth what Heaven was waiting for, all the rest having only been the gradual preparation for this his highest task.

Curiously enough, the first literary attempt of this mystic was political. His pamphlet, 'Le Coup d'État,' appeared in 1851, at the height of the democratic anarchy, as the complete programme of social conservation. They say that the Prince-President, touched by the support given him by this Royalist, offered him the post of *Maître de Requêtes* in the Council of State. The Bourbonism of the author forbade him to accept it, but he contented himself with laying before Louis Napoleon 'a plan for planting fruit-trees along all the highways of France,' thereby showing that true philanthropy for believers lies not in words, but in deeds.

Shortly afterwards appeared his second work, 'The Spirit and the Flesh,' the vigorous onslaught of a Christian moralist on the unbridled licentiousness of the period, still further aggravated by the

odious and grotesque 'Saint-Simonian' theories of a Père Enfantin.* Next year the 'Serpents' was the hiss of disapproval of good sense and religion against the tortuous policy of a revolutionary and atheistical party. Then in 1861 came 'The Gospel of Renan,' an incisive and spiritual reply to the infamous 'Life of Jesus.' We notice more and more the fervent apostle and the keen controversialist, as we must also admire the accomplished writer.

Meanwhile Lasserre (to gain adherents rather than to earn his livelihood) contributed articles to various orthodox journals—the *Pays*, *Monde*, *Réveil*, *Ami de la Religion*, *Révue du Monde Catholique*. At the famous Congress of Mechlin he made a great impression when, with great courage and enthusiasm, he advocated (what was, alas! already a moot point) the union of the Catholic press on the exclusive ground of principles.

In the interval he had the good fortune to stay for over six months in Rome as secretary to Prince Constantin Czartoryski, to plead the cause of our Polish brethren, daily more and more oppressed by the Muscovite tyranny, at the feet of Pius IX., a mission which resulted, on his return to France, in the well-known pamphlet, 'Poland and Catholicity.'

But hardly had this generous pamphlet seen the light, when a sudden ophthalmia came mysteriously

* Saint Simon was a philosophical dreamer, who held strange theories on philanthropy and Socialism. The Père Enfantin was another fanatic (neither a priest nor a religious), who tried to carry out the former's theories by founding a communism partly mystical and partly revolutionary.—TRANSLATOR.

to deprive the courageous writer of the use of his eyes. The doctors, far from lessening the evil, only made it worse, as if to prove that the trial came less from man than from God. Not being able to read or write, the unfortunate publicist communicated to his friend Freycinet his great sorrow. You know the rest—how the Huguenot advised the Catholic, since the doctors could do nothing, to appeal to Heaven by means of the Madonna of Lourdes, the wonders of whom were beginning to be talked of even on the boulevards of Paris; and how the Catholic at first replied coldly to the advances of the Huguenot, fearing nothing so much, as he confessed afterwards, as a miracle, which would oblige him to break certain bonds, from which hitherto he had been loth to tear himself away. . . . Nevertheless, under pressure of the evil, and at the entreaties of his friend, Henri soon gave way. In order that everything might seem marvellous in this marvellous affair, it happened that it was Charles himself who wrote to the Curé of Lourdes for a flask of the holy water. As soon as the precious liquid arrived (October 10, 1862), the first need of the poor blind man—for so he was nearly—was, by an impulse of grace, which so many good works had assuredly earned for him at this fateful hour, to fall on his knees and address to the Mother of all mercy a prayer full of humility, but also inspired by confidence. Rising up again, he takes, not without trembling, the precious flask, pours a little of this healing water in a cup, and rubs his eyes with the corner of a moistened towel. . . . To his surprise,

as soon as the sacred water touched the injured organ, his sight was restored to him, as good, keen, and strong as ever! The cure, clearly supernatural, was accomplished in a few seconds—‘like a flash of lightning,’ to use the words of the healed man. It is impossible to describe his shock, or, rather, his consternation. He literally could not believe his eyes, the more clearly he felt his vision had been restored to him. To make more certain of the fact, he runs to his library, takes a profane book, throws it down at once, as too unworthy of such an attempt, chooses a pious one (the notice on the facts of the Grotto, which was enclosed in the packet), and begins to read with his naked eye 104 pages on end without difficulty or fatigue, without even feeling the need of stopping once, though it could not have been very bright in Paris at the window of a room towards half-past five in the evening in mid-October.

The reader may judge if the happy recipient of such a favour, as complete as it was freely bestowed, was not stirred to the depths of his being. I have read that the Protestant himself was not converted in the course of a Retreat which he made at Solesmes under the influence of this miracle; yet that he would certainly have been converted but for that fatal siren which men call politics, or, rather, if you will, ambition. This, however, remains the secret of Him who fathoms the reins and the hearts. In any case, it cannot be with impunity that any man whatsoever—even if he aspired to guide the car of State—finds himself

personally concerned in such interpositions of Divine power. There is grave reason to fear that if it is not for the spiritual welfare of the privileged witness, it only turns out for his eternal ruin. Lasserre understood immediately that the saying *noblesse oblige* is still more true of miracles. Gratitude lending him wings, he sped to the banks of the Gave to offer his prayers of thanksgiving at the feet of the maternal Madonna, who had just granted him such a signal favour. When the Abbé Peyramale heard the story from the lips of the man miraculously healed, he cried out prophetically, 'Behold the historian of Our Lady of Lourdes!' while shedding tears of joy like the aged Simeon.

In fact, this day, we may say, marked the beginning at Massabielle of the sublime mission of this client of Mary—his one true and undoubted mission—of relating for his generation, as for all generations, the miracles of the Queen of the Pyrénées. Were not all his gifts for this sole purpose? We see, first, our hero in long prayer before the glorious Grotto; the next, frequently conversing with the child-Seer. Was not he, too, henceforth a *seer*, who probed this soul of light to its inmost depths? He conferred, also, many times with the parish priest, interviewed all those who from far or near had taken part in the episodes of Massabielle, visited the places that had anything to do with the visions or the cures, took notes, made inquiries, asked for authentic records, armed himself with all sorts of living documents. On his journey to Tarbes the Bishop wished to put at his disposal the various Proceed-

ings of the Commission, together with the numerous reports of the doctors and the voluminous correspondence relating to the supernatural at Lourdes. All was then ready for the composition of an immortal work, which would become, by a stroke of genius, a *chef-d'œuvre* of the first rank. And yet, doubtless that nothing should be done too hastily—*i.e.*, that human errors might not appear in this record of Divine mercy—five years passed by without any work appearing. M. Peyramale, with his zeal now at fever-height, was disheartened by it, rightly thinking that it was an injustice not to record once for all the history of it—a history so important and delicate—whilst nearly all the eye-witnesses were still living.

At length (since the Mysterious had to take part from beginning to end in the affair), on the eve of August 15, 1867, the Blessed Virgin had to force the hand (so to speak) of her somewhat tardy chronicler. The circumstances under which it happened fully deserve to be told once more in these pages: that evening, the Vigil of the greatest of Our Lady's feasts, Henri Lasserre went to confession—not to his ordinary confessor, Abbé Ferrand de Missol, who was away, but to an unknown priest, who was hearing confessions in a little chapel of the Rue Duguay-Trouin—and accused himself (it seems), amongst other things, of ingratitude to Our Lady in putting off continually the writing of a book in her honour, despite the promise he had made after an extraordinary grace. 'Very well,' replied the confessor, 'for your penance begin the work this very day.' And as the penitent still tried to put it off a little

longer, probably because of the timidity natural to the holiest persons regarding the unfolding of God's works, 'Not to-morrow,' insisted the confessor with the voice of a prophet, 'but this evening. I order you!' He who spoke so sternly and peremptorily was no other than Théodore Ratisbonne, the celebrated Jew converted at Rome by the miraculous medal! And the result was that from this memorable vigil of Our Lady in August the writer of the Immaculate Conception set to work. . . .

The first steps, uncongenial enough for such a master of style, consisted in selecting and arranging the various parts. Perceiving ere long that there were gaps in the outline of facts, the author, who was now urged on by conscience and love, began to travel to various places, where the missing references might be gathered. This indispensable work—a true critical cross-examination being added with scrupulous care to so many other preliminary investigations—furnished the most satisfactory and reliable results; and when the examining magistrate had finished his task, it was the turn of the advocate, or, rather, the historian.

A year later the remarkable masterpiece focussed on itself universal attention. Its popularity at once surpassed all previous expectations. Translated into seventy-eight languages or dialects, this volume, the greatest literary success of modern times, has already run through more than two hundred editions in less than forty years! It can be said that the whole world wished to read these matchless pages in English, German, Flemish, Czech, Breton, Spanish,

Dalmatian, Dutch, Hungarian, Slovenian, Arabic, modern Greek, Italian, Maltese, Roumanian, Polish, Portuguese, Chinese, Japanese, Bengalese, Kamaran, and Tamoul. . . . The good Lady had visibly blessed the work of her chosen author. This is what the Head of the Church himself was pleased to declare in a Brief full of high praise, addressed to his famous and beloved son on September 4, 1869.

The highest praise of this providential work is that it marked the beginning of the universal enthusiasm of which we have endeavoured to give some account in a previous chapter. 'Lasserre has spoken,' said Ernest Hello; 'the pilgrimages are the answer.' Published at Lourdes, the book drew everyone to Lourdes, and thus became as useful to the designs of Providence as, after Bernadette's visions, the labours of a Peyramale or the judgment of a Laurence. This is why, from all the organs of religious thought, from the Pope downward, congratulations poured in upon Lasserre, who had 'decidedly entered into the glory of his sublime heroine, the Virgin of Massabielle,' as the Rev. Père Sempé wrote to him, voicing the opinion of all the Bishops, priests, and people. Even members of the Academy, literary men, and journalists were anxious to add their note of enthusiasm to this chorus of praise. The reason was because a picture so heavenly was designed in so artistic a framework! 'Never has writing,' they said, 'succeeded more completely in fascinating the mind while stirring the heart.' The absorbing tale of apparitions and cures; the dramatic picture of conflicts stirred up in

turn by Unbelief and political hatred, and bringing out into strong relief the doctrinal meaning of facts; and, lastly, the graphic description of the final triumph of the supernatural—all is found in this matchless work with an ever-increasing interest and (we must add) with a conscientiousness that leaves no room for error or doubt. Such excessive critical severity has led Léon Gautier, a true connoisseur, to remark that such a work is the ‘authentic record (*procès-verbal*) of miracle.’ Considered from the point of view of its moral influence, notice how the same critic appreciated this work from the beginning: ‘It is a manly and strong work. It will assuredly make men!’ In any case, it has already made many believers, which is without doubt better still. But let us hear Hello once more: ‘This book has been everywhere; it has conquered time and space; the movement has carried it in a tremendous whirlwind, then it has ended by drawing men into this movement, making them submit wherever it passed.’

We know that this masterpiece was not his only one. In 1879 appeared ‘Bernadette,’ a touching and edifying biography of the Ecstatic Child, who had just died like a sweet saint in the obscurity of the cloister of Nevers. What other pen save that which had described so well the peerless Lady could reveal to us the supernatural beauties lodged in the soul of S. Marie Bernard? Four years later we have the ‘Miraculous Episodes of Lourdes,’ a sort of natural continuation of the great history. ‘The first volume,’ some thinker or other has said, ‘was bound to produce the second, not only in the

order of ideas, but also in that of facts.' We might call this work a true mosaic of little dramas in a hundred different acts. What a variety of characters move across the stage! What richness of scenes, and what a splendid style! But, above all, what a refutation of the prevailing materialism by this triumph of the supernatural, as undeniable as overwhelming!

Such is the Lourdes trilogy of Henri Lasserre. I am mistaken; there are two others—'Month of Mary of Our Lady of Lourdes,' and a 'Life of the Abbé Peyramale.'

But, speaking generally, the first two works, which even then were not to everyone's liking (Mgr. Perraud forbade them in his diocese), seem little more than the résumé of the preceding writings, with a character of vivid piety and of a mystical unction better adapted to their special purpose. As to the biographical study which the author gave in 1897, twenty years after the death of his admirable friend, it is only fair to say that even there we find many valuable details regarding the origin of the famous Shrine, the growth of the pilgrimages, and a host of men and things relating to this sacred Grotto.

But what constitutes the chief charm of these pages, written from his heart, is the life of the hero, as I have tried to sketch it before. Then, once more, though always with a new felicity of painting, comes the tale of the marvellous facts, in which the Curé of Lourdes played so important a part, as well as the account of how the work was carried out—his

own special work! Through all these episodes, which are nearer Heaven than earth, the great soul of the priest of God looms out, now agitated by doubt, now restrained by prudence, now led by faith, and again upheld and consoled by prayer. What a majesty surrounds this champion of Our Lady when, convinced at length that his little parishioner speaks to him in *her* name, he takes the poor child under his protection, already harassed by persecution! His struggle against all the forces of man constitute a true play within a play, with that stern epilogue especially—I mean the last trials of the good Curé, victim, like Bernadette, of the glory of Our Lady of Lourdes: happy victims, whose crown in return would have to be beautiful beyond compare!

All this, the reader may imagine, written in charming prose, is read and devoured like a romance. What a pity—why should we mention it?—that the personal note creeping too much especially into this last work, the champion of the supernatural descends to mere self-defence and to vulgar recrimination of others! Not wishing once again to reopen old wounds, or to enter into the intricacies of a dispute which is not yet settled, and perhaps never will be, suffice it to say that Lasserre was at times, as someone said, ‘headstrong in good.’ For this reason, if he had disappointments like his venerable friend, perhaps he was also misrepresented.

But this Christian loved Our Lady of Lourdes so much, and served her so well, that we may well pardon him an alloy, which in his case, doubtless, was only an intemperate form of zeal. The writer

of these pages will never forget the supernatural accent with which the historian of Massabielle (for thus he will be known to posterity) honoured him by speaking to him, shortly before his death, almost at the feet of the Madonna and this Grotto, where all his life and heart were.

We are aware that the last days of Our Lady's scribe were, according to the mysterious law of Providence, darkened by other trials than those he endured on the banks of the Gave. The unhappy translation of the 'Holy Gospels,' by drawing on him the censures of the Index, finally broke down the remaining strength of his embittered soul. To him likewise was offered the crown of thorns after the crown of glory. It was a happy token for the next world, whither he went at the age of seventy-two, full of virtues and merits, like the just men of the Bible, laid low by death, but even in the tomb destined for a holy immortality!

CHAPTER X

A GLORIOUS DIPTYCH

AFTER the famous dead, it would be unjust to forget those servants of God still living who by their various services merit the gratitude of all lovers of Massabielle.

Now, of many names, two by common consent stand out pre-eminent—that of the *Organizer* and that of the *Physician*. We purpose, then, in a brief sketch, with the reserve which their modesty demands of us, to present to the reader this fresh group, which, in its turn, has no less claim on our attention and gratitude.

We shall first speak of the ‘Bishop of Lourdes,’ as Mgr. Schoepfer loves to sign himself. When I call him the ‘Organizer’ of the work of Espéluques, I do not mean to say that there was no organization before his time; that would be absolutely unfair. I only mean that, the latest of the Bishops of Our Lady, he has been able, owing to the labours and experience of his predecessors, to carry almost to ideal perfection the spiritual and temporal administration of this glorious Shrine. Everyone is aware, in fact, that the present Guardian of the Grotto, the

sixth link in the golden chain which binds the Bigourdain See to the Madonna, when taking possession eight years ago of the See of Tarbes, found bequeathed to him very precious examples regarding the interests he had to watch over.

On the palace to-day, alas ! does not the venerable and saintly figure of Mgr. Laurence look down, who will ever live in history as the Bishop of the Apparitions ? Mgr. Pichenot, on whom his mantle of virtue even more than of authority fell, passed like a transient gleam, giving barely a hint of what, like a true shepherd, he would have done for the glory of Mary.

Then came Mgr. Langénieux, whose memory is enshrined in contemporary annals with the halo of an apostle even more than of a Bishop. Coming to the banks of the Gave when the external work was hardly beginning, he was, we may say, under God, its good genius. With his mind so keen, his heart so generous, with all the means besides, which his *savoir faire*, joined to his influence, commanded, he did much for the establishment and adornment of so beloved a pilgrimage. Even when the Basilica of Rheims had called him away from the Crypt of miracles, the Archbishop of Rheims, the Cardinal of working men, the Legate of Leo XIII., never lost sight of Lourdes, continuing to direct everything from afar, and was glad to throw his red mantle, type of his love for Mary, over this Grotto, on which his first labours as Bishop had been spent. Might it be to show more clearly that the things of God have no need of man's help, that to such a Prelate

Providence gave as successor Mgr. Jourdan, the infirm and eccentric old man, whose mission regarding Massabielle (if mission it might be called) seemed to be, while suffering, to make others suffer? We have already sketched the trials of a Peyramale sufficiently; we have seen clearly enough how largely they entered into the designs of Providence to allow ourselves to complain against him who was perhaps the cause of them. God, who, as St. Augustine says, uses the bad to purify the good, often uses the good also to test those better than themselves.

Again, Mgr. Billières, however deficient in poetical sensibility, had certainly too much faith and patriotism (he was a native of this land) to take no notice of the treasure which Heaven deigned to entrust to his care. Very good to the needs of his priests, he showed himself most devoted to his Grotto, despite the menace of a civil power which did not spare him difficulties.

Such was for about forty years the list of Bishops at Massabielle. Let us now turn to the present Bishop.

Alsatian by birth, Vicar (after his native province was severed from France) of that church of Notre Dame des Victoires, which in Heaven's designs was a preparation for Lourdes, everything fitted beforehand the newly elect for his special calling to be the servant of the Immaculate Conception, both the religious training of his family circle, and the ecclesiastical novitiate in the most Marian of Paris parishes, and, lastly, a fairly long administration of an important church in the capital. Thus it is, we may repeat, that God usually deigns to choose His

instruments, disposing not only in their heart, but throughout their career, those mysterious 'ascents by steps' * which ravished the spirit of the royal Psalmist. So, when coming to the Pyrenean See, Mgr. Francis Xavier Schoepfer, doubtless to prove more clearly that he would be, above all, a client of Our Lady, if he chose the cross as his symbol—the wooden cross of his heroic patron saint—was anxious to choose a device which contains in a nutshell the whole of Christianity: *Per Mariam ad Jesum*. But, moreover, what is perfectly summed up in these four words is his beneficent rule, of which the vigour, tempered with unction, has already carried out so many plans, used the services of so many people, and won the heart of so many pilgrims, with the sole aim of drawing all to the Son by means of the Mother: *Ad Filium per Matrem*. From the very day of his consecration (to use a happy phrase employed on that occasion) did not the Lady of Massabielle vouchsafe to her chosen son, as the most expressive presage of all, from the crannies of the Rock and the flowering walls of the Grotto, 'the most sweet and prophetic smile of her maternal lips'?

Men were soon able to judge if the new agent of the wonder-working Queen of Heaven had at heart the interests of his Suzerain. Hardly had he come to the land of Mary, henceforth his own land, than he addressed a circular letter to his colleagues throughout the world to invite them to an extraordinary festival which would take place at Espé-

* Psalm lxxxiii.

lugues at the same time as the ceremonies of the secular jubilee, coinciding with the profane rejoicings of an Exposition Universelle. Thus he had the honour and happiness, if not of inaugurating, certainly of celebrating, with greater pomp than ever the universal solemnities which are the monopoly of Lourdes only, and to which the venerable heads of all the churches have since been periodically invited, bringing with them their flocks. With what refined courtesy the Bishop of Our Lady always welcomes his venerable brethren of two worlds! What is not less noticeable is the anxiety of the pious Prelate for all the chief duties of Massabielle. Nothing is done, however unimportant, without the master and father going there, with his soul clearly full of religious fervour, with his smile so gracious and indulgent. Has he not for some time now, like the Madonna, taken up his residence there, in order to be in the very centre of the prayer of Lourdes, as well as of its material interests?

It is well known to all, I think, that at the holy Rock three duties from the beginning have specially claimed the sympathy of Mgr. Schoepfer—that of hospitality, that of the hospital, and, lastly, that of the men's pilgrimages. The first has been brought under his influence to the highest perfection, it seems, that Christian charity can reach; the second has been able to realize under his sway what I will call with eminent professional men 'the *ne plus ultra* of scientific investigation applied to the verification of Divine phenomena'; as to the third, in which the Prelate sees, not without reason, the triumph of

Lourdes, everyone knows the splendid results which on this score he has already obtained by the truly colossal gatherings of our French fellow-citizens at the feet of the white Madonna. Adding a noble example to his wise precepts, how often can the good pastor be seen going from one hospital to another, carrying his blessing and comfort to this host of suffering clients of Mary, who are his children for the nonce ! It is not unusual for him to come to the *Bureau des Constatations* and sit beside M. Bois-sarie, for whom he professes so openly a friendship based on esteem and gratitude, and take part in the study of cases with a knowledge and aptitude truly wonderful. As regards the pilgrimages for men only assembled on the banks of the famous river, we know the marvellous results obtained of late years. The years 1899 and 1903 brought 60,000 good Catholics to the wonderful review at Massabielle. This year, likewise, this energetic Bishop expects to see 100,000 Frenchmen coming in May to renew before their Queen the solemn promises of their baptism. What a reward must not such spectacles be to him already for so many labours !

With a view to the convenience of the pious visitors, Mgr. Schoepfer lately had the new hostelry built, of vast proportions and comfortably fitted up, in order to give them a warmer welcome. But the shrines of Our Lady especially are the continual object of his religious care. It is generally known, I think, over the whole world, that at his accession the new Bishop conceived the idea of extending Massabielle as far as the Vatican, by constructing in

the gardens of His Holiness a *replica* of the Grotto of Bigorre. To-day the facsimile, it seems, is so perfect that the Vicar of Jesus Christ, coming every day to make his orisons in this corner of Heaven, can fancy himself by a sweet illusion in the most wonderful spot in France. How happy, then, must such nearness seem to the pious soul of Pius X. ! Lourdes and Rome, the city of the spotless Virgin and that of the infallible Pontiff—are they not the two great devotions of the present day, which Heaven itself has united by links, doctrinal and historic, rich in the most glorious hopes ?

Yet (we must add) the spiritual beauty of the temples of Mary are much more important to their distinguished Guardian than their material splendour. Thus, from the outset he gave himself no rest till he could obtain the solemn consecration of the Rosary Chapel. It was performed by a Legate of the Sovereign Pontiff, and Leo XIII. wished to make known to the whole world these memorable feasts in a special Encyclical, *Parta humano generi*. At the close of these solemnities the same Pope, in an autograph letter, praised ‘the wisdom and prudence admirably united to zeal and piety’ of the Bishop of Our Lady of Lourdes. It was shortly after this that his special devotion moved Mgr. Schoepfer to compose with his hand—or, rather, with his whole heart—that touching prayer to the Madonna which Pius X.’s predecessor approved and enriched with indulgences, and which the holy Pope now reigning loves to say devoutly every day at the feet of the Grotto.

As though the valley of Espéluques did not afford sufficient scope for his zeal, how often have men seen Mgr. Schoepfer, undaunted by every obstacle, go to the limits of his diocese to promote devotion to the gracious Queen of the Pyrénées! Thus, he lately ascended the mountain of Troumouse to bless a colossal statue of the Immaculate Virgin, standing on a pedestal 6,560 feet high!

So it is not wonderful that during the early months of his reign he received from the Secretary of State an official note saying that the new Pope, the inheritor of the special good-will of Leo XIII., was pleased already to praise 'his thoughtful zeal,' and his unremitting care to glorify the Blessed Mother of God in a shrine which is the centre of her power and mercy.'

When the times began to look threatening, what efforts did the Bishop of Tarbes not make to shield his beloved work as far as possible from men's hatred and the law's intolerance? Letters, applications, journeys—nothing was neglected by him for this purpose. If he could not succeed in keeping for the work of the Grotto those admirable Fathers of Garaison whom Heaven chose almost from the beginning by means of Mgr. Laurence, at least he had the very great joy, at the dark hour, alas! when so many weaker institutions began to give way, and so many glorious temples were closed, of preserving these holy places for the glory of Mary and the piety of the world, which made Paul de Cassagnac himself say: 'Yes, it is this Bishop that has saved Lourdes.'

The reader may imagine that Mgr. Schoepfer has left no stone unturned on the occasion of the Jubilee, 1908. How many of the glories and benefits of this year of Jubilee do they not owe to him?

If the head of the Church has gone so far as to astonish Heaven by the profusion of his supernatural indulgences, the Bishop of Tarbes has contributed no little to this. Read the fascinating pamphlet which, in the form of a pastoral, he took care to publish on the eve of the Golden Jubilee as the incentive, no less than the memorial, of the unrivalled fêtes of 1908, and you must admit that this Prelate, writing, preaching, travelling, ever active, is indeed, on the banks of the Gave, the spirit which animates Massabielle—*mens agitat molem*.

Such appears, to every unprejudiced eye, the worker of the Immaculate Conception. When, then, he modestly styles himself the 'Guardian' of Our Lady, is not this term too feeble to convey the idea of so much energy? We should rather call him the *Organizer*—an organizer who, seconded by the valuable assistance of the chaplains, has already very nearly (I love to repeat it) brought the complex working of this shrine to the highest degree of perfection.

With his majesty marked by sweetness, with his persuasive speech, in which we know not which to admire most, its faultless style, its elegant simplicity, its priestly unction, or its Apostolic doctrine, with his noble heart, so devoted to all that concerns the interests of Our Lady, he well deserved to figure in bas-relief opposite the memorable Pope of the Rosary, on the peristyle of the basilica there—this pious

and undaunted Bishop, whom his contemporaries already call *l'embelliseur de Notre Dame* !

After the religious man comes the man of science, the inquisitor of the supernatural in the footsteps of its apostle.

Who has not been at least once inside this little building—a kind of austere and impressive cenacle, where doctors from every realm, geographical or philosophical, meet together from May till October to discuss in modern fashion the works of God ?

Over this learned body Dr. Boissarie has now presided for sixteen years. Take a good look at this Æsculapius, long, dry, unbending, with impassive features, abrupt gestures, full voice, and say if he does not seem to have been placed there to throw cold water on miracles, so much does he give you the idea from the first of being cold as analysis, inflexible as geometry, a sort of living syllogism ! . . . Formerly a house-surgeon of the hospitals at Paris, he had already, by his well-earned reputation as a clever doctor, won an enviable position, when the wonders of Lourdes attracted his robust reason, and led him to change his career in life. We first meet with him as an assistant to Dr. Saint-Maclou—that Benedictine in a frock-coat—boldly installed in the neighbourhood of the famous Grotto in order to examine better its mystery.

After the death of his master, he has presided with an ability and a conscientiousness which all must acknowledge over this congress of doctors, whose fame is known all over the world. He has already seen

there in succession 2,500 doctors, among whom are reckoned members of the Academy of Medicine, professors of the Faculty, professors of medical schools, hospital surgeons or doctors, and house-surgeons, etc.

Among the most regular, and not the least eminent, of his confrères we are glad to mention Drs. Cox, Duré, and Desplat. Far from slackening with time, the eagerness of this illustrious assembly does nothing, like the fervour of the crowds, but continually increase, the more the wonders declare themselves. For some time past the average number of the disciples of Hippocrates every year is, at the lowest estimate, 250.

Shall I add, then, that the most exacting of all these inquisitors is their president—so much so that more than once his colleagues have had to remonstrate with him, *e.g.*, when not having been able to obtain what he always needs, ‘overwhelming proof’ (*le luxe de la preuve*), he rejects without pity the most convincing arguments, and refuses to enter into the official registers cases otherwise remarkable which the voice of the people, and even the verdict of many professional men, had already declared superhuman.

In this long space of time, what phenomena has our doctor not seen, heard, experimented with, which baffle in turn all the schools? Time after time you should hear his verdict, earmarked with consummate wisdom, but also with a disheartening reserve, and you will have to admit that such an examining magistrate (for M. Boissarie is pre-eminently such) cannot deceive himself any more

than he would wish on any account to beguile us. I shall never forget the disappointment of certain persons 'miraculously cured' before the cold, uncompromising manner of this ruthless man, who, after examining his patients—or, rather, the Blessed Virgin's—from every point of view, passed them on to his assistants with the utmost indifference, called them back, putting aside pitilessly, almost inhumanly, the cases in which there was a shadow of doubt, demanding of others, before definitely keeping them, whether they had been certified and described beforehand by some doctor who has signed the *procès-verbal* of their case—so much so that more than one person cured, to my knowledge, prefers to keep the secret to himself rather than undergo such a merciless ordeal. We expected to find here a devout man on the look-out for supernatural evidences, and, instead, we meet with a matter-of-fact practitioner, who does not profess to be anything else, and remains so to the end. Who has not heard him putting questions and raising objections? We are tempted to ask if he is not trying to forearm himself, by the aid of Science, against Divine power the more clearly Divine power asserts itself. I have already mentioned his favourite axiom, '*Not to admit the intervention of Heaven, save when there is no means of doing otherwise.*' Ever the last person to yield, has he not boasted in one case of having waited *fourteen years* before deciding in favour of the miraculous character of a certain cure?* 'Here is

* Strictly speaking, the *Bureau Médical* of Lourdes, upholding the rights of Faith as scrupulously as those of Science, never

one man, at any rate, who will never become a fanatic,' was the remark of a Parisian journalist one day in my hearing. If any title would suit him, it would be, I think, '*the Iconoclast of pious illusions*,' for (as all feel who see him at work) an organic or constitutional cure — *nervous* cures he simply despises—must be *doubly* and *trebly* certain, evident, undeniable, before he will consent at length to declare it superior to the laws and rules of medical science. Nay, more, even when its supernatural character forces itself upon you, the prudent physician still postpones the final decision, until the lapse of a long experience has tested it, being fond of repeating with a famous Cardinal, '*Le temps et moi*.'* So the famous challenge delivered formerly to free-thinkers by M. Artus regarding Lasserre's book—a reward of 10,000 francs for the man who should prove the inaccuracy of a single statement of the immortal historian—might be repeated to-day regarding the official results of the hospital of a Boissarie. The fact still quite recent of the pretended blind man of Marseilles, Auguste Philippi, does not tend to lessen the value of his judgments, if we recall with what distrust at first, then with what caution, he took up this case, refusing definitely to declare it authentic till further inquiry. Meanwhile all could see the zeal and unselfishness with which he

uses the word 'miracle.' Leaving this task to religion only, it confines itself to declaring that such a cure, either by its nature or by its manner, cannot be accounted for by purely natural causes.

* 'Time and myself will decide.'

anxiously undertook to find out the real facts of the case, which ended in the discovery of an ignominious fraud, which his unerring medical sense, ever at the service of this great, good man, had divined and frustrated.

Although, on an average, 1,500 cures are entered annually in the Register of the Bureau, the President never ceases to declare that it is not so much the quantity as the quality that matters. In fact, a single miracle, duly verified and maturely proved, ought to be enough to make the most exacting Rationalist submit and confess the truth. Zola fully admitted this. Who would, then, venture nowadays to maintain that such a Court of Inquiry is wanting at Lourdes? Doctors innumerable, and for the most part eminent, but with the most widely divergent views on medical matters, come there like inexorable judges rather than partial advocates, in presence of a host of cures, each more difficult to explain than the last, and after a searching, exact, and profound study on the spot—often prolonged even after their return home—all these masters are at length forced to conclude, on their honour as professional men, and sometimes in spite of their most cherished convictions, that here they meet with facts unheard of, extraordinary, and surpassing all known forces and methods. It is clear that in these tragic hours (for they are truly such), the Christian, which lies hid under the medical man, shines forth in M. Boissarie. Having taken every precaution against false explanations, how happy he is—so believing at heart and so fervent in practice—when the evidence, stronger

than all their theories, bows down the souls of these proud medicos round his austere person, who came at first in the secret hope of finding God at fault ! And if, as not seldom happens, some touching conversion follows from these dramatic scenes, his joy then becomes almost the happiness of an apostle.

In 1905, for example, that doctor of Chartres who came armed with all kinds of precautions and safeguards, but after carefully noting, examining, and hearing everything, declared he had found the faith ! The same evening he made a public speech to the doctors and *brancardiers* of Massabielle on the undeniable reality of the miracles he had felt with his own hands, confessing, in tones of touching humility, his former scepticism, and proclaiming his recovered faith with a conviction that had all the greater weight with his audience. I was present, and saw the tremendous effect it produced.

Thus, thanks in great measure to M. Boissarie and his methods, miracles are being more and more acknowledged in the world of medicine—the hardest world to convince—taking their right place there, and there, by God's grace, multiplying their conquests.

Still, you must admit a creation of this kind was not started without some courage. What confidence a man must have in himself and in Heaven thus to entrust miracles, by a sort of Inquisition open to all comers, to the mercy of an ever-changing and mixed assembly, and how on every side marvellous facts are brought to light ! Here it is a consumptive cured during the Procession ; there a victim of

cancer, who has left his sickness in the Pools ; farther on, a case of ' Pott's disease ' * suddenly cured during Mass, etc. So, in view of such results, absolutely abnormal and certified by Science, even Dr. Berillon, the renowned director of a *Revue d'Hypnotisme*, has made no secret latterly that we are at Lourdes in presence of an ' astonishing power.' ' Is this of the same order as our own or not ? ' This is what the learned doctor as yet cannot, or at least dare not, decide. At all events, let us hear how he concludes this avowal : ' If this power *is* of the same order, we must confess that it seems superior to our own.' In common fairness, from which even doctors are not excused, they will all come gradually—with the help of God's grace, and despite their hopeless formulas—to acknowledge that the finger of God is here. M. Boissarie will be able on that day to burn a candle in thanksgiving to the good Mother who, through him, as through Bernadette formerly, will have won over the medical body by the hook of prodigies that bespeak her mercy even more than her power !

Meanwhile, is it not already wonderful, in an age of positivism and criticism run wild, that no serious man has any longer the power or the boldness to scoff at Lourdes, even to question the splendid cures which take place there ? Those who may still doubt have only to visit the spot, returning home, as so many notorious unbelievers have done before them, confessing with their lips and with tears in their eyes. Moreover, does not everything take

* Decay of the spinal column.

place in the open air, in the noonday glare of publicity—that is, in the presence of from 30,000 to 60,000 witnesses of every condition; above all, before the eyes of this unimpeachable jury of learned men, that was lately so loudly called for by the champions of irreligion, and which a Boissarie, strong in the Faith no less than in Science, and armed with the approval of Holy Church, was not afraid to assemble on the very scene of so many marvels, in order to submit miracles to the test of reason?

By this, as Mgr. Pie says, ‘the argument on which Christianity is wont to base its oracles, the argument that God proves His word by miracles, is henceforth found among us not accidentally or in isolated cases, but in a chronic, or (more accurately) a permanent, form.’ Bernheim says the same thing in slightly different words. ‘The facts of Lourdes,’ he says, ‘belong to Science, for all the observations are there made with such sincerity, and investigated by men as capable as they are honourable.’ To have won such an avowal from the king of hypnotism, a Jew, the *Autopsy of the Supernatural* must have indeed been merciless at Massabielle!

As though so many works and merits were not enough, everyone knows that Boissarie spends his spare time in writing. But it is always with the same critical severity that the pen of the writer replaces the scalpel of the surgeon. The former reveals and publishes what the latter has already examined and diagnosed.

Such is the latest work, which appeared not quite

a year ago (in succession to four or five others), on the very eve of the Jubilee, besides the scientific preface to the '*Noces d'Or.*' There, as you can imagine, we find gathered together the most important and undisputable facts which have been observed quite lately in this *Bureau Médical*, the living school of Catholicism, taught by Reason alone.

It is, indeed, chiefly from a scientific and critical standpoint that this volume is addressed to us. I would call it a proof of the Supernatural by human reason. From end to end, the Supernatural is irresistibly borne in upon you in all the cases which the author relates and dissects with his professional severity. Does not such a work, therefore, indirectly at least, constitute a crushing reply to the perfidious 'Immanence' of the present day, which would fain reduce our most undisputed miracles to so many pious legends, or, at all events, contingencies incapable of proof, or, lastly, phenomena hitherto unexplained, but which will eventually be explained, from which, therefore, no conclusion can be legitimately drawn? When we happen to come across cures that are literally astounding—*e.g.*, those of a Peter de Rudder, a George Gargam, a Madame Rouchel, and the Parisian singer—I will ask in all sincerity, what object can all the sciolism of the present day, multiplied into a hundred protean forms (Suggestion, Immanence, Higher Criticism, etc.), have in coming here? On rising up from these pages—if our 'Intellectualist' has not taken leave of fairness and common-sense—what else can he do except give up arguing, and adore?

This is how, as we said, so much good is done by this beautiful work, so striking in substance, often so impressive in style, but written always with a clearness and simplicity which are the secret only of the greatest masters. Hitherto to mention Boissarie was to quote the highest medical authority on the things of Lourdes; in the future, the doctor who spends his life in minutely examining miracles will appear, besides, in the eyes of those whose 'views' are not formed beforehand, as the matchless critic of a medical school that has no rival!

CHAPTER XI

THE LITURGY OF THE APPARITION

OF all the testimonies which for fifty years have thrown light on Lourdes, the best undoubtedly are those numerous ones coming from the Holy See; and foremost among these no one would hesitate to place the Office, in which the wonderful things of Massabielle are found approved, not to say canonized, by the highest authority in the world. We have thought the reader might like to rest awhile, at the close of this account of Lourdes, in a sort of mystic oasis, while we unfold before his eyes the beauties of the liturgy of Lourdes.

First Vespers. — How beautiful are the five opening anthems engrafted on the psalms of Our Lady like so many petals fallen from Heaven! From the first, with the radiance of uncreated light in which the Immaculate Conception was bathed, exhales the fragrance of spotless innocence. The next sketches more in detail the Woman clothed with the sun as with a garment, having the moon beneath her feet, and on her head a crown of stars. So before such a vision the antiphonary, borrowing

from the Hebrew poets their richest imagery, says of this peerless Lady that she is the glory of Jerusalem, the joy of Israel, and the honour of all her people. Then come a series of loving invocations, recalling the greeting of the Archangel and the inspiration even of the Heavenly *Magnificat*. The last refrain declares that her praises will never cease on earth, whom the Lord hath so highly exalted. After which we hear the Little Chapter, drawn from Canticles of Solomon, an enchanting nuptial song, which seems the quintessence of all the perfumes, the sweetness of all the melodies, the brightness of all the colours of the Bible. 'Arise, my love,' sings the invisible Spouse, 'my beautiful one, and come: my dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hollow places of the wall, show me thy face, let thy voice sound in my ears.'*

At such words what else can the servants of Mary do except fall on their knees and salute with a respect full of tenderness their Queen, whom by turns they call 'Star of the Sea' and 'Gate of Heaven,' 'Virgin undefiled' and 'the sublime Mother of God'? *Ave Maris Stella*. When this glorious symphony comes to an end, an angel, an echo from the Heavenly country, utters this piercing cry, which will remain like the motto for the day: 'O most sacred of all beings, deign to allow me to unite my praise with that of mortals,' to which the human choir replies by begging from the Immaculate Mother strength against the enemy, which the Fall of Man renders so necessary, alas!

* Cant. i. 11, 13, 14.

here below. And after a majestic prelude, wherein the Almighty enters once more on the scene, to declare that the heroine of the feast is His well-beloved, His peerless one, the perfect one, such as from the beginning He conceived in His plan of creation, hear this song of all her mystic triumphs borrowed from the Madonna herself, in order to magnify better her glory—that unrivalled glory of which for twenty centuries she was the first to be conscious, while she protests her virginal humility. Vespers end here with a devout prayer, in which the motives of the dogma are felicitously mingled with motives of love to dispose the Eternal better in men's favour by reminding Him of all that He has done for the benefit of the Woman foretold long ago.

Matins.—Amid the frozen shadows of this wintry night do you hear, like the blast of a Seraph's trumpet, the words of the *Invitatorium*, apparently so simple, but in reality so pregnant with meaning? The hymn which follows is a harmonious series of variations, in which the Church is pleased to celebrate the condition of the All-pure, bidding her to regard the sad plight of the sons of Adam, and more especially, it seems, the heritage of shame bequeathed to her hapless sisters, the daughters of Eve, through that accursed dragon, whose venom infects through them all the race. . . . Now the joyful anthems of the first nocturn, like pearls from the Gospel, will be recited in a melodious bead-roll. It is at first the greeting of Heaven's messenger to the daughter of Israel that we are reminded of;

next we assist at the impressive scene of the Visitation, when her holy cousin in prophecy blesses her whom all generations call Blessed. The third invocation, the praise of Heaven and earth combined, recalls to Mary that by her primeval privilege she has entered into a friendship with God, such that no evil can touch her, and she has since become the radiant centre of all good. What do you think of this little versicle and its short response, inserted here, just as at the end of the other nocturns, in the body of the text, like two jets of light and flame, the better to warm the heart by enlightening still more the mind? It is the same with the longer passages, which form an epilogue to each of the three 'Lessons'; there, somehow, the spirit of the Scripture just read is pithily summed up. As for the first three 'Lessons,' they are taken from the Book of Proverbs, so prophetic of Our Lady. It is Wisdom personified, in so far as it has been able to reveal itself in this world in a created form, whom we hear already revealing to men (long before the future secrets destined for Bernadette) who she is, what she is called, what she possesses, and lastly, what part she plays in the eternal mystery of Predetermination.

With the second antiphons the prophecy becomes more clear in proportion as the designs of God are unfolded. We hear, first, from the humble Virgin's own lips this triumphant assertion, which we noticed in the office of the Vigil, and the refrain of which will often charm the liturgy of the present day: 'He that is mighty hath done great things to

me ;' then the ardent reply of mankind : ' Yea, truly, the Most High hath sanctified the woman, who was to be His tabernacle ; and because God reigns in the midst of her she will never be disturbed.'

Lastly, a voice particularly pleasing (none other than that of the Angel Gabriel) tells us the great secret, which explains such a preference—the boundless love wherewith the Creator from all eternity surrounded His elect. Again we come to the 'Lessons,' this time historical, as the former ones were prophetic ; they bring us to the very threshold of the wonders of Lourdes, *in medias res*. Everything is here faithfully related—the Apparitions, and the various circumstances under which they happened eighteen times, and the salutary consequences to the world which have accrued from them. How solemn are the opening words, *Anno quarto a dogmatica definitione* . . . like the majestic prologue which the Roman martyrology uses on Christmas Eve to denote the chronology of the Heavenly plan ! 'What news is sweeter than that ?' we exclaim with St. Bernard, welcoming the yearly repetition of the glad tidings. 'O words, though short, yet so joyful, since they tell us of the approach of God's mercy ! What sweetness do they not contain ? The charm of such words urges us to seek developments to this language, and here words fail us.'

So spake in the twelfth century the honey-tongued doctor in his poetical mysticism ; thus, on hearing from the inspired lips of the Church the preface to the story of Massabielle, every Christian soul can and should break forth into transports of joy. Truly

a wonderful event! You should read the account in this inimitable language of the Church's prayer, in which we know not which to admire more, the simplicity which charms us, or the sublimity which carries us away. And as the liturgical periods proceed, does not each one feel himself fascinated by the interest of a story that has no parallel, and moved to tears by the merciful intervention of Divine power in the most touching and winning way possible—viz., of a Woman, a Queen, a Mother, whose beauty at the sight of our miseries is dimmed with tears? And these visits of the Immaculate Queen coinciding exactly with the time when her blessed dogma was proclaimed, what glorious vistas do they not open out to our pious meditations?

How this bleak wilderness, in which the Queen of angels comes to smile on a poor child, becomes 'apparelled with celestial light' in the sacred account, which puts it at once on a level with the most sacred shrines in the world! How every little detail is filled in! We see again the bright countenance of 'the Lady,' the splendid robe which adorns her, and the mantle which envelopes her royally; the blue sash which girdles her with such grace, the golden roses blooming like heavenly carbuncles on her bare feet; the white Rosary, which she piously grasps in her hand, and the big sign of the cross with which she signs herself. Then, again the strangely altered figure of the child-Seer—her humble white hood, which, as she hastens to the sublime vision, protects her against the biting north wind; her appearance in her ecstasy, the mere sight



INTERIOR OF THE BASILICA.

[To face p. 271

of which wrought conversions ; the holy water, which in her childish timidity she was for sprinkling on the Apparition ; the invitation which in reply the Unknown gave her to return for fifteen days to the Grotto ; the penances she gives her, the promises she makes her, the gifts she bestows on her, the message she entrusts to her ; and, lastly, the seal she puts on all these wonders by deigning to disclose her name.

We have the beauty of churches, springing up as though by the hand of a magician, which are being continually adorned before our eyes with untold treasures ; then the procession of all mankind, which we see winding without a break towards the Rock ; there Bishops and priests walk in due precedence, whilst from his infallible See the Pontiff of Rome blesses the movement, encourages it with all kinds of spiritual favours, and in this sacred cavern welcomes with unfeigned joy the salvation of the future.

Such are the three wonderful 'Lessons' of the second nocturn, presenting a graphic and comprehensive picture of the whole sublime drama of Espélugues, and all in beautiful Latin, in which classical elegance continually vies with mystical unction. May I add that to us, Frenchmen, it has this special beauty, that *Lourdes*, the *Gave*, *Massabielle*, *Bernadette*, in our own tongue, find a place—a place of honour—like shining gems, in the beautiful language of the Church—a thing unheard of in the Church's annals ! If the world lasts, they shall be names as musical to the ear, as stirring to the heart,

of every pious Catholic as any that are enshrined in the immortal book of the Church's Liturgy.

The responsories, which conclude each of these Lessons, serve each in its turn to bring out into stronger relief the facts of the history, like the antistrophes of ancient Greek tragedy, in which the *Chorus* never failed to 'point the moral' of the preceding narrative. Just as in their winged brevity they gave dark hints in the first nocturn, so they seem to become still clearer in the second. Notice, it is God Himself who speaks to the beloved of His heart in the dithyrambic tone, as if so much beauty, grace, and glory wellnigh astonished Him: 'Who is this that cometh up like the rising dawn? She is as shining as the sun, beautiful as the moon.'*

And, proud of His conquest, by which at length He achieves his full triumph as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, let us hear Him, in words much better than our weak paraphrases, cry out once more in rapture: 'She is indeed my dove, my perfect one, my Immaculate one!' *Immaculata mea*.

In the next responsory it will be a Prophet, the most famous of all in Israel, who will open his mouth clearly to foretell at this early date that hill of France on which 'the Virgin' will appear, to which henceforth all peoples will flock with this hymn on their lips: 'Come, let us ascend together to the mountain of God,' which is Mary. At the end of this nocturn, so poetical in many respects, we hear the Seer herself thank the Lord in the name of all her exiled brethren for the blessings He has lavished

* Cant. vi. 9.

on His mother ; after which, as a token of her high sovereignty, she shows us the crown of precious stones which, like the twelve stars of the Apocalypse, sparkle on the forehead of the Almâh.

In the third nocturn, also, each antiphon will be a colloquy, in which Creator and creatures will speak to Mary. 'Thou art truly happy,' the earth sings to her, 'because the hand of the Most High has strengthened thee.' 'Fear not,' says Jehovah to her ; 'in lavishing such gifts on thee, I was not doing a work that was to pass away, but thy unique privilege was fraught with eternal consequences.' 'Yes, it is true,' angels and men cry out together, 'that in raising thee to such glory the Almighty has brought to confusion His enemies, which are ours.'

Then the melodious canticle is sung, telling us that on this peerless creature the graces and the blessings of the Most High have been showered abundantly. Again, we come to the Lessons—the happiest commentary on the Gospel of Our Lady, since it is taken from St. Bernard. The first act of the holy doctor is to utter a cry of joy, inviting all mankind to rejoice with him, even the ancient head of mankind and his unwary consort ; for if both slew all their posterity at the fatal hour of their birth in misfortune, we see one of their daughters arise who will repair the original fall by showing herself not merely sinless, but also full of grace to free others from sin. So that the word of malice which the first man spoke regarding the first woman, 'The woman whom you gave me as helpmate gave me the fruit of death,' will henceforth bear the most

beautiful of applied senses, and each of us, when we look towards the Immaculate, will be able to sing this hymn of grateful joy: 'Behold the true mother of the living, who, in giving us the blessed fruit of her womb, has given life to the world!' On this theme of man's fall the last of the fathers is pleased to trace an eloquent and ingenious parallel between the two Eves of Holy Scripture. Thus he greets in a series of eloquent antitheses the 'prudence' which atones for 'folly,' 'humility' for 'pride,' and instead of 'the fatal apple' which an unhappy spouse offers to her credulous husband, he boasts of 'the bread of Bethlehem,' which the Virgin Mother will one day bring to hapless mortals. Then he cries out in a transport of religious fervour: 'O woman, admirable and worthy of all honour!' But the interpreter of love does not fail to discern, throughout this passage, the fulfilment of the ancient prophecies—viz., the overthrow of the infernal beast by the Virgin promised from Eden, thus showing how Mary really overcame the Evil One by crushing already at this distant hour his power of pride, of avarice, and of pleasure.

She is truly, amid all the frailties of her sex, the 'valiant woman' described by Solomon, who triumphs over Satan, as he triumphed of yore over the 'weak woman'—the first Eve! After such words, what else can follow but the joyful strains of the *Te Deum*, borne upwards on the sonorous breath of the pealing organ, and rolling along the arched roof in tumultuous waves of enchanting sound, to thank Heaven for having bestowed so precious a gift on the children of earth?

Lauds.—This ‘hour’ will not detain us long (though it is also very beautiful), since we have already explained the antiphons and little chapter in ‘First Vespers.’ We may notice, however, that the hymn, *Aurora cæli prævia*, over and above the stamp of beautiful Latin, has the true lilt of lyrical sentiment. The sublime heroine is regarded under the most expressive aspects: she is the radiant dawn that heralds the bright day; the sacred Ark, by the mere contact with which the billows of universal woe are calmed; the dew of springtide on the bosom of sorrowful Nature, parched by blighting storms; the eternal champion whose victorious heel proudly crushes the eternal enemy, but also the sweet and merciful mother, ever mindful of the prayers and tears of her children.

As the loving conclusion, we hear again that sigh so often breathed from the heart of suppliant mortals, *Diffusa est gratia*—a kind of *ritournelle*, or echo, full of music and sweetness; a relief after sublime ecstasies and deep contemplation. With the *Benedictus*, that *Magnificat* of the dawn, there resounds once more the pæan of the spiritual victory, and again the Mother of Jesus is likened to the broadening day, the harbinger of our redemption, from whose bosom the Sun of eternal justice will one day shine forth to dispel our darkness.

Little Hours.—*Prime* differs but little (in the Little Chapter at the end, which occurs again in *None*) from the same hour in the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary. At *Tierce* the Cantic of Canticles

pays its melodious tribute to the stainless Virgin. In a sort of animated dialogue, the Church borrows the lyrical words of Ecclesiastes, 'Who is she that cometh up from the desert (the desert of life, laid waste by sin and overshadowed by evil) overflowing with delights? She that leaneth on her beloved. The daughters of Sion have seen her and declared her blessed.' At midday, when the Marial Office has reached the Hour of *Sext*, we hear the Madonna speak to us as she spoke about the same hour fifty years ago to the little Soubirous: 'In me are all riches and glory, the most valuable treasures, and, above all, original justice: they are my gifts, better than gold and precious stones, which the vanity of earth so eagerly desires.'

Then, as if not to discourage us by so much supernatural splendour, the sweet Madonna adds: 'I am the Mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope; I alone can give them to you, my children. In me is all grace of the way and of the truth; in me is all hope of life and of virtue.' These teachings are truly too sweet and too profitable for our filial piety not to be repeated once more in *None*. In the convincing tone of the Jewish prophet, she repeats to us that, in her, Christians will find the secret of virtue, and hence eternal salvation, which, being the end of our existence, comes from God, but ought to reach us through Mary. So, at the hour when day begins to turn towards its setting, hear with what piteous earnestness this Mother cries aloud: 'Come over to me, all ye that desire me, and be filled with my fruits; through me your destiny

will be perfectly accomplished.' Lastly, the voice of Our Lady, becoming as thrilling as when it enraptured Bernadette, tells us that to find her is to find life, and that only those become her chosen ones who love her by seeking her, and seek her by loving her. *Qui me invenerit, inveniet vitam, et hauriet salutem a Domino.*

Second Vespers.—With somewhat less solemnity, doubtless, than on the vigil, they reflect the same character of devotion almost in the same inspired words. Laying aside this evening the ordinary metre, Our Lady's minstrel employs the rhythm of Sappho, doubtless in order to relate better, on the wings of the graceful stanza, ere this charming liturgy ends, the two cardinal facts about the Immaculate Conception: first, the proclamation of the Dogma in 1854, and the outburst of rejoicings which it caused everywhere; next, the Apparition of the Woman 'with glory crowned' to the unknown shepherd-girl, whom the mere sight of so much splendour filled with an ecstasy almost like that of the Blessed. Here the liturgical bard, rivalling in poetic fire the Kings of Latin poetry, sings of the happy Grotto, which beheld the countenance of the Queen of Angels a thousand times more beautiful than that of the goddesses of ancient mythology; the holy Rock, too, which served as footstool to the Queen of Heaven, and from which the waves of immortal life have since issued:

*'O specus felix, decorate divae
Matris aspectu! Veneranda Rupes
Unde vitales scaturere pleno
Gurgite lymphae!'*

Then he hails the bands of pious pilgrims, hastening from every quarter of the earth to pray to the Lady of Lourdes, who smiles graciously on all, and reserves for each a special favour. The ode ends with a fervent prayer, in which the bard of Massabielle begs the Mother of Grace to dry every tear by healing every ill, and granting every boon here below, till we win those of our eternal country. This day of Paradise ends with a rapturous and clear-toned *Magnificat*.

Lastly, as the dominant idea of the matchless liturgy, we hear those glorious words, which we take away with us as the mystical flower of the happy Espéluques: *Hodie gloriosa cæli regina in terris apparuit, hodie. . . .*

THE MASS.—From the first words of the Introit, taken from the Apocalypse, we see with the eyes of the Seer of Patmos the mysterious Queen, who on her watch-tower eighteen centuries later was to look down on the Seer of the Pyrénées—a true living city of the Most High, which is for the child a Jerusalem more refulgent than that of old, descending straight from Heaven on the bosom of clouds, as the glistering messenger of God, and decked with richest nuptial gems, like the ideal Spouse described in Holy Writ; a ‘vision splendid,’ to which the Psalmist, the inspired ancestor of the stainless Virgin, makes a triumphal echo in his joyous ‘*Eructavit*’! Then comes the prayer already read at each of the Little Hours, in which the priest, clearly alluding to the astonishing cures of Lourdes,

begs Almighty God to grant to all the faithful health both of soul and body. But let us next turn to the divine Epistle of St. John, historian, doctor, and poet of the Immaculate. It is the splendid account, written nearly two thousand years ago, of what happened at Massabielle—the sky, which is suddenly opened; that surpassing brightness, with which the Grotto is flooded; the muttering of the storm, which the shepherdess hears rumbling amid the universal stillness; the quivering of the trees, trembling as if at the approach of some royal personage from Beyond—every little detail is filled in of the supernatural signs that preluded the most supernatural of dramas. Then see drawing nigh the living Ark of both Testaments. Its great sign (*signum magnum*), that which all tradition since Adam has recognized, is a woman—the Woman *par excellence*, clothed with light, having creation for her footstool, and bearing on her head the diadem of a softly gleaming sovereignty.

They heard, then, in Heaven—and they notice it again in the temple—as it were, the sound of a loud voice, crying: ‘It is to-day, the eventful day of February 11, that an exceeding great mercy has been wrought for earth.’

Notice how the Gradual, to translate better the spirit of the people’s jubilation, is by turns poetical and mystical; forgetting, in fact, that the gloomy winter still spreads over nature its white mantle of death, it declares and sings that around the white Lady Spring awakens again with the spontaneous unfolding of the flowers, which keep her feast, with the

premature budding of the vines, which waft their perfumes towards her, with the soft cooings of the turtle-dove, overjoyed to welcome the Queen of creation. And from the empyrean the thrice-blessed Trinity welcomes the coming of Its Ambassadors, giving her once more endearing and sublime terms, inviting her at length to stay her dove's flight from God in the cleft of the granite cliff of Bigorre, in the depths of the niche purposely designed for her from the beginning of the world. Replying in her turn to the music of Heaven and the harmonies of earth, hearken to the young Seer, kneeling on the earth, cry lovingly to Mary in the ritual language: 'Dear Lady, show me thy face, and let me hear thy voice; for thy words are sweet above everything, and thy countenance, on which the angels gaze, is the reflection of eternal glory. Alleluia! Alleluia! . . .'

At the Gospel we assist at the holiest and most fundamental act of history, Divine or human—that which has lasted through twenty centuries of Christianity, and which especially is the key of Lourdes—I mean, the Annunciation of the Archangel to the child of Juda. Thus the glorious Being, who this winter afternoon sets her flower-decked feet on the wild rose-tree, is the Vision to which all the past ages turned their eyes, until the brightest of pure spirits came in the name of the Heavenly court to greet her on bended knee.

And what a greeting, so full of the Immaculate Conception, he gives her! *Ave, gratia plena!* 'I bow down before thy surpassing greatness, O Mary, who art the pride of creation, the masterpiece

of grace, the pinnacle of glory. The Lord is with thee as He never was with any of the Seraphim. His Essence bathes thee with all possible holiness, until soon He may take of thy very substance to realize His Being of Man-God. O "Woman, above all women glorified," who in Heaven or earth can compare with thee? Surpassing Eden in delight, and Paradise in light, thou art ineffably above thy fellow mortals in beauty and goodness. This is why all generations will call thee Blessed; or, rather, thou art the living benediction, since from thee will Jesus come, who is the Blessed of God and of men.' Thus (metaphorically, at least) the text represents on this great feast the ethereal visitant speaking or singing in the holy house of Nazareth. So, fifty years ago, spake Bernadette, while she recited her Rosary with angelic fervour, so that it is literally true to say that, as at the moment of the Incarnation, it was during the virginal music of the 'Hail Mary' that the peerless Mother of Christ revealed herself to the simple shepherd-girl in all her gifts of nature and of grace. Do not wonder, then, if, for this reason, these cries and sighs, this outpouring of homage and love continues to the middle of the offertory, like the special refrain of the feast, *Ave Maria!*

At the Secret, in which the priest commemorates in the silence of the Divine Action the chief intention of this day, he evokes the glories and merits of the stainless Madonna, and by her all-powerful intercession he takes care to pray for the welfare of our souls and bodies. What time or

place could be more favourable to hymn her praises, or to ask her help? Yet, at the solemn moment when the priest receives the Bread of Heaven, listen to those strains which rise from the hearts of the people; quickly they go, like the overflow of all deep feelings, but blent sufficiently with joyful gratitude to ascend straight to Heaven: 'Lord, Thou hast really visited the earth in the person of Thy august Mother, and by this visit Thou hast vouchsafed to pour Thy bliss in all hearts, just as to enrich us the more it seems Thou wouldst fain impoverish Thyself.' And what will be the final fruit of the sacrifice? 'My God,' the priest joyfully exclaims, 'grant that, in return for so many favours received in this holy place, the hand of Thy glorious Mother may raise us all to Heaven, the sole Thabor, which passeth not away, and where we yearn to go and contemplate in Thy glory the glories of her Immaculate Conception.'

Thus ends one of the most remarkable offices in the golden cycle of the Liturgy.

CHAPTER XII

THE FESTIVITIES OF THE GOLDEN JUBILEE

THEY lasted three days (from February 9 to 11, 1908), and by the testimony of all they were, from beginning to end, truly worthy of the immortal anniversary which they commemorated. Whether regarded from a religious, philosophical, and even social, point of view, we may question whether there have been many functions of equal importance. As to Lourdes, where magnificent displays are everyday occurrences, it is certain that—by the quality even more than the number of the pilgrims, the grandeur of the ceremonies, and, above all, by a supernatural enthusiasm running electrically through the crowds—it had never before witnessed such a sight. To this city of Mary, transformed into a vision of peace, those words might perhaps be applied during this Triduum which David addressed long ago to Jerusalem: 'Joy is the portion of all those that dwell within thy walls' (*Sicut lætantium omnium habitatio est in te.*)

Shall I add that, as was most fitting, the first element of success, always so uncertain on such occasions, was the sun? From the morning of the

gth, as though to welcome the crowds which were pouring in from all parts, and in which the pilgrims from abroad mingled picturesquely with our own countrymen, it rose gloriously, making the last snows on the crests of the neighbouring mountains glitter 'with heavenly alchemy.' Light and whiteness—is not that the symbol of Our Lady of the Pyrénées?

Already, at the invitation of the distinguished 'Guardian' of these places, several princes of the Churches had arrived.

Mgr. d'Angers was the chosen orator of the Golden Jubilee. No one will be surprised to hear that, by the beauty of his words and the suitableness of his doctrine, he showed himself during these three days the eloquent orator that he is esteemed to be. 'Lourdes and France—Lourdes and the Church—Lourdes and the Pope'—this was the sublime teaching that we were privileged to hear. Such pages hardly admit of analysis. It is infinitely better to read them and to enjoy them in their entirety. I may at least mention, as serving as peroration for the Sunday evening's discourse, the commentary on the *Magnificat*, in which the soul of this unhappy country seemed to pass, clinging to the Madonna because it is loth to die.

Mgr. Schoepfer drew the practical conclusion by conducting Bishops, priests, and faithful before the holy Rock, there to implore with one voice (how fervently you may imagine!) the Queen of our nation. Gradually the evening drew on, clear and mild, like the extension of a day in spring, so as to allow round about the festive basilicas those unrivalled visions of

beauty in which, along the lofty terraces that seem like the corridors of Heaven, the glory of sound vies so wonderfully with the splendour of light.

Next day—because a pious and salutary thought wished that the Feast of the living should include also the dead in a refreshing dew—the sky, sharer of our griefs as well as of our joys, was at first overcast. But what came to shine with a clear brightness, both of theology and pathos, was the sermon of the Bishop of the Diocese during the touching Requiem celebrated for the departed workers of the shrine of Lourdes. This theme of supernatural remembrance enabled the venerable orator to call to mind some famous figures: first, two great Popes, among the most signal benefactors of the Grotto; then an ideal Curé, who might be termed the good genius of its epic beginnings; then a matchless historian; but, above all, that humble child of the Soubirous, whose angelic name the good Bishop could not pronounce without tears of emotion.

But the 'event' of the second day—if I may use such a modern phrase—was to be the Legate's arrival. As soon as the figure of the Cardinal was seen, genial and smiling in majesty, there was an outburst of cheering. In the person of this old man, clothed in red, at whose knees even the Bishops knelt down, all welcomed the Pope. For Pius X. was truly at Lourdes in the person of his representative, and justly, therefore, the eminent head of the city, M. Justin Lacaze, addressing the distinguished

visitor in the name of all the City Council grouped round him, declared that he, as the foremost of his fellow-citizens, was saluting the Vicar of Christ. From the station to the steps of the Esplanade, amid the arches of triumph and display of endless banners, the ovation appeared in truth too hearty for Cardinal Lécot, who would have wished to remain in the background, the shadow of Peter, not to take his large share of it. Never did delegate of the Holy See meet with greater personal success, because he combined so much greatness with so much goodness. 'Vive le Légal!' was the cry all that day, and all felt, moreover, that an enthusiasm so natural did no wrong to his august Master, in whose name the Bishop of Bordeaux came amongst us, or to the glorious Queen, at whose feet he was hastening to pay his official homage.

Now, since the head and heart of the Church were at Lourdes, the Golden Jubilee was fully inaugurated. This is what all the bells of the holy city, that rocked and swung madly, never ceased to proclaim with their melodious chimes; this is what the Bishop of the place, in his own style, so pleasing to the ear, declared when welcoming such a guest. The ardent profession of faith, or, more exactly, of loyalty to Rome, that came from the heart of Mgr. Schoepfer, was much appreciated when, looking back over the past fifty years, he affirmed that in this realm of Mary—the pearl of Catholicity—nothing had been done, was done, or would ever be done, unless with, by, and for, the Pope. At the mystical feast of Massabielle, as at the more material one of Cana,

does not the gentle Virgin bid us only to think, love, and desire what the Bishop of Rome thinks, loves, and desires, who perpetuates the person of Christ in history? Then came the sermon at the first Vespers of the Feast itself. On the eve, to emphasize the note of national thanksgiving, Mgr. Rumeau had taken this text, so often heard among the rocks of Espéluques: 'O Immaculate, you have been pleased to visit our earth, and you have exceeded all your former mercies in order to enrich us still more.'

This evening the theme, more sacred, if I may say so, was inspired by the triumphal antiphon, which the prelude of the *Magnificat* will soon proclaim: 'To-day the glorious Queen of Heaven has appeared in this spot; to-day she has come to bring to her people words of salvation and an earnest of peace.' What a beautiful text to make known all that for fifty years religion owes to the merciful Lady! As before, this superb flight of oratory ended, at the close of an hour, in a veritable canticle of supernatural hope.

But now, as in the bright ages of Christianity, in the calm of a night, thickly strewn with lights, the solemn office of Matins is about to begin. Already the immense circle of the Rosary Chapel is filling with worshippers eager to follow this holy action, to feel its devotion, to drink in its harmonies. In every respect I will say it was truly heavenly. Mgr. de Pamiers officiated, assisted by the Arch-priest of Elne and the Chanoine Rousseil. In the choir, streaming with light, were several Bishops in their stalls round the pontifical throne, who were

again surrounded by a host of priests and levites, whose deep voices blended sweetly with the melodious voices of the two choirs. Oh, those psalms chanted so musically to the purest Gregorian modes! Oh, those versicles rippling forth at intervals like pearly cascades! Oh, those lessons interpreted with so much unction and fidelity! Oh, those responsories, which revealed by turns the grace of the idyll, the majesty of the drama, and the power of epic song! I have already tried to describe somehow the *intellectual* beauty of all this liturgy; but what can I say of its musical æstheticism? We must admit that, to thoroughly enjoy both, the enraptured hearers should have been able to add to the delight of those 'inimitable sounds' the understanding of the words. What a pity it is, in truth, that our modern laymen can no longer read, especially on such occasions, the sublime book of the Church's Prayer! The prayer which this night was chanted by so many priestly choristers, and breathed such a poetry of places and things, while nocturn by nocturn, as though from act to act, the sacred function was gradually evolving amid exquisite episodes, touched every heart. Again, what a silence of minds and hearts, while the holy canticles were sung 'with wanton heed and giddy cunning,' amid a variety of rites and ceremonies, for which that faultless rubrician, Chanoine Pottier, gave the signal so graciously! For my part, never have I seen or heard Matins sung so perfectly. From beginning to end you remained, eyes, ears, mind, and heart, dissolved in an ecstasy of delight. Above me, a venerable chorister, who wears a mitre, could not restrain the

expressions of his artistic devotion. If they sing office in Heaven (and the Apocalypse tells us they do), it must be like this! When, after two hours and a half of this delicious psalmody, an ocean of celestial light and sound, the *Te Deum* was joyously intoned by countless voices, far from feeling the least fatigue, everyone—Prelates, clerics, and people—would have gladly begun again. I thought myself (may Our Lady, the object of so much homage, pardon me this distraction!)—I thought of the monk in the legend, who, letting himself be carried away in an ecstasy, could not understand, on coming to himself, why everything about him had changed its appearance, unaware of the fact that his ecstasy had lasted a century!* So the heavens had opened above us, and from the height of her liturgical glory the Immaculate Conception was perceptibly smiling on us, and we had not noticed the flight of the hours.

Yet the third day (February 11) was to be more wonderful still, on which at length dawned the auspicious anniversary. From an early hour, under an Eastern sky, there brooded a halcyon calm. And the crowds grew unceasingly, and the temples were fast filling with countless worshippers, and the confessionals were besieged, and on every side, with a truly royal profusion, the Bread of Angels was being distributed; and at all the countless altars the priests waited their turn to say Mass, and at the Grotto, the chief place of the celebrations of this the crowning day, the Masses of Bishops went on unceasingly.

* Cf. Longfellow's 'Golden Legend,' ii.

Yet the bells of the Basilica, which had never pealed with so much vigour, began to ring out to the echoing Pyrénées their solemn chimes. On the stroke of ten a gorgeous procession of Bishops came forth, followed by their retinue. Let us welcome, as he passes in his festive landau, the Cardinal Legate, clothed in purple and ermine. Behind him walk fourteen Prelates, wearing their mitres and carrying their crosiers; among them this time we notice the Metropolitan of Auch and the Archbishop of Toulouse. When such a cortège could at length enter the temple, already overflowing, we might well ask if the spectacle of the old Cathedral of Rheims, which extorted from Clovis the admiration recorded in history, was more beautiful. In default of the reality, let the reader picture to himself a triple crown of flowers and of electric lights stretching round the vast dome to form in the glorious sanctuary the most dazzling of ciboriums, beneath which the marbles, gold, and enamels of the high altar form for Our Lady a pedestal of surpassing richness. How beautiful, too, the square of azure tapestry, brocaded with white plush and embroidered with gold, with which clever hands have covered the chairs on which our Fathers in the faith will sit!

It is Mgr. Germain who begins the Mass, surrounded by all the pomp of ritual, with a host of ministers eagerly following the movements of the Prelate, whose devout mien enhances his dignity. To-day, especially, what a feast is in store not merely for the eye, but also for the ear! A divine music is soon heard from the choir-lofts, as though

from Heaven, sung by three hundred choristers of Lourdes, who, with finished art, performed the 'Jubilee Mass,' a real masterpiece in its classical and religious inspiration by the Abbé Darras, the well-known choirmaster of the Grotto. I can only briefly mention the *Kyrie*, so overpowering in its entreaty, and the *Gloria*, in *Allegro brio* time, that so weirdly appeals to the hearer. As to the famous *Credo* of Dumont, when its Catholic dogmas were one by one proclaimed by the innumerable voices of men, it produced a really wonderful effect.

Yet, strange to say (and this is its highest praise), all this storm of harmony did not in the least distract your attention from the sacred mysteries that were being enacted in the sanctuary. While the praise of the *Sanctus*, so rich in mystical devotion, or the pleading of the *Agnus Dei*, so full of sweet confidence, rose to Heaven, the hearer might have fancied himself rapt to the very midst of the choirs of the heavenly Jerusalem!

When, with the final ceremonies, the last lights were extinguished, it was a happy idea to visit the miraculous Rock. Cardinal, Archbishops, Bishops, canons, priests, clerics—the entire ecclesiastical hierarchy—advanced in procession, not without some difficulty, through the serried ranks of the enthusiastic crowd to Massabielle, to complete the Liturgy there by saluting the Madonna at the very moment when, on a similar day fifty years ago, she had hallowed these places and made them immortal.

What a triumph of the idea—or the love—in the very fact of this huge multitude gathered at the

mouth of a bleak cave, from which all felt the influence of the Divine! It was the duty of the 'Guardian' of this realm once again to speak at this solemn moment. Mgr. Schoepfer seemed literally inspired as soon as he opened his mouth to call up the unfading episode. With that apostolic fire, always tempered by an elegant refinement of style, the zealous Prelate did not fail to draw the practical conclusions from the most salutary of events. The best conclusion (he said), since the salvation of France is at Lourdes, is to love this shrine of our national life, as the Hebrews loved the Temple of Sion and the Ark of the Covenant, declaring that what has already been done here on the part of the Mother of God towards men, and also on the part of men towards the Mother of God, is a presage of the mercy she will yet show them and the favours they will yet obtain. But where the orator joined to the eloquence of his thoughts the eloquence of acts was when he showed to the crowd, moved even to tears, the *Rosary of Bernadette*—that Rosary which there the Queen of Heaven had eighteen times seen and touched and blessed!

May the author add that, in an audience which the Bishop of Tarbes granted him on the morrow, he had the unspeakable joy of touching and kissing between the Bishop's hands this priceless Rosary, although so rude and simple, like the soul of her who so often recited it? After the sermon came prayers, for it was the very moment when, fifty years ago, the Apparition took place.

Then, while the noonday Angelus chimed from all

the belfries of this 'Dowry of Mary,' 40,000 Christians—or perhaps more—saluted thrice, in union with the Angel, the Full of Grace—not without looking furtively to see whether in the hollow of the granite she might not appear again! And because the intervention of the Pope could not be wanting at so dramatic a moment, to add his blessing to those of the Madonna, the envoy of Pius X., standing upright above the sea of bowed heads, granted the great pardon of Rome—that is to say, the Plenary Indulgence of the Jubilee of Mary.

Thus ended a morning absolutely unparalleled. Who would have thought, fifty years ago, when the delicate child of the Soubirous had her vision here, that half a century later there would be found in the same place a large gathering of princes of the Church, two thousand priests, and innumerable spectators, to commemorate with so much pomp and joy the most popular of jubilees? Is it possible that, for so long a period, crowds so varied, and hastening from the four quarters of France and the world, would come to an almost unknown wilderness and grow enthusiastic before a 'vain shadow' if the power of God did not draw them there?

The evening was not less impressive. At three o'clock began the procession of the Bishops, descending the terraces of the Residence to repair to the Rosary Chapel through a formidable mass of humanity, who greeted them with '*Vivats!*' as respectful as they were hearty. All felt that in the persons of these holy Bishops the Church of France passed by—despoiled, persecuted, but full of merits and still

invincible. Under what roof can they receive so many living waves, which, like those of a rising flood, seemed to wax continually greater? Already the Second Vespers of the Apparition are about to begin. Fully three-quarters of the pilgrims must hear them outside on that esplanade, converted for the nonce into one of the 'open-air temples' dreamed of by the poet long ago; this will be indeed a sacrifice, for, both from the beauty of the Liturgy and the perfection of the music, everything foretells that the new office will be sung to perfection. On his throne sits Cardinal Lécot, surrounded by his court, having in front of him a noble circle of Bishops and priests, all the priesthood in its different degrees and many-coloured insignia. When the cantor began to sing the passage which treats of 'the splendours of the Saints' in Heaven (*in splendoribus sanctorum*), a friend of mine remarked that the City of Heaven ought to have descended at that moment to earth (*vidi Jerusalem novam descendentem de cælo*). Soon it was the turn for the sermon, which always comes first in the ceremonies of our greater feasts. Poor orator! how will he, from the height of the low marble pulpit, be heard by all those souls straining to catch his words? On the other hand, is it possible to leave without the supersubstantial bread the crowds outside, who are surging up to the church walls in their religious impatience? Well, let the tents of Sion be enlarged; or, rather, since the people cannot come to the priests, let the priests go to the people, and thus, under 'the Heaven's majestic dome' (at Lourdes every boldness, as every liberty, is excused),

one man will feed with the bread of the Gospel sixty thousand men! Had the old masters of the Areopagus or the Forum ever such an audience? But this was the triumph—as it seemed destined to be the danger—of the Bishop of Angers, to be able for nearly an hour to hold everyone, body and soul, under the spell of his discourse. If many, unhappily, could not hear him (though the voice of Mgr. Rumeau is powerful), all clearly felt that words befitting the occasion fell from the worthy Bishop's lips. As the crown of the trilogy we have mentioned, the subject of the evening was 'Lourdes and the Vatican,' or the two loftiest mountains of God.

Could there be a more fitting and logical choice at the close of this memorable feast? Having spoken of the sweet Apparition in relation to France, then to the Church, it remained now to sing a hymn of doctrine and eloquence to the undying *concordat*, which, from the dawn of the Gospel, has linked together the Pope and Our Lady. There were, as you may imagine, thoughts and sentiments most admirable, while, touching lightly on the harmonies of dogma and the varied course of history, the learned preacher pursued his ingenious parallel. The interest was very great when this parallel was at length applied in detail to Pius X., so devoted to Our Lady and Lourdes. In proportion as his services—already numerous and remarkable in favour of Massabielle—were recounted, it seemed that so many new jewels were being set in the diadem of the Immaculate Queen. No one will be astonished that the end of an address so instructive and earnest was, by a

liberty always allowed in such cases, greeted with universal applause.

At length, as the conclusion of these holy rejoicings, there was to be fairy nocturn a hundred times more beautiful than that which ancient Ephesus decreed on a famous occasion to the Mother of God. Here again picture to yourself, reader, an entire people, both strangers and Frenchmen, rising once more by some supernatural impulse at nightfall, as if they had not done enough while daylight lasted, to translate better *into a language of fire* their filial enthusiasm. In a short time, wherever you turned your eyes—to the top of the peak of Jer, or to the neighbouring slopes, or to the monasteries strewn like a mystic garland around the Grotto—there was only one line of joyful fires. In the town, especially, you could not have found a façade or a window (belonging to free citizens) which was not lit up. Public buildings and private houses, luxurious hotels or humble dwellings, great warehouses and modest shop-windows, all were bathed in light; at every point Chinese lanterns, lamps, and lights, the splendours of earth, rivalling in brilliance under the beautiful sky of Béarn the myriad stars which were already beginning, in the infinite stillness of this dreamy night, to strew the sky with gold. And the electrical surprises quickly followed one another. Here it was the scene of February 11, 1858, uprising suddenly amid starry lights; there Bernadette, the immortal child, was depicted, amid a sheaf of flames; elsewhere the holy figures of the Bishop and the Curé of the Grotto passed like radiant orbs. But how

can I describe, or even enumerate, all the Bengal fires, all those coloured fairy-lights going off one after another at different points of the flaming horizon? At least, I must mention the beautiful Virgin outlined in fire, whom you saw for an instant brush the summits of 'the Calvary' with her white robe and blue sash amid a spray of fiery roses.

You would truly have called it a ghostly Venice that had emerged from the side of the flaming mountains to float in light, and I am not sure if, espying this spectacle from the height of their lofty observatory, the jealous angels did not find that this strange corner of our planet was almost as bright as in Heaven!

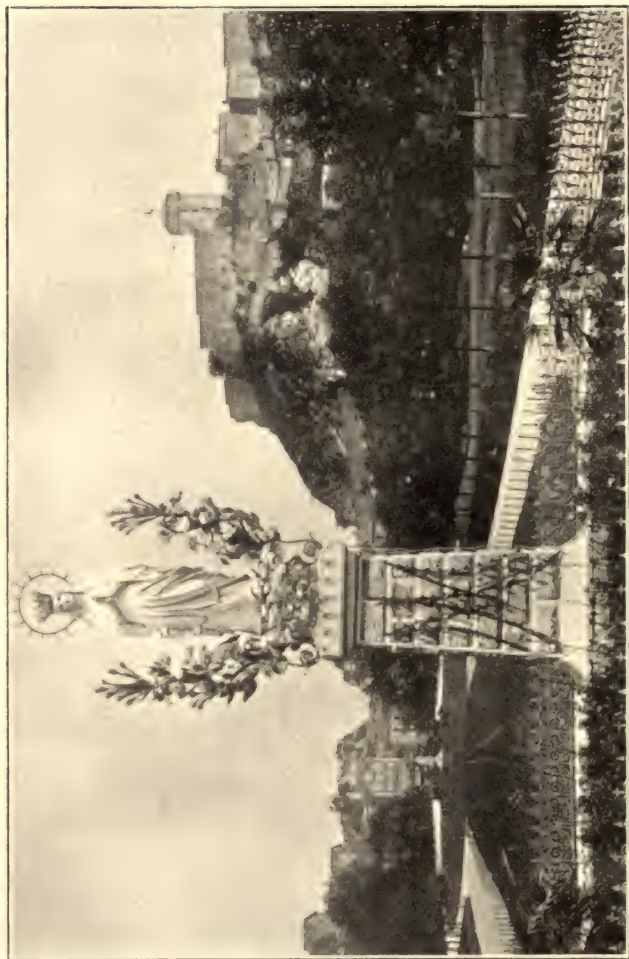
At least, a party journal had to admit next day that 'such a sight was unparalleled in the world'; and, what is infinitely better, this was the testimony of Prelates, who, walking at this hour through the illuminated city of Our Lady, did not cease to declare they had never seen anything like it.

There was nothing, not even the old feudal castle, which was not anxious to outline its rugged profile in the general illumination. That fiery banner which from its solitary height it held in its giant arms, tired by the centuries, added very happily the note of patriotism to the religious symphony. And the sparkling purple whereof it wove itself a garment of joy, as if some wizard of the Middle Ages had come and thrown over its decrepit shoulders the Cardinal's robe—what a vision it was of its great past of chivalry and Christianity roused up to an unparalleled apotheosis in honour of her who, in spite

of all, remains always the Queen of the fairest of kingdoms on earth!

Could the three Palaces of Mary have remained in darkness when all things were thus illuminated in her honour? I must say at once that my faltering pen could not attempt any sketch of the wonderful procession that the approaches of the Espé-lugues then witnessed. Sixty thousand human beings are there in the immense square, each with a torch in his hand. At a given signal this formidable mass—which is not a mere mob, but a singing and walking church—begins moving with dignity and regularity and orderly tranquillity, which, even amid inevitable cross-currents, we know how to preserve; and soon, from the walks of the Grotto to the terraces of the Basilica, and from thence to the lawns of the high plateau, there are, under the sky, darkened by the brightness of earth, in every direction, in countless rhythms, a thousand—ten thousand luminous circuits—like the measured heaving and swell of an ocean of flame—without ever a cry of discord or a false movement marring the ideal music, *Ave, Ave, Ave, Maria*. . . . They talk of miracles; here is one not easy to match!

But suddenly you see all the temples lit up at once. An invisible Genius, the docile servant of the Immaculate Conception, has just passed unawares, and with his electric wand has set the triple church aglow with light. So at this hour the lofty temples, rising tier upon tier in the splendour of their architectural beauty, of which not a line is lost, no tracery nor ornament escapes your notice, seem like an un-



CROWNED STATUE OF OUR LADY, AND THE OLD FORTRESS.

earthly enchanted palace—a wonderful spectacle, worthy of the poetic imagination of Alighieri himself, the superhuman splendour of which lifts you to Heaven.

When, amid the universal illuminations, at length the hymns, the lights, and the rejoicings gradually died away, it wanted but an hour to midnight, as though the swift-footed day were all too short, and had to encroach on the kingdom of night in order to record for all time THE GOLDEN JUBILEE OF MASSABIELLE.

Meanwhile, a few paces away, the eternal Gave kept murmuring its musical refrain amid a silence full of mystery, and there in front, on the rocky hill which serves as a beacon to the mountain of wonders, the feudal castle showed dimly its rugged profile, the lasting witness of an age that has vanished before these 'glories' of the present, which give promise of a brighter future in the powerful gesture of a Queen and the merciful smile of a Mother!

EPILOGUE

THE LAST TRIDUUM

(July 14-16)

THE reader might naturally expect here that, as I have endeavoured to describe the earlier solemnities of the Jubilee, I should also give some account of those which, five months later, commemorated so gloriously the close of the Apparitions. Although I should have been glad to describe once more the splendours of the memorable fêtes of July, 1908, yet because, in their main outlines, these celebrations, despite the grandeur and enthusiasm which will doubtless never be surpassed, would entail much useless repetition, I thought it better, instead of a fresh description, to give a useful and interesting account of the splendid sermons preached at the last Triduum of the Jubilee.

ANALYSIS OF THE SERMON-TRILOGY OF MGR. IZART.

FIRST DISCOURSE, JULY 14, 1908 : OUR LADY OF LOURDES
A MORAL FORCE AS THE MOTHER OF FAIR LOVE.

‘Ego mater pulchræ dilectionis.’—ECCLUS. xxiv. 24.

Exordium.—The preacher begins by showing us the wonderful way in which the ecstasies of Berna-

dette have been followed by the feasts of Massabielle and the pilgrimages of the world. Then, at the opening of this Triduum of July, how could he fail to call up the memories of Mount Carmel by drawing a parallel between the mountain of Scripture and the hill of the Pyrénées? In both we have a cloud of light and healing waters. . . .

So the subject naturally divides itself into three heads—viz., the triple benefit which the Immaculate Conception came to give to Lourdes in order to save us more thoroughly, by revealing herself there as a Moral, Doctrinal, and Social Force.

Above all, observes the Bishop of Pamiers (and this will be the subject of his first discourse), as was fitting, it is in her capacity as Mother of Love—of fair love—that Mary was pleased to descend in our midst to instruct her children by the prestige of her personal virtues.

Now, these virtues may be reduced to two, humility and purity, since all Christian perfection in truth is summed up in these two.

I

First, Humility.—The preacher says at the outset, with the masters of the spiritual life, that humility is Christianity in act, as paganism was pride. Above all, since God ‘emptied Himself’ to raise man up, it is impossible for man to become God-like without in turn annihilating himself. To share in the Divine nature, we must first divest ourselves of human nature; and just as the motto of the ancient city,

as St. Augustine tells us, was 'the worship of self, even to the contempt of God,' so that of the new city ought to be 'the worship of God, even to the contempt of oneself.'

Severe but fundamental theology, from which the preacher proceeds to draw admirable conclusions. As a confirmation from actual experience, we should hear him laying stress on the *place* and the *person* purposely chosen at Massabielle by the merciful Lady as two striking types of humility.

The place! What place more obscure than this mountain hamlet, without any attraction or renown? Such was Bethlehem of old, which served as the scene for the birth of the Messias.

The person! Who was more insignificant than the Bigourdain shepherdess, ignorant and wretched? Such were the shepherds and fishermen called long ago by Christ to be His Apostles. It is thus that in every case, to accomplish His designs, God needs nothing. A proof of this is the Creation; a better proof, if possible, is the Incarnation. Was it not specially by her humility that the daughter of St. Joachim pleased the Most High? Thus, before the Espélugues a double humility will become necessary for the heavenly manifestation. Lourdes and Bernadette, two true 'nothings' which are unknown! How the poor manger of Judæa and the lowly Virgin of Sion have had the power of attracting Heaven and drawing down to earth the Queen of Angels! In their turn, let the humble city of Béarn and the humble child of the Soubirous sing the *Magnificat* with joyous gratitude, for in glorifying

lowliness so much, Our Lord wished to give the world important and necessary lessons. . . .

We need not remark that in this passage, partly doctrinal and partly historical, we meet with many reflections remarkable for their beauty and depth, with superb passages, and an eloquence of style always on a level with the great subject.

Meanwhile the Bishop, doubtless to bring home to us still more the importance of holy humility, mother of all moral greatness, and the first condition of Divine works, returns once more to that initial drama of the Annunciation which was truly the starting-point of evangelical holiness: on the one hand the Heavenly Spirit kneeling before a young Jewess, and religiously holding before her astonished gaze unparalleled vistas; on the other this same timid being protesting, at the moment when such a wonderful destiny is unfolded to her, that she is, and wishes to be, only the handmaid of God. Oh, the beautiful revenge of Nazareth over Eden! There a woman, by her pride, had lost everything; here another woman, the true Eve, humbles herself so as to restore all things.

By a higher congruity, it behoved Mary from this day especially to humble herself precisely because of her surpassing dignity. For is it not the law in every building, spiritual or material, that the higher the roof is, the deeper should be the foundations? But what an ideal temple was the Immaculate Virgin, saluted by Archangels, longed for by the Patriarchs, sung by Prophets, and from the dawn of eternity admitted into full

relationship with the adorable Trinity! . . . Therefore, since the topmost peaks thus reach the Heaven of heavens, should not the base be buried in depths unfathomable? Yes, in the designs of infinite Wisdom, a humility without limits was needed in order to uphold (without being overwhelmed by it) a glory so unparalleled—that of her Divine Maternity. This is precisely the reason why God evidently takes so much care, in proportion as His elect is magnified, to lower her still more. We have the Grotto of Bethlehem, with all its bareness, the workshop of Nazareth, with all its silent hours, her public life, with all its sacrifices. For the Mother of such a Son the glories of Thabor and the delights of the Last Supper were denied.

We do not see her at the Paschal *Alleluia*, or the meetings of the Apostles. Was she even on the Mount of Olives at the solemn moment of His last farewell to earth? The sacred text says nothing about it, as it is strangely silent on all that can redound to the joy or the honour of her maternal heart. Whereas, whenever there is a humiliation to be borne, or a martyrdom to be endured, we can be sure that the Blessed Virgin is there, even until Calvary. 'Oh,' the Orator cries out, like Bossuet, 'the Eternal knows full well how to dig deep the foundations of His wondrous Temple!' Without doubt, as St. Paul tells us, it is most true to say that no one in Heaven or on earth could have ascended higher than this peerless Woman, but only on condition that we add, no one, even among sinners, has had to descend so low. Hence we need not be surprised

that the day she deigned to come to us as an envoy of salvation, so marvellous a Creature, remembering God's mysterious ways, has made use of 'nothing'—a twofold nothing. Then, in a magnificent outburst of eloquence, he continued: 'Royal towns, royal fortunes, Kings of intellect, you were not worthy to be of the household of the Virgin of Nazareth! Ye solitary mountains, desolate rocks, unknown village, the true counterpart of ancient Bethlehem, you will be companions of the Queen of Humility. And you, ignorance and poverty of a shepherdess—you alone will enter into this new Grotto, which for us will become the vestibule of Heaven!' Behold in what manner at Lourdes the gentle Madonna teaches the first of all moral lessons, and thereby shows herself the Mother of fair love.

II

Next, Purity.—But to humility the Christian who wishes to reach his true end, the vision and enjoyment of God, must join holy purity. But with the object of bringing this second lesson home to us, what does the Apparition do on the banks of the Gave? As It has already employed two 'nothings,' It asks likewise for two innocent creatures,—the innocence of the *framework*, and the innocence of the *instrument*.

From its very position, is not Lourdes in truth the freshness of nature? Is not the daughter of François Soubirous, in a mystical sense, the brightness of grace? Oh, the divinely 'pre-established

harmony' between the sacred mystery ready to rise up on the one hand, and the charming country on the other, in which it will be unfolded no less than the spotless child, who will be the chosen confidant. But how Bernadette especially seems marked out for the sublime part which awaits her! For this humility of the shepherd-girl connotes an angelic purity, such as the Queen of Angels requires when she would fain hold converse with mortals. Here the Prelate speaks of the profound definition which the white Lady gave of herself in the Grotto. Having the right to claim so many glorious titles, she only puts forward one—that of her Immaculate Conception. Why? Because, to enable us to understand better her entire teaching, Mary had need precisely of this title, though new, bold, and almost startling, which would not only attest her greatness, but also declare the full measure of her sanctity. In fact, does not this unheard-of expression, while showing us the essential mark of the Virgin *par excellence*—her absolute spotlessness—tell us a thousand times better than any words what the children of a Mother so bright should be? For we should never forget: together with humility, the essence of the celestial Madonna is purity, which goes so far as to personify itself in a sort of living abstraction, which is called the 'Immaculate Conception.'

Notice, also, for what reason Mary seems to us so great at this Grotto. The height of greatness, in fact, is to begin by self-effacement, and to come to be like God, who is the pure Act, and that through purity growing ever brighter. *Quis ascendet in montem*

Domini? . . . Innocens manibus et mundo corde. The Bishop reminded us that, even in Heaven, on the wings of His seraphim the Eternal one day found stains. In this world of sorrow, even in the best consciences, how many imperfections! Had there been only original sin, yet because of it the Saint of saints could not have fully contemplated Himself through our shadows.

This cannot be doubted, but behold a soul apart which, escaping the law of universal decay, and clothed with grace as with a royal garment, deserves to attract the eyes of God, and delight them inexpressibly more than all angelic and human creatures!

In this created mirror of uncreated splendour God will at length contemplate His own beauty in so far as it can be realized outside Himself. Do you not see now why, of all her gifts, *this* one, her robe of innocence, is the dearest to the heart of Mary, and that, when she wishes to teach us what, after her example, we should strive to become, she finds but one expression to convey her meaning: 'I am the Immaculate Conception.' By these words, in fact, which preach to us a truth so solemn, the Virgin of Massabielle has never ceased to cry out for half a century: 'Before you, my children, I forget the numerous titles which form my glory in Heaven—even that of my glorious Maternity—because, in truth, all those taken together only touch me accidentally and externally. But to have been conceived without the shadow of a stain, this privilege, while it remains my chief and personal

happiness, is so far your pattern and the means of your salvation that at the moment when I descend to you I cannot find anything more eloquent or profitable to reveal to you.' Look well, then, on this pattern of all purity and humility, which has mercifully appeared to you among these Pyrenean mountains, and copy it! . . . Such is the twofold moral teaching which Our Lady of Lourdes has given to the modern world from this hallowed granite Rock as from a new pulpit. While, unhappily, too many make pride and pleasure the chief aims of their life, the Queen of Heaven came expressly to us at the time when we sorely needed this lesson, to tell us that the whole aim of a Christian in this world consists in remaining, like her, humble in mind, to draw down God's grace, and pure of heart, in order at length to see God. *There*, in truth, is the highest nobility, the sole aristocracy of the true soldiers of Our Lady, who, under the banner of humility and purity, are marching securely towards Heaven. . . .

SECOND DISCOURSE, JULY 15, 1908: OUR LADY OF LOURDES
A DOCTRINAL FORCE AS THE MOTHER OF FAITH.

'Ego Mater Agnitionis.'—ECCLUS. xxiv. 24.

The 'hidden God,' the 'unknown God'—such were the two great religious miseries, recorded in turn by Isaias and St. Paul, as inherent in the ancient civilizations, including even Judaism. Before Christ, in fact, no people, in spite of all the voices of Nature, of conscience, and of the Bible, knew of the Creator,

or, at least, knew of Him remotely, only catching stray glimpses of Him, as Jehovah said to Moses: 'Thou canst not directly look on My face.'

But, wonderful to relate, behold how, at the beginning of the Gospel, a cry goes forth from the heart of humanity: '*Vidimus!*' We have seen the Invisible close at hand, face to face, heart to heart, as He is, even interiorly, full of grace and truth.'

Now, by whose means was this change, the most far-reaching in history, brought about? By means of a woman—the Woman, the second Eve—in whose heart the Eternal was pleased to lodge His Word, in order that henceforth, far better than prophets and philosophers or naturalists, she might remain the authentic revealer of Him, and that, as Mother of Jesus, Mary should become at the same time Mother of Faith, by containing it as a *Book*, and manifesting it as a *Monstrance*.

Such was the exordium—solemn, imposing, and full of promise. Then follows a graceful compliment to Cardinal Andrieu, who presides at the *Triduum* as Papal Nuncio, and a respectful homage to the Bishop of Lourdes, whose enlightened and burning zeal has only made one mistake during the entire Jubilee—'that of choosing the humblest of Bishops to preach on the most glorious of Virgins.'

I

Mary, the Book of Jesus.—The learned Prelate begins by laying down the axiom that in Heaven or on earth no creature could have fully expressed the Creator,

His eternal Word alone is His perfect and substantial image, His thought both adequate and sharing His whole Word, for this *Logos* is God, even as the God who begets Him. But where can we apprehend this only-begotten Son of the Most High on earth? If the commonest human idea escapes us, unless it is embodied in a sensible form, who will embody or incarnate for us incomprehensible Wisdom? His Mother. Thanks to her, this ineffable *Theophania*, that perplexed all the preceding generations, could at length, in the fullness of time, be effectively realized, and the first chosen ones of Christianity, whether shepherds or Magi, invited to go and behold the Ancient of the days in the arms of a young woman, have had the right to cry out in triumph, 'Let us hasten to Bethlehem, there to behold with our eyes of flesh God Incarnate.'

In their footsteps the preacher desires us to approach Mary, who, since that time, is the Book *par excellence* of men, a matchless volume a thousand times better able to initiate us in the dogmas of Revelation than all the Old Testament, since it is the Godhead Himself who will henceforth be reflected in the Son of the Virgin, with His various attributes.

First, with His *power*. Will He not be seen using His sovereign power over the angry waves, over incurable maladies, and inexorable death, with imperious gestures, which the astonished elements will have to obey?

Next, with His *justice*. The Bishop hails it eloquently in the body of the newly-born Child, but much more in the bleeding limbs of the Crucified,

who writhes on the Cross of Calvary, the innocent Victim of our misdeeds, a prey to unspeakable justice.

Lastly, with His *bounty*. Behold, he cries out in a lyrical transport—how sweetly it flows forth from the lips of the Saviour in generous forgiveness, in gentle, comforting words, in large-hearted pity! Never resting from all eternity, do we not see Him hasten after the lost sheep, showing pity to all things that suffer, weeping over all things that are lost? and, by an unheard-of excess of love, having died for each of us, He contrives still to live on, in order to renew and perpetuate His sacrifice on the mystic table of our altars.

Well, without Mary, should we have—should we even know—all this about the God thrice holy and by nature incommunicable? Take away this Woman, providential teacher of the world redeemed, and no one would know to-day, any more than in past ages, what is the august Trinity, nor even if it exists; still less the mighty and merciful act by which the Infinite was one day hypostatically united to the finite; nor the touching substitution whereby the Innocent One willed to pay for the guilty; nor, above all, this Love of loves, with the idea of better winning our hearts, clothing Himself with the weakness of a child, the tears of a martyr, and the heroism of a friend who becomes the Food, still more than the Ransom, of our souls. . . . ‘How eloquent is this Book!’ sings this Bishop, ‘O volume truly unparalleled!’ Now for twenty centuries humanity reads God therein fluently, in the eternal brightness of the

Christ, which His Mother has shed over the world. The preacher shows us, next, genius and sanctity hastening eagerly through the ages to gain light at this centre of light ; and if to-morrow (an impossible hypothesis), at the hearth of the Church, the Virgin Star were extinguished, we should see mankind blindly falling back into aboriginal Chaos. In fact, from the very cradle of the new religion, such was the doctrinal influence of Mary that history shows us the sacred writers themselves on their knees as before a second source of heavenly inspiration. Will they not gather from *her* lips the most gracious memories of the Divine Idyll, as well as the most heart-rending details of the final drama ; but especially what may be called the *Spirit of the new times*, the fullness of which she received for each of her disciples in the Pentecostal chamber ?

Book of God, His Greatness finds that the Virgin is something more, and greater still—His *Monstrance*, a living and shining Monstrance. We know well that the desire of every mother on this earth is to let her child be seen and esteemed. Do her arms not carry it and lift it ? Do her hands ever forget carefully to draw aside the veils which hide it, in order that he may be seen, of whom she loves to say with holy pride, ‘ This is my son ’ ?

Much more is this the case with this Virgin Mother, more truly a mother than any other, Our Blessed Lady. In a magnificent address, the orator likened Her to a throne of glory, richer than gold, purer than diamond, more precious than shining silks, destined by Heaven to show to mortals the

wisdom of God made man. Now, there were three special occasions on which this merciful revelation had to be made—in the cave of Bethlehem, at the marriage-feast of Cana, and beneath the Cross on Calvary. This thought he beautifully developes, and as ever, explains with the most lucid theology. The first part ended with a splendid survey of the whole Gospel, of which the interpreter from beginning to end seems to us to be the Mother of Jesus.

II

At Massabielle, however, this 'showing forth' by Mary had to be enacted once again, at the end of the ages, when ignorance or contempt of the Son of the Almâh would oblige this ideal Evangelist to resume her rôle of Mother of Faith.

To prove this assertion, which is the keynote of his discourse, the Bishop reminded us that on earth it was ever from the beginning the fortune of truth to be the mark of every kind of contradiction, the outcome of pride, falsehood, and vice. So the posthumous history (if we may so call it) of the Blessed Virgin will be, like her life on earth, a long and epic contest through the ages against the repeated attacks of the infernal Serpent, which will earn for her the glorious title of 'Vanquisher of all Heresies.'

But the Bishop, always logical, even in his sublimest flights of eloquence, hastens to add: We all know that, especially in our own day, Rationalism, with an unheard-of boldness, has raised the standard of the most determined revolt in the name of

Science. So we see the terrible assault delivered nowadays by all the powers of Hell against God, and His Christ, and His Church. Atheism, Materialism, Liberalism—these are, under different labels, the cry of modern progress for fifty years. And our poor modern society was obliged to fight in the midst of this ‘dark Cimmerian desert,’ when, on a bleak Rock in France, there appeared, shining brightly, the Mother of Truth.

As the orator declared, to win a hearing again among us Mary had need of three conditions—teaching authority, a great miraculous power, and the gift of popularizing this truth, that will set us free, and making it pass into the lives of men.

Such is the threefold character of the intervention of the Madonna at Espéluques. Above all, with what doctrinal prestige she is surrounded in the midst of the splendours of her Immaculate Conception! But in this kind of fundamental dogma with which she is anxious to identify herself, if we examine it more carefully, do we not find, in fact, the whole of Christianity contained, which flows from it as from a living spring? Here the Bishop addresses a moving appeal to the so-called free-thinkers, whose folly or ignorance fancies it has blotted out our beliefs, because it denies them. Let them go to the school of the Sublime Teacher to learn the science of sciences—that (we said) which has for its harmonious and rational trilogy God the Creator, Christ the Redeemer, and the Church the Sanctifier. Now, it is at Lourdes, better than anywhere else, that this fundamental and necessary philosophy can be learnt.

Again, it is clear that, in view of the arrogant criticism of our contemporaries, *proof* was necessary—a proof as positive as their denials—and we see miracles—yes, miracles—as numerous as they are astounding. In truth, they were never wanting to religion through all the ages, whether of the Old or New Testament. Only the wonders of the past seem so far off to the clever thinkers of the day that they assume in their eyes, so greedy for *historical truth*, a fabulous and legendary character, little calculated to satisfy their energetic reason. Well, let that pass. Since the present day needs new interventions on the part of Heaven, Heaven is going to supply them, and lo! in this wonderful cavern for fifty years there will happen, as though in the very Sanctuary of the Supernatural, under the eyes of civilization, such phenomena that one of the most illustrious representatives of Science will have to cry out: ‘Here you *feel* the Divine!’

Still proof alone, however conclusive and clear it may be, would not ordinarily suffice for the intellect, so often led astray by the heart. Therefore, to charm the latter, while gently restraining the former, there will be the irresistible attractions of the Mother of all sweetness and charm. Yes, she it is, by a truly maternal way of acting, who, through showing her beauty, and goodness, and mercy, will make her Son recognized by the multitudes brought under her spell.

This great result comes especially from devotion to the Holy Eucharist, which devotion to Mary has gradually introduced into this her domain.

Who can tell, in fact, the unexampled triumphs which Mary, faithful to the end in her task of directing everything to Jesus, obtains in her realm for the saving Host, effacing herself as much as she can—even wishing now, for some time, that the best miracles should only take place during the procession of the holy Monstrance—and so obtaining that each of these wonder-working processions should be a new triumph of faith over incredulity in tears, and still more of love over egotism defeated and overthrown?

Moreover, we must listen, after that, to the eloquent appeal of the Bishop to free-thought: O rationalists of every degree, do you proudly deny the mysteries of our Faith? Very well, behold them all clustered and throbbing around the Blessed Sacrament in procession, which for twenty centuries has been termed the mystery of our Faith *par excellence*—*mysterium Fidei*—since, in using it as a crucial test, our Faith wins through it the most glorious triumphs. Tell us, then, if, when the Blessed Sacrament is borne in a splendour of Paradise from the Grotto to the Basilica, bowing low every forehead, dilating every soul with its wondrous rays, it be not the power of God which is passing, because it is His love, which subdues poor mortals even to ‘making them gasp for breath’! The orator rightly sees in *this* the chief benefit which this doctrinal Force, ---Our Lady,—could give to her people. For the multitude of souls lying in a state of exhaustion and collapse on the earth, without any higher aims, Our Lady has lifted up at Lourdes the sacred

Host, certain, by the influence of the Real Presence, combined with the charms of poetry and miracle which surround It, of making Christ reign at length in our midst, as in His and her home. This is how Lourdes has become a new Palestine, where, as long as marvels abound in the footsteps of Jesus, all go to seek truth and love from the fountain of His Mother.

This doctrinal explanation ended in a spirited and haughty defiance to the hostile forces which, especially in our days, rise up in the name of Science against Revelation. The Bishop, raising his eyes to the heavenly Teacher of the Faith, told them that he feared not for our ancient dogmas, ever young, nor for our eternal moral laws, more and more necessary. Ye tempests of error, let loose your fury! Billows of impiety, lash with angry buffets the labouring bark of Peter! Beyond the region of storms, behold the Star of the Sea shining afar off, the unfailing harbinger of peace of mind, and joy of heart! *Ave Maris Stella!*

And the discourse ended in a learned exposition of this hymn, as was fitting, and, still better, in a thrilling and harmonious prayer.

THIRD DISCOURSE, JULY 16: MARY A SOCIAL FORCE AS
THE MOTHER OF HOPE.

‘Ego Mater Spei.’—ECCLUS. xxiv. 24.

This last discourse opens with a description of the actual state of France. Would this be the end

of a nation, of one of the greatest nations? Thus mournful Pessimism ventures to think, even in our midst. Or else, might not this undeniable decay presage an evolution, which would at length make an era of free-thought supersede that of the old faith, blotted out for ever? This, it seems, is the hope of a certain school of fatalists.

Against these two hypotheses, equally impious, the Bishop and patriot speaks through the mouth of Mgr. Izart, for at Lourdes more than anywhere else any word of despair would sound like a blasphemy—a blasphemy against God and against His Mother.

I

First, as a *blasphemy against God*. The reason (over and above the fact that God has given a recuperative power to nations, and that the Blood of Christ that redeemed us can always abundantly restore what is fallen, nations no less than individuals)—the reason is that Heaven loved our race too well, even from its cradle, to cast it irrevocably away in its hour of unfaithfulness and trial. The preacher recalls very appropriately that the Vicar of Christ—he who has special grace on earth to interpret the decrees of Providence—far from despairing of our country, even at the height of the perilous tempest, of which he has to bear the brunt, on the contrary, fills all his sails and ours, too, with the breath of the most glorious hopes. In proof of this, consider almost all his writings and discourses, but chiefly that immortal Encyclical which was

inspired four years ago by the Jubilee of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Well, from the height of the walls of the Vatican could not the watchful sentinel of Israel have perceived the work of death, which is gradually being wrought amongst us? Certainly the Pope loves the eldest daughter of the Church too well not to keep a record—a minute and sorrowful record—of all that the factions, under the pretext of politics, are doing and plotting against her. Yet, in spite of all, the loyal friend of the Franks, Pius X., is still convinced, for higher reasons, which are known only to himself, that glorious deeds still remain to be done by the foremost of all Catholic nations.

It is very true, the Bishop immediately adds, to forestall the common objection, that what disheartens us most in this darkest hour of our trials seems to be the silence of God. ‘What is the Most High doing?’ he cries out pathetically, like Lacordaire and many other Christians of the present time. ‘Is He going to give the new barbarians time to bury our country and religion in the mire or the blood of a catastrophe that will end all things? To such faint-hearted or demoralized people the Bishop, not without bitter irony, replies by showing carefully and in minute detail all the ruins already piled up—that these tragic disasters are the salutary blows which will finally awaken those who are sleeping. For God is only waiting for this; let us rouse ourselves, and instead of a tearful inaction, let us resolve to show an energetic and uncompromising faith. By this means it is certain God will intervene, even

though in the eyes of the enemy our cause seems irretrievably lost. Such is, in fact, the usual way of acting of Heaven through the long and varied course of history. Was not the Lord silent before the pride of Babel, the injustice of Pharaoh, the revelry of Balthasar, and the impiety of Antiochus? But a day came, when they least expected it, when at length the death-knell sounded for the bold insulters of the Divine Majesty. And where was this disheartening plan of postponing the day of vengeance, which Heaven so often employs, exemplified more clearly than on Calvary? Oh, how completely, then, amid the most mournful and incomprehensible of tragedies, it was 'the hour of the powers of darkness'! Oh! how, in front of this gibbet, on which the innocent Victim hung bleeding, Satan could exult to his heart's content! Yes, but behold! three days later, at the glorious dawn of Easter, God had His revenge in the triumph of the Resurrection.

Turning from the Gospel to history, the Bishop mentions, among other examples, Julian the Apostate, who, at the very moment he was flattering himself on having blotted out Christianity by craft and violence, perished miserably on the battle-field, obliged to cry out to Heaven, as the blood gushed forth, these significant words, that will live for ever in history: 'Galilean, thou hast conquered!'

So, even at the moment when all seems lost, even then we should rest assured that God will have the last word.

God's last word! Without seeking proofs else-

where, did not France in bygone ages hear it, especially in the glorious days of Geneviève, Clotilde, Charles Martel, Joan of Arc, and Henri IV.?

The fervent preacher believes in this providential opportunism with all his faith as a priest, and with all his heart as a Frenchman, and much more firmly because at Massabielle the Mother of Our Saviour has come in person as the gracious envoy of infinite mercies, and has brought us salvation in her winning smiles.

II

Since the Queen of Heaven, then, descended among us eighteen times, with all her beauty and sweetness, tempering her power with compassion in order to reanimate our courage, what a crime it would be to give way to despair! In fact, it is enough to study Lourdes, that kind of 'real and abiding presence' of the Blessed Virgin in the midst of her people, to understand that in so extraordinary an occurrence we can see traces of higher designs, that restore our confidence. If the dealings of Mary with our nation in the past made a learned Pope, Benedict XIV., declare formerly that it is *impossible* that France, her kingdom, should perish, what must we say in truth regarding the drama which for half a century has been evolving before our eyes on the banks of the Gave? There is no doubt, the preacher declares in his turn, that all this, so beautiful, so unprecedented, so unique, has happened providentially to make us believe, and the whole world besides, in the salvation of a country

treated by Heaven unlike any other. In this passage the Bishop, who has the gift of making pithy summaries, contrives to give us in a nutshell almost the entire history of Massabielle, as shortly before he had limned in its essential features the whole history of France.

And the picture (for such it truly was) ends with a touching cry of love: 'Lourdes! Lourdes! the smile of God! the love of the Immaculate Virgin!' Then came a solemn assertion of sublime hope. No, this people will never perish, to whom the countenance and the heart of the Mother of God are turned. Then let us ponder this serious teaching: Three sins had ruined our country—the sin of the mind, or Rationalist pride, which, by insolently throwing off the yoke of faith, has hurled so many minds into the abyss of impiety, and even of inanity; the sin of the flesh, or sensual luxury, which, instead of the virtues of our forefathers, has substituted selfish and unprofitable pleasure; the sin of the will, by turns unbridled independence and cringing servility, knowing nothing (whether from interest or fear) except revolt against God, and, alas! ignoble surrender to man, so much so that the most chivalrous of peoples has become—when there is question of duty to be done, either in the political and social or the religious world—the most backward of all.

Well, considering this triple transgression, who will give us the 'contrite and humble heart,' which must necessarily precede all speedy repentance? Our Lady of Lourdes! For here on earth, since the day when she revealed herself there with her sweetness dimmed with tears, her presence remains to us,

like the 'Sacrament of Penance,' wisely intended for our actual needs. Behold, then, the wonderful hospital, whither our great but sorely stricken nation will come, when it is willing, because there, to each of its miseries, *she* will find the fitting remedy.

First, will not minds be set free by humbly kneeling, so to speak, at the feet of the supernatural, which radiates from this centre? Ah! all this adoration of faith and all these sighs of prayer, when all men turn once more to the Unseen, to God, what an antidote they are, in truth, to the Naturalism of the day! Next, in this holy Grotto the senses misused and the poor wounded heart will find a healing grace in this ever-infallible reception of penance, which, since the Mother of God promulgated it there so expressly, has become the universal practice, displaying itself without remission under the form of poignant grief and unbounded devotion, to make up for the sensuality of men and the vengeance of God. Here the Bishop dwells with touching emotion on the mournful sight of the sick of every rank, age, and sex, 'new Christs of the social redemption,' coming one after another to Massabielle to pay to Heaven the necessary ransom for earth. Then a tribute, full of sympathetic admiration, naturally follows for that other army of Christian charity which covers with its glorious banner all human miseries on the banks of the river of Béarn. Blessed be the kindness which in this way untiring pity constantly bestows on grateful suffering under the tearful eyes of the Mother of fair love! Of all the flowers of grace unfolding in this predestined valley

this is the fairest, for, besides neutralizing as much as possible the moral evil of which we are dying by soothing bodily pain, it brings about a providential reunion of all classes.

Lastly, does not Lourdes effect the cure of wills, weakened so much in these days by all the anæsthetics of egotism and human respect, which have caused them to lose the elasticity and the robustness of their ancient Christianity? On this subject Mgr. Izart can only feel pained and indignant at the sight of all the nominal Catholics of the present time, downright obstacles to the cause of religion and society, a thousand times more harmful than our most declared enemies. To heal us from this deadly canker, what remedy has the Madonna of the Grotto employed? 'I ask,' she says, 'that many people should come here, in procession.' Oh, that gracious remedy! Men of France, you were afraid to declare your belief, afraid to profess openly the practice of your religion, and you were almost putting your banner in your pocket, and more than once treading the Ten Commandments underfoot. Come, then, a truce to such cowardice! Organize yourselves at once, without delay, in an immense crusade, as famous and glorious as those of the Middle Ages; raise aloft your standards, wave your banners, display your rosaries, let your mystic Hosannahs re-echo to the farthest bounds of your country, and come before this bleak granite Rock in thousands and myriads to sing in chorus the *Credo* of the Baptistery of Rheims. Thus it is that cowardice is banished, but it is thus, also, that the soul of a great nation is once more quickened into life. . . .

The preacher, as usual, ended his eloquent appeals by a prayer—a prayer of love to Lourdes, ‘the land of miracles, of heroism, and of sacrifice,’ the blessed centre of our national regeneration; to the Queen of Lourdes especially, who, though she vanished out of sight on the evening of July 16, 1858, has not, however, quitted her dear France, where she will for ever remain in her love and in her benefits.

May she reign here like a mother, till her task of setting us free is fully achieved, till the hour we so much long and yearn for, at length dawns, when, at this wonderful Grotto, the capital of our native land, our nation, led back by Mary to the path of truth, virtue, and religion, will come to sing, before the eyes of the astonished world, a *Te Deum* in thanksgiving to God, who has, at the last, saved France from ruin, that He might emblazon in her deliverance the endless resurrections of His love! *Fiat! Fiat!*

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* * *

Thus spoke, for three days in succession, the Bishop of Pamiers, in the presence of twenty princes of the Church, more than three thousand priests, and nearly a hundred thousand of the faithful. Or, rather, of what value are all the analyses in the world, however exact and faithful, compared to such sublime and winning eloquence? I shall be accused of Chauvinistic or friendly exaggeration when I say that, since the days of Mermillod and Pie, the valley of the Pyrénées has never heard such beautiful accents. Alas! in my endeavour, less for the honour of the distinguished Prelate than for the glory of the Heavenly Queen, to describe so many gems of

oratory, I have, unhappily, not been able to bring before the reader's mind the clear-toned voice, the thrilling accents, the persuasive speech, the stately gestures, all the glorious outbursts of emotion, all the splendid flights of imagination, all the concise summaries of doctrine—in a word, all the consummate art which so often, despite the sanctity of the place, thrilled through that vast audience and evoked loud applause.

The reader would be disappointed—and I should never forgive myself—if I did not add that the fitting conclusion of this memorable Triduum was the cure of Mlle. Lévêque—a 'first-class' miracle, as the medical examination proved beyond all doubt. The gentle Madonna deigned to grant it to this great pilgrimage at the very hour when the famous 'Evening Mass' was being celebrated in her honour at Espélugues, as though to prove more clearly that all the extraordinary honour and devotion, of whatever kind, which the heart can devise here on earth finds an echo in Heaven in the heart of Our Lady of Lourdes, to whom be all honour, all love, and all benediction for ever and ever. Amen.

'Hail, fruitful Rock, whence hope springs out !
Hail, stream that Love Divine bade spout !
Dear step to Heaven, where Mary's feet
On France's soil found resting sweet !
Rejoice, O Lourdes ! sing loud, and dance :
God makes thy dust the gem of France ;
His heart has chosen thee, on high
He sets thy "GLORIES" in the sky !'

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