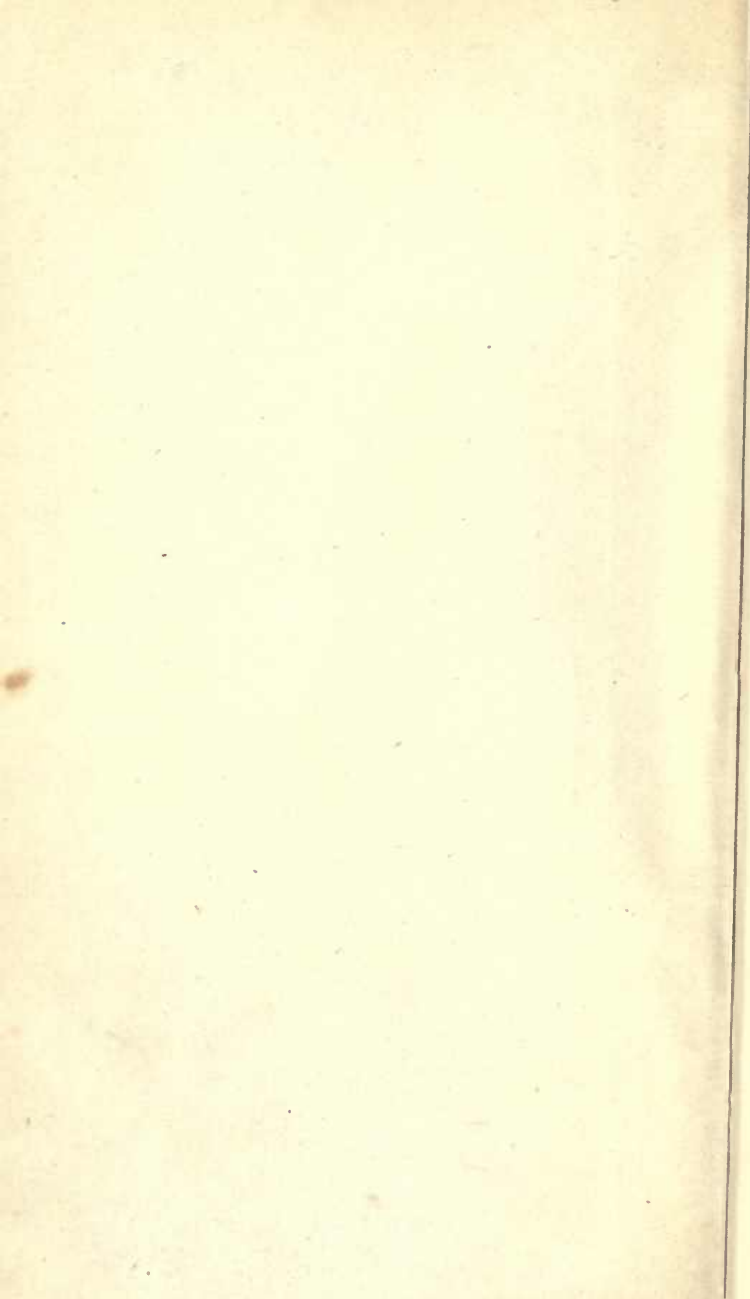


UNIVERSITY OF ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE



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OUR LADY OF LOURDES.

BY

HENRI LASSERRE.

A work honored with a special brief addressed to the
Author, by his Holiness the Pope, Pius IX.

Translated from the French.

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BRIEF OF HIS HOLINESS PIUS IX.

TO THE AUTHOR OF

OUR LADY OF LOURDES.

To his beloved Son, Henri Lasserre,

PIUS IX. POPE:

BELOVED SON,—Salutation and the apostolic benediction. Receive our felicitations, very dear son. Having obtained some time since, a most remarkable benefit, you have just accomplished, scrupulously and with feelings of love, the vow you then made: you have just employed your best efforts, in proving and establishing the truth of the recent Apparition of the most clement Mother of God; and this you have done in such a manner that the very struggle of human malice against the divine mercy serves but to bring out more forcibly the luminous evidence of the fact.

In the explanation you have afforded of events, their progress and dependence on each other, all men may perceive clearly and with certitude how our most holy Religion tends towards and results in the true advantage of all people; how it heaps on all

those who have recourse to it, gifts not only of a celestial and spiritual but also of a temporal and terrestrial nature. They will be able to see how, even in the absence of all material force, this Religion is all-powerful for the maintenance of order; how, amid excited multitudes, it can restrain within just bounds the anger and indignation, however justified, of exasperated minds. They will be able to see lastly how the Clergy coöperate by their loyal efforts and zeal towards the attainment of such results, and how, far from encouraging superstition, they display infinitely more deliberation and severity of investigation than any other class of men, when it is a question of pronouncing judgment with reference to facts which seemingly surpass the ordinary powers of nature.

Your narrative, in no less luminous a manner, will render manifest the following truth—that impiety declares war against religion entirely in vain, and that the attempts of the wicked to hamper the divine counsels of Providence by human machinations are utterly unavailing, the perversity of men and their criminal audacity serving, on the contrary, as a means, in the hands of Providence, to confer on its works more power and splendor.

Such are the reasons which have induced us to receive with the most lively joy your work entitled: *Our Lady of Lourdes*. We firmly believe that She who, from every quarter, attracts towards Herself by miracles of her power and goodness, multitudes of Pilgrims, wills, in the same manner, to employ your book in order to propagate more widely, and to excite towards Herself, the piety and confidence of mankind, to the end that all may participate in

the plenitude of Her graces. As a pledge of the success we predict for your work, receive our apostolic benediction, which we address to you very affectionately, as a testimony of our gratitude and our paternal benevolence.

Given at Rome, at St. Peters, 4 September, 1869, in the year of our Pontificate XXIV.

PIUS IX. POPE.

Dilecto Filio Henrico Lasserre,

PIUS PP. IX.

DILECTE FILI,—Salutem et apostolicam benedictionem. Gratulamur tibi, dilecte fili, quod, insigni auctus beneficio, votum tuum accuratissimo studio diligentîâque exsolveris; et novam clementissimæ Dei Matris apparitionem ita testatam facere curaveris, ut e conflictu ipso humanæ malitiæ cum cœleste misericordiâ claritas eventûs firmior ac luculentior appareret. Omnes certe in propositâ a te rerum serie perspicere poterunt, religionem nostram sanctissimam vergere in veram populorum utilitatem; confluentes ad se omnes supernis juxta et terrenis cumulare beneficiis; aptirsimam esse ordini servando, vi etiam submolâ; concitatos in turbis animorum motus, licet justos compescere; iisque rebus sedulo adlaborare Clerum, eumque adeo abesse a superstitione fovendâ, ut imo segniorem se præbeat ac severiorem aliis omnibus in judicio edendo de factis, quæ naturæ vires excedere videntur. Nec minus aperte patebit, impietatem incassum indixisse religione bellum, et frustra machinationes hominum divinæ Providentiæ consiliis obstare; quæ imo nequitia eorum et ausu sic

uti consuevit, ut majorem inde quærat operibus suis splendorem et virtutem. Libentissime propterea excepimus volumen tuum, cui titulus Notre Dame de Lourdes; fore fidentes, ut quæ per mira potentiae ac benignitatis suæ signa undique frequentissimos advenas accersit; scripto etiam tuo uti velit ad propagandam latius fovendamque in se pietatem hominum ac fiduciam, ut de plenitudine gratiæ ejus omnes accipere possint. Hujus, quem ominamur, exitus labore tuo auspicem accipe benedictionem Apostolicam, quam tibi grati animi Nostri et paternæ benevolentiae testem peramanter imperimus.

Datum Romæ, apud S. Petrum, die 4 September, 1869, Pontificatus Nostri Anno XXIV.

PIUS PP. IX.





THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

IN consequence of a remarkable favor received, the account of which will be duly found in the course of this work, I promised, some years ago, to write the history of the extraordinary events which have given rise to the Pilgrimage of Lourdes. If I have been guilty of a grave fault in deferring for so long a time the execution of my promise, I have, at least, made the most conscientious efforts to study, with scrupulous attention, the subject I wished to treat.

The presence of the incessant procession of visitors, pilgrims, men, women, whole populations, who come now from every quarter to kneel before a lonely grotto, entirely unknown ten years ago, and which the word of a child has caused to be regarded all at once as a divine sanctuary; on seeing the vast edifice rising which the faith of the people is erecting on that spot at a cost of nearly two millions, I felt an earnest desire not only to search for the proofs of the supernatural fact itself, but also to trace in what manner, by what logical connection of things or of ideas, the belief in it had been so universally spread.

How has it been produced? How was an event of such a nature accomplished in the middle of the nineteenth century? How could the testimony of an illiterate little girl with regard to a fact so extraordinary, touching Apparitions which no one of those around her saw, find credit and give birth to such astonishing results?

There are persons who have one peremptory word in answer to such questions, and the word "superstition" is very convenient for that purpose. For my own part, I am not so expeditious; and I wished to account to myself for a phenomenon so entirely out of the ordinary course of things, and so worthy of attention, from whatever point of view we regard it. Whether the Miracle be true or false; whether the cause of this vast concourse of people is to be found in divine agency or human error, a study of this kind does not the less possess the highest interest. I remark, however, that the Sectaries of Free-thought are very cautious of entering upon it. They prefer to deny the whole thing bluntly. This is, at the same time, easier and more prudent.

I understand, very differently from them, the restless search after truth. If to deny everything flatly appears to them the simplest mode, to affirm everything roundly appears to me to be somewhat hazardous.

I have seen *savants* toil up the steep paths of mountains in order to be able to explain to themselves why an insect of a certain class which is found during the summer on the highest peaks, is, after the winter has set in, only to be met with in the valleys. This is all very well, and I cannot

blame them. I sometimes say to myself, however, that the great movements of humanity, and the causes which set immense multitudes in motion, have claims fully as great on the employment of the sagacity of the human mind. History, Religion, Science, Philosophy, Medicine, the different workings of human nature, are, in my opinion, quite as curious as Entomology.

This study I wished to render complete. I did not, therefore, content myself with official documents or letters, or official reports or written attestations. It was my wish, as much as possible, to know everything and see everything for myself, to have everything brought freshly before my eyes through the memory and narrative of eye-witnesses. I have made long journeys over France to interrogate all those who had figured—whether as the chief personages or as witnesses—in the events I had to recount, to check their accounts by comparing them one with another, and then arrive at entire and lucid truth.

In my investigations connected with this divine history, I wished, in a word, to follow and even push further, if that were possible, the excellent method which M. Thiers has employed with such happy results in the long labors and sagacious researches which preceded his *chef-d'œuvre* on the Consulate and the Empire.

I trust that, with God's assistance, my efforts have not been entirely in vain.

Once having acquired the truth, I have written about it as freely as if, like the Duc de St. Simon, I had closed my door and written a history not destined to appear to the world until after the lapse

of a century. I have wished to say everything while the witnesses are still living, to give their names and place of abode, that it might be possible for others to interrogate them and to renew the investigation I have myself made, in order to control my own labor. It was my wish that each reader might examine for himself my assertions, and render homage to the truth, if I have been sincere ; it was my wish that he might be able to cover me with confusion and dishonor if I have been guilty of falsehoods.

The deep investigation to which I devoted myself, the documents I consulted, the numerous testimonies I have heard, have allowed me to enter into circumstantial details, which were not at the disposal of those who gave a summary account of these events when they first occurred, as also to rectify sundry errors which had crept into the chronological department. I have been most attentive in re-establishing the exact order in which the several events occurred. This was very-necessary in order to convey a just conception of their logical consequences and their real essence.

To study facts, not only in their outward appearance, but in their hidden life ; to trace, with an ever wakeful attention, the link often distant—often imperceptible at first sight—which unites them ; to understand and explain clearly their cause, origin and generation ; to surprise and detect the action of the eternal laws and marvelous harmonies of the miraculous orders, in the depths one attempts to illuminate ; such is the aim I had the boldness to conceive.

Such being my thoughts, no circumstance could be a matter of indifference or deserve neglect. The slightest detail might contain a light, and permit me to seize—if I may be allowed so to speak—the hand of God in *flagrante delicto*.

From this arose my researches; from this the form very different from the habitual style of official histories, which my narrative adopted of its own accord; from this, both in my account of the Apparitions as in that of the miraculous cures, those portraits, dialogues, landscapes, circumstances of time and place, and descriptions of the weather: from this, those thousand details which have cost me so much trouble to collect, but which gave me as I piously stored them up, the unspeakable pleasure of seeing for myself, of tasting and feeling—with all the charm of a discovery scarcely suspected beforehand—the deep harmony of works which proceed from God.

This joy I now endeavor to communicate to my readers, to my friends, to those who are curious to learn the secrets from on high. Some of these details at times arrive so wonderfully and opportunely that the reader, accustomed to the discords of this world, might suspect the painter of flattery in his picture. But God is an artist that needs not the invention of others. The supernatural works which He designs to accomplish here below are perfect in themselves. To copy them faithfully would be to hit on the ideal.

But who can copy them in this way? Who can see them in all their beauty and harmony? Who has not his sight dimmed? Who can penetrate all the secrets of these great and little things? No

one, alas! Almost everything escapes us and we only see by glimpses.

I have now dared to say what I should have wished to have done. The reader alone will see what I have done.





OUR LADY OF LOURDES.

FIRST BOOK.

I.

THE small town of Lourdes is situated in the department of the Hautes-Pyrenees, at the embouchure of the seven valleys of the Lavedan, between the last undulations of the hills terminating the plain of Tarbes and the first escarpments with which the Grande Montagne commences. Its houses, scattered irregularly over an uneven surface, are grouped as it were in defiance of order at the base of an enormous rock, entirely isolated; on the summit of which, rises like the nest of an eagle, a formidable castle. At the foot of this rock, beneath the shade of alders, oaks and poplars, the Gave hurries rapidly along, breaking its foaming waters against a bar of pebbles, and serving to turn the noisy wheels of three or four mills built on its banks. The din of these mills and the murmur of the wind in the branches of the trees are mingled with the sound of its gliding waves.

The Gave is formed by the several torrents of

the upper valleys, which in their turn themselves issue from the eternal glaciers and stainless snows which mask in the depths of the chain, the arid sides of the Grande Montagne. The most important of these tributaries proceeds from the cascade of Gavarine, which falls, as every one knows, from one of those rare peaks which no human foot has yet been able to scale.

Leaving on its right the town, the castle and all the mills of Lourdes (with the exception of one built on its left bank), the Gave, at if anxious to reach its ultimate destination, flows rapidly towards the town of Pau, which it hurries by in order to join the Adour and finally the ocean.

In the environs of Lourdes, the scenery on the banks of the Gave is sometimes wild and savage, sometimes charming; verdant meadows, cultivated fields, thick woods and lofty rocks, are reflected by turns in its waters. Here, the eye gazes over smiling and cultivated farms, the most graceful landscape, the high road to Pau, continually dotted with carriages, horsemen and travelers on foot; there, over stern mountains in all the terror of their solitude.

The castle of Lourdes, almost impregnable before the invention of artillery, was in days of yore the key of the Pyrenees. It has been handed down by tradition that Charlemagne, at war with the Infidels, was long unable to take possession of it. Just as he was on the point of raising the siege, an eagle, winging his flight above the highest tower of the beleaguered fortress, let fall upon it a splendid fish which it had just captured in a lake in the neighborhood.

Whether it was that on this particular day the laws of the Church prescribed abstinence, or that the fish was a christian symbol still popular at that epoch, one thing is certain—the Saracen chief Mirat, who occupied the castle, regarded the occurrence in the light of a prodigy, and became a convert to the true faith. It needed nothing less than this miraculous conversion of Mirat and his subsequent baptism, to re-incorporate this castle into the domains of Christendom. Further, the Saracen, as the chronicle informs us, expressly stipulated, that “having become the champion of Our Lady, the Mother of God, he would have it understood, both in his own case and in that of his descendants, that his dignity of Count, free from all earthly fiefdom, was held from Her alone.”

The punning coat of arms of the town testify to this extraordinary fact of the eagle and the fish. Lourdes bears on a field *gules* three towers *or*, faced with stone-work *sable* on a rock *argent*. The center tower, higher than that on either side, is surmounted by an eagle with outstretched wings *sable*, holding in his beak a trout *argent*.

During the whole period of the Middle Ages, the castle of Lourdes was a center of terror to the surrounding country. Sometimes in the name of the English, sometimes in that of the counts of Bigorre, it was occupied by a kind of free-booting captains, who, in point of fact, warred strictly on their own account, and levied contributions on the inhabitants of the plain in a circle of forty or fifty leagues. Their incredible audacity, we are told, carried them even to the extent of laying violent hands on persons and property up to the very gates

of Montpellier, after which they sought security, like veritable birds of prey, in their own inaccessible aërie.

In the eighteenth century the castle of Lourdes was converted into a state prison. It was the Bastille of the Pyrenees. The Revolution opened the gates of this prison to three or four persons confined in it by the arbitrary power of despotism, and in return peopled it with several hundreds of criminals, who, to tell the truth, were culpable in a very different way. A contemporary author has noticed on the prison register the offences of these unfortunate wretches. He gives us specimens of the designations of the crimes attached to the name of each prisoner: "*Unpatriotic—Having refused the kiss of peace to citizen N—before the altar of our country—Troublesome—A drunkard—Cold as ice toward the Revolution—Hypocritical in disposition and reserved in his opinions—A peaceable Harpagon, indifferent towards the Revolution, etc., etc.*"

From this we perceive that the Revolution had just reasons for complaining of the arbitrary power of kings, and had substituted a regime of mild toleration and entire liberty for the terrible despotism of the monarchy.

During the Empire the Castle of Lourdes preserved its character of state-prison, and only lost it on the return of the Bourbons. Since the Restoration, the terrible castle of the middle ages having become in the natural order of things a place of fourth or fifth-rate importance, is now peaceably garrisoned by a company of infantry under the orders of a commandant. The town has nevertheless remained the key of the Pyrenees, but in quite

a different point of view to what it was formerly. Lourdes is the point of intersection of all the roads leading to the warm baths, whether you go to Barèges, to Saint Sauveur, to Cautarets, to Bagnères de Bigorre, or from Cauterets or Pau you attempt to reach Luchou, you must always pass through Lourdes. From the earliest times since the baths of the Pyrenees have been visited by strangers, the innumerable diligences employed for the conveyance of passengers to the baths during the summer season were in the habit of stopping at the Hotel de la Poste. Travelers were usually allowed time to dine, to visit the castle, and to admire the scenery before resuming their journey.

We see then that for the last one or two centuries this little town has been constantly traversed by those resorting to the baths, and by tourists from every corner of Europe. A tolerably advanced state of civilization has been the result.

In 1858, the period when this history commences, the greater part of the Parisian newspapers had long been regularly received at Lourdes. Several of its inhabitants took in the *Revue des deux Mondes*. As is everywhere the case, the cabarets and cafés supplied their customers with three numbers of the *Siecle*—to-day's, yesterday's and the day before yesterday's. The Bourgeoisie and the Clergy were divided between the *Journal des Débats*, the *Presse*, the *Moniteur*, the *Univers* and the *Union*.

Lourdes boasted a club, a printing establishment and a newspaper. The Sous-préfet resided at Argelès; but the grief experienced by the inhabitants of Lourdes at being deprived of this functionary, was somewhat alleviated by the joy of having the

Tribunal de première instance, that is to say three Judges, a *Procureur Imperial* and a *Substitut*. As inferior satellites of this luminous centre, there gravitated around it a *Juge de Paix*, a commissary of Police, six *Huissiers* and seven Gendarmes (one of them a Brigadier). Within the town there was a hospital and a prison, and, as we shall have perhaps an opportunity of explaining, circumstances occurred when some strong-minded persons, nourished on the wholesome and humanitarian doctrines of the *Siecle*, pretended it would be necessary to place the criminals in the hospital and transfer the sick to the prison.

But in addition to these powerful reasoners, at the bar of Lourdes and in the medical profession, there might be found men equally learned and distinguished in manner—men of remarkable powers of mind and of impartial observation, such as are not always to be met with in places of greater importance.

The mountain races are generally gifted with firm and practical good sense. The population of Lourdes having had little admixture with foreign blood, was excellent. Few places could be cited in France where the schools are more numerously attended than at Lourdes. There is not a boy in the place who does not go for several years to some lay institution or to the school conducted by the Brothers; not a little girl who does not in the same manner attend the school of the Sisters at Nevers, until she has completed the education adapted to her place in society. With more instruction than the working classes of most of our cities, the people of Lourdes have, at the same time, the simplicity of rural life. They are warm in their affections,

upright in heart, abounding in southern wit, and strictly moral. They are honest, devout, and averse to innovations.

Certain local institutions, dating from time immemorial, serve to maintain this happy state of things. The inhabitants of these regions long before the pretended discoveries of modern progress, had understood and reduced to practice under the shadow of the Church, those ideas of joint responsibility and prudence which have given birth to our mutual aid societies. Societies of such a description exist at Lourdes and have been in operation for centuries past; they date from the middle ages; they have emerged victoriously from the Revolution, and the philanthropists would have long ere this sung their praises, had they not derived their vitality from the religious principle and were they not still called, as in the fifteenth century, "Brotherhoods."

"Almost all the people," says M. de Lagreze, "enter these associations which combine philanthropy with devotion. Those of the laboring class, united under the name of *confrères*, place their work under the patronage of heaven and mutually exchange assistance and christian charity. The common coffer receives the weekly offering of the workman when in high health and full vigor, to return it one day to him when laid low by sickness or distress. When a workman dies the expenses of his funeral are paid by the association, and its members accompany him to his last resting place. Each Brotherhood (with the exception of two which share the high altar between them, has a private chapel, the name of which is assumed by

the members and the expenses of which are defrayed by the offertory on Sunday. The Brotherhood of Notre Dame de Grace is composed of husbandmen; that of Notre Dame de Carmel, of slaters; that of Notre Dame de Monsarrat, of masons; that of Saint Anne, of cabinet-makers; that of Saint Lucy, of tailors and seamstresses; that of the Ascension, of quarry men; that of the Holy Sacrament, of church-wardens; that of Saint John and St. James, of all those who have received either of these names in baptism.”

The women are in the same manner members of similar religious associations. One of them, “The Congregation of the Children of Mary,” is of a peculiar character. It is also, though in a spiritual point of view, a mutual aid society. In order to obtain admission into this Congregation, which is of course confined to the laity, the candidate must have been long known as of irreproachable character. Little girls think of it long before they become young women. The members of this Congregation pledge themselves never to incur danger of falling by frequenting worldly society—in which the religious spirit is lost—not to follow the absurdities of fashion, and on the other hand to attend punctually the meetings and instructions which take place every Sunday. Admission into the Congregation is deemed an honor, while exclusion from it is considered a disgrace. The good effected by this association in preserving a high tone of morality in the country and preparing young women for their maternal duties is incalculable. Consequently, in a great number of dioceses many *Confréries* have been founded on the model of this Mother Congregation.

The whole country has a peculiar devotion for the Virgin. Numerous sanctuaries are consecrated to her in the Pyrenees from Piétat or Garaison to Bétharram. All the altars in the parish church at Lourdes are dedicated to the Mother of God.

III.

SUCH was the state of Lourdes ten years ago. The railroad did not then pass by it, nor was it indeed in contemplation. One marked out more direct appeared to be intended beforehand for the line of the Pyrenees.

The whole of the town and the fortress, as we have already observed, are situated on the right bank of the Gave, which after breaking—in its course from the south—against the enormous rock that serves as a pedestal to the castle, makes immediately a bend at right angles and takes suddenly a westerly direction.

An ancient bridge, built some little distance above the first houses of the town, serves as a means of communication with the country, meadows, forests and mountains on the left bank.

On this last bank, a little above the bridge and opposite to the castle, a large canal is formed from the water of the Gave. This canal rejoins its parent stream about a *kilomètre* further down, after passing the rocks of Massabielle, the base of which it washes.

The long island formed by the Gave and this canal is one vast and verdant tract of meadow land and is known by the name of *l'Ile du Chalet*, or more commonly *le Chalet*.

The mill of Sâvy, the only one on the left bank, is built across the canal and serves as a bridge between the island meadow and the main land.

In 1858 there was scarcely a wilder, more savage or solitary spot in the environs of the busy little town we have described, than the Rocks of Massabielle, at the foot of which the mill-stream rejoined the Gave.

A few paces above this junction, on the bank of the stream, the abrupt rock was pierced at its base by three irregular caverns, curiously placed above each other and communicating with one another like holes in a gigantic sponge.

The singularity of these caverns renders them somewhat difficult to describe.

The first and the largest was on a level with the ground. It had almost the appearance of a booth at a country fair, or of a badly shaped and very high oven cut vertically through the centre, so as only to form a semi-dome. The entrance in the shape of an arch very much askew was about thirteen feet high. The breadth and depth of the grotto could not have been less than three times its height. The rock sloped back from the entrance, like the roof of a garret seen from below, and became narrower on either side.

Above, somewhat to the right of the spectator, were two superimposed apertures in the rock, forming as it were annexes or dependencies of this larger one.

Viewed from the outside the principal of these two openings was oval in form and about the size of a window in a house or a niche in a church. It sloped slightly up as it receded; then, at the depth

of about six feet, forked ; one branch descending to the grotto beneath, the other turning back on itself as far as the exterior of the rock and forming the second upper aperture of which we have spoken, but being of no importance except that it gave light in every way to this supplementary cavity.

An eglantine or wild rose, springing from a fissure in the rock, trailed its long branches at the base of this niche-like orifice.

At the foot of this little series of caverns, which the eye could take in at a glance, but of which it is very difficult by mere description to convey a correct idea, the mill-stream rushes over a chaos of enormous rocks, fallen from the mountains, to reunite with the Gave five or six paces below.

The grotto was exactly in front of the *Ile du Chalet* which, as we have already observed, was formed by the Gave and the canal.

These caverns were called the Grotto of Massabielle from the name of the rocks of which it formed a part. In the *patois* of the country "Massabielle" signifies "Old Rocks."

Lower down on the banks of the Gave there was a steep and rugged hillock which, as well as these rocks, belonged to the commune of Lourdes, and where the poor of the town used to bring their pigs to feed. On the approach of a storm the grotto served them as a place of shelter, as also to the few fishermen who were wont to fish with nets in this part of the Gave.

As in all caverns of this nature the rock was dry in fine weather and slightly humid when it rained. This occasional humidity and imperceptible dripping of the wet season was only observable on one

side, that to your right on entering. It is precisely on this side that the rain usually comes, driven by the westerly wind; and the rock being very slender and full of clefts in this place suffered in the same way as do houses with the same exposure and built with indifferent mortar.

The left side and the bottom not being thus exposed were always as dry as the floor of a drawing-room. The accidental humidity of the western wall served even to set off by contrast the burning dryness of the northern, eastern and southern portions of the grotto.

Above this triple cavity arose almost in a peak the enormous mass of the Rocks of Massabielle, garlanded in many a place with ivy and box, heather and moss. Tangled brambles, hazels and wild roses, a few trees, whose branches were often broken by the wind, extended their roots into the fissures of the rocks, wherever the falling in of the mountain or the breath of heaven had afforded them a handful of earth for their nourishment. The eternal sower, He whose invisible hand fills the immensity of space with suns and planets, He who has produced out of nothing the ground on which we tread, the vegetable and animal kingdoms, the Creator of so many millions of men who have peopled the earth, and so many millions of angels who people heaven, that God, whose wealth is boundless and power unlimited, does not intend that a single atom should be lost in the immense regions of his works. And this is why He leaves nothing barren which is capable of production; this is why over the entire extent of our globe innumerable germs float in the air, covering the vegetable earth

wherever it appears, were there only room for the existence of a blade of grass or for the growth of the tiniest moss. And in the same way, O Divine Sower! thy graces, like an invisible dust of fruitful seeds, float around our souls on the watch for a fertile soil. And if we are so barren, it is because we present to Thee sometimes hearts harder and more arid than the rock, sometimes beaten paths for ever trodden by the feet of the passers by, sometimes thickets of thorns solely occupied by rank weeds which choke the good seed.

IV.

It was necessary to describe somewhat minutely the country destined to be the scene of the events we are about to relate. It is of no less importance to indicate beforehand what light, or I should rather say what profound moral truth lights up the starting point of this history, in which, as will be seen, the hand of God has visibly appeared. These reflections will retard us but an instant in the commencement of our recital.

It appears almost superfluous to point out the strong contrasts to be met with in this world, in which the wicked and the good, the rich and the poor are mingled together, and the cottage of the indigent is sometimes separated but by a single wall from the abode of opulence. On one side, all the pleasures of a life of ease, agreeably organized in the midst of the comforts and elegance of luxury; on the other, the horrors of want, cold, hunger, disease—the melancholy procession of human sufferings. Around the former, adulation, visits and

loud professions of friendship; around the others, indifference, solitude, desertion. People of the world shun the poor man and leave him out of all their schemes, either because they fear the importunity of his actual or silent appeals, or because they dread the sight of his fearful destitution, as a reproach to themselves. The rich, forming themselves into an exclusive circle which they call "good society," consider all outside of themselves as having only as it were a secondary existence, unworthy of their attention—all those in fact who do not belong to the class of "gentlemen." When they employ a workman, even when they are charitably disposed and succor the poor, they treat him as a *protégé*, as an inferior. They do not act towards him with that simple intimacy with which they would conduct themselves towards one of their own set. With the exception of some rare christians, no one treats the poor man as his brother or his equal. With the exception of the Saints—alas! few and far between in our day—who would ever think of showing him the respect they deem due to a superior? In the world, properly so called, in the great world the poor man is absolutely forsaken. Overwhelmed with the weight of labor, worn out with want, despised and abandoned, would it not appear as though he were cursed by the Creator of the earth? Ah! it is just the contrary; he is the beloved one of the universal Father. While the World has been cursed for ever by the infallible word of Christ, it is the poor, the suffering, the humble, the insignificant who are the "good society" in the eyes of God, the chosen company in which his heart delights. "Ye are my friends,"

he tells them in his Gospel. He does more. He identifies himself with them and only opens the kingdom of heaven to the rich on condition of their having been the benefactors of the poor. "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these little ones, ye have done it unto me."

So, when the Son of God came upon earth, it was His will to be born, to live and to die in the midst of the poor—to be Himself poor. It was from among them He chose his Apostles, his principal disciples, the first-born of his Church. In the long history of that Church, it was upon the poor that He generally poured forth his choicest spiritual graces. In all ages—with some slight exceptions—Apparitions, Visions, especial Revelations, have been the privilege of the poor and little ones whom the world despises.

When God, in His wisdom, deems fit to manifest himself sensibly to men by these mysterious phenomena, He descends, as do the kings of the earth when traveling, into the houses of His ministers or of His particular friends. And this is the reason of His habitual choice of the dwellings of the poor and the humble.

For nearly two thousand years past has the word of the Apostle been verified, "God hath chosen what is weak according to the world to confound that which is powerful."

The recital undertaken by us will perhaps furnish some proof of these high truths.

V.

ON the 11th of February, 1858, was inaugurated

the week of profane enjoyments, which, according to immemorial custom, precedes the austerities of Lent. The weather was cold and somewhat overcast, but very calm. The clouds remained motionless in the depths of heaven. There was no breeze to agitate them and the atmosphere was entirely still. Occasionally there fell a few drops of rain. On that day the diocese of Tarbes, in accordance with the peculiar privileges of its Proper Office, was celebrating the memory and the feast of the illustrious Sheperdess of Saint Genevieve.

It was eleven o'clock in the morning by the parish church of Lourdes.

While joyful assemblies and parties were almost everywhere in preparation, a poor family, lodged in a wretched dwelling in the Rue Petits-fosses, had not even wood for cooking their scanty meal.

The father, still young, was a miller by trade, and had for a short time kept a little mill situated to the north of the town on one of the streams which flow into the Gave. This business, however, required a certain amount of capital, as the lower classes are not in the habit of paying ready money for having their corn ground, and consequently the poor miller had been obliged to relinquish the little mill, where his exertions, instead of placing him in easy circumstances, had served only to plunge him into deeper poverty. Waiting for better days he worked hard — not at home, for he had nothing in the world, not even a small garden — but all around, for some of his neighbors, who employed him from time to time as a day-laborer.

His name was François Soubireus, and he was married to a very respectable woman, Louise Cas-

terot, who was a good christian and kept up the courage of her husband.

They had four children, two girls, the eldest of them being about fourteen years old, and two boys much younger ; the last born being between three and four years old.

It was only within the last fortnight that their eldest daughter, a weakly child, had been living under the same roof with them. This is the little girl destined to take an important part in our narration, and we have carefully studied all the peculiarities and details of her life.

At her birth, her mother, then very much out of health, had been unable to suckle her, and had placed her out to nurse in a neighboring village, Bartrès, where the infant remained after being weaned. Louise Soubirous had become a mother for the second time ; and the care of two children at the same time, would have detained her at home, and prevented her from going out to daily labor in the fields, which, however, she could easily do as long as she only had one child at the breast. For this reason the parents allowed their eldest to remain at Bartrès. They paid five francs a month for her board, sometimes in money, but more frequently in kind.

When the little girl was old enough to make herself useful, and there was some idea of taking her back to her parent's house, the good peasants, who had brought her up, perceived that they had formed a strong attachment to her, and regarded her almost as one of their own children. From that day they kept her without charge, and employed her in tending their sheep. Thus she

grew up in the midst of the family which had adopted her, passing all her days in solitude on the lonely declivities, where her humble flock grazed.

Her knowledge of prayers was entirely confined to the Chaplet. Either because her foster-mother had recommended this to her, or because it was the simple want of her innocent soul, everywhere and at all times, while engaged in watching her flock, she was in the habit of reciting this prayer of the simple. In addition to this, she amused herself quite alone with those natural play-things, which motherly providence provides for the children of the poor, who, in this respect, as indeed in all others, are more easily satisfied than those of the rich. She used to play with stones, which she piled up in little childish buildings; with the plants and flowers which she gathered here and there; with the water of the brook, into which she threw immense fleets of blades of grass, following them with her eye as they floated downwards, and lastly, with the lamb which was the object of her preference in the flock intrusted to her care. "Of all my lambs," she said one day, "there is one I love more than all the rest." "And which is that," she was asked. "The one I love," she replied, "is the smallest;" and it was her greatest pleasure to caress it in frolicsome sport.

Compared with other children, she was herself like this poor little feeble lamb which she loved. Although she had already attained her fourteenth year, you would have never supposed her to be more than eleven or twelve. She was subject to an oppressive asthma, which, without rendering

her absolutely sickly, caused her sometimes great suffering. She bore her misfortune patiently, and accepted her physical pains with that tranquil resignation which appears so difficult to the rich, but which the poor seem to find naturally and without effort.

In this innocent and lonely school, the poor shepherd-girl learned, perhaps, what is to the world unknown: the simplicity, which is so pleasing to God. Far removed from the contagion of impurity, ever communing with the Virgin Mary, and passing her time and her hours in crowning Her with prayers while telling her beads, she preserved that entire candor, that baptismal purity, which the breath of the world, even among the best, so soon tarnishes.

Such was the soul of this child, limpid and peaceful as those unknown lakes which are buried in the midst of lofty mountains, and in which all the splendors of heaven are silently reflected. "Blessed are the pure in heart," says the Gospel, "for they shall see God."

These great gifts are hidden gifts, and the humility which possesses them is often unconscious of them. The young maiden had now reached her fourteenth year, and if all those who accidentally came in contact with her felt themselves attracted towards, and secretly fascinated by her, she was herself entirely unconscious of it. She regarded herself as one of the last, and the most backward children of her age, and in point of fact, she could neither read nor write. In addition to this she was wholly unacquainted with the French language, and knew nothing but her own poor Pyrenean *patois*.

She had never been taught the catechism, and in this respect her ignorance was extreme. "Our Father, Hail Mary, I believe in God, Glory be to the Father" recited in the course of the Chaplet, constituted the extent of her religious knowledge.

After the foregoing details, it is unnecessary to add, that she had not yet made her first communion. It was in fact with the view of preparing her for this, and sending her to the catechism class, that the Soubious had just withdrawn her from the retired village, where her foster-parents resided, and had brought her to their own house, at Lourdes, notwithstanding their exceeding poverty.

It was about a fortnight since she had returned to the dwelling of her parents. Her mother treated her with every possible care and attention, as her asthma and her general fragility of appearance caused her much anxiety. While the rest of the children of the Soubious went about in nothing but their sabots, this child wore stockings; while her sister and brothers were always running about in the open air, she was almost constantly employed in the house. The poor child accustomed to be in the open air, would have preferred going out.

The day was Shrove-Tuesday; it had struck eleven o'clock, and these poor people had not the wood necessary to prepare their mid-day meal.

"Go and gather some on the bank of the Gave, or on the common," said the mother to Marie, her second daughter.

As in many other places, the poor in the commune of Lourdes, possessed the right of picking up any dry branches which the wind might have blown down from the trees, and any dead wood

which might have been washed down by a flood, and left among the rocks along the course of the river.

Marie put on her sabots, an operation which her elder sister, of whom we have just been speaking, the little shepherd-girl of Bartrès, regarded with envy.

"Allow me to follow her," she said to her mother, "I will also bring back my little bundle of wood."

"No," answered Louise Soubirous: you have a cough, and it would make you worse."

In the mean time, a young girl from the next house, Jeanne Abadie, about fifteen years old, had entered, and volunteered to go with them to pick up some wood. They all joined in urging the mother to give the required permission, and at length she consented.

The child at the moment had a handkerchief wrapped round her head and knotted on the side as is the custom with the peasant women in the South. This did not appear sufficient to the mother.

"Take your *capulet*," she said to her.

The *capulet* is a very graceful article of dress, peculiar to the races of the Pyrenees, and partakes of the nature of the kerchief and the mantle. It is a kind of hood, of very coarse cloth, sometimes white as the fleece of a sheep, sometimes of a brilliant scarlet, which covers the head and falls back over the shoulders, as far down as the loins. When the weather is very cold or windy, the women bring it in front, and carefully envelope in it their neck and arms. When they find it too warm for this garment, they fold it up square, and carry it on their heads, like a kind of quadrangular *berret*,

The *capulet* of the little shepherd-girl of Bartrès was white.

VI.

THE three children soon left the town behind them, and crossing the bridge, reached the left bank of the Gave. They passed by the mill of M. de Laffitte, and gaining the *Ile du Chalet*, sought here and there for small fragments of wood, in order to make a little faggot.

By degrees they descended the meadow, following the course of the Gave. The frail child, to whom the mother had hesitated in granting permission to leave the house, walked somewhat in the rear. Less fortunate than her two companions she had not yet found anything, and her apron was empty, while her sister and Jeanne were already furnished with a little load of chips and small branches.

Clad in a worn-out and patched black dress, her delicate visage framed in the white *capulet* which covered her head, and fell back on her shoulders, with coarse sabots on her feet, she displayed an innocent and rustic grace which charmed the heart even more than the eye.

She was short for her age. Although her childish features were somewhat tanned by the sun, they had lost nothing of their native delicacy. Her hair, black and soft, was almost concealed by her kerchief. Her brow, which was tolerably lofty, was marked by lines of incomparable purity. Under her well-arched eyebrows, her brown eyes—sweeter in her even than blue—possessed a calm and pro-

found beauty, whose magnificent limpidity had never been troubled by any evil passion. It was the simple eye spoken of in the Gospel. The mouth, wonderfully expressive, served as the index of a soul in which habitual goodness and compassion for suffering of every kind held undisputed sway.

Her physiognomy was pleasing, owing to its sweetness and intelligence, and her whole person possessed an extraordinary attraction, which sensibly affected the most elevated regions of the soul. What then was this attraction. I was going to say this ascendancy, and this secret authority in this poor ignorant child clothed in rags. It was the greatest and the rarest thing in the world—the Majesty of Innocence.

We have not yet told her name. Her Patron was a great Doctor of the Church—whose genius sheltered itself more especially under the protection of the Mother of God—the author of the *Memorare*, “Remember, O most pious Virgin Mary,” the admirable Saint Bernard. However, in accordance with a custom which is not without its charm, the great name given to this humble peasant girl had taken a child-like and rustic form. The little girl bore a pretty name, graceful like herself—she was called Bernadette.

She followed her sister and her companion along the meadow by the mill and searched, but in vain, among the grass for some morsels of wood for the hearth at home.

Such must have been the appearance of Ruth, or of Naomi, going to glean in the fields of Boaz.

VII.

THE three girls, strolling in this manner, had reached the end of the *Ile du Chalet*, directly opposite the triple excavation forming the Grotto of *Massabielle*, which we have endeavored to describe. They were only separated from it by the course of the mill-stream, which was ordinarily very considerable, and which bathed the feet of the rocks.

Now, it happened that on that very day, the mill of *Sâvy* was undergoing repairs, and the water had been turned off as much as possible above. The canal was, consequently, very easy to cross, though not altogether dry, and the channel was exceedingly narrow.

Branches of dead wood fallen from the various wild trees and shrubs which grew in the fissures of the rock were thickly scattered over this lonely spot, which the accidental drainage of the canal rendered more easy of access at the moment than was usually the case.

Delighted with this fortunate discovery, and as active and diligent as *Martha* in the Gospel, *Jeanne* and *Marie* quickly took off their wooden sabots and forded the little stream.

"The water is very cold" they observed, on reaching the opposite bank and putting on their sabots again.

It was the month of February, and these torrents from the mountain, freshly issuing from the eternal snows to which they owe their source, are usually of an icy temperature.

Bernadette less active or less eager, and being besides far from robust, was still on this side of the

little stream. The idea of fording this feeble channel was quite embarrassing to her. She had also to take off her stockings, while Marie and Jeanne wore nothing but sabots ; and, hearing the exclamation of her companions, she feared the coldness of the water.

“Throw two or three large stones into the middle of the stream,” she said to them, “so that I may pass over without wetting my feet.”

The two gleaners of wood were already arranging their little fagot and did not care to lose any time in suspending their operations.

“Do as we did,” answered Jeanne ; “go in barefooted.”

Bernadette submitted, and leaning against a fragment of rock which was there, began to take off her shoes and stockings. It was about noon, and the Angelus might sound at any moment from all the towers of the Pyrenean villages.

VIII.

SHE was engaged in taking off her first stocking when she heard around her as it were, the sound of a blast of wind, rising in the meadow-tract with an indescribable character of irresistible might.

She believed it to be a sudden hurricane, and turned herself round instinctively. To her great surprise, the poplars which border the Gave were perfectly motionless. Not the slightest breeze stirred their still branches.

“I must have been deceived,” she said to herself. As she thought again about this noise, she did not know what to believe.

She began once more to remove her shoes and stockings.

At this moment, the impetuous roaring of this unknown blast became audible afresh.

Bernadette raised her head, gazed in front of her, and uttered, or rather strove to utter, a loud cry, which was stifled in her throat. She shuddered in all her limbs, and confounded, dazzled, and crushed in a certain manner by what she saw before her, she sank down, bowed herself entirely to the earth and fell on both knees.

A truly unheard-of spectacle had just met her gaze. The narration of the child; the innumerable interrogations which a thousand sharp-sighted and inquisitive minds have put to her since that period; the precise and minute particularities into which so many intellects on the watch for discrepancies have forced her to descend, allow us to trace—with a hand as sure of each detail as of the general physiognomy—the wonderful and astounding portrait of the marvelous Being who appeared at that instant to the eyes of the terrified and transported Bernadette.

IX.

ABOVE the Grotto, in front of which Marie and Jeanne, eagerly bending to the ground were picking up pieces of dead wood, in the rustic niche formed by the rock, a woman of incomparable splendor stood upright, in the midst of a superhuman brightness.

The ineffable light which floated around her neither pained nor distressed the eyes, as does the bril-

liancy of sunshine. Far from this being the case, this aureole, intense as a pencil of rays, and calm as a profundity of shade, invincibly attracted the gaze, which seemed to bathe itself in it and rest on it with exquisite delight! It was, like the morning star, light combined with coolness. There was, in addition to this, nothing vague or vaporous in the Apparition herself. She had not the transitory form of a fantastic vision, she was a living reality, a human body which the eye pronounced palpable, like the flesh of us all, and which only differed from an ordinary person by its aureole and its divine beauty.

She was of middle height. She appeared to be quite young, and had the grace of the age of twenty years. But, without losing aught of its tender delicacy, this lustre, so fleeting in time, had in her the stamp of eternity. Further, in her features so divinely marked, there were mingled in some sort, but without disturbing their harmony, the successive and distinct beauties of the four seasons of human life. The innocent candor of the Child, the absolute purity of the Virgin, the tender seriousness of the highest of Maternities, and Wisdom superior to that of all accumulated ages, were summed up and melted into each other, without injuring the effect of each in this marvelous countenance of youthful womanhood. To what can we compare it in this fallen world, where the rays of the beautiful are scattered, broken and tarnished, and where they never appear to us without some impure admixture? Any image, any comparison would be a degradation of this unutterable type. No majesty existing in the universe, no distinction of this world, no simplicity here below, could con-

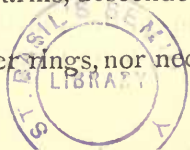
vey any idea of it or assist us to comprehend it better. It is not with earthly lamps that we can can render visible, and, so to say, light up the stars of heaven.

Even the regularity and the ideal purity of these features, in which nothing clashed, shields them from any attempt at description. Need we however say, that the oval curve of the countenance was infinitely graceful; that the eyes were blue and so sweet that they seemed to melt the heart of every one upon whom they turned their gaze? The lips breathed forth divine goodness and kindness. The brow seemed to contain supreme wisdom, that is to say, the union of omniscience with boundless virtue.

Her garments of an unknown texture, and doubtless woven in the mysterious loom which furnishes attire for the lilies of the valley, were white as the stainless mountain snow, and more magnificent in their simplicity than the gorgeous robe of Solomon in all his glory. Her robe, long and training, falling in chaste folds around her, suffered her feet to appear reposing on the rock, and lightly pressing the branches of the wild rose which trailed there. On each of them in their virgin nudity there expanded the mystic rose of a bright, golden color.

In front, a girdle—blue as the heavens—was knotted half-way round her body and fell in two long bands reaching within a short distance of her feet. Behind, a white veil fixed around her head and enveloping in its ample folds, her shoulders and the upper part of her arms, descended as far as the hem of her robe.

She wore neither rings, nor necklace, nor diadem,



nor jewels of any description; none of those ornaments with which human vanity has decorated itself in all ages. A chaplet, with beads as white as drops of milk strung on a chain of the golden hue of harvest, hung from her hands, which were fervently clasped. The beads of the chaplet glided one after the other through her fingers. The lips however of this Queen of Virgins, remained motionless. Instead of reciting the rosary, she was perhaps listening in her own heart to the eternal echo of the Angelic Salutation, and to the vast murmur of the invocations coming from the earth.

She was silent; but later her own words, and the miraculous events which we shall have to recount, plainly testified that She was the Immaculate Virgin, the most august and holy Mary, mother of God.

This marvelous apparition gazed on Bernadette, who, in the first shock of amazement, had, as we have already said, sunk down, and without assigning any reason to herself, had suddenly prostrated herself on her knees.

X.

THE child, in the first moment of astonishment, had seized her chaplet, and holding it between her fingers, wished to make the sign of the Cross and carry her hand to her bosom. But she trembled to such a degree that she had not the faculty of raising her arm; it fell powerless on her bended knees.

Nolite timere, "do not fear," said Jesus to his disciples, when he came to them walking on the waves of the sea of Tiberias.

The fixed gaze, and the smile of the incomparable Virgin, seemed to say the same thing to the little, terrified shepherd-girl.

With a grave and sweet gesture, which had the air of an all-powerful benediction for earth and heaven, she herself made the sign of the Cross, as with the view of re-assuring the child. The hand of Bernadette, raising itself by degrees, as if invisibly lifted by Her who is called the Succor of Christians, made the sacred sign at the same moment.

Ego sum : nolite timere. "It is I, be not afraid," said Jesus to his disciples,

The child was no longer afraid. Dazzled, fascinated, having nevertheless occasional doubts about herself, and rubbing her eyes, her gaze constantly attracted by this celestial apparition, she humbly recited her chaplet: "I believe in God: Hail, Mary, full of Grace——"

At the moment of her closing it by singing, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost," etc., etc., the Virgin, so radiant with light, all at once disappeared, and doubtless re-entered the eternal Heavens, the abode of the Holy Trinity.

Bernadette experienced the feeling of one descending or falling from a great height. She glanced around her. The Gave was pursuing its murmuring course over the pebbles and broken rocks; but its murmur seemed to her hoarser than before, the waters more sombre, the landscape dull, and the light of the sun even not so clear. Before her were extended the Rocks of Massabielle, beneath which her companions were busily occupied in gathering morsels of wood. Above the Grotto, the niche

where the wild rose trailed its branches was always open; but nothing unwonted appeared about it. There remained in it no trace of the divine visit, and it was no longer the Gate of Heaven.

XI.

THE scene just recounted had lasted about a quarter of an hour: not that Bernadette was conscious of the exact lapse of time, but she was enabled to compute it by the fact of her having been able to recite the five decades of her chaplet.

Bernadette being completely restored to herself, finished taking off her shoes and stockings, and fording the little stream, rejoined her companions. Absorbed as she was with the thought of what she had just seen, she no longer feared the coldness of the water. All the childish faculties of the humble little girl were concentrated to the end of turning over and over again in her heart the remembrance of this unheard of vision.

Jeanne and Marie had observed her falling on her knees and engaged in prayer; but this, thank God, is not an event of rare occurrence among the children of the Mountain, and being occupied in their task, they had not paid any attention to the circumstance.

Bernadette was surprised at the complete calmness of her sister and Jeanne, who having just then completed their work, had entered the Grotto and had commenced to play as if nothing extraordinary had taken place.

"Have you seen nothing?" asked she. They then remarked that she appeared agitated and excited.

"No," they replied. "Have you seen anything?"

Whether the youthful Seer feared to profane what so entirely filled her mind, by repeating it, or wished to digest it in silence, or was restrained by some feeling of timidity, it is difficult to say; but she obeyed that seemingly instinctive necessity of humble minds to conceal, as if a treasure, the peculiar graces with which God has favored them.

"If you have seen nothing," she rejoined, "I have nothing to tell you."

The little fagots were soon arranged and the three girls started on their return to Lourdes.

Bernadette, however, had not been able to dissimulate the troubled state of her mind. While on the way home, Marie and Jeanne urged her to tell them what she had seen. The little shepherd-girl gave way to their entreaties, having previously exacted a promise of secrecy.

"I have seen," she said, "something clothed in white;" and she described to them, in the best language she could, her marvelous vision.

"Now you know what I have seen," she said at the termination of her narration; "but I beg of you not to say anything about it."

Marie and Jeanne had no doubts on the subject. The soul, in its first purity and innocence, is naturally prone to belief, and doubt is not the fault of simple childhood. Beside, the touching and sincere accents of Bernadette, who was still agitated and deeply impressed by what she had seen, swayed them irresistibly. Marie and Jeanne did not doubt, but they were terrified. The children of the poor are always timid. This may be easily ex-

plained, from the fact that suffering reaches them from all quarters.

"It is, perhaps, something to do us harm," they observed. "Do not let us go there again, Bernadette."

The confidantes of the little shepherd-girl had scarcely reached home when they found themselves unable to keep the secret any longer. Marie related all the circumstances to her mother.

"It is all nonsense," said the mother. "What is this your sister tells me?" she continued, interrogating Bernadette.

The latter re-commenced her narration and her mother shrugged her shoulders.

"You are deceived. It was nothing at all. You fancied you saw something and have seen nothing. It is mere folly and nonsense."

Bernadette persisted in what she had said.

"At all events," rejoined the mother, "do not go there any more. I forbid you to do so."

This prohibition weighed heavily on the heart of Bernadette; for since the Apparition had vanished, it had been her greatest wish to see it again. However, she submitted and made no reply.

XII

Two days, the Wednesday and Thursday passed away. This extraordinary event was never for a moment absent from the thoughts of Bernadette, and formed the constant subject of her conversations with her sister Marie, Jeanne and some other children. The remembrance of the celestial Vision in all its sweetness, was still in the depths of Ber-

nadette's soul. A passion—if we may use a word so often profaned to designate so pure a sentiment—had sprung up in the heart of the innocent little girl: the ardent desire of again seeing the incomparable Lady. The name of “Lady,” was the one she had given her in her rustic language. However, when any one asked her whether this Apparition bore any resemblance to any lady she might see in the street or in the church, to any one of those celebrated for their exceeding beauty throughout the country, she shook her head and smiled sweetly:

“Nothing of all this gives you any idea of it,” she answered. “The beauty she possesses is not to be expressed by language.”

It was, therefore, her great desire to see her once more. The minds of the other children were divided between fear and curiosity.

XIII.

THE sun rose brightly on the Sunday morning, and the weather was splendid. There are often in the valleys of the Pyrenees, days warm and mild, like those of spring, which seem to have strayed into the lap of winter.

On returning from Mass, Bernadette begged her sister Marie, Jeanne and some other girls, to urge her mother to remove her prohibition and to permit them to re-visit the Rocks of Massabielle.

“Perhaps it is something wicked,” said the children.

Bernadette replied that she could not believe such to be the case, as she had never seen a countenance of such marvelous goodness.

"At all events," rejoined the little girls, who, being better educated than the poor shepherd-girl of Bartrès, knew a little of the catechism—"at all events, you must throw some holy water over it. If it is the Devil, he will depart. You shall say to it, if you come on the part of God, approach; if you come from the Devil, depart."

This was not precisely the formulary for exorcism; but in point of fact these little theologians of Lourdes reasoned on the case with as much prudence and discretion as any Doctor in the Sorbonne.

It was therefore carried in this youthful council, to take some holy water with them. Besides, in consequence of all these conversations, a certain amount of apprehension had entered the mind of Bernadette.

Nothing remained now but to obtain permission. The children demanded this in a body after the mid-day repast. The mother was at first unwilling to grant their request, alleging that as the Gave flowed by and washed the Rocks of Massabielle, their going there might be attended with danger; that the hour of Vespers—which they must on no account miss—was near at hand, and that all this story was childish. But we know how difficult it is to resist the prayers and entreaties of a troop of children. All promised prudence, expedition and good behavior, and the Mother ended by giving way.

The little group proceeded to the Church and devoted a few moments to prayer. One of Bernadette's companions had brought with her a pint bottle which was duly filled with holy water.

On their first arrival at the Grotto, there was no manifestation of any kind.

"Let us pray," said Bernadette, "and recite the chaplet."

The children accordingly knelt down, and commenced to recite the Rosary.

All at once the countenance of Bernadette appeared to be transfigured, and was so in reality. An extraordinary emotion was depicted on her countenance, and her glance, more brilliant than usual, seemed to inhale a divine light.

The marvelous apparition had just become manifest to her eyes; her feet resting on the rock, and clothed as on the former occasion.

"Look!" she said; "she is there."

Alas! the sight of the other children was not miraculously released, as was her own, from the veil of flesh which hinders us from distinguishing spiritualized bodies. The little girls perceived naught but the solitary rock and the branches of the wild rose which descended in a thousand wild arabesques to the base of the mysterious niche, in which Bernadette contemplated an unknown Being.

However, the expression of Bernadette's countenance was of such a nature, as to leave no room for doubt. One of the girls placed the bottle of holy water in the hands of the youthful Seer.

Then Bernadette, remembering the promise she had made, rose, and shaking the little bottle briskly several times, sprinkled the marvelous Lady, who stood, graciously, a few paces in front of her in the interior of the niche.

"If you come on the part of God, approach," said Bernadette.

At these words and actions of the child, the Virgin bowed several times and advanced almost to the edge of the rock. She appeared to smile at the precautions and hostile weapons of Bernadette, and her countenance lighted up at the sacred name of God.

"If you come on the part of God, draw near," repeated Bernadette.

But, when she observed her beauty so gloriously brilliant and so resplendent with celestial goodness, she felt her heart fail her at the moment of adding—"If you come on the part of the Devil, depart." These words which had been dictated to her, appeared monstrous in the presence of this incomparable Being, and they fled forever from her thought without having mounted to her lips.

She prostrated herself afresh and continued to recite the chaplet, to which the Virgin appeared to listen as her own beads glided through her fingers.

At the close of this prayer the Apparition vanished.

XIV.

ON her way back to Lourdes, Bernadette was filled with joy. She pondered in the depth of her soul on these strikingly extraordinary events. Her companions experienced a kind of vague terror. The transfiguration of Bernadette's countenance had proved to them the reality of a supernatural apparition. Everything that exceeds nature is a source of terror to it. "Depart from us, Lord, lest we should die," was the exclamation of the Jews in the Old Testament.

"We are afraid, Bernadette. Let us not return

here again. Perhaps what you have seen comes to do us harm," said her timid companions to the youthful Seer.

The children returned, according to promise, in time for Vespers. When the office was over, the fineness of the weather attracted many of the inhabitants to prolong their walk as they chatted together, enjoying the last rays of the sun, so mild in these splendid winter days. The story of the little girls circulated here and there among these various groups. By this means, a rumor of these strange events began to be spread abroad in the town. The report, which at first had only agitated a humble knot of children, grew rapidly in proportion like a wave, and penetrated from one to another into the masses of the population. The quarriers, very numerous in that part of the country, the seamstresses, the artisans, the peasants, the female servants, the nurses, the poorer classes in general, talked of this asserted apparition among themselves—some believing, others disputing it; some only laughing at it, while many exaggerated it. With one or two exceptions, the *bourgeoisie* did not even take the trouble of thinking for a moment about such childish stories.

Singularly enough, Bernadette's father and mother, though fully convinced of their child's sincerity, regarded the Apparition as an illusion.

"She is but a child," they said. "She fancied she saw something, but she has not seen anything. It is only the imagination of a young girl."

However, the extraordinary preciseness of Bernadette's story puzzled them. At times, carried away by the earnestness of their daughter, they felt

themselves shaken in their incredulity. Much as they wished her not to return to the Grotto, they did not venture actually to forbid her doing so.

However, she did not return there until the following Thursday.

XV.

DURING the first days of the week, many persons of the lower classes came to the house of the 'Soubereux' to put questions to Bernadette. The child's answers were clear and precise. She might possibly be laboring under an illusion, but no one could see her or hear her speak without being convinced of her good faith. Her perfect simplicity, her innocent youth, and the irresistible emphasis of her language, something,—what I know not, in all this,—inspired confidence, and most frequently produced conviction. All those who saw her and conversed with her, were entirely convinced of her veracity, and fully persuaded that something very extraordinary had taken place at the Rocks of Massabielle.

However, the mere declaration of a little ignorant girl could not suffice to establish a fact so entirely out of the ordinary course of things. Stronger proofs were necessary than the word of a child.

Besides, what was the nature of this Apparition, even granting its reality? Was it a spirit of light, or an angel from the abyss? Was it not some soul in a state of suffering wandering to and fro and demanding the prayers of others? Or further, such or such a one who had died long ago in the country in the odor of piety, and whose glory was now be-

ing made manifest? Faith and superstition—each proposed their hypotheses.

Might it have been the funereal ceremonies of Ash-Wednesday which served to incline a young girl and a lady of Lourdes to one of these solutions? Did the glittering whiteness of the attire of the Apparition suggest to their minds the idea of a shroud and a phantom? We know not. The young girl was called Antoinette Peyret, a member of the Congregation of the Children of Mary; the other was Madame Millet.

“It is doubtless some soul from Purgatory which entreats for Masses,” thought they.

And they went in search of Bernadette.

“Ask this Lady who she is and what she wishes,” said they to her. “Let her explain this to you, or, as you may not be able to understand her well, let her commit it so writing, which would be still better.”

Bernadette, who was strongly urged by some internal impulse to re-visit the Grotto, obtained fresh permission from her parents, and the following morning at about six o'clock, with the break of dawn, after having assisted in the church at the half-past five o'clock Mass, she proceeded in the direction of the Grotto, accompanied by Antoinette Peyret and Madame Millet.

XVI

THE repairs of M. de Lafitte's mill had been completed, and the mill-stream restored to its usual channel, so that it was impossible to reach their place of destination by Ile du Chalet, as had been

the case on the former occasion. It was necessary to scale the side of the Espéugnes, taking a miserable road which led to the forest of Lourdes, and then descend by a breakneck path to the Grotto, in the midst of the rocks and steep and sandy declivity of Massabielle.

Bernadette's companions were somewhat afraid on meeting these unexpected difficulties. She herself, on the contrary, on reaching the place felt her heart thrill, and was impatient to arrive at the Grotto. It seemed to her as if some invisible being bore her along and lent her unwonted energy. Though usually so frail, she felt herself strong at that moment. Her step became so rapid in ascending the hill, that Antoinette and Madame Millet, strong and young as they were, experienced some difficulty in following her. Her asthma which usually obliged her to walk slowly, seemed for the moment to have disappeared. She was neither out of breath nor tired when she reached the summit. While her companions were bathed with perspiration, her visage was calm and tranquil. She descended the rocks, though for the first time in her life, with the same ease and activity, being conscious as it were of some invisible supporter by whom she was guided and sustained. On these almost peaked declivities, in the midst of these rolling stones, on the edge of the abyss, her step was as firm and fearless as if she had been walking on the broad and level surface of a high-road. Madame Millet and Antoinette did not venture to follow her at this, to them, impossible pace, but descended slowly and cautiously, as was indeed necessary in so perilous a path.

Bernadette accordingly reached the Grotto a few

moments before them. She prostrated herself and commenced to recite her chaplet, gazing at the same time on the niche, festooned with the branches of the wild rose, which was still empty.

All at once she uttered a cry. The well-known brilliancy of the aureola began to shed its rays within the cavern. A voice, which called her, became audible. The marvelous apparition stood there once more a few paces above her. The admirable Virgin inclined her head, all-luminous with eternal serenity, toward the child, and with a motion of her hand signed to her to draw near.

Just at this moment Bernadette's two companions, Antoinette and Madame Millet, arrived, after having gone through the most painful exertions. They perceived the features of the child to be in a state of ecstatic transfiguration.

She heard and saw them.

"She is there," she said. "She makes a sign for me to advance."

"Ask her if she is angry at our being with you. Should such be the case, we will retire."

Bernadette regarded the Virgin, invisible to all save herself, listened for a moment and turned again toward her companions.

"You may remain," she answered.

The two women kneeled down by the side of the child and lighted a wax taper which they had brought with them.

It was doubtless the first time since the creation of the world that a light of the kind had shone in this wild spot. This act so simple, which seemed to inaugurate a sanctuary, had in itself a mysterious solemnity.

Under the supposition that the Apparition was divine, this sign of visible adoration, this lowly little flame lighted by two poor country women, would never more be extinguished, but would increase in volume from day to day through the long series of future ages. In vain would the breath of incredulity exhaust itself in efforts, in vain would the storm of persecution arise; this flame, fed by the faith of the people would continue to mount towards the throne of God, steady and inextinguishable. While these rustic hands, doubtless unconscious of the importance of the act, lighted the flame for the first time with so much simplicity in this unknown grotto in which a child was praying, the dawn, first of silvery whiteness, had assumed successively golden and purple tints, and the sun, which despite the clouds, was shortly to inundate the earth with his light, began to appear from behind the crest of the mountains.

Bernadette in an ecstasy of delight contemplated the faultless beauty. *Tota pulchra es, amica mea, et macula non est in te.*

Her companions addressed themselves to Bernadette afresh.

“Advance towards Her since She calls you and makes signs to you. Approach. Demand from Her who she is, and why She comes here? Is it a soul from Purgatory that entreats for prayers and would have Masses said for it? Beg her to write on this piece of paper what She wishes. We are disposed to do all she desires, all that may be necessary for her repose.”

The youthful Seer took the paper, pen and ink handed to her and advanced toward the Apparition,

who seeing her approach encouraged her with a Mother's glance.

However, at each step which the child took, the Apparition drew back by degrees into the interior of the cavern. Bernadette lost sight of her for a moment and entered under the vault of the grotto from below. There, always above her but much nearer in the opening of the niche, she saw again the radiant Virgin.

Bernadette, holding in her hands the writing materials which had just been given her, stood on tip-toe in order to be able to reach with her tiny arms the height where the supernatural Being was standing.

Her two companions also advanced with the object of trying to hear the conversation about to be engaged in. But Bernadette without turning and apparently in obedience to a gesture of the Apparition, signed to them with her hand not to approach. Covered with confusion they retired a little on one side.

"O Lady," said the child, "if you have anything to communicate to me, would you have the kindness to inform me in writing who you are and what you desire?"

The divine Virgin smiled at this simple request. Her lips opened and she spoke.

"There is no occasion," she replied, "to commit to writing what I have to tell you. Only do me the favor to come here every day for fifteen days."

"I promise you this," exclaimed Bernadette.

The Virgin smiled anew and made a sign of being satisfied, thereby showing her entire confidence in

the word of this poor peasant-girl who was but fourteen years old.

She knew that the little shepherd-girl of Bartrès was like those pure children whose fair heads Jesus loved to caress, saying: "Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

She also replied to the promise of Bernadette by a solemn engagement.

"And I," she said, "I promise to render you happy, not in this but in the other world."

Bernadette, without losing sight of the Apparition, returned to her companions.

She remarked that the Virgin while She followed her Herself with Her eyes, suffered Her gaze to remain for upwards of a moment with an expression of kindness on Antoinette Peyret, the unmarried one of the two, who was a member of the Congregation of the Children of Mary. She repeated to them what was passing.

"She is gazing on you at this moment," said the youthful Seer to Antoinette.

The latter was deeply impressed by these words, and since that time has been living on this souvenir.

"Ask Her," said they, "if it would be displeasing to Her if we were to accompany you here every day during the fifteen days?"

Bernadette put the question to the Apparition.

"They may return with you," replied the Virgin, "and others besides. I desire to see many persons here."

In saying these words she disappeared, leaving behind her that luminous brightness which had surrounded her, and which itself vanished by degrees.

On this as on other occasions the child remarked

a peculiarity which seemed to be as it were the law of the aureole with which the Virgin was constantly surrounded.

"When the vision takes place," she said in her way of speaking, "I see the light first and then the 'Lady'; when the vision ceases it is the 'Lady' that disappears first and the light afterwards."



SECOND BOOK.

I.

ON her return to Lourdes, Bernadette had to inform her parents of the promise she had made to the mysterious Lady, and of the fifteen consecutive days in which she was to repair to the Grotto. On the other hand, Antoinette and Madame Millet recounted what had past, the marvelous transfiguration of the child during her ecstasy, the words of the Apparition and the invitation to return during the Quinzaine. The rumor of these strange events spread immediately in every direction, and, being no longer confined to the lower classes, threw the whole society of the country, from very different motives, into the most profound state of agitation. This Thursday, 18th of February, 1858, was market day at Lourdes. As usual, the attendance was numerous, so that, the same evening, the news of Bernadette's visions, whether true or false, was dispersed in the mountains and valleys, at Bagnères, Tarbes, Cautarets, Saint Pé, nay, in all directions in the Department, and in the nearest towns of Béarn. On the morrow, about a hundred persons were assembled at the Grotto at the moment of Bernadette's arrival. The following day, there

were not less than four or five hundred ; and, on Sunday morning, the crowd collected was computed at several thousands.

And yet, what did they see? What did they hear under these wild rocks? Nothing, absolutely nothing, save a poor child praying, who claimed to see, and who claimed to hear. The more apparently insignificant the cause, the more inexplicable, humanly speaking, was the effect.

“It must be,” argued believers, “either that the reflection from on high was really visible on this child, or that the breath of God which stirs up hearts as it wills, had passed over this multitude. *Spiritus ubi vult spirat.*”

An electric current, an irresistible power from which no one could escape, appeared to have roused up the entire population at the word of an ignorant shepherd girl. In the work-shops and yards, in the interior of families, at the parties of the higher classes, among clergy and laymen, at the houses of rich and poor, at the club, in the cafés and hotels, on the squares, in the streets, evening and morning, in public and private, nothing else was talked of. Whether any one sympathized with or was opposed to it, or, without taking part either way was simply curious and inquisitive to learn the truth, there was not a single individual in the country who was not strongly—I had almost said entirely—engrossed in the discussion of these singular events.

Popular instinct had recognized the personality of the Apparition without waiting for her to declare her name. “It is, beyond a doubt, the Holy Virgin,” was repeated by the multitude on every side. In presence of the essentially insignificant author-

ity of a little girl not yet fourteen years of age, who pretended to see and hear what no one around her saw or heard, the philosophers of the place had fair play against Superstition.

This child is not even old enough to take an oath, and her testimony would scarcely be received at any of the tribunals when deposing to the most insignificant fact; and would you believe her, when the question in point is an impossible event, an Apparition? Is it not evidently a farce concocted for the sake of raising money by her own family, or by the clerical party? It only requires two sharp eyes to see through this wretched intrigue. In less than ten minutes any one of us might have seen through it.

Some of those who held this language determined to see Bernadette, to ask her questions and be present at her ecstasies. The child's answers were simple, natural, free from contradictions, and given with an accent of truth which it was impossible to mistake, so as generally to produce the conviction in the most prejudiced minds of her entire sincerity. With regard to her ecstasies, those who had seen at Paris the greatest actresses of our day, agreed that art could not go so far. The supposition of the whole thing being a piece of acting, could not hold out against the evidence of four and twenty hours.

The *Savants*, who at first had permitted the philosophers to decide the point, now took a high tone.

"We know this state perfectly well," they declared. "Nothing is more natural. This little girl is sincere, perfectly sincere in her answers; but she is in a state of hallucination. She fancies she sees, and does not see; she believes she hears, and does not hear. As regards her ecstasies—in which she is

equally sincere—they are not acted nor do they proceed from art. It is a purely medical question. The young Souberous suffers from attacks of a certain malady: she is cataleptic. In a derangement of the brain, complicated with a muscular and nervous agitation, we have a full explanation of the phenomena which makes so much noise among the vulgar. Nothing is more simple.”

The little weekly newspaper of the locality, *Le Lavedan*, an advanced journal which habitually appeared behind its time, deferred its issue a day or two in order to speak of this event, and, in as hostile an article as it could produce, summed up the lofty speculations of philosophy and medicine, elaborated by the clear heads of the place. From that moment—that is to say, from the Friday night and the Saturday—the idea of the whole thing being a piece of acting had been abandoned in face of the clearness of the facts, and the free-thinkers did not return to it any more, as may be proved by all the newspapers then issued.

In conformity with the universal tradition of High Criticism in matters of religion, the excellent editor of the *Lavedan* commenced with a little spice of calumny and insinuated that Bernadette and her companions were thieves.

“Three young children had gone to pick up some branches of trees which had been felled near the gates of the city. These girls, *being surprised in the very act by the proprietor*, fled as quick as their legs could carry them to one of the grottoes, which are contiguous to the forest road of Lourdes.”

The Free-thinkers have always written History in this manner. After this straight-forward action,

which proved his good-will and admirable sense of justice, the editor of the *Lavedan* gave a tolerably correct account of what had taken place at the Rocks of Massabielle. Indeed, the facts were too notorious and had been witnessed by too many to be denied.

"We will not relate," he added, "the innumerable versions which have been given on this subject; we will only say that the young girl goes every morning to pray at the entrance of the Grotto,—a taper in her hand—and escorted by more than five hundred persons. There she may be seen passing from the greatest state of collectedness to a sweet smile, and falling once more into the highest state of ecstasy. Tears escape from her eyes, which are perfectly motionless, and remain constantly fixed on that part of the Grotto where she fancies she sees the Blessed Virgin. We shall make our readers acquainted with the further progress of this adventure, which finds every day new adepts."

Not a word of acting or jugglery. They knew well that this hypothesis fell to the ground on your first conversation with Bernadette, on your first glance at her ecstasy and the tears which momentarily inundated her cheeks. The excellent Editor affected to pity her, in order to induce others to believe that she was an invalid. He never mentioned her without calling her, in accents of gentle compassion, "the poor visionary." "Everything," he said, from the opening of his article, "leads to the supposition that this young girl suffers from an attack of catalepsy."

"Hallucination," "catalepsy," were the two great words in the mouths of the *savants* at Lourdes.

"Be sure of one thing," they often said, "there is no such thing as anything supernatural. Science has abolished it. Science explains everything, and in science alone can you find anything certain. It compares and judges and looks to nothing but facts. The supernatural was all very well in those ignorant ages when the world was brutalized by superstition and unable to observe things accurately; but, in the present day, we defy its being brought forward, for we are here. In the present instance, we have an example of the stupidity of the common people. Because a little girl is out of health, and, when attacked by fever, has all kinds of crotchets in her head, these blockheads loudly proclaim a miracle. Human folly must, indeed, be boundless to see an Apparition in what does not appear, and detect a voice in what is heard by no one. Let this pretended Apparition cause the sun to stand still, like Joshua; let her strike the rock, like Moses, and make water gush from it; let her cure those pronounced incurable; let her, in some way or other, command nature as its mistress—then we will believe. But who does not know that things of this nature never do happen and never have happened."

II.

Such were the observations which were exchanged from morning to night among the sagacious intellects which then represented Medicine and Philosophy at Lourdes.

The greater part of these thinkers had seen enough of Bernadette to establish the fact that she was not acting a part. This satisfied their spirit

of inquiry. From the fact of her evident sincerity, they concluded that she must be either mad or cataleptic. Their strength of mind did not permit them to admit even the possibility of any other explanation. When it was suggested to them to study the fact, to see the child, to go to or to revisit the Grotto, to follow in all their details these surprising phenomena, they shrugged their shoulders, laughed as the so-called philosophers only can laugh, and observed, "We know all this by heart. A crisis of this kind is by no means rare. Before a month is over, this child will be raving mad and probably paralyzed."

There were some, however, who were not satisfied with such superficial reasoning.

"Phenomena of this nature are rare," observed Doctor Dozons, one of the most eminent physicians in the town; "and for my own part I shall not allow this opportunity of examining them carefully to escape. The advocates of the Supernatural cast them so often in the teeth of men of our profession, that I should be wanting in curiosity were I not to study attentively and go to the bottom of this much-vexed question, *de visu* and by personal experience, now that they are produced at the present moment under my very eyes."

M. Dufo, an advocate, and several members of the bar; M. Pougat, president of the Tribunal, and a great number of other persons, determined to devote themselves, during the fifteen days announced beforehand, to the most scrupulous investigation, and to be as much as possible in the first ranks. The number of observers increased in proportion to the interest excited by the facts.

Some of the medical profession, some *autochthon* Socrates', some local Philosophers, terming themselves Voltaireans to induce others to believe that they had read Voltaire, firmly resisted their own curiosity, and held it a point of honor not to figure among the stupid crowd which was increasing daily in number. As it almost always happens, the grand principle of these fanatics of Free-thinking was not to examine at all. In their view, no fact deserved attention which deranged the inflexible dogmas which they had learned in the *Credo* of their newspaper. From the heights of their infallible wisdom, at their shop-doors, in front of the cafés, or at the windows of the club, these intellects of the highest order smiled with ineffable disdain as they saw pass by the innumerable stream of humanity which was borne along—by I know not what wild spirit of enthusiasm—toward the Grotto.

III.

ALL these facts had naturally made a strong impression on the Clergy of the town; but, with wonderful tact and good sense, they had from the very first assumed the most prudent and reserved attitude.

The Clergy, surprised, like all around them, at the singular event which had so suddenly taken possession of public opinion, were busily engaged in endeavoring to determine its nature. Whereas the Voltaireanism of the place, in the largeness of its ideas, admitted only one solution as possible, the Clergy perceived several. The fact might be natural, in which case it was the result of a fine

piece of acting or of a most singular malady ; but it might be supernatural, and the question to be solved was whether this Supernatural was diabolical or divine. God has his miracles, but the Demon has his prestiges. The clergy were fully aware of all these things, and determined to study extremely carefully the most trifling circumstances of the event in progress. They had, besides, from the first moment, received the rumor of so surprising a fact with the greatest distrust. However, it might possibly be of a divine nature, and ought not therefore to be pronounced upon lightly.

The child, whose name had suddenly become so celebrated in the whole country, was entirely unknown to the priests of the town. Since her return to the house of her parents at Lourdes, a period of fifteen days, she had attended the Catechism, but had not been remarked by the Abbé Pomian, who was employed this year in instructing the children of the parish. He had, however, once or twice asked her questions, but without knowing her name or paying any attention to her outward appearance, lost, as she was, among a crowd of children, and quite unknown, as those who come last generally are.

When the whole population were rushing to the Grotto towards the third day of the Quinzaine, demanded by the mysterious Apparition, the Abbé Pomian, wishing to know by sight the extraordinary child of whom every one was talking, called her by name, to take part in the Catechism, as was his custom, when he wished to put questions to any of his little charges. At the name of Bernadette Soubirous, a little girl, fragile in appearance, and meanly dressed, rose from her seat. The ecclesi-

astic remarked in her only two things—her simplicity and extreme ignorance in all religious matters.

The parish was presided over at that moment by a priest of whom we must furnish a portrait.

The Abbé Peyramale, then verging on his fiftieth year, had been, for the last two years, *curé doyen* of the town and canton of Lourdes. He was, by nature, rough, perhaps somewhat extreme in his love of what was good, but softened by Grace, which still, however, now and then suffered glimpses to escape of the primitive stock, knotty, but in the main good, on which the delicate but powerful hand of God had engrafted the christian and the priest. His natural impetuosity entirely calmed, as far as he was himself concerned, had turned into pure zeal for the house of God.

In the pulpit, his preaching was always apostolical, sometimes harsh ; it persecuted everything of an evil tendency, and no abuse, no moral disorder, from whatever quarter it might proceed, was treated by him with indifference or weakness. Sometimes the society of the place, whose vices or caprices had been lashed by the burning words of its pastor, had exclaimed loudly against him. This had never disturbed him, and, with God's assistance, he had almost always issued victorious from the struggle.

These men with strict ideas of duty are a source of annoyance to many, and they are seldom pardoned for the independence and sincerity of their language. However, the one in question was forgiven ; for when he was seen trudging through the town with his patched and darned cassock, his coarsely-mended shoes and his old, shapeless, three-

cornered hat, every one knew that the money which might have been devoted to his wardrobe was employed in succoring the unfortunate. This priest, austere though he was in morals and severe in doctrine, possessed an inexpressible kindness of heart, and he expended his patrimony in doing good as secretly as he could. But his humility had not succeeded, as he would have wished, in concealing his life of devotedness. The gratitude of the poor had found a voice: besides, in small towns, the private life of an individual is soon exposed to the light of day, and he had become an object of general veneration. You had only to see the way in which his parishioners took off their hats to him as he passed in the street; only to hear the familiar, affectionate and pleased accent with which the poor, sitting on the steps of their door, said, "Good morning Monsieur le Curé!" to divine that a sacred bond, that of good modestly done, united the pastor to his flock. The Free-thinkers said of him, "He is not always agreeable, but he is charitable and does not care for money. He is one of the best of men, in spite of his cassock." Entirely unrestrained in manner, and overflowing with good-humor in private life, never suspecting any evil, and suffering himself even sometimes to be deceived by people who took advantage of his kindness, he was, in his capacity of priest, prudent even to the verge of distrust in whatever regarded the things of his ministry and the eternal interest of Religion. The man might sometimes be encroached upon—the priest never. There are graces attached to a particular state of life.

This eminent priest combined with the heart of

an Apostle good sense of rare strength and a firmness of character which nothing could bend when the Truth was in question. The events of the day could not fail of bringing to light these first-rate qualities. Providence had not acted without design in placing him at this epoch at Lourdes.

The Abbé Peyramale, placing a strong check on his own somewhat sanguine nature, before permitting his Clergy to take a single step or to show themselves at the Grotto, which he did not even visit himself, determined to wait until these events had assumed some definite character—until proofs had been produced one way or other and judgment had been pronounced by ecclesiastical authority,

He appointed some intelligent laymen, on whom he could depend, to repair to the Rocks of Massabielle every time Bernadette and the multitude proceeded thither, and to keep him, day by day and hour by hour, thoroughly acquainted with what was going on. But at the same time that he took proper measures to be informed of every particular, he neglected nothing which might prevent the Clergy from being compromised in this affair, the true nature of which was still a matter of doubt.

“Let us remain quiet,” he said to those who were impatient. “If, on the one hand, we are strictly obliged to examine with extreme attention what is now going on, on the other, common prudence forbids us to mix ourselves up with the crowd which rushes to the grotto chaunting canticles. Let us refrain from appearing there, nor expose ourselves to the risk of consecrating by our presence an imposture or an illusion, or of opposing by a prema-

ture decision and hostile attitude, a work which possibly may come from God."

"As for our going there as mere spectators, the peculiar costume we wear makes that impossible. The people of the neighborhood, seeing a priest in their midst, would naturally form a group around him, in order that he might walk at their head and intone the prayers. Now, should he give way to the pressure of the public, or to his own inconsiderate enthusiasm, and it should be discovered later on that these Apparitions were illusions or lies, it is clear to every one to what extent Religion would be compromised in the person of the Clergy. If they resisted, on the contrary, and later on the work of God became manifest, would not that opposition be attended with the same evil consequences?

"Let us then take no part at present, since we could but compromise God, either in the works which he intends to accomplish or in the sacred Ministry which he has vouchsafed to confide to us."

Some, in the ardor of their zeal, urged some course of action.

"No," he answered them firmly, "we should only be warranted in interfering in the case that some manifest heresy, some superstition or disorder should arise from that quarter. Then only our duty would be clearly traced out by the facts themselves. The fruits proving bad we should judge the tree to be bad, and we ought to hasten to the rescue of our flock on the first symptom of evil. Up to the present moment, nothing of the kind has arisen; on the contrary, the crowd, perfectly recollected, confines itself to praying to the Blessed Virgin, and the piety of the faithful seems ever on the increase.

“Let us then endeavor to wait for the supreme decision which the wisdom of the Bishop shall promulgate touching these events, while we submit ourselves, apart, to a necessary examination.

“If these facts proceed from God, they are in no need of us, and the Almighty will well be able, without our puny aid, to surmount all obstacles and turn every thing to suit his designs.

“If, on the other hand, this work is not from God, He will Himself mark the moment when we ought to interfere and combat in his name. In a word let providence act.”

Such were the profound reasons and considerations of deep wisdom which determined the Abbé Peyramale formally to prohibit all the priests in his jurisdiction from appearing at the Grotto of Massabielle, as also to abstain from going there himself.

Monseigneur Laurence, Bishop of Tarbes, approved highly of this prudent reserve, and extended even to all the priests of his diocese the prohibition of mixing themselves up in any way in the events at Lourdes. When any question respecting the pilgrimage of the Grotto was put to a priest, either at the tribunal of Penance or elsewhere, the answer was determined on beforehand :

“We do not go there ourselves, and are consequently unable to pronounce on these facts with which we are not sufficiently acquainted. But it is plainly allowable for any of the faithful to go there, if such is their pleasure, and examine facts on which the Church has not yet pronounced any decision. Go, or stay away : it is not our business to advise you or dissuade you from doing so—neither to authorize nor to forbid you.”

It was, we must allow, very difficult to maintain such an attitude of strict neutrality : for each priest had to struggle on this occasion not only against the force of public opinion, but further against his own individual desire—and that certainly a legitimate one—to assist in person at the extraordinary things, which were, perhaps, on the point of being accomplished.

This line of conduct, however difficult it might be to keep, was nevertheless observed.

In the midst of whole populations, stirred up all at once like an ocean by a strange unknown blast, and driven towards the mysterious rock where a supernatural Apparition conversed with a child, the entire body of the Clergy, without one single exception, kept aloof and did not make their appearance. God, who was invisibly directing all things, gave his priests the strength necessary not to give way to this unheard of current, and to remain immovable in the bosom of this prodigious movement. This immense withdrawal on the part of the Clergy ought to show manifestly that the head and action of men went for nothing in these events, and that we must seek their cause elsewhere, or to speak more correctly, higher.

IV.

HOWEVER, this was not sufficient. Truth requires to pass through another crucible. It behoves her, without any external support, relying on herself, and herself alone, to resist the great human forces let loose upon her. It is necessary for her to have persecutors, furious enemies and adversa-

ries skilled in laying snares. When Truth passes through such trials, the weak tremble and fear lest the work of God should be overthrown. *Quid timetis, modicæ fidei.* The very men who menace her now are her bulwarks hereafter.

Such furious opponents attest to the eyes of ages, that such a belief has not been established clandestinely or in the shade, but rather in the face of enemies, whose interest it was to see and control everything; they attest to the eyes of ages that its foundations are solid, since so many united efforts were not able to shake them even at the moment when they arose in their original weakness: they attest that its basis is pure, since after examining everything through the magnifying glass of malevolence and hatred, they failed in detecting in it any vice or stain. Enemies are witnesses above suspicion, who in spite of themselves depose, before posterity, in favor of the very thing they would willingly have hindered or destroyed. Consequently, if the Apparitions of the Grotto were the starting-point of a divine work, the hostility of the mighty ones of the world, must necessarily go side by side with the withdrawal of the Clergy.

God had equally provided for this. While the ecclesiastical authority, personified in the Clergy, maintained the wise reserve advised by the Curé of Lourdes, the civil authority was equally preoccupied with the extraordinary movement which was in course of arising in the town and its vicinity, and which, pervading by degrees the whole Department, had already crossed its limits in the direction of Béarn.

Although no disorder had occurred, this class, so

prone to take umbrage, was rendered uneasy by these pilgrimages, these crowds in a state of pious recollection, and this child in a state of ecstasy.

In the name of liberty of conscience, was there no means of preventing these persons from praying, and above all from praying where they liked? Such was the problem which official liberalism began to propose to itself.

The different degrees, M. Dutour, *Procureur Imperial*, M. Duprat, Juge de Paix; the Mayor, the Substitute, the Commissary of Police and many others besides, took and gave the alarm. A miracle in the midst of the 19th Century, going forth all at once without asking permission and without any preliminary authorization, was viewed by some as an intolerable outrage on civilization, a blow against the safety of the state; and it was necessary for the honor of our enlightened epoch that this should be set to rights. The majority of these gentlemen besides, did not believe in the possibility of supernatural manifestations and could not be induced to see anything in it but an imposture or the effects of a malady. At all events, several of them felt themselves instinctively opposed to any event, of whatever nature which could directly or indirectly tend to increase the influence of Religion, against which they were actuated either by blind prejudices or avowed hatred.

Without returning to the reflections which we made a short time since, it is truly a remarkable thing to see that the Supernatural, whenever it appears in the world, constantly encounters, though under different names and aspects, the same opposition, the same indifference, the same fidelity.

With certain shades of distinction, Herod, Caiaphas, Pilate, Joseph of Arimathea, Peter, Thomas, the Holy Women, the open enemy, the coward, the weak, the feeble, the devoted, the sceptic, the timid, the hero, belong to all times.

The Supernatural, more especially, never escapes the hostility of a party more or less considerable of the official world. Only this opposition proceeds sometimes from the master, sometimes from his underlings.

The most intelligent of the little band of the functionaries of Lourdes, at that time, was undoubtedly M. Jacomet, although, in a hierarchic point of view, M. Jacomet was the lowest of all, inasmuch as he filled the humble post of Commissary of Police. He was young, of great sagacity in certain circumstances, and gifted with a facility of speaking not found generally among his peers. His shrewdness was extreme. No one ever more thoroughly understood the genus "Scoundrel." He was wonderfully apt in foiling their tricks, and the anecdotes, on this head, recorded of him are astonishing. He did not understand so well the ways of honest men. Quite at ease in complicated affairs, anything simple troubled him. Truth disconcerted him and excited his suspicions—anything disinterested was an object of distrust to him, and sincerity was a torture to his mind, always on the watch to discover duplicity and evasion. In consequence of this monomania, Sanctity would, doubtless, have appeared to him the most monstrous of impostures, and would have met no mercy at his hands. Such whims are frequently found among men of this profession, their employment habituat-

ing them to ferret out offences and detect crimes. They acquire, in the long run, a remarkably restless and suspicious turn of mind, which inspires them with strokes of genius when they have to do with rogues, and enormous blunders when they have to do with honest people. Though young, M. Jacomet had contracted this strange malady of old police-officers. In fact, he was like those horses of the Pyrenees, which are sure-footed in the winding and stony mountain-paths, but which stumble every two hundred paces on broad, level roads; like those night-birds which can only see in the dark, and which, in broad daylight, dash themselves against the walls and trees.

Perfectly satisfied with himself, he was discontented with his position, to which his intelligence rendered him superior. Hence arose a certain restless pride and an ardent wish to signalize himself. He had more than influence, he had an ascendancy over his superiors, and he affected to treat the *Procureur Imperial* and all the other legal functionaries on a footing of perfect equality. He mixed himself up with everything, domineered everybody, and almost entirely managed the affairs of the town. In all matters regarding the canton of Lourdes, the Prefect of the Department, Baron Massy, only saw through the eyes of Jacomet.

Such was the Commissary of Police, such was the really important personage of Lourdes when the Apparitions at the Grotto of Massabielle took place.

V.

It was the third day of the Quinzaine, the twenty-first of February, the first Sunday in Lent.

Before sunrise, an immense crowd, consisting of several thousand persons, had assembled in front of and all around the Grotto, on the banks of the Gave and in the meadow-island. It was the hour when Bernadette usually came. She arrived enveloped in her white *capulet*, followed by some of her family, her mother or her sister. Her parents had attended during her ecstasy the day before; they had seen her transfigured, and now they believed.

The child passed through the crowd, which respectfully made way for her, simply in a composed and unembarrassed manner; and, without appearing to be conscious of the universal attention she excited, she proceeded, as if she was doing the simplest thing in the world, to kneel down and pray beneath the niche around which the wild rose festooned its branches.

A few moments afterwards, you might have seen her brow light up and become radiant. The blood, however, did not mantle her visage; on the contrary, she grew slightly pale, as if nature somewhat succumbed in presence of the Apparition which manifested itself to her. All her features assumed a lofty and still more lofty expression, and entered, as it were, a superior region, a country of glory, significant of sentiments and things which are not found here below. Her mouth, half-open, was gasping with admiration, and seemed to aspire to heaven. Her eyes, fixed and blissful, contemplated

an invisible beauty, which no one else perceived, but whose presence was felt by all, seen by all, so to say, by reverberation on the countenance of the child. This poor little peasant girl, so ordinary in her habitual state, seemed to have ceased to belong to this earth.

It was the Angel of Innocence, leaving the world for a moment behind and falling in adoration at the moment the eternal gates are opened and the first view of Paradise flashes on the sight.

All those who have seen Bernadette in this state of ecstacy, speak of the sight as of something entirely unparalleled on earth. The impression made upon them is as strong now, after the lapse of ten years, as on the first day.

What is also remarkable, although her attention was entirely absorbed by the contemplation of the Virgin, full of Grace, she was, to a certain degree, conscious of what was passing around her.

At a certain moment her taper went out; she stretched out her hand that the person nearest to her might relight it.

Some one having wished to touch the wild rose with a stick, she eagerly made him a sign to desist, and an expression of fear passed over her countenance.

"I was afraid," she said, afterwards, with simplicity, "that he might have touched the 'Lady' and done her harm."

One of the observers, whose name we have already mentioned, Doctor Dozons, was at her side.

"There is nothing here," he thought, "either of the rigidity of catalepsy or of the unconscious ecstacy of hallucination; it is an extraordinary

fact, of a class entirely unknown to Medical Science."

He took the child's arm and felt her pulse. To this she did not appear to pay any attention. Her pulse was perfectly calm, and beat as regularly as when she was in her ordinary state.

"There is, consequently, no morbid excitement," observed the learned Doctor to himself, more and more unsettled in his views.

At that moment the youthful Seer advanced, on her knees, a few paces forward into the Grotto. The Apparition had removed from her original place, and it was now through the interior opening that Bernadette was able to perceive her.

The glance of the Blessed Virgin seemed, in a moment, to run over the whole earth, after which she fixed it, impregnated with sorrow, on Bernadette, who still remained kneeling.

"What is the matter with you? What must be done?" murmured the child.

"Pray for sinners," replied the Mother of the human race."

On perceiving the eternal serenity of the Blessed Virgin thus veiled with sorrow as with a cloud, the heart of the poor shepherd-girl experienced all at once a feeling of cruel suffering. An inexpressible sorrow spread itself over her features. From her eyes, which remained wide open and constantly fixed on the Apparition, two tears rolled upon her cheeks and staid there without falling.

A ray of joy returned at length to light up her countenance, for the Virgin had herself doubtless turned her glance in the direction of Hope, and had contemplated, in the heart of the Father, the inex-

haustible source of infinite mercy which descends on the world in the name of Jesus, and by the hands of the Church.

It was at this moment that the Apparition disappeared. The Queen of Heaven had just re-entered her kingdom.

The aureole, as was its wont, lingered a few moments, and then became gradually obliterated like a luminous mist which melts and disappears in the air.

The features of Bernadette lost by degrees their lofty expression. It seemed as if she passed from the land of sunshine into that of shade, and the ordinary type of earth resumed possession of that countenance which, but a moment before, had been transfigured.

She was now nothing more than a humble shepherd-girl,—a little peasant,—with nothing outwardly to distinguish her from other children.

The crowd pressed around her, panting for breath, and in an extraordinary state of anxiety, emotion, and pious recollection. We shall have, elsewhere, an opportunity of describing their bearing.

VI.

DURING the whole morning after the Mass, and up to the hour of Vespers, nothing was bruited abroad at Lourdes but these strange events, of which, as might be expected, the most opposite interpretations were given. To those who had seen Bernadette in her state of ecstacy, proof had appeared in a form which they asserted to be irresistible. Some of them illustrated their convictions with not inappropriate comparisons.

“In our valleys the Sun displays itself late, concealed as it is towards the East, by the Peak and the mountain of Ger. But, long before we can see it, we can remark in the West, the reflection of its rays on the sides of the mountains of Bastsurguères, which become resplendent, while we are still in the shade; and then, although we do not actually see the sun, but only the reflection of its rays on the declivities, we boldly assert its presence behind the huge masses of the Ger. “Bastsurguères sees the sun,” we say, “and, were we on the same level as Bastsurguères, we should see it also.” “Well it is precisely the same thing when we gaze on Bernadette lighted up by this invisible Apparition: the certainty is the same, the evidence altogether similar. The countenance of the youthful Seer appears all at once so clear, so transfigured, so dazzling, so impregnated with divine rays, that this marvelous reflection which we perceive gives us full assurance of the existence of the luminous centre which we do not perceive. And, if we had not in ourselves to conceal it from us, a whole mountain of faults, wretchedness, material pre-occupations, and carnal opacity,—if we, also, were on a level with the innocence of childhood, this eternal snow never trodden by human foot, we should see actually, and not merely reflected, the object contemplated by the ravished Bernadette, which, in her state of ecstacy, sheds its rays over her features.”

Reasoning such as this, excellent perhaps in itself, and conclusive for those who had witnessed this unheard-of spectacle, could not satisfy those who had not seen anything. Providence—supposing it really to have taken a part in these proceedings—must,

it would appear, confirm its agency by proofs, which, if not better (for scarcely any one resisted these after having experienced them), should at least be more material, continuous, and, in some measure, more palpable to the senses.

It may be, the profound design of God tended that way; and, that His object in calling together such vast multitudes was to have, at the necessary moment, a host of unobjectionable witnesses.

At the conclusion of Vespers, Bernadette left the church with the rest of the congregation. She was, as you may well imagine, the object of general attention. She was surrounded and overwhelmed with questions. The poor child was distressed by this concourse of people, and, having returned simple answers, endeavored to get through in order to return home.

At that moment, a man in the uniform of the police, a *Sergent de Ville*, or officer of the police, approached her and touched her on the shoulder.

"In the name of the law," said he.

"What do you want with me?" inquired the child.

"I have orders to arrest you and take you with me."

"And where?"

"To the Commissary of Police. Follow me!"

VII.

A THREATENING murmur went through the multitude.

Many of those who were there had, the same morning, seen the humble child transfigured by the

divine ecstasy and illuminated by rays from on high.

For them, this little girl blessed by God had about her something sacred. They thrilled with indignation on seeing the agent of police lay hands on her, and would have interfered on her behalf had not a priest, who at that moment came out of the church, made signs to the crowd to remain quiet.

"Let," he said, "the authorities act as they will."

By a wonderful coincidence, such as is often to be met with in the history of supernatural events, where any one gives himself the trouble, or rather the pleasure of sifting them, the Universal Church had sung that very day, the first Sunday in Lent, those immortal words destined to comfort and console the innocent and the weak in the presence of persecution. "God hath confided thee to the care of His Angels, that they may watch over thee in thy way. They will bear thee up in their hands, lest thy feet should be dashed against, and wounded by the stones in thy path. Trust in him: He will protect thee under the shadow of his wings. His almighty Power shall encompass thee as with an invisible shield. Go boldly! thou shalt crush the Asp and the Serpent under thy feet; the lion and the dragon shall be brought low by thee. 'Because he hath hoped in me,' says the Lord, 'I will deliver him—I will protect him because he hath confessed my name. He shall call on me and I will graciously hear him. I am with him in the day of trouble.'"

The Gospel for the day related how the Saviour of men, eternal type of the just upon earth, had to undergo His temptations; and it gave all the details of his famous struggles against, and victory over

the Evil Spirit, in the solitude of the desert: *Ductus est Jesus in desertum, ut tentaretur a Diabolo.*

Such were the texts so replete with consolation for innocent and persecuted weakness, which the Church had proclaimed; such were the mighty souvenirs which she had revived and the memory of which she celebrated the very day on which, in the depth of an obscure town among the mountains, an agent of the civil power arrested, in the name of the law, an ignorant little girl, in order to conduct her into the presence of the most crafty of the representatives of Authority.

The multitude had followed Bernadette as she was carried off by the official agent, in a great state of excitement and grief. The office of the Commissary of Police was not far off. The *Sergent* entered with the child, and leaving her by herself in the passage, returned to lock and bolt the door.

A moment afterwards, Bernadette was ushered into the presence of M. Jacomet.

An immense crowd remained standing outside.

VIII.

THE highly intelligent man who was about to interrogate Bernadette flattered himself with the idea of obtaining an easy triumph.

He was one of those who obstinately refused the explanation given by the *savants* of the place. He had no faith either in catalepsy or hallucination, or the various illusions of a morbid ecstasy. The particularity of the statements attributed to the child, and the observations made by Dr. Dozons and many other witnesses of the scenes enacted at the Grotto,

seemed to him irreconcilable with such a hypothesis. With regard to the fact itself of the Apparitions, he did not believe, they say, in the possibility of those visions from the other world, and his detective genius, however much it was adapted to track rogues in their breach of the laws, could scarcely perhaps reach so far as to discover God behind a supernatural fact. Being, therefore, fully convinced in his own mind that those apparitions could not but be false, he had resolved, by fair means or foul, to discover the clue to the error, and to render the Free-thinkers in authority at Lourdes or elsewhere, the signal service of branding as an imposture, a supernatural manifestation which had gained popular credit. He had there an admirable opportunity of striking a heavy blow at the pretended authority of all the Visions of past ages, more especially should he succeed in discovering and proving that the Clergy, who so studiously kept aloof in this affair, were secretly directing it and turning it to their own advantage.

Under the supposition that God was *nothing* and man *everything* in this event, the reasoning of M. Jacomet was excellent.

On the contrary supposing that God was *everything* in it and man *nothing*, the unfortunate Commissary of Police was embarking on a most perilous voyage.

In this disposition of mind, M. Jacomet, from the very first day, had caused all the proceedings of Bernadette to be carefully watched, with the view of surprising, if possible, some mysterious communication between the youthful Seer and any member of the Clergy, whether of Lourdes itself or the

neighborhood. He had even, it seems, extended his official zeal so far as to place one of his creatures in the church with orders to keep his eye on the confessional. However, the children who attended the Catechism, were in the habit of going to confession by rotation once a fortnight or once a month, and Bernadette's turn, during those days, had not yet arrived. All his conscientious efforts had therefore failed to discover any complicity in the acts of imposture which were attributed by him to Bernadette. From this he drew the conclusion that she was acting probably alone, without altogether renouncing his suspicions, for the true agent of police is always suspicious, even when he has no proofs. It is this which constitutes his peculiar type and his proper genius.

When Bernadette entered he fixed on her for a moment his sharp and piercing eyes, which he had the wonderful art of impregnating all at once with good-humor and unconstraint. Habituated as he was to take a high tone with every one, he was more than polite with the poor girl of Soubirous, the miller: he was soft and insinuating. He made her take a seat and assumed at the commencement of his interrogatory the benevolent air of a real friend.

"It appears that you are in the habit of seeing a beautiful Lady at the Grotto of Massabielle, my poor child. Tell me all about her."

Just as he had said these words, the door of the apartment had been gently opened and some one had entered. It was M. Estrade, *Receveur des Contributions Indirectes*, a man of importance at Lourdes and one of the most intelligent in the place. This

functionary occupied a portion of the house in which M. Jacomet resided, and having been apprised, by the uproar of the crowd, of the arrival of Bernadette, had naturally felt curious to be present at the interrogatory. He concurred, besides, with M. Jacomet in his ideas on the subject of apparitions, and, like him, believed in some trickery on the part of the child. He used to shrug his shoulders on being offered any other explanation. He considered things of this nature as being so absurd, that he had not even condescended to go to the Grotto to witness the strange scenes reported as taking place there. This philosopher seated himself a little on one side, after having made signs to the Commissary not to interrupt his proceedings. All this passed without Bernadette appearing to pay it any particular attention.

Thus the scene and the dialogue of the two interlocutors obtained a witness.

On hearing the question of M. Jacomet, the child had directed her beautifully innocent glance towards the agent of police, and set about relating in her own language, that is to say in the *patois* of the country, and with a sort of personal timidity which added still more to the truthfulness of her accent, the extraordinary events, with which for some days past, her life had been filled.

M. Jacomet listened to her with deep attention, still affecting an air of good-humor and kindness. From time to time he took notes on a paper which lay before him.

This was remarked by the child but it did not cause her any uneasiness.

When she had finished her relation, the Commis-

sary, with increased earnestness and sweetness of manner, put to her innumerable questions as if his enthusiastic piety was interested beyond measure in such divine wonders. He shaped all his interrogations, one after the other, without any order, in short and hurried phrases, so as not to allow the child any time for reflection.

Bernadette replied to these various questions without any trouble or shadow of hesitation, and with the tranquil composure of a person who is questioned on the aspect of a landscape or a picture immediately under his eyes. Sometimes, in order to make herself understood, she added some imitative gesture, some expressive mimicry, to supply as it were the feebleness of her expressions.

The rapid pen of M. Jacomet had in the meantime noted, as she went along, all the answers which had been given to him.

Then it was that after having attempted in this manner to weary and perplex the mind of the child by entering into such a minute infinity of details — then it was that the formidable agent of police assumed, without passing through any intermediate stage, a menacing and terrible expression of countenance and suddenly changed his tone :

“ You are a liar,” he exclaimed with violence and as if seized suddenly with rage ; “ you are deceiving everybody, and unless you confess the truth at once, I will have you arrested by the Gendarmes.”

Poor Bernadette was as much stupefied at the aspect of this sudden and formidable metamorphosis as if she had felt the icy rings of a serpent suddenly twisting itself among her fingers, instead of the harmless branch of a tree which she had fancied

she had been carrying in her hand. She was stupefied with horror, but, contrary to the deep calculations of Jacomet, she was not agitated. She preserved her tranquillity as if her soul had been sustained by some invisible hand against so unexpected a shock.

The Commissary had risen to his feet with a glance at the door as if to hint that he had only to make a sign to call in the Gendarmes and send the visionary to prison.

"Sir," said Bernadette, with a calm and peaceful firmness, which, in this wretched little peasant-girl had an incomparably simple grandeur, "you may have me arrested by the Gendarmes, but I can only say what I have already said. It is the truth."

"We shall see about that," said the Commissary resuming his seat and judging by a glance of his experienced eye that threats were absolutely powerless on this extraordinary child.

M. Estrade, who had been a silent and impartial witness of the scene described above, was divided between feelings of immense astonishment with which Bernadette's accent of conviction had inspired him, and of admiration, in spite of himself, of the skillful strategy of Jacomet, the aim of which as it was unfolded before him, he thoroughly understood.

This struggle between such strength coupled with craft, and mere childish weakness with no other defensive weapon than simplicity, assumed a totally unexpected character.

Jacomet, however, armed with the notes which he had been taking for the last three quarters of an hour, applied himself to recommencing his inter-

rogatory, but in a different order and in a thousand captious shapes, proceeding always, according to his method, with sudden and rapid questions and demanding immediate answers. He had no doubt of being able by such means to drive the little girl to contradict herself, at least in some of the minor details. Were this done, the imposture was exposed and the game was in his own hands. But he exhausted in vain all the dexterity of his mind in the multiplied evolutions of this subtle manœuvre. In nothing did the child contradict herself, not even in that imperceptible point, that minute *iota* spoken of in the Gospel. To the same questions, in whatever terms proposed, she invariably replied, if not in the same words, at least with the same facts and in the same shade of meaning. M. Jacomet meanwhile held out, if it was only with the object of wearying still more this artless child whom he hoped to find at fault. He turned and twisted her account of the Apparitions into every possible shape, without being able to impair it. He was like a wild beast trying to make an impression with its fangs on a diamond.

“Well,” said he at length to Bernadette, “I am going to draw up the report of your examination, and you shall hear it read.”

He wrote rapidly two or three pages, frequently consulting his notes. He had designedly introduced into certain details some variations of slight importance, as, for instance, the form of the robe and the length or position of the Virgin’s veil. This was a new snare, but it was as useless as all the rest. While he was reading and saying, from time to time, “That is correct is it not?” Bernadette,

as simple and meek as she was unshaken, replied humbly but firmly :

“ No ; I did not say so, but so.”

And she re-established the inexactly-stated particular in its original truth and shade of meaning.

For the most part, Jacomet contested the point.

“ But you did say so ! I wrote it down at the time. You have said so-and-so to several persons in the town,” etc., etc.

“ No,” answered Bernadette ; “ I did not say so, and could not have said so, for it is not true.”

And the Commissary was always obliged to yield to the child's objections.

The modest and invincible self-possession of this little girl was, indeed, most remarkable, and the surprise of M. Estrade, on observing it, increased. Personally Bernadette was, and appeared to be, extremely timid, and her bearing was humble and even somewhat confused before strangers. And yet, in anything touching the reality of the Apparitions, she displayed uncommon force of mind and energy of affirmation. When her testimony to what she had seen was in question, she gave her replies without hesitation and with undisturbed composure. But even then it was easy to divine in her the virgin modesty of a soul which would gladly have concealed itself from the sight of every one.

It was plain to be seen that she triumphed over her habitual timidity solely from respect for the internal truth, of which she was the messenger to mankind, and from love for the “ Lady” who had appeared to her at the Grotto. She needed all the feeling of her office to enable her to surmount the

innate tendency of her nature, which, under any other circumstances, was timid and disliked anything like publicity.

The Commissary betook himself once more to threats.

"If you persist in going to the Grotto, I shall have you put in prison, and you shall not leave this place until you promise to go there no more."

"I have promised to the Vision to go there," observed the child. "And, besides, when the moment arrives, I am urged on by something which comes within me and calls me."

The interrogatory, as we see, verged to a close. It had been long, and could not have lasted less than an hour, at least. Outside, the crowd, not without a feeling of restless impatience, awaited the coming out of the child whom they had seen that very morning transfigured in the light of a divine ecstasy. From the apartment, in which passed the scene which we have just described, might be heard confusedly the cries, words, questions and thousand different noises which serve to form the tumult of a crowd. The uproar seemed to increase and assume a menacing tone. At a certain moment there was a peculiar kind of agitation in the crowd as if some one, whose presence had been greatly desired and long expected, had arrived in the midst of it.

Almost immediately, repeated knocks at the door of the house were heard, but they did not appear to affect the Commissary.

The blows became more violent. The man who struck them shook the door at the same time and

endeavored to force it. Jacomet rose in a state of irritation and went to open it himself.

"You cannot come in here," said he furiously. "What do you want?"

"I want my daughter," answered the miller, Soubirous, effecting his entrance by force, and following the Commissary into the room in which Bernadette was.

The sight of the peaceful countenance of his daughter calmed the anxious agitation of her father, and he once more subsided into a poor man of the humbler class, who could not help trembling in presence of a personage who, notwithstanding his inferior position, was, owing to his activity and intelligence, the most important and formidable man in the district.

Francois Soubirous had taken off his Bearnois *béret* and was twirling it in his hands. As nothing escaped the notice of Jacomet, he saw, at a glance, that the miller was frightened. Resuming his air of good-humor and compassionate pity, he clapped him familiarly on the shoulder.

"Friend Soubirous," said he to him, "take care, mind what you are about. Your daughter is on the eve of getting herself into trouble, and is on the straight road to prison. I am willing not to send her there this time, but only on condition of your forbidding her to return to the Grotto, where she is acting a farce. On the first repetition of the offence, I shall be inflexible, and, besides, you know that the *Procureur Impérial* treats such matters earnestly."

"Since such is your wish, Monsieur Jacomet," answered the poor father, panic-struck, "I will

forbid her to go there and her mother likewise, and, as she has always obeyed us, she will certainly not go there."

"At any rate, if she goes there, and this scandal continues, I shall call you to account as well as her," said the formidable Commissary, resuming his tone of menace and dismissing them by a gesture.

Cries of satisfaction were uttered by the crowd at the moment Bernadette and her father came out. The child then returned home, and the multitude dispersed through the town.

The Commissary of Police and the *Receveur* being left alone, communicated to each other the impressions made on them by this strange interrogatory.

"What firm resolution in her depositions!" exclaimed M. Estrade, who had been struck with profound astonishment.

"What invincible persistence in her falsehood!" replied Jacomet, stupefied at having been vanquished.

"What truth in her accents!" continued the *Receveur*. "Nothing in her language or bearing bore the slightest appearance of contradiction. It is clear she believes she has seen something."

"What artful cunning!" rejoined the Commissary. "In spite of my efforts she never fell into any discrepancy. She has her story at her fingers' ends."

Both the Commissary and M. Estrade persisted in their incredulity regarding the actual fact of the Apparition. But a shade of difference already separated their two negations, and this shade of difference was as a gulf between them. The one

supposed Bernadette to be dexterous in falsehood, the other set her down as sincere in her illusion.

"She is artful!" said the former.

"She is sincere!" observed the latter.

IX.

ALTHOUGH M. Jacomet had been powerless against the simple, precise and uncontradictory answers of Bernadette, he had, nevertheless, gained a decided advantage at the close of this long struggle. He had exceedingly terrified the father of the youthful Seer, and he knew that in that quarter, at least for the time, the odds were in his favor.

François Soubirous was a very good kind of a man, but by no means a hero. Opposed to official authority, he was timid, as the lower classes and the poor usually are. To such, the least embroilment with the law is, owing to their poverty, a terrible misfortune, and they feel themselves utterly powerless to cope with arbitrary power and persecution. He believed, it is true, in the reality of the Apparitions; but as he neither comprehended their nature nor measured their importance, and even felt a certain amount of terror in connection with these extraordinary events, he saw no great inconvenience in setting his face against Bernadette's revisiting the Grotto. He had perhaps some vague fear of displeasing the invisible Lady who was in the habit of manifesting herself to his child, but the fear of irritating a man of flesh and blood, of engaging in a struggle with so formidable a personage as the Commissary came nearer home to him and acted much more powerfully on his mind.

"You see that all these gentlemen of the place are against us," he observed to Bernadette, "and if you return to the Grotto, M. Jacomet, who is master here, will put both of us in prison. Do not go there any more."

"Father," said Bernadette, "when I go there, it is not altogether of myself. At a certain moment there is something in me which calls me and attracts me to the place."

"Be this as it may," rejoined her Father, "I forbid you positively to go there again. You will surely not disobey me for the first time in your life."

The poor child, thus placed in a dilemma between the promise she had made to the Apparition and the express prohibition of her father's authority, replied :

"I will in that case do all in my power to prevent myself going there and to resist the attraction which summons me to the place."

So passed sadly away the evening of the same Sunday which had arisen in the blessed and glorious splendor of ecstasy.

X.

THE next morning, Monday the 22nd of February, when the usual hour for the Apparition arrived, the crowd waiting for the youthful Seer on the banks of the Gave saw no signs of her coming. Her parents had sent her at sun-rise to the school, and Bernadette deeming it her duty to obey, had repaired thither with a heavy heart.

The Sisters, whose duties combining charity and

the instruction of children, to which may perhaps be also added the recommendations of the Curé of Lourdes, detained them at the Hospital or the School, had never witnessed the ecstasies of Bernadette and placed no faith in the Apparitions.

Besides, in matters of this nature, if the common people sometimes exhibit too much credulity, it is a fact—and the phenomenon, however surprising it appears at first, is indisputable—that Ecclesiastics and Religious of both sexes are very sceptical and loath to believe, and that, while admitting theoretically the possibility of such divine manifestations, they often demand a severity of proof which may be regarded as excessive. The Sisters accordingly, added their formal interdiction to that of Bernadette's parents, telling her that all these visions were destitute of reality, and that either her brain was affected or she was guilty of falsehoods. One of them suspecting an imposture in things of so grave and sacred a nature, displayed much severity and treated the whole affair as a piece of trickery.

“Naughty child,” said she to her, “this a pretty Carnival you are making in the holy season of Lent.”

Other persons who saw her during the hours of recreation, accused her of wishing to pass herself off as a saint, and of making sport of sacred things. The taunts of some of the children at the school were added to the bitter reproaches and humiliations with which she was overwhelmed.

It was the will of God to try Bernadette. Having on the preceding days inundated her with consolation, He intended, in His wisdom, to leave her for a certain reason in a state of complete abandon-

ment, a prey to raileries and insults, and to bring her in contact, alone and deserted as she was, with the hostility of all those by whom she was surrounded.

The unfortunate little girl suffered cruelly, not only from these external contrarieties, but perhaps still more from the internal anguish of her mind.

This childish shepherd-girl, unacquainted hitherto in her short life with any thing but physical evils, was now entering on a higher path and was beginning to experience tortures and distractions of another nature. On the one hand, she was unwilling to disobey the authority of her father or of the Sisters: while on the other, she could not endure the thought of failing in the promise she had made to the divine Apparition at the Grotto. A cruel struggle ensued in her young soul, hitherto so peaceful. It seemed to her as if she was oscillating hopelessly between two abysses equally fatal. To go to the Grotto was a sin against her father, not to go there was a sin against the vision which had come from on high. In either case, in her own point of view, it was evidently a sin against God. And yet, situated as she was, she must choose between the two; there was no middle course and it was impossible to avoid so fatal a choice. It is true, as we are informed by the Gospel, that what is impossible to man is possible to God. The morning passed away in distress of this nature, which was rendered the more painful and distracting from the fact of its arriving in a soul entirely fresh, at an age, habitually calm and pure, when impressions take such deep root and when the delicate fibres of the heart have not yet been rendered

callous by long acquaintance with human suffering.

Towards the middle of the day the children returned home for a few moments to partake of their frugal meal.

Bernadette, her soul crushed between the two alternatives presented by her irremediable situation, walked slowly towards her home. From the tower of the Church at Lourdes the mid-day Angelus had just sounded.

At that moment an unaccountable power took possession of her all at once, acting not on her mind but her body, as an invisible arm might have done, and, driving her out of the road she was taking, forced her irresistibly in the direction of the path which lay on her right. She was impelled by it, seemingly, in the same way as a leaf, lying on the ground, is hurried along by the imperious blast of the wind. She could no more prevent herself advancing than if she had been placed suddenly on a most rapid descent. Her whole physical being was dragged towards the Grotto, to which this path led. She could not but walk, she was even obliged to run.

And yet the movement by which she was carried along was neither violent nor rough. It was irresistible; but it had nothing in it harsh or shocking to her who was under its control; on the contrary, it was supreme force co-existing with supreme mildness. The almighty hand rendered itself as soft as that of a mother, as if it had feared to injure so frail a child.

Providence, therefore, which directs all things, had solved the insoluble problem. The child, sub-

mitting to the will of her father, was not going to the Grotto, where her heart yearned to be; and yet carried away forcibly by the Angel of the Lord, she arrived there notwithstanding, thus fulfilling her promise to the Virgin without having willfully disobeyed the paternal command.

Such phenomena have been remarked more than once in the life of certain souls, whose deep purity has been pleasing to the heart of God. Saint Philip Neri, Saint Ida of Louvain, Saint Joseph of Cupertino, Saint Rose of Lima experienced impulses of a similar or analogous nature.

The humble heart of the child, bruised and deserted, began already to smile with hope in proportion as her steps approached the Grotto.

"There," said she to herself "I shall see the beloved Apparition once more; there I shall be consoled for everything—there I shall contemplate that beautiful countenance, the sight of which ravishes me with happiness. Boundless joy will ere long succeed these cruel sorrows, for the Lady will never desert me."

Owing to her inexperience she was not aware that the Spirit of God breathes where it wills.

XI.

SHORTLY before Bernadette's arrival at the Grotto, the mysterious power which had borne her along seemed to be diminished, if not to have altogether ceased. She walked slower, and felt a degree of fatigue which was unusual to her; for this was precisely the spot where, on other days, an invisible power seemed at one and the same time to draw her

towards the Grotto and support her in the exertion of walking. On that day, she did not experience either this secret attraction or mysterious support. She had been *driven* towards the Grotto, but she had not been *attracted* towards it. The power, which had seized her, had marked out to her the path of duty and shown that, above all things, she must obey and keep the promise she had given to the Apparition; but, she had not, as on former occasions, heard the interior Voice and experienced the all-powerful attraction. Any one accustomed to the analysis of mental feelings will appreciate these shades of difference which are more easily understood than expressed.

Although the vast majority of the multitude which had remained all the morning in the vain expectation of seeing Bernadette arrive had dispersed, there was still at that moment a considerable crowd assembled in front of the Rocks of Massabielle. Some had come there to pray—others actuated by mere curiosity. Many of these, having from a distance observed Bernadette walking in that direction, had rushed to the spot and reached it simultaneously with her.

The child, according to her usual habit, knelt down humbly and began to recite her chaplet, keeping her eyes fixed on the opening festooned with moss and wild branches where the celestial Vision had, already six times, deigned to appear.

The crowd wrapped in attention, curious, collected and breathing thick with the intensity of their feelings, expected every moment to see the countenance of the child become radiant and indicate by

its lustre that the superhuman Being was standing before her.

A considerable period of time elapsed in this way.

Bernadette prayed fervently, but no portion of her motionless features was lighted up from the divine reflection. The marvelous Vision did not manifest herself to her eyes, and the child was not heard when she earnestly besought the realization of her hopes.

Heaven, like earth, seemed to abandon her and to remain as hard to her prayer and her tears, as the rocks of marble before which her knees were bent.

Of all the trials to which she had been exposed since the previous evening this was the most cruel, and her cup of bitterness was full to overflowing.

"Why hast thou disappeared?" thought the child, "and why dost thou abandon me?"

The marvelous Being seemed herself in fact to reject her also, and by ceasing to manifest herself to her, to justify those who opposed her and leave the victory in the hands of her enemies.

The crowd was disconcerted and interrogated poor Bernadette. Those around her asked her a thousand questions.

"To-day," replied the child, her eyes red with tears, "the 'Lady' has not appeared to me. I have not seen any thing."

"You must now be convinced," said some, "that it was an illusion, my poor little girl, and that there has never been anything; it was merely your fancy."

"In fact," added others, "if the Lady appeared

yesterday, why should she not have appeared to-day?"

"On the other days, I saw her as plainly as I now see you," said the child; "and we conversed together. But to-day, she is no longer there, and why it is so, I know not."

"Pshaw!" rejoined a Sceptic, "the Commissary of Police has succeeded, and you will see an end of all this."

De par le roi, défense à Dieu
De faire miracle en ce lieu.

Believers who happened to be there were troubled in heart, and did not know what to say.

As to Bernadette, sure as she was of herself and of the past, not a shadow of doubt flitted across her mind. She was, however, profoundly mournful, and shed tears and prayed on regaining her father's house.

She attributed the absence of the Apparition to some feeling of dissatisfaction. "Could I have committed any fault?" she asked herself. But her conscience did not reply to her with any reproach. Meanwhile, her feeling of enthusiasm towards the divine Vision, whom she evidently longed to contemplate, was one of redoubled fervor. She sought in the simplicity of her soul what measure she could take to see her again, and she discovered none. She felt her utter absence of power to evoke this immaculate Beauty which had appeared to her, and turning her heart to God, she wept, not knowing that to weep is to pray.

There remained, however, a secret hope in the innermost depths of her sorrowing soul, and some

rare rays of joys, piercing here and there all these sombre clouds, passed at intervals over her heart, strengthening her faith in the divine Apparition, which she never ceased to love and in which she believed, although it was no longer presented to her sight. And yet, doubtless, the poor and ignorant child did not and could not know the meaning of the words which were being chanted at that moment in the Epistle of the Mass: "Ye shall rejoice in God, should it be necessary for you to be grieved with divers trials, to the end that, thus strengthened, your faith infinitely more precious than gold (which is also tried by fire), may turn into praise, into glory, and into honor for the manifestation of Jesus Christ, *Him whom ye love always, although ye have not seen Him; Him, in whom ye believe, although ye see him not now; and, for the very reason that ye thus believe, ye shall be crowned with indescribable and glorious joy.*"

In the same way she had no presentiment of the event which was on the eve of being accomplished, and she was unable, humble peasant girl as she was, either to know or to apply to the Rock of Massabielle those words which the Priests of the entire Universe pronounced that very day in the Gospel for the Mass,—"*Super hanc petram ædificabo Ecclesiam meam,*" "On this rock I will build my Church." She did not divine that very shortly, that is to say, on the morrow of these hours passed in bitter tears, she would herself announce prophetically, and demand, in the name of the Apparition, the erection of a temple on those lonely rocks.

All these things were hidden in the unfathomable obscurity of the future.

"Where do you come from?" said her father to her, the moment she came in.

She related to them what had just happened.

"And you say," continued her parents, "that some power carried you along in spite of yourself?"

"Yes," answered Bernadette.

"That is true," they thought to themselves, "for this child has never told a falsehood."

Bernadette's father reflected for some moments. It seemed as if there was a kind of struggle going on within his mind. At length he raised his head and seemed to arrive at a definite resolution.

"Well," he rejoined, "since it is so, since some superior power has dragged you there, I no longer forbid you to go to the Grotto, and leave you free to do as you like."

An expression of joy of the purest and most lovely kind lighted up Bernadette's countenance.

Neither the miller nor his wife had taken any objection to the absence of the Apparition on that day. Perhaps, in the bottom of their hearts, they attributed its cause to the opposition they had offered, from fear of the civil power, to superhuman commands.

XII.

WHAT we have just related had taken place in the afternoon, and a rumor of it had rapidly spread through the town. The sudden interruption of the supernatural Apparitions gave rise to the most opposite comments. Some pretended to derive from the circumstance an unanswerable argument against all the preceding visions; others, on the contrary,

considered it as an additional proof of the child's sincerity.

This irresistible power, said to have carried away Bernadette in spite of herself, elicited shrugs from all the philosophical shoulders in the place, and furnished a subject for interminable *theses* to the respectable *savants*, who explained everything by a perturbation of the nervous system.

The Commissary, seeing that his injunctions had been infringed, and learning, in addition to this, that François Soubirous had removed the prohibition which he had imposed on his daughter, sent for both of them, together with the mother, and renewed his threats. He succeeded in alarming them afresh; but, notwithstanding the terror with which he inspired them, he was greatly surprised at no longer finding in François Soubirous the docility and feebleness of character displayed by him the previous evening.

"Monsieur Jacomet," said the poor man, "Bernadette has never told an untruth, and if God, the Blessed Virgin, or any other Saint calls her, we cannot offer any opposition to them. Put yourself in our place. God would punish us."

"Besides, you say yourself that the Vision has ceased to make its appearance," argued Jacomet, addressing himself to the child. "You have now nothing more to do there."

"I have promised to go there every day during the Quinzaine," replied Bernadette.

"All that is mere stuff!" exclaimed the Commissary, in a tone of exasperation; "and I shall put you all in prison if this girl continues to excite the mob with her grimaces."

“Good God !” said Bernadette. “I go to pray there quite alone. I do not invite any one, and it is not my fault if so many persons precede and follow me. They have, indeed, said that it was the Blessed Virgin, but as for myself, I do not know who it is.”

Accustomed as he was to the quibbles and artful tricks of rogues, the Agent of Police was disconcerted, face to face, with such profound simplicity. His craft, his marvelous shrewdness, his captious questions, his threats, all the cunning or alarming tricks of his calling had been hitherto foiled, by what, at first sight, and even now, appeared to him to be weakness itself. Never, for a single moment, admitting himself to be in the wrong, he could not conceive the reason of his complete failure. Far, then, from ceasing to oppose the free course of things, he resolved to summon other forces to his assistance.

“Really” he exclaimed, stamping on the floor, “this is a mighty stupid business !”

And, permitting the Soubirous to return home, he rushed to the *Procureur Impérial*.

Notwithstanding his horror of superstition, M. Dutour could not find any law in the arsenal of our code to warrant him in treating the youthful Seer as a criminal. She did not summon any one to join her ; she did not derive any pecuniary advantage from her proceedings ; she went to pray on a public piece of ground, open to everybody, and where no law prohibited her from kneeling ; she did not give out that the Apparition uttered anything subversive of, or contrary to, the Government ; the population did not commit the slightest

disorders. On these heads there was evidently no opening for treating her with rigor.

As to prosecuting Bernadette on account of "*fausses nouvelles*," experience had established the fact, that she never contradicted herself in her story, and without a contradiction in her words, admitting of actual proof, it was difficult to establish that she lied, without directly attacking the very principle of supernatural Apparitions—a principle admitted by the Catholic Church in all ages. Without the concurrence, then, of the high authorities of the Magistracy and the State, a mere *Procureur Impérial* could not take upon himself to engage in a conflict of this nature.

To make her, then, amenable to prosecution, it at was least, necessary that Bernadette should contradict herself one day or other; that either she or her parents should derive some profit from the transaction, or that the crowd should be guilty of some disorder.

All this might occur.

To natures of the common order, which usually busy themselves in the lower regions of the official world, it would, doubtless, have only been a step from this hypothesis to the desire of realizing it; from this clear view of things in the minds of those hostile to the fanaticism of the people, to the wish to lay snares for the multitude or the child. But M. Jacomet was a functionary, and the morality of the police is above suspicions of the kind. It is only ill-disposed minds which can believe in the existence of agents who provoke others to infringe the laws.

XIII.

ON the morning of the next day, the crowd was assembled before the Grotto ere the sun had risen. Bernadette repaired to her post with that calm simplicity of manner which remained unchanged amid the threatening hostility of some and the enthusiastic veneration of others. The sorrow and anguish of the previous day had left some traces on her countenance. She still feared she should see the Apparition no more ; and whatever were her hopes, she scarcely dared to give way to them.

She kneeled down with humility, supporting in one hand a taper which she had brought with her, or had been given to her, while, in the other, she held her chaplet.

The weather was calm, and the flame of the taper did not mount more straight to heaven than did the prayer of this soul towards those invisible regions from which the blessed Apparition was wont to descend. Doubtless it must have been so ; for scarcely had the child prostrated herself, when the ineffable Beauty, whose return she was then so ardently invoking, manifested herself to her eyes and transported her with ravishment. The august Sovereign of Paradise gazed on the child of this world with an expression of indescribable tenderness, appearing to love her still more since she had suffered. She, the greatest, the most sublime, the most powerful of created Beings ; She, whose glory swaying all ages and filling eternity, makes all other glory grow pale, or rather disappear ; She, the Daughter, Spouse and Mother of God, seemed to wish to introduce, as it were, a kind of intimacy

and familiarity into the feelings which united her with this little unknown and ignorant child, this lowly shepherd-girl. She addressed her by her name, with that sweet, harmonious voice, the deep charm of which ravishes the ear of the Angels.

"Bernadette," said the divine Mother.

"I am here," replied the child.

"I have to tell you a secret, for you alone, and concerning you alone. Do you promise me never to repeat it to any one in the world?"

"I promise you," said Bernadette.

The dialogue continued, and entered into a profound mystery, which it is neither possible nor allowable for us to fathom.

Whatever it may have been, when this kind of intimacy had been established, the Queen of the eternal Realm gazed on this little girl, who the day before had suffered, and was destined again to suffer, for love of Her; and it pleased Her to choose her as an embassadress to communicate one of Her wishes to mankind.

"And now, my child," said she to Bernadette, "go, go to the Priests and tell them to raise a chapel to me here." And as She pronounced these words the expression of her countenance, her glance and her gesture, seemed to promise that she would pour out there numberless graces.

After these words, she disappeared, and the countenance of Bernadette re-entered into the shade, as the earth at night, when the sun has gradually worn away in the depths of the horizon.

The multitude pressed round the child, who had but just now been transfigured in ecstasy. The hearts of all were touched with emotion. Ques-

tions were showered upon her from all quarters. They did not ask her if the vision had taken place; for at the moment of her ecstasy, all had understood, had been conscious that the Apparition was there; but they wished to know the words which had been uttered. Every one made efforts to approach the child and to hear what she said.

“What did she say to you? What did the Vision say to you?” was a question which escaped from the mouths of all.

“She told me two things—the one for myself alone, the other for the Priests; and I am going to them immediately,” replied Bernadette, who was in haste to take the road to Lourdes in order to deliver her message.

She was astonished on that, as on the preceding days, that every one did not hear the dialogue and see the “Lady.” “The vision speaks loud enough for others to hear,” she said; “and I also speak in my ordinary tone of voice.” In fact, during the ecstasy, every one perceived the child’s lips to move, but that was all; no one could distinguish any words. In this mystic state, the senses are, in a manner, spiritualized, and the realities which strike them are absolutely imperceptible by the gross organs of our fallen nature. Bernadette saw and heard, she spoke herself; and yet no one around her could distinguish the sound of her voice or the form of the Apparition. Was Bernadette, then, mistaken? No; she alone grasped the truth. She alone, aided by spiritual succor and ecstatic grace, perceived momentarily that which escaped the senses of all others; precisely as the astronomer, furnished with the material assistance of his

telescope, contemplates for an instant in the heavens the vast yet distant star which is invisible to the eyes of the vulgar. Outside her state of ecstasy she saw nothing; exactly as the astronomer without the powerful optical instrument, which increases a hundred-fold the power of his eye, is as powerless to discover a hidden star as his next neighbor.

XIV.

WHAT then had this strange and intimate conversation turned upon? What was this peculiar secret of which Bernadette spoke, being at the same time unwilling to explain its nature? What secret could there be between the Mother of the omnipotent Creator of Heaven and Earth and the lowly daughter of the miller Souberois; between this radiant Majesty, the highest that exists after God; between this supreme Queen of the Realms of the Infinite, and the little shepherd girl of the hills of Bartrès? Assuredly we will not attempt to divine it, and we should regard it as a sacrilege to play the eaves-dropper at the gates of Heaven.

We may, however, be allowed to remark the profound and delicate knowledge of the human heart and the maternal wisdom which doubtless prompted the august speaker, in Her interview with Bernadette, to introduce some words of profound secrecy as a prelude to the public mission with which She invested her. Favored in the eyes of all with marvelous Visions, charged to the Priest of the true God with a message from the other world, the soul of this child, up to that moment so peaceful and

solitary, found itself transferred all at once into the midst of innumerable crowds and infinite emotions. She was about to become the mark of the railleries of some, the menaces of others, the contradictions of many, and, what was attended with most danger to herself — of the enthusiastic veneration of a great number. The days were at hand when the multitudes would receive her with acclamation and would vie with each other for the possession of shreds of her garments, as if they were holy relics ; when eminent and illustrious personages would prostrate themselves before her and implore her blessing ; when a magnificent temple would rise and whole populations would flock together in incessant pilgrimages and processions on the faith of her word. And thus it was that this poor child, sprung from the people, was on the point of undergoing the most terrible trial which could assault her humility, — a trial in the course of which she might lose for ever her simplicity, her candor, in short all those modest and sweet virtues which had germinated and blossomed in the bosom of solitude. The very graces she received became a source of fearful danger to her, a danger to which more than once the choicest souls, honored by favor from heaven, have succumbed. St. Paul himself, after his visions, was tempted with pride, and required to be buffeted by the Evil Angel of the flesh in order that he might not exalt himself in his own heart.

The Blessed Virgin willed, however, to protect this little girl whom She loved, without permitting the Evil Angel to approach this lily of purity and innocence, opening its petals to the rays of her grace. What then does a mother when her child is threat-

ened with danger? She clasps it closer and more tenderly to her bosom and says to it *quite low*, in the mystery of a word softly murmured in her ear, "Fear nothing. I am there." And should she be obliged to quit it for a moment and leave it alone, she adds: "I am not going away far. I am here within a few paces of you, and you have but to stretch out your hand to take mine." In the same manner did the Mother of us all act towards Bernadette. At the moment when the world with all its various temptations, and Satan with all his subtle snares were about to strain every nerve to tear the child from Her, She was pleased to unite her more intimately to Herself. She girded her with Her arms and pressed her more energetically to Her heart. She, the Queen of Heaven!—by imparting a secret to the child of earth, She did all that; it was to elevate Bernadette even to the import of Her lips which uttered low tones; it was to found in her childish memory an inaccessible place of refuge, a place of peace and close intimacy which no one could ever succeed in disturbing.

A secret imparted to and heard by another creates the strongest bond of union between two souls. To tell a secret is to give a sure pledge of affectionate fidelity and unreserved confidence; it is to establish a closed sanctuary and as it were a sacred place of meeting between two hearts. When some one of importance, some one infinitely above us in rank, has put us in possession of his secret, we can no longer doubt him. His friendship has by means of this intimate confidence taken up, as it were, its abode in ourselves, and by it he has made himself the guest, or to speak more clearly, the tenant of

our soul. When our thoughts dwell on this secret, we seem in a measure mysteriously pressing his hand and feel as if in his presence.

In like manner a secret imparted by the Virgin to the miller's daughter became for the latter a safeguard on which she might firmly rely. We are not taught this by Theology : it is the study of the human heart which attests its truth,





THIRD BOOK.

I.

ON her arrival in the town Bernadette found that the multitude had streamed there in advance of her in order to observe her next proceedings.

The child passed down the road which traverses Lourdes and served to form its principal street; then stopping in the lower part of the town, before the boundary wall of a rustic garden, she opened its gate, which was painted green, with an open railing, and directed her steps toward the house to which the garden belonged.

The crowd, actuated by a feeling of respect and decorum, did not follow Bernadette, but remained outside.

Humble and simple in appearance, her poor garments patched in many places, her head and shoulders covered with her little white *capulet* of the coarsest material; having in a word no external sign of a mission from on high — with the exception perhaps of the royal mantle of poverty which Jesus Christ himself bore — the messenger of the divine Virgin, who had appeared at the Grotto, had just entered the abode of the venerable man, in whom,

in that out-of-the-way part of the world and for this child, the infallible authority of the Catholic Church was personified.

Although it was still early the Curé of Lourdes had already finished saying his Office.

We know not whether at the moment he was about to hear for the first time the voice of this poor shepherd-girl, so insignificant in the eyes of the flesh and the world, but so great perhaps in the judgment of Heaven, his memory recalled to him the various words he had just pronounced that very day at the *Introit* and *Gradual* of the Mass: "*In medio Ecclesiæ aperuit os ejus Lingua ejus loquitur judicium. Lex Dei ejus in corde ipsius.*" "His lips have spoken in the midst of the Church. His tongue hath said that which is just. The law of God is in his Heart."

The Abbé Peyramale, although, as a faithful and pious son of the Church, fully convinced of the possibility of the Apparitions, experienced some difficulty in believing in the divine reality of this extraordinary Vision which, according to the statement of a child, was making itself manifest on the banks of the Gave, in a grotto, hitherto unknown, of the Rocks of Massabielle. He would doubtless have been convinced by the aspect of her ecstasy; but he had seen nothing of all these things save through the eyes of strangers, and great doubts existed in his mind respecting the reality of the Apparitions in the first place, and secondly as regarded their divine character. The Angel of Darkness truly transforms himself at times into an Angel of Light, and in such matters a certain uneasiness is quite warrantable. Besides he deemed it necessary to

test the sincerity of the youthful Seer himself. He therefore received Bernadette with an expression of mistrust which amounted even to severity.

Although, as we have already stated, he had kept himself aloof from what had been taking place and never in his life spoken to Bernadette—who besides had only recently been added to his flock—she was known to him by sight, some persons having pointed her out to him a day or two before, when she happened to be passing in the street.

“Are you not Bernadette, the daughter of Soubirous?” said he to her, when, having crossed the garden, she presented herself before him.

The eminent priest, whose portrait we have sketched, had all the familiarity of a father with his parishioners, more especially with the little children belonging to his flock. Only on that day was the tone of the Father severe.

“Yes, it is I, Monsieur le Curé,” replied the humble messenger of the Virgin.

“Well, Bernadette, what do you want of me? What are you coming to do here?” he rejoined somewhat harshly, glancing at the same time at the child with an expression of cold reserve and severe scrutiny, eminently calculated to disconcert a soul which might not have much confidence in itself.

“Monsieur le Curé, I come on the part of the ‘Lady’ who appears to me at the Grotto of Massabielle.”

“Ah, yes,” observed the priest, cutting her short, “you pretend to have visions, and you draw everyone after you with your fabrications. What is all

this? What has happened to you within the last few days? What is the meaning of all these strange things you affirm without bringing forward anything in proof of them."

Bernadette was grieved, perhaps in her innocence, surprised at the severe bearing and almost harsh tone assumed by the Curé on receiving her, as he was usually so kind, paternal and mild with his parishioners, more especially with the little ones.

She however related simply all the facts already known to the reader, and though she was heavy at heart, her tale was told without agitation and with the calm self-possession of truth.

This man of God could rise superior to all his personal prejudices. Accustomed from long practice to read the hearts of others, he inwardly admired, while she was speaking, the wonderful character of truthfulness in this little peasant-girl, recounting in her rustic language occurrences of so marvelous a nature. Through her limpid eyes, behind her candid countenance, he perceived the profound innocence of her highly privileged soul. It was impossible for one of his noble and upright nature to hear that accent of truth and survey those pure and harmonious features, so stamped with goodness, without feeling himself inwardly prompted to believe the words of the child, who was then speaking.

The incredulous themselves, as we have already explained, had ceased to arraign the sincerity of the youthful Seer. In her state of ecstasy, Truth from above seemed entirely to illuminate her and enter within her. In her accounts of what had happened, Truth seemed to proceed from her person and

spread its radiance around, filling the hearts of others with new ardor and scattering, like vain clouds, the confused objections of the intellect. This extraordinary child, in short, had around her brow as it were an aureole of sincerity, which was visible to the eyes of pure souls and even to those of an opposite kind, and her words were gifted with the power of expelling doubt.

In spite of M. Peyramale's unbending and decided character, in spite of his strength of mind and intellect, in spite of his profound distrust, his heart was strangely stirred with an emotion which seemed inexplicable by the accents of Bernadette, who was so much spoken of and to whom he was now listening for the first time. This man, notwithstanding his strength, felt himself vanquished by this all-powerful weakness. However, he had too much self-command and was too prudent to allow himself to be carried away by an impression which, after all, might deceive him. As a mere individual, he would probably have said to the child, "I believe you." As Pastor of a vast flock, over which he was placed as the guardian of the truth, he had determined to surrender only to visible and palpable proofs. Not a muscle of his face betrayed his inward agitation. He was able to preserve his harsh and severe expression of countenance towards the child.

"And you do not know the name of this Lady?"

"No," replied Bernadette. "She did not tell me who she was."

"Those who have faith in your statements," rejoined the Priest, "imagine that it is the Blessed Virgin Mary. But are you aware," he added with

a grave and vaguely menacing voice, "that if you falsely pretend to see Her in this Grotto, you are on the high road never to see Her in Heaven? Here, you say you alone see Her. Above, if you lie in this world, others will see Her, and, in punishment of your deception you will be for ever far from Her, for ever in hell."

"I know not whether it is the Blessed Virgin, Monsieur le Curé," replied the child; "but I see the Vision as I now see you, and She speaks to me as you are doing now. And I come to tell you from Her that She wishes a chapel to be erected to Her at the Rocks of Massabielle, where she appears to me."

The Curé gazed on this little girl while she was intimating to him this formal demand with such perfect assurance; and, in spite of his previous emotion, he could not repress a smile at this strange message when taken in connection with the humble and childish appearance of the embassadress from heaven. The emotion of his heart was succeeded by a thought taking possession of his mind that the child was laboring under a delusion, and doubt reassumed the upper hand.

He made Bernadette repeat the very terms employed by the Lady of the Grotto.

"After having confided to me the secret which regards me alone and which I cannot reveal, She added: 'And now go to the Priests and tell them I wish they would erect a chapel to me here.'"

The Priest remained silent for a moment. "After all," he thought, "it is possible!" And this thought that the Mother of God was sending a direct message to himself, a poor unknown priest, filled him

with trouble and agitation. Then he fixed his eyes on the child and asked himself, "What guarantee have I of the truth of this little girl and what is there to prove to me that she is not the sport of some error?"

"If the 'Lady' of whom you speak to me, is really the Queen of Heaven," he replied, "I should be happy to contribute, so far as my means will allow, to the erection of a chapel to Her; but your word is not a certainty. Nothing obliges me to believe you. I do not know who this 'Lady' is, and before busying myself with her wishes, I would know whether she has a right to make this demand. Ask her then to give me some proof of her power."

The window happened to be open and the Priest glancing downward into the garden perceived the arrest of vegetation and the momentary death produced among the plants by the hoar-frosts of winter.

"The Apparition, you tell me, has under its feet a wild rose tree, an eglantine, which grows out of the rock. We are now in the month of February. Tell her from me that if she wishes the Chapel, she may cause the wild rose to blossom." Saying which he dismissed the child.

II.

It was not long before all the details of the conversation, which had taken place between Bernadette and the universally respected Priest who at that time was Curé of the town of Lourdes, became generally known.

"He has given her a sorry reception," observed

the *savants* and philosophers in great glee. "He is too reasonable to believe in the reveries of a child in a state of hallucination and has shown considerable tact in getting himself out of the difficulty. On the one hand, it was impossible for a man of his intelligence and calibre to countenance such follies, while on the other, by opposing to all this a simple denial, he would have had all this fanatical multitude on his back. Instead of falling into this double danger and being taken in the horns of this dilemma, he escapes quietly out of the difficulty, and, without going directly against the popular belief, he very cleverly demands a visible, palpable, and certain proof from the Apparition,—in a word, a Miracle, which is equivalent to an impossibility. He condemns the lie or the illusion to refute themselves, and, with the thorn of a wild rose tree bursts this grand balloon. It is a very happy idea."

Jacomet, M. Dutour and their friends rejoiced at this demand in due form of law notified to the invisible Being of the Grotto. "The Apparition is summoned to produce her passport," was a joke repeated with much laughter in official quarters.

"The wild-rose will blossom," said the firmest among the believers, those who were still under the impression made on them by having witnessed Bernadette in a state of ecstacy.

A great number, believing though they did in the Apparition, were alarmed at this ordeal. The heart of man is after this fashion, and the Centurion, mentioned in the Gospel, spoke for most of us when he said, "*Credo Domine, adjura incredulitatem meam.*" "Lord I believe. Help thou mine unbelief."

Both parties awaited the morrow with impatience.

III.

AMONG those who had been prevented hitherto by their superlative contempt for superstition from mixing themselves with the multitude in order to examine what was going on, several resolved from that time forth to repair to the Grotto, in order to attend officially the popular deception. One of the above was M. Estrade, the *Receveur des Contributions Indirectes*, of whom we have already spoken, and who had been present in M. Jacomet's room, at the interrogatory of the youthful Seer. He had been there, as you will remember, deeply struck with Bernadette's strange accent of sincerity, and being unable to doubt the child's good faith, had attributed her story to the results of a hallucination. At times, however, this first impression fading away, he inclined to the solution of Jacomet, who continued to view the whole affair as an extremely clever piece of acting and a miracle of roguery. M. Estrade's philosophy, however firm in its principles, oscillated between these two explanations, which to his point of view were the only ones possible. His contempt for these mystic extravagances and these impostures went so far that up to that moment, in spite of his secret curiosity, he had made it a point of honor not to go to the Rocks of Massabielle. That day, however, he resolved to repair to them—partly to attend a strange spectacle—partly to observe for himself—and partly out of complaisance and to escort thither his sister, who was much touched with these accounts, and certain

ladies in the neighborhood. He has, himself, related to us his impressions, which are not liable to any suspicions.

“I reached the spot,” he informs us, “much disposed to examine and, to tell the truth, to laugh and enjoy myself thoroughly, expecting as I did to see a kind of farce or some grotesque absurdities. An immense crowd of people massed themselves by degrees round those wild rocks. I wondered at the simplicity of so many blockheads and smiled to myself at the credulity of a crowd of devotees who were kneeling sanctimoniously in front of the rocks. We had come very early in the morning, and thanks to my skill in elbowing the crowd, I had no great difficulty in securing a place in the front ranks. At the usual hour, towards sunrise, Bernadette arrived. I was near to her. I remarked in her childish features that expression of sweetness, innocence and profound tranquillity with which I had been struck some days previously at the residence of the Commissary. She knelt down in a perfectly natural manner, without ostentation or embarrassment, and paying apparently little attention to the crowd which surrounded her, precisely as if she had been alone in a church or in a solitary wood, far from human gaze. She drew out her chaplet and began to pray. Shortly afterwards her look seemed to receive and reflect a strange unknown light; it became fixed and rested wondering, ravished and radiant with happiness on the opening in the rock. I turned my eyes in the same direction, but I saw nothing, absolutely nothing, except the naked branches of the wild-rose. And yet, must I confess it to you? In face of the transfiguration of the

child, all my former prejudices, all my philosophical objections, all my preconceived negations fell at once to the ground and cleared the way for an extraordinary feeling which took possession of me in spite of myself. I had the certitude, the irresistible intuition that a mysterious being was there. My eyes did not see it; but my soul and the souls of the innumerable witnesses of this solemn hour saw it as I did, with the inner light of evidence. Yes, I attest the fact that a divine being was there. Suddenly and completely transfigured Bernadette was no longer Bernadette. It was an Angel from heaven plunged in indescribable ravishment. She had no longer the same countenance; another cast of intelligence, another life, I was going to say another stamp of soul was depicted upon it. She bore no longer any resemblance to herself, and it seemed as if she was a perfectly different person. Her attitude, her slightest gestures, the manner, for instance, in which she made the sign of the Cross, had a nobility, dignity, and grandeur, exceeding anything human. She opened her eyes wide as if insatiable of seeing — wide open and almost motionless; she was afraid, it would seem, to droop her eye-lids and to lose for a single moment the ravishing sight of the marvel she was contemplating. She smiled at that invisible being, and all this conveyed the fullest idea of ecstacy and beatitude. I was not less moved than the rest of the spectators. Like them, I held my breath, in order to endeavor to hear the colloquy which was being carried on between the Vision and the child. The latter listened with an expression of the most profound respect, or to express it better,

of the most absolute adoration mingled with boundless love and the sweetest ravishment. Sometimes a shade of sorrow passed over her countenance, but its habitual expression was one of extreme joy. I observed that, at intervals of a few moments, she ceased to breathe. During the whole of this time she had her chaplet in her hand, sometimes motionless (for ever and anon she seemed to forget it in order to lose herself entirely in the contemplation of the divine Being), sometimes gliding the beads more or less regularly through her fingers. Each of her movements was in perfect harmony with the expression of her countenance, which denoted by turns admiration, prayer and joy. She made from time to time those signs of the Cross, so pious, so noble and so imprinted with power, of which I have just spoken. If the denizens of Heaven make the signs of the Cross, they will assuredly resemble those made by Bernadette in her state of ecstasy. This gesture of the child, restricted as it was, seemed to a certain extent to embrace the Infinite.

“At a certain moment Bernadette quitted the spot where she was praying on the bank of the Gave, and without rising from her knees proceeded to the interior of the Grotto. It is a distance of about forty-five feet. While she was mounting this somewhat abrupt slope, the persons who were on her route, heard her very distinctly pronounce the words ‘Penitence! penitence! penitence!’

“A few moments afterwards she rose and walked in the midst of the crowd towards the town. She had subsided into a poor little tattered girl, who to all appearance had taken no more part in this extraordinary spectacle than those around her.”

However, while all this scene was being enacted the wild rose had not blossomed. Its bare and unattractive branches wound motionless along the rock, and in vain had the multitude awaited the fragrant and charming miracle which had been demanded by the chief pastor of the town.

It was, however, a remarkable circumstance that this fact did not seem to stagger the belief of the faithful; and notwithstanding this apparent protestation on the part of inanimate nature against all supernatural power, many considerable men, and among others the one whose account of the occurrence we have just given, felt themselves converted to belief on witnessing the transfiguration of the youthful Seer.

The crowd, as was always the case, minutely examined the Grotto at the close of the ecstasy, when the child had taken her departure. M. Estrade, like all the rest, explored it with the greatest attention. Every one sought to discover something extraordinary in it, but there was nothing in it to strike the eye. It was an ordinary cavity in a hard rock and its surface was perfectly dry in every direction with the exception of the entrance and that part exposed to the west, when, during wet weather, the wind driving the rain produced a temporary humidity.

IV.

“WELL, have you seen her to-day, and what has she said to you?” demanded the Curé of Lourdes, when Bernadette had presented herself at his house on her return from the Grotto.

"I have seen the Vision," replied the child, "and I said to her 'Monsieur le Curé requests you to furnish him with some proofs, as for instance, to cause the wild rose which is under your feet to blossom, because my word alone does not satisfy the Priests, and they will not rely on me.' Then she smiled but said nothing. Afterwards she bade me pray for sinners, and commanded me to ascend to the bottom of the Grotto. And she cried out three times the words 'Penitence! penitence! penitence!' which I repeated as I dragged myself on my knees as far as the bottom of the Grotto. There she imparted to me a second secret which regards myself alone. Then she disappeared."

"And what have you found at the bottom of the Grotto?"

"I looked after She had disappeared (for as long as She is there my attention is fixed on Her alone and She entirely absorbs me), and saw nothing but the rock, and on the ground a few blades of grass which were growing in the midst of the dust."

The priest remained absorbed in a kind of reverie.

"Let us wait," said he to himself.

The same evening, the Abbé Peyramale related this interview to the *vicaires* of Lourdes and some priests from the neighborhood. They rallied their Dean on the apparent failure of his demand.

"If it is the Blessed Virgin," they said to him, "this smile on the receipt of your request, appears to us as unfavorable for you; and irony from so exalted a quarter strikes us as alarming."

The Curé extricated himself from this view of the question with his usual presence of mind.

"This smile is in my favor," he replied ; "the Blessed Virgin is no scoffer. If I had spoken ill, she would not have smiled, she would have been moved to pity at my plea. She smiled ; therefore she approves."

V.

THERE was certainly some truth in the Abbé Peyramale's sly repartee ; but, perhaps, not so much as he was inclined to think. Surely, if at that moment with his profound sagacity and high-mindedness, he had maturely reflected on the words which the Celestial Vision had pronounced a short time after having smiled, he would have comprehended the meaning of the smile which the poor child, favored though she was with such visions, was unable to interpret.

"To pray for sinners, to do penance, to climb kneeling the steep and difficult slope which leads from the rapid and tumultuous waves of the torrent to the unchangeable rock on which one of the sanctuaries of the Church was to be founded,"—such had been the commands of the Apparition at the close of the child's prayer ; such had been Her answer to the request that She should cause the wild-rose to blossom ; such had been, from Her own mouth, the plain and clear commentary on Her smile. Who does not see after due reflection, the admirable meaning of this symbolic response ?

"And what, even though I am the Mother of the God-Saviour, the Mother of that Jesus who spent his life in doing good and in consoling the afflicted, could they demand nothing from me as a proof of my

power but this idle and frail marvel, which the rays of the sun, who is my Servant, will perform of themselves a few days hence? When a multitude of sinners, indifferent or hostile to the law of God, covers the surface of the globe; when whole nations, either guilty or led astray, quench their thirst at the poisoned stream of this world or at the turbid torrents which rush down to the abyss; when they have need, above all things, to scale on their knees the rugged path which separates the fleeting and troubled life of the flesh from the unchangeable life of the spirit; when the salvation of so many outcasts and the healing of so many sick in soul is the constant study of my maternal heart, am I not to give better proofs of my Power and Goodness than to make roses bloom in the depth of winter? and is it for so trifling an amusement that I appear to a young girl of earth and open my hands full of graces before her?"

Such was, it appears to us, as far as it is permitted to a wretched man to penetrate and interpret things so lofty in their nature, the deep meaning of the smile and the commands by which the Mother of the human race replied to the request of the Pastor of Lourdes. God, more especially in evil and necessitous times, does not condescend to fritter away (if we may use the expression), his omnipotence in vain prodigies which only strike the eye, or in ephemeral wonders which would wither before the close of day and be carried away by the first blast of wind. When it is His will to found aught eternal, He supports it by some eternal proof which future ages will not be able to impair.

What, meanwhile, was the signification of the

command received by Bernadette to scale on her knees the surface of the Grotto until her progress was arrested by the escarpment of the parched rock? No one knew; and, in the presence of that arid rock, no one dreamed that, from the moment the Synagogue had committed self-murder while thinking to slay Jesus, the staff of Moses had passed as an heir-loom to the people of Christ.

The Curé of Lourdes, despite the lofty range of his mind, did not at once see these things which the future was to make so clear. The strong doubts he cherished within him of the reality of the Apparition prevented him from meditating carefully on the various circumstances connected with the scene at the Grotto, and fixing on them that clear glance which he usually threw on the things pertaining to God.

The Free-thinkers of the place, although somewhat disconcerted at the conversions produced that day at the Rocks of Massabielle by the extraordinary splendor of Bernadette's transfiguration, triumphed exceedingly at the check the believers had met with, in regard to the humble and graceful proof which had been demanded by M. Peyramale. They praised the latter even more than they had done on the previous day for having exacted a miracle.

"Jacomet," they said, "was guilty of a blunder in wishing to kill the Apparition: the Curé, with much greater shrewdness, forces her to commit suicide." Incapable of appreciating the loyal simplicity of his impartial wisdom, which, doubtless, demanded some proofs before either believing or rejecting the matter, they attributed to craft what

was really the result of prudence, and detected a snare in the simple prayer of an upright soul which was in quest of truth. As we see, on this occasion, these gentlemen were almost on the point of paying the Curé of Lourdes the high compliment—which he certainly did not deserve—of reckoning him as one of their own number,

VI.

THE honorable M. Jacomet, in the meanwhile, seemed to be annoyed with himself for not having surprised the imposture in the very act, and crushed the growing superstition by his own personal exertions. He racked his brains to guess the answer to the enigma, for he began to see clearly, from the very demand made by the Curé of Lourdes, that the Clergy had nothing to do with the matter. He had, therefore, only the little girl and her parents to deal with. He never for a moment doubted, that somehow or other, he would settle the affair to his satisfaction.

When Bernadette chanced to make her appearance on the street, the crowd eagerly pressed round her: at every step she was stopped by some one, and every one wished to hear from her mouth the details of the Apparitions. Several persons, among others M. Dufo, an advocate and one of the eminent men of the place, sent for her and asked her numerous questions. They did not resist the secret power which the living Truth imparted to her words.

Many persons repaired in the course of the day to the house of the Soubirous to hear Bernadette's account of the affair. She submitted with all sim-

plicity and complaisance to these incessant interrogations, and it was plain that, from that time forth, she considered it her peculiar office and duty to bear witness to all that she had seen and heard.

In a corner of the room in which visitors were received, there was a little shrine adorned with flowers, medals and holy images, and surmounted by a statue of the Virgin, which gave it an appearance of luxury and attested the piety of the family. All the rest of the chamber showed signs of the most wretched destitution; a pallet-bed, a few rickety chairs, and a miserable table, comprised all the furniture of the dwelling in which crowds came to learn the splendid secrets of heaven. The majority of visitors were struck and touched by the sight of such extreme indigence stamped on everything, and could not resist the pleasing temptation of leaving these poor people some present,—some trifling alms. This, however, the child and her parents invariably refused so peremptorily, that they could not press anything on them.

Many among these visitors were strangers to the town. One of the latter came to the house one evening at an hour when the throng of visitors had subided, and there only remained a neighbor or a relation of the family sitting at the fireside. He carefully interrogated Bernadette, desiring her not to omit the slightest detail, and appearing to take an extraordinary interest in the child's narration. Every moment he betrayed his enthusiasm and faith by the most tender exclamations. He congratulated Bernadette on having received so great a favor from heaven, and then compassionated the want of which he saw around him so many marks.

"I am rich," said he; "allow me to assist you."

He placed on the table a purse, which he half opened, showing that it was full of gold.

A flush of indignation mantled Bernadette's countenance.

"I do not wish for anything, Sir," she observed eagerly. "Take it back again."

And she pushed the purse, which had been placed on the table, towards the unknown gentleman.

"It is not for you, my child, it is for your parents, who are in want, and you cannot hinder me from succoring them."

"We do not wish to have anything, nor Bernadette either!" exclaimed her parents.

"You are poor," continued the stranger, insisting in his offer. "I have put you out of your way, and I take an interest in you. Is it from pride that you refuse me?"

"No, Sir; but we do not want anything. Take back your gold."

The unknown took back his purse and left the house, with an expression of much annoyance on his countenance.

Where did this man come from, and who was he? Was he a compassionate benefactor or a crafty tempter? We know not. The police arrangements were so excellent at Lourdes, that perhaps M. Jacomet, more fortunate in this respect than ourselves, knew the secret, and could solve the riddle better than any one else.

If, then, by one of those accidents which sometimes occur in matters of police, the cunning Commissary heard that very evening the details of this scene between Bernadette and this mysterious

stranger, he must have allowed that snares and temptations were as useless against this extraordinary child as captious questions and violent threats had already proved. The difficulties attending the unravelling of this affair increased for this man, who was yet so superlatively shrewd and so expert in merely human matters. If he had been surprised at the complete impossibility of producing the slightest contradiction in Bernadette's recital, he was plunged into a state of absolute stupor by her disinterestedness and the firmness she had displayed in rejecting a purse full of gold.

Such conduct would have been easily explained in the mind of the sagacious Commissary had not the demand of some visible proof, of a miracle, of the impossible blossoming of the wild rose, which the Curé had made, proved, beyond a shadow of doubt, that the Clergy were not lurking behind the youthful Seer. But Bernadette and her parents, *left* to their own resources, poor, in distress, wanting for bread, and still not deriving any profit from the popular enthusiasm and credulity—this was a thing altogether inconceivable.

Had the little girl invented the imposture merely to make herself talked about? But, to say nothing of the fact that there appeared little probability of such an ambition in the mind of a little shepherd-maid, what explanation could be offered for the indefeasible unity of her narration and her disinterestedness, which extended even to the members of her family, who were all extremely poor, and, consequently, sorely tempted to turn the blind credulity of the multitude to their own advantage.

M. Jacomet was not the man to flinch because

the case was attended with some insoluble objections, and he confidently awaited the turn of events, little doubting that a triumph was in store for him, which would only be rendered more glorious from the fact that at first it had been beset with difficulties and obstacles.

VII.

THE night had ended the agitations of so many minds so differently influenced, some believing in the reality of the Apparition, others remaining in a state of doubt, while a certain number persisted in denying the fact.

Day was about to break, and the universal Church, over all the surface of the Globe, was murmuring in the interior of Temples, in the silence of solitary Presbyteries, in the peopled shade of Cloisters, beneath the vaulted roofs of Abbeys, Monasteries and Convents, those words of the Psalmist in the Office of Matins: *Tu es Deus qui facis mirabilia. Notam fecisti in populis virtutem tuam. . . . Viderunt te aquæ Deus, viderunt te aquæ, et imuerient, et turbatæ sunt abyssi.* "Thou art the God who workest marvels. Thou hast shown forth Thy power in the midst of the multitudes. . . . *The waters saw Thee, O Lord, the waters saw Thee,* and they trembled in Thy presence and the depths were troubled."

Barnadette, having arrived before the Rocks of Massabielle, had just knelt down.

An innumerable crowd had preceded her to the Grotto and pressed around her. Although there were there a good number of sceptics, of such as denied the truth of the Apparition, and of others

who came merely from motives of curiosity, a religious silence suddenly prevailed as soon as the child had been perceived. A shudder had passed through the crowd like a shock of electricity. All, by a unanimous instinct, the incredulous as well as believers, had uncovered their heads. Several had kneeled down at the same time as the daughter of the miller.

At that moment the divine Apparition manifested Herself to Bernadette, who was suddenly transported into her marvelous ecstasy. As was always the case, the radiant Virgin stood in the oval excavation of the rock, and her feet rested on the wild rose.

Bernadette contemplated her with an inexpressible sentiment of love, a sentiment sweet and deep, which overflowed her soul with delight, without at all disturbing her mind or causing her to forget she was still upon earth.

The Mother of God loved this innocent child. She wished, by a still closer intimacy, to press her yet more to her bosom ; She wished to strengthen still more the bond which united Her to the humble shepherd-girl, in order that the latter, amid all the agitations of this world, might feel, so to say, every moment, that the Queen of Heaven held her invisibly by the hand.

“ My child,” she said, “ I wish to impart to you, always for you alone, and concerning you alone, a last secret, which, as with the other two, you will never reveal to any one in the world.”

We have explained further back the profound reasons which formed, out of these intimate confidences, the future safeguard of Bernadette, amidst the moral

dangers to which the extraordinary favors, of which she was the object, must inevitably expose her. By this triple secret, the Virgin clothed her messenger, as it were, with armor of three-fold strength against the dangers and temptations of life.

Bernadette, in the exceeding joy of her heart, listened, in the meanwhile, to the ineffable music of that voice so sweet, so maternal, so tender, which, eighteen hundred years ago, had charmed the filial ears of the Infant-God.

"And now," rejoined the Virgin, after a short silence, go and drink from, and wash yourself in the Fountain, and eat of the herb which is growing at its side."

Bernadette, at this word "Fountain," gazed around her. There was, and never had been, any Spring in that spot. The child, without losing sight of the Virgin, betook herself quite naturally towards the Gave, whose tumultuous waters were rushing a few paces from there, across pebbles and broken rocks.

A word and a gesture from the Apparition arrested her in her course.

"Do not go there," said the Virgin; "I have not spoken of drinking from the Gave; go to the Fountain, it is here."

And stretching out Her hand—that delicate yet powerful hand—to which nature submits, She showed with her finger to the child, on the right side of the Grotto, the same parched corner towards which, but the morning before, She had made her ascend on her knees.

Although she saw nothing in the place pointed out to her which appeared to have any connection

with the words of the divine Being, Bernadette obeyed the command of the heavenly Vision. The vaulted roof of the Grotto sloped downwards on this side, and the little girl scrambled on her knees the short distance she had to traverse.

On reaching the end, she did not perceive before her the least appearance of a fountain. On the face of the rock there sprung here and there some tufts of that herb belonging to the Saxifrage family, which is call *la Dorine*.

Whether it was owing to a new sign from the Apparition, or to an inward impulse of her soul, Bernadette, with that simple faith so pleasing to the heart of God, stooped down, and, scratching the ground with her tiny hands, began to scoop out the earth.

The innumerable spectators of this scene, as they neither heard nor saw the Apparition, did not know what to think of this singular operation on the part of the child. Many already began to smile, and to believe in some derangement of the poor shepherd-girl's brain. How little is needed to shake our faith.

All at once the bottom of this little cavity dug by the child became damp. Arriving from unknown depths, across rocks of marble and the bowels of the earth, a mysterious water began to spring up, drop by drop from beneath the hands of Bernadette, and to fill the hollow, about the size of a goblet, which she had just completed.

This water, newly come, mixing itself with the earth broken by Bernadette's hands, formed at first nothing but mud. Three times did Bernadette essay to raise this muddy liquid to her lips; but

three times was her feeling of disgust so strong that she rejected it, feeling she had not the power of swallowing it. However she wished, before everything else, to obey the radiant Apparition who towered over this strange scene; and the fourth time, making a grand effort, she surmounted her repugnance. She drank, she washed herself, and she ate a morsel of the wild plant which grew at the foot of the rock.

At that moment the water of the Spring overleaped the brim of the little reservoir hollowed by the child, and proceeded to flow in a slender stream, more slender, perhaps, than a straw, towards the crowd which was pressing on the front of the Grotto.

This stream was so extremely small that for a long time—until the close, in fact, of that day—the parched earth sucked it up entirely on its passage, and you could only guess its progressive course by the damp line, like a ribbon, which was traced on the ground, and which, increasing in length by degrees, advanced at an extremely slow rate towards the Gave.

When Bernadette had accomplished, as we have related above, all the mandates she had received, the Virgin gazed at her with an expression of satisfaction, and, a moment afterwards, She disappeared from her sight.

The multitude were greatly excited by this prodigy. As soon as Bernadette emerged from her state of ecstasy, all rushed towards the Grotto. Every one wished to see with his own eyes the little hollow from which the water had gushed from beneath the hand of the child. Every one wished to dip

his handkerchief in it and raise a drop of it to his lips. So this infant spring, in consequence of the gradual enlargement of its reservoir by the crumbling in of the earth, assumed, in a short time, the appearance of a puddle of water or of a liquid mass of wet mud. The Spring, however, seemed to increase in volume as water was drawn from it, and the orifice through which it gushed from the depths below became visibly larger.

"It was some water which must have accidentally dripped from the rock during the rainy season, and which, and that, too, accidentally, must have formed a little pool, under the ground which the child has also accidentally discovered," said the *savants* of Lourdes.

And the philosophers remained perfectly satisfied with this explanation.

The next day, the Spring, urged by an unknown power from the mysterious depths, and perceptibly increasing in volume, gushed from the ground more abundantly.

The stream proceeding from it was already about the thickness of your finger. It was, however, still muddy, owing to its struggles in forcing its passage through the earth. It was only at the expiration of a few days that, after having augmented to a certain degree from hour to hour, it ceased to increase, and became perfectly limpid. From that time it gushed from the earth in a jet of considerable magnitude, having almost reached the size of a child's arm.

We must not, however, anticipate events, but continue to follow them, day by day, as we have done hitherto. We will now resume our narrative.

VIII.

PRECISELY at that hour, at the very moment the Spring was gushing softly but irresistibly from beneath the child's hand, in testimony, as it were of the divine intervention, the Philosophers of Lourdes published a new article on the occurrences at the Grotto in the Free-thinking journal of the locality.

The *Lavedan*, a newspaper we have already quoted, had been issued, and was in process of distribution just at the moment of the return of the amazed multitudes from the Rocks of Massabielle.

Neither in this article nor in the preceding one, nor, indeed, in any of the descriptions of the place written at that time, was there the slightest hint of the existence of any Spring at the Grotto. And thus incredulity had paralyzed beforehand the audacious assertion that the Spring had always flowed there, to which the Free-thinkers might, after a certain time, be tempted to have recourse. It was the will of Providence, that, in addition to the testimony of the public, these men should have their own articles, their own printed publications, which their dates rendered authentic and beyond refutation, brought against them. If these beautiful gushing waters, which delight the eye to-day, had been in existence before the 25th of February, before the scene we have just described was enacted, and the orders and indications given by the Virgin to Bernadette in her state of ecstasy, how came it that the editors of the papers, who were always supposed to keep their eyes open, and

whose details were sometimes so minute—how came it that they never saw this copious spring nor ever once mentioned it? We defy the Free-thinkers to produce a single document—we repeat, the words, a single document—which makes any mention of a Spring, or even of any water, before the period when the Virgin commanded and Nature obeyed.

IX.

THE popular emotion had considerably increased. Bernadette, when she passed, was received with acclamation, and the poor child used to return home with all possible speed in order to escape their ovations. This humble soul, which, up to that time, had lived entirely unknown, in silence and solitude, found itself all at once placed in a blaze of light, in the midst of uproar and of the crowd, on the pedestal of fame. This glory, which so many court so eagerly, was to her a martyrdom of the most cruel description. Her most insignificant words were commented on, discussed, admired, rejected, made the subject of scoffs—in a word, abandoned to the different currents of human opinion. It was then she tasted the heartfelt joy of having something she was not to divulge, and of finding, in the three secrets imparted to her by the Virgin, a kind of secluded sanctuary to which her heart might retire with a sense of perfect peace, and refresh itself in the shade of that mystery, and with the charm of its intimate union with the Queen of Heaven.

As we have already remarked, the outburst of

the Fountain had taken place towards sunrise in the presence of a numerous assemblage. It was the 25th of February, the third Thursday of the month, and a great market-day at Tarbes. The news, therefore, of the marvelous occurrence of the morning at the Rocks of Massabielle, was carried to the town by a multitude of eye-witnesses, and before night had been spread through the whole Department, and even as far as the nearest towns of the neighboring departments. The extraordinary movement, which, for the last eight days, had attracted to Lourdes so many pilgrims and others, urged by mere curiosity, was from that moment developed to a most surprising degree.

A great number of visitors came to sleep at Lourdes in order to be on the spot next day; others walked all through the night, and at break of day, the usual hour of Bernadette's arrival, five or six thousand persons, closely packed on the banks of the Gave, the neighboring eminences and the rocks, were encamped in front of the Grotto. The Spring had considerably increased in volume since the previous day.

When the youthful Seer, humble, peaceful and simple in manner in the midst of so much commotion, presented herself in order to pray, the cry of "There is the Saint! There is the Saint!" arose from the vast throng. Several persons sought to touch her garments, regarding as sacred everything pertaining to one so privileged by the Lord.

It was not, however, the will of the Mother of the humble and the lowly that this innocent heart should succumb to the temptation of vain glory, and that Bernadette should, for one moment, be

puffed up with pride on account of the singular favors she had received.

It was well that the child should feel, in the midst of such acclamations, her own nothingness, and realize once more how powerless she was, when left to herself, to evoke the divine Vision. It was in vain she prayed. The superhuman radiancy of ecstasy was not observed diffusing itself over her features; and, when she rose, after her long prayer, she replied, in a tone of sadness to the interrogations showered upon her, that the Vision from on high had not appeared.

X.

THIS absence on the part of the Virgin was, doubtless, intended to maintain Bernadette in a state of humility and in the consciousness of her own nothingness; but, in addition to this, it contained, perhaps, for christians, a high and mysterious precept, the import of which will not escape the attention of souls accustomed to contemplate and admire the secret harmony which exists in works proceeding from God.

If heaven, on that day, had closed itself to the eyes of Bernadette, if the celestial Creator, who used to appear to her in visible flesh, had seemed to vanish for a moment, the Fountain—proof of the reality and power of that superhuman Being—which had sprung forth the day before, and was continually increasing, was visible to the eyes of all, and trickled on the sloping floor of the Grotto in sight of the astonished multitude.

The Vision had withdrawn in order to allow her

work, so to say, to speak. She had withdrawn and remained silent in order to allow an opportunity of speaking to the Church of that country, whose words at the *introit* of the Mass and at the answers of Matins, might serve as a commentary on this singular fountain which had suddenly started into existence from beneath the hand of Bernadette in her state of ecstasy.

While in fact all this was taking place at the Grotto, before the miraculous Spring which had burst forth on the right side of the arid rock, the memory of another Spring—the most illustrious and life-imparting of all those which for the last six thousand years have watered the heritage of Adam—was being celebrated in the diocese of Tarbes, and in several dioceses of France. That day, February the 26th, 1858, being the Friday of the first week in Lent, was the Feast of the Holy Lance, and of the Nails of Our Lord. And the Spring of which we speak and the memory of which was then being glorified in the Office prescribed for the diocese, was the great divine Fountain which the lance of the Roman centurion, piercing the right side of the lifeless body of Christ, had made to flow as a river of life for the regeneration of earth and the salvation of the human race. “Vidi aquam egredientem de templo a latere dextro; et omnes ad quos pervenit aqua ista salvi facti sunt.” “I saw water flowing from the temple on the right side, and all to whom that water came were saved.” Such was the exclamation of the Prophet, when he contemplated the prodigies of the mercy of God in the dim vista of ages. “In that day,” said the priests in the Office of Matins, “there shall be a fountain opened

for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, which shall serve to purify the sinner and all such as are polluted."

By these coincidences, wonderful in themselves and which we urgently beg our readers to verify for themselves in the places pointed out in the note, did the Church of that place reply with dazzling clearness to the innumerable questions proposed around the marvelous Fountain which was spouting forth its waters on the right side of the Grotto. The Spring of water which had just made its appearance at the base of the Pyrenees, derived its source, by some mysterious process of infiltration, from that vast stream of divine Grace which, under the Nails of the soldiers and the Lance of the centurion, had begun to flow eighteen hundred years ago from the summit of Mount Golgotha.

Such was the original principle to which we must retrace our steps, in order to discover the hidden origin of the miraculous Spring, and it was well that the Offices celebrated at its starting point, at the very place where it had pierced the earth, should of themselves lead the mind towards these mystic heights. With regard to the practical results and external effects which were to be produced abroad by this mysterious fountain, their interpretation and secret were naturally not to be sought at its centre and starting-point, nor in the confined circle, and at an exceptional feast of a particular diocese, but rather, in the universal Offices which the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church was at that moment celebrating throughout the Christian world. Now, this very day, February 26th, 1858, being the Friday of the first week in Lent, the Gospel appointed

for the Mass contained the following words, which need no comment: "Now, there is at Jerusalem a pond called Probatika which, in Hebrew, is named Bethsaida—having five porches. *In these lay a great multitude of sick, of blind, of lame, of withered, waiting for the movement of the water.* And an angel of the Lord went down at a certain time into the pond, and the water was troubled. And, he that went down first into the pond, after the motion of the water, *was made whole of whatever infirmity he lay under.*

XI.

ALTHOUGH doubtless very few persons in the crowd instituted comparisons of this nature, the idea that the waters of the Spring which had gushed forth at the Grotto might have the power of healing the sick, must have suggested itself to the mind of every one. From the morning of the same day, a rumor of several marvelous cures began to spread in all directions. Amid the contradictory versions which were being circulated, and taking into consideration the sincerity of some, the exaggeration voluntary or involuntary of others, the flat denial of many, the hesitations and uneasiness of a great number, the emotion of all, it was difficult at the first moment to distinguish truth from falsehood among the miraculous facts which were asserted on all sides, told as they were in different ways, with great blunders in names and confusion of persons, to say nothing of mixing up the circumstances of several episodes differing from and foreign to each other.

Did you ever in one of your country walks, throw

suddenly a handful of corn into an ants' nest? The terrified ants run from one side to the other in an extraordinary state of agitation. They keep coming and going to and fro, crossing each other, running against each other, alternately stopping and resuming their course, suddenly changing the point towards which they were running, picking up a grain of corn and leaving it there, and wandering in every direction in a state of feverish disorder, a prey to indescribable confusion.

Very similar was the conduct of the multitude, both of inhabitants and strangers at Lourdes, in the state of stupefaction into which they were thrown by the superhuman wonders which reached them from Heaven. Such is always the conduct of the natural world, when it is suddenly visited by some manifestation from the supernatural world.

By degrees, however, order is restored in the ants' nest, and its momentary agitation ceases.

There was, in the town, a poor workman known by every one; who, for many years, had dragged out a most miserable existence. His name was Louis Bourriette. Some twenty years before, a great misfortune had befallen him. As he was working in the neighborhood of Lourdes, raising stone with his brother Joseph, who was also a quarryman, a mine owing to some mismanagement had exploded close to them. Joseph was killed on the spot, and Louis, of whom we are now speaking, had his face ploughed with splinters of rock, and his right eye half destroyed. His life had been saved with the greatest difficulty. He suffered so terribly from the results of this accident, that he was attacked with a burning fever, and for some time force was obliged

to be employed to keep him in his bed. However, he recovered by degrees, thanks to the skill and devoted care of those who attended him. But, the medical men, in spite of the most delicate operations and masterly treatment, failed entirely in effecting the cure of his right eye, which had unfortunately been injured internally. The poor man had returned to his occupation of quarryman, but he was no longer fit for any thing but the coarsest style of work, as his wounded eye was utterly unserviceable, and he could only see objects as it were through an impenetrable mist. When the poor workman wished to undertake any work requiring more than usual care, he was obliged to apply for assistance to others.

So far from time having brought any amelioration in his condition, his sight had diminished from year to year. This progressive deterioration had become still more sensible, and at the time we have now reached in our history, the evil had made such progress that his right eye was almost entirely lost. When Bourriette closed his left eye, he could not distinguish a man from a tree. The man and the tree were to him only a black and confused mass, scarcely perceptible as in the obscurity of night.

Most of the inhabitants of Lourdes had given Bourriette employment at one time or other. His state excited pity, and he was much liked by the brotherhood of quarrymen and stone-cutters, who form a numerous class in that part of the country.

This poor creature hearing about the miraculous Spring at the Grotto, called his daughter.

“Go and bring me some of this water,” he said.

"Blessed Virgin, if she it is, has but to will my cure in order to effect it."

Half an hour afterwards, the child brought him, in a basin, a small quantity of the water which, as we have explained above, was still dirty and impregnated with earth.

"Father," observed the child, "it is only muddy water."

"That does not matter," replied the father, addressing himself to prayer.

He bathed with the water his weak eye, which he but a moment before considered gone forever.

Almost immediately he uttered a loud cry, and began to tremble in the excess of his emotion. A sudden miracle had been accomplished in regard to his sight. The air had already become clear around him and bathed in light. Nevertheless, objects appeared still as if surrounded with a light gauze, which hindered him from seeing them perfectly.

The mist was still before his eyes, but it was no longer dark as it had been for the last twenty years. It was penetrated by the sun, and instead of thick night it was to the eyes of the poor sick man, as the transparent vapor of morning.

Bourriette continued to pray, and at the same time washed his right eye with the salutary water. By degrees the light of day flooded his sight and he distinguished objects clearly.

Next day or the day after, he happened to meet on the public square of Lourdes with Doctor Dozons, who had never ceased to attend him since the commencement of his malady. He ran towards him saying, "I am cured."

"Impossible," exclaimed the Doctor. "Your or-

gan of sight is injured to such an extent as to render your cure out of the question. The treatment I have prescribed for you is only intended to soothe your pain, but can never restore you the use of your eye."

"It is not you who have cured me," replied the quarry-man with emotion, "it is the Blessed Virgin of the Grotto."

The man of human science shrugged his shoulders.

"That Bernadette has ecstasies of an inexpressible nature, is certain; for I have devoted unwearied attention to establishing that fact. But it is impossible that the water, which, how I know not, has gushed forth at the Grotto, should cure suddenly maladies which are in their very nature incurable."

On saying this he took a little tablet out of his pocket and wrote a few lines with a pencil on one of its pages.

Then with one hand he closed Bourriette's left eye, which was still serviceable, and presented to his right eye, which he knew to be entirely deprived of sight, the little sentence he had just written.

"If you can read this I will believe you," said the eminent physician with an air of triumph, strong as he felt himself to be from his extensive knowledge and profound medical experience.

Many persons who happened to be walking on the square at the time had formed a group around them.

Bourriette glanced at the paper with the eye, the sight of which but just now was extinct, and read immediately and without the slightest hesitation:

“Bourriette has an incurable amaurosis from which he can never recover.”

Had a thunderbolt fallen at the feet of the learned physician it could not have stupefied him more than did the voice of Bourriette as he read calmly and without any effort the single line of small writing which was lightly traced in pencil on the page of the tablet.

Doctor Dozons was more than a merely scientific man, he was by nature conscientious. He frankly recognized and unhesitatingly proclaimed the agency of a superior power in this sudden cure of a malady deemed to be incurable.

“I cannot deny it,” he said; “it is a miracle, a true miracle, with all due deference to myself and my brethren of the faculty. This has quite upset me; but we can but submit to the imperious voice of a fact so clear and so entirely beyond the range of poor human science.”

Doctor Vergez, of Tarbes, Fellow and Professor of the Faculty at Montpellier, and resident Physician at the Baths at Baréges, being summoned to pronounce his opinion in the case, could not prevent himself from recognizing, and that in the most undeniable way—its supernatural character.

As we have already observed, Bourriette's state had been notorious for upwards of twenty years, and the poor man himself was universally known in the town. Besides, this marvelous cure had not caused the disappearance of the deep traces or scars, which the accident had left on his face, so that every one had it in his power to verify the miracle which had just been accomplished. The poor quarry-man, almost mad with joy, recounted all the

particularities of the event to any one who cared to listen to him.

He was not the only one who openly bore witness to an unexpected good fortune and loudly proclaimed his gratitude. Events of a similar nature had taken place in other houses in the town. Several persons residing at Lourdes, Marie Daube, Bernard Soubie, Fabien Baron, had all at once quitted their sick-bed, to which maladies of different kinds, but all pronounced incurable, had confined them, and they proclaimed publicly their cure by the water of the Grotto. The hand of Jean Crassus, which had been paralyzed for ten years, had become straightened again and recovered all the vigor of life in the miraculous water.

Thus the accuracy of facts succeeded, among the different accounts in circulation, to the vague rumors of the first moment. The enthusiasm of the people was raised to the highest pitch, an enthusiasm at the same time touching and sound, which in the church expressed itself in fervent prayers, and around the Grotto in the canticles of thanksgiving which burst from the joyful lips of the pilgrims.

Towards evening, a great number of workmen belonging to the association of quarry-men, of which Bourriette was a member, repaired to the Rocks of Massabielle and laid out a path for visitors in the steep declivity near the Grotto. Before the hollow from which the spring now bubbled forth, they placed a balustrade formed of wood, beneath which they dug a small oval reservoir, about half a metre in depth, and in shape and length not very unlike an infant's cradle.

The enthusiasm was momentarily increasing.

Vast throngs were perpetually passing to and fro on the road leading to the miraculous spring of water. After sunset, when the first shadow of night began to fall on the earth, you might perceive that the same thought had occurred to a throng of believers, and the Grotto was all at once illuminated with a thousand lights. Rich and poor, children, men and women had brought spontaneously candles and tapers. During the whole night, this clear and mild light might be seen from the opposite side of the Gave. Thousands of small torches placed here and there without any apparent order seemed to give back on earth the glittering lustre of the stars with which the firmament of heaven was so thickly studded.

Neither priests nor pontiffs nor leading men of any kind were to be found among those masses of people; and yet, without any one having given any signal, the moment the illumination lighted up the Grotto and the rocks, and shed a trembling reflection on the little reservoir of the miraculous Spring, the voices of all rose at the same time and mingled with each other in a chaunt, which seemed to proceed from a single soul. The Litany of the Blessed Virgin burst on the ear, interrupting the silence of night to celebrate the memory of our admirable Mother, in front of the rustic throne on which in her wisdom she had deigned to appear in order to crown the hearts of all christians with joy. *Mater admirabilis, Sedes Sapientiæ, Causa Nostræ lætitiæ ora pro nobis.*

XII.

IN the evening of the same day, a time usually devoted to amusement after the cares of business, the enemies of superstition assembled in great force at the club and round the tables of the *cafés*, and great agitation pervaded their Sanhedrim.

"There has never been a spring of water in that place," exclaimed one of the most strong-headed of the party. "It is but a pool of water, formed, I know not how, by some accidental infiltration, and which must have been discovered by the merest chance by Bernadette when she stirred up the ground. Nothing is more natural."

"Evidently," they answered on all sides.

"Nevertheless," some one ventured to observe, "they pretend that the water flows."

"Not the least in the world," exclaimed several voices. "We went there ourselves: it is nothing more nor less than a pool of water. The common people with their usual exaggeration, pretend to say that the water flows. This is not true; we put the thing to the test yesterday, on the first rumor reaching us, and it is nothing but a muddy puddle."

These assertions were looked upon as satisfactory and consistent by the philosophic and learned world. It was the official version of the story, and was received as certain and incontestible. So credulous are even the incredulous in whatever seems to help their own arguments, so completely do the followers of Free Examination discard anything like investigation in matters of this nature, and so obstinate are they in maintaining the grounds

they have once taken, even when disproved by facts themselves, that, six weeks after this period, and in spite of the crushing evidence of the existence of a copious fountain, which as every one might prove for himself, supplied more than 25,000 gallons of water a day, this *absolute* denial of any spring of water, this impudent version of the *puddle*, passed current and was even boldly printed in the journals of the Free-thinkers. This would be hardly credible, if we did not give a proof of it at random, extracted from the official journal of the department.

With regard to the asserted cures, they were denied unprovisionally, as had been the case with the Spring of water. All of them, without any exception, were unconditionally rejected with shruggings of shoulders and loud laughter, as indeed had been that of Louis Bourriette.

"Bourriette is not cured," said one.

"He was never sick," replied another.

"He imagines he is cured ; he believes he sees," insinuated a young man of the school of M. Renan.

"The effect of the imagination on the nerves is sometimes surprising," rejoined a physiologist.

"There is no such person as Bourriette in existence," exclaimed sturdily a new arrival, striking at once at the root of the question.

The attitude assumed by the philosophical heads of the place was summed up in these four or five formularies, as far as these extraordinary cures, so much bruited among the common people, were concerned.

It was a matter of astonishment to them that such grave and highly educated men as M. Dufo, who

was then president-elect of the Order of Barristers, as Doctor Dozon, as M. Estrade, as the Commandant of the Garrison, as the retired *Intendant Militaire*, M. de Laffite, should have displayed such inconceivable weakness as to allow themselves to be deluded by all that was taking place.

In the course of this day so pregnant with events, Bernadette had been summoned to the chamber of the Tribunal, either before or after the sitting of the court, and the dialectics brought into play by the *Procureur Impérial*, the *Substitut* and the Judges had not been more successful in producing any variation or contradiction in her story than the genius of M. Jacomet, in spite of his long experience in the Police.

The *Procureur Impérial*, followed by his *Substitut*, had pronounced his own opinion in the matter some days before and nothing could shake the firmness of his mind. He deplored this invasion of fanaticism and was determined to discharge his duty energetically. Owing to I know not what circumstances, and as is seldom the case in such immense assemblages, no disorder arose, and the laudable zeal of the *Procureur Impérial* was doomed to a state of complete inaction and to an attitude of expectation. In the midst of this vast movement of men and ideas which stirred up the whole country, it would seem if an invisible hand protected those innumerable crowds and hindered them from giving, even innocently, the slightest pretext for the forcible interference of the law-officers, police or civil administration. Whether they liked it or not, these formidable personages had at least for the time their hands tied, and they were not to be untied

until the moment when the mysterious Apparition of the Grotto had completed her work. These multitudes then could come with perfect security; these multitudes so vast to the bodily eye which saw them meeting from every side of the horizon; so insignificant to the spiritual eye after comparing them with the millions of men destined to repair to the same spot in the future as a place of pilgrimage. An invisible ægis seemed to defend from all danger those first witnesses whom the Blessed Virgin had summoned: "*Nolite timere, pusillus grex.*"

The enemies of Superstition applied most urgently to the Mayor of Lourdes in order to induce him to issue an order prohibiting all access to the Rocks of Massabielle, which formed part of the public lands belonging to the *commune*. Such an order, they thought, would inevitably be infringed in the then excited state of popular feeling and would give rise to innumerable proceedings. It would be resisted and resistance would be followed by arrests, and if the judicial authority, including that of the police and the administration, could once take the matter in hand, it would easily carry everything before it, as it would be supported by all the powers of the State.

M. Lacadé, Mayor of Lourdes, was a most upright and excellent man and had deservedly acquired the general respect of the public. Every one in the town of Lourdes did justice to his rare personal qualities, and his enemies—or such as were jealous of him—never reproached him with anything worse than a certain timidity which prevented him from taking a decided course between extreme parties, and a somewhat too great attach-

ment to his functions as Mayor, though, as every one allowed, he discharged them in a decidedly superior manner.

He refused to issue the order which was solicited from him.

"I do not know where the truth lies in the midst of so much clamor," he replied, "and it is not for me to pronounce either for or against. As long as there is no disorder I let things take their course. It is for the Bishop to decide the question, as it regards religion; it is for the *Préfet* to decide measures which are in the jurisdiction of the Administration. For myself, I wish to keep clear of the whole business, and I shall only act in my capacity of Mayor on the express order of the *Préfet*."

Such, if not the very language, was the import of his reply to the worrying applications urged upon him by the Philosophers of Lourdes, who, as regarded christian belief, resembled in that respect the philosophers of all times and places. The pretended liberty of Thought rarely tolerates the liberty of Belief.

Since the gushing forth of the Spring the Apparition had not re-iterated her command to Bernadette to go to the Priests and demand from them the erection of a chapel. On the next day, as we have already related, the Vision had not manifested herself, so that, since that moment, Bernadette had not made her appearance at the presbytery. The Clergy, notwithstanding the rising tide of popular faith and the increasing rumors of miracles which were spread by the multitudes, continued to remain strangers to all the manifestations of enthusiasm which took place around the Grotto.

"Let us wait patiently," they said. "In human affairs it is enough to be prudent once. In things pertaining to God our prudence should be seventy-fold."

Not a single priest therefore appeared in the ceaseless procession which was repairing to the miraculous Spring of water. Owing therefore to the Clergy having made a point of keeping aloof, and to the municipal authorities refusing to act and oppose their veto, the popular movement had free course and was always on the increase, like the rivers of their country at the period of the melting of the snow. It overflowed on all sides, perpetually advancing and covering the surrounding country with its innumerable waves. The advocates of repression began to feel how powerless they were to resist a current of such formidable strength and to see clearly that all opposition would be swept away like a dyke of straw by this sudden and mighty irruption. They were forced to resign themselves to allow free passage to these multitudes which had been invisibly upheaved and put in motion by the breath of God.

At the Grotto the greatest order was maintained, notwithstanding so vast a concourse of people. They continued drawing water from the Fountain, singing canticles and devoting themselves to prayer.

The soldiers of the Garrison, agitated in common with all the people of the country, had requested permission from the Commandant of the fort to repair, themselves, to the Rocks of Massabielle. With the instinct of discipline developed in their case by military system, they took measures of their own accord to obviate obstructions, to leave certain

passages free and to prevent the crowd from approaching too near to the dangerous banks of the Gave, stationing themselves for this purpose on both sides of the river and assuming spontaneously a certain amount of authority, which no one, as was reasonable, dreamt of disputing.

Some days passed by in this manner, during which the Apparition manifested herself without any new peculiarity except that the Spring of water was always increasing in volume and the miraculous cures effected by it were multiplied more and more. There was a moment of profound astonishment in the camp of the Free-thinkers. The facts were becoming so numerous, so amply proved and so patent that almost every moment the ranks of the incredulous suffered from desertion. The best and the most upright among them suffered themselves to be gained by the evidence adduced. There remained, however, an indestructible number of minds arrogating to themselves superior strength, but whose strength in point of fact consisted in rejecting all proofs and refusing to give way to truth. This would appear impossible did not every one know that a great part of the Jewish people resisted the miracles even of Jesus Christ and His Apostles, and that four centuries of miracles were necessary to open the eyes of the pagan world.



FOURTH BOOK.

I.

ON the second of March, Bernadette repaired anew to the residence of the Curé of Lourdes, and spoke to him a second time in the name of the Apparition.

“She wishes a chapel to be erected, and processions to the Grotto to be organized,” said the child.

Events had crowded, the Spring had gushed forth, cures had been effected and miracles had supervened to bear witness, in the name of God, to Bernadette’s veracity. The priest had no further proofs to demand, and he demanded none. His conviction was settled, and thenceforth no doubt could touch his heart.

The invisible “Lady” of the Grotto had not declared her name. But, the man of God had not failed to recognize Her in Her maternal kindness and, perhaps, he had already added to his prayers, —“Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us.”

Notwithstanding, however, the secret enthusiasm with which his ardent heart had filled on seeing the great things which had been done, he had with rare prudence succeeded in withholding the premature expression of the deep and sweet sentiments which

agitated him, at the thought that the Queen of Heaven had descended amid the humble flock of his parishioners ; and, he had not cancelled the formal prohibition of going to the Grotto which he had imposed on his Clergy.

“ I believe you,” said he to Bernadette, when she presented herself to him anew. “ But, what you demand of me in the name of the Apparition, does not depend on myself ; it depends on the Bishop, whom I have already apprised of all that is passing. I am about to go to him and acquaint him with this fresh application. He alone can act in this affair.”

II.

MONSEIGNEUR Bertrand-Sévère Laurence, Bishop of Tarbes was the man of the Diocese, individually as well as officially. He had been born in it, reared in it, grown in it to man's estate. Rising rapidly, owing to his merit, to the highest ecclesiastical functions, he had been, successively, Superior of the Petit Séminaire of Saint Pé, which he had founded, Superior of the Great Seminary, and Vicar-General.

Almost all the priests of the diocese had been his pupils. He had been their Master before becoming their Bishop ; and, under one or other of these titles, he presided over them nearly forty years.

The profound harmony and entire unity of mind and soul which, owing to the above circumstances, reigned between the former Superior of the Seminaries and the Clergy he had trained for the sacerdotal life, had been one of the causes of his promotion to the Episcopacy. When, some twelve years be-

fore, the See of Tarbes had become vacant by the death of Monseigneur Double, every one pointed out the Abbé Laurence as eminently qualified to succeed him. A great number filled with the same desire and animated with the same hope, signed a petition requesting the nomination of the Abbé Laurence to the See of Tarbes. Thus, the Bishop had been selected and raised to his eminent rank by the suffrages of the faithful, as had frequently happened in the primitive Church. It may easily be inferred from what we have said, that Monseigneur Laurence and his Clergy formed one large Christian family, as should be the case in all times and places.

All the warmth of his nature was concentrated in his excellent and paternal heart, which made itself all things to all men. By a curious contrast, which could hardly be termed a contradiction, his head was cool, and subjected every thing to the investigation of impassible reason. The Prelate's intellect, although naturally adapted to every branch of mental exercise, was essentially practical in its tendency. Never was any one less accessible to the illusions of the imagination, or the allurements of unguarded enthusiasm. He distrusted ardent and exaggerated natures. In order to convince him, arguments addressed to the passions were unavailing. If his heart was under the influence of his feelings, his intellect was governed by reason alone.

Before proceeding to act, the Bishop was wont to weigh most carefully not only his acts in themselves, but, also, all their consequences. From this there resulted in him sometimes a certain slowness in pronouncing judgment in affairs of importance—a slowness which, doubtless, did not originate in in-

decision of character, but rather in discretion of mind, which desired to act with deliberation, and only come to a determination after thorough acquaintance with the subject in question. Knowing, besides, that Truth is eternal in its nature, and that the hour of its triumph must inevitably arrive, he was endowed with that virtue, the rarest in the world—patience. Monseigneur Laurence could wait.

Gifted with uncommon powers of observation, Monseigneur Laurence knew mankind thoroughly, and possessed in a high degree the difficult art of managing and guiding them. Unless the interests of religion were at stake and there was some particular reason for publicity, he carefully avoided any clashing of opinion, disagreements and disputes, knowing as he well did, that to excite feelings of hostility against the Bishop, was, owing to the natural bent of the human heart, to make enemies to the Episcopacy and religion. His prudence was extreme, and, having to steer the bark of Peter through the whole extent of his Diocese, he was thoroughly imbued with a sense of his own responsibility. Ever on the watch to observe the state of the sea and the direction of the wind, he not seldom gazed down into the depths of the water and carefully looked out for the first appearance of breakers.

Remarkable for his skill in the administration of affairs, orderly in his habits, a strict disciplinarian, and combining in his person apostolic simplicity with diplomatic prudence, he had been always, from the reign of Louis Philippe to the re-establishment of the Empire, very highly appreciated by the different governments which succeeded each other. When Monseigneur Laurence demanded any thing,

it was known beforehand in the highest quarters, that what he demanded was certainly just and very probably necessary, and he never met with a refusal.

Thus, for a long time past, in this Pyrenean diocese, the spiritual and temporal authority had been on the best possible terms with each other, when those miraculous events occurred at Lourdes, of which we have treated in the present work.

III.

THE Abbé Peyramale explained to the Bishop the surprising events of which the Grotto of Massabielle and the town of Lourdes had been the scene for nearly the last three weeks. He recounted the ecstasies and visions of Bernadette, the words uttered by the Apparition, the gushing forth of the Spring, the sudden cures effected, and the agitation which pervaded the whole community.

His narration, which we have no doubt was highly animated and picturesque, though we regret that we cannot furnish our readers with its exact words, must have struck the mind of the good Bishop, but it could not lead hastily to his immediate conviction. Habituated as he was to see Truth descend hierarchically from the heights of the Vatican, Monsiegnur Laurence felt little disposed to receive and accept without mature investigation a message from heaven, delivered suddenly, and in defiance of ordinary rules by a little illiterate peasant-girl.

He was, however, too well versed in all matters touching the History of the Church, to deny the absolute possibility of a fact which, after all, has had

its counterparts in the secular annals of Catholicism ; but, at the same time, the practical tendency of his mind rendered conviction in his case somewhat difficult. The Bishops are the successors of the Apostles. Monseigneur Laurence was an apostle and a holy one : but, like St. Thomas, he wished to see before he believed ; and, in some respects, this was a fortunate circumstance ; for, when the Bishop believed, every one knew that he might in all safety believe with him, and that the clearest proofs had been brought forward.

The Curé of Lourdes had not himself actually witnessed the majority of the facts he adduced ; and, in consequence of the reserve he had imposed on the Clergy, he could only appeal before the Bishop, to the declarations of third persons, and those laymen, of whom some, being either sceptical or indifferent in matters of religion, did not even follow the observances of the Church.

Besides, in the midst of so many accounts given to him, of the multiplicity and confusion of so many incidents, of the unavoidable hiatuses in his information, and of the numberless reports which were current, it was impossible for him to satisfy himself on the subject, and to display the logical and providential march of events in the methodical manner which is so easy at the present time. It is with facts of a moral order, as it is with objects of a physical order ; we must be at some distance from them, in order to see them in their proper point of view. The Abbé Peyramale could certainly analyze many details of what was being accomplished under his eyes ; but, just at that time, it was not in the Bishop's or his power to see it as a whole, and to remark its

admirable coherency,—they were too near the stage on which this scene was enacted.

Monseigneur Laurence did not pronounce any opinion. Wiser in this respect than St. Thomas, he refrained from denying the truth of the fact; for, he knew that things of that nature, though very rare, are yet possible. He confined himself to not believing, or, in other words, to saying neither yes nor no, and remaining in that methodical state of doubt which is affirmed by Descartes to be the best condition, in order to proceed to the search after truth. As Bishop, he required documents and attestations of unimpeachable authenticity, and the second-hand proofs which he received from the Curé of Lourdes did not appear to him sufficient. Might there not be some illusion in the child's mind? some exaggerations in the accounts given by the crowd? Had not pious souls suffered themselves sometimes to be deceived by false miracles, whether proceeding from imposture, hallucination, or the artifices of the Evil one? All these questions suggested themselves to his mind and made it his duty to proceed with the greatest prudence.

The idea of instituting an official inquiry presented itself naturally to his mind, and public opinion, desirous of having the difficulty solved, urged the episcopal authority to take the affair officially in hand and pronounce its judgment on the matter. The Bishop, with admirable foresight, comprehended that the very agitation of the population would injure the maturity and safety of the inquiry. He wisely pursued the difficult course of resisting the pressure universally brought to bear upon him. He resolved, therefore, to allow things

to take their own course, to let new events become known, and to wait for the production of some striking testimony in the interests of truth, whatever might be its nature.

“It is not yet time for the episcopal authority to busy itself with this affair. To establish the judgment which is expected from us, we must proceed extremely slow, distrust the impulse of the moment, give time for reflection, and request to be enlightened, in order to a careful investigation of facts.”

Such was the language held by the Bishop.

He did not, therefore, cancel the order which prohibited the Clergy from repairing to the Grotto. At the same time, however, in concert with the Curé of Lourdes, he took all proper measures to be informed, day by day, of whatever took place at the Grotto, and of all the cures, true or false, which were effected, employing for that purpose witnesses of unshaken integrity and acknowledged capacity.

It naturally resulted, from the reserved attitude adopted by the Bishop, that the investigation would be made, so to say, of its own accord, publicly, and, after having heard the adverse parties, not by a commission composed of certain persons, but by the intelligence of all, and in accordance with the necessities of the case. Should there be any error or trickery in the affair, the unbelieving class, which resented so deeply the popular superstition, would not be slow to detect and proclaim them, with the proofs in their hands. If, on the other hand, these events had a divine character, they would triumph alone over all obstacles, and display

their intrinsic vitality, while dispensing with any external support.

Their authority, in this case, must prove incontestable in the eyes of all right-thinking persons.

The Bishop, therefore, decided to remain in this attitude of observation, whatever might happen, and as long as possible—at least for some months—and to postpone any direct interference until forced to it by the events themselves.

IV.

WHILE, at the Bishop's palace, matters were treated with such extreme circumspection, the civil authorities were in the greatest state of perplexity with regard to what was passing at Lourdes. The *préfecture* of Tarbes was occupied by M. Massy, and the Ministry of Public Worship by M. Rouland.

The Baron Massy, Prefect of the Hautes-Pyrénées, was a good but independent Catholic, and decidedly opposed to anything like Superstition. He professed, as a good Christian, to believe the miracles recounted in the Gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles; but outside these prodigies, which are, in some measure, official, he did not admit the Supernatural.

Miracles having been indispensable in order to found the Church and give her authority, he accepted them as being a necessity of that period of formation. But, in his opinion, God ought to stop there and be satisfied with this minimum of the Supernatural so fairly conceded. In the eyes of this official personage, the part of God was fixed

and regulated by the orthodox *Credo* and the concordats of the Church. It was established, formed into a code, and drawn up into articles of faith and articles of law. These mysteries were respected by the faithful, and the various Governments had put up, as well as they could, with these distant facts which affected them but little. God should not, therefore, transgress those limits and proceed to trouble the constitutional course of things by inopportune interference or by personal acts of power. Let him allow the constituted authorities to act—*per me reges regnant*—and let Him remain henceforth in the invisible depths of the Infinite. The Prefect, having bowed his lofty intellect to faith in the miracles recorded in the Gospels, was not unlike those excellent persons who, in the apportionment of their income, assign to charity a fixed sum, beyond which they make it a rule never to give anything, and when the Supernatural presented itself, he was tempted to say to it, "Walk on, my friend, you have already received your dole."

M. Massy was, as we see, very orthodox; but, on theoretical grounds, he dreaded the invasion of the Supernatural, while, practically, he feared the encroachments of the Clergy. "Nothing too much," was his motto. This was all very well, but those who are always repeating this generally end by making the measure too narrow and not giving enough. The *summum jus*, the strict right, approximates closely to the *summa injuria*, or last degree of injustice. The Latins, with their habitual good sense, pretended that it was precisely the same thing.

Wedded to his ideas of government, and essen-

tially official, he was for whatever was established, solely owing to the fact of its having been established. Whatever was, ought to be. A state of things existing was a principle *justificatus in semet-ipsam*. Whatever was legal was legitimate. In vain was he told, *Dura lex*. He answered, *Sed lex*. He went even further. Like many men who have grown old in the affairs of government, he was tempted to believe that the slightest deviation from ordinary routine was an attempt against eternal right. He confounded arrangement with order, and mistook regulation for law.

M. Massy, was, however, remarkably intelligent, and administered the affairs of the department confided to him with talent. He took in, at a glance, the real state of things, and his judgment was prompt. Unfortunately, men have often, in the world, faults closely allied to their good qualities, and this valuable faculty of seeing and deciding, as it were, by intuition, sometimes led him into error. Depending, perhaps, somewhat too much on his first cursory view of a question, it happened sometimes that he acted prematurely. When this was the case, he was guilty of the serious fault of being unable to acknowledge that he had been deceived ; and notwithstanding the precipitation of some of his decisions, he was never known to swerve from the course he had once resolved to take, whether men, ideas, or facts were at stake.

In such circumstances, which, however, rarely occurred, he usually displayed obstinacy and a determination to march on against the obstacles which, from the very nature of things, were opposed to his progress. It is assuredly a great quality

to persevere without flinching in any fixed line of conduct, but only on the supposition that we never fall into error and are always proceeding in the right path. When we are unfortunate enough to get heedlessly entangled in a blind alley, this quality degenerates into a great vice, and we end by breaking our head against the wall.

Up to that time the Prefect and the Bishop had lived on a perfectly good understanding. M. Massy was Catholic, not only in what he believed, but in practice also. Everybody did justice to his exemplary morality and to his domestic virtues, and he met with just appreciation from the Bishop. The Prefect, on his part, could not but admire and love the eminent qualities of the Bishop. The prudence of the latter, united to his knowledge of mankind, had always avoided any occasions of collision between the spiritual and temporal authorities, so that not only peace but the most cordial harmony existed between the head of the Diocese and the head of the Department.

V.

M. MASSY, who was informed, from time to time, of the events at Lourdes by Monsieur Jacomet, in whom he placed the blindest confidence, by no means imitated the Bishop's wise reserve. He gave way to his first impression; and having no faith in the possibility of Apparitions and Miracles of the kind, and flattering himself that he might put a stop to the popular torrent whenever he chose, he openly declared his own opinions on the subject, and resolved to smother in its cradle this new supersti-

tion, which, from its first birth, seemed to threaten so rapid a growth.

"If I had been Prefect of the Isere at the time of the pretended Apparitions of La Salette," he often used to say, "I should soon have set it to rights, and that legend would have been heard of no more, as will soon be the case with the one at Lourdes. All this phantasmagoria will come to nothing."

Instead of remaining quiet until the ecclesiastical authority, the only competent one in the case, should consider the proper time to have arrived for taking in hand the investigation of so extraordinary an affair, the Prefect anticipated the decision of the question in accordance with his own anti-supernatural prejudices. The Bishop, naturally patient, was taking his time to untie the Gordian knot, while M. Massy, giving way to the impetuosity of his temper, preferred to cut it once for all. These trials of strength were all very well for the sword of Alexander, but the dress-sword of a Prefect runs considerable risk of being found unequal to the task. On an occasion of this kind, that of M. Massy was destined to be blunted preparatory to being shivered.

Although his mind therefore was quite made up on the subject, he could not but perceive that the question was in the jurisdiction of the episcopal authority, and not in any way in that of the civil power, and he did not wish in any manner to wound the feelings of the venerated Prelate who conducted the affairs of the diocese, as every body acknowledged, with so much wisdom. While he permitted his hostile sentiments against the "miracles" of the Grotto to become generally known, and had

them investigated by his agents, he confined himself publicly to taking certain measures, for which the immense concourse of people attracted by the fame of these events to Lourdes, might at a shift serve for a pretext.

He began, with what exact expectation we know not, by having the Grotto secretly watched, day and night, as if some human trickery could have been in complicity with this strange gushing-forth of the miraculous Spring and its progressive augmentation.

On the third of March, in obedience to orders arrived from the Prefecture, the Mayor of Lourdes, M. Lacadé, wrote to the Commandant of the Fortress to place at his disposal the troops forming the garrison, and to keep them from the next day in readiness for whatever might happen. The soldiers, fully armed, were to occupy the road and approaches to the Grotto. The local Gendarmerie and all the police-officers had received similar instructions.

How far was this menacing display of armed force necessary for the maintenance of the public tranquillity? It is beyond our powers of comprehension. Was it not to be feared that these hostile or, to say the least, unreasonable demonstrations, and this attempt at intimidation might tend to irritate the population of these districts, who, though they had hitherto conducted themselves so peaceably, were naturally of ardent temperament and at the moment excited in the highest degree by the events we have just narrated? Was there not a risk of provoking some cries of anger, some movement, some seditious agitation in minds so powerfully excited by sentiments of religion? Many

feared this would be the case. Others hoped it, perhaps, and confidently reckoned on the multitude giving the armed force some pretext for interference. The odds were a hundred to one that it would turn out so.

VI.

NOTWITHSTANDING the disquietude and suspicion which pervaded official quarters, the fame of these marvelous events had been spread in all the surrounding districts with electrical rapidity.

The whole of Bigorre and Béarn, previously agitated by the first reports of the Apparition, was stirred to its depths on receiving intelligence of the bursting forth of the Spring and the subsequent miraculous cures. All the high-roads throughout the department were covered with travelers, hastening to their destination. Every moment, from all sides, by every road and every path which terminated in Lourdes, there arrived a motley crowd of vehicles of every description, carriages, wagons, *chars-à-bancs*, men on horseback and pedestrians.

Even at night this rush suffered little diminution. The inhabitants of the mountain came down by starlight in order to reach the Grotto by morning.

The travelers, who had arrived in the first instance, had for the most part remained at Lourdes, not wishing to lose any of these extraordinary scenes which had certainly not been paralleled for centuries past. The hotels, inns and private houses overflowed with people. It became almost impossible to provide lodgings for the fresh crowds which continued to pour in. Many passed the night in

prayer in front of the illuminated Grotto, for the purpose of securing places nearer the youthful Seer on the morrow.

Thursday, the fourth of March, was the last day of the Quinzaine.

When day-break began to silver the horizon, the approaches to the Grotto were more densely crowded than on any of the preceding days.

A painter such as Raphael or Michael Angelo, might have derived from this living spectacle a subject for an admirable picture.

Here, an old mountaineer, bent beneath the weight of years, and venerable as a patriarch, supporting himself with his trembling hands upon his enormous staff shod with iron, met your view.

Around him was crowded all his family, from the grandmother, an ancient matron with attenuated features, her face tanned and wrinkled, hooded in her flowing black cloak lined with red, down to the youngest boy, who stood on tip-toe in order to obtain a better view. The young maidens of the mountain, their hands clasped with fervor, beautiful, calm and grave as the splendid Virgins of the Campagna of Rome, prayed alone or in groups. Many of them were dropping through their fingers the rustic beads of their chaplet. Some of them were reading in silence some book of prayer. Others holding in their hand or even on their head an earthen jar, to be filled with the miraculous water, recalled to the imagination the biblical countenances of Rebecca or Rachel.

There you saw the peasant of Gers with his enormous head, his bull neck and face apoplectic, and coarse-featured like that of Vitellius. At his

side appeared in profile the finely-marked head of the Bearnais, which has been rendered so familiar by the innumerable portraits of Henry IV.

The Basques, of middle stature, but appearing tall owing to their wonderful erectness, with fine open chests, rather high shoulders and limbs indicative of great agility, looked on perfectly motionless, and seemed rooted to the soil. Their high forehead, narrow and prominent chin, their visage thin and in the shape of a V, their characteristic features and the distinctness of their type, indicated the primordial purity of their race, which is, perhaps, the most ancient in the land of the Gauls.

Men of the world, of all professions, magistrates, shop-keepers, notaries, advocates, doctors and clerks, displaying forms less rough but at the same time less marked, more humble or more polished, more distinguished in the opinion of some, more vulgar in that of others, were mingled in great numbers with the crowd.

The ladies, in bonnets and veils, with their hands buried in their muffs, seemed, in spite of all their precautions, to suffer from the frosty morning air, and might be seen changing their position and moving about in hopes of keeping themselves warm.

A few Spaniards scattered here and there, remarkable for their impassible dignity, and enveloped in the capacious folds of their large cloaks, stood waiting with the immobility of statues. They kept their eyes fixed on the Grotto and prayed. They scarcely turned their heads when any incident or the undulation of the crowd forcibly withdrew them from their contemplation; their darkly lumin-

ous eyes flashed for a moment on the multitude and they resumed their prayers.

In many places the pilgrims, fatigued with their journey, or their stations during the night, were sitting on the ground. Some of them with prudent foresight, had with them knapsacks furnished with provisions. Others carried in a sling a bottle-gourd filled with wine. Many of the children had fallen asleep stretched on the ground, and their mothers, stripping themselves of their capulets, cautiously covered them with them.

A few troopers, belonging to the cavalry regiment at Tarbes or the depot at Lourdes, had come mounted and stationed themselves out of the way of the bustle in the bed of the Gave. Many of the pilgrims, and others brought there by mere curiosity, had climbed into the trees, and from their isolated heads, which towered above the rest and were very conspicuous, all the fields, meadows, roads, hillocks, and eminences which commanded the Grotto, were seen literally covered with an innumerable multitude of men, women and children, of old men, persons of all classes, workmen, peasants and soldiers, all agitated, closely packed together, and swaying to and fro like ripe ears of corn. The picturesque costumes of those districts flaunted their gaudy colors in the first rays of the sun, whose disk was beginning to appear from behind the peaks of the Ger. From a distance, the hills of Vizens, for instance, the *capulets* of the women, some white as snow, others of a brilliant scarlet, combined with the large blue caps of the peasants of Béarn, shone like daisies, poppies and corn-flowers from the midst of this harvest of human beings. The helmets of

the troopers stationed in the bed of the Gave flashed in the early rays which broke from the east.

There could not have been less than twenty thousand persons spread over the banks of the Gave, and this multitude was incessantly recruited by the arrival of new pilgrims from all quarters.

On these countenances were depicted prayer, curiosity, and scepticism. Every class, every idea, every sentiment was represented in this immense multitude. There was to be found there the rough-hewn christian of the first ages, who knows that with God all things are possible. Further on might be seen the christian tormented with doubts, who had come before these wild rocks in search of arguments for the firmer establishment of his faith. The believing woman was also there, demanding from the divine Mother the recovery of some dear one brought low by sickness, or the conversion of some beloved soul. There also was the decided rejecter of the Supernatural, having eyes which would not see and ears which would not hear. And lastly, there might be found there the frivolous-minded man, oblivious of his own soul's best interests, in search only; beneath Heaven, which was half-opened to his gaze, of the amusement of his curiosity in what to his eyes was a trivial spectacle.

Around this crowd and along the road the Constables and the Gendarmes kept going to and fro in a state of nervous anxiety. The Deputy, having on his official scarf, remained motionless.

On a little eminence might be seen Jacomet and the *Procureur Impérial*, closely watching the state of things and prepared to take rigorous measures on the slightest appearance of disorder.

There proceeded from the multitude an immense, vague, confused and indescribable murmur, formed of a thousand different noises, of words, conversations, prayers and exclamations, resembling the unappeasable roar of the ocean.

Suddenly an exclamation broke forth from the lips of all, "There is the youthful Saint! there is the youthful Saint!" and an extraordinary agitation pervaded the whole crowd. The hearts of all, even of the coldest, were stirred with emotion: every head was lifted and every eye directed to the same point.

Bernadette, accompanied by her mother, had just made her appearance on the path laid out by the Brotherhood of Quarry-men some days before, and was calmly descending towards this sea of human beings. Although she had this vast multitude before her eyes and was doubtless filled with happiness at seeing so many testimonials of adoration for "the Lady" she was entirely absorbed with the thought of seeing once more that incomparable Beauty. Who cares to gaze on earth when heaven is on the point of throwing wide its gates? She was so completely engrossed with the joyful hope which filled her heart that the cries of "There is the youthful Saint," and the testimonials of popular veneration did not appear to reach her. She was so full of the image of the Vision, she was so perfectly humble, that she had not even vanity enough to cause her to blush or to suffer from confusion.

The Gendarmes, however, had hastened to the spot, and breaking through the crowd in front of Bernadette, formed an escort for the child and effected a passage for her up to the Grotto.

These excellent fellows, like the soldiers, believed, and their sympathizing and pious deportment prevented the crowd from being irritated at such an employment of armed force, and further disappointed the calculations of the crafty.

The thousand cries of the multitude had by degrees subsided, and a great silence ensued. There could not be greater recollection in any of the Churches of Christendom during Mass, on the occasion of an ordination or a first communion. Every one, to a certain degree, held his breath. No one shutting his eyes would have imagined that so vast a crowd was there assembled, and amid the universal silence the murmur of the Gave would alone have struck his ear. Those who were near the Grotto could distinguish the bubbling of the miraculous Spring as it flowed calmly into the little reservoir through the little wooden pipe which had been placed for that purpose.

When Bernadette prostrated herself, every one, by a unanimous movement, knelt down.

Almost simultaneously the superhuman rays of ecstasy lighted up the transfigured features of the child. We shall not describe again this marvelous spectacle of which we have more than once endeavored to convey some idea to our reader. It was a spectacle ever new, as is the rising of the sun every morning. The power which produces such splendors has the infinite at its disposal, and employs it unceasingly to diversify the external form of its eternal unity; but the pen of a poor author commands only limited resources and pale colors. If Jacob, the son of Isaac, wrestled with the Angel, the artist, in his weakness, cannot wrestle with

God; and there is a time, when feeling his utter inability to express by his art all the delicate gradations of the divine work, he is silent and confines himself to the act of adoration. I leave, therefore, to souls which peruse my feeble lines the task of imagining all the successive joys, all the melting feelings, all the graces and celestial inebriation which the blessed Vision of the immaculate Virgin, the admirable Beauty with which God himself was charmed, caused to pass over the innocent brow of the enraptured Bernadette.

The Apparition, as on the preceding days, had commanded the child to drink at and wash herself in the Fountain, and to eat of the plant to which we have already referred; she had afterwards renewed her order to her to go and tell the Priests that she desired a chapel built on the spot and processions to repair to it.

The child had besought the Apparition to inform her of her name, but the radiant "Lady" had not returned any answer to the question. The moment for doing so had not yet arrived. It behoved that Her name should be first inscribed on the earth and engraved on the heart by uncounted deeds of mercy. The Queen of Heaven wished to be indented by her benefits; She intended that the grateful voice of every mouth should name Her and glorify Her before She answered and said: "Your heart has not deceived you: it is I indeed."

VII.

BERNADETTE had just set out on her return to Lourdes. In the immense crowd, which we have

attempted to describe, and which was now slowly dispersing, the question was continually recurring, diversified with a thousand commentaries, "What could be the signification of the strange and mysterious order given by the Apparition to the child the week before, an order reiterated several times and more especially that very day." They examined all its details and weighed all its circumstances.

The Blessed Virgin, addressing herself to the daughter of man, and speaking perhaps to us all through her, had commanded Bernadette to turn her back on the Gave, to ascend towards the rock, even to the farthest corner of the Grotto, to drink, to eat of the plant, and to wash in the Fountain, which at that time was invisible to all eyes. The child had obeyed in every particular the divine voice. She had scaled the steep ascent. She had eaten of the plant. She had scooped out the earth. The water had burst forth, at first feeble and turbid, afterwards in greater abundance and clearer; and in proportion as it was drawn, it had become in a few days a copious and magnificent *jet-d'eau*, clear as crystal — a stream of life for the sick and infirm.

It required no profound knowledge of the science of Symbolism to comprehend the deep meaning, so admirably adapted to the times, of this order, in which the imbecility of philosophy could detect only what was fantastic.

What is the evil of modern societies? In the order of ideas, is it not pride? We are now living in days when man makes himself God. In the order of morals, is it not the most unbridled sensuality, the love of everything which is in its nature

transitory? What is the cause, and what is the object of this prodigious activity, this marvelous industry which distracts the world? Man wishes enjoyment. Through so many fatigues, he seeks physical comforts, pleasures, and the satisfaction of his most material and most selfish instincts. He places the aim and object of his wishes here below, as if he were to live for ever. And this is why he never dreams of directing his steps towards the Church, the suspicion never having once crossed him that She alone possesses the secret of true life and endless happiness.

“O senseless mortals,” says the Mother of the human race, “go not to quench your thirst at the Gave, whose waters fleet rapidly by; with those ephemeral passions which falsely promise you ‘always,’ while the apparent life of the senses is but a kind of death; with those material joys, which destroy the spirit; with those waters which irritate your thirst instead of appeasing it; with those unavailing waters which afford you but a momentary illusion, and leave you in the same state of misery, wretchedness and want you experienced before! Forsake those tumultuous and agitated waves, turn your back on those billows which soon sink for ever, and on that torrent which flings itself headlong into the abyss. Come to the Fountain which quenches your thirst and calms your mind, which heals you and brings you back to life. Come and drink at the Fountain which dispenses true joy and true life, that Fountain which gushes from the unchangeable Rock on which the Church has laid her eternal foundations. Come and drink from and wash yourselves in that gushing Fountain. . . .

“Drink at the Fountain! But where is it? Where, then, in the rock of the Church is that Spring of unheard-of graces? Alas! the times are past and gone when the Church restored the power of walking to the paralytic, and sight to the blind! In vain do we fix our eyes on the unchangeable rock, our eyes do not perceive that miraculous Fountain in which the sick are healed. Either it never was in existence or its source has been dry for the last eighteen hundred years.”

Such is the view taken by the world.

“Ask and you shall receive,” say the Holy Scriptures. “If prodigies do not arise in the midst of you, as in the time of the Apostles, it is so because, being devoted to mere sensual existence, and refusing to admit anything you cannot actually see with your eyes, you do not seek for the miraculous fountain in the secrets of divine goodness. You do not see the water, you say, gush forth in the mysterious corner of the Sanctuary? Notwithstanding this, only believe, O Bernadette, and all ye children of men. Come and draw from it with the entire faith which the sucking-babe has when he glues his lips to his mother’s breast. What is Providence but our Mother? See, then, the Fountain how it gushes forth and increases in volume as its water is drawn from it, precisely in the same manner as the milk of a mother flows to the lips of her infant.”

“Drink! But this water which issues from the rock passes through impure elements! The Clergy have a thousand human thoughts and peculiar ideas which have naught to do with heaven. They have impregnated the divine Spring with earth. Wash

myself in it? Ah! I am more highly educated, less sullied by vice and more noble-minded than this priest!"

"Proud wretch, art thou not also formed of earthly clay? *Memento quod pulvis es.* Eat of the plant, humiliate thyself, and be mindful of thy origin. Does not everything with which thou art nourished pass through the earth, and does not thy daily subsistence proceed always from the clay of which thou wert formed?"

"Is the Spring dried up? Humble faith will cause it to gush forth anew. Is it muddy? Is it impure? Drink, then, copious draughts from it, and it will become clear, transparent and luminous, and the sick and the infirm will be healed by its waters. How plain is the teaching given to all the faithful! Would you effect a change for the better in the Clergy? Would you bring them back to a state of Apostolical virtue? Would you sanctify the human element of the Church? Partake of the Sacraments which are dispensed by the Priesthood. Be only sheep, and you will have pastors. Wash yourselves in the soul of your priest, and it will purify itself while it is working your purification. You have suffered the Fountain of Miracles to be lost, owing to your not availing yourselves of its use. It is by the reverse of this conduct, it is by using it that you must find it again. *Quærite et invenietis.* If you would have the gate opened to you, you must knock. If you would receive, you must demand."

VIII.

ALTHOUGH the crowd was, as we have already stated, more particularly dense in the morning at the time of Bernadette's arrival, it was not to be supposed that solitude reigned during the after part of the day at the Rocks of Massabielle. All the afternoon there was perpetual going to and fro on the road leading to the Grotto, which, from that time, was to be so celebrated. Every one examined it in all directions, many prayed in front of it, and some broke off fragments of it in order to keep them as pious *souvenirs*.

On that day, towards four o'clock, there were still five or six hundred persons, employed as above-mentioned, on the banks of the Gave.

At the same moment, a heart-rending scene was passing round a cradle in a squalid house at Lourdes, in which resided Jean Beauhohorts, a day-laborer, and his wife Croisine Ducouts.

In the cradle there lay a child about two years old, who was sickly, and of a wretched constitution. He had never been able to walk, was constantly out of health, and, from his birth, had been wasted by slow fever of a consumptive nature, which nothing had succeeded in reducing. Notwithstanding the skillful attention of a medical man of the place, M. Peyrus, the child was rapidly approaching his end. Death was spreading its livid hues on a countenance which had been reduced by protracted sufferings to a deplorable state of emaciation.

The father and mother kept their eyes fixed on

their dying child, the former, calm in his grief, while the latter seemed plunged in despair.

One of their neighbors, Françonnette Gozos was already busying herself in preparing a shroud for the poor child's burial, and, at the same time, using her best efforts to induce the mother to listen to some words of consolation.

The latter was crushed with grief, and anxiously watched the progress of the last agony of death. The child's eye had become glazed, his limbs were absolutely motionless, and his breathing was imperceptible.

"He is dead," said the father.

"If he is not dead," observed the neighbor, "he is on the point of death, my poor friend. Go and weep by the fire, while I, ere long, fold him up in his shroud."

Croisine Ducouts, the mother of the child, did not appear to hear what was said to her. A sudden idea had just taken possession of her mind, and her tears ceased to flow.

"He is not dead!" she exclaimed; "and the Holy Virgin of the Grotto is going to effect his cure for me."

"Grief has turned her head," said Beauhohorts, sadly.

He and the neighbor endeavored in vain to dissuade the mother from her project. The latter had just taken the already motionless body of her child out of the cradle and wrapped it up in her apron.

"I go at once to the Virgin!" she exclaimed making her way to the door.

"But my dear Croisine," said her husband and

Françonnette to her, "if our poor Justin is not quite dead, you are going to kill him outright."

The mother, as if beside herself with grief, refused to listen to their expostulations.

"What matters it whether he dies here or at the Grotto! Allow me to implore the mercy of the Mother of God."

Saying this she left the house, carrying the child in her arms.

As she had said, "she went at once to the Virgin." She walked at a rapid pace, praying aloud, invoking Mary, and appearing to all who met her like an insane person.

It was about five o'clock in the evening, and there were some hundreds of persons before the Rocks of Massabielle.

The poor mother forced her way through the crowd, with her precious burden in her arms. At the entrance of the Grotto she prostrated herself and prayed, after which she dragged herself on her knees towards the miraculous Spring. Her face was burning, her eyes sparkling and full of tears, and the state of disorder of her entire person proved the intensity of her grief.

She had reached the basin which had been dug by the quarry-men. The water was of an icy temperature.

"What is she going to do?" observed the spectators to themselves.

Croisine drew out of her apron the body of her dying child, which was in a state of complete nudity. She made the sign of the Cross on him and herself, and afterwards, without hesitation, and in a quick and determined manner, plunged the

child up to his neck in the icy water of the Spring.

A cry of terror, and a murmur of indignation arose from the crowd.

"The woman is insane!" they exclaimed on all sides, pressing round her to hinder her putting her plan into execution.

"Would you kill your child?" said some one to her, rudely. It seemed as if she were deaf. She remained motionless as a statue,—the statue of Sor-row, Prayer, and Faith.

One of the by-standers touched her on the shoulder. The mother turned round on this, still keeping her child in the water of the Fountain.

"Let me alone, let me alone!" she exclaimed in a voice at once energetic and beseeching. "I wish to do all in my power,—God and the Blessed Virgin will do the rest."

The complete immobility of the child and the cadaverous hues of his face, were remarked by several of those present.

"The child is already dead," they said. "Let her alone; grief has turned the poor mother's head."

No; grief had not turned her head. It led her, on the contrary, into the path of the loftiest faith, of that absolute, unhesitating, undecaying faith which God has solemnly promised never to resist. The earthly mother felt within her, that she was addressing herself to the heart of that Mother who is in heaven. Thence arose her boundless confidence which neutralized the terrible reality of the dying body she held in her hands. Doubtless, she saw as plainly as the multitude around her, that ice-cold

water, such as that in which she was plunging her child, was calculated, in ordinary circumstances, infallibly to kill the little hapless being to whom she was so fondly attached, and suddenly to terminate his agony by the stroke of death. No matter! Her arm remained steady and her Faith was strong. For a whole quarter of an hour, before the astonished eyes of the multitude, in the midst of the cries, reproaches, and insults heaped upon her by the crowd of by-standers, she kept her child immersed in the mysterious water which had but lately gushed forth at a gesture from the all-powerful Mother of that God, who, for our sins, died and rose again.

What a sublime spectacle of Catholic faith! This woman precipitated her dying child into the most imminent of earthly dangers, to find in it, in the name of the Virgin Mary, the cure which comes from heaven. Humanly speaking, she was urging him in the direction of death, in order to lead him supernaturally to life! Jesus commended the faith of the Centurion. Truly, that displayed by this poor mother strikes us as being still more worthy of admiration.

The Heart of God could not but be touched by an act of faith, at once so simple and so grand. Our Father, who is, at the same time, so invisible and so manifest, bent Himself, doubtless, at the same time as the Blessed Virgin, over so moving and religious a scene, and He blessed the Christian woman, who believed with all the fervor of primitive times.

The child had remained motionless as a corpse, during this long immersion. The mother wrapped

him once more in her apron, and hastily returned home.

His body was cold as ice.

"You see now that he is dead," said the father.

"No," said Croisine, "he is not dead! The Blessed Virgin will effect his recovery."

With these words the poor woman laid the child down in his cradle. He had scarcely been there a few moments, when the mother, having bent her ear attentively over him, suddenly exclaimed :

"He is breathing !"

Beauhohorts advanced rapidly and listened in his turn. Little Justin was certainly breathing. His eyes were closed, and he slept a calm and deep slumber.

The mother did not weep. During the evening and following night, she came every moment to listen to her child's respiration, which became stronger and more regular, and she waited with anxiety for the moment of his awaking.

This took place at break of day.

The child's emaciation had not disappeared, but there was some color in his cheeks, and his features wore an air of repose. The mild ray of life sparkled in his laughing eyes, which were turned towards his mother.

During his slumber, deep as that sent of yore by God upon Adam, the mysterious and omnipotent hand, from which every thing good emanates, had re-animated and strengthened—we dare not say re-suscitated—his body, which, but a short time before was motionless and chill.

The child sought his mother's breast and drew from it long draughts. Though he had never walk-

ed, he wished to leave his cradle and walk about the room. But Croisine, notwithstanding the courage and entire faith she had displayed the previous day, dared not trust too much in his recovery, and trembled at the thought of the danger he had escaped. She resisted the repeated solicitations of the child, and refused to remove him from the cradle.

Thus the day passed by. The child constantly demanded nourishment from his mother's breasts. Night at length came, and was passed as calmly as the one preceding it. The father and mother left the house at day-break, in order to proceed to their daily toil, and their little Justin was still sleeping in his cradle.

When the mother opened the door on her return, she almost fainted at the sight presented to her view.

The cradle was empty. Justin had risen without any assistance from where his mother had laid him; he was on his legs going to and fro, touching the different articles of furniture, and disarranging the chairs. In short, the little paralyzed child was walking.

A mother's heart alone can imagine the cry of joy emitted by Croisine at such a spectacle. She wished to rush forward, but could not, so great was her emotion. Her limbs trembled. Her sense of happiness seemed to deprive her of strength, and she supported herself against the door. A vague fear, however, in spite of herself, was mingled with her beaming happiness.

"Take care, you will fall down!" she cried out with anxiety.

He did not fall; his step was firm, and he ran and threw himself into the arms of his mother, who embraced him with tears in her eyes.

"He was cured from yesterday," thought she to herself; "since he wished to leave his cradle and walk, and I, like an infidel, have hindered him, owing to my want of faith."

"You now see that he was not dead, and that the Blessed Virgin has saved him," she observed to her husband, on his return home.

Such were the words of this happy mother.

Françonnette Gozos, who had, only two nights since, been present at what was supposed to be poor Justin's death-agony, and had arranged the shroud for his interment, happened to arrive at the same time, and could scarcely believe her eyes. She was never tired of gazing at the child, as if she wished to convince herself of his identity.

"It is certainly he!" she exclaimed. "It is certainly poor little Justin!"

They knelt down.

His mother joined the child's hands to raise them towards heaven; and, all together, they offered thanksgivings to the Mother of Mercies.

His malady never returned. Justin grew rapidly and suffered from no relapse. Since that period, eleven years have elapsed. The writer of these pages determined to see him, not very long since. He is strong and in good health; only his mother grieves that he sometimes plays truant when sent to school, and reproaches him with gadding about more than he ought.

M. Peyrus, the medical man, who had attended the child, frankly allowed the impossibility of ex-

plaining this extraordinary occurrence, according to the ordinary rules of medical science.

The Doctors Vergez and Dozons undertook, separately, an examination of this fact so highly interesting, both as regards Science and Truth, and, like M. Peyrus, they could but attribute it to the omnipotent agency of God. All united in establishing three circumstances which manifestly impressed on this cure a supernatural character,—the duration of the immersion,—its immediate effect—and the faculty of walking displayed as soon as the child had quitted his cradle.

The conclusions of M. Vergez' report were unmistakable on this head.

“A bath of cold water of a quarter of an hour's duration, in the month of February, inflicted on a child in the agony of death, must, in his opinion, and according to all the data, theoretical and experimental, of medical science, produce immediate death. For,” added the skillful physician, “if affusions of cold water, especially when applied repeatedly, may be of the utmost service in severe adynamic affections, their use is subject to certain rules which cannot be transgressed without exposing life to real danger. As a general rule, the duration of the application of cold water should not exceed a few minutes, because the depression occasioned by cold would destroy all power of reaction in the system.

“Now, the woman Ducouts, having plunged her child in the water of the Fountain, kept him in it for upwards of a quarter of an hour. She therefore sought the cure of her son by means absolutely condemned by experience and the rationale of medical science, and yet she did not on that account ob-

tain it less immediately ; for, a few moments later, he fell into a calm and deep sleep which lasted for about twelve hours. And in order that this fact should stand out in the clearest light, and that not the slightest incertitude should hover over the reality and instantaneousness of its production, the child, *who had never walked*, escaped from his cradle, and commenced walking about with the confidence which is usually only the result of practice, showing by this that this cure was effected without any intermediate state of convalescence, *in a manner altogether supernatural.*"

IX.

OTHER cures continued to take place in all directions. It would be impossible to report each particular case, not only from their number but from the fact that the author of this book has made it a rule not to bring forward anything in this class of facts of which he has not himself proved the exactitude, not only from the depositions of actual witnesses of what took place, but also from those persons who were themselves favored with such marvelous graces. Notwithstanding then the interest which attaches to every supernatural fact, we have been obliged to confine ourselves within certain limits. We have been forced, not without regret, to discard from our narrative many of these wonderful prodigies, which we had ourselves perfectly verified, and limit ourselves to producing a circumstantial history of the most striking miracles. We will, however, risk quoting from the official report of the Commission named later on to investi-

gate these events, a few of the cures which took place about this time, which were duly authenticated, and of which, consequently, the fame was spread from the very first throughout the district. The *restaurateur*, Blaise Maumus, on plunging his hand into the Spring had himself witnessed the dissolving and disappearance of an enormous wen he had in the joint of his wrist. The widow Crouzat, who had been so deaf for the last twenty years as to be unable to hear the Offices, suddenly recovered her hearing on making use of this water. In a similarly miraculous manner, Auguste Borde, who had long been lame owing to an accident, found his leg become straight again and recover its strength and natural shape. All the persons we have just mentioned belonged to Lourdes, and any one who wished it could hear from them a full account of these extraordinary facts.

X.

ON the supposition that the *Parquet*, at whose anti-superstitious tendencies we have already hinted, were right in the decision they had come to of denying every thing connected with the Apparition, they had, in these miracles, so publicly attested and proclaimed, an excellent opportunity of instituting a rigid investigation and of prosecuting, if necessary, the authors or propagators of these reports, calculated as they were to lead astray the public conscience and trouble the minds of many. Unlike the Apparitions which had been visible to Bernadette alone, these cures were open to universal scrutiny. They were numerous, and, far from being

isolated cases, they already mounted to five and twenty or thirty. They were within reach of any one who wished to investigate them. Every one might verify, study, or analyze them in order to recognize their truth or demonstrate that they were false.

The Supernatural was abandoning the invisible: it was becoming material and palpable to the senses. In the persons of the sick restored to health, of paralytics who recovered the power of motion, it appealed to all, as did Jesus Christ to the Apostle Thomas, "Look at my feet, look at my hands. See these darkened eyes which have refound the blessings of light. Look at those restored to life who were but now in the agony of death; those now hearing who were formerly deaf; those now running with the agility of strength and health who not long since were lame." The Supernatural had, so to speak, incarnated itself in all these incurables who had been cured so suddenly, and, publicly attesting its own claims, courted inquiry, investigation and prosecution. It became possible, if we may be permitted to use such an expression, to lay violent hands upon it and arrest it like any other criminal.

Here lay, as every one perceived, the very core of the question. Some satisfactory method of treating these inconceivable facts, which were so entirely opposed to all received notions, must be discovered. There was therefore hardly any one who did not endeavor to guess the crafty and energetic means which would be employed by that fraction of the official world which had hitherto displayed so firm a resolution of unceasingly persecuting and finally crushing fanaticism.

What kind of interrogatories would be instituted by the Police? With what kind of judicial examinations would the *Parquet* commence? To what severe measures would the Administration have recourse? The Administration, the *Parquet*, and the Police did nothing at all, and directing their attention in other quarters, did not think it advisable to run any risk in a public investigation of facts so notorious and so bruited abroad over the whole surrounding district.

What was the meaning of this singular forbearance in presence of such striking prodigies? It meant that Incredulity acts prudently.

Even in the midst of their transport and passion, parties, religious as well as political, have sometimes a certain instinct of self-preservation which warns them of the extreme danger into which they are on the point of rushing and forces them to recoil. They cease all at once to advance towards the logical development of their situation and have not courage to attack their enemy on that decisive point towards which they were blindly hurrying, uttering triumphant shouts in anticipation of victory. They are suddenly brought to understand that they would be entirely, suddenly and hopelessly vanquished, and that such a line of action can only terminate in their death. In such a case what do they do? They retrace their steps and carry on a guerilla warfare on less dangerous ground.

This is all very well in military affairs; but in the order of ideas it appears difficult to reconcile this kind of prudence with entire sincerity of belief. It supposes a vague disquietude as to the value of our own line of argument, and a vague presentiment of

the absolute certainty of the things we are opposing. To fear to face the investigation of any fact, the existence of which would lead to the entire overthrow of such or such a doctrine, is to declare ourselves that we have internal doubts of what we assert so boldly ; it is to show that we fear the truth to be known ; it is to take to flight without attempting the struggle and to tremble at the approach of light.

Such were the reflections that occurred to the strongest minds in the place on perceiving this retreat and withdrawal of actual hostilities in presence of the events which were occurring.

Incredulity ought to have been convinced, but such was not the case. It was only disconcerted and overwhelmed by the force of circumstances, by the evidence adduced and by the sudden invasion of the Supernatural. Those know but little of the human heart who think that the most conclusive and indubitable proofs are sufficient to bring men, who have already made up their mind, to a humble acknowledgment of their error. The free-will of man has the terrible power of resisting every thing—even God Himself.

It is in vain that the Sun gives light to the world and illuminates the infinite space in which the globes of our universe pursue their course : we have only to shut our eyes in order to resist his omnipotence and to extinguish his very being. The soul also as well as the body may in the same manner shut its senses to the light of truth. The darkness does not proceed from the weakness of the understanding : it is the result of an act of the will, which persists and takes pleasure in its self-imposed blindness.

However, in matters of this kind, men feel the necessity of a certain amount of self-deception, and to quiet their consciences are obliged to keep up the show of sincerity. They have not sufficient determination to deny or to oppose resolutely and face to face what is plainly acknowledged to be truth. What then is their line of conduct? They make it their study to remain in a kind of obscurity, which permits them to struggle against truth without seeing clearly, and which serves them in some measure as an excuse. Forgetting that ignorance, when voluntary, does not remove responsibility, they reserve to themselves the right of replying: "Nay, Lord, I was ignorant," and for this reason they make up their minds to deny every thing, and limit themselves to shrugging their shoulders without caring or wishing to take the trouble of getting to the bottom of things. The contempt which they affect outside is but the hypocrisy of the fear they experience within.

Thus it was that the incredulous, brought face to face with the supernatural cures which were being effected on all sides, refused to give themselves the trouble of examination, and dared not hazard investigation. Notwithstanding the challenges issued to them and the raileries of those who believed, they turned a deaf ear to whatever tended to produce a public debate on these miraculous cures. They affected not to busy themselves with the divine phenomena which were submitted to their senses, which were notorious, which claimed universal attention and might have been easily studied, continuing to produce theories on hallucinations—a vague and mist-clad region, in which they might

talk and declaim at their ease, without being felled by the stubbornness of facts which were palpable, manifest and impossible to gainsay.

The supernatural, therefore, courted discussion, and that to the furthest extent. The Free-thinkers declined the challenge and beat a retreat. By so doing they acknowledged their own discomfiture and condemnation.

XI.

THE philosophers of unbelief, irritated by these events they appeared to despise, and in regard to which they dared not risk the decisive proof of a public investigation, sought other means of ridding themselves of such stubborn facts. They had recourse to a manœuvre which in its extreme cleverness and machiavelic type showed all the resources of intellect which hatred of the Supernatural induced the cluster of Free-thinkers to employ. Instead of investigating the miracles which were really true, they invented false ones, reserving to themselves the right of exposing the imposture at a later period. Their journals made no mention, either of Louis Bourriette, or of the child of Croisine Ducouts, or of Blaise Maumus, or of the widow Crozat, or of Marie Daube, or of Bernarde Soubie, or of Fabien Baron, or of Jean Crassus, or of Auguste Borde, or in fact of hundreds of others. But they treacherously fabricated an imaginary legend, hoping to propagate it by means of the press, and refute it at their ease later on.

This assertion may appear strange, but we assert nothing without having the proofs in our hands.

“Do not be astonished,” observed the journal of the Prefecture, the *Ère Impériale*, “if there are still to be found persons who persist in maintaining that the young girl is predestinated and endowed with supernatural power. For them it is affirmed,

“1. That a dove hovered the day before yesterday over the head of the child during the time her state of ecstasy lasted.

“2. That the young girl has breathed on the eyes of a little blind child and restored her sight.

“3. That she has cured another child whose arm was paralyzed.

“4. Lastly, that a peasant from the valley of Campan, having declared that he was not the dupe of these scenes of hallucination, the little girl had the same evening procured his fish to be turned into snakes, which snakes devoured this irreverential man, leaving no trace of his bones.”

As to the real cures, the miracles fully authenticated, and the bursting forth of the fountain, the crafty editor took good care not to mention them. With no less art, he did not give any names, in order to avoid being contradicted.

“Such is the present state of things, and all this might have been obviated at Lourdes if the parents of the girl had followed the advice of the medical men and sent her to the hospital.”

We may remark that none of the medical men had up to that time offered advice of the kind.

After having invented these fables, the pious and judicious writer sounded the alarm in the name of reason and the faith

“Such is the opinion,” he continued, “of all reasonable people, who are actuated by feelings of real piety, who have a real love and respect for religion, who look upon the mania of superstition as highly dangerous, and who hold fast to the principle that the Church alone is competent to pronounce on the genuineness of miraculous facts.”

The remarkable diplomacy which had dictated these articles, was worthily crowned by this devout ebullition of faith and this closing genuflexion. Such are the ordinary formularies of all those who would reduce to the confined limits of their own systems the position which it pleases God to occupy in this nether world. As regards the last affirmation propounded as a principle, when miraculous facts are in question, is it necessary to say that they command respect or not, according to their own merits, as indeed do all facts, and derive their peculiar character, not from the Church, by which they are only recognized, but from God himself, by whose power they are directly produced? The decision of the Church does not create a miracle, it only authenticates it, and on her authoritative examination and affirmation the faithful believe. But no law, either as regards faith or reason prevents christians, who are witnesses of a fact plainly supernatural, from recognizing, of their own accord, its miraculous character. Such an abdication of their reason and common sense has never been exacted from believers by the Church. She only reserves to herself the right of judging without appeal in the last resort.

“It does not appear up to the present moment,” were the closing words of the article, “that the

religious authorities have thought what is going on worthy of any serious attention."

On this last point, the editor of the journal which supported the views of the Administration was in error, as our readers have already learned in the course of this narration. However, this observation of his—and in this respect at least it was of great value—proved for futurity and for History, that the Clergy had been entire strangers to the events which had taken place up to that moment, and that those events were continuing to take place without the slightest connivance on their part.

The poor *Lavedan*, the local organ of Lourdes, though placed in the very centre of all that was occurring, felt itself crushed by the stubbornness of facts, and had all at once subsided into absolute silence. This silence was destined to endure for several weeks. It never alluded in the most distant manner to these events, so unheard of in their nature, or to the immense concourse of people they attracted. You would have thought it was published for the benefit of readers in some other quarter of the globe, had not its columns been filled with articles borrowed in all directions from the public prints and directed against Superstition in general.

XII.

DURING the period of the manifestation of the Apparitions, the popular movement had been favored with the most magnificent weather. There had been an uninterrupted series of fine days, such as had not been experienced for many years past.

From the fifth of March, there was a change in the weather and a heavy fall of snow. The severity of the season naturally abated for some days the concourse of visitors to the Grotto.

The miraculous cures, however, increased in number. Benoite Cazeaux, a most respectable inhabitant of Lourdes, had been confined to her bed for three years by a slow fever accompanied with pains in her side, and all her applications to the medical men of the place had been fruitless. A course of baths at Gazost had proved equally unavailing towards the recovery of her health.

The medical men had become disheartened by the unsuccessful issue of all their efforts, and had ceased to visit the poor woman, regarding her as incurable. Finding herself in this desperate situation, she had had recourse to Our Lady of Lourdes, and her supposed incurable malady had suddenly disappeared in consequence of drinking one or two glasses of water from the Grotto, and the application of some lotions.

Another woman, Blaisette Soupenne, of Lourdes, about fifty years of age, had been suffering for several years from a chronic affection in her eyes, and her state was truly pitiable. In technical terms, it was a Blepharitis accompanied with atrophy. A continual flow of tears from the eyes, severe smarting pains sometimes at the same time, sometimes alternately; an eversion of the eyelids and total disappearance of the eye-lashes, the two lower lids being covered with a multitude of fleshy warts—such was the disastrous state of this unfortunate woman. It was in vain she applied lotions of cold water several times a day to her eyes, employed all

the remedies prescribed by her medical advisers, or sought some relief at the baths of Barèges, Cautarèts and Gazost—everything had been a failure. Abandoned by man, she had turned herself towards the Divine Goodness which had manifested itself at the Grotto. Pronounced incurable by medical science, she had addressed herself to Faith, and had besought the miraculous Lady to remove from her that cruel malady which had defied the skill of men and the agency of natural remedies. She received great relief on the application of the first lotion. At the second application, which took place the following day, the cure was complete. Tears ceased to flow from her eyes, the eyelids resumed their natural form, and the fleshy warts disappeared. From that very day the eye-lashes grew again.

In the opinion of the medical men called in to examine the above case, the supernatural effect in this marvelous cure was rendered more obvious from the fact “that the material injury,” they said, “was more striking, and that to the rapid re-establishment of the tissues in their normal and organic condition, was added the restoration of the eyelids to their original form and position. The importance of this fact is so much the greater as the malady in question is one of the most difficult to treat successfully, and in the stage it had reached in the case of Blaisette Soupenne, necessitated a surgical operation, such as the excision of the palpebral mucous membrane, or at least a severe cauterization of the swellings and fleshy pimples of that membrane.”

These wonderful events increased daily in num-

ber. God proceeded in His work. The Blessed Virgin afforded ample display of her omnipotence.

XIV.

SINCE the last day of the Quinzaine, Bernadette had several times re-visited the Grotto, but much like any other simple individual, that is to say, without hearing in her heart the irresistible voice which was wont to summon her to the spot.

She heard this voice, however, once more on the twenty-fifth of March, in the course of the morning, and immediately proceeded towards the Rocks of Massabielle. Her countenance was beaming with hope. She felt within herself that she was going to see the Apparition once more, and that Paradise would throw its eternal gates half open to her ravished eyes.

It may be easily conceived that she had become ere this an object of general attention at Lourdes, and she could not take a step without becoming "the observed of all observers."

"Bernadette is going to the Grotto," was the observation of the one to the other as she was seen passing by.

A moment afterwards, a crowd, issuing from all the houses and collecting from all the alleys, rushed in the same direction and reached the Grotto at the same time with the child.

In the valley, the snow had melted within the last two or three days, but still remained on the crests of the neighboring peaks. The weather was fine and clear, and not a speck was to be seen in the

calm blue of the firmament. The sun seemed to rise with royal pomp from the bosom of the white mountains and threw a splendor over his cradle of snow.

It was the anniversary of the day on which the Angel Gabriel had descended to the purest of virgins, the Virgin of Nazareth, and had saluted her in the name of the Lord. The Church was celebrating the feast of the Annunciation.

While the crowd was hurrying to the Grotto, and amongst it might be noticed the greater number of those who had been cured—Louis Bourriette, the widow Crouzat, Blaisette Soupenne, Benoitte Cazeaux, Auguste Bordes, and twenty more, the Catholic Church, at the close of her morning office, was intoning those wonderful words, "At that moment shall the eyes of the blind be opened, the ears of the deaf shall recover their hearing, the lame shall leap like the deer, for the waters have burst forth in the desert, and torrents in the wilderness."

Bernadette had not been deceived by the joyful presentiment she had felt. The voice which had called her was the voice of the faithful Virgin.

As soon as the child had fallen on her knees the Apparition made herself manifest. As ever before, an ineffable aureole beamed around her, of boundless splendor and infinite sweetness; it was like the eternal glory of absolute peace. As ever before, her veil and her robe falling in chaste folds were white like the glistening snow. The two roses which blossomed on her feet had the yellow tinge which pervades the base of heaven at the first light of the virgin dawn. Her girdle was blue as the azure firmament.

Bernadette, plunged in ecstasy, had forgotten earth in the presence of her spotless beauty.

"O Lady," she said to her, "would you have the goodness to inform me who you are and what is your name?"

The queenly Apparition smiled but gave no reply. But at that very moment, the Universal Church, proceeding with the solemn prayers of her Office, was exclaiming:

"O holy and immaculate Virginity, what praises can I give unto Thee? In truth, I know not, for thou hast borne in thy womb Him whom the Heavens cannot contain."

Bernadette heard not these distant voices, nor could she surmise these profound harmonies. Notwithstanding the silence on the part of the Vision, she urged her request, and repeated:

"O Lady, would you have the kindness to inform me who you are and what is your name?"

The Apparition appeared to become more radiant, as if her joy kept increasing, and yet she did not reply to the child's question. But the Church, spread over the whole of Christendom, was continuing her prayers and chaunts and had reached those words:

"Wish me joy, all ye who love the Lord, for when I was yet a child, the Most High hath loved me, and from my womb was produced the God-Man. All generations shall proclaim me Blessed, for God hath deigned to regard the lowliness of his hand-maiden; and from my womb was produced the God-Man."

Bernadette redoubled the urgency of her request and pronounced for the third time the words:

“O Lady, would you have the kindness to inform me who you are and what is your name?”

The Apparition appeared to enter more and more into the glory of beatitude, and as if absorbed in her own felicity, continued to return no answer. But, by an extraordinary coincidence the universal choir of the Church was at that moment bursting forth into a song of joy and pronouncing the earthly name of the marvelous Apparition, “Hail Mary, full of Grace, the Lord is with Thee, blessed art Thou among women.”

Bernadette pronounced once more these suppliant words :

“O Lady, I beseech you, have the kindness to inform me who you are and what is your name?”

The hands of the Apparition were clasped with fervor and her countenance was radiant with the splendors of infinite beatitude. It was Humility crowned with Glory. At the same time that Bernadette was contemplating the Vision, the Vision was doubtless contemplating, in the bosom of the divine Trinity, God the Father of whom She was the daughter, God the Holy Ghost of whom She was the Spouse, and God the Son of whom She was the Mother.

At the last question of the child She unclasped her hands, slipping over Her right arm the chaplet, whose alabaster beads were strung on a golden thread. She then opened both of Her arms and bent them towards the ground, as if to show to the earth Her Virgin hands, full of blessings. Afterwards, raising them towards the eternal region, from which on that very day centuries before the divine Messenger of the Annunciation had de-

scended, She joined them again fervently, and gazing up to Heaven with an expression of unspeakable gratitude, she pronounced the following words:

“I am the Immaculate Conception.”

Thus saying, She disappeared, and the child, like the multitude, found herself opposite a solitary rock.

At her side, the miraculous Fountain, falling through its wooden conduit into its rustic basin, soothed the ear with the peaceful murmur of its waters.

It was the day and the hour, when Holy Church was intoning in her Office the magnificent hymn,—
“O most glorious of Virgins.”

O Gloriosa Virginum,
Sublimis inter sidera.

XIV.

THE Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ had not said,—“I am Mary, the Immaculate; She had said,—“I am the Immaculate Conception,” as if to mark the absolute, and, as it were, substantial character of the divine privilege granted to Her alone since Adam and Eve were created by God. It is as if she had said, not, “I am pure,” but, “I am purity itself;” not, “I am a Virgin,” but, “I am the incarnate and living Virginity;” not, “I am white,” but, “I am whiteness!”

Any thing that is white may cease to be so; but, Whiteness is always white. It is its essence and not its quality.

Mary is more than conceived without sin: She is

the Immaculate Conception itself ; the essential and superior type ; the archetype of unsullied humanity, of humanity as it proceeded from the hands of God, without having been tainted by the original stain, by the impure element which the fault of our first Parents mixed with the very source of that vast river of generations, which has flowed for the last six thousand years, and of which, each of us, is a fleeting wave.

What would you do, if you wished to draw water pure from a muddy spring? You would pass it through a filter, and the water clears itself of its grosser elements. You then pass it through a second filter, then through a third, and so on. The time soon comes when the water becomes entirely pure and clear,—a liquid diamond. In the same manner did God act, when the original Spring was troubled. He chose a particular family in this world, and watched over it from age to age, from Seth unto Noah, from Shem unto David, from David even unto Joachim and Anne, the parents of the Blessed Virgin. And, when this human blood was thus filtered, so to speak, in spite of the accidents of some intermediate guilty persons, through nearly fifty generations of patriarchs and just men, there came into the world a creature absolutely pure ; a creature without stain ; a daughter of Adam entirely immaculate. She was called Mary, and Her fruitful Virginity produced Jesus Christ.

The Virgin, at that moment, had desired to attest by her presence and her miracles, the last dogma defined by the Church, and proclaimed by St. Peter, speaking by the voice of Pius IX.

It was the first time in her life that the little shep-

herd-girl, to whom the divine Virgin had just appeared, had heard the words: "Immaculate Conception;" and, being entirely ignorant of their meaning, she exerted herself to the utmost on her way back to Lourdes to retain them in her memory. "I repeated them to myself all along the road, in order not to forget them," she told us, one day; "and, up to the very door of the presbytery to which I was going, I kept saying, *Immaculate Conception, Immaculate Conception*, at each step I made, as I wished to take to the Curé the exact words of the Vision, in order that the chapel might be built."





FIFTH BOOK.

I.

THE question which had mounted from M. Ja-comet to the Prefect had continued its upward flight, and reached the Ministry of Public Worship.

On the 12th and 26th of March, the Prefect had sent in his reports to his Excellency, confining himself, until an answer was received, to the steps we have already mentioned.

The Ministry of Public Worship was not then, as is the case now, united to the department of Justice, but to that of Public Instruction. Monsieur Rouland was the Minister.

Formerly *Procureur Général*, and at the date of our story, Minister of Public Instruction, M. Rouland had, at one and the same time, in regard to religious matters, the traditional and suspicious formalism of the old parliamentary body, and the ideas and feelings current in the University of France. Of a dogmatic turn of mind, deeply convinced of his own importance, his very philosophy tinged with sectarianism, an extravagant admirer of his own wisdom, and easily irritated against any thing which did not square with his own systematic ideas, M. Rouland was unable to admit for one moment the reality of

the Visions and Miracles at Lourdes. Such being the case, though at a distance of two hundred and fifty leagues from the spot where the events occurred, and having no other documents than two letters received from the Prefect, he solved the question with that decisive tone which settles matters of importance without even condescending to discuss them. Notwithstanding the advice he gave the Prefect to act prudently, it was plain that he had decided in his own mind not to tolerate either the Apparitions or the Miracles. As was always the case, in similar circumstances, the Minister assumed the attitude of a defender of the interests of religion. We subjoin a copy of the letter written by him to M. Massy, bearing date the twelfth of April.

“MONSIEUR LE PREFET:

“I have examined the reports, which you had the goodness to forward to me on the twelfth and twenty-sixth of April, on the subject of a pretended apparition of the Virgin, said to have occurred in a Grotto at no great distance from the town of Lourdes. It is of importance, in my opinion, to put a stop to proceedings which would result in compromising the true interests of Catholicism, and weakening the religious feeling of the population of the district.

“*Legally, no one can establish an oratory or place of public worship, without the double authorization of the civil and religious authorities.* We should then be justified, were we to carry out the law rigorously, in immediately closing the Grotto, which has been transformed into a kind of chapel.

“But, serious inconveniences would, in all probability, arise from putting this law *suddenly* into force. It would, therefore, be better to confine ourselves to preventing the youthful visionary from revisiting the Grotto, and to taking such measures as shall insensibly divert public attention, by rendering the visits to the spot less frequent from day to day. I could not, however, Monsieur le Préfet, give you more precise instructions at the present moment: it is a question which requires most especially tact, prudence and firmness, and, in this respect, any recommendations from me are unnecessary.

“It will be indispensable for you to act in concert with the Clergy; and I cannot lay too much stress on the advisability of your communicating, personally, with the Bishop of Tarbes in this delicate affair, and I authorize you to tell the Prelate, *from me, that I do not think it expedient to permit a state of things to continue unchecked, which cannot fail of affording a pretext for fresh attacks on the Clergy and Religion.*”

II.

ON the strength of this letter, M. Massy addressed himself to the Bishop, begging him, formally, to prohibit Bernadette from repairing in future to the Grotto. He naturally brought forward the interests of religion, which were compromised by these hallucinations or deceptions, and the deplorable effect which things of this nature were producing on all serious minds, which sincerely sought to reconcile Catholicism with sound philosophy and modern ideas. As to the supposition of there being any re-

ality in the Apparitions, M. Massy, following in the wake of M. Rouland, did not deign to notice it. The Prefect and the Minister agreed in treating such superstitions with contempt.

The Prefect was clever, but the Bishop in his turn was shrewd, and it was not easy to pass off on him the shadow for the substance. Monseigneur Laurence discerned, clearly, two things :

The first was, that the Authorities (and, by this word, we understood only the Prefect and the Minister, who happened to be in power for the time being), would have been very glad to have put the Clergy prominently forward, while, at the same time, they dictated to them their course of action. Now, Monseigneur Laurence had too high a sense of his duties as Bishop to become a mere tool in the hands of others.

The second was, that the Minister possibly and the Prefect certainly were tempted to have recourse to violent measures, that is to say, to oppose material force to opinion. Now, Monseigneur Laurence was too prudent not to exert every effort in order to avoid an evil of such magnitude.

It was necessary therefore for him, on the one hand to resist energetically the pressure brought to bear upon him by the Civil Authorities, and on the other not to irritate them ; to reject their unreasonable demands as inadmissible, and at the same time to maintain a spirit of harmony.

Amidst these difficulties of so opposite a nature, the Bishop succeeded in steering a middle course.

At the same time that he stemmed the popular enthusiasm which urged him to proclaim the Miracle officially, he resisted the Minister and the Pre-

fect, who requested him to condemn it without investigation. Impassible in the midst of the agitations of the multitude, and the blind prejudices of men in power, he was determined not to pronounce his judgment until he was thoroughly acquainted with the merits of the case, to refrain from any premature decision and to keep the future in reserve. However, perceiving as he did, the undisguisedly hostile disposition of the Administration, he recognized it to be his duty to do all in his power to prevent the Civil Authorities from betaking themselves to deplorable acts of violence. They must be deprived of all pretext for adopting such a line of conduct. Since the Temporal Power inclined towards inconsiderate measures, the Spiritual Power must have prudence for both. Since the Prefect had not prudence enough, the Bishop must have it in excess: it was in his opinion, the only way of having enough.

III.

MONSEIGNEUR Laurence, as we have already observed, was still in a state of doubt as to the judgment he should form on the events which had occurred at Lourdes. Not being on the spot, not seeing directly the marvels which were in process of accomplishment, and deriving what little knowledge he had of them from the reports of ecclesiastics who had not themselves been eye-witnesses of the facts, he had not yet come to any full conviction. He was waiting.

Under these circumstances, to formally prohibit Bernadette from going to the Grotto when she

felt herself called to the place by a voice from on high, would have been to attack the most sacred liberty the soul can enjoy, and this, Churchmen can respect even in a child: but to employ words of council and to pledge Bernadette not to repair to the Rocks of Massabielle, unless under the immediate influence of that irresistible suggestion, this was what the Bishop deemed it prudent to order the Curé of Lourdes to undertake, in order to prevent, as far as lay in his power, the Civil Authorities from entering on the dangerous path of persecution, to which his admirable foresight shewed him they were tending.

What in reality held the Prefect back, was not so much a question of principle as a personal consideration. He felt he must look twice before attempting a religious *coup d'état* with a Prelate so universally venerated as Monseigneur Laurence, more especially after having lived with him up to that moment in the most perfect harmony. Baron Massy was too deeply imbued with the political feeling of the affairs of administration not to hesitate in breaking up this feeling of cordiality, and in violently invading a jurisdiction which belonged of right to the Bishop, and to him only.

IV.

EASTER-SUNDAY had arrived. Notwithstanding the pious apprehensions of the Minister of Public Worship, the marvelous occurrences at Lourdes had not "weakened the religious feeling of the population of the district." Numberless conver-

sions had taken place, and the confessionals were in a state of siege. Usurers and robbers had made restitution of their ill-gotten gains, and many scandals had ceased. The Faithful crowded to the Holy Table.

On Easter-Monday, the fifth of April, that is to say the very day the Prefect had visited the Bishop, the Mother of God had once more by an internal call, summoned the daughter of the miller, and the child, soon followed by an immense crowd, had repaired to the Grotto, where, as on the preceding days, the Heavens had opened themselves before her eyes, and displayed to her the Virgin Mary in a state of glory.

That day a very singular occurrence took place before the wonder-struck eyes of the multitude.

The taper, which Bernadette had either brought with her, or received from one of the bystanders, was of considerable size and she had rested it on the ground, supporting it at the bottom between the fingers of her hands, which were half clasped. The Virgin appeared to her. And behold, by an instinctive movement of adoration, the youthful Seer, falling in a state of ecstasy before the Immaculate Beauty, slightly raised her hands and let them rest calmly, and without thinking of what she was doing, on the lighted end of the taper. And then the flame began to pass between her fingers, which were half open, and to mount above them, flickering in different directions, according as the light breeze blew. Bernadette, however, remained motionless and absorbed in the heavenly contemplation, utterly unconscious of the phenomenon which caused so much astonishment to the multitude

around her. Those who witnessed it pressed closely on each other in order to obtain a better view. M.M. Jean-Louis Fourcade, Martinou, Estrade, Callet, warden of the forest, the demoiselles Tard'hivail, and a hundred other persons were spectators of this unheard of incident. M. Dozons had remarked by his watch that this extraordinary state lasted more than a quarter of an hour. All at once a slight shudder was perceptible in the frame of Bernadette. Her features lost their lofty expression. The Vision had vanished and the child resumed her natural state. The bystanders seized her hand but it presented nothing unusual to the eye. The flame had spared the flesh of the youthful Seer during her ecstasy at the feet of Mary. The crowd, not without sufficient reasons, exclaimed that a Miracle had been performed. One of the spectators however, wishing to test the fact, took the taper which was still lighted and applied it to Bernadette's hand, without her being aware of what he was doing.

"Ah! Sir," she exclaimed, drawing back quickly, "you are burning me."

The occurrences at Lourdes had produced such an excitement in the surrounding districts, and the influx of strangers was so great, that on that day the multitude which had in a moment flocked around Bernadette amounted to nearly ten thousand persons, and these had not been warned beforehand, as was the case during the Quinzaine.

V.

SOME young women of Lourdes, of exemplary virtue, among whom we will only mention by name, Marie Courrège, a pious servant-maid respected by every one, had the same vision as Bernadette, at the Grotto, separately, twice or thrice. This was vaguely rumored abroad, but had no influence on the mass of the public. Some little children had also visions, but of a perfectly distinct and rather alarming nature. When the divine Supernatural manifests itself, the diabolical Supernatural strives to mingle itself with it. This is a truth proved in almost every page of the history of the Fathers of the Desert and of the Mystics. The abyss was troubled and the Evil Angel had recourse to his counterfeits for the purpose of troubling the souls of believers.

These various facts, which did not attract much observation at the time, are not sufficiently precise (more especially as some of their details have been forgotten) to be consigned to the pages of History. We merely point them out that we may not incur the blame of neglect. The true visions were only important so far as they affected individuals, the remainder died away of themselves.

VI.

THE road to the Rocks of Massabielle continued to be thronged. Never did an uproarious cry escape from the crowd, nor was there any agitation in this popular stream whose waves were incen-

santly renewed. Canticles, litanies, *vivats* in honor of the Virgin were all that struck the ear, and all that M. Jacomet and his police could register in their Reports. It was something more than order, it was a state of pious recollection.

The artizans of Lourdes had widened the road which had been laid out some fifteen or twenty days previously on the slopes of Massabielle, by the quarry-men; they had blown up the rock with powder, and reduced it in many places, so that they had made a broad and very commodious road on those precipitous declivities. It was a work of considerable toil, requiring trouble, time, and outlay of money. These good-hearted fellows devoted themselves to the task every evening, on their return from the work-yards in which they were employed from morning to night. They rested from the toil of their hard day's work in laboring at this road, which led the way to God: *In labore requies*. Towards night-fall they might be seen clinging like a nest of ants to the side of the steep descent, digging, wheeling barrows, boring the rock, inserting powder and shivering vast blocks of marble or granite.

"Who will pay you?" they were asked.

"The Blessed Virgin," was the reply.

Before retiring from their labor, they descended all together into the Grotto and offered up their prayers in common.

In the midst of this magnificence of nature, beneath that lovely starry heaven, these christian scenes offered a spectacle of simplicity and grandeur redolent of the primitive ages of the Church.

The outward appearance of the Grotto gradually

changed. Up to that date tapers had been burned in it as a sign of veneration. About this time there were placed in it vases of flowers, either growing naturally or arranged in bouquets by pious hands, statues of the Virgin and ex-votos as marks of gratitude. A small balustrade had been erected by the workmen to protect these fragile articles from the involuntary accidents which might have happened from the too great eagerness of the throng.

Several persons, having received some special grace by the intervention of Our Lady of Lourdes, brought with them by way of homage to the place of the Vision their little gold cross and chain, and placed their pious offering under the guardianship of the public faith. As it was from that time the general cry of the country that the command of the Apparition must be obeyed, and a chapel erected, it became the custom to throw pieces of money into the Grotto. Considerable sums, amounting to several thousand francs lay consequently exposed in the open air, without any outward protection, night and day: and such was the respect inspired by this spot, a short time before entirely unknown—such was the moral effect produced on souls, that not a single evil-doer was to be met with in the whole country to attempt a sacrilegious robbery. But what made this more wonderful was the fact that, a few months previously several churches in the neighbourhood had been plundered. The Virgin willed not that the slightest *souvenir* of crime should be connected with the origin of the pilgrimage it was her wish to establish.

VII.

A SINGULAR circumstance, which perhaps passed unnoticed at the time, derived importance from what followed, and struck the attention of many. We cannot refrain from pointing it out.

One of the highest privileges of sovereignty is the right of granting pardon, and when a king wishes to solemnize his accession to the throne, he issues an amnesty to those who have made themselves amenable to the law.

The power of the Queen of Heaven was greater, and she exerted it in a higher degree. She willed that there should not be any guilty of crime. The Apparitions which had already taken place, and those which took place later on, were spread over two periods of three months; at the commencement of each of which the assizes were held. Now during these two judicial quarters, *there was not a single crime committed or a single criminal condemned*, throughout the Department. The session of the March assizes had only to examine a single case anterior to the date of the Apparitions, and this single case terminated in an acquittal. The next session, which was to be in June, had only two cases to pronounce upon, *both connected with occurrences anterior to this same period*.

It appears to us that this wonderful coincidence, this mysterious mark of divine influence which hovered over the whole country, this entirely extraneous proof, this moral prodigy, this miracle extending over a whole diocese, is eminently calculated to afford food for reflection to the most

frivolous minds. How came it that during so long a time the arm of the criminal was stayed? Is that imposture, hallucination or calalepsy? How was it that the sword of justice was not required to strike a blow? How came this peace, this truce of God? *precisely at that very moment.* Setting aside the reason we have assigned, we challenge unbelief to endeavor to discover the cause of this surprising fact, of this strange coincidence. It will make the attempt in vain.

The Queen of Heaven had passed by, the Queen of Heaven had left her blessing.

Bernadette received constant visits from the innumerable strangers whom piety or curiosity brought in crowds to Lourdes. They were of all classes, of all professions, and of every school of philosophy. No one was offended at the simple and sincere language of the youthful Seer; no one after seeing her and hearing her speak dared to say that she was telling falsehoods.

In the midst of excited parties and numberless discussions, this little girl, by an inconceivable privilege, inspired every one with respect, and was never, for a single moment, exposed to the attacks of calumny. Such was the halo of her innocence, that she was never personally assailed: she was protected by an invisible ægis.

Bernadette was, in every respect, a child of very ordinary intelligence, but she seemed to rise above herself whenever she had to bear testimony to the truth of the Apparition. She was never discomposed by any objection.

Her answers, at times, displayed considerable depth of thought. M. de Resseguier, Counselor-

General and formerly Deputy for the Basses-Pyrénées, came to see her, accompanied by several ladies of his family. He made her enter into the most minute details connected with the Visions. On Bernadette telling him that the Apparition expressed herself in the *patois* of Béarn, he exclaimed:

"You are not telling the truth, my child! God and the Blessed Virgin do not understand your *patois*, and know nothing of such a miserable dialect."

"If they did not know it," she replied, "how could we know it ourselves? And if they did not understand it, who could render us capable of understanding it?"

Her repartees were not deficient in wit.

"How could the Blessed Virgin have ordered you to eat grass? Did she take you for a beast of the field," observed a sceptic to her one day.

"Do you think of that when you are eating salad?" she replied, smiling archly.

Her answers were remarkable for their artless simplicity. This same M. de Rességuier happened to be speaking to her of the beauty of the Apparition at the Grotto.

"Was she as beautiful as any of the company now present," he asked her.

Bernadette glanced slowly round the charming circle of ladies, married and unmarried, who had accompanied her visitor, and with almost a little pout of disdain she replied:

"Oh! it was quite a different thing from *all that*!"

"All that," was the *élite* of the society of Pau.

She used to disconcert those who proposed to her

subtle questions in hopes of causing her embarrassment.

"If the Curé were to formally prohibit your going to the Grotto, what would you do?" some one said to her.

"I would obey him."

"But if you received at the same time from the Apparition a command to repair thither, how would you act between these two contrary orders?"

The child without the slightest hesitation answered at once:

"I should go to ask permission from the Curé."

Nothing either then or later caused her to lose her graceful simplicity. She never spoke of the Apparition unless she was interrogated on the subject. She always regarded herself as the most backward of all the children at the school superintended by the Sisters, who found some difficulty in teaching her to read and write. The mind of this child was elsewhere, or, if we dared to penetrate the recesses of her exquisite nature so imbued with grace, we would rather say her soul, which doubtless felt little curiosity towards mere earthly learning, was playing truant in the thickets of Paradise.

During the hours of recreation she was confounded with the rest of her companions. She liked to play.

Sometimes a visitor, it might be a stranger from a distance, requested the Sisters to show him this youthful Seer, this being so privileged by the Lord, this beloved of the Virgin, this Bernadette whose name had already acquired so much celebrity.

"There she is," said the Sister, pointing her out with her finger among the rest of the children.

The visitor on turning his eyes in that direction beheld a little weakly child, miserably dressed, playing at base, blind-man's buff, or with her skipping rope, entirely taken up with the pleasures of childhood. But what she preferred to any thing else was to figure as the thirtieth or fortieth in one of those immense circles which children make, holding each others hands and singing all the while.

The Mother of God, while visiting Bernadette, while allotting to her the part of a witness of divine things, while making her the center of vast throngs, and as it were, an object of pilgrimage, had, by a miracle greater than all the others, protected her candor and her innocence, and had granted her the extraordinary, nay, divine gift, of remaining a child.

IX.

IT was not only at Lourdes that miraculous cures had taken place. Many, whose maladies prevented them from repairing to the Grotto had procured some of the water and found their most inveterate symptoms suddenly disappear.

At Nay, in the Basses Pyrenees, there was a young lad, about fifteen years of age, called Henry Busquet, who fallen into hopelessly bad health. He had, in 1856, a violent and long typhoid fever, the result of which was that an abscess had formed on the right side of his neck, spreading imperceptibly to the top of his chest and the extremity of his cheek. The abscess was about as big as your hand. This caused the lad such intense suffering as to force him at times to roll himself on the ground.

The medical man who attended him, Doctor Subervielle, a practitioner of great repute in his district, lanced the abscess about four months after its first formation, and there issued from it a vast quantity of sero-purulent matter ; but this operation did not conduce to the recovery of Henry. After having tried several unavailing remedies, the Doctor thought of the waters at Cauterets. In 1857, in the course of the month of October—a season of the year when the rich frequenters of the baths having taken their departure, those in poorer circumstances repair to them— young Busquet went to Cauterets and took a course of fifteen baths. These proved more prejudicial than useful to him and served but to aggravate his sores. His malady increased in violence notwithstanding some momentary relief. The unfortunate lad had, in the parts mentioned above, an extensive ulcer, which emitted an abundant suppuration, covering the top of his chest and all one side of his neck, and threatening to spread to his face. In addition to this, two fresh glandular swellings of considerable size had arisen at the side of this terrible ulcer.

Such was the state of this poor lad when, happening to hear the marvelous effects of the water of the Grotto spoken of, he had thoughts of undertaking the journey to Lourdes. He wished to leave home and make the pilgrimage on foot ; but he presumed too much on his own strength, and his parents refused to take him there.

Henry, who was very pious, was haunted with the idea that he would be cured by the Virgin who had appeared to Bernadette. He requested a woman, one of his neighbors, who was going to

Lourdes, to draw for him a little of the water at the Spring. She brought him a bottle-full of it on the evening of Wednesday, April the 28th, the Feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph.

Towards eight o'clock at night, before retiring to rest, the lad knelt down and prayed to the Most Blessed Virgin Mary.

His family, consisting of his father, mother and several brothers and sisters, joined with him in prayer. They were all excellent people, simple and full of faith: one of the daughters is at the present moment a *religieuse* with the Sisters of Saint André.

Henry went to bed. Doctor Subervielle had charged him repeatedly never to use cold water, as it would inevitably lead to a serious complication of his malady; but at that moment Henry was thinking of something else than medical prescriptions. He removed the bandages and lint which covered his ulcer, and with a piece of linen soaked in the water from the Grotto, he bathed and washed his sores in the miraculous fluid. He was not wanting in faith. "It must be," he thought to himself, "that the Virgin will effect my cure." He went to sleep with this hope in his breast and fell into a deep slumber.

On awaking, what he had hoped proved a reality: all his pain had ceased, all his sores were closed; the glandular swellings had disappeared. The ulcer had become a solid scar, as solid as if it had been slowly healed by the hand of time. The eternal power which had stepped in and effected the cure, had performed in a few moments the work of several months or several years. His recovery

had been complete, sudden and without any intermediate state of convalescence.

The medical men in their Report addressed to the Commission (from which we have derived the technical terms employed in our narration), humbly acknowledged the miraculous nature of the young lad's recovery.

"All affections of this nature," observed one of them, "can only be cured very slowly, because they are connected with scrofulous diathesis, and involve the necessity of an entire change in the system. This consideration alone, placed in opposition with the suddenness of the cure, is sufficient to prove that the fact in question deviates from the ordinary action of nature. We rank it among facts which fully and evidently possess a supernatural character."

The lad's usual medical attendant, Doctor Subervielle, declared this sudden cure—as indeed did every one—to be marvelous and divine; but the restless skepticism, which often lurks at the bottom of the hearts of members of the Faculty, waited for time to afford full proof of the truth of his theory.

"Who knows," M. Soubervielle was often in the habit of saying, "but what this malady may recur when Henry reaches the age of eighteen? Up to that period I shall be always in a state of anxiety."

The eminent physician who spoke thus was not destined to rejoice at seeing the cure of Henry confirmed by time. He died a short time after this and his death was a calamity to that part of the country.

As to young Henry Busquet, the author of this book, in accordance with his practice of ascertain-

ing the truth of facts by personal investigation, availed himself of the opportunity of seeing him and hearing the circumstances from his own lips.

Henry told us his story, with which we are already acquainted from official reports and the testimony of several individuals. He related it to us as if it had been the simplest thing in the world, without showing surprise or astonishment. To the strong good sense of christians, like Henry, sprung from the lower classes, whose minds have not been led astray by sophistry, the supernatural does not appear extraordinary, still less contrary to reason. They find it strictly conformable with common sense. If they are sometimes surprised at being restored to health by the aid of a physician, it is to them no matter for astonishment that God, who had power sufficient to create man, should, in his loving kindness, cure him when attacked with sickness. They see clearly at a glance that a miracle, far from disturbing order, is on the contrary one of the laws of eternal order. If God, in His mercy, has conferred on certain waters the virtue of removing maladies of certain kinds—if He cures indirectly those who employ, according to certain conditions, such material agency, have we not greater reason to believe that He will effect a direct cure in those who address themselves directly to Him? Such is the reasoning of the humbler classes.

It was our great wish to see with our own eyes and touch with our own hands the traces of this terrible sore, which had been so miraculously cured. The place where the ulcer was is marked by an immense scar. It is now long since the lad passed safely through the crisis of his eighteenth year,

and there has been no hint of any return of his cruel malady. He has never suffered again from any running nor shown any tendency to glandular swellings, and he enjoys perfect health. Henry Busquet is now a man of five and twenty years of age, strong and hearty. Like his father, he is a plasterer by trade. On Sundays he plays the trombone in the brass band at the *Faufare de l'Orphéon*, an instrument on which he displays no small talent. He has a splendid voice. If ever you happen to go to the town of Nay, you will not fail of hearing him through the windows of some house, either being built or repaired, for, when on the scaffolding, he is wont to sing at the top of his voice from morning till night. You may listen to him without any fear of your ears being offended by any coarse song. His charming voice delights in gay and innocent ballads, not unfrequently in the canticles of the Church. The singer has not forgotten that it is to the Blessed Virgin he owes his life.

X.

WHILE all these Miracles were taking place in different directions, there occurred an incident, in appearance very foreign to the object of this history, but which, notwithstanding its apparent insignificance, was destined to be attended with most important consequences as events progressed.

The Prefect of the Hautes-Pyrenees made about this time the notable discovery that his carriage and saddle horses were not particularly well domiciled, and that it was desirable to erect elegant and spacious stables for their accommodation. Unfortu-

nately the ground about the Prefecture was somewhat confined, and Baron Massy wished, above all things, to avoid disfiguring either his court-yard or his garden.

The Prefecture of Tarbes is quite close to the Cathedral. Between the two buildings was the former cemetery of the priests and canons of the Church. It is handed down by tradition, that many of the noble families of the country had formerly had vaults in it, and that the ashes of their illustrious members repose below. The Prefect observed to himself that this plot of ground was the very thing for his stables and coach-houses. With Baron Massy the execution of a project followed speedily on its first conception. He had the foundations therefore dug among the tomb-stones and fragments of human bones, and the buildings necessary for the accommodation of the official horses began shortly afterwards to rise conspicuously in the cemetery. The Prefect erected his buildings exactly opposite one of the ancient doors of the Cathedral, and at a very small distance from it, so that the noise of the stable was unavoidably heard by the congregation.

Such a forgetfulness of decorum could not fail of deeply annoying the occupants of the Palace. Monseigneur Laurence strove in vain to make the Prefect understand that the ground was consecrated, that it belonged to the Church, and that neither the repose of the dead nor the devotion of the living, ought to be disturbed by the pawing and neighing of horses. The Prefect, as we have observed before, could never relinquish what he had once resolved upon. By discharging his workmen and se-

lecting another site, he would have allowed himself to have been in the wrong. Notwithstanding, therefore, the sincere desire he might have to keep the Bishop in good humor, he did not pay the slightest attention to his remonstrances. His workmen remained on the old cemetery engaged in the construction of his stables.

On seeing the Prefect persist in his desecration of the tombs, Monseigneur Laurence threw off his reserve and protested energetically against his conduct. The Bishop addressed himself directly to the Minister of Public Worship, requesting authorization to pull down these unseemly and offensive buildings.

The Prefect was greatly annoyed at the very firm and dignified attitude assumed by the Bishop. He went post-haste to Paris, to argue his own case with the Minister, and endeavored to bring over the Council General to his side of the question; he sought legal opinions on the subject, and in short entered on a desperate struggle, the various episodes of which would be of no interest to our readers. The question lasted several months, and was eventually decided in accordance with the wise expostulations of Monseigneur Laurence. The grass grows once more to-day on the site of the demolished stables, and a funereal tree, planted in the centre of the cemetery, serves to mark that the ashes of the dead repose in that place.

But from the day when the Bishop issued his protest, the harmony, which, up to that period, had existed between the Head of the Department and the Head of the Diocese was broken for ever. In the heart of the Prefect this harmony was succeeded

by an intense feeling of irritation. He ceased to be inclined to arrange matters amicably; perhaps his tendencies took quite the opposite direction. As he wished to encroach on the property of the Church in this miserable affair of his stables, so with regard to the question of the Apparitions, he from that time felt himself more inclined than before to encroach on the spiritual jurisdiction of the Bishop.

The bridle, which up to that moment had kept him in check, was snapped. Great effects are not unfrequently produced by very insignificant causes.

XI.

IN the course of the months of April and May, after as well as before the receipt of the letter from the Minister, the Prefect had employed his natural quickness of mind in endeavoring to find a key to these strange events at Lourdes, independent of the supernatural. Interrogatories had been renewed to no purpose, by the *Parquet* and Monsieur Jacomet. Neither the Commissary of Police nor M. Dutour had been able to catch the child tripping. This little shepherd-girl, thirteen or fourteen years of age, illiterate and unable to read or write, or even speak French, disconcerted by the mere force of her profound simplicity the crafty and the prudent.

A disciple of the Mesmers and the Du Potets—where from no one knew—had attempted in vain to throw Bernadette into the magnetic slumber. His passes had failed in exerting the slightest influence on her calm, and but slightly nervous temperament, and his success was limited to causing the child a

head-ache. The poor little thing, however, submitted herself with resignation to the experiments and examinations of every one. It was the will of God that she should be exposed to every form of trial, and emerge triumphantly from them all, without exception.

It was understood that a foreign family of immense fortune having, as was the case with all, been fascinated with Bernadette, had proposed to adopt her, offering at the same time to her parents the sum of one hundred thousand francs, with the permission of remaining with their daughter. The disinterestedness of these good souls had not even been tempted for a moment, and they preferred remaining poor.

Every thing brought to bear on Bernadette failed, the snares laid by guile, the offers of enthusiasm, the dialectics of the most acute intellects.

However great the horror M. Dutour entertained for fanaticism, he was unable to find, either in the Code of Criminal Instruction or in the Penal Code, any text which would authorize him in taking severe measures against Bernadette, and throwing her into prison. An arrest of this nature would have been illegal in the highest degree, and might be attended with very unpleasant consequences to the Magistrate by whose order it was carried into execution. In the eye of the penal law, Bernadette was innocent.

The Prefect, with his exceeding clearness of mind took all this into consideration as thoroughly as if he had been a practical lawyer. He then entertained the idea of arriving at the same result by the employment of other means, and of proceeding by a

measure emanating from the Administration to effect an incarceration, which, as it appeared to him, would be of considerable utility, but in which the Magistrates, with the codes in their hands, did not deem themselves authorized to assume the initiative.

XII.

IN the immense arsenal of our laws and regulations, there is one formidable weapon provided, as we think, somewhat imprudently, with the very praiseworthy intention of protecting an individual against himself, but which—should it chance to fall into the hands of malice and blind hatred—may give rise to the most frightful of all tyrannies; we mean the arbitrary sequestration—against which there is no power of appeal—of an innocent person. We would be understood to allude to the law regarding Insanity. Without public discussion, or the possibility of making any defence, on the certificate of one or two medical men, declaring him to be laboring under mental alienation, an unfortunate wretch may be seized suddenly, by a simple measure of the Administration, and thrown into the most horrible of prisons—into the dungeon of a mad-house. We believe, and we are under the necessity of believing, that, in the majority of cases, this law is equitably applied, in consequence of the general feeling of honor and the capacity of the medical body. But, we are at a loss to understand how this feeling of honor and this medical knowledge can afford just reasons for suppressing all means of defence, all publicity, and all opportunity of appeal; that the decision, with closed doors, of

two medical men, should be exempted from this triple guarantee with which the Law has seen right to surround the judgments pronounced by the Magistracy. The members of the medical profession are, doubtless, well skilled in their art, and we acknowledge that the fact of finding two of them perfectly agreed in opinion, renders the truth of their common *thesis* sufficiently probable; but, is there in this proceeding a certitude sufficiently grave, sufficiently evident, sufficiently clear—if we may be permitted to employ a pleonasm of this nature—to confer irrevocably the right of depriving, without any other form of procedure, a citizen of his liberty? That medical men are actuated by a high sense of honor is equally beyond a doubt, and no one has a greater veneration than ourselves for members of their profession; but, may not—more especially in cases of mental alienation—their preconceived ideas and philosophical doctrines sometimes incline their minds, in spite of themselves, towards very deplorable errors? One of them, M. Lélut, in a publication which he gained a certain celebrity, has ranked amongst the deranged, Socrates, Newton, Saint Theresa, Pascal, and a host of others, who, like the former, were the glory of Humanity. Would, for instance, such a Master and his pupils deserve to be invested with the right of shutting up as maniacs, without any opposing evidence, without publicity and without appeal, merely after a simple consultation, all those whom they should regard as such? And yet, M. Lélut is a man of remarkable learning and a medical celebrity; he is a member of the Institute. What can we say of the guarantee offered by the mob of practitioners—

by some of those wretched little village doctors who have succeeded to the Barber-Surgeons, with whom our ancestors were perfectly satisfied.

Convinced as he was of the absolute impossibility of the Supernatural, Baron Massy, observing the incapacity of action to which the Magistracy was reduced, hesitated not to seek for a solution of the extraordinary question, which had so suddenly arisen in his department, in calling this terrible law to his assistance.

XIII.

ON learning that the Virgin had appeared anew, and revealed her name to Bernadette, the Prefect sent a Commission, composed of two medical men, to the house of Soubirous. He chose them from among those, who, like himself, rejected the Supernatural, and who had their conclusions written beforehand in their so-called medical philosophy. These two physicians who belonged to Lourdes—one of them being an intimate friend of the *Procureur Impérial*—had been exhausting their efforts for the last three weeks in supporting all kinds of theories on catalepsy, somnambulism, and hallucination, and waging a war of exasperation against the inexplicable radiances of Bernadette in her state of ecstasy, the gushing forth of the Spring, and against the sudden cures which were perpetually occurring to effect a breach in the doctrines with which their professional education had imbued them.

It was to these men and under these circumstances, that the Prefect, in his wisdom, deemed it right to confide the examination of Bernadette.

These gentlemen felt the child's head and did not discover in it anything wrong. On comparing it with the system of Gall, no signs of the bump of insanity were visible. The child's answers were sensible, without any contradictions or singularity. There was nothing exaggerated in the nervous system: on the contrary, there was the most perfect equilibrium, and an indescribable calmness. The little girl's chest suffered often from asthma, but this infirmity had no connection with a derangement of the brain.

The two physicians, who, in spite of their prejudices were truly conscientious men, recorded all this in their report, and attested the healthy and normal state of the child.

However, as, when the Apparitions were in question, she persisted without variation in her account of what had taken place, the two gentlemen, who utterly disbelieved the possibility of visions of the kind, laid considerable stress on that head, in order to affirm that Bernadette *might possibly be laboring under a state of hallucination.*

In spite of their anti-supernatural notions, they dared not—after seeing the child's state, in which mind and body seemed to be so equally balanced—assume a more decided tone of affirmation. They felt instinctively, that it was not their positive science, with its concomitant certitude, but rather their preconceived philosophical opinions which led them to a conclusion of this kind, and which answered one question by propounding another.

The Prefect did not scrutinize the affair so narrowly, and the report appeared to him sufficient. Armed with this document, and in virtue of the law

of June 30th, 1838, he determined to have Bernadette arrested and conducted to Tarbes to be shut up provisionally in the hospital, from which she would doubtless be transferred eventually to the lunatic asylum.

It was not enough to strike a blow at the child, it was necessary to oppose a barrier to this extraordinary movement of the people. M. Rouland had insinuated in his letter to the Prefect, that this was possible without outstepping the limits of the law. For this, it was only required to consider the Grotto as an Oratory, and to have it stripped of its *ex-votos* and the offerings of believers.

If these believers opposed any resistance, a squadron of cavalry would be quartered at Tarbes, ready to act as events might render necessary. An outbreak would have crowned the secret wishes of many. It only remained to put into execution these various measures against Bernadette and the population of the Department. The Prefectoral infallibility had recognized their necessity and urgency, in order to parry the increasing attacks of Superstition.

XIV.

It was the time of the year when the Council of Revision was held. Under these circumstances, M. Massy had an opportunity of going to Lourdes, where all the Mayors of the canton would meet him.

“The Prefect,” as an illustrious writer has since observed, “had undertaken on that day to impose on those under his jurisdiction a tolerably severe

and grievous service, inaugurated in a sufficiently repugnant manner. He might have well understood, had he wished to do so, that some consoling liberties are necessary as a slight compensation for the sacrifices exacted by society. Now, the liberty of praying in certain places, of burning a taper there, of placing an offering there, or drawing thence a little water, cannot appear very onerous to the state, fatal to the public liberty, nor offensive to the modesty or liberty of any one, yet it is a source of deep consolation to those who make use of it. Encourage therefore the existence of Faith. In the enjoyment of your high posts, your power, and your fortunes, consider that the majority of men whom you govern are obliged to ask God day by day for bread, and only obtain it by a kind of miracle. Faith is as it were already bread; it assists the poor to eat even black bread, it aids them to wait for it patiently, when the hour is passed at which it ought to come. And when God appears willing to open one of those places of grace where Faith flows more abundantly and affords prompter succour, do not close them. You yourselves will be the first to require them. It is there you will be able to effect a saving in the expenses incident to hospitals and prisons."

Far different were the thoughts and feelings of Baron Massy. After having exacted in the name of Power that terrible tax of blood, which is termed the Conscription, he addressed an official speech to the Mayors of the canton. He well knew how to invoke at one and the same time the interest of the Church and that of the State, the Pope and the Emperor, while touching on the subject of Appari-

tions and Miracles. To each of his phrases, periphrases and paraphrases, he began with piety and ended with the administration. The premises were those of a theologian, the conclusions those of a Prefect.

"The Prefect has shown to the Mayors," said the organ of the Prefecture on the following day, "in what points the scenes which had been enacted afforded matter for regret, *and how much disrepute they tended to throw upon religion.* He particularly applied himself to make them understand that the fact of the formation of an oratory at the Grotto, *a fact sufficiently established by religious emblems and tapers being placed there,* was an attack made on the *ecclesiastical and civil authority, an illegality* which it was the duty of the Administration to put a stop to, since, according to the express terms of the law, no public chapel or oratory can be founded *without the authorization of the Government,* on the recommendation of the Bishop of the Diocese."

"My sentiments," the devout functionary had added, "ought not to be suspected by any one. Every one, in this department, knows my profound respect for Religion. I have given, I think, sufficient proofs of it to render it impossible to put a bad interpretation on my intentions.

"It will cause you, therefore, no surprise to learn, Gentlemen, that I have ordered the Commissary of Police to remove all objects deposited at the Grotto and transfer them to the Mayoralty, where they will be placed at the disposition of their rightful owners.

"I have further directed that all persons claiming to see Visions shall be arrested and taken to Tarbes

at the public expense, *to be there placed under medical treatment*, and I shall see that all those who have helped to spread the absurd rumors now in circulation, are prosecuted *as propagators of false news.*"

All this happened on the fourth of May. It was thus that the very pious Prefect inaugurated his Month of Mary.

These words were received "*with unanimous enthusiasm,*" if we are to believe the organ of the Prefecture.

The real truth was, that some disapproved most strongly the violent measures to which the authorities were pledging themselves, while others, who belonged to the sect of Free-thinkers, flattered themselves that the hand of the Prefect would be sufficient to put the drag on the progress of events.

Outside, the philosophers and *savants* were in high glee. The *Lavedan*, which had maintained absolute silence for nearly two months, owing to its having been overwhelmed by the evidence adduced, recovered its powers sufficiently to intone a dithyramb to the praise and glory of the Prefect.

Immediately on the conclusion of his speech, the Head of the Department quitted the town, leaving his orders to be executed in his absence.

The Prefect's measures completed each other. By the arrest of Bernadette, he attacked the cause of trouble; by having the various objects removed from the Grotto, he attacked its effect. If, as was highly probable, the ardent populations of the district, wounded in their freedom of belief, their right of praying and their religion, attempted any resistance or committed any acts of disorder, the squadron of cavalry, summoned in all dispatch, would

hasten to the spot, and, placing everything in a state of siege, would refute Superstition with the all-powerful argument of the sword. As M. Massy had just transformed a question purely religious into one dependent on the Administration, he was equally prepared to transform the latter into one of military interference.

The Mayor and the Commissary of Police, each in his own department, were charged with the execution of the Prefect's wishes. The first was ordered to have Bernadette arrested, the second to repair in person to the Rocks of Massabielle and to despoil the Grotto of whatever the piety or gratitude of the faithful had deposited within its precincts.

Let us follow the progress of both, beginning with the Mayor, as is due to his higher functions.

XV.

ALTHOUGH M. Lacadé, Mayor of Lourdes, avoided giving his own opinion on the extraordinary events which were occurring, he had been deeply impressed by them, and it was not without a certain degree of terror that he saw the Administration having recourse to such violent measures. He was in a terrible state of perplexity. He did not know what attitude the people might assume. It is true the Prefect had announced the possibility of sending a squadron of cavalry to Lourdes to maintain the tranquillity of the town when the arrest should have taken place; but that very fact caused him no little uneasiness. The supernatural aspect of the question and the Miracles also filled

him with alarm. He did not know exactly how to act, placed as he was between the authority of the Prefect, the force of the people and the power from on high. He would have gladly made some compromise between earth and heaven. To keep up his courage, he addressed himself to the *Procureur Impérial*, M. Dutour ; and the two went together to the residence of the Curé of Lourdes to communicate to him the order for the arrest of Bernadette which had emanated from the Prefecture. They explained to the Abbé Peyramale how, according to the wording of the law of June 3, 1838, the Prefect was acting in the plenitude of his legal rights.

The Priest was unable to restrain himself from a burst of indignation at the cruel iniquity of such a proceeding, though it might be actually possible in conformity with some one of the innumerable laws produced at some time or other by the second-hand Lycurguses who have been cast on the strand of the Palais-Bourbon by the flowing and ebbing tides of our twelve or fifteen political revolutions.

“This child is innocent!” he exclaimed, “and the proof of it is, that, in your capacity of Magistrate, Sir, you have never been able, in spite of your various interrogations, to find a pretext for an attempt at prosecution. You know that there is not a Tribunal in France but would acknowledge her innocence, which is as clear as the sun at noon-day ; that there is not a *Procureur-Général*, who would not only, under such circumstances, declare this arrest to be monstrous and have it cancelled, but would even protest against a simple action at law.”

"This being the case the Magistracy does not act in the matter," replied M. Dutour. "The Prefect, on the report furnished by the medical men, has Bernadette shut up on the plea of derangement, and this for her own good, in order that her cure may be effected. It is a simple administrative measure, which has nothing to do with Religion, since neither the Bishop nor the Clergy have pronounced any opinion officially on all these events, which are taking place entirely independently of them."

"Such a measure," rejoined the Priest, becoming warm as the discussion proceeded, "would be the most odious of persecutions; so much the more odious from the fact that it assumes the mask of hypocrisy, affects to wish to afford protection, and conceals itself beneath the cloak of legality, while its real object is to strike a blow at a poor defenceless being. If the Bishop and Clergy, including myself, are waiting for more light to be thrown on these occurrences, in order to pronounce on their supernatural character, we, at least, know enough to judge of Bernadette's sincerity, and the soundness of her intellectual faculties. And since your two medical men do not certify the existence of any cerebral affection, in what respect are they more competent to judge of madness or good sense than any one of the thousand visitors who have put questions to the child, and who have all agreed in admiring the entire lucidity and normal character of her mind. Your doctors themselves dare not make a positive affirmation, and only conclude with a hypothesis. The Prefect cannot have Bernadette arrested on any plea whatever."

“It is a legal proceeding.”

“It is unlawful. As Priest, as the *Curé-doyen* of the town of Lourdes, I have a duty towards all, and more especially the weakest. If I saw an armed man attack a child, I would defend that child at the peril of my life, for I know the duty of protecting others, which is incumbent on a good Pastor. Be assured, I would act in the same manner even if the man were a Prefect, and his weapon were a bad clause of a bad law. Go, then, and tell M. Massy that his Gendarmes will find me on the threshold of the door of this poor family, and that they will have to lay me low, to pass over my body and trample me under their feet before they touch a hair of this little girl’s head.”

“However”——

“There is no however in the case. Examine, institute investigations; you are at full liberty to do so, and everybody invites you to do so. But if, instead of this, you wish to persecute, if you wish to strike the innocent, know well that before you reach the last, and the least among my flock, it is with me you must begin.”

The Priest had risen from his chair. His tall figure, his strongly-marked features, the plenitude of strength for which he was remarkable, his resolute gestures, and his countenance burning with emotion, supplied a commentary to his words and stamped their character upon them.

The Procureur and the Mayor were silent for an instant. They afterwards mentioned the measures relative to the Grotto.

“As far as the Grotto is concerned,” replied the Priest, “if the Prefect wishes, in the name of the laws

of the Nation, and in that of his own private piety, to strip it of the various objects which innumerable visitors have deposited there in honor of the Blessed Virgin—let him do so. Believers will be sorry and even indignant. But let him not be alarmed; the inhabitants of this country know the respect due to Authority, even when it strays from the right path. It is said that at Tarbes a squadron of cavalry, with their horses saddled and bridled, are only waiting a signal from the Prefect to hasten to Lourdes. Let the squadron dismount.

“However warm the heads of my people may be, however ulcerated their hearts, they listen to my voice, and I answer for their tranquillity without any armed force. With an armed force, I am no longer responsible for them.”

XVI.

THE attitude of energy assumed by the Curé of Lourdes, who was known to be incapable of giving way when what he considered to be his duty was at stake, introduced into the question an element hitherto overlooked, though it might very easily have been foreseen.

In the case of any measure emanating from the Administration, the intervention of the *Procureur Impérial* was not required, and it was only from friendly motives that M. Dutour had accompanied M. Lacadé to the residence of the Abbé Peyramale. All the onus of the decision to be taken weighed, therefore, on the Mayor.

M. Lacadé was perfectly certain that the Curé of Lourdes would infallibly act as he had said. As to

attempting a surprise and arresting Bernadette suddenly, without the knowledge of the Pastor, it was not to be thought of, now that the Abbé Peyramale was forewarned and had his eyes open. We have just mentioned the impressions which the Mayor experienced in presence of the Supernatural rising all at once before him. The apparent impassibility of the municipal magistrate did but mask the excessive anxiety and agitation of the real man.

He communicated to the Prefect the conversation which M. Dutour and himself had just had with the *Curé-doyen*, as also the behavior and words of the man of God. The arrest of Bernadette, he added, might, further, in the then state of public feeling, rouse the town and provoke an indignant revolt against the constituted authorities. As to himself, in consequence of the determination so formally expressed by the Curé, and fearing the terrible consequences which might ensue, he regretted to find himself forced to refuse—even if he were obliged to resign the honors of the Mayoralty—to take any personal part in the execution of such a measure. It was for the Prefect, if he saw good, to act himself, and to have the arrest effected by a direct order to the Gendarmerie.

XVII.

WHILE Bernadette's lot and liberty were subject to such uncertainty, M. Jacomet, in full uniform, and wearing his scarf of office, was making the necessary preparations to execute, at the Rocks of Massabielle, the orders of the Prefect.

The report that Baron Massy had enjoined the spoliation of the Grotto had spread rapidly, and had caused much agitation in every quarter of the town. The entire population were thrown into a state of consternation, as if in the presence of some monstrous sacrilege.

"The Blessed Virgin has condescended to descend among us," they said, "and to work miracles, and see how they receive her. It is enough to bring down the wrath of heaven."

The coldest hearts were stirred with emotion; a mysterious effervescence displayed itself by degrees among the people and continued to increase. From its very commencement, and before the interview we have just described, the Curé Peyramale and the Priests of the town had suggested to all words of peace, and had endeavored to calm those who were most irritated.

"Dear friends," said the Clergy, "do not compromise your cause by disorders; submit yourselves to the law, however bad it may be. If the Blessed Virgin takes any part in all these things, she is perfectly capable of turning them all to her own glory, and any violence on your part would be a want of faith towards her and an insult to her omnipotence. Look at the Martyrs; did they revolt against the Emperor? They owed their triumph to the very fact of not having combated."

The moral authority of the Curé was great; but those who listened to him were hot-headed, and their hearts were indignant. Everything depended on the merest chance.

The religious objects and *ex-votos* deposited at the Grotto formed a considerable mass, and were

too heavy to be transferred to the town by hand. M. Jacomet repaired to the *Poste*, kept by M. Barioze, to procure a cart and horses.

"I do not lend my horses for such purposes," replied the Post-master.

"But you cannot refuse your horses to any one who is willing to pay for them!" exclaimed M. Jacomet.

"My horses are intended for the service of the Post, and not for business of this nature. I do not wish to have anything to do with this proceeding. Bring an action against me, if it suits you to do so. I refuse to let you have my horses."

The Commissary went elsewhere. At all the hotels, at all the livery stables, which were pretty numerous at Lourdes, owing to its proximity to the different bathing places, at the houses of private individuals, to whom he addressed himself in despair, he met with similar refusals. His situation was truly a cruel one. The population, agitated and quivering with emotion, watched him thus going, to no purpose, from house to house, and were spectators of his successive disappointments. He heard the murmurs, the laughter and the bitter gibes of the crowd. The eyes of all scowled upon him as he pursued his painful and fruitless course across the squares and through the streets of the town. In vain did he successively increase the sum of money he offered for the loan of one horse and cart. He had been refused it by the very poorest, though he had offered as much as thirty francs, and the distance to the Grotto was considerable.

The crowd, on hearing the sum of thirty francs

mentioned, compared it with the thirty pieces of silver.

At length, at the house of a farrier, he found a girl who, for the sum offered, lent him what he needed.

When the multitude saw him issue from this house with the cart and horses, they were the more indignant, as the venal complaisance of the proprietor could not be excused by the urgency of want. The family were not poor.

Jacomet proceeded in the direction of the Grotto. The *Sergents de Ville* drove the cart. An immense crowd followed them. They were silent, sombre and uneasy, as if they felt in themselves the accumulation of the awful electricity of a thunder-storm.

In this manner they reached the Rocks of Massabielle. As the cart could not be driven up to the very spot, it was halted at some little distance.

Under the vaulted roof of the Grotto there were tapers burning here and there, placed in candlesticks, adorned with moss and ribbons. Crosses, statues of the Virgin, religious pictures, necklaces and jewels of various kinds rested on the ground or in the cavities of the rock. In certain places, carpets had been spread under the images of the Mother of God. Thousands of bouquets had been carried there in honor of Mary by pious hands, and the earliest blossoms of the month of flowers diffused their fragrance and embalmed this rural sanctuary.

In one or two willow baskets and on the ground there glittered copper, silver, or gold pieces,

amounting altogether to several thousand francs, the first spontaneous gift of the faithful towards the erection, on this spot, of a temple to the Immaculate Virgin — a pious offering, whose sacred character had struck with respect the audacity even of criminals, and in which, in spite of the facilities afforded by night and solitude, no robber up to that time had dared to lay a sacrilegious hand.

M. Jacomet cleared the balustrade constructed by the workmen of Lourdes, and entered the Grotto. He appeared agitated. The *Sergents de Ville* were near him; the crowd which had followed him watched him, but did not utter any cries. There was something alarming in the outward tranquillity of this multitude.

The Commissary began by securing the money. Then, extinguishing the candles, one by one, and collecting the chaplets, crosses, carpets, and various articles with which the Grotto was filled, he handed them over to the *Sergents de Ville* to stow away in the cart. The poor fellows seemed to be disgusted with the business they were engaged in, and displayed much feeling of sorrow and respect as they carried to the cart all the articles of which Jacomet stripped the Grotto, honored and sanctified but a short time since by a visit from the Mother of God, the gushing forth of the Fountain, and by the cure of the sick.

Owing to the cart being at some distance from the Grotto, all this occupied some time. M. Jacomet called a little boy who happened to be there, a little in front of the crowd.

“Here, take this picture and carry it to the cart.” The little boy stretched out his hands to take hold

of the frame. Another child at his side called out to him :

“Wretch ! what are you going to do ? God will punish you.”

The child started back in terror, and no fresh order on the part of the Commissary could induce him to come to the front again.

There was something — I know not what — convulsive in the movements of the Commissary. When he picked up the first bouquet, it was his intention, as he looked upon it as a thing of no value, to throw it into the Gave, but a vague murmur in the crowd arrested him in the act. He appeared to understand that the measure of the popular patience was full to the brim, and that the least incident might cause it to overflow. The bouquets were then, with all the other articles, transferred to the cart.

A moment afterwards a statuette of the Virgin fell to pieces in the hands of the Commissary, and this little incident produced once more a terrible sensation in the crowd.

When the Grotto was stripped of every thing, M. Jacomet wished to carry off even the balustrade. For this purpose he required an axe. Some men who were shaping wood in a saw-pit attached to M. Laffite’s mill refused successively to lend him one. Another workman, who was employed at some little distance from the others, dared not resist him and suffered him to take his axe.

M. Jacomet took the business in hand himself and struck the balustrade several blows with the axe. As it was not strongly made, it immediately yielded.

The sight of this act of material violence, the spectacle of this man striking the wood with the axe, produced more effect on the multitude than any thing that had occurred before and was followed by a menacing explosion. The Gave was close at hand, deep and rapid in its course, and a few moments of *égarement* would have been sufficient to have induced the crowd—in one of those irresistible paroxysms of rage to which crowds are sometimes subject—to hurl the unfortunate Commissary into its waters.

Jacomet turned round towards them and showed his countenance pale and distracted.

“What I am doing,” he said, with apparent regret, “I am not doing of my own accord, and it is with the greatest regret that I find myself obliged to put it into execution. I am acting in obedience to the orders of the Prefect. I must obey the higher authorities, however much it may cost me. I am not responsible for this and you must not bear any grudge against me.”

Some voices from among the crowd exclaimed:

“Let us remain calm and abstain from violence; let us leave everything in the hands of God.”

The advice and activity of the Clergy produced their fruits, and there was not any disorder. The Commissary and the *Sergents de Ville* drove the cart without any obstacle to the Mayoralty, where they deposited all the articles they had collected at the Grotto. The money was handed over to the Mayor.

In the evening, for the purpose of protesting against the Prefect's measures, an innumerable multitude repaired to the Grotto, which was suddenly

filled with flowers and illuminated. Only, in order to obviate the seizure of the tapers by the Police, should they come for that purpose, every one held his own in his hand, and, on his return, carried it back to his own house.

The next day much sensation was caused among the people by the occurrence of two events.

The girl, who had lent M. Jacomet the cart and horse, fell from the top of a hay-loft and broke one of her ribs.

The same day, the man who had lent the Commissary the axe for the destruction of the balustrade at the Grotto, had both his feet crushed by the fall of a beam which he wished to place on his bench.

To the eyes of the Free-thinkers this appeared to be an irritating and untoward coincidence. The multitude regarded the double accident as a punishment from Heaven.

XVIII.

THESE trifling incidents caused but little annoyance to the Prefect. He had as little faith in maladies as he had in cures proceeding from Heaven.

The attitude assumed by the Abbé Peyramale — which though not menacing was inflexible — and his determination to take a personal part in protecting Bernadette against the projected arrest, troubled Baron Massy much more than any signs of heavenly wrath. God, in a word, made him less uneasy than the Curé.

The refusal of M. Lacadé to proceed to that violent measure; his offer of resignation — a most singular circumstance on the part of so timid a

functionary—the visible dissatisfaction of the Mayors of the canton, with the speech made at the Council of Revision; the symptoms of serious effervescence with which the removal of the *ex-votos* from the Grotto had been received; the incertitude as to whether the Gendarmes and soldiers, who, as regarded Bernadette, participated in the general enthusiasm and veneration, would passively obey the orders they might receive—all this supplied the Prefect with food for reflection. He plainly saw that, in the midst of so many unpleasant conjunctures, the incarceration of the youthful Seer might be attended with the most disastrous consequences.

It was not that he would not willingly have braved an outbreak. Some of the details we have given would lead us to imagine that such had been the object of his secret wishes. But a general rising of the population, preceded by the resignation of the Mayor, complicated by the personal interference of one of the most universally respected Priests in the Diocese, followed, in all probability by a complaint to the Council of State of arbitrary sequestration, and accompanied by energetic protestations from the Catholic, or simply independent portion of the Press, assumed a serious character which could not fail of forcibly striking a man of so much intelligence and attachment to the duties of his office as Baron Massy.

It was, however, a bitter trial to the proud Prefect to pause in the execution of this radical measure, which he had so publicly announced on the eve of the Council of Revision; and assuredly he could not have brought himself to it, if the report

furnished by the medical men had certified the madness or hallucination of the youthful Seer, instead of adducing a simple and hesitating hypothesis. Had Bernadette really been suffering from an attack of mental alienation, nothing would have been easier for the Prefect than to have ordered a second examination; nothing more easy than to have the child's cerebral disease attested by two other doctors chosen from among the scientific notabilities of the place, and with sufficient authority, as men of learning, to impose their decision on public opinion. But M. Massy, being fully acquainted with the interrogatories to which Bernadette had been submitted, was aware that it was impossible to find any medical man in his right senses who would not acknowledge and declare, as every one else did, the child's perfect possession of reason, her uprightness of mind and entire good faith. Before the evidence of such a situation, in presence of the moral and almost material impossibilities which unexpectedly stood up before him, the wary Prefect, notwithstanding his notorious obstinacy, found himself obliged to pause and proceed no further. The force of circumstances condemned him to inaction. As to entirely retracing his steps and revoking the measure which had already been put into execution publicly by Jacomet at the Rocks of Massabielle, such a solution of the difficulty could never once enter Baron Massy's mind. The removal of the various objects from the Grotto having been accomplished, was persisted in. But the youthful Seer remained free, and doubtless wholly unconscious, between the time of her morning and night

prayers, of the storm which had passed over her head, but which had not burst.

The civil authority, by this abortive and never repeated attempt, certified, itself, the absolute impossibility of proving Bernadette to be laboring under the slightest cerebral derangement. By leaving the youthful Seer at large, after having attempted to shut her up, official power, in spite of itself, paid public homage to the entire soundness of her reason and her intelligence. By these badly aimed blows, Unbelief wounded herself by her own weapons, and served the very cause she claimed to attack. Let us not, however, accuse her of clumsiness. It must be difficult to struggle against evidence, and in a combat of such a nature the grossest blunders are inevitable.

However, if M. Massy modified in some respects the outline of his projects, he persisted invincibly in the ultimate object of his designs. The only concession he would sometimes make to the course of events was to abandon a means acknowledged to be useless and dangerous, in order to adopt one apparently more adapted to his purpose, and to outflank the difficulties it was impossible for him to crush or break through. In a word, if he changed his tactics, his resolutions remained unchanged. He did not retreat, he endeavored to out-manœuvre his foe.

Now the incarceration of Bernadette was but a means. The important principle and ultimate object was the radical overthrow of Superstition, and the final defeat of the Supernatural.

M. Massy by no means ceased to hope. He had the "full assurance," he loftily observed, of shortly

coming to an end of the increasing difficulties of his situation. That he, a Prefect of the Empire, a Baron, a Massy should be vanquished by the nursery tales of a childish shepherd-girl, and confounded by the phantom of a chimerical Apparition, would have been insupportable to his pride, and appeared impossible to his genius.

If he was therefore compelled to give up the idea of having poor Bernadette shut up on the plea of insanity, in spite of the speech he delivered on the 4th of May, he was only the more on that account determined to put a stop somehow or other to the progress and encroachments of Fanaticism.

The doctrines and explanations which, for the last few days, had become the favorite theme of the Free-thinkers of those southern regions, suggested to his mind, which was already in a state of embarrassment, a new method which appeared to him truly decisive.

In order to understand how the Prefect came in a certain way to change his plan of attack, it would be well for us to glance at what was passing at that moment in the camp of those whose minds were opposed to Christianity.





SIXTH BOOK.

I.

THE enemies of Superstition had lost considerable ground in their desperate struggle against the events, which, for the last eleven or twelve weeks had brought their philosophy to bay. As it was impossible to deny the existence of the Spring, whose limpid waters were flowing magnificently before the eyes of the astonished people, so it was becoming impossible longer to deny the reality of the cures which were effected, every hour and every where, by the use of this mysterious water.

At first they had shrugged their shoulders at the earliest cures, confining themselves to denying them purely and simply, and to refusing, with their usual prejudice, to submit them to any kind of investigation. But the spirit of Incredulity had been very soon outflanked by the multiplicity of those admirable cures, of which we have only been able to relate or point out the smallest number. Facts obtruded themselves on their attention. They became so numerous and striking that it was necessary, at all cost, either to yield to the Miracle, or discover some natural way of accounting for these extraordinary phenomena.

The Free-thinkers then plainly saw that unless they surrendered their arms or rejected the clearest evidence, it was urgent upon them to initiate some rapid evolutions and to contrive some different tactics.

The most intelligent among this little band found that they were already somewhat late in the field, and reproached themselves with the gross blunder they had originally committed in denying prematurely and without investigation, facts which had since become patent and perfectly established, such as the gushing-forth of the Spring and the cures of many who had been notoriously pronounced incurable, but who were now to be seen by every one, going about the streets of the town in perfect health. What made the evil almost irreparable was, that these unfortunate denials of facts, since amply verified, were authentically and officially certified in all the journals of the Department.

II.

THE great majority of cures effected by the water of Massabielle, were characterized by a rapidity, nay suddenness, which plainly indicated the immediate agency of sovereign power. There were, however, some which did not present this typical and undeniably supernatural character. They were effected in a slow and progressive manner, owing to the more or less frequent applications of draughts or lotions, and keeping pace with the ordinary march of natural cures—however miraculous they might be in their original principle.

At Gez, a village in the neighborhood of Lourdes,

a little boy, seven years of age, had been a remarkable instance of one of these *mixed* cures, which any one, according to the bent of his mind, might attribute to a special grace proceeding from God, or to the sole efforts of Nature. This child, who was called Lasbareilles, was born completely deformed with a double curvature of the back and breast bone.

His legs, which were excessively slender and almost withered, were paralyzed, owing to their extreme weakness. The unfortunate little creature had never been able to walk. He was always either lying or sitting down. Whenever it was necessary to change his position, his mother carried him in her arms. Sometimes, however, the child, resting himself on the edge of the table, or supported by his mother's hand, succeeded in standing upright and taking a few steps at the cost of violent efforts and immense fatigue. The medical man of the place had declared his inability to cure him; and seeing that the little fellow suffered from essentially organic rachitis, no remedy had been applied to his case.

The parents of the unfortunate child, having heard the miracles at Lourdes mentioned in the course of conversation, had procured some of the water from the Grotto; and during the space of fifteen days, they had, in three several instances, applied lotions to the body of the child, without any favorable result.

Their faith was not, however, on that account discouraged: if hope were banished from the world, it would truly be found again in the hearts of mothers. The fourth lotion was applied on Holy Thurs-

day, that is to say, the first of April, 1858. On that day the child had taken a few steps alone.

These lotions had become more and more efficacious, and the child's state underwent a progressive amelioration. He had come, at the end of three or four weeks, to walk almost as well as any body. We use the expression "almost" as he retained in his movements an awkwardness of gait which seemed to be a kind of reminiscence of his original infirmity. The emaciation of his legs had disappeared by degrees with his weakness, and his chest was almost entirely straightened. All the inhabitants of Gez, who well knew the former state of the child, attributed this recovery to a Miracle. Were they right or wrong in so doing? Whatever our own opinion may be on the subject, there is certainly much to be said on both sides of the question.

Another child, Denys Bouchet, from the market-town of Lamarque, in the canton of Ossun, had been also cured of a general paralysis in very much the same way. A young man, twenty-five years of age, Jean Louis Amaré, who was epileptic, had found his terrible malady yield entirely, but only by degrees, to applications of the water of Massabielle.

Some other analogous cases had occurred.

III.

WERE we not acquainted with the wonderfully varied forms of supernatural cures which have taken place since the establishment of Christianity, we might, perhaps, be tempted to believe, that things were thus disposed at this moment by Providence for

the very purpose of causing the proud philosophy of man to catch itself in its own nets and commit suicide with its own hands. But here, let us believe, there was no divine snare. God does not lay an ambush for any of his creatures. By its own innate strength and by means of its normal and regular developments, the logic of which is unknown to human philosophers, Truth is an eternal snare in the path of Error.

However this may be, the scientific men and the medical men of the place, were eager to discover in these various cures of uncertain and doubtful complexion—which were, however, perfectly established as regarded their reality and progressive character—an admirable opportunity and happy pretext for bringing into operation a change of tactics and dexterity of manœuvres which the increasing evidence of facts rendered absolutely necessary.

Ceasing, then, to endeavor to account for these cures by bringing forward the thread-bare theory of the effect of imagination, they boldly attributed them to the natural virtues which this singular water, lately gushed forth by the merest chance, indubitably possessed.

To offer such an explanation, was to acknowledge the reality of the cures.

Let the reader recall to his mind the commencement of this divine history, when a little shepherd-girl, going to collect fragments of dead-wood, had claimed to have seen a luminous Apparition start up before her. Let him remember the sneering of the strong-minded of Lourdes, the shruggings of shoulders at the Club, the ineffable contempt with which

all these powerful minds received those childish stories as nonsense and folly. How many steps forward had the supernatural affirmation made—how many steps to the rear had incredulity, science and philosophy taken since the first events which so suddenly took place at the lonely Grotto on the bank of the Gave!

The Miracle—if we may venture to use the expression—had assumed the offensive. The Free-thinkers, formerly so fierce in their attack, now pursued by the force of facts, were reduced to an attitude of self-defence.

The representatives of Philosophy and Science were not, however, on this account less bold in their assertions, nor did they display less contempt for popular superstition.

“Well, then, be it so,” they observed, affecting a good-humored tone and the semblance of sincerity. “We allow that the water of the Grotto cures certain maladies.” What can be more simple? What need is there of Miracles, supernatural graces, and divine intervention, to explain an agency which, if not identical with, is analogous to, that of a thousand Springs, which from Vichy or Baden-Baden to Luchon, act so efficaciously on the human system? The water of Massabielle, in point of fact, possesses certain very potent mineral qualities similar to those of the Baths of Baréges or Cautarets, a few leagues higher up in the mountains. The Grotto of Lourdes has no connection with Religion, it is in the jurisdiction of medical science.

A letter,—which we take at random from among our documents,—gives a better idea than we could, ourselves, furnish, of the position assumed by men

of science with regard to the marvelous operations of the water of Massabielle. This letter, from the pen of a very honorable physician in the neighborhood, Doctor Lary, who had not the slightest faith in any miraculous interpretation, is addressed to a member of the Faculty :

“ OSSUN, April 28th, 1858.

“ I take the earliest opportunity, my dear friend, of sending you the details you ask for, regarding the woman called Galop, of our commune.

This woman, in consequence of rheumatism in her left hand, had lost the power of holding any thing with it. For instance, if she wished to wash or remove a glass, she most frequently let it fall ; and if she wished to draw water, she was forced to give up the idea, as she was unable with her left hand to tighten the rope of the well. It was more than eight months since she had made her bed ; and during that time, she had been obliged to relinquish spinning altogether.

“ Now, since her single journey to Lourdes, where she made use of the water of the Grotto, she spins with considerable facility ; *she makes her bed, is able to draw water from the well, washes and carries about glasses and plates at table, and, in a word, uses this hand almost as well as the other one.*

“ The movements of her left hand are not yet quite so free as they were before her illness, but, compared with what they were before she used the water of the Grotto at Lourdes, there is a difference of 90 per cent.

“ The woman proposes going again to the Grotto, and I shall make her promise to pay you a visit that

you may convince yourself of the truth of what I now write you.

“You will find, on examining the patient, an incomplete ankylosis of the lower joint of the forefinger—this is all that remains of her complaint. If this morbid state yields to the reiterated use of the water of the Grotto, this fact will be an additional proof of the water being impregnated with alkali.

“I must now close. Believe me,

“Yours, very faithfully,

“LARY, M. D.”

This explanation having been once admitted, and held *a priori* as certain, the medical men displayed less reluctance in acknowledging the cures effected by the water of the Grotto, and, from that moment, they betook themselves to generalizing their thesis and to applying it almost indiscriminately to all cases, even to those which had an almost bewildering character of suddenness—a character, however, not easily reconcilable with the ordinary action of mineral waters. The learned personages of the place extricated themselves from this difficulty by attributing to the water of the Grotto extremely powerful qualities, such as had not been met with up to that period. It mattered little to them that they upset with their theories all the ordinary laws of nature, provided heaven was excluded from any share in the profits. They willingly admitted the *extra-natural*, in order to rid themselves of the *super-natural*.

There were to be found among the class of believers, certain persons of badly organized and provoking minds, who troubled with their importunate

reflections, the grave explanations and transcendental theories of this learned coterie.

“How comes it,” they objected, “that this mineral spring, gifted with such exceptional power of effecting sudden cures, should have been discovered by Bernadette precisely at the time she was in a state of ecstasy, in the train of asserted heavenly visions, and, as it were, the proof of these supernatural Apparitions? How did it come to pass, that this Spring gushed forth just at the moment when Bernadette believed she heard the divine Voice commanding her to drink and to wash herself? And how is the fact to be accounted for, that this Spring, which rose suddenly before the eyes of the whole population under such astonishing circumstances, does not give water of an ordinary description, but a kind of water, which, by your own confession, has already cured so many laboring under desperate maladies, who had recourse to it, not by the advice of their medical attendants, but from simple feelings of religious faith?”

These objections, repeated in a thousand different forms, irritated the Free-thinkers, Philosophers, and *Savants*, beyond measure. They endeavored to parry them by answers, so truly pitiable and wretched, that they could hardly be supposed to be deceived by them themselves; but, to find any better adapted to their purpose was, truly, a difficult task.

“After all,” they said, “coffee was discovered accidentally by a goat. A herdsman found out by chance the baths of Luchon, and again a peasant, while digging accidentally, stumbled on the ruins of Pompeii. What is there so astonishing in the fact that this little girl, amusing herself in scooping out

the earth during her state of hallucination, should have caused a spring to gush forth, and that this spring should turn out to be mineral and impregnated with alkali? That at that very moment she fancied she saw the Blessed Virgin and heard a voice declaring the existence of the spring, is a merely fortuitous coincidence which Superstition would gladly convert into a Miracle. That day, as has always been the case, chance did everything and was the sole revealer.

Those who believed, however, did not suffer themselves to be staggered by such logic. They had bad taste enough to consider that to explain all these things by referring them to purely accidental coincidences, was to do violence to reason under pretext of undertaking its defence. This served to exasperate the Free-thinkers, who, while acknowledging somewhat late in the day the reality of the cures effected, deplored more than ever the religious and supernatural character which the common people persisted in attributing to these strange events; and like persons in a pet, they inclined to violent measures with the view of stemming the popular current. "If these waters have mineral properties," they began to say, "they belong either to the State or the municipality, and no one should repair to them without medical prescription. A bathing establishment there would be a more suitable erection than a chapel."

The scientific men of Lourdes, obliged to recognize facts which could not be gainsayed, had reached this state of mind and mood of intellect, when the Prefect's measures relative to the objects deposited at the Grotto, and the attempt to incar-

cerate Bernadette on the plea of insanity—an attempt rendered abortive by the unexpected interference of the Curé Peyramale—suddenly came into play.

IV.

To all these theses of the medical sect, now at bay, there was wanting a sure and official *point d'appui*. M. Massy had already meditated seeking this *point d'appui* in one of the most admirable and incontestable sciences of the present day—Chemistry. With this object he had addressed himself through the Mayor of Lourdes to a Chemist of tolerable celebrity in the Department, M. Latour de Trie.

To have it attested—not in detail by the examination of each case, but wholesale and in a mass—that all these cures which were increasing in number and starting up as formidable opponents, were entirely natural, owing to the innate properties of this new Spring, appeared to him a master-stroke; and he believed that by doing so he should merit the gratitude of Science and of Philosophy, and, to omit nothing, of the higher Administration represented in the person of M. Rouland, the Minister.

Perceiving that it was plainly impossible to have Bernadette arrested as insane, he urged on the analysis which was to establish officially, in the very face of the cures, the mineral and therapeutic properties of the water of the Grotto. He was impatient to rid himself of this encroaching Supernatural, which after having caused the Spring to gush forth, was now healing the sick and threatened to bear down all opposition. A really official analy-

sis might be productive of great service, even if it left this accursed Supernatural tolerably strong in many quarters.

The Chemist of the Prefecture therefore set to work to make this precious study of the water which had gushed forth at Massabielle, and perfectly conscientiously if not completely scientifically he found at the bottom of his retorts a solution in exact conformity with the explanations of the medical men, the thesis of the philosophers and the wishes of the Prefect. Was Truth as well satisfied with this analysis as the Prefecture, Philosophy and the Faculty might possibly be? This is a question which they did not perhaps think of proposing to themselves at the time, but which the future was destined to charge itself with the decision.

However this may be, here is the summary analysis which M. Latour de Trie, Chemist to the Administration, addressed officially, on the sixth of May, to the Mayor of Lourdes, by whom it was immediately forwarded to Baron Massy :

CHEMICAL ANALYSIS.—The water of the Grotto at Lourdes is very limpid, free from any smell and without any peculiar taste. Its specific gravity is very nearly that of distilled water. Its temperature at the Spring is 15° Cent.

It contains the following compounds :

1. Chlorides of sodium, calcium and magnesium abundantly.
2. Carbonates of sodium, calcium and magnesium.
3. Silicates of sodium and aluminium.
4. Oxide of iron.

5. Sulphate of sodium and carbonate of sodium.
6. Phosphate: traces.
7. Organic matter: ulmine.

We certify the entire absence of sulphate of calcium or selenite in this water.

This peculiarity, which is somewhat remarkable, is quite in its favor and ought to make us regard it as being very light, easy of digestion and communicating to the animal economy a disposition favorable to the balance of vital action.

We do not believe we are prejudging in saying, on taking into consideration the *ensemble* and the quality of the substances of which this water is composed, that medical science will not be slow in recognizing in it certain special curative properties which may lead to its being classed in the number of waters which form the mineral wealth of our Department.

Be pleased to accept, etc.,

A. LATOUR DE TRIE.

Discipline is not carried to the same extent in civil as in military affairs, and in the former, owing to want of skill, the manœuvres are sometimes failures. The Prefect in the midst of his pre-occupations had neglected to issue his instructions to the editorial department of the Prefectural organ, the *Ère Impériale*, the consequence of which was that while the Chemist of the Prefecture was asserting one thing, the Journalist of the Prefecture was as distinctly affirming the other; while the former paid homage to the Spring of Lourdes, as one of the future therapeutic and mineral riches of the Pyrenees, the latter alluded to it as *dirty water*, and in-

dulged himself in sundry pleasantries at the expense of the cures effected. "It is unnecessary to say," he wrote the very day on which M. Latour de Trie had sent in his report, the sixth of May, "that this famous Grotto pours out a perfect flood of miracles and that our Department is drenched with them. At the corner of every field you may meet with persons, who tell you the thousands of cures effected by the use of this *dirty water*. Very soon the doctors will have nothing to do, and all who have hitherto suffered from rheumatism or affections of the chest, will have disappeared from the Department."

In spite of these little discrepancies which he might have avoided, it is only fair to acknowledge that the Prefect was a man of considerable activity. On the fourth of May, towards noon, he had made his speech to the Mayors of the cantons of Lourdes and issued his orders. On the evening of the same day the Grotto had been stripped of its offerings and *ex-votos*. On the morning of the fifth of May he had become aware of the utter impossibility of arresting Bernadette and abandoned the design. On the evening of the 6th, the analysis furnished by his Chemist had reached his hands.

Armed with this last and highly important document he was waiting to see what course things would take.

What indeed would happen at Lourdes? What would take place at the Grotto? What would be the next step of Bernadette, whose slightest movements were narrowly watched by the Argus eyes of Jacomet and his agents? During the great heats which were already commencing, would not the

Fountain, as many asserted, be dried up and everything be brought to a stand still? What line of conduct would be pursued by the population? Such were the preoccupations, hopes and disquietudes which filled the breast of Baron Massy, Prefect of the Empire.

V.

AT the Grotto, the miraculous Fountain continued to pour forth its limpid and abundant waters with that character of tranquil perennity remarkable in the beautiful springs which gush from amid rocks.

The supernatural Apparition ceased not to assert her claims and prove her existence by the benefits she conferred.

At one time rapid as the flash of lightning which rends the clouds, at another slow in its progress as the light of morning which rises and sheds its rays gradually over the surface of the earth, the Grace of God continued to descend visibly and invisibly on the assembled throngs.

We can only speak of graces which were obvious to the senses.

About a league and half from Lourdes, at Loubajac, there lived an excellent peasant woman, formerly a hard worker, but who for the last eighteen months had been reduced by an accident to the most painful state of inaction. Her name was Catharine Latapie-Choust. In October 1856, having climbed an oak for the purpose of shaking down the acorns, she lost her balance and had a serious fall, from the effects of which her right arm and

hand were dislocated. The necessary operation, as we learn from the report of the case and the official statement now before us, which was immediately and successfully performed by a skillful medical man, had almost brought her arm back to its normal state, without however being able to cure its extreme weakness. But the stiffness of the three most important fingers of her hand defied all the care and attention which were lavished upon her. The thumb, fore and middle finger remained bent inwards and entirely paralyzed, so that it was impossible for her to straighten them, or indeed to move them in any way. The unfortunate peasant woman, who was still young, having barely attained her thirty-eighth year, was unable to sew, spin, knit or attend to household matters. Her doctor, after having attended her for a length of time to no purpose, had informed her that she was incurable, and that she must resign herself to the loss of the use of her hand. Such a sentence from the lips of so competent a judge was for this unfortunate creature the announcement of an irreparable misfortune. To the poor labor is the only resource, and their being obliged to do nothing is tantamount to inevitable destitution.

Catharine had become *enceinte* nine or ten months after her accident, and her time was approaching when the divine events at the Grotto of Massabielle occurred. One night she felt herself all at once aroused, as it were, by a sudden idea. "A Spirit within me"—she informed the author of this book—"a Spirit within me, said to me, with a kind of irresistible force, 'Go to the Grotto! Go to the Grotto and you will be cured!'" Who was this

mysterious being who spoke thus, and whom this ignorant peasant woman—ignorant, at least, as far as all human knowledge went—called “a Spirit?” The secret is, doubtless, known to her Guardian-angel.

It was three o'clock in the morning. Catharine called her two children, who were already well grown, to accompany her.

“Remain at your work,” she said to her husband. “I am going to the Grotto.”

“In your present advanced state, it is impossible,” he rejoined. “It is a journey of three leagues to Lourdes—there and back.”

“Nothing is impossible. I am going to be cured.”

No objections were of avail, and she started with her two children. It was a lovely moonlight. The awful silence of night, disturbed, from time to time, by mysterious noises; the profound solitude of the scene, dimly lighted and peopled with indistinct forms, terrified the children. They trembled and paused at every step; but they were re-assured by their mother. Catharine had no fear, and felt that she was advancing towards Life.

She reached Lourdes at day-break. She met Bernadette. Some one informed her it was the youthful Seer. Catharine made no reply, but approaching the child so blessed by God and beloved by Mary, she humbly touched her dress. She then pursued her way towards the Rocks of Massabielle, where, notwithstanding the early hour of the morning, a multitude of pilgrims had assembled, and were devoutly kneeling.

Catharine and her children knelt also and prayed.

After having prayed, Catharine rose and went to bathe her hand calmly in the marvelous water.

Immediately her fingers were straightened. Immediately her fingers became supple and life returned to them. The divine Virgin had cured one pronounced incurable.

How did Catharine take this? She felt no surprise. She uttered no cry, but, kneeling down once more, she offered a prayer of thanksgiving to Mary and to God.

For the first time, for eighteen months, she prayed with joined hands, and clasped her fingers together.

She remained thus a long time absorbed in this act of gratitude. Such moments are sweet; the soul loves to forget itself in them, and it seems as if Paradise were once more restored to its gaze.

Sudden and violent pains recalled to the mind of Catharine the consciousness that she was still on earth, on this earth of sighs and fears, where the curse originally hurled against the guilty woman, ancestress of the human race, has not ceased to weigh on her innumerable posterity. We said that Catharine was in the last stage of pregnancy. As this poor woman was still on her knees, she felt herself suddenly overtaken with the first and terrible pangs of child-birth. She trembled as she reflected that she had not time even to return to Lourdes, and that she would be delivered before the throng which surrounded her. She regarded this crowd for an instant with an anguish of fear.

This terror, however, was of short duration. Catharine turned herself anew towards that sovereign Virgin whom Nature obeys.

"Good Mother," she said to her with simplicity, "Thou who hast just obtained for me so great a favor, spare me the shame of being delivered before this concourse of people, and grant, at least, that I may be enabled to return home ere I bring into the world the babe I bear within me."

Immediately all her pangs subsided, and the Spirit, the Spirit within her of whom she spoke to us, and whom we believe to have been her Guardian-angel, said to her, "Be calm; go without fear; you will reach home without any accident."

"Let us rise now and go," said Catharine to her two children.

On this she took them by the hand and proceeded in the direction of Loubajac, without allowing any one to suspect the crisis which had threatened her, and without displaying any uneasiness, not only to the by-standers but even to the midwife of her own village, who chanced to be there, and was recognized by her in the midst of the pilgrims. Happier than we can express, she traversed calmly, and without hastening her pace, the long route and bad roads which separated her from home. The two children were no longer afraid, as they had been during the night: the sun had risen, and their mother was cured.

On reaching her house, Catharine wished to pray again, but immediately the pangs of labor came once more upon her. A quarter of an hour afterwards she was delivered, and became the mother of a third son.

At the same period, a woman of Lamarque, Marianne Garrot, had been relieved, in less than ten days, by simple lotions of the water from the

Grotto, of a milk-colored eruption, which extended over the whole of her face, and had resisted every kind of treatment for upwards of two years. Doctor Amadon, of Pontac, her medical adviser, certified the fact, and, at a later period, bore unexceptionable testimony to it before the Episcopal Commission.

At Bordères, near Nay, Marie Lanou-Domengè, a widow, eighty years of age, had for the last three years suffered from a partial paralysis in her left side. She could not move a step without the assistance of others, and was, in consequence of her infirmity, incapable of any kind of labor.

Doctor Poneymiroo, of Mirepoix, after having in vain employed certain remedies to restore animation to her atrophied limbs, had ceased to attend her in his medical capacity, though he continued to visit her.

Hope, however, quits unwillingly the mind of the sick. "When shall I get better?" was the good woman's question whenever she met Doctor Poneymiroo.

"You will get better when such is God's will," was the invariable reply of the Doctor, who was far from thinking, when he thus expressed himself, that his words were prophetic,

"Why should I not believe this word and address myself directly to the divine goodness," observed the old peasant woman to herself one day, on hearing the Spring of Massabielle mentioned in conversation.

She dispatched some one to Lourdes to procure a small quantity of the healing water at the Spring itself.

When it was brought to her, she was seized with great emotion.

"Take me out of my bed," she said, "and hold me upright."

They raised her and dressed her hastily, almost in a feverish state of excitement. Both the spectators and actors in this scene were troubled.

Two persons raised her and held her standing upright, supporting her under her shoulders.

They presented her a glass of the water from the Grotto. Marie stretched her trembling hand towards the water of deliverance, and plunged into it her fingers. She then made the sign of the Cross upon herself, after which she raised the glass to her lips and slowly drank its contents, doubtless absorbed in some fervent prayer, which she uttered in a low tone.

She was pale—so pale, that for a moment the bystanders thought she was on the point of fainting.

But while they were exerting themselves to prevent her from falling, she held herself erect, trembled and gazed around her. She uttered a cry, as it were, of triumphant joy.

"Let me go! Let me go quickly. I am cured."

Those who were supporting her half withdrew their arms hesitatingly. Marie immediately darted forward and began to walk with confidence, as if she had never been suffering from illness.

Some one, who, in spite of all this, entertained some fears about her, gave her a cane with which to support herself.

Marie looked at the cane and smiled. She then took it, and, with a gesture of contempt, threw it to a distance from her as an article of no further use.

From that day she betook herself once more to hard work in the fields.

Some visitors having come to see her in order to ascertain the truth of the fact, asked her if she could walk in their presence.

"Walk? Gentlemen," she exclaimed, "I am going to run."

And suiting the action to the words she commenced to run before them.

This happened in the month of May. In the month of July following, Marie, the vigorous octogenarian, was pointed out by one to another as a phenomenon, who was gallantly reaping the corn, and was far from being the last in the fatiguing labor of the harvest.

Her medical man, the highly honorable Doctor Poncymiroo, praised God for so evident a miracle, and later on, he signed, with the Commission of Investigation, the official report of the extraordinary events we have just described, with reference to which he did not hesitate to acknowledge "the direct and evident agency of divine power."

VI.

THE Press of Paris and of the province began to occupy themselves with the occurrences at Lourdes; and far beyond the range of the Pyrenees, public attention was being turned by degrees towards the Grotto of Massabielle.

The Prefect's measures were highly commended by the organs of the Free-thinkers, and not less vehemently censured by the Catholic journals. The latter, while they hazarded no judgment as to the

reality of the Apparitions and miracles, claimed that a question of this nature should be decided by the ecclesiastical authority and not prematurely settled by the arbitrary power of the Prefect.

The innumerable miracles which were being accomplished either at the Grotto or at a distance, attracted a vast concourse of invalids and pilgrims to Lourdes. The analysis of Latour de Trie and the pretended mineral properties attributed to the new Spring by the medical men who supported the Prefect, added still more to the reputation of the Grotto, and induced even those to flock there who reckoned on the resources of Nature only for their recovery. On the other hand, these polemical discussions, by exciting the minds of all, added to the multitude of those who believed a multitude of others who were actuated by feelings of mere curiosity. All the means employed by the party of unbelief produced an effect diametrically contrary to the one they had proposed to themselves. Owing to the irresistible turn events had taken—a turn regarded as fatal by some, as providential by others—the influx of people, which it had been the wish of the authorities to check, assumed more and more considerable proportions. This influx was the more accelerated and developed owing to the fact that, as if to give every one a chance, the material difficulties which were opposed to traveling by the rigor of winter had gradually disappeared. The month of May had returned. The lovely weather of spring seemed to court pilgrims to repair to the Grotto by all the flowery paths which wind here and there through woods and across meadows and

vineyards in that land of rugged mountains, verdant hills and umbrageous valleys.

Out of humor and powerless, the Prefect saw the gradual increase and extension of this orderly and prodigious heaving, which bore multitudes of christians in ever renewed phalanxes, to come and kneel and drink at the foot of a solitary rock.

The measures already taken had, it is true, deprived the Grotto of its resemblance to an oratory, but in reality it remained much as it was before, as far as the veneration of the people went. Crowds flocked from every part to the place where the miracle had taken place.

Contrary to the hope of the Free-thinkers, the fears of the Faithful and the expectations of all, no disorder of any description arose from this unheard-of movement of men, women, children, believers, unbelievers, and of those who were utterly indifferent on the subject. An invisible hand seemed to protect these crowds against themselves, when, without leader or guide, they rushed day by day to the number of several thousand pilgrims towards the miraculous Fountain.

The Magistracy, represented by M. Dutour, and the Police, personified in M. Jacomet, regarded this strange spectacle with feelings of unbounded astonishment. Did it add to their exasperation? We cannot tell. Yet, to men of a certain turn of mind, who push their ideas of authority to extremes, the sight of a multitude so wonderfully orderly and peaceful is an almost insulting and perfectly revolutionary anomaly. When order is maintained by itself, all the functionaries who only exist for the purpose of *maintaining order* experience a sense of

vague uneasiness. Accustomed to mix themselves up in every thing in the name of the Law, to keep up discipline, issue orders, summon, punish, pardon and to see every thing and every individual depending upon them either personally or officially, they experience a feeling bordering on distraction when they find themselves face to face with a multitude of men who dispense with them altogether and do not afford them any pretext for interfering, showing their importance or encroaching on their liberty. Order of this kind which ignores them is in their eyes the height of disorder. If so fatal an example was generally followed, there would be no necessity for any *Procureurs Impériaux*, the Commissaries of Police would vanish from the scene, and the stars of Prefects themselves would begin to pale.

Baron Massy had full power to order the removal of all the objects deposited at the Grotto. By no law, however, was such a deposit regarded as criminal, and it was impossible to prohibit such offerings or to punish the donors. In consequence of this the Grotto was often filled with lighted tapers, flowers, *ex-votos*, and even with silver or gold pieces towards the erection of the building demanded by the Virgin. The pious faithful wished by so doing to testify to the Queen of Heaven their good-will, even though it might be unavailing, together with their zeal and their love. "What does it matter if the money is taken away. It will at least have been offered. The taper will have shed its transient light in honor of our Mother, and the bouquet will for an instant have perfumed the blessed rock, on which Her feet rested." Such were the thoughts of these truly christian souls.

Jacomet and his agents accordingly came to carry off every thing. Much emboldened since he had escaped the perils of the fourth of May, the Commissary affected the most contemptuous and brutal conduct, sometimes hurling various objects into the Gave, before the offended eyes of believers. Sometimes, also, he found himself obliged to preserve, in spite of himself, the festal air which marked those blessed places. It was when, the piety of believers having scattered the leaves of countless roses around the Grotto, it was out of the question for him to pick up the thousand remnants of flowers and the numberless petals which served to form this brilliant and fragrant carpet.

The crowds, however, continued to pray on their knees, without making any reply to his provoking conduct, and they allowed every thing to be done with a patience which God alone can give to a justly excited multitude.

One evening a report was spread that the Emperor or the Minister had requested the prayers of Bernadette. M. Dutour uttered a cry of triumph and made all preparations for saving the State. Three respectable women, who, as it appeared, had originated the assertion, were dragged into court and the *Procureur* insisted on the full rigor of the French law being enforced against them. Notwithstanding his wrath and eloquence the judges acquitted two and only condemned the third to a fine of five francs. The *Procureur* protested against the weakness of the Judges, persisted in his public accusation, and in his exasperation, or rather desperation, appealed from their decision to the Judges of the Imperial Court at Pau, who, treating his

anger with ridicule, not only confirmed the acquittal of the two women, but refused to ratify the very slight sentence pronounced on the third, dismissing the case altogether.

This little incident, so utterly insignificant in itself, only figures in our story to show how anxiously the officials of the *Parquet* were on the lookout, how actively they were in search of misdemeanors and opportunities of displaying severity, since they were irritated with such miserable trifles, and employed their time in prosecuting poor simple-minded women, whose innocence was to be shortly afterwards publicly proclaimed by the Imperial Court.

The population remained calm. No pretext was furnished by them for severities on the plea of maintaining order.

One night, when it was pitch dark, some unknown persons tore up the pipe of the miraculous Spring and choked its waters under shapeless heaps of rocks, earth and sand. Who was it that raised this monument of darkness against the divine work? What impious and at the same time cowardly hands committed this sacrilege, while shunning the observation of their fellows? No one knows. But when day broke and the profanation became known, a murmur of indignation, as might have been anticipated, issued from the crowds who had rushed to the spot, and on that day the people might be seen on the roads and in the street moving to and fro in a state of agitation resembling that of the ocean when it foams and surges and roars beneath the blast of a hurricane. The Police, Magistrates and *Sergents de Ville* were on the alert, watching, listen-

ing and reconnoitering, but were unable to detect an act of violence or a single cry of sedition. The influence from above, divine in its nature, which preserved order among these excited crowds, was plainly invincible. Who then—let us repeat the question—had committed this nocturnal deed? The *Parquet* and the Police could never discover who it was, in spite of making the most active search. There were not wanting, however, some prejudiced persons bold enough to suspect—doubtless unjustly—the *Parquet* and the Police of having themselves been the authors of the sacrilege, hoping by this means to provoke disorder which might furnish them with a pretext for having recourse to severe measures. The municipal authorities protested strongly against the imputation that they had connived at this scandalous proceeding. The same night, or early the next morning, the Mayor ordered the pipe to be replaced, and all the rubbish with which the new Spring was obstructed to be swept from off the pavement of the Grotto. It was the Mayor's policy to avoid any decidedly *personal* interference and to allow matters to rest as they were. He was ready to act, but only as a subordinate, when expressly enjoined to do so by the Prefect and on the latter's responsibility.

At times, the people, fearing not to have sufficient control over their agitated feelings, took precautions against themselves. The Association of Stonehewers, in number four or five hundred, had resolved to make a grand peaceable demonstration at the Grotto, repairing to it in procession and singing hymns on the occasion of their patronal feast, Ascension day, which fell that year on the thirty-

- first of May. Feeling, however, their hearts indignant and their hands quivering in presence of the measures taken by the authorities, they were afraid of themselves and renounced their project. They confined themselves to suppressing on that day, from a feeling of respect to the Blessed Virgin who had appeared at Lourdes, the annual ball which served to conclude their Feast.

“We do not wish,” they said, “that any disorder, however involuntary, or any amusement not recognized by the Church, should afflict the eyes of the Virgin who has visited us.”

VII.

THE Prefect saw more and more the hopelessness of being able to have recourse to coercive measures, owing to this amazing tranquillity, this calm, not less irritating than it was marvelous, which reigned of its own accord among these countless multitudes. There was nothing to lay hold of. He must either retrace his steps, and relinquishing the path he had hitherto pursued, leave the population absolutely free to take their own course, or, by adopting measures of violence and persecution, oppose, on some pretext or other, an arbitrary barrier to the popular movement. He must either beat a retreat or boldly advance.

On the other hand, the variety and suddenness of the cures effected, appeared to many persons of judgment to be but lamely accounted for by the therapeutic and mineral properties of the new Spring. The accuracy of the scientific decision furnished by M. Latour de Trie, was called into

question. A chemist of the town, M. Thomas Pujo, asserted that the water was merely ordinary water, and did not contain any medical properties. Many very competent professors of chemistry in the district were of the same opinion. The analysis of Latour de Trie was declared by men of science to be erroneous. These rumors gained so much ground that the Municipal Council of Lourdes began to stir in the business. The Mayor could not well refuse—in opposition to the wishes of all—to allow a second examination of the water of the Spring to be made. Without consulting the Prefect, which, as it appeared to him, would have been useless—so deeply convinced was the latter that M. Latour was correct in his report—he got a resolution passed by the Municipal Council, authorizing him to intrust Professor Filhol, one of the greatest chemists of the present day, with a new and definitive analysis. The council voted at the same time the funds necessary to remunerate the illustrious *savant*.

M. Filhol was a man of weight in modern science, and there would evidently be no appeal against his verdict.

Of what nature would his analysis prove to be? The Prefect was not sufficiently versed in chemistry to know. But we believe, without any fear of deceiving ourselves on the subject, that he must have been somewhat uneasy. The verdict pronounced by the eminent Professor of Chemistry in the Faculty of Toulouse might seriously derange the plans and contrivances of M. Massy. He really had no time to lose. Here again he must beat a retreat or advance boldly.

In the midst of so many different party feelings, and numerous calculations, Bernadette could not escape being exposed to fresh attempts, but they proved as useless as the former ones.

She was preparing to make her first communion, and she made it on the third of June, the feast of Corpus Christi. It was the same day on which the Municipal Council of Lourdes commissioned M. Filhol to analyze the water of the mysterious Spring which had some time back gushed forth from under the hand of the youthful Seer, when in her state of ecstasy. God entering into her child-like and girl-ish heart, was also making the analysis of a pure wave, and we may well imagine that He could not but admire and bless, in her virgin soul, the freshest of Springs and the most limpid of crystals.

She continued to receive numerous visits notwithstanding her ardent wish for concealment and retirement. She was always the simple, innocent child, whose portrait we have attempted to draw. She fascinated all who approached her by her candor, her striking sincerity and delicate perfume of calm piety.

One day, a lady, after having held a conversation with her, in an impulse of enthusiastic veneration which may be easily understood by those who have known Bernadette, wished to exchange her chaplet of precious stones for the one ordinarily used by the child:

"Keep your own, Madam," she replied, showing her simple auxiliary of prayer. "Here is mine, and I would not change it. It is poor like myself, and is, on that account, more befitting my state of indigence."

An ecclesiastic endeavored to prevail on her to accept a piece of silver. She refused, and he urged her to take it. She refused it again so formally that any further pressing seemed useless. The priest, however, would not acknowledge himself beaten.

"Take it," said he, "it is not for yourself but for the poor, and you will have the pleasure of giving alms."

"Do that yourself, Father, in my intention," replied the child, "and that will avail more than if I did it myself."

It was poor Bernadette's intention to serve God without payment, and to fulfil the mission she had received from on high without emerging from her state of noble poverty. And yet, she and her family were at times in want of bread.

About this time, the Prefect's official salary was raised to 25,000 francs. M. Jacomet received a donation. The Minister of Public Worship, in a letter which was communicated to several functionaries, assured the Prefect of his perfect satisfaction, and praising him for all he had hitherto done, he pressed upon him the adoption of energetic measures, adding that it was necessary at any cost to make an end of the Grotto and the miracles at Lourdes.

In this quarter, as in all the rest, the Prefect must either beat a retreat or advance boldly.

But what could be done?

VIII.

THE plan of the divine work developed itself by

degrees with all its admirable and powerful logic. But no one at that moment, and M. Massy less than any one else, perceived the invisible hand of God directing all things, however manifestly such was the case. It is not in the middle of a charge that one can judge of the disposition of a battle. The unfortunate Prefect having left the straight path, saw nothing in what was passing around him but an irritating series of vexing incidents, and an inexplicable fatality. Remove God from certain questions and the *inexplicable* will meet you at every turn.

The march of events, slow but irresistible, was upsetting, one by one, all the theses of unbelief, and forcing the wretched philosophy of man to beat a retreat and abandon its intrenchments one after the other.

The Apparitions had taken place. The Free-thinkers had, in the first instance, absolutely denied their reality, while they accused the youthful Seer of being a mere tool in the hands of others, and of engaging in a series of jugglery from mercenary motives. This theory did not hold good when brought face to face with the child's examination. Her veracity made a deep impression on all.

The spirit of incredulity driven out of this, their first position, had fallen back on hallucination and catalepsy.

"She fancies she sees; she does not see. There is nothing in it."

Providence, however, had assembled from every quarter of the horizon its thousands and thousands of witnesses round the child in her state of ecstasy; and when the proper moment arrived had solemnly

attested the truth of Bernadette's narration by causing a Spring to gush forth publicly, before the spell-bound eyes of the throng which had flocked to the spot.

"There is no Spring," the unbelievers had said. "It is an oozing of water, a pool, a small pond. Call it what you will, except a Spring."

But while they were solemnly and publicly denying its very existence, the Spring was increasing, almost like a being endowed with life, and assuming prodigious proportions. More than 25,000 gallons issued daily from this strange rock.

"It is accidental, it is a singular circumstance," Unbelief had stammered out, reduced to desperation and recoiling from hour to hour.

And see—events following their invincible course—the most striking cures had immediately attested in every direction the miraculous character of the Spring, and given a new and decisive proof of the reality of the all-powerful Apparition, whose gesture had sufficed to cause this Fountain of Life to gush forth from beneath the hand of a mere mortal.

The first impulse of the Philosophers had been to deny the reality of these cures, as they had denied in the first instance the sincerity of Bernadette, as they had denied the very existence of the Spring.

Yet suddenly the cures had become so numerous, so notorious, that the enemy had been obliged to beat a retreat and admit their reality.

"Well, be it so! Cures are certainly effected, but they are owing to the impregnation of mineral substances. The Spring possesses certain therapeutic virtues," had been the cry of the incredulous, hold-

ing in their hands I know not what semblance of a chemical analysis. Then the most astounding cures, which were absolutely inexplicable by a hypothesis of this nature, had been multiplied to an immense extent; and simultaneously, though from opposite quarters, several conscientious and enlightened men, thoroughly acquainted with the science of chemistry, had boldly declared that the Spring of Massabielle did not possess *in itself* any mineral virtue, that it was composed of ordinary water, and that the purely official analysis furnished by M. Latour de Trie was solely intended to meet the well-known views of the Prefect.

Driven thus from all the intrenchments in which, after successive defeats, they had sought refuge; pursued by the blasting evidence of facts; crushed beneath the weight of their own admissions; unable to retract these successive and forced admissions, which had been publicly registered in their own journals, what had the Philosophers and Free-thinkers to do? The Philosophers and Free-thinkers had but to humbly surrender their arms to Truth. They had but to bow their heads, to bend their knees, and to believe; they had but to do what is done by the ripe ears of corn, when the wheat, that gift of God, comes by degrees to fill their grains, as is mentioned by the author of the *Essays*. "It has happened," says Montaigne, "to really learned persons, as it happens to spikes of corn. They stand erect and hold their heads high, as long as they are empty; but, when they are full and heavy with ripe grain, they begin to bow down and lower themselves towards the ground. In like manner, men, after having tried everything and sounded everything, have

renounced their presumption and acknowledged their natural condition."

It may be, the Philosophers of Lourdes did not possess enough of largeness and strength of mind to apprehend the good seed of truth. It may be, their pride rendered them inflexible and impervious to the clearest evidence. One thing is certain, that, with the exception of a few who were happily converted, there did not happen to them what happens "to really learned persons," and they continued "to hold their heads high," like the empty ears of corn.

Not only did they maintain their attitude of incredulity ; but impiety, driven with shame and disgrace from quibble to quibble, from sophism to sophism, from one falsehood to another, and reduced to the most absurd shifts, suddenly threw off the mask, and exposed its full deformity. It passed, we would say, from the realm of discussion and reasoning, which it had attempted to usurp, to that of intolerance and violence, which really belongs to it.

Baron Massy, who was thoroughly acquainted with the state of the public mind in general, saw plainly with his unerring *coup d'œil*, that, if he took arbitrary measures and openly had recourse to persecution, he would derive considerable moral support from the exasperation of the Free-thinkers, who were entirely discomfited, humiliated, and consequently furious.

He also had been vanquished so far in the analogous if not identical struggle into which he had entered with the Supernatural. All his efforts had failed.

Issuing from the inmost recess of a solitary rock, and announced by the voice of a child, the Super-

natural had commenced its march, overturning all obstacles, dragging the multitude in its train, and gaining on its passage the enthusiastic shouts, prayers, cries of gratitude, and exclamations of the popular faith.

Once more, what still remained to be done?

To withstand the clearest evidence, and to take violent measures against the throng of believers.

IX.

IN the midst of all these strangely varied events, the question regarding the stables of the Prefecture was discussed with ever-increasing warmth, and had worked up the Prefect to the highest pitch of exasperation. The month of June had arrived. The bathing-season was commencing, and would bring to the Pyrenees invalids and tourists from every part of Europe, who would be witnesses of the scandal which the Supernatural was creating in the Department administered by Baron Massy. The instructions of M. Rouland were of the most urgent nature, and pressed the interference of the authorities. On the sixth of June, M. Fould, Minister of Finance, stopped at Tarbes on his way to his country residence, and had a long conference with M. Massy. A report circulated that the events at the Grotto formed the subject of their discussion.

The fact of going to drink at a spring, the road to which passed through the common lands belonging to the town, did not, however, constitute a criminal act in the eyes of the law. It was, therefore, of the highest importance, that the genius of the enemies of Superstition should discover some pre-

text for interference. Arbitrary power has not in France, as in Russia or in Turkey, the rights of citizenship, and it requires the mask of legality.

The subtle Prefect had, on this subject, an inspiration as ingenious as it was simple. As the Rocks of Massabielle formed part of the lands belonging to the commune of Lourdes, the Mayor, as guardian of the interests of the town, had the power of prohibiting any one from approaching them whether he might have reasons for so doing or not, in the same manner as a proprietor prohibits when he likes and whom he likes to enter his house or trespass on his estate.

A prohibition of this kind, publicly proclaimed, exposed every visitor to the charge of a specified misdemeanor—that of the violation of property.

By so crafty a proceeding, an act, absolutely innocent in itself, was transformed into one of a criminal nature, liable to the penalties attached to it by law.

The whole scheme of M. Massy gravitated round this idea, and this plan having once been hit upon, he resolved to act and to act despotically.

The next day, the Mayor of Lourdes received instructions to issue the following order:

THE MAYOR OF THE TOWN OF LOURDES,

Considering the instructions addressed to him by the superior authorities,

The laws of the 14th and 22d of December, 1789, of 16th and 24th of August, 1790, of 19th and 22d of July, 1791, and that of the 18th of July, 1837, on the Municipal Administration ;

•Considering, that it is important, *with a view to the interests of Religion*, to bring to a close the scenes

so much to be regretted which are taking place at the Grotto of Massabielle, situated at Lourdes, on the left bank of the Gave ;

Considering, on the other hand, that it is *the duty of the Mayor to watch over the public health in his locality* ;

Considering, that a great number of those in his jurisdiction, as also of persons strangers to the commune, come to draw water at a certain Spring in the said Grotto ;

Considering that there are serious reasons for thinking that this water contains mineral ingredients, and that it is prudent before permitting its use to wait until a scientific analysis should make known the applications which medical science may make of it ; that, in addition to this, the Law subjects the working of Springs of mineral water to the preliminary authorization of the Government ;

ORDERS :

First Article.—It is forbidden to take any water from the said Spring.

Second Article.—It is equally forbidden to pass over the communal lands going by the name of the “Rive de Massabielle.”

Third Article.—To prevent access to the Grotto, a barrier will be placed at its entrance.

Notices will also be posted, as follows, “Persons are forbidden to trespass on this property.”

Fourth Article.—All infraction of the present Order will be prosecuted according to Law.

Fifth Article.—The Commissary of Police, the Gendarmerie, the *Gardes Champêtres*, and the Au-

thorities of the commune are charged with the execution of the present Order.

Done at Lourdes, at the Mayorality, 8th of June, 1858.

A. LACADÉ, *Mayor*.

Seen and approved,

C. MASSY, *Prefect*

X.

IT was not without some hesitation that M. Lacadé consented to sign an order of this nature, and to put such a measure into execution. His somewhat undecided nature, fond of pursuing a middle course and liking to swim, as they said, with the current, could not but regard with considerable alarm such an act of decided hostility against the strange power which plainly hovered over all the events of which the Grotto of Lourdes was the centre. On the other hand, as should always be the case, the Mayor was attached to his official position, and, as the wags asserted, somewhat in love with his official scarf. He must, however, become the instrument of the Prefect's violent courses or resign his honors. The alternative was embarrassing to the first magistrate of Lourdes, though we cannot term it a very grave one, without feeling a disposition to smile at the weakness of poor human nature. M. Lacadé hoped to get out of the difficulty, by requesting the Prefect, as the condition of his attaching his own signature to the document, to insert at the beginning of the order, and, as it were, its opening sentence, "*With reference to instructions addressed to him by the superior Authorities.*"

“By these means,” observed the Mayor, “I am entirely freed from any responsibility as regards the public or myself. I have not taken the initiative; I remain neuter. I do not command; I am simply obeying. I do not give this order; I receive it. I do not proclaim this measure; I merely carry it into execution. All the responsibility rests on my immediate superior, the Prefect.

From a private in a regiment of the line, this style of reasoning would have been unexceptionable.

With his mind thus set at rest, M. Lacadé watched over the execution of the Prefect’s decree. He had it published with sound of trumpet, and placarded all over the town. At the same time, under the protection of an armed force, and the directions of Jacomet, barriers were erected around the Rocks of Massabielle, so as to entirely prevent all access to the Grotto and the miraculous Spring, unless by breaking them down or scaling them. Posts with notices attached to them were placed here and there, at all points whereby the people might penetrate the communal lands with which the venerated Rocks were surrounded, absolutely forbidding any one to trespass on the grounds belonging to the commune, under penalty of prosecution before the tribunals. The *Sergents de Ville* and *Gardes Champêtres* kept watch day and night, relieving each other every hour, and drawing up official reports against such as passed the outer posts for the purpose of going and kneeling in the vicinity of the Grotto.

There was a *Juge de Paix* at Lourdes called Duprat. He was as inveterate a foe to Superstition, as were the Jacomets, Massys, Dutours, and other con-

stituted authorities. This judge, being unable under the circumstances to inflict any but the smallest possible fines on delinquents, imagined an indirect way of rendering these fines enormous and really formidable to the poor folks who came from all directions to pray in front of the Grotto and request at the hands of the Blessed Virgin, one, the recovery of health long broken ; a second, the cure of a much-loved child ; a third, some spiritual grace, or some consolation in overwhelming sorrow.

M. Duprat, finding them guilty of a misdemeanor, sentenced the culprits to a fine of five francs each. But, by a conception worthy of his genius, he combined in a single judgment all those who had violated the Prefect's prohibition, whether by forming part of the same throng, or even, as it appeared, by repairing to the Grotto in the course of the same day. When he sentenced them, he made them all jointly and severally liable for the costs. Consequently should one or two hundred persons have gone to the Rocks of Massabielle, each of them was made liable to pay, not only for himself, but for all the rest ; or, in other words, to pay out 500 or 1000 francs. And yet, since the individual and original sentence amounted only to a fine of five francs, this magistrate's decision could not be appealed from to a superior court, and there was no means of obtaining redress. The judge was omnipotent, and this is a specimen of the way in which he exerted his omnipotence.

XII.

THIS somewhat brutal interference of the local Government with the question to which the scenes

enacted on the banks of the Gave, for some months past, had given rise, implied on the part of those who governed not only the denial of anything supernatural having occurred, but further of its possibility. In fact had the Administration admitted for one moment the *possibility* of the Apparition they would have adopted very different measures. In that case their aim would have been to have had the matter thoroughly sifted, whereas the course now followed plainly tended to hushing it up.

One fact was absolutely certain : the cures effected. Whether produced by the mineral and therapeutic nature of the water, or by the imagination of the invalids themselves, or by means of direct miraculous agency, these cures were palpable and officially recognized by the incredulous themselves, who being unable to reject them, sought only to account for them in a natural way.

Hundreds and thousands of loyal witnesses—whose testimony was beyond all suspicion—affirmed unhesitatingly that their cure had been effected by the use of the water at the Grotto. Not one was to be found to whom it had proved fatal or in whom it had produced evil consequences. Why then have recourse to these prohibitive measures, these lofty barriers, this armed force, menacing personal liberty, and this system of persecution? Why, if such measures were permitted, were they not carried to their logical conclusion? Why not close every place of pilgrimage where the sick had recovered their health, every church in which the faithful owing to their prayers believed they had received some particular Grace from God?

Such were the questions asked in every quarter.

“If Bernadette,” observed some, “had simply discovered a mineral spring possessing powerful curative virtues, without alluding to Visions and Apparitions, what Authority would have had the barbarity to prevent invalids repairing to it for the purpose of drinking its waters? Under the rule of Nero such a thing would not have been attempted, and all governments would have voted a reward to the child. But here, invalids kneel down before commencing their prayers, and the understrappers of office, flaunting cotton, silver or gold lace, who kiss the dust before their own masters, are not pleased that others should prostrate themselves before God. This is the real question. It is prayer which is the object of their persecution.”

“But Superstition?” observed the Free-thinkers.

“Is not the Church at hand to watch and guard the faithful against error? Let her act in her own province, and do not transform the Council of the Prefecture into an Ecumenical Council, or a Prefect or Minister into an infallible Pope. What disorder has arisen? None. What evil has taken place which might justify your measures and prohibitions? None. The mysterious Spring has done naught but good. Suffer then the believing portion of the population to resort to it and drink of its water, if they see right to do so. Leave them the liberty of believing, praying and of being cured; the liberty of turning themselves towards God, and demanding from the powers on high some assuagement of their sorrows. Free-thinkers, tolerate the freedom of prayer.”

But neither the anti-christian philosophers nor the pious Prefect of the Hautes-Pyrenees consented

to pay any regard to so unanimous a cry, and rigorous measures pursued their course.

That intolerance with which the Catholic Church is so unjustly reproached by the enemies of Christianity, is in reality the dominant passion of the latter. They are from their very nature tyrants and persecutors.





SEVENTH BOOK.

I.

THE Clergy continued to refrain from repairing to the Grotto, and kept themselves studiously aloof from the movement. The orders of Monseigneur Laurence in this matter were rigidly obeyed throughout the diocese.

The masses of the population, cruelly agitated by the persecution of the Administration, turned with anxiety towards the ecclesiastical authorities to whom God had committed the direction and defense of the faithful, and looked forward to an energetic protest on the part of the Bishop against the violence done to their own religious liberty.

Their expectations, however, were not realized. Monseigneur preserved an absolute silence and suffered the Prefect to proceed. Further, M. Massy had it inserted in his journals that he was acting in concert with the ecclesiastical authorities, and, to the amazement of all, the Bishop did not contradict the assertion. The mind of the people was troubled.

From the very first, the extreme prudence of the Clergy had been little understood or appreciated by the ardent faith of the multitude. At the stage which

events had now reached, after so many proofs of the reality of the Apparitions of the Blessed Virgin, after the gushing forth of the Spring, and so many cures and miracles, this excessive reserve on the part of the Bishop in presence of the persecutions adopted by the Authorities appeared to them an inexplicable disloyalty. The respect they entertained for his character or person did not entirely suffice to restrain the expression of popular murmurs.

Why not boldly pronounce his judgment at a time when the elements of certainty were so abundantly at hand from all quarters? Why not, at any rate, issue his orders for an investigation, or have the question studied and some examination of it undertaken, so as to guide every one's faith and prevent misconception. Were not events, which were sufficient to bewilder the civil power, and cause the up-heaving of whole populations, worthy of the Bishop's attention? Did not the Prelate's obstinate silence justify the Prefect in acting as he did? If the Apparition was false, was it not the duty of the Bishop to enlighten the Faithful on the subject, and arrest the progress of error at once? If it was true, was it not his duty to oppose himself to the persecution undergone by those who believed, and courageously to defend the work of God against the malice of men? Would not a single step taken by the Bishop, an investigation, for instance, instituted by him, have hindered the Prefect from entering on that course of persecution to which he had now pledged himself? Were the Priests and the Bishop then deaf to so many prayers and exclamations of gratitude which were rising from the base of this Rock, destined to eternal

celebrity, on which the Mother of the crucified God had rested her virginal foot? Had the Letter killed the Spirit? Were they, like the Pharisaical priests mentioned in the Gospel, blind to the lightning-like splendor of so many miracles? Were they so occupied in administering the concerns of the Church, and so absorbed in their clerical functions, that the almighty hand of God, appearing *outside* the temple, was either entirely overlooked by them or deemed by them an incident of no importance. Was it then under such circumstances, when God was intervening and persecution beginning to rage, that the Bishop should walk last, as if he were bringing up the rear of a procession?

This clamor rose from the midst of the assembled throng and kept increasing. The Clergy were charged with indifference or hostility, the Bishop with timidity or weakness.

Owing to the logical course of events and the natural bent of the human heart, this vast movement of men and ideas, so essentially religious in its commencement, threatened to take an anti-ecclesiastical turn. The masses of the people, full of faith in the Blessed Virgin and the Holy Trinity, but full also of discontent—irritated against the prolonged keeping aloof of the Clergy, displayed a tendency to rush towards the Church in which the divine strength dwells, and to desert the sacristy, where, beneath the sacerdotal robes, is found but too often the feebleness of man.

Monseigneur Laurence continued, however, to preserve his attitude of reserved inaction. What were the Prelate's reasons for resisting that voice

of the people which is sometimes the voice of Heaven? Was it prudence inspired by God? Was it merely human prudence? Was it shrewdness? Was it mere weakness?

II.

To believe is no easy matter. In spite of so many glaring proofs, Monseigneur Laurence had still some doubts and hesitated to act. His extremely learned faith, did not get over the ground so rapidly as did the faith of his simple-minded neighbors. God, who shows himself, so, to speak, all at once to simple and ignorant souls, who cannot be enlightened by human studies, is sometimes pleased to impose a longer and more patient research on cultivated and highly-educated persons, who are capable of arriving at truth by the paths of labor, investigation and reflection. Like the Apostle Thomas, when he refused to believe the testimony of the other disciples and of the Holy Women, Monseigneur Laurence would have liked to have seen everything with his eyes and touched everything with his hands. Of a precise intellect, rather inclined towards the practical than leaning towards the ideal, and naturally distrustful of popular exaggerations, the Prelate was one of those who—by I know not what peculiar instinct—gave a cold reception to the passionate feelings of others, and willingly supposed that we are apt to be led astray by our emotions and deceived by our enthusiasm. Although, at times, he was deeply struck by so many extraordinary events, he was so afraid of affirming on slight grounds that they resulted from supernatural agency, that he

might perhaps have run the risk of rejecting the idea altogether, or of only acknowledging it when too late, had not the grace of God tempered and confined within just limits that natural bent of his mind which we have just pointed out to our reader.

Not only did Monseigneur Laurence hesitate to pronounce his own judgment, but even to command an official investigation. A Catholic Bishop, and deeply imbued with the necessity of keeping up the external dignity of the Church, he was not without fears of compromising the gravity of this Mother of the human race, by launching her prematurely into the solemn examination of all these singular facts with which he had not himself a sufficient personal acquaintance, and which might, after all, have no foundation beyond the silly tales of a little shepherd girl, and the vain illusions of some poor fanatics.

There can be no doubt that the Bishop would never have advised the measures taken by the civil authorities, and they met with his decided disapprobation. But since the evil was done, was it not prudent to derive from it the incidental good which might be one of its results? Was it not wise—if, by chance, the popular belief and account were erroneous—to leave this pretended supernatural fact to its own resources and to allow it to fight its own battle by itself against the hostile investigation and persecution of M. Massy, the Free-thinkers and *Savants*, who had formed a league together to overturn Superstition? It would be better, therefore, to wait and not to be in a hurry to engage in a conflict with the civil power, which might, perhaps, prove useless. "I deplore the measures now taken as much as you do," the Bishop was wont to

observe in his own private circle to those who urged him to interfere ; " but not being charged with the police department, nor consulted by any of the authorities, I can but let things take their course. Every one is responsible for his own acts. I have had nothing to do up to the present moment with the acts of the civil authorities as regards the Grotto, and I congratulate myself on having done so. Later on, the ecclesiastical authorities will see if there is anything to be done."

Actuated by this spirit of prudence and forbearance, the Bishop desired the Clergy of his diocese to urge the people to remain calm and to employ their influence to make them submit to the decree of the Prefect.

It appeared to the Bishop that the wisest part would be to avoid all disorder ; not to create new embarrassments ; to favor even, from a feeling of respect for the principle of Authority, the execution of the measures ordered by the local government, and to see what turn events might take.

Such were the views of Monseigneur Lawrence, as may be gathered from his correspondence at that period. Such were the considerations which determined his attitude and inspired his conduct.

Perhaps he would have reasoned very differently, had he possessed, at that time, the ardent faith of the multitude. But it was well that he reasoned and acted in this way ; it was well that he did not yet believe. We subjoin some grave reasons.

If Monseigneur Lawrence, with the prudence required of him as Bishop, regarded the matter with an eye to the possibility of its being grounded on error, God, in his infinite clear-sightedness, re-

garded it only as connected with the immutable certainty of His acts and truth of His work. God willed that this work should undergo the proof of time, and should affirm its own claims by surmounting, without the assistance of any one, the painful barriers of persecution. Now, if the Churchman, the Bishop, had from the very first believed in the reality of so many Apparitions and Miracles, would he have been able to resist the generous impulses of his apostolic zeal, or hesitate, for one moment, to interfere energetically against the persecutions of the faithful, against the enemies of the work of God? If he had had entire faith in the fact that the Mother of God had really appeared in his diocese, demanding the erection of a temple to her own glory, and curing such as were sick, could he have balanced, for one single moment, between the will of the eternal Queen of Heaven and Earth and the paltry opposition of a Massy, a Jacomet or a Rouland? Certainly not. With such a faith in his heart, the Bishop, like St. Ambrose of old at Milan, could not but have started up, cross in hand and mitre on head, in the very teeth of the civil authorities. Publicly, at the head of the believers, undeterred by any fear of man, he would have gone to drink at the divine Spring, to bend his knees before the blessed Rock which the Virgin had sanctified by the touch of her feet, and to lay the first stone, in that wild spot, of a magnificent temple to the Immaculate Mary.

But in thus defending the work of God in the Present, the Prelate would infallibly have weakened it for Futurity. The support which might have been afforded it in its commencement would have

compromised it at a more advanced period, and laid it open to the suspicion of having emanated not from God but from men. The more the Bishop kept himself outside the movement and displayed a repugnance, nay hostility towards the faith of the people, the more the supernatural work displayed its strength, in triumphing without any external assistance, by its own resources, its intrinsic truth and innate force—in defiance of the animosity or withdrawal of all that, in this world, bears the name of power.

Providence had resolved that this should be so, and that the grand fact of the Apparition of the most blessed Virgin, in the nineteenth century, should pass, like Christianity in its infancy, through trials and persecution. 'It was, therefore, necessary, to carry out the divine scheme, that the Bishop, far from taking the initiative, should be one of the longest—I was going to say one of the hardest—to surrender, and should only yield at last, after all the rest, to the unexceptionable weight of the testimony adduced and the irresistible evidence of facts.

And for this cause was it that God, in His secret designs, had placed in the episcopal chair of the diocese of Tarbes the eminent and guarded man whose portrait we have sketched. For this cause had it pleased Him to withhold from Monseigneur Laurence, in the commencement, faith in the reality of the Apparition, and to keep his mind in a state of doubt notwithstanding so many astonishing events. It formed part of His heavenly plan, under such circumstances, to confirm in the Prelate that temporizing and prudent spirit with which He had

so largely endowed him, and to leave to his episcopal wisdom that character of long hesitation and extreme deliberation which, in the midst of the general effervescence, was unintelligible to the multitude, though the future was destined to show to the eyes of all its admirable results and providential utility.

The people possessed the virtue of Faith, but their impatient ardor would have willingly urged the Clergy to interfere prematurely. The Bishop had the virtue of Patience, but his eyes were not yet opened to the truth of the supernatural work which was being accomplished before him, and forcibly striking every one. Complete wisdom, and all things duly proportioned, were, as is always the case, in God alone, who was directing all events, and whose almighty hand was turning to the fulfillment of His object and tending to the immutable order of His designs the enthusiasm of the multitude and the hesitation of the Prelate.

It was the will of God that the Church, in the person of the Bishop, should abstain from taking any important part, and, keeping herself constantly aloof from the struggle, should appear at the last moment only to close authoritatively this grand debate and openly declare the Truth.

III.

THE population, less calm and less patient than the Bishop, carried away with enthusiasm on seeing the great things which were being enacted before them, and touched by the miraculous cures which were daily increasing in number, did not,

however, suffer themselves to be arrested in their course by the violent measures of the Administration. —

The most intrepid, in defiance of tribunals and fines, cleared the barriers and betook themselves to prayer in front of the Grotto, after having thrown their names to the *Gardes* who kept watch at the entrance of the communal lands. Among these *Gardes* were several who sympathized with the faith of the multitude, and these also got into the habit of kneeling at the entrance of the venerated place as soon as they reached the spot and before they were posted as sentinels. Placed, as they were, between the crust of bread which their poorly-paid position of *Sergent de Ville*, or *Cantonnier*, gave them, and the repugnant employment imposed upon them, these poor fellows, in their prayer to the Mother of the weak and indigent, threw the responsibility of the wretched orders they executed on the authorities, who forced them to act. Notwithstanding this, they strictly fulfilled their task, and duly reported the names of delinquents.

Although many believers, in the impetuosity of their zeal, would most willingly have exposed themselves to danger in order to go and publicly invoke the Virgin at the place of the Apparition, yet the style of jurisprudence adopted by M. Duprat was eminently calculated to fill the multitude with alarm, as his nominal fine of five francs, as we have explained, might mount up to an enormous sum. A sentence of this kind would have been utterly ruinous to many persons, more especially to the very poor. The majority of them accordingly

endeavored to escape the rigorous surveillance of persecuting power.

Sometimes the Faithful, respecting the barriers at which the *Gardes* were stationed on the boundary of the communal lands, reached the Grotto by cross-roads. One of the party, left in the rear, kept a look-out and warned his companions, by a preconcerted signal, of the arrival of the police. In this manner invalids were, with considerable difficulty, transported to the miraculous Spring. The official authorities, on being informed of these infractions of their orders, doubled the number of sentinels and cut off all access by these paths.

Some might be seen swimming across the Gave, in defiance of the swiftness of its current, for the purpose of coming to pray in front of the Grotto and drinking at the holy Fountain. The darkness of night was favorable to these violations of the law, which daily increased in number, notwithstanding the zeal and activity of the Police agents.

The influence of the Clergy had been diminished, not to say compromised, by the reasons we have explained.

In spite of their efforts to conform themselves to the injunctions of the Bishop, the priests discovered their utter inability to calm the agitated minds of their hearers, and to impress upon them that even the arbitrary acts of Power were entitled to respect. "Only what is respectable can claim respect," was a revolutionary watchword which found an echo in every heart. The personal ascendancy of the Curé of Lourdes—loved and revered though he was—began to pale before the popular irritation.

Order was menaced by the very measures adopted under pretext of ensuring its maintenance. The masses, outraged in the belief they held most dear, oscillated between submission and violence. If, on the one hand, petitions to the Emperor were universally signed, demanding in the name of liberty of conscience, the withdrawal of the Prefect's decree; on the other, the boards, with which the Grotto was closed, were broken night after night and thrown into the Gave. Jacomet exerted himself in vain to discover who were the believers, with so little respect for Authority, as to commit a misdemeanor hitherto unknown to our codes—nocturnal prayer accompanied with the breaking open and destruction of fences.

In order to avoid rendering themselves liable to prosecution, the faithful often went to prostrate themselves against the posts which marked the exterior boundary of the communal lands. It was a silent protest against the measures of the civil authority, and, as it were, a silent appeal to the omnipotence of God.

On the day when the Court of Pau reversed the sentence pronounced by the Tribunal of Lourdes against one of the three women prosecuted for some trifling remarks on the subject of the Grotto, and confirmed the acquittal of the two others, the crowd collected in the vicinity of the barrier was immense, and uttered shouts of victory. They could not contain themselves and cleared the barrier in compact masses, without returning any reply to the summons and terrified shouts of the agents of Police, who, disconcerted by the check they had experienced at Pau, and feeling alarmed at coming into

collison with so many thousands of men, retired and suffered the torrent to pass.

The next day orders and remonstrances from the Prefect came to revive the courage of the Police and to prescribe a still more strict surveillance. The force at their disposal was augmented, and dismissal in case of failure was hinted to the agents. Redoubled rigôr was the order of the day.

Reports of a sinister nature, absolutely false, but craftily circulated and easily credited by the multitude, threatened the delinquents with imprisonment. The actual penalties not being sufficient, an attempt was made to produce a kind of panic in the mind of the faithful by the employment of imaginary menaces.

By some means or other, any open infractions of the law were prevented from being renewed for some days.

Sometimes, unfortunate creatures, coming from a distance, suffering from paralysis, blindness or some one or other of those melancholy infirmities which medical science leaves to their fate, and which God alone possesses the secret of curing, went to the Mayor and besought him with clasped hands to suffer them to seek their last chance of recovery at the miraculous Fountain. The Mayor, obstinately adhering to the Prefect's programme, and displaying in the execution of the measure adopted that energy in trifling details with which weak minds often deceive themselves, refused, in the name of the higher Authorities, the permission which was demanded. Inexcusable cruelty, official reports were drawn up against the sick themselves.

The great majority of such, then repaired to the

right bank of the Gave, immediately opposite the Grotto. There was collected there on certain days an innumerable throng, on whom the officials had no hold ; for the land trampled upon by these multitudes belonged to private individuals, who believed they should bring down on themselves the benediction of heaven by permitting the pilgrims to come and kneel down in their meadows and to pray in them, their eyes turned towards the scene of the Apparitions and the miraculous Fountain.

About the time when these vast multitudes were being assembled, poor Bernadette, worn out by her asthma, and doubtless wearied by the visits of so many strangers, fell sick.

In his extreme anxiety to calm the public mind, and remove to a distance every cause of agitation, the Bishop availed himself of this circumstance to advise, indirectly, Bernadette's parents to send her to the baths of Cauterets, which are not very far from Lourdes. It would be the means of withdrawing the youthful Seer from those dialogues, interrogations and accounts of the Apparitions, which every one received with avidity, and which served to feed the popular emotion. The Soubirous, uneasy about Bernadette's state of health, and being convinced in their own minds that these perpetual visits were breaking her down, confided her to the care of one of her aunts, who was herself going to Cautarets. She offered to take upon herself the trifling expenses of the child's trip, which would cost but little at that season of the year, when the warm-baths are almost deserted. The noble and the rich do not repair to them till somewhat later on in the year, and a few poor people from the

mountains have Cautarets all to themselves during the month of May.

Bernadette, out of health, seeking silence and repose, and wishing to withdraw herself as much as possible from public curiosity, remained there drinking the waters for two or three weeks.

IV.

IN proportion as the month of June drew to a close, the great bathing season in the Pyrenees was commencing.

Bernadette had returned to her father's house at Lourdes.

The bathing places were soon thronged with invalids, tourists, travelers, explorers, others attracted by simple curiosity, and *savants* from every direction, coming by the thousand roads with which Europe is intersected. These sombre mountains, so solitary and wild all the rest of the year, were peopled by degrees by a mass of visitors, belonging, for the most part, to the highest circles of society of the great cities. From July, the Pyrenees are a *faubourg* of Paris, London, Rome or Berlin. French and foreigners meet each other in the refreshment rooms, elbow each other in the saloons, walk about in the mountain paths, and take excursions on horseback in every direction, along the banks of babbling streams, on the rugged peaks or the flowery turf of umbrageous valleys. Ministers, tired of active business; deputies and senators, weary of harranguing themselves or listening to the harangues of others; bankers, diplomatists, merchants, ecclesiastics, magistrates, authors, men of the

world, come to lay in a stock of health, not only at these widely-famed springs, but in this keen and pure mountain air, which stirs up the blood to greater activity and renders the mind—I know not how—more sprightly and free to exercise its powers. In this society, so varied; this throng of cosmopolites, so essentially fluctuating and diverse, representatives of every belief and every shade of unbelief, every school of philosophy grave or gay, every opinion and every system might have been found. It was a microcosm; it was an epitome of Europe, which in the natural course of things and at the appointed hour, Providence was ushering into the presence of the supernatural events and miracles which were taking place on the threshold of the Pyrenees. God was carrying out His eternal plans. In the same way as of yore, at Bethlehem, He had shown Himself to the shepherds long before He showed Himself to the royal Magi; so, at Lourdes, He had in the first instance summoned the lowly, the humble, the inhabitants of the lonely mountains; and it was only *after* these that He called together the rich and brilliant, the sovereigns of wealth, intellect and art, to become spectators of His divine work.

Strangers hurried to Lourdes from Cautarets, Baréges, Luz, Saint Sauveur, Eaux-Bonnes and Bagnères-de-Bigorre. The town was alive with dashing equipages, drawn, as is the custom of the country, by four stout horses, harnessed and decked with glaring colors and tinkling bells.

The great majority of pilgrims or travelers did not take much heed of orders and barriers. They defied threats of prosecution and repaired to the

Grotto, some from a sentiment of religious faith, others actuated by a lively feeling of curiosity. They wished to see, and they did see the persons who had been cured. Bernadette received innumerable visits. In all the saloons at the warm-bathing establishments, the events we have related formed the topic of every conversation. By degrees public opinion was formed, no longer the opinion of the little nook of country of forty or fifty leagues which extends at the base of the Pyrenees from Bayonne up to Toulouse or Foix, but the opinion of France and of Europe, which were represented at that moment in the bosom of the mountains by visitors of every class, every idea and of every country.

The violent measures of M. Massy, inasmuch as they caused as much vexation to the curiosity of some as they did to the piety of others, were loudly blamed by all parties. The former declared them illegal, while the latter deemed them inexpedient; all agreed in declaring them utterly powerless to stem the prodigious movement of which the Grotto and the miraculous Spring formed the centre. The absolute certainty of the Prefect's ultimate failure made even those judge him with severity who participated in his horror of the Supernatural, and who in the commencement would willingly have applauded his policy. Men in general, and more especially in the caste of Free-thinkers, judge the actions of those in power much more by their visible results than by philosophical principles. Success is the surest means of obtaining approval. Failure is a two-fold misfortune, for universal blame is almost always superadded to the public humilia-

tion which attends a want of success. The Baron was suffering from the attacks of this two-fold misfortune.

There were circumstances when the zeal of the Police and the municipal courage of Jacomet himself were sorely tried. Illustrious personages sometimes transgressed the limits of the enclosure. One day there was arrested a stranger—a man with marked and expressive features—who was advancing towards the *poteau*, evidently with the intention of going to the Rocks of Massabielle.

“You cannot pass.”

“You will soon see whether I can pass or not,” replied the stranger as he entered carelessly the communal lands and directed his steps towards the place of the Apparition.

“Your name? I shall make out a report against you.”

“My name is Louis Veuillot,” answered the stranger.

While the report was being drawn up against that celebrated writer, a lady had passed the boundary a few paces behind and had gone to kneel against the barrier of boarding which closed the Grotto. From between the openings of the palisade she was watching the miraculous Spring gushing forth and was praying. What was she demanding of God? Was her soul turning itself towards the present or the future? Was she praying for herself, or for others who were dear to her and with whose destiny she was charged? Was she imploring the blessings and protection of Heaven for an individual or a family? No matter.

This woman engaged in prayer had not escaped

the vigilant eyes which represented the policy of the Prefect, the Magistracy and the Police.

The Argus quitted M. Veuillot and rushed towards the kneeling woman.

"Madame," said he, "nobody is permitted to pray here. You are taken in the very act; you will have to answer for this before the *Juge de Paix*, presiding over the Correctional Tribunal, and without appeal. Your name?"

"Willingly," said the lady. "I am the wife of Admiral Bruat, and Governess of His Highness, the Prince Imperial."

No one in the world had a higher respect for the social hierarchy and established authorities than the formidable Jacomet. He dropped his accusation.

Scenes of this nature were often renewed. To prosecute certain persons was alarming to the agents of the Prefect and might have caused some uneasiness to that high functionary himself. It was a deplorable state of things. The powerful disobeyed the decree with impunity, while the weak were treated with the utmost severity.

The weights and measures used varied according to circumstances.

V.

THE question, however, raised by these supernatural events, by the Apparitions, true or false, of the Virgin, by the gushing forth of the Spring, by the miraculous cures, genuine or counterfeit, could not, as all agreed, remain for ever in suspense. It was absolutely necessary that all these things should be submitted to a proper and severe investigation.

Strangers, who had not been in these districts except for a short season, had not been present at the commencement of these extraordinary events, and who had not been able, like the people of the country, to come to any reasonable conviction, were unanimous—in the midst of the different accounts and various appreciation they heard on all sides—in expressing their astonishment at the complete silence and apparent indifference of the ecclesiastical authorities. Much as they blamed the interference of the civil power, they did not less condemn the extent to which the religious power personified in the Bishop had kept aloof.

The Free-thinkers, interpreting the long hesitations and present attitude of the Prelate to their own liking, thought themselves sure of his verdict. The friends of M. Massy began to cry loudly that Monseigneur Laurence agreed with the Prefect in his appreciation of what had taken place. They threw on the Bishop the entire responsibility of the violent measures which had been adopted. “The Bishop,” they said, “might arrest the progress of Superstition by a single word. The only thing required was that he should boldly pronounce his judgment. The civil authorities have only been forced to act in his default.”

The believers, taking into consideration the evidence adduced of the miraculous facts, looked upon themselves as equally certain of a solemn decision in favor of their faith.

Others—and among these a great number of strangers—had not come to any conviction or decided views on the question, and sought to be relieved from their state of uncertainty by some defi-

nitive investigation. "Of what use are the religious authorities," they observed, "if it is not to decide questions of this nature and to settle the faith of such as owing to distance, want of documents, or any other cause, are unable to examine and decide for themselves."

The Bishop's palace was besieged with complaints of this kind. To the murmur of the multitude was joined the voice of the classes usually termed enlightened, though frequently the little lights of earth made them lose sight of the Great Light of Heaven. An investigation was demanded from all quarters.

The supernatural cures continued to be effected. From a hundred sources official reports of these cures, signed by numerous witnesses, were forwarded to the residence of Monseigneur Laurence.

On the sixteenth of July, the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Bernadette had heard within her the voice which had for some months been silent, and which now no longer summoned her to the Rocks of Massabielle, then closed and guarded, but to the right bank of the Gave, into those meadows where the multitude used to assemble to pray, safe from prosecutions and the vexatious proceedings of the Police. It was about eight o'clock in the evening. Scarcely had the child knelt down and commenced the recitation of her chaplet, when the Blessed Mother of Jesus Christ appeared to her. The Gave, which separated her from the Grotto, had almost vanished from her sight as soon as the ecstasy came over her. She saw naught before her but the blessed Rock—to which she seemed to be as near as on former occasions—and the Immacu-

late Virgin, who smiled sweetly upon her as if to confirm all the past and shed light on all the future. Not a word proceeded from her divine lips. At a certain moment She bowed Her head towards the child as if to tell her, "We shall meet again at some very distant period," or to bid her a last farewell. After this She disappeared and re-entered Heaven. This was the eighteenth Apparition and it was the last.

In a different or entirely opposite sense, some strange events happened which it is of importance to point out. Three or four different times some women and children asserted that they had had visions like those of Bernadette.

Were these visions true? Was the Devil trying to mix up his mysteries with those of God in order to trouble them? Or were these singular phenomena attributable only to derangement of mind, ill-regulated enthusiasm, or the perverse and mischievous tricks of some naughty children? Or must we seek for some hostile hands, concealing themselves treacherously in the back-ground, who were pushing these visionaries to the front with the object of throwing discredit on the miraculous events at the Grotto? We cannot tell.

The multitude, with their thousands of eyes fixed on all these details, with their intuitive perception and the necessity they felt of coming to some conclusion, were less reserved in their judgments than we are ourselves.

The hypothesis that these self-styled visionaries were incited by underhand manœuvres on the part of the Police assumed immediately, right or wrong, a very serious hold on the mind of the public, which

had had become deeply imbued with distrust. The two or three children who claimed to have seen Apparitions mixed up all kinds of absurdities with their story, which was in other respects sufficiently incoherent. One day they clambered over the barrier formed of boards which inclosed the Grotto, and under pretence of offering their services to the pilgrims, drawing some of the water for them, and of sanctifying their chaplets by contact with the blessed Rock, they received from them and appropriated to themselves sundry presents. Jacomet, who might so easily have arrested them, suffered them to remain unmolested. He sometimes affected to be unconscious of these strange scenes, ecstasies, and infringement of the Prefect's orders, sometimes to be absent at the time they occurred. From these surprising proceedings on the part of the very crafty and sharp-sighted Commissary, every one concluded that it was one of those dark underhand pieces of roguery, of which men connected with the Police, and even with the Administration, are—too frequently, perhaps—considered capable. "Baron Massy," they said, "finding himself deserted by public opinion, and being convinced by experience of the impossibility of putting a stop to what was going on by the assistance of violence, is attempting to dishonor the miracles by fomenting false visionaries, of whom he will afterwards make a great fuss in the newspapers and with the government. *Is fecit cui prodest.*"

Whatever might be the value of these suspicions—and most probably they were unjust—such scenes might disturb the public mind. The Curé of Lourdes, roused by these scandals, lost no time in

dismissing with disgrace the youthful visionaries from the catechism class, and declared that if anything of the kind occurred again, he would himself take care to institute a severe investigation and discover the real instigators.

The attitude and threats of the Curé produced a sudden and radical effect. The pretended visions ceased there and then, and nothing more was heard of them. They had only lasted four or five days.

The Abbé Peyramale made the Bishop acquainted with this incident. As for M. Jacomet he on his part forwarded to the proper authorities, a report, couched in hyperbolical and romantic language, of which we shall have occasion to speak hereafter.

This audacious attempt of those hostile to the movement, to dishonor it and alter its nature, added weight to the already very sufficient reasons with which the Bishop was urged to act. Everything combined to show that the moment for interference had arrived, and that the religious authorities should no longer delay their investigation and final judgment.

Some men of the highest consideration in the christian world, such as Monseigneur de Salinis, Archbishop of Auch; Monseigneur Thibaud, Bishop of Montpellier; Monseigneur de Garsignies, Bishop of Soissons; M. Louis Veuillot, chief editor of the *Univers*; some personages less known, but of tolerable notoriety, Monseigneur de Rességnier, formerly deputy; M. Vène, Chief Engineer of the Mines and Inspector-General of the Pyrenean warm-baths, and a great number of eminent Catholics happened to be in the district at the time. All of them had studied the extraordinary events which

form the subject of our history ; all of them had visited and interrogated Bernadette, and all of them had either believed or were inclined to believe in the truth of her story. One of the most revered of our Bishops was said to have been unable to restrain his emotion on hearing the youthful Seer repeat her tale, so purely simple and bearing so strongly the impress of truth. On contemplating this little girl, on whose brow the gaze of the ineffable Mother of God had rested, the Prelate had not been able to resist the first impulse of his melted heart. He, a prince of the Church, had prostrated himself before the majesty of this lowly peasant-girl.

“ Pray for me, bless me and my flock,” said he to her with a voice choking with emotion, and so agitated that his knees almost refused to perform their office.

“ Rise, Monseigneur. It is for you to bless this child,” exclaimed the Curé of Lourdes, who was present at the scene, seizing the Bishop eagerly by the hand to assist him in rising.

However suddenly and rapid was the movement of the Priest, Bernadette had anticipated it ; and full of confusion in her humility she bowed her head low beneath the Prelate’s hand. The Bishop blessed her, but not without shedding tears.

VI.

THE clear and sagacious mind of the Bishop of Tarbes could not fail of being deeply struck by the combination of events, the testimony of so many serious men, and the knowledge of their conviction

after mature examination. Monseigneur Lawrence judged that the time for speaking had arrived, and he at length broke silence. On the 28th of July, he issued the following mandate, which was immediately known throughout the diocese and produced an immense sensation; for every one felt that the extraordinary state of things which had engrossed public attention for so many months was at length approaching a settlement.

MANDATE of Monseigneur the Bishop of Tarbes, constituting a Commission charged with furnishing an official report on the authenticity and nature of events which have occurred, about six months ago, on the occasion of an Apparition, true or pretended, of the Blessed Virgin, in a Grotto, situated to the west of the town of Lourdes.

Bertrand Sévère-Laurence, by the divine mercy and the favor of the Holy Apostolic See, Bishop of Tarbes.

To the Clergy and Faithful of our diocese, health and the benediction in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Facts of grave import connected with Religion, which agitate the diocese, and are re-echoed far and wide, have occurred since the eleventh of last February.

Bernadette Soubirous, a young girl of Lourdes, aged fourteen years, is said to have had visions in the Grotto of Massabielle, situated west of the said town; the Immaculate Virgin is said to have appeared to her. A Fountain is said to have risen there. The water of this Fountain either used as a drink or applied as a lotion is said to have effected

a great number of cures, which cures are said to be miraculous. People have come and still come both from our own and the neighboring dioceses, seeking the cure of their different maladies by the use of this water, invoking at the same time the Immaculate Virgin.

The civil Authorities have bestirred themselves in the matter.

From every quarter, since the month of March last, the ecclesiastical Authorities have been requested to explain their views touching this extemporaneous pilgrimage.

We at first thought that the time had not come for us to stir with any useful results in this matter; that, in order to establish firmly the judgment expected from us, it behoved us to proceed with sage deliberation, to distrust the first impulse of enthusiasm, to allow the public mind to calm itself, to afford due time for reflection and to beseech enlightenment for an attentive and satisfactory investigation.

Three classes of persons appealed to our decision, but from entirely different points of view.

The first consists of such as, refusing to enter into any examination of the question in point, see nothing in the occurrences at the Grotto, and the cures attributed to the water of the Fountain, but superstition, jugglery and means of duping others. It is evident we cannot embrace their opinion *a priori* and without serious investigation. Their organs talked at first—and that very loudly—of superstition, trickery and insincerity; they affirmed that the occurrences at the Grotto were grounded on sordid self-interest and culpable cupidity, and

thus wounded the moral sense of our christian population. To deny everything and to impugn the intentions of others is the easiest way, we allow, of solving difficulties ; but, to say nothing of its not being very honest, it is unreasonable and more calculated to produce irritation than conviction in the minds of others. To deny the possibility of supernatural intervention is to become the disciples of a superannuated school, to abjure the christian religion and to follow blindly the track of the infidel philosophy of the last century. As Catholics we cannot, in circumstances like the present, either take the advice of persons who deny that God has the power of making exceptions to the general laws which He has established for the government of the world, the work of his hands, nor can we enter into any discussion with them in order to ascertain whether such or such a fact is supernatural, inasmuch as they proclaim *beforehand* that the Supernatural is impossible. Is this as much as to say that, with regard to the question in point, we reject a full, sincere and conscientious discussion, enlightened by science and the progress it has made? Certainly not : on the contrary we challenge it. It is our wish that these facts should be first submitted to the severe rules of certitude which are admitted by sound philosophy, and that afterwards in order to decide whether such facts are supernatural and divine, there should be summoned to the discussions of these grave and difficult questions men who have devoted themselves to and are well versed in the science of mystic theology, medicine, natural philosophy, chemistry, geology, etc., etc. ; in fact, that Science may be heard and pronounce its judgment.

Above all things it is our wish that no means of arriving at the truth be omitted.

There is a second class of persons who neither approve nor blame, but suspend their judgment; before pledging themselves to any opinion, they desire to know the decision of the competent authorities and are most anxious to have it pronounced.

There is lastly, a third and very numerous class of persons who have already formed their convictions, though somewhat prematurely, regarding the matter which engrosses us. They are waiting with the greatest impatience for the Bishop of the diocese to pronounce his judgment on an affair of so much gravity. Although they expect our decision to be favorable to their pious sentiments, we know sufficiently well their submission to the Church to feel assured that they will accept our judgment, of whatever nature it may be, as soon as it is made known to them.

It is therefore, with the object of enlightening the religion and piety of so many thousands of the faithful, of satisfying a want of the public, of fixing uncertainty, and of calming the minds of all, that we yield to-day to the pressure which has long been brought to bear on us from so many quarters, and endeavor to throw light on occurrences of the deepest interest to the Faithful, as affecting the worship of Mary and religion itself. We have resolved, for this purpose, to institute in the diocese a permanent Commission for collecting and authenticating any facts which may have already taken place or may arise hereafter in the Grotto of Lourdes, or in connection with it, for making them

known to us and apprizing us of their character, and thus furnishing us with the elements which are indispensable to enable us to arrive at a solution of the question.

FOR THESE REASONS :

Having invoked the holy name of God, we have commanded and do command as follows :

Article 1.—A Commission is instituted in the diocese of Tarbes with the object of ascertaining :—

1st. Whether cures have been effected by the use of the water of the Grotto of Lourdes, whether by drinking it or in lotions, and whether these cures can be accounted for naturally, or should be attributed to a supernatural cause.

2d. Whether the Visions which the child, Bernadette Soubirous, claims to have had in the Grotto are real, and, in that case, whether they can be accounted for naturally, or are of a divine and supernatural character.

3d. Whether the object which appeared demanded anything from the child or manifested any intentions to her? Whether the latter was charged with the communication of them, and to whom? And what was the precise nature of the demands, or intentions manifested?

4th. Whether the Fountain, flowing at present in the Grotto, was in existence before the date of the Vision which Bernadette Soubirous claims to have had.

Article 2.—The Commission will bring to our notice only such facts as are established by conclusive evidence; it will forward to us circumstantial reports on such facts, accompanied with its own opinion regarding them.

Article 3.—The deans of the diocese will be the principal correspondents of the Commission: they are requested to make known to it:

1st. The facts which shall have taken place in their respective deaneries.

2d. The persons who may be able to bear testimony relative to the existence of the above facts.

3d. Those who, from their scientific knowledge, may be able to enlighten the Commission.

4th. The medical men who attended the sick persons before their cure.

Article 4.—After previous inquiries, the Commission will proceed to an investigation. The evidence will be taken on oath. Two members, at least, of the Commission, will go to the place where an investigation takes place.

Article 5.—We earnestly recommend the Commission often to summon to its sittings men versed in the sciences of medicine, natural philosophy, chemistry, geology, etc., in order to hear them discuss the difficulties which may be, in certain points of view, in their line, and to learn their opinion. The Commission ought to neglect nothing, to avail itself of every possible source of information, and to arrive at the truth of whatever nature it may be.

Article 6.—The Commission will be composed of nine members of our Cathedral-Chapter, the Superiors of the Grand and Little Seminaries, the Superior of the Missionaries of our Diocese, the Curé of Lourdes, and of the Professors of Dogmatic Theology, Morality, and Natural Philosophy of our Seminary. The Professor of Chemistry of our Little Seminary will be frequently consulted.

Article 7.—M. Nogaro, Canon-archpriest, is named President of the Commission. Canons Tabariès and Soulé are named Vice-presidents, The Commission will name a secretary and two vice-secretaries taken out of its number.

Article 8.—The Commission will commence its labors immediately, and meet as often as it may judge necessary.

Given at Tarbes, in our episcopal palace, under our signature, seal, and the counter-signature of our Secretary, 28th of July, 1858.

✠ BERTRAND SEVRE,
Bishop of Tarbes.

By command,

FOURCADE, *Canon-Secretary.*

Monseigneur Laurence had scarcely issued this order, when a letter from M. Rouland, Minister of Public Worship, reached the Palace.

To understand well the terms in which this letter was couched, we will premise :

It is impossible to know beyond all doubt whether the Police or the Administration had instigated the false visionaries, or whether they were the innocent victims of universal suspicion, and it would be still more difficult to establish this point by regular documents. In such cases, the proofs, when any are in existence, are always destroyed by interested hands. To arrive then at the truth, there remains only the general complexion of events, and the unanimous feeling of a contemporary public—a feeling sometimes certainly very just, but often also imbued with passion and stained with error. In presence of such incomplete elements, of this shade mingled with

light, and this light mingled with shade, a historian has only to recount authentic facts, to express his doubts, uneasiness and scruples, with regard to the rest, and to leave the reader to decide the question and determine in his own mind on which side the greater probability rests.

Whatever, therefore, was the reason, or the unknown hand which had instigated two or three street-boys to play the part of Visionaries, M. Jacomet, M. Massy, and their friends, displayed the greatest eagerness in exaggerating these childish tricks and turning them to the best advantage. They exerted themselves to the utmost to invite the attention of the multitude to this quarter, and to divert it from the really grave events, such as the divine ecstasies of Bernadette, the gushing forth of the Spring, and the cures of those that were sick, which had captivated the faith of the people. When the battle is lost on one point, eminent strategists endeavor, by some well-contrived feint, to lure the enemy towards a portion of the field full of ambuscades, and mines ready to explode as soon as they reach it. This is what they term, "making a diversion."

The sudden disappearance of the false visions and false Visionaries before the aroused attention and far-seeing threats of the Abbé Peyramale, blasted, from the very first day, the hopes which had been conceived by the profound tacticians of the free-thinking party.

The good sense of the public remained firm on the true ground of the question, and did not allow itself to be deceived. This was not the case with the high-reasoning powers of the Minister, M. Rou-

land. Let us see how it happened that his strong mind was led astray.

Attempting one more desperate effort against the triumphant and irresistible force of circumstances, and employing the last resources of their genius to produce at all cost out of these paltry incidents a last chance of resisting defeat and of resuming the offensive, the Prefect and Jacomet had forwarded to the Minister of Public Worship, the most hyperbolic and fantastic picture of these childish scenes. Now, owing to an illusion scarcely conceivable in a statesman who had had experience of official life in these, our days, M. Rouland placed the blindest confidence in official reports. Faith is never lost, whatever may be said to the contrary, but it is often misplaced. Rouland, the philosopher, had no faith in our Lady of Lourdes, proving her claims by cures and miracles, but he had faith in the Prefect and Jacomet. These two gentlemen then made him believe, that, under the shade of the Rocks of Massabielle, children had the audacity to play the part of priests, and that the people, represented by creatures of impure life, crowned them with laurels, or with flowers, etc., etc. They did not disguise to him the utter impotency of violent measures against the general agitation of the public mind. According to them, material force was vanquished and the civil authority at bay. The religious authority alone could save the situation by energetic action against the popular belief. Driven to desperation and knowing little of what became the dignity of a Christian Bishop, they dared to imagine, that a pressure from the higher authorities judiciously brought to bear on Monseigneur Lau-

rence, might determine him to condemn what was passing, and act according to their own views. For this reason they suggested to the Minister a personal appeal to the Bishop, as the best means of extrication from the present difficulties.

This was to urge his Excellency in the direction towards which he naturally inclined. M. Rouland was well-known to have a tendency to mix himself up with religious questions, and he experienced much pleasure in drawing up programmes for the guidance of the successors of the Apostles.

The Minister, notwithstanding his having been formerly *Procureur-Général*, never once thought of asking himself the question why — if the reports he had received were correct — the *Parquet* had not prosecuted before the tribunals the authors of the profanations brought to his notice. This strange inaction of the Magistracy with regard to these asserted disorders never once excited his suspicions.

Accepting then with a candor more than ministerial the romances of the Police and the Prefect and fancying that he saw his way clearly in the business; deeming himself a theologian of the first water and something more than an Archbishop, seeing that he was the Minister of Public Worship, M. Rouland, from the interior of his cabinet, formed a peremptory judgment on the actual state of things, and wrote to the Bishop of Tarbes a letter, which was in all respects a worthy counterpart of the one he addressed at the commencement of the affair to the Prefect and which we have already quoted. It was from beginning to end impregnated with the same official piety. On re-perusing it to-day, by

the light of historical truth, it is impossible to avoid smiling sadly at the manner — sometimes so monstrously barefaced — in which those who govern are at times deceived — we might almost say impudently mocked and held up to derision — by the inferior agents of their administration. We cannot in fact regard without a melancholy irony of mind the following letter written by the very Minister who at no very distant period of time was to affix his signature to a paper authorizing the erection of a spacious church on the Rocks of Massabielle, in eternal memory of the Apparitions of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary.

MONSEIGNEUR, — The latest intelligence I have received touching the affair of Lourdes appears to me to be of a nature calculated to cause deep sorrow to all sincerely religious men. These benedictions of chaplets by mere children, these manifestations in which may be remarked women of doubtful morality, these crowns placed on the heads of visionaries, these grotesque ceremonies, mere parodies of religious ones, could not fail of giving free scope to the attacks of protestant and other journals, if the central authority did not interfere to moderate the ardor of their discussions on religious subjects. These scandalous scenes do not throw less discredit on Religion in the eyes of the population, and I think it my duty, Monseigneur, to call anew your most serious attention towards these facts. . . .

These much to be regretted manifestations seem to me also to be of a nature to induce the Clergy to break through the reserve they have hitherto main-

tained. I can but make a pressing appeal on this subject to all your prudence and firmness, and ask you whether you do not think it advisable to reprove in the most public manner profanations of the kind.

Accept, etc.,

ROULAND,

Minister of Public Instruction and Public Worship.

IX.

THIS missive reached Monseigneur Laurence precisely at the moment he had issued the Order with which the reader is acquainted, and had constituted a Commission of Inquiry regarding the extraordinary events which the all-powerful hand of God had brought to pass.

Although the Bishop could not but be extremely astonished and indignant at the extravagant stories which the Minister gave out as if they were truth itself, he replied in a tone of moderation to his Excellency's letter. Without giving his own opinion on the matter in debate—as he did not wish from prudential motives to bring on a premature decision—he re-established the exact nature of the facts which had been so disgracefully travestied. He explained with equal clearness and frankness the line of conduct which he had followed himself and prescribed to his Clergy, until the increasing importance of the events around him had obliged him to interfere and to appoint a Commission of Inquiry. To the Minister, who, without knowing any thing or examining any thing, urged him to condemn, he replied that he was engaged in investigation.

MONSIEUR LE MINISTRE, — I read your despatch with great astonishment. I am also informed of what is passing at Lourdes, and, as Bishop, deeply interested in reprobating whatever is calculated to cause sorrow to Religion and the faithful. I am, therefore, enabled to inform you that the scenes you mention in your letter have never existed such as they have been described to you, and that if some things to be regretted have occurred they were of a very transient nature and have left no traces behind them.

The occurrences to which your Excellency alludes must have taken place since the closing of the Grotto and the first week in July. Two or three children of Lourdes took it into their heads to play the part of Visionaries and perform sundry antics in the streets. The Grotto, as I observed, being then closed, they found means of entering it and of offering their services to visitors, who had been stopped at the barriers, to bless their chaplets in the interior of the Grotto and to receive their offerings, for the purpose of appropriating them to themselves. One of them, who made himself most remarkable by his eccentricities—sometimes highly improper—was attached to the parish church at Lourdes, as chorister. The Curé gave him a severe reprimand, expelled him from the catechism class and excluded him from the service of the Church. This disorder was only transient. The public saw nothing in it beyond the frolics of certain children, which a few threats soon put an end to. Such are the facts which some *too zealous* persons have magnified in their reports into permanent scenes.

I should be glad, Monsieur, for you to obtain in-

formation as to what is passing at Lourdes from persons of birth and education who have stopped in that town in order to see the places for themselves, to converse with the inhabitants and with the child who has seen the Vision, such as the Bishops of Montpellier and Soissons, the Archbishop of Auch, M. Vène, Inspector of the Mineral Waters, Madame Bruat, wife of the Admiral, M. Louis Veuillot, etc., etc.

The Clergy have up to the present time kept altogether aloof, on the occasion of the affairs at the Grotto. The Clergy of the town have displayed admirable prudence, never going to the Grotto, in order to avoid giving credit to the Pilgrimage, but on the contrary favoring the measures taken by the authorities. And yet they have been reported to you as favoring Superstition. I do not accuse the first magistrate of the Department as his intentions have always been upright; but in this affair he has placed too much confidence in his subordinates.

In my letter in answer to the Prefect, bearing date April 11th, a letter which has been submitted to you, I offered that magistrate my sincere co-operation to bring this affair to a happy termination. But it was impossible for me to accede to his wishes by stigmatizing, from the christian pulpit, without enquiry or investigation, those who were in the habit of going to pray at the Grotto, nor could I prohibit them from going there, more especially as no disorder of any kind was reported, though on certain days the visitors might have been counted by thousands. Besides the fact that the Church always assigns specific reasons for her prohibitions, and the information I had received on the subject was insuf-

ficient, I was also morally certain, that my words would not have been listened to at a moment when the minds of all were in a state of the highest excitement.

The Prefect, being at the Council of Revision at Lourdes, on the 4th of May, had the religious objects which were in the Grotto removed by the Commissary of Police at Lourdes, and, in a speech which he addressed to the Mayors of the canton, he said that he had taken that measure with the consent and approval of the Bishop of the Diocese—an assertion which was repeated some days later by the organ of the Prefecture. I was informed of this step by the journals, and by the Curé of Lourdes. I lost no time in writing to the latter desiring that the orders of the Prefect might be respected. I never complained either at the time or since that I appeared to have shared in a measure of which I was entirely ignorant. Although numerous letters have reached me begging me to enter my protest, I have refrained from doing so, not wishing to add to the embarrassments of the situation.

The objects of piety being removed from the Grotto, we might hope that the number of visits to the spot would gradually decrease and that this Pilgrimage, which had so unexpectedly sprung into existence, would be brought to a close. The public claimed, right or wrong, that the water which flows in the Grotto effected marvelous cures; the crowds became more numerous and people flocked to the spot from the neighboring departments.

On the eighth of June, the Mayor of Lourdes issued an Order, forbidding all access to the Grotto.

This Order was based on the interests of Religion and the public health. Although Religion had thus been brought prominently forward, and the Bishop had not been consulted, the latter did not make any formal expostulation; he kept silence for the reasons explained above.

You see, Monsieur le Ministre, from these few details that the reserve of the Clergy in this affair has not been pushed to extremes. In my opinion it has only been prudent. When I could, I co-operated with the measures taken by the civil authorities, and if they have not always been successful, it is not the Bishop who must incur the blame.

Now, yielding to the expostulations addressed to me from all quarters, I thought the time had arrived for me to occupy myself usefully with this affair. I have named a Commission for the purpose of seeking for and collecting the elements necessary to form a decision — as far as I am concerned — on a question which keeps the country in agitation, and which, to judge from the information which reaches me, seems to interest the whole of France. I am confident that the Faithful will receive my decision with submission, as they know well that I shall have neglected no means of arriving at truth. This Commission has been in operation for some days. I am determined to give every publicity to my Order by means of the Press, in the hope that it may contribute to calm the public mind while waiting for the promulgation of the decision. I shall do myself the honor of forwarding your Excellency a copy of it within a few days.

I am, etc., etc.,

B. S., BISHOP OF TARBES.

Such was the letter of Monseigneur Laurence to M. Rouland. It was clear, it was conclusive, and it was unanswerable. The Minister of Public Worship did not reply to it. He resumed his former silence, in which he showed his wisdom. Perhaps he would have displayed still greater wisdom if he had never broken it.

X.

At the time when Monseigneur had just commanded, in the name of Religion, an investigation relative to those extraordinary facts which the civil authorities had condemned, persecuted, and wished to suppress *a priori*, without deigning even to study or discuss them; on the very same day, when the Prelate's letter to the Minister of Public Worship was despatched, M. Filhol, the illustrious Professor of Chemistry in the Faculty of Toulouse, returned the decisive verdict of Science on the water of the Grotto at Lourdes. The conscientious and most complete labor of the great chemist annihilated the official analysis of M. Latour de Trie, that *savant* of the Prefecture, who had been so much cried up by the Prefect.

The undersigned, Professor of Chemistry to the Faculty of Science at Toulouse, Professor of Pharmacy and Toxicology at the School of Medicine in the same town, Chevalier of the Legion of Honor, certifies to having analyzed a certain water coming from a Spring, which has gushed forth in the environs of Lourdes. . . .

The result of this analysis is, that the water of

the Grotto at Lourdes may be considered from its component parts to be a water fit for drinking purpose, analogous to the majority of those which are met with on mountains whose soil is rich in lime-stone.

The extraordinary effects which are positively attributed to the use of this water, cannot—at least in the present state of science—be explained by the nature of the salts, whose existence is revealed by this analysis.

This water does not contain any active substance capable of endowing it with marked therapeutic virtues. It may be drunk without inconvenience.

(Signed) FILHOL.

TOULOUSE, August 7th, 1858.

Thus when confronted with the examination of the celebrated chemist, all the pseudo-scientific scaffolding on which the Free-thinkers, *Savants* and the Prefect had with so much pains constructed their theory of extraordinary cures, fell to the ground. According to the verdict returned by true science, the water of the Grotto was not mineral, nor did it possess any curative virtues. And yet it effected cures. There remained nothing for those, who had audaciously put prominently forward false explanations, except the confusion attending their attempt and the impossibility from that time forth of withdrawing the public acknowledgment they had made of the cures accomplished. Falsehood and error were taken in their own nets.



EIGHTH BOOK.

I.

THE mandate of the Bishop instituting a Commission of Inquiry, coupled with the analysis furnished by M. Filhol, took away from Baron Massy, M. Rouland and M. Jacomet, all pretext for persevering in violent measures as well as for maintaining round the Grotto rigorous prohibitions, barriers and sentinels.

In justification of the prohibition of trespass on the communal grounds they had said, "Considering that it is important, *in the interests of Religion*, to put a stop to the deplorable scenes at the Grotto of Massabielle." Now, the Bishop by declaring the state of things to be sufficiently grave to warrant his interference, and by taking in hand the investigation of whatever regarded the "interests of Religion," disarmed the civil power of this motive, which it had so loftily invoked.

In justification of the prohibition of going to drink water at the Spring which had gushed forth from beneath the hands of Bernadette when in a state of ecstasy, they had said, "Considering that it is the duty of the Mayor to watch over the public health; considering that there are serious reasons

for believing that this water contains mineral compounds, and that it is prudent—before permitting its use—to wait until a scientific analysis shall make known the manner in which it may be applied by the science of medicine. . . .” Now by declaring that the water did not contain any mineral compound, and by establishing that it might be drunk with impunity, M. Filhol demolished, in the name of Science and Medicine, this pretended reason, “the public health.”

If then the civil power had alleged these motives as straightforward reasons, and not as specious pretexts; if it had acted “in the interests of Religion and of the public health,” and not under the influence of evil passions and intolerance; if, in a word, it had been sincere, and not actuated by hypocrisy, it would, in the present stage of events, have had nothing to do but to cancel its prohibitions and remove its barriers; it would have had nothing to do but to leave the people absolutely free to drink at the Fountain, whose perfect harmlessness had been proclaimed by Science; it would have had nothing to do but to acknowledge their right to go and kneel at the foot of those mysterious Rocks, where from henceforth the Church kept watch.

It did nothing of the kind.

To this solution of the question, so clearly pointed out by logical reasoning and conscience, there was one potent obstacle—Pride. Pride bore the sway from the bottom to the top of the ladder, from Jacomet up to Rouland, including, of course, the Baron, and all their philosophizing Sect. It seemed hard to them to recoil and surrender their arms.

Pride never submits. It would rather boldly intrench itself in the illogical than bow to the authority of Reason. Furious, beside itself, driven to the most absurd shifts, it raises itself to its full height against evidence. It says, "*Non serviam*," like the Satan of holy writ. It resists, refuses to give way and becomes inflexible—until all at once the crash comes and it is contemptuously shivered into atoms.

II.

To the official and officious enemies of Superstition, there remained one last weapon to be employed, one final struggle to be attempted. If the battle seemed to be definitely lost in the Pyrenees, they might possibly reconquer their position at Paris, and make themselves masters of public opinion in France and in Europe, before the cosmopolite band of tourists and bathers, on their return to their own firesides, should have spread every where their vexatious impressions and severe judgments. A formidable campaign was organized by the irreligious press of Paris, the province and foreign countries, against the events at Lourdes and the Bishop's pastoral letter.

While the generals of Free-thought were engaged in the decisive combat on this vast battle-field, the Prefect of the Hautes-Pyrenees, like Kellermann at Valmy, received instructions to maintain his line of operations—come what might—not to give way an inch and not to capitulate, at any price, in face of the enemy. They well knew Baron Massy's intrepidity, and were aware that neither arguments, nor

reason, nor moral considerations, nor the spectacle of the most astounding Miracles would triumph over his invincible firmness. He would hold his ground even though it were crumbling beneath his feet. Even the absurdity of their position would be ably defended by him.

The *Journal des Debats*, the *Siecle*, the *Presse*, the *Indépendance Belge*, and several foreign journals struck the blow simultaneously, and rushed to the attack with violence. The most insignificant journals of the most insignificant countries, deemed it an honor to figure in this muster of shields against the Supernatural. We find, in fact, among those which took part in the struggle, even a paltry little newspaper of Amsterdam, the *Amsterdaamsche Courant*.

Some, as the *Presse* for instance, by the pen of M. Guérout, or the *Siecle* by that of M. M. Bénard and Jourdan, attacked Miracles in their very principle, declaring that they had had their day, that they did not enter into any discussion with them, and that in a question already judged *a priori* by the great lights of philosophy, to examine was inconsistent with the dignity of Free Examination. "Miracles," observed M. Guérout, "belong to a series of civilization which is fast disappearing. If God does not change, the idea which mankind forms of Him changes from epoch to epoch in proportion to the degree of light and morality they have attained. Ignorant people, who have no suspicion of the important harmony of the laws of the universe, see every where those laws reversed. From day to day God appears to them, talks to them, converses with them and sends angels to them.

In proportion as Societies are enlightened, men become educated, and the sciences of observation come to counterbalance the flights of the imagination, all this mythology vanishes. Man is not less religious on this account; he is in reality more so, but it is after another fashion. He sees no longer face to face gods or goddesses, angels or demons. He strives to decipher the divine will written in the laws of the world. Miracles, which at certain epochs, might be the conditions of faith and serve as exterior coverings of deep truths, have become in our days the bugbears of all serious convictions." M. Guérault declared that if he were told of a most striking supernatural fact as being in the process of accomplishment in his immediate neighborhood, on the Place de la Concorde, "he would not go out of his way to see it. If such adventures can take their place for an instant in the superstitious baggage of the ignorant masses, they do but provoke in men of enlightenment—in those, whose opinion, in process of time, becomes that of the world—the repulsion of distrust and the smile of disdain." Other journals devoted themselves gallantly to the disfigurement of facts. At the same time that it attacked the very principle of miracles, the *Siccle*, in spite of the evidence adduced, and the vast body of water which the Spring produced daily, still stuck, in its capacity of a very advanced journal, to the hackneyed theory of hallucination and oozing. "It seems to us a matter of difficulty," observed M. Bénard, with all the pomp of learning, "how they managed to manufacture a miracle out of the hallucination, true or false, of a miserable little girl of fourteen years

of age, and the oozing of some pure water in a Grotto."

As to the miraculous cures they disposed of them by a single word. "The hydropathists also pretend to effect the most brilliant cures with pure water, but they have not yet proclaimed from the house-tops that they work Miracles."

But the most curious specimen of the good faith of the Free-thinkers, or of their sagacious investigation of this matter, is to be found in the Dutch journal we named above, the grave narration of which was re-produced in the French papers. This friend of enlightenment instructed the world and recounted the events which had occurred as follows:

"A new manifestation, destined to rouse and nourish the ardor of the faithful for the worship of the Blessed Virgin, was imminent. The deliberations of the Bishops on this point resulted in the preparation of the famous Miracle of Lourdes. Every one knows that the Bishop of Tarbes has appointed a Commission charged with investigating the fact. The so-called conclusions of the Report of the Commission, which is composed of ecclesiastics and individuals paid by the Clergy, were prepared long before the first meeting. *The pretended shepherd-girl Bernadette is not an innocent shepherd-girl, but a young girl belonging to the city, of highly cultivated mind and crafty intellect, who has passed several months in a nunnery where she has been duly tutored in the part she was to play. There, before a small number of confederates, trial-representations were given long before she was brought on the public scene. As we see, nothing was wanting to this comedy, not even rehearsals. If at any time there*

happens to be a dearth of dramatists at Paris, persons may be found among the superior Clergy who will fill up the gap in the most superior style. Besides, the liberal press has turned the whole affair into ridicule from beginning to end, and it is very possible that the Clergy, for their own interest, will recognize the necessity of being prudent." The information obtained by the journalists could only be compared with that which had captivated the simple faith of his Excellency, M. Rouland. The public, as we see, were not treated more respectfully than a Minister. In this manner is not unfrequently formed the opinion of those who are termed by M. Guérault, in his article, "enlightened men," doubtless in allusion to the torrent of light which the press throws upon them.

III.

OUTSIDE the events themselves and the Miracle, the mandate of the Bishop of Tarbes was the center of attack. Philosophy, in virtue of the infallibility of its dogmas, was indignant at the idea of investigation, scientific study and experiments. "When an individual, laboring under hallucination, sends a paper on perpetual motion or squaring the circle to the Academy of Sciences, the Academy passes to the order of the day without losing its time in examining lucubrations of the kind. There is no place for investigation when Miracles are in question; in the name of reason, Philosophy passes to the order of the day. To examine supernatural facts, would be to admit their possibility and by so doing repudiate our own principles. In such matters

proofs and evidence go for nothing. We do not enter into discussions on what is impossible, we shrug our shoulders and there is nothing to be said." Such was the theme on which turned—in a thousand different forms—the ardent and exasperated polemical discussion of the irreligious portion of the press. In vain did it obstinately persist in denials and misrepresentations; it dreaded any investigation. False theories delight in resting on the fleeting waves and indistinct mists of pure speculation. By I know not what instinct of self-preservation, they shrink from broad day-light and dare not descend with firm step on the broad plain of experimental method. They have a foreboding that defeat awaits them there.

In this desperate struggle against the evidence of facts and the rights of reason, the skin-deep liberalism of the *Journal des Débats* peeled off and fell, like theatrical varnish, leaving visible, with scarcely any attempt at concealment, the ground-work of furious intolerance which is concealed beneath the stately phrases of philosophy. The *Journal des Débats*, in an article from the pen of M. Prévost-Paradol, displayed its alarm beforehand at the immense range which the Report of the Commission and the verdict of the Bishop would infallibly have, and he made that his starting-point to appeal to the secular arm and to conjure Cæsar to put a stop to the whole matter. "It is evident," said he, "that a striking manifestation of the divinity in favor of a certain form of worship is a high testimony to its peculiar truth, its superiority to all the rest, and to its incontestible right to the government of souls. It is therefore an event of a nature calculated to bring in

its train numerous adhesions, whether as regards dissenters or unbelievers ; in a word, it is an instrument of proselytism." He put in a strong light the political importance of the result of the inquiry. "If this decision is favorable to the Miracle, it tends to a certain point, to break in that part of France the balance between the religious and the civil power. The Ministers of a form of worship in favor of which such prodigies are authenticated are vastly different personages from those anticipated, organized and placed under certain regulations by the terms of the Concordat. They have an influence of quite another nature over the population, and in case of any collection they dispose of it with an authority totally different from that of the Council of State and of the Prefect.

"We have sufficiently proved," continued the writer in the *Débats*, "the importance which, in several points of view, the decision of the Episcopal Commission of Tarbes must necessarily have. Now, there is here a truth which we should bear in mind, and of which M. de Morny has just reminded the Council-General of Puy de Dôme with justifiable urgency. It is that nothing of importance can be legally done in France without the previous authorization of the Administration. If a stone cannot be moved, as M. de Morny well remarked, or a well dug without the consent of the Administration, how much more necessary must its consent be in order to establish a Miracle or found a Pilgrimage. Any one who is conversant with religious matters, and particularly with the opening of temples, or of schools of dissenting communes, knows perfectly well that the administrative au-

thority has not one plea, but ten ; not one article of the law, but twenty or thirty which confer on it supreme power in such matters. The meeting of the Commission of the Diocese of Tarbes may be prevented or dissolved in a hundred ways by the Concordat, by the penal Code, by the law of 1824, by the decree of February 1852, by the central authority, by the municipal authority, by all the authorities possible. Further than this, the decision of this Commission when promulgated may be annulled in reality by the legal opposition of the administrative authority to the erection of a chapel or to the licensed use of the marvelous water. The same authority has the power of prohibiting and dispersing all assemblages of persons, and of prosecuting their instigators, etc." Having reached this point, having warned Cæsar, and cried out lustily his *caveant consules*, the crafty writer resumed—for form's sake—his mantle of liberalism. "What are we aiming at," he observed hypocritically, "in establishing this preventive right of the Administration? Is it to exhort it to avail itself of it? God forbid?" And he thus rejoined, by a back door, the ranks of the friends of liberty,

In the departments, the journals tamely re-echoed those of Paris. The battle was commenced everywhere and by all. The sergeants, corporals, the rank and file of literature stepped to the front in the wake of the Marshals of Free-thought. At Tarbes, the *Ère Impériale*, inspired by the Prefect, rammed his carbine with arguments fresh from Paris, and fired close to the muzzle, every second day, at the Supernatural. The little *Lavedan*, itself, had found a few grains of powder—terribly

damped, it is true, by the water of the Grotto—and assisted, it is said, by Jacomet, exerted itself to level at the Miracle its hebdomadal pistol, which regularly missed fire once a week.

The *Univers*, the *Union*, the majority of the Catholic journals supported the universal shock gallantly. Powerful talents placed themselves at the service of Truth, which was still more powerful. The Christian press re-established the reality of History and put to flight the miserable quibbles of philosophical fanaticism.

“In face of the unexplained occurrences to which a supernatural character is attributed by the faith or the credulity of the multitude, the civil authority,” observed M. Louis Veuillot, “has—without information, but also without success—decided the question in the negative. The spiritual authority is now interfering in its turn; it is its right and its duty. Before judging, it seeks information. It has instituted a Commission, a kind of tribunal of investigation, in order to discover facts, study their nature, and to determine their character. If they are true, and possess a supernatural character, the Commission will say so. If they are false, or only produced by natural causes, it will state this. What more can our adversaries desire from us? Would they have the Bishop abstain, at the risk of slighting a grace which God might deign to grant to his diocese, or, in the other case, suffer a superstition to strike its roots deep into the hearts of the faithful?”

“The Bishop cannot fail to have remarked the strangeness of this conviction, which is establishing itself among a whole people, on the word of a

poor illiterate little girl. He must have asked himself the question—How came these cures, which are said to be effected by a few drops of pure water, either employed as a lotion or drank by the sufferers? And if there were in reality no cures, it is necessary for us to know why it was so generally believed that they had taken place. Now, supposing that the water is pure, as the chemists say, and that nevertheless the cures are certain, as has been affirmed up to the present time by many invalids and some doctors, we do not see any difficulty in recognizing in this supernatural and miraculous agency, with all due deference to the explanations offered by the *Siecle*."

This vigorous polemical writer faced all his enemies at the same time. A stroke of his pen was sufficient to upset the absurd prejudice of denying Miracles altogether, and of refusing even an examination of those astounding facts which whole multitudes saw with their eyes and proclaimed on their knees. "If M. Guérout were told that, in the name of Christ, a great miracle was being performed on the Place de la Concorde, he would not go to see it. He would do well, since he is determined to remain incredulous; before such a spectacle he would not be certain of finding such a natural explanation as would dispense him from going to confession. But he would do better to see the Miracle and believe, yielding to the testimony which God, in His mercy, might be willing to give him. In either case, we would have him to understand that the crowd would not be much troubled at his absence, and would experience no uneasiness at hearing him declare that what had been

seen was the simplest thing in the world, and that the crowd was merely suffering from hallucination. Things would pass in Paris exactly as at Lourdes. There would be a general cry that a Miracle had taken place, and, if it really was a Miracle, the Miracle would produce its effect; in other words, that many men who have not hitherto *sought to decipher* the divine will, or have not succeeded in doing so, would know it and put it in practice; they would love God with all their heart and all their soul and all their mind, and their neighbor as themselves. Such is the end God would attain by Miracles. Woe to those who refuse to profit by them."

"Those who reject the Supernatural," observed one of the ancients, "sap the foundations of all philosophy. They do so, in fact, and especially since the advent of Christianity, because wishing to withdraw God from the world, they are left without any explanation of the world or of humanity. This God whom they exclude, some deny His existence, in order to get rid of Him altogether; others banish Him into vacuity, as exacting nothing and having nothing to exact from mankind, whom he abandons to chance, after having created them in a freak of his disdainful power. Some, denying and affirming His existence at the same time, as if they wished to glut their ingratitude by a double insult, pretend to discover Him everywhere, which dispenses them from acknowledging and adoring Him anywhere. However, around them and within themselves, humanity cries aloud and confesses God. They answer with sophisms, which do not really satisfy them, and by sarcasms, the compass of which they, with difficulty, hide from themselves; and

lastly, their science and their reason, driven into absurdities, stop their eyes and their ears. They sap the foundations of philosophy. Does God, compassionating the faith of the weak, which these false Doctors would abuse, show Himself by one of those unusual strokes of his power, which does not on that account cease to be one of the laws of the world? They reject it. Look! We do not wish to see! David has said of the sinner, "He has sworn in his heart to sin; he refuses to understand lest he should be forced to do well."

"Ah! doubtless," exclaims elsewhere the indignant logician, "there exists a miserable crowd at whom all these common-places may be boldly flung; but there are also, even at Lourdes, readers whose good sense rebels and asks what becomes of history, palpable facts and right and simple reason in systems of the kind, 'with their decision to refuse all examination, and their negation *a priori*.'"

"As to preventing the Episcopal Commission performing its duties, we doubt if there are laws conferring this power on the State; if there are, the wisdom of the State should abstain from putting them in force. On the one hand nothing could be more favorable to the growth of Superstition: popular credulity would go astray to its heart's content, for 'there is no law which can oblige the Bishop to pronounce his judgment on a fact of which he cannot know anything, and of which he is even forbidden to know anything.' The enemies of Superstition have only one thing to do, which is to institute a Commission themselves, have a counter-investigation, and publish its result; provided, of course, that the Episcopal Commission concluded in favor

of the Miracle. For, if it came to the conclusion that the facts were false or only produced by illusion, there was nothing more to be said on the subject."

In the midst of the great excitement of the public mind, the Catholic press displayed truly admirable reserve, in refusing to pronounce any judgment regarding what had occurred at the Rocks of Massabielle and the miraculous cures. It did not wish to anticipate in any way the decision of the Episcopal Commission. It confined itself to refuting calumnies, gross libels and sophisms, to maintaining the grand historical thesis of the Supernatural, and to reclaiming, in the name of reason, the rights of investigation and the liberty of intelligence.

"The occurrences at Lourdes," observed the *Univers*, "have not yet been either verified or stamped with any decided character. They may arise from miraculous agency, or from a mere illusion. The debate will be settled by the Bishop's decision.

"As regards ourselves, we think we have replied to whatever has been advanced seriously, or merely speciously, respecting the affair at Lourdes. Here we shall pause. It was not our part to allow the press to incrust these facts with all the lies it could invent; it would not be our part to reply to the derision which it has showered so unsparingly upon them. Wise men will appreciate the wisdom and good faith of the Church, and, as is usually the case, after all this disturbance, Truth will obtain in the world her little nucleus of adherents,—*pusillus grex*—which is, however, sufficient to maintain the reign of truth in the world."

We see that, in this vast polemical war, which was stirred up on this grand question of Miracles owing to the events at Lourdes, the two camps were animated with the most opposite spirit.

On the one side, the Catholics appealed for a fair investigation; on the other, the pseudo-philosophers dreaded the approach of light. The former said "Let an inquiry be instituted;" the latter exclaimed, "Let all debates be cut short!" The motive of one party was liberty of conscience; while the other entreated Cæsar to suppress by violence this religious movement, and to stifle it, not by force of argument, but by the brutality of power.

Every one of impartial mind, placed by his ideas or position outside the *mêlée*, could not but perceive in the clearest point of view, that justice, truth, and reason, were on the side of the Catholics. For this, it was sufficient not to be blinded by the fury of the struggle or the force of prejudice.

Although the Administration, in the person of a Commissary, a Prefect, and a Minister, had unfortunately played a most foolish part in this grave affair, there existed one powerful man who had never acted in it, and who, whatever might be his religious, philosophical, and political ideas, was in a condition to decide with perfect impartiality. The fact of the Supernatural having manifested itself or not at the gates of Lourdes, was a matter of utter indifference, as far as his schemes and the progress of his own affairs were concerned. Neither his ambition, nor his vanity, nor his doctrinal views, nor his antecedents, were pledged on either side of the question. Where is the mind, which, in such circumstances, would not deal equitably, and give rea-

son and justice their due? Men do not violate Justice and outrage Truth, except when they deem it of utility to trample them under foot, in view of some powerful interest connected with fortune, ambition, or pride.

The man of whom we are speaking was called Napoleon III., and was, by chance, Emperor of the French.

Impassible as was his wont, mute as the sphinxes of granite which guard the gates of Thebes, he followed the polemical combat, watching the fluctuations of the battle, and waiting until the conscience of the public, so to say, dictated to him his decision.

IV.

WHILE God thus left his work to be discussed by man, He did not cease to grant visible graces to those humble and believing souls, who repaired to the miraculous Fountain to implore the sovereign power of the Virgin Mother.

A child at St. Justin, in the department of Gers, Jean-Marie Tambourné, had been for some months entirely disabled in his right leg. He suffered such excruciating pains in it, that his limbs had been violently twisted out of shape; and his foot, completely turned outwards by his attacks of suffering, had formed a right angle with the other foot. His general health had been speedily impaired and disorganized owing to his state of continual suffering, which deprived him of sleep as well as of appetite. His parents, who were in tolerably easy circumstances, had exhausted, in hopes of effecting his cure,

all the treatment recommended by the medical men of the place. Nothing could overcome the poor child's inveterate infirmity. Recourse had been had to the waters of Blousson, and to medicinal baths, but almost everything had failed. Very slight temporary alleviation of his sufferings constantly led to disastrous relapses.

His parents had lost all confidence in any means recommended by science. Disgusted with the vain efforts of medical men, they turned their hopes towards the Mother of Mercy, who, as it was said, had appeared at the Rocks of Massabielle. On the twenty-third of September, 1858, Jean-Marie was taken by his mother to Lourdes in a public conveyance. The distance was long, being about fifty *kilomètres*. On reaching the town, the mother, carrying her unfortunate son in her arms, repaired to the Grotto. She bathed him in the miraculous water, praying at the same time fervently to Her, who has willed to be called in the Rosary, "Health of the weak." The child had fallen into a kind of ecstatic state. His eyes were wide open and his mouth half closed. He seemed to be contemplating some strange spectacle.

"What is the matter with you?" enquired his mother.

"I see God and the Blessed Virgin," he replied.

The poor woman on hearing these words experienced a profound commotion in her heart of hearts. A strange perspiration stood in beads on her face.

The child had come to himself again.

"Mother," he exclaimed, "my ailment is gone! I do not feel any more pain. I can walk. I feel as well as I was long ago!"

Jean-Marie spoke the truth. Jean-Marie was cured. He returned to Lourdes on foot. He dined and slept there. Simultaneously with the disappearance of his infirmity and pain, his appetite and sleep returned. The next day, his mother returned to the Grotto to bathe him once more, and had a mass of thanksgiving celebrated in the parish-church of Lourdes. Then, both started on their return homewards, but on foot, and not in any vehicle.

When, after having slept *en route*, they reached St. Justin, the child perceived his father, who was on the high-road, looking out, no doubt, for the carriage which was to bring home his pilgrims. Jean-Marie recognizing him from afar, let go his mother's hand and began to run towards him.

The father almost fainted at the sight. But his dearly-loved child was already in his arms. "Father," he exclaimed, "the Blessed Virgin has cured me!"

The fame of this event spread like wild-fire in the town, where Jean-Marie was known by every one. People came to see him in crowds from all quarters.

The sister of a notary at Tarbes, Mademoiselle Jeanne-Marie Massot-Bordenave, had remained, in consequence of a long and serious illness, almost entirely deprived of the use of her hands and feet. She could only walk with the greatest difficulty. As to her hands, they were constantly swollen, of a purple color, and causing her pain, and almost entirely useless. Her fingers, bent and stiff, could not be straightened, and were the victims of a complete paralysis. Having been to see her brother at Tarbes, she had returned to her own residence at Arras, in

the canton of Aucun. She was alone in the *interieur* of the diligence. A flask of wine given to her by her brother having by accident become uncorked and upset, she could neither pick it up nor replace the cork, owing to the complete weakness of her fingers.

Lourdes happened to be in her way home. She stopped there and repaired to the Grotto.

Scarcely had she plunged her hand into the miraculous water, when she instantly felt them restored to life. Her fingers had straightened themselves, and had suddenly refound their strength and flexibility. Delighted, perhaps beyond her fondest hopes, she plunged her feet also into the miraculous water, and they were cured in the same way her hands had been. She fell on her knees. What did she say to the Virgin? How did she thank her? Such prayers, such bursts of gratitude, may be divined, but they cannot be written.

After this, she put on again her stockings and shoes, and, with a firm step, took the road leading to the town.

A young girl was walking in the same direction, who was returning from the wood, and carrying on her head an enormous fagot. The weather was warm, and this poor peasant was bathed with perspiration. Exhausted with fatigue, she sat down on a large stone at the side of the road, placing at her feet her burden, which was too heavy for her weakness. At that moment, Jeanne-Marie Massot passed before her, returning active and radiant with joy from the divine Fountain. A good thought descended into her heart. She drew near to the young peasant-girl.

"My child," she said to her, "the Lord has just granted me a most remarkable favor. He has cured me; He has removed my burden from me. In my turn, I should like to assist and relieve you."

Saying these words, Marie Massot raised, with her hands so recently restored to life, the heavy fagot thrown on the ground, placed it on her head, and in this manner re-entered Lourdes from which, less than an hour before, she had issued infirm and paralyzed. The first fruits of her restored strength had been nobly employed—they had been consecrated to charity. "Freely ye have received—freely give," is a text to be found somewhere in Holy Writ.

A woman in the decline of life, Marie Capdevielle of the small town of Livron, in the vicinity of Lourdes, had been also cured of a most severe deafness which was beginning to become inveterate.

"It appears to me," she used to say, "as if I were in another world, when I hear the church-bells, which I had not heard for upwards of three years."

These cures and many others continued to attest, in a manner not to be gainsaid, the direct intervention of God. God manifested his power in restoring health to the sick; and, it was clear that, if He had permitted persecution, it was necessary for the carrying out of his designs. It depended upon Him to cause its cessation, and for that purpose to incline, as was pleasing to Him, the will of the great ones of earth.

V.

THE polemical discussion of the press on the subject of the Grotto was exhausted. In France and in foreign countries, the public conscience had been enabled to judge, not of the reality of the supernatural occurrences, but of the violent oppression which liberty of belief and right of examination were undergoing in a corner of the Empire. The miserable sophisms of anti-christian fanaticism, and of intolerance pretending to be philosophical, had not been able to withstand the forcible logic of the Catholic journals. The *Debats*, the *Siecle*, the *Presse*, and the vile crowd of irreligious papers were silent, probably regretting that they had engaged in so unfortunate a war, and had given so much publicity to such extraordinary facts. They had only succeeded in propagating and spreading in every country the fame of so many miracles. From Italy, Germany, and countries still more distant, persons wrote to Lourdes begging that a few drops of the sacred water might be forwarded to them.

At the Ministry of Public Worship, M. Rouland persisted in wishing to oppose himself to the most sacred of liberties and in pretending to arrest the march of events.

At the Grotto, Jacomet and the *Gardes* persisted in watching day and night, and in dragging the believers to the bar of the tribunals. M. Duprat was constantly engaged in condemning delinquents.

Placed between such a Minister to support him and such agents to execute his wishes, Baron Massy remained gallantly in his absolutely illogical posi-

tion and viewed with complacency the omnipotence of his arbitrary power. More and more exasperated at seeing himself deprived, by the episcopal inquiry and the analysis of M. Filhol, of the vain pretexts of religion and public order with which he had originally sought to veil his intolerance, he abandoned himself with pride to the bitter joy of enforcing measures of pure unmitigated tyranny. He remained deaf to the unanimous cry which greeted his ears. To every reason adduced, to the most undeniable evidence, he opposed his own will: "Such is my good pleasure." It was sweet to him to be stronger in his individual capacity than the multitudes, stronger than the Bishop, stronger than good common sense, stronger than the miracles, stronger than the God of the Grotto. *Etiam si omnes, ego non.*

It was under such circumstances that two eminent personages, Mgr. de Salinis, Archbishop of Auch, and M. de Rességnier, formerly deputy, waited upon the Emperor, who was at that moment at Biarritz. Napoleon III. received at the same time from different quarters petitions urgently demanding and claiming in virtue of the most sacred rights, the withdrawal of the arbitrary and violent measures of Baron Massy. "Sire," so ran one of these petitions, "we do not pretend to decide in any way the question of the Apparitions of the Virgin, although, on the faith of astounding miracles, which they claim to have seen with their own eyes, almost all, in these districts, believe implicitly in the reality of these supernatural manifestations. What is certain and beyond all dispute, is, that this Spring, which gushed forth all at once — and which

has been closed to us in spite of the scientific analysis which proclaimed it to be entirely innocuous — has not done any harm to any one ; what is certain is, that, on the contrary, a great number of persons declare that they have recovered their health by its means. In the name of the rights of conscience, which are quite independent of all human power, allow those who believe to go and pray there, if it suits them to do so. In the name of mere humanity allow the sick to go there to be cured, if such is their hope. In the name of intellectual liberty, allow those minds which seek for light from study and investigation to go there to discover their error or find the truth.”

The Emperor, as we have stated above, was quite disinterested in the question, or rather he was interested in not employing his strength in a sterile opposition to the progress of events. He was interested in listening to the cry of souls demanding the liberty of their faith, to the cry of intellect demanding the liberty of studying and seeing for itself. He was interested in being just, and in not galling by a gratuitous exercise of arbitrary power and a plain refusal of justice, those who believed what they had seen with their own eyes, as well as those, who though not yet convinced, claimed the right of investigating publicly the mysterious occurrences which were exciting the attention of the whole of France.

We have seen what impossible fictions the worthy Minister Rouland had accepted as incontestable truths. The information forwarded to the Emperor by his Excellency was by no means calculated to enlighten the former on the subject. The polemical

discussions in the journals, although they had triumphantly displayed the rights of one party and the intolerance of the other, had not succeeded in giving him any very clear idea of the actual state of things. It was only at Biarritz that it was presented to him as a whole, and that he was made acquainted with all its details.

Napoleon III. was by no means demonstrative, and it rarely happened that his thoughts were expressed by words. They were to be inferred from his actions. On learning the absurd measures of violence by which the Minister, the Prefect and their subordinates were bringing discredit on the supreme power by following their own caprice, a flash of cold anger, it is said, lighted up his jaded eye; he shrugged his shoulders convulsively, and a cloud of deep displeasure passed over his brow. He rang the bell violently.

"Take this to the telegraph," he said.

It was a laconic dispatch for the Prefect of the Hautes Pyrenees, ordering, on the part of the Emperor, the immediate withdrawal of the Decree regarding the Grotto of Lourdes, and directing that for the future the people should be allowed perfect freedom of action.

VI.

EVERY one knows the theories of Science on that marvelous electric spark, which the iron threads, with which the earth is covered as with a network, transport from one pole to the other with the rapidity of lightning. Telegraphic communication, say the *Savants*, is nothing more nor less than a

thunder-bolt. On that day Baron Massy coincided in opinion with the *Savants*. The imperial telegram, bursting upon him all at once, struck him suddenly dumb, and bewildered him as completely as the sudden fall of a thunder-bolt on his house would have done. He could not believe in its reality. The more he thought of it the less possible did it appear to him to retrace his steps, condemn his previous measures, and retreat from his present position before the public gaze. He must, however, either swallow the bitter draught, or send in his resignation and bid a sad adieu to the sweets of office. Fatal alternative. The hearts of functionaries are sometimes a prey to bitter anguish.

When we are overtaken by a sudden catastrophe, we experience some difficulty in accepting it as final, and we struggle against it even when all is lost. Baron Massy did not escape an illusion of this nature. He had some vague hope that the Emperor would think better of his decision. Under this idea, he took upon himself the responsibility of keeping the despatch secret for some days and of not obeying its injunctions. He wrote to the Emperor, and in addition to this employed M. Rouland, the Minister—who was less publicly but as completely crushed as himself by the unexpected order from Biarritz—to influence the Sovereign.

Napoleon III. paid as little attention to the objections of the Minister as he had done to the entreaties and supplications of the Prefect. The judgment he had pronounced was based on the evidence which had been laid before him, and was

—irrevocable. The steps which had been taken only served to apprise his Majesty, that the Prefect had dared to neglect his orders and defer their execution. A second despatch was sent from Biarritz. It was so worded as to render further observations or delay out of the question.

Baron Massy had only to choose between his pride and his position as Prefect. He made this melancholy choice, and his humility induced him to retain office.

The Head of the Department therefore resigned himself to the virtue of obedience. However, notwithstanding the imperious dispatches of his Master, he still endeavored, not to protract the struggle—for that was no longer possible—but to mask his retreat and to avoid the public surrender of his arms.

Owing to some little indiscretions in the Bureau, perhaps also from something which dropped from those who had gone as ambassadors to the Emperor, the purport of the orders from Biarritz had transpired to a certain extent. They formed the topic of conversation every where. These rumors were neither confirmed nor contradicted by the Prefect. He ordered Jacomet and his subordinates to suspend all prosecutions and to discontinue all surveillance. Such moderation following immediately on the reports in circulation with regard to the Emperor's instructions, would, in his opinion, be sufficient to cause things to go on in their usual course, and the Decree might fall into desuetude without the necessity of its being publicly withdrawn. It was even probable that the people of the district, on recovering their full liberty of action, would hasten

to tear up and throw into the Gave the posts bearing the notices forbidding any trespass on the lands of the commune, as well as the barriers which prevented all access to the Grotto.

M. Massy was deceived in his calculations, plausible as they were. In spite of the forbearance of the Police, and the reports in circulation which had not been officially contradicted—perhaps for these very reasons—the people feared some snare. They continued to go and pray on the opposite bank of the Gave. The infractions of the law were, as formerly, only isolated instances. No one touched the posts or the barriers. Instead of falling of its own accord, as the Prefect had fondly hoped, the *statu quo* maintained itself obstinately unchanged.

The character of Napoleon III. and the precise nature of the orders transmitted from Biarritz duly considered, a situation of this nature was perilous for the Prefect. Baron Massy was too intelligent not to appreciate this. Every moment he had cause to fear that the Emperor might be apprised all at once of the manner in which he was attempting to tack. Every hour, doubtless, he dreaded to receive some terrible missive, which would crush him for ever and banish him into nothingness, that is to say, out of the luminous sphere of government, into that external darkness, where the unfortunate non-official world wears out its fretful existence.

The end of September had arrived.

It happened that, during these perplexities, M. Fould had occasion once more to visit Tarbes, and even to take Lourdes on his way. Did he increase the Prefect's terror when speaking to him of his

Master? Did the Baron receive some new telegram couched in still more alarming language than the other two? We cannot tell. One thing is certain, that on the third of October, owing to some cause unknown, M. Massy became as supple as a reed trampled under the foot of a passer-by, and his arrogant stiffness seemed to give way to a sudden and complete prostration.

The next day, in the name of the Emperor, he issued an order to the Mayor of Lourdes to rescind the Decree publicly, and to have the posts and barriers removed by Jacomet.

VII.

M. LACADÉ did not share in the hesitation of M. Massy. A decision of this nature relieved him from the heavy onus which his complex desire of steering cautiously between the Prefect and the masses, the powers of heaven and those of man, had imposed upon him. By an illusion not uncommon in undecided characters, he imagined that he had always sided with the prevailing party, and he drew up a proclamation to that effect.

“Inhabitants of the town of Lourdes, the day we have so longed for has at length arrived; we have gained it by our wisdom, our perseverance, our faith and by our courage.”

Such was the import and tone of his proclamation, of which, unfortunately, the text has not reached us.

The proclamation was read with the sound of drums and trumpets in every quarter of the town. At the same time the following placard was posted up on all the walls:

THE MAYOR OF THE TOWN OF LOURDES,

Considering the instructions, addressed to him,

DECREES :

The decree issued by him June 8th, 1858, is revoked.

Done at Lourdes, in the Hotel of the Mayoralty,
October 5th, 1858. A. LACADÉ, *Mayor*.

During this time, Jacomet and the *Sergents de Ville* repared to the Grotto to remove the barriers and posts.

The crowd had already arrived there, and was visibly increasing. Some were praying on their knees and, striving to prevent themselves from being distracted by the external noises, thanked God for having brought to a close the scandal and persecution which had prevailed. Others remained standing, talking in low tones and waiting, not without emotion, to see what was about to occur. Women in great number were telling their beads. Many held a flask in their hands, wishing to fill it at the very spot whence the Spring was gushing forth. Flowers were thrown over the barriers into the interior of the Grotto. As to the barriers themselves, no one touched them. Those who had erected them publicly, in opposition to the power of God, must come and remove them publicly, in deference to the will of a man.

Jacomet arrived. Although, in spite of himself, he betrayed a certain degree of embarrassment and excitement of manner, and his deep humiliation might be guessed from the pallor of his countenance, he did not present, as was generally expect-

ed, the sad aspect of one who had been vanquished in the struggle. Escorted by his subordinates, furnished with axes and mattocks, he advanced boldly towards the scene of action. With an affectation which appeared singular under the circumstances, he wore the official costume appropriated to state occasions. His broad tricolored scarf girded his loins and floated over his full-dress sword. He passed through the crowd and stepped close up to the barriers. A vague tumultuous noise, a low murmur, and a few solitary cries proceeded from the multitude. The Commissary mounted on a fragment of rock and made a gesture that he wished to say a few words. Every one listened to him. "My Friends, it is these barriers, they say, which, to my great regret, the municipality erected in obedience to the orders they received, which are now about to be demolished. Who has suffered more than myself from this obstacle opposed to your piety? I am a religious man myself, and I share your faith. But a functionary, like a soldier, has but one watchword, which is the duty—often a very painful one—of obedience. The responsibility does not rest with him. Well, my friends, when I witnessed your admirable calmness, your respect for power, and your persevering faith, I notified it to the superior authorities. I pleaded your cause, my friends. I said, 'Why should these harmless people be hindered from praying at the Grotto, and from drinking at the Spring?' In consequence of this, every prohibition has been removed, and the Prefect and myself have resolved to demolish for ever these barriers which were so annoying to you and still more so to myself.'

The crowd maintained a cold silence. Some young men whispered together and laughed. Jacomet was visibly discomposed at the failure of his oration. He ordered his subordinates to remove the palings. It was done with considerable promptitude. A heap was made of the boards and *débris* near the Grotto, and the Police carried it away as soon as it was dark.

The town of Lourdes was in a great state of emotion. During the afternoon, the crowd kept going to and fro on the road leading to the Grotto. The faithful, in countless throngs, knelt devoutly before the Rocks of Massabielle. They sang canticles, and recited the litanies of the Virgin. *Virgo potens, ora pro nobis*. They quenched their thirst at the Spring. The believers were free, God had achieved the victory.





NINTH BOOK.

I.

IN consequence of the events we have already narrated, the prolonged sojourn of Baron Massy in that part of the country was an utter impossibility. The Emperor lost no time in transferring him to the first prefecture which became vacant in the Empire. By a singular coincidence, his new prefecture was that of Grenoble. The Baron left Our Lady of Lourdes behind him, solely, as it would appear, to meet with Our Lady of Salette.

Jacomets also quitted the district. He was appointed Commissary of Police in another department. Replaced in his proper sphere, he contributed, with rare shrewdness, to the discovery of the roguery of some dangerous scoundrels who had foiled the efforts of his predecessors, and the most active pursuit of the *Parquet*. The affair in question was an extensive robbery—to the amount of two or three hundred thousand francs—of funds belonging to a railway company. This was the starting-point of his fortune in the Police, for which he had an unmistakable vocation. His remarkable aptitude for this branch of the public service, which

was justly appreciated by his superiors, raised him eventually to a very high position.

The Procureur Imperial, M. Dutour, was, ere long, transferred to other duties. M. Lacadé remained in his position as Mayor, and we shall see his shadowy profile once or twice more in the last pages of this narration.

Although Monseigneur Laurence had instituted a Tribunal of Investigation towards the end of July, it had been his wish to see the effervescence of the public cool down of its own accord, before he permitted it to enter on its duties. "To wait," he thought, "could never lead to compromising anything, when the question regarded the works of God, who holds time in His own hands." The event had shown he was right. After the tumultuous discussions of the French press, and the violent measures of Baron Massy, the Grotto had become free of access, and there was no longer cause for dreading the scandal of seeing the members of the Episcopal Commission arrested by an agent of Police on the road to the Rocks of Massabielle, when repairing there to accomplish their work and study, on the very spot where the Apparition had manifested herself, the traces of the hand of God.

On the 17th of October, the Commissioners betook themselves to Lourdes. The youthful Seer was interrogated by them.

"Bernadette," says the Secretary, in his official report, "presented herself before us with great modesty, but with remarkable self-composure. She displayed great calmness and absence of embarrassment, in the midst of so numerous an assembly, and in presence of distinguished ecclesiastics whom she

had never seen before, but whose mission had been explained to her."

The young girl recounted the Apparitions, the words of the Virgin, the order given by Mary to have a chapel built on the very spot consecrated to her worship, the sudden appearance of the Fountain and the name of the "Immaculate Conception" which the Vision had given to herself. She explained, with the grave certitude of a witness sure of the facts, and with the humble candor of a child, all that was personal to herself in this supernatural drama, which had extended over nearly a whole year. She replied to all the questions put to her, and left no obscure doubts in the minds of those who interrogated her, no longer in the name of men such as Jacomet, the *Procureur*, or of so many others, but in that of the Catholic Church, the eternal spouse of God. Our readers are already aware of all the facts to which she bore testimony, as we have explained those events, in the order in which they occurred, in different portions of this narrative.

The Commissioners visited the Rocks of Massabielle, and saw for themselves the enormous flow of the divine Spring. They established, from the unanimous declaration of persons belonging to the district, that the Spring was not in existence previously to its having gushed forth before the eyes of the multitude, from beneath the hand of the youthful Seer, when in a state of ecstasy.

At Lourdes and at places distant from the town, the Commissioners investigated most minutely the extraordinary cures which had been effected by the use of the water of the Grotto.

There were, in this delicate inquiry, two very dis-

tinct parts : the facts themselves and their attendant circumstances depended on human testimony ; the examination into the natural or supernatural character of these facts depended—at least to a great extent—on the verdict of medical science. The method pursued by the tribunal of investigation was suggested by this double conception.

Making the tour of the dioceses of Tarbes, Auch and Bayonne, the Commissioners summoned before them all those who had been pointed out to them as having been cured in so remarkable a manner ; they questioned them with the utmost minuteness on all the details of their malady, and of their restoration—whether sudden or gradual—to health. They employed men of human science to put to them technical questions, which, perhaps, would never have occurred to the minds of theologians. They assembled together, in order to submit these declarations to the test of cross-examination, the relatives, friends, and neighbors of those who claimed to have been cured, including all the witnesses of the different phases of the event, those who had seen the invalid, those who had been present at the cure, etc., etc.

Having once arrived in this manner at an absolute certainty relative to the facts taken as a whole, and in their details, the Commissioners submitted them, in order to ascertain their value, to two eminent and qualified physicians, whom they had admitted as colleagues. These physicians were Doctor Vergés medical superintendent of the baths at Baréges and Fellow-professor of the Faculty of Montpellier, and Doctor Dozons, who had already studied several of these strange incidents on his own account.

Each medical man stated in a separate report, his opinion on the nature of the cure; sometimes rejecting the Miracle to attribute the cessation of the malady in question to natural causes; sometimes declaring the fact to be utterly inexplicable, except by a supernatural action of divine power; and lastly, sometimes not arriving at any conclusion and remaining in doubt—a doubt, more or less, inclining to one or other of the above solutions.

Furnished with this double element—the entire knowledge of facts on the one hand, and the conclusions arrived at by Science on the other—the Commissioners deliberated and submitted their judgment to the Bishop, together with all the documents connected with the case.

The Commissioners had not and could not have any preconceived opinions. Believing on principle in the Supernatural, which is so often met with in the history of the world, they were at the same time, aware, that nothing tends so much to discredit true miracles, proceeding from God, as false prodigies contrived by man. Equally indisposed to affirm beforehand or to reject prematurely, and being entirely unprejudiced either for or against the Miracle, they confined their task to that of investigation, and truth was the sole object of their researches. Appealing—in order to throw light on the various facts they were studying—to every kind of information and every kind of testimony, they acted with entire publicity. They opened their sessions to unbelievers, as well as to those who believed. Firmly resolved to discard with relentless severity all that was vague and uncertain, and to accept only such facts as were precise, well-founded, and incontestable, they reject-

ed all declarations which were grounded on mere *on-dits* and empty reports.

To every witness who appeared before them, the Commissioners imposed two conditions:—the first, only to depose to what he knew personally and had seen with his own eyes; the second, to pledge himself to tell the truth and nothing but the truth, by the solemn formality of an oath.

With such precautions, and with an organization so prudent and wise, it was impossible for false miracles to succeed in deceiving, even for a moment, the judgment of the Commissioners. This was, besides, still more impossible, in the midst of so many hostile intellects stirred up against the Supernatural, and deeply interested in combating and upsetting every error, every exaggeration, every doubtful assertion, and every miraculous fact which did not admit of the clearest demonstration.

If then, true miracles, incompletely established, were destined not to receive the sanction of the Commission of Inquiry, it was at least absolutely certain that no lying wonders could maintain their ground before the severity of its examination, or take their place, in its judgment, among the admirable facts of the divine and supernatural order.

Whoever, wishing to contest the truth of such or such a miracle, could produce not merely vague general theories, but precise articulations and a personal knowledge of facts, could publicly demand the right of presenting himself. Not to do so, was to submit to the sentence pronounced, and to confess that he had nothing formal or particular to allege, and was unable to furnish any counter-evidence. Forbearance evidently implied this. It is not when

parties are heated with passion and the ardor of a long struggle, that they suffer judgment to go by default. To refuse the combat is to acknowledge a defeat.

III.

DURING several months the Episcopal Commissioners repaired to the houses of those whom public notoriety and previous information designated to them as having been the objects of one of those remarkable cures, the character of which it rested with them to determine.

The truth of a great number of Miracles was established. Among these, many have already found a place in the course of this narration. Two of them had occurred quite recently, shortly after the withdrawal of the Prefect's decree and the re-opening of the Grotto. One took place at Nay, the other at Tarbes. Although the two christian women who had been the objects of heavenly favor were unknown to each other, a mysterious link seemed to unite these events. Let us narrate them, one after the other, just as we investigated them ourselves and committed them to writing under the impression of the living testimonies we had ourselves heard.

In the town of Nay—the same in which, some months previously, young Henry Busquet had been miraculously cured—a female, already considerably advanced in years, Mme. Rizan, a widow, was on the point of death. Her life, at least for the last twenty-four or twenty-five years, had been one of perpetual pain. Attacked in 1832 by the cholera,

she had remained almost entirely paralyzed in her left side : she was quite lame, and could only move a few steps in the interior of her house by supporting herself against the walls or different articles of furniture. Rarely, twice or three times a year, in the height of summer, was she able—assisted and almost carried by strangers—to repair to the parish church of Nay, near as it was to her residence, to hear Mass. It was impossible for her, without assistance from others, either to kneel down or to rise from a kneeling posture. One of her hands was entirely atrophied. Her general health had suffered, not less than her limbs, from this terrible scourge. She was subject to continual vomitings of blood. Her stomach was unable to bear any solid food. A little meat gravy, light soups and coffee had, however, sufficed, in her deplorable condition, to sustain in her the flickering flame of life—a flame ever weak, ever on the point of being extinguished on its mysterious hearth, and powerless to convey sufficient warmth to her wretched body, which was often attacked with icy trembling fits. The poor woman was always cold. Even in the midst of the heats of July and August she always begged to see the fire blazing on the hearth, and requested to have her old invalid-chair wheeled close to the mantel-piece.

For the last sixteen or eighteen months her state had changed considerably for the worse, and the paralysis of her left side had become total ; the same infirmity commenced to attack her right leg. Her atrophied limbs were tumefied beyond measure, as is sometimes the case with those of dropsical patients.

Mme. Rizan had been obliged to quit her arm-chair for her bed. She could not move in it, so great was her state of infirmity, and those about her were obliged to turn her from time to time and to change her position. She was nothing more than a helpless mass. Her sense of feeling was gone as well as her power of moving. "Where are my legs?" she used to say sometimes when any one came to move her from one part of her bed to another.

Her limbs were, so to say, drawn up together and bent back on themselves. She kept constantly lying on her side in the form of a **Z**.

Two medical men had successively attended her. Doctor Talamon had long since regarded her as incurable, and, if he continued to visit her frequently, it was only as a friend. He refused to prescribe any remedies for her, alleging that any treatment, no matter of what nature, would be fatally injurious, and that drugs and medicines could only weaken the poor invalid and exhaust still more her system, which had already been so terribly attacked. Doctor Subervielle, at the entreaty of Mme. Rizan, had prescribed some remedies, which were speedily acknowledged to be useless, and had also given up all hope.

If her paralyzed limbs had become insensible, the sufferings experienced by this unfortunate woman elsewhere, sometimes in her stomach and sometimes in her head, were of the most fearful description. Owing to the fact of her being obliged to remain always in one position, her poor body was afflicted with two painful sores—one in the hollow of her chest and the other in her back. On her side, in

several places, her skin was worn away by long contact with the bed-clothes, and exposed her flesh denuded and bleeding. Her death was at hand.

Mme. Rizan had two children. Her daughter, called Lubine, lived with her and attended her with unceasing devotedness. Her son, M. Romain Rizan, had a situation in a commercial house at Bordeaux.

When the last hope was given up, and Doctor Subervielle had declared that the poor sick woman had scarcely a few days to live, M. Romain Rizan was sent for in all haste. He came, embraced his mother, and received her blessing and last farewell. Then, being obliged to start on his return immediately, in consequence of an order which recalled him, torn from the foot of this death-bed by the cruel tyranny of business, he left his mother with the painful certainty of seeing her no more.

The dying woman had been administered. Her death-agony was prolonged amid intolerable sufferings.

"O God!" she often exclaimed, "be pleased to put an end to this intolerable pain. Grant that I may either recover or die!"

She sent to beg the Sisters of the Cross at Izon—her sister-in-law being their Superior—to make a *Novena* to the most Blessed Virgin in order to obtain from her power, either her recovery or death. She also expressed a wish to drink some of the water of the Grotto. One of her neighbors, Mme. Nessans, who happened to be going to Lourdes, promised to bring her some of it on her return.

For some time past she had been watched day and night. On Saturday, October 16, a violent crisis announced the inevitable approach of her last moments. She was continually spitting blood. A livid tint spread over her emaciated countenance. Her eyes became glassy. The poor invalid seldom spoke except to complain of the acute pain she suffered. "Lord!" she often repeated, "Lord Jesus how I suffer! Can I not then die?"

"Her wish will be very shortly granted," observed Doctor Subervielle, as he left her. "She will die in the course of the night, or, at latest, towards daybreak. There is no more oil in the lamp."

From time to time the door of the sick-room was opened to admit friends, neighbors and priests—among the latter the Abbé Dupont and the Abbé Sanareus, *vicaire* of Nay—who entered silently, and asked, in a low voice, if the dying woman still breathed.

At night, when he left her, the Abbé André Dupont, her consoler and friend, could not restrain his tears.

"Before to-morrow she will be dead," said he, "and I shall only see her again in Paradise."

Night had come, and, by degrees, the house had been reduced to a state of solitude. On her knees, before a statue of the Virgin, Lubine was praying, all earthly hope having vanished. The deepest silence reigned around, only disturbed by the painful breathing of the sick woman. It was nearly midnight.

"Lubine!" exclaimed the dying mother.

Lubine rose hastily from her knees and approached the bed.

"What do you wish, dearest mother?" she said, taking her by the hand.

"My dear child," said the dying mother to her, in a strange tone of voice, which seemed to proceed, as it were, from a heavy dream, "go to the house of our friend Mme. Nessans, who was to have returned to-night from Lourdes. Beg her to give you a glass of the water from the Grotto. It is this water which is to cure me. The Blessed Virgin so wills it."

"My dearest mother," replied Lubine, it is now too late to go there. "I cannot leave you alone, and every one at Mme. Nessans's must be in bed by this time. To-morrow morning I will go for it as early as possible."

"Well, let us wait, then."

The sick mother relapsed into silence.

The night passed away long and weary.

At length daybreak was announced by the joyous Sunday bells. The morning *Angelus* bore upwards to Mary the prayers of earth, and celebrated the eternal memory of her omnipotent maternity. Lubine hastened to the house of Mme. Nessans, and soon returned, bringing with her a bottle of the water from the Grotto.

"Here, dearest mother, drink! and may the Blessed Virgin come to your assistance."

Mme. Rizan raised the glass to her lips and swallowed a few mouthfuls.

"O my child, my child, it is Life that I am drinking. There is Life in this water. Bathe my face with it. Bathe all my body with it.

Trembling from head to foot, and almost beside herself with emotion, Lubine moistened a piece of

linen in the miraculous water and washed her mother's face with it.

"I feel myself cured!" exclaimed the latter, in a tone of voice which had become clear and strong. "I feel myself cured!"

Lubine, in the meantime, was bathing with the moistened linen her poor mother's paralyzed and swollen limbs. With transports of joy, mingled with I know not what shudder of terror, she perceived the enormous swelling to subside and disappear under the rapid movement of her hand, and the skin, which was violently stretched and shining, to resume its natural appearance. Suddenly and entirely, without going through any transition state, health and life were reviving beneath her fingers.

"It seems to me," said her mother, "as if fiery pimples were issuing out of every part of my body."

It was, doubtless, the internal principle of the malady which was taking to flight from the body hitherto so racked with pain, and was quitting it for ever, owing to the agency of a superhuman will.

All this had been accomplished in a moment. In one or two minutes the body of Mme. Rizan—apparently just before in the death-agony—had, on being bathed by her daughter, recovered the plenitude of its strength.

"I am cured! altogether cured!" exclaimed the happy woman. "How kind the Blessed Virgin is! How powerful she is!"

Then, after this outburst of gratitude to heaven, the material appetites of earth made themselves forcibly felt.

"Lubine, dearest Lubine, I am hungry. I want something to eat."

"Will you have some coffee, or will you have some wine or milk?" stammered out the young girl, troubled at the almost astounding suddenness of the Miracle.

"I would like to have some bread and meat, my child," said her mother. "It is now more than twenty-four years since I have tasted either."

There happened to be some cold meat and a little wine near at hand. Mme. Rizan partook of both.

"And now," said she, "I wish to rise."

"It is impossible, dearest mother," said Lubine, hesitating, in spite of herself, to believe her eyes, and fancying, perhaps, that the cures which proceeded directly from God were subject, like those of an ordinary nature, to the slow progress and precautions of convalescence.

Mme. Rizan insisted on leaving her bed, and asked for her clothes. They had been for many months folded up and put in their place in a wardrobe of an adjoining chamber, under the idea, alas! that they would be no more required. Lubine left the room in quest of them. She returned almost immediately, but on reaching the threshold of the door, she uttered a loud cry and let fall on the floor—so great was the shock—the dress she had in her hand.

Her mother, during Lubine's short absence, had sprung out of her bed and had gone to kneel before the mantelpiece, on which there was a statue of the Virgin. There she was, with clasped hands, pouring out her gratitude to her powerful deliverer.

Lubine terrified, as if she had beheld one rise from the dead, was incapable of assisting her mother to dress. The latter picked up her gown, dressed herself in a moment without any assistance, and knelt down once more at the feet of the sacred image.

It was about seven o'clock in the morning, and those who had attended the first Mass were just coming out of Church. Lubine's cry was heard in the street by persons who were passing under her windows.

"Poor girl," they observed, "it is her mother who has just expired. It was impossible she could get through the night."

Several persons, either friends or merely neighbors, immediately entered the house to console and support Lubine in her indescribable sorrow. Among them were two Sisters of the Holy Cross.

"Well, my poor girl," they said, "your excellent mother is then dead! You will, however, see her again in heaven."

They then approached the young woman, whom they found leaning against the half-opened door, with a countenance expressive of great consternation.

Lubine could scarcely make them any reply. "My mother has risen from the dead," said she, with a voice stifled with such strong emotion, that she could not bear it without fainting.

"She is raving," thought the Sisters, as they entered the apartment, followed by some persons who had ascended the staircase with them.

What Lubine had said was, however, true. Mme. Rizan had quitted her bed. She was dressed and

was praying, prostrate before the image of Mary. She rose and said :

“ I am cured ! Let us offer up a thanksgiving to the Blessed Virgin. Let all kneel down.”

The news of this extraordinary cure spread with the rapidity of lightning through the town of Nay. All that and the following day, the house was crowded with people. The throng, in the highest degree of emotion and recollectedness, pressed into the room, through which a ray of the omnipotent goodness of God had passed. Every one wished to see Mme. Rizan, to touch her body which had been restored to life, to convince himself by the evidence of his own eyes, and to engrave on his memory all the details of this supernatural drama.

Doctor Subervielle acknowledged, without any hesitation, the divine and supernatural character of this extraordinary cure.

At Bordeaux, in the meanwhile, M. Romain Rizan, reduced to despair, was expecting, in an agony of mind, the fatal missive which was to announce to him the death of his mother.

It was a terrible blow for him when one morning, a letter reached him by post, which was directed in the well-known handwriting of the Abbé Dupont.

“ I have lost my poor mother ! ” he observed to a friend who had come to pay him a visit.

He burst into tears, and had not the courage to tear open the envelope.

“ Do not give way to weakness in your misfortune ; have faith,” said his friend to him.

He at length broke the seal. The first words which struck his eyes were the following : “ *Deo*

gratias, Allelulia. Rejoice, my dear friend. Your mother is cured, *completely* cured. It is the Blessed Virgin who has restored her miraculously to health." The Abbé Dupont proceeded in his letter to relate in what indisputably divine a manner Mme. Rizan had found, at the end of her agony, Life in the place of death.

We may easily fancy the joy of the son and of his friend.

This friend was employed in a printing establishment at Bordeaux, where the *Messenger Catholique* was published.

"Give me that letter," he said to Romain Rizan; "the works of God ought to be known and Our Lady of Lourdes glorified."

Half willingly and half reluctantly, Romain confided the letter to his friend. It was published in the *Messenger Catholique* a few days afterwards.

The happy son returned almost immediately to Nay. On the arrival of the *diligence*, a woman was waiting for him. She ran to him briskly, when he got out of the carriage and rushed into his arms weeping with tenderness and joy.

It was his mother.

Ten years afterwards, the author of this work, in quest of all the details of the truth, went himself—in order to collect materials for this history—to re-open the investigation which had long before been made by the Episcopal Commission. He paid a visit to Mme. Rizan, whose perfect health and green old age excited his admiration. Although she has reached her seventy-first year, she has none of the infirmities which advanced age usually brings in its train. Not a trace remains of so much suffer-

ing. All those who had known her formerly, and whose testimony we heard, had not recovered from their astonishment at so miraculous an event.

We desired to see Doctor Soubervielle. He had been dead several years.

"But," we observed to an ecclesiastic of Nay who acted as our guide, "Madame Rizan was, if I am not mistaken, visited by another medical man of the place, Doctor Talamon?"

"He is a very distinguished man," answered our companion. "He was in the habit of going constantly to the house of Madame Rizan, not in his medical capacity, but as her friend and neighbor. Now, immediately after the miraculous cure, he ceased to visit her, and did not make his re-appearance at her house until nine or ten months afterwards."

"Perhaps," we rejoined, "he wished to avoid being interrogated on the subject, and having to explain his own views on the extraordinary event, which was no doubt somewhat opposed to his principles of medical philosophy."

"I do not know how that was."

"No matter, I should like to see him."

We knocked at his door.

Doctor Talamon is a tall and handsome old man, with an intelligent and expressive countenance. A remarkable brow, a crown of white hair, a glance indicative of very decided opinions, a mouth capable of varied expression, on which the smile of scepticism often plays: such are the principal features you would observe on approaching him for the first time.

We explained to him the object of our visit.

"It is a long time since all that happened," he observed to us. "At a distance of ten or twelve years my memory has but a very dim recollection of the subject of your conversation, to say nothing of my not having actually witnessed it myself. I did not see Mme. Rizan for several months afterwards, and I know not in what state, by what agents, or in what degree of slowness or rapidity her cure was effected."

"What, then, sir, had you not the curiosity to verify, in your individual capacity, the extraordinary fact which you must have immediately learned from public rumor, which was widely spread in this place?"

"To tell you the truth, sir," he replied, directing his answer to me, "I am an old physician. I know that the laws of nature are never reversed; and, to tell you the honest truth, I am no believer in all these miracles."

"Ah! Doctor, you sin against the faith," exclaimed the Abbé who had introduced me.

"And I, Doctor, do not accuse you of sinning against the faith, but I accuse you of sinning against the particular science which you profess; that of medicine."

"How and in what?"

"Medicine is not a speculative science, it is an experimental science. Experiment is its law. The observation of facts is its first and fundamental principle. If you had been told that Mme. Rizan had been cured in this manner by rubbing herself with an infusion of such or such a plant recently discovered in the mountains, you certainly would not have failed in going to establish the truth or other-

wise of the cure. You would have examined the plant, and have recorded a discovery which would perhaps have appeared to you of not less importance than that of quinine in the last century. But, in this case, a water, which had miraculously gushed forth, was spoken of, and you did not take the trouble of going to see it. Forgetting that you were a physician, or in other words, a humble observer of facts, you have refused to bestow on it even a passing glance, like those academies of science which rejected steam without condescending to investigate its claims, and which proscribed quinine in the name of I know not what pretended medical principles. In medicine, when a fact presents itself which contradicts an established principle, it simply proves that the principle is false. Experiment is the supreme judge. And here, Doctor, allow me to point out to you that if you had not had some vague consciousness of the truth of what I am now telling you, you would not have hesitated in going to ascertain the truth, and you would have given yourself the pleasure of branding as an imposture a Miracle which was exciting the whole country. But this would have exposed you to the necessity of surrendering at discretion, and you have acted like men attached to a particular party, who will not hear the arguments of their opponents. You have listened to your philosophical prejudices and you have disobeyed the first law of medicine, which is to face the study of facts—no matter of what nature—in order to derive instruction from them. I allow myself, Doctor, more freedom in saying these things to you, because I am aware of your great merit, and I am not ignorant

that your very superior intellect is capable of listening to truth. Many medical men refuse to certify facts of this nature from human respect, not daring to brave either the displeasure of the Faculty or the railleries of their *confrères*. As to you, Doctor, if your philosophy has deceived you, the fear of man has had nothing to do with your keeping aloof."

"Certainly not," he said. "But, perhaps, placing myself in the point of view you have indicated, I should have done better to have examined the matter in question."

V.

A VERY long time before these events occurred at Lourdes, and before Bernadette had made her appearance in the world—in 1843, in the course of the month of April, a highly honorable family of Tartas, in the Landes, was in a state of serious uneasiness. About a year previously, Mlle. Adèle de Chanton had espoused M. Moreau de Sazenay, and was now approaching the term of her pregnancy.

The crisis of a first maternity is always alarming. The medical men, summoned in haste on the appearance of preliminary symptoms, declared that child-birth would be difficult, and they did not conceal their opinion that it might be attended with some danger.

There is no one who does not know or does not understand the cruel anxiety of situations of this nature. The most poignant anguish is not for the poor wife who is groaning on her bed of pain, and who is almost entirely absorbed in her sense of phy-

sical suffering. It is for the husband, whose heart at that moment is a prey to indescribable tortures. They are both of an age when the impressions are vivid; they have just entered on a new life, the sweet life of *two*; they have tasted the first joys of a union which God had seemed to bless; they have passed some months in discussing together the hopes of the future; they have, so to say, sat them down together in happiness, as they might sit side by side in a smoothly gliding bark. The stream of life lulls you to sleep and bears you calmly onward between banks gay with flowers. And behold, all at once, in the midst of happiness, the threatening shadow of death presents itself. The heart of the husband, which expands itself with the hope of the babe so soon to be born, finds itself suddenly crushed with terror for the wife who may perish. He hears heart-rending cries. How will the crisis end? Is it joy that is approaching, or is it misfortune? What will issue from that chamber? Will it be Life or will it be Death? What must we send for? A cradle or a coffin? Or, alas! horrible contrast, will both one and the other be necessary? Or worse still, may two coffins be required, one for the mother, the other for the infant?

Human science is silent and dares not pronounce. Anguish of this nature is terrible, more especially for those who seek not their strength and consolation in God.

M. Moreau, however, was a christian. He knew that the thread of our existence is in the hands of a supreme Master, to whom we can always appeal from the decision of the doctors of Science. When man has condemned, the King of

Heaven, like the sovereigns of earth, reserves to Himself the right of pardoning.

"The Blessed Virgin," thought the unfortunate husband, "will, perhaps, deign to listen to my prayer."

On this he addressed himself with confidence to the Mother of Christ.

The danger which had at first appeared so threatening passed away by degrees, like a black cloud, which, in the highest regions of the atmosphere, is driven along and dispersed by the blasts of wind. The horizon became clear and serene, and ere long, radiant with gleams of sunshine. A little girl had just been born.

Assuredly, there was nothing extraordinary in this deliverance. However alarming the case had appeared to M. Moreau, the medical men had never actually despaired of a favorable result. It might, therefore, have been owing to purely natural causes. The heart of the husband and father, however, felt itself penetrated with gratitude towards the Blessed Virgin. His was not one of those souls which struggle against the feeling of gratitude, and which doubt the reality of a benefit received, in order to dispense themselves from the trouble of returning thanks for it.

"What name have you fixed on for your little girl?" was one of the first questions put to M. Moreau.

"She shall be called Marie," he replied.

"Marie? But it is one of the commonest names possible about here. All the women of the lower classes, all the servant-girls in the place are called Marie. And, besides, *Marie Moreau* is by no means

euphonious. These two *Ms* and two *rs* are insupportable."

A thousand reasons to the same purpose were alleged. There was a general outcry on the subject. M. Moreau de Sazenay was of an easy temper, very accessible, and habitually showed much deference to the advice tendered him by others; but in this particular instance he resisted everything, supplications as well as admonitions; he braved the sullenness of all around, and adhered to his resolution with extraordinary tenacity. He remembered that, during his recent state of alarm, he had invoked that sacred name, which was no other than that of the Queen of Heaven.

"She shall be called Marie. I wish her to have the Blessed Virgin as her patroness. I tell you the truth, when I say that this name will bring her happiness."

All around him were astonished at his obstinacy, but he remained firm, as did Zacharias when, as we are informed in the Gospel, he desired that his son might be named John.

In vain was he besieged with objections on all sides. His inflexible will carried the day.

Thus the first born of this family bore the name of Marie.

Further, the father wished that for three years she should be devoted to white, the color of the Virgin.

This was also done.

More than sixteen years had passed away since the events occurred which we have narrated. A second little girl had been born, who had received the name of Marthe. Mlle. Marie Moreau was receiv-

ing her education at the Convent of the Sacred Heart at Bordeaux.

Towards the beginning of January, 1858, she was attacked with a complaint in her eyes, which obliged her speedily to relinquish her studies. She supposed at first that it was a cold, caught by her having sat in a draught, and that it would soon pass away ; but she was deceived in her hopes, and eventually she fell into a state which caused the greatest uneasiness to those about her. The medical men who usually attended the establishment, deemed it necessary to have a consultation with M. Bermont, an eminent oculist at Bordeaux.

It was decided that Mlle. Marie was suffering not from a cold but from amaurosis.

“The case is a very serious one,” observed M. Bermont. “One of her eyes is gone and the other is in a most critical state.”

Her parents were immediately informed of her state. Her mother hastened to Bordeaux and brought her daughter home with her, in order that, in the bosom of her family and with every care lavished upon her, she might carry out the treatment which the oculist had prescribed, if not to cure the eye which was destroyed, at least to save the one which still remained, and which was already so severely affected as only to perceive objects as if enveloped in a confused mist.

Medicines of different kinds, sea-bathing and everything recommended by science was unavailing. Spring and autumn passed away amid these vain efforts. Her deplorable condition resisted everything, and was slowly becoming worse and

worse. Complete blindness was imminent. M. and Mme. Moreau resolved to take their daughter to Paris in order to consult the most eminent oculists of the day.

While they were making hasty preparations for their journey, dreading that it might be already too late to charm away the terrible misfortune which threatened their child, the postman happened to bring them the weekly number of a little journal published at Bordeaux, to which they subscribed, the *Messenger Catholique*.

It was about the commencement of November. Curiously enough, it was the very number of the *Messenger Catholique* which contained the letter of the Abbé Dupont and the account of the miraculous cure of Mme. Rizan, of Nay, in consequence of her having used the water from the Grotto.

M. Moreau opened it mechanically, and his glance fell on that divine history. He grew pale as he read it.

Hope began to awake in the soul of the disconsolate father, and a ray of light penetrated his mind, or rather his heart.

"There," said he, "is the gate at which we must knock. It is evident," he added, with a marvelous simplicity, of which we like to preserve the verbal expression, "it is evident that if the Blessed Virgin has appeared at Lourdes she is interested in operating there miraculous cures, in order to establish and prove the reality of these Apparitions. And this is more especially true at the commencement, so long as this event is not yet universally accredited. Let us, then, lose no time. There, as everywhere else, the first come will be first served. My dearest

wife and child, it is to Our Lady of Lourdes that we must have recourse."

The sixteen years which had elapsed since the birth of his daughter, had not, as we see, rendered the faith of M. Moreau lukewarm.

It was determined to celebrate a *Novena*, to which the companions and friends of the young invalid, who resided in the neighborhood, associated themselves. By a providential coincidence, one of the priests of the town had in his house at that moment a bottle of the water from the Grotto, so that the *Novena* was commenced almost immediately.

The parents—in case of the cure being accomplished—made a vow to undertake a pilgrimage to Lourdes, and to devote their daughter, for one year, to white and blue, to those colors of the Blessed Virgin which she had already worn for the space of three years, when she was quite a little child, on her first entry into life.

The *Novena* commenced on Monday evening, November 8.

Must we confess the truth! The invalid had but little faith. Her mother dared not hope. Her father alone had that tranquil faith which the benevolent powers of heaven never resist.

They all joined in prayer, in the apartment of M. Moreau, before a statue of the Blessed Virgin. The mother, the young invalid and her little sister rose from their knees successively with the intention of leaving the room and retiring to rest, but the father still remained kneeling.

He thought he was alone, and he raised his voice with such fervor that its accent induced his family to remain, although on the point of taking their

departure. We have heard from them these circumstances, and even now they cannot recall this solemn moment without quivering with emotion.

“Blessed Virgin!” exclaimed the father; “Most Blessed Virgin, it is thy duty to cure my child. Yes, of a truth, *it is thy duty*. It is for thee an obligation, and thou canst not refuse me. Remember, then, O Mary, that it was in spite of all, against the will of all, that I would choose thee to be her Patroness. Thou oughtest to remember what struggles I had to endure to give her thy sacred name. Ah! Blessed Virgin, canst thou forget all this? Canst thou forget how, at that time, I defended thy name, thy power, thy glory against all the protestations and vain reasonings of those who were about me? Canst thou forget that I placed this child publicly under thy protection, saying and repeating to all that this name, thy own name, O Blessed Virgin, would bring her happiness? She was my child: I have made her thine. Canst thou forget this? Art thou not thereby pledged to assist me, O Blessed Virgin? Is not thy honor pledged—now that I am wretched, now that we pray unto thee for our child, for thine—to come to our assistance and to cure her malady? Wilt thou permit her to become blind after I have shown so great faith in thee? No! No! That is impossible, and thou wilt heal her.”

Such were the feelings which the unhappy father gave vent to in loud tones, appealing to the heart of the Blessed Virgin, making his demand, so to say, in due form of law, and citing her to pay her debt of gratitude.

It was ten o'clock at night.

The young girl, at the moment of retiring to rest, soaked a linen bandage in the water brought from Lourdes and placed it on her eyes, tying it in a knot at the back of her head.

Her soul was agitated. Without having the faith of M. Moreau, she said to herself, that, after all, it was not impossible the Blessed Virgin might cure her; that soon, perhaps, at the close of the *Novena*, she might be restored to the enjoyment of light. Then her doubts recurred, and it seemed to her that a Miracle was not intended for one like herself.

All these thoughts constantly revolving in her mind, it was with great difficulty that she could get to sleep, and it was very late ere slumber overtook her.

The next morning, when she awoke, her first movement—a movement of vague hope and uneasy curiosity—was to remove the bandage with which her eyes were covered.

She uttered a loud cry.

All around her the light of early morning inundated her chamber. She saw clearly, plainly, distinctly. The eye which had only been lately attacked had entirely recovered its powers of vision; the other, which had been dead, was restored to life.

“Marthe! Marthe!” she cried to her sister. “I see! I see! I am cured!”

Little Marthe, who slept in the same room with her sister, leaped from her bed and ran towards her. She gazed on the eyes of Marie, now entirely free from their bleeding film—her eyes black and brilliant, in which strength and life were once more resplendent.

The little girl's heart turned towards her father and mother, who were wanting to render her joy complete.

"Papa! Mamma!" she cried.

Marie made her a sign to be silent.

"Wait, wait!" she said. "I wish first to know whether I can read. Give me a book."

The child took one which happened to be lying on the table.

"Here is one," she said.

Marie opened the book and read from it fluently and without any effort, like any other person. Her cure was complete, radical and positive, and the Blessed Virgin had not done things by halves.

Her father and mother had hastened to her room. "Papa, mamma, I can see, I can read, I am cured!" How would it be possible for us to paint this indescribable scene? Every one comprehends it, every one can see it by descending into the depths of his own heart.

The door of the house had not yet been opened. The windows were closed and their transparent panes only suffered the first brightness of morning to enter. Who then could have entered and mingled in the joy of this family which had been so suddenly restored to happiness. And yet these christians—whose prayers had been so graciously heard—felt instinctively that they were not alone, and that a powerful and invisible Being was at that moment in their midst.

The father and mother and little Marthe fell on their knees. Marie, who was still in bed, clasped her hands, and from these four bosoms, overpowered with emotion and gratitude, there issued as a

thanksgiving the name of the Mother of God—"O Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Lourdes." What were the other words they uttered? We know not. As to their feelings, who does not divine them, by placing himself, in imagination, in presence of this wonderful event, this lightning-like display of the power of God, traversing all at once the destiny of an unfortunate family and changing their sorrow into boundless happiness.

It is scarcely necessary to add that, shortly afterwards, Mlle. Marie Moreau went with her parents to offer up her thanksgivings to Our Lady of Lourdes at the Grotto of the Apparition. She deposited her ordinary attire on the altar and resumed—happy and proud to wear them—the colors of the Queen of Virgins.

M. Moreau, whose faith had formerly been so great, was stupefied with astonishment. "I believed," said he, "that such graces were only granted to saints. How is it that such favors descend also upon miserable sinners like ourselves?"

These facts had for witnesses the entire population of Tartas, which sympathized in the affliction of this family, one of the most highly respected in the place. Every one in the town saw and can attest that this malady, which was despaired of up to that period, was suddenly cured at the commencement of the *Novena*. The Superior of the Convent of the Sacred Heart at Bordeaux, the one hundred and fifty pupils who were the companions of Mlle. Marie Moreau, the medical men of the above establishment, have established the serious state to which she was reduced before these events occurred, and afterwards her entire recovery. She

returned in fact to Bordeaux, where she remained two years longer to complete her education.

The oculist, M. Bermont, could not recover from his surprise at this termination of the case so far beyond the range of his art. We have seen his declaration attesting the state of the invalid and acknowledging the utter impossibility of such a cure being made by the ordinary means at the disposal of the science of medicine. "A cure," he says, "which was complete, and is still complete. As to the instantaneous nature of this cure, as it has been produced, it is," he adds, "a fact, beyond comparison, which altogether exceeds the limits of medical knowledge. In which belief I have attached my signature—*Bermont.*"

This declaration, dated 8th February, 1859, is deposited at the Bishop's palace at Tarbes, together with a great number of letters and attestations from the inhabitants of Tartas, among which figures that of M. Desbord, Mayor of the town.

Mlle. Marie wore the colors of the Virgin up to the day of her marriage, which took place soon after she had completed her education and had left the Convent of the Sacred Heart. On that day she repaired to Lourdes, and laid aside her maiden attire to assume her bridal robe.

It was her wish to present her blue and white dress to another young girl, beloved like herself by the Blessed Virgin—to Bernadette. Having the same mother, were they not almost sisters?

This was the only gift ever accepted by Bernadette. She wore for many years—until in fact it could be worn no longer—that dress, the colors of which always recalled to her mind the beneficent

omnipotence of the divine apparition at the Grotto.

Eleven years have elapsed since the occurrence of these events. The benefit conferred by the Most Blessed Virgin has not been withdrawn; the sight of Mlle. Moreau has continued perfectly good; there has never been any relapse, not even the slightest indisposition. Short of suicide—I mean an act of ingratitude or an abuse of grace—what God has resuscitated dies no more. *Resurgens jam non moritur.*

Mlle. Marie Moreau is now the wife of M. d'Izaru de Villefort; she is the mother of two noble children, who have the finest eyes in the world. Although they are both boys, their first baptismal name is that of—Marie.

VI.

THE miraculous cures were counted by hundreds. It was impossible to attempt to establish the truth of all. The Episcopal Commissioners subjected thirty of them to a most minute scrutiny. They displayed extreme strictness in their investigation, and only admitted the Supernatural when it would have been impossible to have done otherwise. They rejected, for instance, all such cures as could not claim to have been effected almost instantaneously, but had been accomplished by slow degrees, as also all such as had been obtained in union with medical treatment, however unavailing the latter might have been up to that period. “Although the inefficacy of the remedies prescribed by medical science had been satisfactorily shown,”—we quote from the Report drawn up by the Secre-

tary of the Commission,—“it was not possible, in that case, strictly and exclusively, to attribute the cure to the supernatural virtue of the water of the Grotto, which had been used simultaneously.”

Further, there had been pointed out to the Commissioners, as possessing a miraculous character, sundry favors of a spiritual nature, singular graces and unhopèd-for conversions. It was difficult to establish judicially these dramas which were enacted in the secret recesses of the human soul, and were therefore not subject to any external control. Although such occurrences, such changes of heart are sometimes more marvelous and astonishing than the straightening of a limb or the cessation of some physical malady, the Commissioners judged wisely that they ought not to be included in the solemn and public inquiry with which the Bishop had charged them.

In their report to Monseigneur Laurence, the Commissioners, in concert with the medical men, divided into three categories the cures which they had investigated and of which they had furnished ample details in their official documents, which were all signed by the persons cured and by numerous witnesses.

The first category comprehended such cures as, however striking their nature, were susceptible of a natural explanation. They were in number six, and comprised those of Jeanne Marie Arquè, the widow of M. Crozat, Blaise Maumus, and of a child called Laffitte, all three residents at Lourdes; of a child called Lasbareilles, of Gez; of Jean Cras-sus, of Arcizan-Avant, and lastly of Jeanne Pomièr, of Loubajac.

The second category was composed of cures with regard to which the Commissioners were inclined to admit supernatural agency. In this number we find as follows: Jean Pierre Malon, Jeanne Marie Daube, wife of a man called Vendome, Bernarde Soubies and Pauline Bordeaux, all of Lourdes; Jean-Marie Amaré, of Beaucens; Marcelle Peyrègne, of Agos; Jeanne-Marie Massot Bordenave, of Arras; Jeanne Gezma and Auguste Bordes, of Pontacq.

“The majority of these facts”—as we learn from the medical investigation—“furnish almost all the conditions necessary for their admission into the supernatural order of things. It may be considered that, in rejecting them, we have acted with too much caution and have pushed our conscientiousness to extremes. But far from complaining of being so reproached, we congratulate ourselves on it, being fully convinced that in matters of this importance to be strict is to follow the dictates of prudence.”

Under such circumstances, a natural explanation, however improbable, but still within the range of possibility, sufficed to prevent the Commissioners from declaring the Miracle. The fact was then ranked by them in the category we have just pointed out.

The third class comprised those cures which displayed in the most evident and undeniable manner the supernatural character. There were fifteen of them, and we subjoin the names of those cured: Blaisette Soupenne, Benoite Cazeaux, Jeanne Crassus, wife of a man called Crozat, Louis Bourriette, the child Justin Beauhohorts, Fabien

and Suzanne Baron, all of Lourdes; Mme. Rizan and Henry Busquet of Nay; Catherine Latapie, of Loubajac; Madame Lanou of Bordères; Marianne Garrot and Denys Bouchet of Lamarque; Jean-Maria Tambourné of Saint Justin; Mlle. Moreau de Sazenay of Tartas; and Paschaline Abbadee of Rabastens. All these cures were pronounced to have been incontestably miraculous.

“The maladies by which those who were favored with such sudden and striking cures had been attacked were for the most part of very different natures,” as we gather from the report of the Commission. They assumed very different characters. Some of them belonged to internal, others to external pathology.

These affections, however, though of such different kinds have been cured by the use of one and the same element, sometimes externally, sometimes internally, and in some cases in both ways simultaneously.

“Now, in the natural and scientific order, besides the fact of each remedy only being applied in a particular manner, it is clear that it only possesses one special virtue adapted to such or such a malady, but which is inefficacious, if not injurious, in all other cases. It is not, therefore, owing to any peculiar property inherent in its composition, that the water of Massabielle has succeeded in producing such numerous, extraordinary and different cures, and in suddenly putting to flight so many maladies of different and sometimes diametrically opposite nature.

“And this is the more remarkable,” the report added, “since Science has authoritatively declared

on the analysis furnished by the most eminent men, that this water does not in itself contain any mineral or therapeutic properties, and that, chemically speaking, it is nothing but pure water."

Medical science did not arrive less decidedly at the same conclusions after a mature and conscientious examination of these miraculous cures.

"On glancing at these cures as a whole," said the medical report, "one is struck at once with the facility, promptitude, and instantaneousness with which they issue from the bosom of their producing cause; with the violation and utter upsetting of all therapeutic methods which prevail in their accomplishment; with the contradictions which the precepts and previsions of science meet with; with that kind of disdain which makes sport of the long continuance, extent and resistance of the malady; with the hidden, but at the same time, real care with which the circumstances are arranged and combined, in order to show that in the cure which is being effected there is something going on quite out of the ordinary course of nature. Such phenomena are beyond the range of human intellect. How, in fact, can it comprehend the oppositor which exists:

"Between the simplicity of the means and the grandeur of the result?

"Between the unity of the remedy and the diversity of the maladies?

"Between the short duration of the application of the curative agent and the slowness of the treatment prescribed by art or science?

"Between the sudden efficacy of the former and the tedious failure of the latter?

“Between the chronic nature of the disease and the instantaneousness of the cure?

“There is in all this a contingent Force superior to those which have been dispensed to nature and consequently foreign to the water which it employs for the manifestation of its power.”

All these striking facts, so carefully and publicly verified; this investigation which had been so completely, conscientiously and minutely pursued by the Commission, and the declarations and conclusions which had been so decidedly pronounced by men deeply versed in medical and chemical science, could not fail of producing conviction in the mind of the bishop. His doubts were entirely cleared up.

However, actuated by that spirit of extreme prudence which we have often had occasion to point out to our readers in the course of this narration, Mgr. Laurence, before solemnly pronouncing the episcopal verdict on this important question, wished that a new sanction should be conferred on these miraculous events—the sanction of time.

He suffered three years to elapse without taking any further steps.

A second investigation was then instituted. The cures, which we indicated above as supernatural, still remained in full force. No one came forward to withdraw his original testimony or to contest the facts. The works of Him who reigns in eternity have nothing to fear from the test of time.

At length, furnished with such a superabundant series of demonstrations and proofs amounting to certainty, Mgr. Laurence pronounced the judgment which was expected from him. We give a general summary of it below.

VII.

PASTORAL letter of Mgr. the Bishop of Tarbes, pronouncing judgment in the case of the Apparition which took place at the Grotto of Lourdes.

BERTRAND-Sévère-Laurence, by the Divine Mercy and the favor of the Holy Apostolic See, Bishop of Tarbes, Assistant to the Pontifical Throne, etc.

To the clergy and faithful of our diocese salutation and benediction in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

In all epochs of humanity, Our Beloved Co-operators and Very dear Brothers, a marvelous communication has subsisted between heaven and earth. At the commencement of the world, the Lord appeared to our first parents in order to reproach them with the crime of their disobedience. In following ages, we find Him conversing with the Patriarchs and the Prophets; and the Old Testament is often the history of the celestial Apparitions with which the children of Israel were favored.

Such divine favors were not to cease with the Mosaic dispensation; on the contrary they were to be under the law of grace more numerous and more striking.

In the very cradle of the Church, in those times of bloody persecution, the Christians were in the habit of being visited by Jesus Christ or by Angels, who came, sometimes to reveal to them the secrets of the future, sometimes to deliver them from their chains, sometimes to strengthen them for the combats they were to endure. It was thus—according

to the idea of a judicious writer—that God encouraged those illustrious Confessors of the faith, at a time when the mighty of the earth were uniting all their efforts to stifle in its germ that doctrine by which the world was to be saved.

These supernatural manifestations were not exclusively confined to the first ages of Christianity. History attests that they have been perpetuated from age to age for the greater glory of Religion and the edification of the Faithful.

In the ranks of celestial Apparitions those of the Blessed Virgin occupy a prominent place, and have been an abundant source of blessings for the world. In traversing the Catholic universe, the traveler meets with temples consecrated to the Mother of God, built at no great distance from each other; and several of these edifices owe their origin to an Apparition of the Queen of Heaven. We have already one of these blessed Sanctuaries in our part of the country—Our Lady of Garaison—founded, four centuries ago, in consequence of a revelation made to a young shepherd-girl. Thousands of pilgrims repair thither every year to kneel before the throne of the glorious Virgin Mary to implore her kindness.

Thanks be to the Almighty! in the infinite treasures of his goodness, he has reserved for us a fresh favor. He wills that in the diocese of Tarbes a new sanctuary should be elevated to the glory of Mary. And what instrument has He employed to communicate to us His merciful designs. It is one *which would be deemed the weakest in the eyes of the world*, a child aged fourteen years, Bernadette Soubirous, born of poor parents at Lourdes.

[Here the Bishop gave a summary of the Apparitions of the Most Blessed Virgin, with which the reader is already acquainted. Mgr. Laurence then proceeded to the discussion of the facts.]

Such is substantially, [continued the Prelate,] the narration as we gathered it from the lips of Bernadette, in presence of the Commission, which had been assembled for the purpose of hearing her account a second time.

Thus this young girl is said to have seen and heard a being styling herself the Immaculate Conception, and which, albeit clothed in human form, is said to have been neither seen nor heard by any of the numerous spectators who were present at the scene. It is said, consequently, to have been a supernatural being. What must we think of all this?

You are well aware, beloved Brethren, that the Church exercises a wise deliberation in her appreciation of supernatural facts: she demands positive proofs, before admitting them and proclaiming them divine. Since the original fall, man, more especially in matters of this nature, is subject to many errors. If not lead astray by his reason, now become so weak, he is liable to be the victim of the artifices of the Devil. Who does not know that the Evil one transforms sometimes into an angel of light in order that we may fall more easily into his snares. Thus the beloved Disciple recommends us not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits, whether they be of God. This trial, dearly beloved Brethren, we have already made. The occurrences, of which we are now speaking to you,

have been a cause of anxiety to us for the last four years. We have followed them in their different phases; we have received suggestions from our Commission, composed of pious, learned and experienced priests, who have interrogated the child, studied the facts, and examined into and well weighed everything. We have also called in the authority of Science, and we have remained firmly convinced that the Apparition is supernatural and divine, and, consequently, that what Bernadette saw, was the Blessed Virgin. Our conviction has been formed on the testimony of Bernadette, and more especially so after taking into consideration the facts which have been produced, and which admit of no explanation but that of divine intervention.

The testimony of the young girl offers all the guarantees we can possibly desire. There cannot be the slightest doubt as to her sincerity. Who does not, when coming in contact with her, admire her simplicity, modesty and candor? While everybody is discussing the marvels which have been revealed to her, alone, she remains silent. She never speaks unless when questions are put to her; then she enters into details without the slightest affectation, and with the most touching ingenuousness; and her answers to the numerous questions addressed to her are given without hesitation; are clear, precise, very much to the purpose, and bearing the impress of deep conviction.

Subjected to rough trials, she has never been shaken by threats, and she has declined the most generous offers with noble disinterestedness. Always *d'accord avec elle-même*, she has, in the differ-

ent interrogatories to which she has been subjected, constantly adhered to her first statement, neither adding to nor taking away from it. Bernadette's sincerity is therefore incontestable. Let us add that it has never been contested. Even those who opposed her, have themselves rendered her this homage.

But granting that Bernadette had no wish to deceive others, is it not possible that she was deceived herself? For instance, did she not fancy she saw and heard what she neither saw nor heard? Was she not the victim of a hallucination? How could we believe this for a moment? The wisdom of her replies reveals in the child a soundness of mind, a calmness of imagination, and a fund of good sense beyond her years. In her the religious feeling has never displayed any over-excited character; it has never been proved that she suffered from any intellectual derangement, oddity of disposition, or morbid affection which might have predisposed her to indulge in creations of the imagination. She has had this vision, not once only, but as often as eighteen times; she saw it for the first time suddenly, when nothing could have prepared her for what was to be accomplished later on; and during the Quinzaine, when she expected to see the vision every day, she saw nothing for two days, although she was placed in the same way and in identical circumstances. And then what took place during the time the Apparitions were before her? Bernadette was transformed; her countenance assumed a new expression, her eyes kindled, she saw things which she had never before seen, she heard language which she had never before heard, the

sense of which she did not always understand, but the remembrance of which she did not fail to retain. These circumstances joined together, preclude the idea of hallucination. The young girl has therefore really seen and heard a being styling herself the Immaculate Conception, and it being impossible to account for the phenomenon naturally, we have just ground for believing that the Apparition was supernatural.

The testimony of Bernadette—in itself of considerable importance—acquires altogether new strength—we might say its complement—from the marvelous occurrences which have taken place since the first event. If a tree should be judged by its fruits, we may affirm that the Apparition, as narrated by the girl, is supernatural and divine, for it has produced supernatural and divine effects. What then happened, dearly beloved Brethren? The Apparition was scarcely heard of, when the news spread with the rapidity of lightning; it was known that Bernadette was to repair to the Grotto for the space of fifteen days, and the whole country was aroused. Crowds of people streamed towards the place of the Apparition; they waited for the solemn hour with religious impatience; and while the girl, beside herself with ravishment, was absorbed by the object of her contemplation, the witnesses of this prodigy, deeply affected and melted to tenderness, were mingled in a common feeling of admiration and prayer.

The Apparitions have ceased; but the concourse of people continues, and pilgrims, arriving from distant countries as well as from the neighboring districts, hasten to the Grotto. They are of all

ages, all ranks and all conditions. And by what feeling are these numerous strangers urged to visit the place? Ah! they come to the Grotto in order to pray and to demand favors of one kind or other from the Immaculate Mary. They prove, by their recollected behaviour, that they are sensible as it were of a divine breath which vivifies this rock, from henceforth forever celebrated. Souls, already christian, have become strengthened in virtue; men frozen with indifference have been brought back to the practices of religion; obstinate sinners have been reconciled with God, after Our Lady of Lourdes had been invoked in their favor. These marvels of grace, bearing the stamp of universality and duration, can only have God for their author. Consequently, have they not come for the express purpose of confirming the truth of the Apparition?

If from effects produced for the good of souls, we pass to those which concern the health of the body, how many new prodigies have we not to recount?

Our readers will not have forgotten the gushing forth of the Spring, from which Bernadette drank and in which she washed herself, in the presence of the assembled multitude. It would be superfluous to repeat here the details.

Persons suffering from sickness, [resumes the Bishop,] tried the water of the Grotto, and not without success. Many, whose infirmities had resisted the most energetic treatment, suddenly recovered their health. These extraordinary cures acquired immense notoriety, and their fame soon spread far and wide.

The sick of all countries requested to have some of the water of Massabielle sent to them, when they were unable to repair themselves to the Grotto. How many bowed down with infirmities have been cured, how many families consoled! If we wished to invoke their testimony, innumerable voices would be raised to proclaim, in accents of gratitude, the sovereign efficacy of the water of the Grotto. It would be impossible for us to enumerate here all the favors which have been obtained; but there is one thing of which we are bound to inform you, which is, that the water of Massabielle has cured many who had been given over and pronounced incurable. These cures have been effected by the use of a water, which, according to the report of eminent Chemists who have subjected it to a minute analysis, is destitute of any curative properties. They have been effected in some instances instantaneously, in others after the repetition of the application of this water two or three times, either internally or externally. Further, these cures are permanent. What then is the power which has produced them? Is it the power of the organism? Scientific men, when consulted on the subject, have replied in the negative. These cures are then the work of God. Now they are connected with the Apparition; she it is who is their starting point; she it was who inspired the sick with confidence; consequently there is an intimate connection between the cures and the Apparition; the Apparition is divine, since the cures bear the seal of the divinity. From this it follows that the Apparition having styled herself the Immaculate Conception, it was the Most Blessed

Virgin whom Bernadette saw and heard! Let us then exclaim: The finger of God is here! *Digitus Dei est hic.*

How can we but admire, dearly beloved Brethren, the economy of divine Providence! At the end of the year 1854, the immortal Pius IX. proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. The words of the Pontiff were re-echoed in the most distant parts of the world; Catholic hearts thrilled with joy, and the glorious privilege of Mary was everywhere celebrated with *fêtes*, the *souvenir* of which will remain forever engraved on our memory. And behold about three years afterwards, the Blessed Virgin, appearing to a child, says to her: *I am the Immaculate Conception—I desire that a chapel should be erected here to my honor.* Does she not appear to wish to consecrate by a monument the infallible oracle of the successor of St. Peter?

And where does she desire that this monument should be erected? It is at the foot of our Pyrenean mountains, a country where numerous foreigners meet together, coming from every part of the world in search of health at our warm baths. May it not be said that she invites the faithful of all nations to come and honor her in the new temple which shall be erected to her?

Inhabitants of Lourdes, rejoice! the august Mary condescends to regard you with her merciful eyes. It is her will that a sanctuary should be built to her honor near your town, in which she will abundantly pour forth her benefactions. Be thankful to her for this pledge of predilection which she gives you, and since she lavishes on you the tender-

ness of a mother, show yourselves to be her devoted children by the imitation of her virtues and your unshaken attachment to Religion.

Besides, it is with pleasure we recognize the fact, that the Apparition has already produced among you abundant fruits of salvation. Eye witnesses of the occurrences at the Grotto and of their happy results, your confidence has been as great as your conviction has been strong. We have ever admired your prudence, your docility in following the advice tendered by us of submission to the civil authorities, at a time when for the space of several weeks, you were obliged to cease your visits to the Grotto, and to compress, in your own hearts, the sentiments inspired by the spectacle which had so impressed you during the Quinzaine of the Apparitions.

And all of you, whether Priests or Laics, in our diocese, open your hearts to the influence of hope; a new era of graces is commencing for you: you are called upon to reap your share in the benefits which are promised to us. In your supplications and canticles, you will henceforth mingle the name of Our Lady of Lourdes with the blessed names of Our Lady of Garaison, of Poeylaün, of Héas and of Piétat.

From above these sacred sanctuaries, the Immaculate Virgin will watch over you and shield you with her tutelary protection. Yes, beloved fellow-laborers, and beloved brothers in Christ, if, with our hearts full of trust, we keep our eyes steadily fixed on that "star of the sea," we shall, without fear of shipwreck, pass through the tempests of life, and reach in safety the haven of eternal felicity.

FOR THESE REASONS :

After having conferred with our venerable Brothers, the Dignitaries, Canons and Chapter of our Cathedral Church ;

The Holy Name of God being duly invoked ; taking for our guidance the rules wisely traced by Benedict XIV.—in his work on the Beatification and Canonization of Saints—for the discernment of Apparitions true or false ;

Seeing the favorable report which has been presented to us by the Commission charged with obtaining all information relative to the Apparition at the Grotto of Lourdes, and its attendant circumstances ;

Seeing the written testimony of the Physicians and Surgeons whom we have consulted on the subject of the numerous cures obtained in consequence of the use of the water of the Grotto ;

Considering, in the first place, that the fact of the Apparition—viewed either with reference to the young girl who reported it, or more especially with reference to the extraordinary effects which it has produced—can only be accounted for through the medium of a supernatural cause ;

Considering, in the second place, that this cause can but be divine, since the effects produced by it, being, some, sensible signs of grace, as the conversion of sinners, others, deviations from the ordinary laws of nature, as miraculous cures, can only be referred to the Author of Grace and to the Lord of nature ;

Considering, in short, that our conviction is strengthened by the vast and spontaneous concourse

of the faithful at the Grotto—a concourse which has not ceased since the first Apparitions, having for its object to request favors, or to return thanks for those already obtained ;

In order to respond to the legitimate impatience of our Venerable Chapter, of the clergy, of the laics of our diocese, and of so many pious souls, who have long been demanding from the ecclesiastical Authority a decision which motives of prudence have induced us to defer ;

Wishing, also, to satisfy the pious wishes of many of our Colleagues in the Episcopacy, and of a great number of eminent personages strangers to our diocese ;

After having invoked the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, and the assistance of the Most Blessed Virgin,

WE HAVE DECLARED AND DO DECLARE AS
FOLLOWS :

Article 1.—We pronounce judgment that the IMMACULATE MARY, MOTHER OF GOD, really appeared to Bernadette Soubirous, on the eleventh of February, 1858, and following days, to the number of eighteen, in the Grotto of Massabielle, near the town of Lourdes ; that this Apparition is invested with every character of truth, and that the faithful have good ground for believing it to be certain.

We submit, with all humility, our judgment to the judgment of the Sovereign Pontiff, to whom is committed the government of the universal Church.

Article 2.—We authorize the worship of Our Lady of the Grotto of Lourdes in our diocese ; but we prohibit the publication of any particular formula

of prayers, of any canticle, or of any book of devotion bearing on this event, without our approbation given in writing.

Article 3.—In order to conform ourselves to the will of the Blessed Virgin—several times expressed by the Apparition at that period—we propose to proceed to the erection of a sanctuary on the site of the Grotto, the proprietorship of which is now vested in the Bishops of Tarbes for the time being.

This edifice, when we take into consideration the steep and difficult locality we have to deal with, will require much labor and relatively a very considerable outlay of money. In order, therefore, to realize our pious scheme, we shall need the co-operation of the priests and the faithful of our diocese, as well as of the priests and the faithful of France and of foreign countries. We appeal to their generous hearts, and more especially to all the pious persons of all countries, who are devoted to the worship of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary.

Article 4.—We address ourselves with confidence to the establishments of both sexes, consecrated to the education of youth, to the Congregations of the Children of Mary, to the *confréries* of the Blessed Virgin and to the different pious Associations, whether in our own diocese or in the whole of France.

On the Sunday following its reception, this, our pastoral letter, shall be read and published in all the parish churches, as also in the chapels and oratories of the seminaries, colleges and hospitals of our diocese.

Given at Tarbes, in our episcopal palace, under our signature and seal and the counter-signature of

our secretary, on the 18th of January, 1862, being the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter at Rome.

✠ BERTRAND SEVERE,
Bishop of Tarbes.

By order, FOURCADE, *Canon-Secretary.*

VIII.

IN the name of the see, or, to speak more correctly, in that of the Church, Mgr. Laurence bought from the town of Lourdes the Grotto, the portion of land by which it is surrounded, and the entire group of the Rocks of Massabielle. M. Lacadé was Mayor at the time. He it was who proposed to the municipal council, the cession to the Church, the Spouse of Christ, of those places now for ever holy, where the Mother of God had appeared. His signature was formally attached to the contract of sale.

This sale was authorized by M. Rouland, as was also the construction of a church in eternal memory of the Apparitions of the Blessed Virgin to Bernadette Soubirous, of the issuing of the Spring, and of the countless miracles which were accomplished in order to attest the reality of the divine visions.

While the vast temple dedicated to the Immaculate Conception on the rugged rocks of Massabielle was rising stone by stone from its foundations, Our Lady of Lourdes continued to pour out her miracles and her benefactions on mankind. At Paris and Bordeaux, in Périgord, in Bretagne and in Anjou, in the most lonely country places, and in the very heart of thickly inhabited cities, Our Lady

of Lourdes was invoked, and every where Our Lady of Lourdes responded with undeniable signs of her power and goodness.

Let us still narrate two of these divine histories ere we close our tale, and give a tableau of the present state of things. The first forms an episode in the life of the author of this book which will never be effaced from his memory. This episode we subjoin, just as we wrote it nearly seven years ago.





TENTH BOOK.

I.

“DURING my whole life my sight had been excellent. I could distinguish objects at an immense distance, and on the other hand I could read my book with the greatest ease, however close it might be to my eyes. I never suffered the least weariness after passing whole nights in study. I was sometimes astonished and delighted at the strength of my sight, which was at the same time so powerful and so clear. I was therefore greatly surprised and cruelly disappointed when, in the course of June and July, 1862, I found my sight becoming by degrees weak, incapable of working by night, and at length so entirely unserviceable that I was obliged to give up reading and writing. If I attempted to take up a book, at the end of three or four lines—sometimes at the first glance—I experienced such a weariness in the upper part of my eyes as to render further exertion impossible. I consulted several physicians and more particularly two eminent men who devoted themselves especially to eye-complaints, M. Desmares and M. Giraud-Teulon.

“The remedies prescribed for me were of little or

no avail. After a period of perfect rest, and a regimen into which iron largely entered, there was at first a slight improvement in my state, and one day I could read and write in the afternoon for a considerable time; but the next day all my distressing symptoms returned. It was then that I tried local remedies, cold water *douches* on the eye-ball, cupping in the back of the neck, a general system of hydropathy and alcoholic lotions in the parts adjoining the eye. Sometimes—though very rarely—I felt a momentary alleviation of the excessive weariness from which I was constantly suffering, but this only lasted for a few moments, and, in short, my complaint was insensibly assuming that chronic type which usually characterizes incurable infirmities.

“In obedience to the advice of my medical attendants, I had given up my eyes to entire rest. Not content with wearing blue spectacles whenever I left the house, I had quitted Paris for the country, and retired to my mother’s residence at Coux, on the banks of the Dordogne. I had taken with me as my secretary a young person who read for me the books I required to consult, and wrote from my dictation.

“September had arrived. This state had lasted about three months, and it began to cause me the most serious uneasiness. I suffered dreadful anxiety, which I did not mention to any one. My relations and friends had the same fears, though they kept them from me. We were almost convinced that my sight was lost for ever, but each of us tried to inspire hope we had ceased to have ourselves, and concealed our mutual feelings of alarm.

"I have a very intimate friend—a friend of my earliest infancy—to whom I am in the habit of confiding my joys and sorrows. From my dictation my secretary wrote him a letter in which I described my unhappy situation and my cruel fears for the future.

"The friend of whom I speak is a Protestant, as is his wife also, a double circumstance which deserves being remarked. For certain very sufficient reasons I cannot give his name here in full; we will call him M. de —.

"He replied to me a few days afterwards. His letter reached me on the 15th of September, and surprised me greatly. I here give its contents without changing a single word:

" 'Your few lines, my dear friend, gave me pleasure; but, as I have already told you, I long to hear from you *in your own handwriting*. Within the last few days, on my return from Cauterets, I stopped at Lourdes, near Tarbes. I visited the celebrated Grotto there, and heard such wonderful things relating to cures produced by its waters—more especially in cases of eye-complaints—that I beg you most seriously to give them a trial. Were I a Catholic, a believer like you, and suffering, as you are, from any malady, I should risk the chance without hesitation. If it is true that the sick have been suddenly cured, you may hope to swell their number; and if it is not so, what do you risk by making the trial? I may add that I am somewhat personally interested in this experiment. Should it succeed, what an important fact it would be for me to record? I should be brought face to face

with a miraculous fact, or at least with an event to which the principal witness would be above all suspicion.

“‘It appears that it is not actually necessary to go to Lourdes to use this water, as you may just as well have it forwarded to you. You have but to write to the Curé of Lourdes on the subject and he will provide you with it. It is necessary to go through certain preliminary formalities which I am unable to point out to you, but the Curé of Lourdes will furnish you with all particulars. Beg him at the same time to send you a little pamphlet by the Vicar-general of Tarbes, which gives an account of the best established miraculous occurrences.’

“This letter of my friend was eminently calculated to fill me with astonishment. His disposition of mind is clear, positive and mathematical, lofty in its nature, but at the same time not likely to yield to the illusions of enthusiasm. Add to this, he is a Protestant. The advice he gave me so seriously and so urgently, amazed me more especially as coming from him.

“I resolved, however, not to follow it.

“‘It seems to me,’ I replied to him, ‘that I am to-day somewhat better, and if I continue to improve I shall not have any occasion to have recourse this time to the extraordinary remedy you propose, for which, besides, I, perhaps, have not sufficient faith.’

“Here, I must confess, not without blushing, the secret motives of my resistance.

“Whatever I might have said, I was not wanting in faith, and though I knew nothing of the water

of Lourdes, except from the impertinent strictures of some ill-thinking journals, I was morally certain that there, as well as in many other places, the power of God might manifest itself in cures. I go further: I had a kind of presentiment that if I tried this water—said to have gushed forth in consequence of an Apparition of the Blessed Virgin—I should be cured. But I dreaded, I confess, the responsibility of so great a favor. ‘If you are cured by the ordinary routine of medicine,’ I observed to myself, ‘you will be quits by paying the doctor. You will be in the same position as your neighbor. But if God cures you by a Miracle, by the special effect of his power and by a direct and personal intervention, it will be quite a different affair for you and you will be obliged to amend your life and become a saint. When God shall in a manner have given you for the second time with his own hands those eyes which are now so little under your control, will you be able to suffer them—as you do at present—to stray towards objects which seduce you or wander over what may cause you sorrow? After a miracle exerted in your favor, God will demand His recompense, and that will cost you dearer than the fees of the doctor. It will then be your duty to overcome this evil habit, to acquire that virtue. What may you not be obliged to do? Ah! it is impossible.’

“And my wretched heart, fearing its own weakness, refused to accept the grace of God.

“Such was my reason for rebelling against the advice tendered me of having recourse to this miraculous intervention, against this advice which Providence, always profound in its ways, sent to

me by two Protestants, by two heretics, outside the Church. My agitation, however, and my resistance were alike in vain. An interior voice was for ever telling me that the hand of man would be powerless to cure me, and that the Master, whom I had so often offended, willed Himself to restore me my sight, and thus presenting me with a new life, to prove whether I should be able to employ it better.

"In the mean time my state of health remained stationary or become slowly worse.

"Early in October I was obliged to undertake a journey to Paris.

"By the merest accident M. de —— happened to be there at the same time with his wife. The first visit I made was to them. My friend was stopping at the house of his sister, Mme. P——, who resides in Paris with her husband.

"‘And how are your eyes?’ asked Mme. de ——, as I entered the drawing-room.

"‘My eyes are always in the same state, and I begin to think my sight is lost for ever.’

"‘But why do you not try the remedy we advised you?’ said my friend to me. ‘Something or other gives me hopes that you might be cured.’

"‘Pshaw!’ I replied, ‘I will confess to you, that without proceeding to the length of denial and open hostility, I have no great faith in all these waters and pretended apparitions. All that is possible, and I have no positive objection to it; but not having studied the question, I am neither for nor against it; it is beyond my reach. In short, I have no wish to have recourse to the means you advise me.’

“ ‘You bring forward no valid objections to such a step,’ he replied. ‘According to your religious principles, you must believe, and you do believe, in the possibility of such things. Such being the case, why should you not make the experiment? What will it cost you? As I have told you, the thing cannot do you any harm, since it is merely pure water, water of the same chemical composition as the most ordinary water; and since you believe in miracles, and have faith in your religion, does it not strike you as extraordinary that you should be advised so strongly by two Protestants to have recourse to the Blessed Virgin? I tell you beforehand, that if you are cured, it will be a terrible argument against me.’

“ Mme. de — joined her entreaties to those of her husband. M. and Mme. P——, who are both Catholics, urged me no less strongly. I was driven into my last intrenchment.

“ ‘Well,’ I said to them, ‘I am going to confess the whole truth to you and open to you my whole heart. I am not wanting in faith, but I have faults, weaknesses, a thousand little wretchednesses—and all these, alas! hold firmly to the most sensitive and *vivants* fibres of my miserable existence. Now, a miracle such as the one of which I might possibly be the object, would impose on me the obligation of sacrificing everything and of becoming a saint; it would be a terrible responsibility, and I am such a coward that I dread it. If God cures me, what will He exact from me? whereas, with a doctor, a little money and the affair is settled.

“ ‘This is disgusting is it not? But such is the wretched pusillanimity of my heart. You fancied

my faith was wavering! You imagined that I feared the failure of the miracle! Undeceive yourselves. My fear is that the miracle may succeed.'

"My friends sought to convince me that I exaggerated the responsibility—of which I spoke—as much on the one hand as I diminished it on the other.

"‘You are not less bound at the present moment to live a virtuous life than you would be, supposing the event results as we suppose,’ observed M. de ——. ‘And, besides, even should your cure be effected by the hands of a physician, it would not, on that account, be less a favor from God, and in that case your scruples would have the same reasons for protesting against your weaknesses or your passions.’

"All this did not appear to me perfectly correct, and M. de — (a logical mind if ever there was one) probably owned to himself that his reasoning was not altogether what it might have been; but he wished, as much as possible, to calm the apprehensions I felt so keenly, and to induce me to decide on following the advice he tendered me, even to the length of recalling to my mind himself the grave responsibility with regard to which he was then endeavoring to re-assure me.

"In vain did I attempt to combat the more and more pressing entreaties of my friend, of his wife, and of our host and hostess. I ended, weary of the conflict, by promising to do everything they wished.

"‘As soon as I procure a secretary,’ I told them, ‘I shall write to Lourdes; but I only arrived to-day, and have not yet had time to look for one.’

“ ‘But I will act as your secretary!’ exclaimed my friend.

“ ‘Well, be it so! To-morrow we will breakfast together at the Café de Foy. I will dictate a letter to you after breakfast.’

“ ‘Why not do so at once,’ he said to me, eagerly. ‘In that case we gain a day.’

“ Writing materials were produced from the adjoining apartment. I dictated to my friend a letter for the Curé of Lourdes, which was posted the same evening.

“ The next day M. de — came to my house.

“ ‘My good friend,’ he said to me, ‘now that the die is cast and that you have decided to make the trial, you must do it seriously, and fulfill the conditions necessary for its success, without which the experiment would be utterly useless. Offer up the necessary prayers, go to confession, bring your soul into a suitable condition, and go through the devotional exercises prescribed by your religion. You understand that all this is of the most vital importance.’

“ ‘You are perfectly right,’ I replied, ‘and I will do what you tell me. But I must confess you are a queer Protestant. A few days since you inculcated on me faith, now you do the same with regard to the practices of religion. We have exchanged parts in a droll manner, and any one overhearing us—you the Protestant and I the Catholic—might well be astonished; and I confess, alas! the impression produced would not be to my advantage.’

“ ‘I am a scientific man,’ replied M. de —. ‘As we are about to make an experiment, I very naturally wish we should do it according to the pre-

scribed conditions. I reason on this subject as if I were reasoning on physical science or chemistry.'

"I declare, to my shame, that, I did not place myself in the state of preparation so judiciously recommended by my friend. I was, at the time, in a very bad frame of mind; my natural feelings were deeply agitated, troubled and inclined to evil.

"I recognized, however, the necessity of going and throwing myself at the feet of God; but as I had not been guilty of any of those gross and material faults, against which there is a sudden reaction in the mind, I deferred doing so from day to day. Man rebels more against the sacrament of penance during a temptation than when the actual commission of a sin has come to overthrow and humiliate him. It is, in fact, more difficult to combat and resist than to demand pardon after a defeat. Who has not experienced this?

"About a week passed away in this manner. M. and Mme. de — inquired every day whether I had received any news of the miraculous water, or any letter from the Curé of Lourdes. The Curé replied to me at length, informing me that some of the water of Lourdes had been forwarded by the railroad, and would shortly reach me.

"We awaited the moment in a state of impatience which may easily be conceived; but, would you believe it? I felt less interest in the matter than my Protestant friends.

"The state of my eyes was always the same. It was absolutely impossible for me either to read or write.

"One morning—it was Friday, October 10, 1862 —I was waiting for M. de — in the Gallery d'Or-

leans at the Palais-Royal. We had breakfasted together. As I had arrived earlier than the appointed time, I was gazing at the different shops in the gallery, and reading the advertisements of some new books in front of Dentu's library. This was enough to weary my eyes excessively. My sight had become so weak that I could not read even the largest letters without suffering from invincible lassitude. This slight circumstance plunged me into a state of deep dejection, as it afforded me the means of measuring once more the full extent of my misfortune.

"In the afternoon, I dictated three letters to M. de —, and at four o'clock I left him and returned to my own residence. As I was going up-stairs, my porter called me.

" 'A small box has been brought here for you from the railroad,' he said to me.

"I entered eagerly the porter's lodge. A small deal box was, in fact, there, bearing my address and these words—doubtless intended for the *octroi*— 'Pure water.'

"It was the water from Lourdes.

"I experienced inwardly a violent emotion; but I suffered no outward signs of it to escape me.

" 'Very well,' said I to my porter. 'I will take it to my apartment presently. I shall return almost immediately.'

"I left the house in a pensive frame of mind, and walked up and down the street for a few moments.

" 'The affair is becoming serious,' I thought to myself. 'De — is right; I must prepare myself. In the state of mind in which I have been for some

time past, I cannot—unless I purify myself—ask God to perform a Miracle in my favor. It is not with a heart still full of wretchedness of my own choosing that I can implore so great a favor from Him. Let me use my own efforts to cure my soul, before I beseech him to cure my body.’

“Revolving these serious considerations in my mind, I proceeded in the direction of the residence of my confessor, M. l’Abbe Ferraud de Missol, who lives in my immediate neighborhood. Happily I was certain of meeting with him, as it was Friday, and he is always at home on that day.

“He was at home; but several persons were already in his ante-chamber waiting for him, and they would naturally see him before my turn came. In addition to this, one of the members of his family had arrived unexpectedly on a visit. His servant informed me of all this, and begged me to return in the evening after his dinner-hour, towards seven o’clock.

“I resigned myself to this proposal.

“On reaching the street-door I paused for a moment. I hesitated between my wish to pay a visit I had much at heart, and my thought of returning to my own house to pray. My fancy urged me violently in the direction of amusement, while a grave voice—a voice which only appeared to me to be feeble, because I had usually been deaf to it—a deep and holy voice called me to retirement.

“I hesitated some moments, deliberating in my own mind.

“At length the good inspiration carried the day, and I retraced my steps towards the Rue de Seine.

“I took from my porter the little box, which was

accompanied with a Notice of the Apparitions at Lourdes, and with hasty steps ascended the staircase.

“On reaching my apartment I knelt down at the side of my bed and prayed, altogether unworthy as I felt myself to turn my eyes towards heaven and to address myself to God.

“I then rose. On entering my room, I had placed the little deal box and the pamphlet on the mantelpiece. I glanced every moment at this box which contained the mysterious water, and it seemed to me as if something grand was going to take place in that solitary chamber. I dreaded to touch with my impure hands the wood which contained the sacred water, and, on the other hand, I felt myself strangely tempted to open it, even before making my confession as I had proposed doing. This struggle lasted some moments; it ended in a prayer.

“‘Yes, my God,’ I exclaimed, ‘I am a miserable sinner, unworthy to raise my voice towards Thee, and to touch an object which Thou hast blessed. But it is the very excess of my misery which should excite thy compassion. My God, I come to Thee and to the Blessed Virgin Mary, full of faith and unreserved confidence; and from the depth of the abyss, I cry out unto Thee. To-night I shall confess my sins to Thy minister, but my faith cannot and will not wait. Forgive me, O Lord, and heal me. And Thou, O Mother of Mercy, come to the assistance of thy unfortunate child.’

“Having thus refreshed myself with prayer, I summoned courage to open the little box of which I have spoken. It contained a bottle full of water.

"I removed the cork, poured some of the water into a cup and took a napkin out of my *commode*. These common preparations, which I went through with a particular attention, were impressed—as I still remember—with a secret solemnity, which struck me myself, as I went to and fro in my chamber. In that chamber I was not alone; it was manifest that God was there. The Blessed Virgin, whom I had invoked, was doubtless there also.

"Faith, fervent and ardent, had inflamed my soul.

"When my preparations were all finished, I knelt down again.

"‘O Blessed Virgin Mary,’ I said with a loud voice, ‘have pity on me and heal my physical and moral blindness.’

"On saying these words, with my heart full of confidence, I rubbed successively both my eyes and my forehead with the towel I had just soaked in the water of Lourdes. What I am now describing did not occupy the space of thirty seconds.

"Judge of my astonishment—I had almost said my horror. Scarcely had I applied this miraculous water to my eyes and brow when I felt myself all at once cured, immediately, without any intermediate state and with a suddenness which I can only compare in my imperfect language to that of a flash of lightning.

"Strange contradiction of human nature! A moment before I believed in my faith, which promised me my cure; and now I could not believe my senses which assured me that the cure was accomplished.

"No! I did not believe my senses, and that to such a degree that in spite of the astounding effect

already produced, I committed the fault of Moses and struck the rock twice. In other words, for some time longer, I continued to pray and moisten my eyes and my brow, not daring to rise, not daring to test the reality of my cure.

“However, at the expiration of ten minutes, the strength I continued to feel in my eyes and the entire absence of any heaviness in my sight, left no longer any room for doubt.

“‘I am cured!’ I exclaimed.

“And I ran to take a book—no matter what—to read. I stopped all at once. ‘No! no!’ I said to myself, ‘it is not any kind of book that I can take up at this moment.’

“I went to seek the Notice of the Apparitions which was lying on the mantel-piece. Certainly, this was but an act of justice.

I read one hundred and four pages without interruption, and without experiencing the slightest fatigue. Twenty minutes before I could not have read three lines.

“And if I did stop at page 104 it was because it was thirty-five minutes past five in the evening, and at that hour, towards the middle of October, it is almost dark at Paris. When I laid aside the book, the gas was being lighted in the shops of the street in which I resided.

“In the evening I made my confession and informed the Abbé Ferraud of the great favor the Blessed Virgin had just conferred on me. Although far from being prepared, as I have already said, I was permitted by him to communicate the next morning, in order to thank God for so special and extraordinary a benefit, and to fortify the reso-

lutions which an event of such a nature could not fail of giving birth to in my heart.

“ M. and Mme. de — were—as you may easily imagine—singularly affected by this occurrence in which Providence had caused them to take so direct a part. What were their reflections regarding it? By what thoughts were they visited? What passed in the interior of those two souls? It is their secret and the secret of God. What little I succeeded in discovering with regard to their feelings, I have not been authorized to impart to others.

“ Be this as it may, I knew the nature of my friend. I left him to his own reflections, without pressing him to come to any conclusion. I knew, and I know still, that God has His appointed hour, and knows His own designs. His agency was so distinctly visible in all that had happened, that I feared to interfere myself, in spite of my great wish—which was well-known to my friends—that they should enter the only Church which contains God in all His fullness.

“ I regret being unable to pause here in order to contemplate for an instant in my memory those two beings—so dear to me—receiving by the rebound of the Miracle, accomplished in my favor, the first shocks, which Truth gives to such as she wishes to conquer.

“ Seven years have elapsed since my miraculous cure. My sight is excellent. It is not ever wearied by reading, hard work, or sitting up at night. God grant me grace never to employ it save in the cause of right.”

II.

ANOTHER episode.

There are not unfrequently to be found in civil life, men who from their outward appearance might be mistaken for soldiers. Although they have never lived in camps, all who happen to see them passing by and are not acquainted with them, infallibly take them for old military men. They have their somewhat stiff carriage, firm bearing, regimental look, and also their abrupt good nature. Men of this stamp are more especially found in mixed services, such as the Custom-house, Woods and Forests, etc., which, though purely civil, borrow from the system adopted in the army, their gradations of rank and style of employment. On one hand they have, like men in private life, a family, a home and a domestic life; on the other they are subjected on every side to the multiplied exigences of a purely military organization. The result is to be found in those singular physiognomies of which I am now speaking, and which every one must have remarked.

If then you have ever seen a gallant cavalry officer dressed in plain clothes, his hair cut short, with a bristly moustache in which a few gray hairs may be detected; if you have remarked, among his energetic features, those vertical and rectilineal wrinkles—no, they can hardly be called wrinkles—which would seem to be peculiar to these military countenances; if you have scanned carefully those foreheads, entirely unfit for hats, but which appear to be made expressly for the *kepi* or the silver-

laced *tricorne*; those firm but mild eyes which during the day are habituated to brave danger, and which at the approach of evening are softened in the intimacy of the fireside, and love to gaze on the countenances of children; if you have any recollection of this characteristic type, I have no occasion to sketch for you the portrait of M. Roger Lacassagne, holding an appointment in the custom-house at Bordeaux; you know him as well as I do myself.

When, nearly two years ago, I had the honor of calling on him at his residence, 6 Rue du Chai des Farines, at Bordeaux, I was struck at first with his severe aspect and reserved address.

He enquired from me, with the somewhat abrupt politeness of men accustomed to discipline, the object of my visit.

"Sir," I replied, "I have heard of the history of your journey to the Grotto of Lourdes, and to assist me in the investigations I am making just now, I have come to hear the recital from your own mouth."

At the words "Grotto of Lourdes" his harsh countenance had brightened up, and the emotion of a stirring *souvenir* had all at once softened the austere lines of his brow.

"Sit down," said the gallant man, "and excuse my receiving you in this room in its present state of disorder. My family start to-day for Arcachon, and you find us in all the bustle of moving."

"That is of no importance. Kindly relate to me the events of which I have been informed only in a somewhat confused manner."

"As for myself," he said, in a tone of voice in

which I could trace tears, "as for myself, never, as long as I live, shall I forget a single circumstance."

"Sir," he resumed, after a moment of silence, "I have only two sons. The youngest is called Jules, and it is of him only that I shall have occasion to speak to you. He will be here almost immediately. You will see how amiable, pure and good he is."

M. Lacassagne did not inform me how tenderly he loved his youngest son. But the tone of his voice, which seemed to become soft and caressing when speaking of him, revealed to me all the depth of his paternal love. I saw plainly that there, in this feeling at once so tender and so strong, was concentrated the manly soul which was opening itself to me.

"His health," he continued, "had been excellent up to the age of ten years.

"At that period he was attacked suddenly, and without any apparent physical cause, with a malady, the serious nature of which I did not at first realize. On the 25th of January, 1865, when we were taking our seats at the table for supper, Jules complained of there being something the matter with his throat which prevented his swallowing any solid food. He could only take a little soup.

"As he remained in the same state the next day, I called in one of the most eminent medical men of Toulouse, M. Noguès.

"'It proceeds from the nerves,' observed the Doctor, giving me every hope of a speedy recovery.

"A few days afterwards, in fact, the child was able to eat, and I thought he was quite convalescent, when the malady returned, and continued

with intermissions, more or less regular, until towards the end of the month of April. From that time, his state remained unchanged. The poor child was reduced to live exclusively on liquids, such as milk, gravy from meat, and broth. Even the broth was obliged to be somewhat thin, for the orifice in his throat was so narrow that it was absolutely impossible for him to swallow even tapioca.

“The poor little fellow, reduced to such miserable nourishment, became visibly thinner and was slowly wasting away.

“The physicians—for there were two of them, as from the first I had begged M. Roques, a man of great medical celebrity, to act in concert with M. Noguès—astonished at the singularity and obstinacy of this affection, sought in vain to acquire a clear idea of its nature in order to fix upon its remedy.

“One day, it was the 10th of May—I have suffered so much, sir, and thought so much about this unfortunate malady, that I have remembered all the dates—I perceived Jules in the garden running with very unusual precipitation, and, as it were, by jerks. I feared, sir, the least agitation for him.

“‘Stop, Jules,’ I exclaimed, going towards him and seizing him by the hand.

“He made his escape from me immediately.

“‘Papa,’ he said, ‘I cannot stop. I must run. It is stronger than I am.’

“I took him on my knees; his legs twitched convulsively. A short time afterwards his head was attacked with ghastly contortions.

“The true character of his malady was now apparent. My unfortunate child was suffering from chorea. You know doubtless, sir, with what terri-

ble fits this horrible malady generally discovers itself" —

"No," I exclaimed, interrupting him, "I do not even know what a chorea is."

"It is a disease commonly known by the name of St Vitus' dance."

"Ah! Now I know what it is. Proceed."

"The principal seat of the disease was in the œsophagus. The symptoms which had developed themselves, and which, unfortunately, re-appeared every hour of the day without cessation, put an end to the doubts of the medical men.

"However, though they had traced the malady to its source, they were unable to overcome it. The utmost they could do after fifteen months of treatment, was to subdue the external symptoms, such as the twitchings of the legs and head; or rather, to say what I really think, these symptoms disappeared of their own accord by an effort of nature. As to the extreme contraction of the throat, it had passed into a chronic state, and resisted all our efforts. Remedies of every kind, country air, and the baths of Luchon, were successively and fruitlessly employed for the space of two years. These different treatments only served to exasperate the malady.

"Our last attempt was passing a summer at the sea-side for the sake of the baths. My wife had taken our poor invalid to St. Jean-de-Luz. It is needless to tell you, that, in the state in which he was, we were entirely absorbed in attending to his physical organization. Our grand object was merely to keep him alive. We had from the very first suspended his studies, and all mental exertion was

prohibited: we treated him as if he were merely vegetating. Now, as his mind was active and serious, this privation of all intellectual exercise greatly affected his spirits. Besides the poor child was ashamed of his malady; he saw others of his own age in health, and he felt himself to be as it were, disgraced and accursed. He avoided all——”

The Father, quite overcome by these *souvenirs*, paused a moment as if to master a sob in his voice.

“He avoided all company,” he resumed. “He was sad. Did he find any book, he read it to distract his thoughts. At St. Jean-de-Luz, he saw one day on the table of a lady who resided in the neighborhood, a little notice of the Apparition at Lourdes. He read it, and was, as it would appear, greatly struck with it. In the evening he observed to his mother, that the Blessed Virgin might easily cure him; but she paid no attention to his words, regarding them as a mere childish fancy.

“When we returned to Bordeaux—for, a short time before this my station had been changed, and we had come to reside here—my poor child’s state was precisely the same.

“This was in the month of August, last year. As you may well imagine, we were profoundly discouraged at seeing the unavailing result of so much medical skill, and the failure of so much care. By degrees we ceased applying any kind of remedy, leaving nature to itself, and resigning ourselves to the inevitable misfortune with which it had pleased God to visit us. It seemed to us as if so much suffering had somehow or other redoubled our love for the poor child. Jules was attended to by his mother and myself with equal tenderness and

unceasing solicitude. Grief has aged us both many years. Look at me, sir, I am only forty-six."

I looked at the poor father, and the sight of his furrowed countenance, on which grief had left unmistakable traces, touched my heart deeply. I took his hand and pressed it with cordial sympathy and profound compassion.

"In the meanwhile," he continued, "the child's strength was visibly decreasing. For two whole years, he had not taken any solid food. It was only at great expense, by means of liquid nourishment, which we exerted every effort to make as substantial as possible, and owing to exceptional care of him, that we had succeeded in prolonging his days. He was reduced to a frightful state of emaciation. He was extremely pale, and seemed to have no blood under his skin, so much so that he might have been taken for a wax figure. Death was plainly approaching with rapid steps. It was more than certain, it was imminent. In truth, sir, in spite of my experience of the impotency of medical science, I could not in my grief prevent myself from knocking once more at the same door. It was the only one I knew anything of.

"I addressed myself to M. Gintrac, Sr., the most eminent physician in Bordeaux.

"M. Gintrac examined the child's throat, probed it, and discovered that, besides the extreme contraction which closed the alimentary canal, there were rugosities symptomatic of extreme danger.

"He shook his head and gave me but little hope. He saw my terrible anxiety.

" 'I do not say that he may not recover,' he added, '*but he is very ill.*'

"These were his very words.

"He deemed the employment of local remedies absolutely necessary ; first injections, and then touching the parts with a rag steeped in ether. But this treatment entirely upset my poor boy, and such being the result, M. Sentex, the house-surgeon of the hospital, advised us himself to discontinue it.

"During one of my visits to Doctor Gintrac, I informed him of an idea which had occurred to me.

" 'It appears to me,' I said, 'that if Jules *wished* to swallow, he might do so. It may be that this difficulty proceeds only from fear, and perhaps he does not swallow to-day merely because he was unable to do so yesterday. In that case, it may be a mental malady, which moral means alone can cure.'

"The Doctor deprived me of this last illusion.

" 'You are mistaken,' he said. 'The malady is in the organs, which are but too really and too deeply attacked. I have not confined myself to a mere ocular examination—which might lead us into error—but I have probed the parts, and felt them most minutely with my fingers. The œsophagus is lined with rugosities, and the duct is so extremely contracted, that it is *materially impossible* for the child to take any food except those in a liquid form, which reduce themselves naturally to the size of the duct, and pass through the orifice, about as large as the eye of a needle, which still exists. A very slight increase in the swelling of the tissues and the invalid would be suffocated. The commencement of the malady, the alternations for better and worse which have characterized it, and its momentary interruptions serve to corroborate my material observations. Your son having been once cured would

have remained always cured, had the evil been one of the mind. Unfortunately, it is in the organs.'

"These observations which had been made to me already at Toulouse, but which I had wilfully disregarded, were too conclusive not to produce conviction in my mind. I returned home, with the sentence of death in my soul.

"What then could be done? We had sought advice from the most eminent physicians of Toulouse and Bordeaux, and all had been in vain. The fatal truth was brought home to me; our poor child was condemned, and that without appeal.

"It is difficult, sir, for the heart of a father to be convinced of so cruel a fact. I still endeavored to deceive myself. I was always in consultation with my wife, and began to think of hydropathy.

"Things had reached this desperate and discouraging state, when Jules addressed his mother—in a tone of voice so full of confidence and absolute certainty, as could not fail to strike her—the following words:

" 'You see, mamma, neither M. Gintrac nor any other doctor can do anything for me. It is the Blessed Virgin who will cure me. Send me to the Grotto of Lourdes, and you will see I shall be cured. I am sure of it.'

"My wife repeated to me what he had said.

" 'There is no room for hesitation,' I exclaimed. 'We must take him to Lourdes—and that without delay.'

"It is not, sir, that I had faith. I did not believe in miracles, and I did not regard such extraordinary interventions of the Divinity as possible. But I was a father, and no chance, however slight it

might be, appeared to me to be contemptible. Besides, I hoped that, independently of those supernatural events which it was difficult for me to admit, this might produce a salutary moral effect on my child. As for a complete cure, you may easily understand, sir, I did not even think of it.

“The time was winter, about the beginning of February. The season was a severe one, and I feared to expose Jules to the least inclemency of weather. I wished to wait for the first fine day.

“Since my boy had read the little account of the Apparition at Lourdes—eight months previously at St. Jean-de-Luz—the feeling he now expressed to us had never left him. Having displayed it once there—when it did not meet with any attention—he had never mentioned it again; but this idea had remained in his mind and been his constant companion while he was submitting—with a patience which you should have seen, sir—to the treatment prescribed by the medical men.

“This faith so full and entire was the more extraordinary, as we had not brought up our child in any exaggerated notions of the duties of religion. My wife went through her routine of devotion, and that was all; and, as for myself, I was imbued, as I have just told you, with philosophical ideas of quite another kind.

“On the 12th of February the weather promised to be splendid. We took the train for Tarbes.

“During the whole journey our child was gay, full of absolute faith in his cure—of a faith which quite upset me.

“‘I shall be cured,’ he said to me every moment. ‘You will see. Many others have been cured; why

should not I? The Blessed Virgin is going to cure me.'

"And I, sir, supported, without partaking in it, this so great confidence, this confidence which I should qualify as 'stupefying,' did I not fear to be wanting in respect to God who inspired him with it.

"At Tarbes, at the Hotel Dupont, where we alighted, every one remarked my poor child, so pale and weak, but at the same time so sweet and charming in appearance. I had mentioned the object of my visit, to the proprietors of the hotel. A happy presentiment seemed to mingle itself with the kind wishes of these good hearted people, and, when we started, I saw that they expected our return with impatience.

"In spite of my doubts, in order to be prepared for whatever might happen, I took with me a little box of biscuits.

"When we reached the crypt which is beneath the Grotto, Mass was being said. Jules prayed with a faith which was reflected on all his features, with an ardor which proceeded from heaven. He was altogether transfigured, poor little angel.

"The Priest remarked his fervor, and when he had quitted the altar, he came immediately out of the Sacristy again and approached us. A happy thought had suggested itself to his mind, on seeing my poor darling. He informed me of it, and then turning towards Jules, who was still kneeling—

"'My child,' said he, 'are you willing that I should consecrate you to the Blessed Virgin?'

"'Oh! yes,' replied Jules.

"The priest proceeded immediately with the

simple ceremony, and recited the holy formularies over my son. .

“ ‘And now,’ exclaimed the child, in a tone of voice which struck me, owing to its perfect confidence ; ‘and now, papa, I am going to be cured.’ ”

“We went down into the Grotto. Jules knelt down before the statue of the Virgin and prayed. I watched him, and I still have before my eyes the expression of his countenance, his attitude and his clasped hands.

“He rose and we went in front of the fountain.

“That moment was a terrible one.

“He washed his neck and breast, and then taking the glass drank a few mouthfuls of the miraculous water.

“He was calm and happy ; nay, more, he was gay and radiant with confidence.

“For myself, I trembled and shuddered almost to fainting at this last trial ; but I repressed my emotion, though it was most difficult for me to do so. I did not wish to let him see that I still had doubts.

“ ‘Try now to eat,’ I said to him, handing him a biscuit.

“He took it and I turned my head aside, not feeling strength to watch him while making the effort. It was in fact the question of my child’s life or death which was going to be decided. In that question, so terrible for a father’s heart, I was playing, so to say, my last card. If I failed, my beloved Jules was dead. The trial was to be decisive and I dared not face the sight.

“I was soon relieved from my poignant anguish.

The voice of Jules—a sweet and joyous voice—cried out to me:

“ ‘Papa! I am swallowing the biscuit. I am able to eat. I was sure of it, for I had faith.’ ”

“What a shock, sir. My son, already the victim of death, was saved, and that suddenly, and I, his father, was present at this astounding resurrection.

“Well, sir, in order to spare my child’s faith any trouble, I had sufficient control over myself not to appear astonished.

“ ‘Yes, dearest Jules, it was certain and could not have turned out otherwise,’ I said to him, in a tone of voice which all the energy of my will succeeded in rendering calm.

“And yet, sir, a tempest was raging within me. Had my breast been opened it would have been found burning as if full of fire.

“We renewed the experiment. He ate a few more biscuits, not only without difficulty, but with increasing appetite. I was obliged to check him.

“I felt the necessity of loudly proclaiming my happiness and of thanking God.

“ ‘Wait for me here,’ I said to Jules, ‘and pray to the kind Virgin. I am going up into the Chapel.’ ”

“Leaving him for a moment kneeling in the Grotto, I hastened to impart the happy news to the priest. I was in a kind of bewilderment. Besides my happiness, which was rendered terrible by its suddenness and unexpectedness; besides the agitation of my heart, I experienced in my soul and in my mind an inexpressible trouble. A revolution was taking place in my confused, agitated and tumultuous thoughts. All my philosophical ideas were tottering or falling to pieces within me.

“The priest descended hastily and saw Jules finishing his last biscuit. The Bishop of Tarbes happened to be at the Chapel that very day ; he wished to see my son. I gave him a full account of the cruel malady which had just been brought to so happy a termination. Every one fondled the child and sympathized with my joy.

“In the mean time my thoughts turned towards my wife and the happiness she was about to have. Before returning to my hotel I hurried to the telegraph office. My telegram consisted of but one word—‘*Cured.*’

“Scarcely had it been despatched when I should have liked to have had it back again. ‘Perhaps,’ I said to myself, ‘I have been too hasty. Who knows whether there may not be a relapse?’

“I scarcely dared believe in the happiness which had overtaken me, and when I did believe in it, it seemed as if it were going to escape from my grasp.

“As for the child, he was happy ; happy without the least admixture of uneasiness. He was radiant in his joy and sense of entire security.

“‘You see now, papa,’ he repeated to me every moment, ‘the Blessed Virgin alone could save me. When I told you so, I was sure of it.’

“At the hotel he dined with an excellent appetite. I was never weary of watching him eating.

“He wished to return, and did return on foot to the Grotto to offer up his thanksgiving to his Deliverer.

“‘You will be very grateful to the Blessed Virgin,’ observed a priest to him.

“With a gesture he pointed to the image of the Blessed Virgin, and afterwards to heaven.

“ ‘Ah! I shall never forget her,’ he exclaimed, in reply.

“ At Tarbes we stopped at the same hotel as on the evening before. We were expected there. The good people of the house had—as I think I have already told you—I know not what happy presentiment. Their joy was extraordinary. Groups were formed around us to see him eat with sensible pleasure of whatever was served at the table; one, who but the evening before, could only swallow a few spoonfuls of liquid. That time seemed already long ago.

“ This malady which had foiled the skill of the most eminent physicians and which had just been so miraculously cured, had been of two years and nineteen days’ duration.

“ We were impatient to see once more the happy mother, and took the express to Bordeaux. The child was worn out with the fatigue of his journey, and I should have said by his emotions also, had I not observed his constant and peaceful serenity in presence of his sudden cure, which filled him with gladness, but which caused him no astonishment. He desired to go to bed as soon as he arrived. He was overwhelmed with sleep and did not eat any supper. When his mother, who was dying with joy before our arrival, saw him thus oppressed with weariness and refusing to eat, she was attacked with a fearful doubt. She was in despair. She accused me of having deceived her, and I had the greatest difficulty in the world to make her believe me. How great was her happiness when on the following day our beloved Jules, seated at our table, breakfasted with us, and displayed a better appetite

than we did. It was not till then that she became tranquil and re-assured."

"And since that time," I asked him, "has there been no relapse or unfavorable symptoms?"

"No, sir, nothing of the kind. I cannot say that the cure progressed or was consolidated, inasmuch as it had been as complete as it was instantaneous. The transition of a malady so long seated and obstinate to its complete and entire cure, was effected without the least gradation, as it was without any apparent shock to the system. But my son's general health improved visibly under the influence of a strengthening diet, of which it was full time for him to experience the salutary effects."

"And did the medical men attest by their written declaration the anterior state of your son's health? This would have been an act of bare justice."

"I was of the same opinion as yourself, sir, and I sounded on the subject the doctor of Bordeaux who had attended Jules in the last instance; but he maintained a reserve in the matter which prevented me from pressing him. As to Doctor Roques, of Toulouse, to whom I wrote immediately, he hastened to acknowledge in the plainest terms the miraculous nature of what had occurred and which was quite beyond the power of medical skill.

"'In presence of this cure desired for such a length of time and so promptly obtained,' he wrote to me, 'how can we help leaving the narrow horizon of scientific explanations, to open our soul to gratitude on so strange an event in which Providence seems to act in obedience to the faith of a child?' He rejected energetically, as a medical

man, the theories which are infallibly brought forward in similar circumstances such as 'moral excitement,' 'effects of the imagination, etc.,' to proclaim openly in this event 'the precise and positive agency of a superior existence, revealing itself to and obtruding itself upon the conscience.' Such was the unbiassed opinion of M. Roque, physician of Toulouse, who was as thoroughly acquainted as I was myself with the previous state of my son's malady. I transcribe the above from his letter, bearing date 24th February.

"Besides, the things I have just related to you were so notorious that no one would think for a moment of disputing them. It is a more than established fact that medical science was utterly foiled by the strange malady with which Jules was attacked. As to the cause of his recovery, every one can judge and appreciate it according to the point of view from which he regards it.

"For myself, who, before the occurrence of this extraordinary event, believed only in purely natural agencies, I plainly saw that I must seek for explanations in a higher order; and from day to day I raise my heart in gratitude to God, who, while bringing to a close a long and cruel trial in an un-hoped-for manner, touched me in the most vulnerable part in order to make me bow before Him."

"I understand your thoughts and feelings on that subject, and I agree with you that such was the plan of God."

After having said these words, I remained for some moments silent and absorbed in my own reflections.

Our conversation returned of itself to the child

who had been miraculously cured. The father's heart was always turning in that direction as does the magnetic needle towards the North.

"Since that time," he said to me, "his piety is angelic. You will shortly see him. The nobleness of his feelings may be read in his countenance. He is well disposed, by nature upright and high-minded. He is incapable of a meanness or of a falsehood. But his piety has developed to the highest degree his native qualities. He is studying now at a school in the neighborhood, under M. Conangle, in the Rue du Mirail. The poor child has soon recovered the time he had lost. He is fond of study and is at the head of his class. At the last distribution of prizes, he gained that for excellent conduct. But above all he is most prudent, amiable and good in every respect. He is beloved by his teachers and comrades. He is our joy, our consolation."

At that moment the door was opened and Jules entered the room in which we were, with his mother. I embraced him with the tenderest emotion. His countenance is radiant with the glow of health. His brow, high and broad, is magnificent, and in his deportment there is a modesty and mild self-possession which inspires respect. His eyes, which are very large and very lively, reflect rare intelligence, absolute purity and a noble soul.

"You are a happy father," I said to M. Laccasagne.

"Yes, sir, very happy. But my poor wife and I have undergone much suffering."

"Do not complain of it," I said to him as we moved to a little distance from Jules. "This sor-

rowful road was the way which led you from darkness to light, from death to life, from yourself to God. At Lourdes, the Blessed Virgin has shown herself twice the Mother of the living. She has given to your son temporal life in order to give you the true Life, the Life which will last for ever."

I left this family so blessed of God ; and under the impression of what I had seen and heard, I wrote—my heart still thrilling with emotion—what I have just narrated.





ELEVENTH BOOK.

I.

LET us return to Lourdes. Time had proceeded on its course. Human hands had set to work in good earnest.

The approaches to the Grotto, in which the Virgin had appeared, were changed in appearance. Without losing aught of its grandeur, this wild and stern locality had assumed a graceful, pleasing and lively aspect. A superb church — not yet finished, but swarming with workmen — proudly seated on the summit of the Rocks of Massabielle, towered joyously towards Heaven. The great slope, abrupt and uncultivated, formerly accessible only with difficulty even to the practiced feet of mountaineers, was covered with green turf and planted with shrubs and flowers. Amidst dahlias and roses, daisies and violets, beneath the shade of acacias and cytisuses, a vast path, broad as a road, winded in graceful curves and lead from the church to the Grotto.

The Grotto was closed with an iron railing, after the fashion of a sanctuary. A golden lamp was suspended from the roof. Under those wild rocks

on which the Virgin had trodden with her divine feet, clusters of tapers burned night and day.

Outside this enclosed portion, the miraculous Spring fed four massive basins of bronze. A *piscina*, concealed from observation by a small building erected over it, afforded the sick an opportunity of bathing in the blessed water.

The situation of the mill-stream of Sâvy had been altered, being thrown back up the stream in the direction of the Gave. The Gave itself had retreated to afford room for a magnificent road which led to these Rocks of Massabielle, formerly so totally unknown, but now so celebrated. On the banks of the river as it flowed downwards, the soil had been levelled, and a broad lawn bordered with elms and poplars formed a splendid promenade.

All these changes had been effected and were still being effected in the midst of an immense influx of believers. The copper coins thrown into the Grotto by the faith of the people, the grateful *ex votos* of so many invalids who had been cured, of so many hearts which had been consoled, of so many souls which had been restored as it were from death to truth and life, sufficed to defray the expenses of these gigantic labors, the estimate of which was nearly two millions of francs. When God in his goodness condescends to call on man to co-operate directly in any one of his works, he employs neither soldiers nor *gendarmes* to collect the sums needful, and only accepts a purely voluntary assistance from the hands of his creatures. The Master of the world repudiates constraint, for He is the God of free souls, and the only tribute He consents to receive are the spontaneous gifts offered to him from

a happy heart and entire independence by those by whom He is loved.

Thus was the church being built; thus was the mill-stream and the river diverted into other courses; thus were the adjoining lands excavated or levelled, and roads laid around the celebrated Rocks where the Mother of Christ had manifested herself in her glory to the gaze of mortals.

II.

ENCOURAGING the workmen, seeing to everything, suggesting ideas, sometimes helping himself to straighten a stone placed crooked or a tree badly planted, recalling to the imagination by his indefatigable ardor and his holy enthusiasm, the grand figures of Esdras or of Nehemiah, occupied, in obedience to the commands of God, in constructing the walls of Jerusalem, a man of lofty stature, with a broad and strongly marked forehead, seemed to be everywhere at one and the same time. He attracted attention even from a considerable distance by his powerful frame and his long black cassock. His name may be easily guessed. It was the pastor of the town of Lourdes; it was the Curé Peyramale.

Every hour in the day he was thinking on the message addressed to him by the Blessed Virgin through the youthful Seer; every hour in the day he was thinking of those prodigious cures which had accompanied and followed the divine Apparition, of those countless miracles which he witnessed daily. He vowed his life to the execution of the orders of the mighty Queen of the Universe, and to the erection of a magnificent monument to her

glory. Any delay, any slowness, even the loss of a single moment seemed to him to mark the ingratitude of men ; and his heart, devoured with zeal for the house of God, often led to his being indignant, and manifested itself in severe admonitions. His faith was absolute and replete with grandeur. He regarded with horror the wretched narrowness of human prudence, and he thundered against it with the holy disdain of one accustomed to view things according to the horizon of that sacred mountain, from whose height the Son of God preached the nothingness of earth and the reality of heaven : " Be not troubled. Seek first my kingdom and all the rest shall be added unto you."

One day, just opposite the miraculous Fountain, in the middle of a group of ecclesiastics and laics, an architect presented to him a plan—and it was by no means an ungraceful one—of a charming little church which he proposed building over the Grotto. The Curé Peyramale glanced at it and his face became flushed ; with a gesture of impatience he crumpled up and tore the plan and threw the fragments into the Gave.

" What are you doing ?" exclaimed the astonished architect.

" You see," replied the priest, " I blushed at what human meanness presumes to offer to the Mother of my God, and I destroyed the miserable design. What we must have here in memory of the great events which have taken place, is not a little confined village church, but a temple of marble as large as the summit of the Rocks of Massabielle will afford room for, and as magnificent as your mind can possibly conceive. Now then, sir,

as an architect let your genius indulge in the most daring conceptions, let nothing arrest its upward flight and let it give us a master-piece. Be sure of one thing, that were you Michael Angelo himself, it would be strangely unworthy of the Virgin who has appeared here."

"But, sir," observed every one to the Curé, "it would take millions to realize what you are speaking of."

"He who caused a Spring of living water to gush forth from this barren rock will have no difficulty in rendering the hearts of believers generous," replied the priest. "Go, and have no fears. Why do you tremble, Christians of little faith?"

The temple was erected in the proportions designed by the man of God.

Often the Curé, considering the different works in progress, used to say, "When will it be granted to me to be present, in the midst of Priests and the faithful, at the first procession which shall come to inaugurate in these blessed places, the public worship of the Catholic Church. Might I not in such a moment chant my *Nunc Dimittis* and expire with joy at such a feast."

His eyes used to fill with tears at such thoughts. Never was any desire more ardent and more fondly dwelt on in the depth of a soul than this innocent wish of a heart entirely taken up with God.

Occasionally, at times when there were but few persons at the Rocks of Massabeille, a little girl came to kneel humbly before the place of the Apparition, and to drink at the spring. She was evidently sprung from the people and was poorly dressed. There was nothing to distinguish her

from others, and unless some pilgrim happened to know her, or to inform others of her name, no one would have guessed that it was Bernadette. She who had been so highly privileged by the Lord, had returned to her primitive state of silence and obscurity. She continued to attend the schools of the Sisters, where she was the most simple of the scholars and would have wished to have been one of the most in the shade. The countless visits she received there did not trouble her peaceful soul, in which the memory of her glimpse of heaven and the image of the incomparable Virgin lived for ever. The people, however, thronged to the spot from every direction, miracles were there accomplished, and the temple rose by degrees. And Bernadette, like the saintly Curé of Lourdes, looked forward to the day—the most fortunate to her next to those of the Divine visit—when she should, with her own eyes, see the Priests of the true God, conducting the faithful, headed by the Cross, and with banners floating in the air, to the Rock of the Apparition.

In fact, notwithstanding the bishop's pastoral letter, the Church had not yet taken possession by any public ceremony of these forever sacred places. This, however, was solemnly done April 4, 1864, by the inauguration and benediction of a superb statue of the Blessed Virgin, which was placed, with all the pomp usual on such occasions, in the rustic niche wreathed with wild roses, where the Mother of God had made her appearance to the daughter of man.

The weather was magnificent. The sun of early spring had risen and was progressing through the

azure dome of heaven, which was not specked with a single cloud.

The town of Lourdes was dressed with flowers, banners, garlands and triumphal arches. From the high tower of the parish church, from all the chapels of the town, and from all the churches of the neighborhood, joyous peals of bells burst forth. Vast multitudes had assembled to take part in this grand *fête* of earth and heaven. A procession such as never had been seen within the memory of man, started in order to proceed from the parish church of Lourdes to the Grotto of the Apparition. Bodies of troops, in all the splendor of military equipment, led the way. Immediately following them were the Brotherhoods of Lourdes, the mutual-aid societies; all the corporations of the adjoining districts, bearing their banners and cross; the Congregation of the Children of Mary, whose flowing robes shone like snow; the Sisters of Nevers with their long black veils; the Sisters of Charity, in large white caps; the Sisters of Saint Joseph, enveloped in their dark cloaks; the religious orders of men, Carmelites and teaching Brothers of the Christian Schools, immense multitudes of pilgrims, men, women and children, not forgetting old men, in all, fifty to sixty thousand human beings, ranged in two interminable files, wound along the road, strewn with flowers, leading to the illustrious Rocks of Massabielle. At intervals, choruses of human voices and bands of instrumental music made the air resound with triumphal marches, canticles, and all the outbursts of popular enthusiasm. Lastly, bringing up the rear of this unheard-of procession, the most eminent Prelate, Monseigneur Bertrand-

Sévère Laurence, Bishop of Tarbes, surrounded by four hundred priests in full canonicals, by his grand vicars, and by the dignitaries of the chapter of his cathedral church, marched with solemn steps, wearing his mitre and attired in his pontifical robes, blessing with one hand the assembled people, while with the other he supported himself on his large golden crozier.

An indescribable emotion, a kind of intoxication such as is only known by Christian multitudes assembled in the sight of God, filled all hearts. In fact, the day of solemn triumph had come, after so many difficulties, so many struggles, so many obstacles. Tears of happiness, enthusiasm, and love, trickled down the cheeks of these masses of people, agitated by the breath of God.

What ineffable joy must, in the midst of this *fête*, have filled the heart of Bernadette, who, doubtless, marched at the head of the Congregation of the Children of Mary! What feelings of overwhelming felicity must have inundated the soul of the venerable Curé of Lourdes, as he chanted, without doubt, at the bishop's side, the *Hosanna* of the Divine victory? Both of them having been partakers of the affliction, the moment was now come for both of them to be present at the glory.

Alas! Bernadette was sought for in vain among the Children of Mary; the Curé Peyramale was sought for in vain among the clergy who surrounded the Prelate. There are joys too great for earth and which are reserved for heaven. Here below, God refuses them even to his dearest sons.

At the very time when everything wore a festal air and the sun shone joyously on the triumph of

the faithful, the Curé of Lourdes, attacked with a malady which was pronounced mortal, was the victim of the most terrible physical sufferings. He was lying stretched on his bed of pain, at the foot of which two *religieuses* connected with the hospital, prayed and watched day and night. He wished to have been lifted from his bed to have seen the grand *cortège*, but his strength failed him, and he had not even a passing glimpse of all its splendor. Through the closed curtains of his apartment, the joyous sound of the silvery bells only reached him like a funeral knell.

As to Bernadette, God marked His predilection for her—as is His wont to do with His elect—by causing her to pass through the grand trial of pain. While, presiding over the immense procession of the faithful, Monseigneur Laurence, Bishop of Tarbes, was going in the name of the Church to take possession of the Rocks of Massabielle and solemnly inaugurate the worship of the Virgin who had appeared to her, Bernadette, like the eminent Priest of whom we have just spoken, was brought low by sickness; and maternal Providence, fearing perhaps for her much-loved child the temptation of vain-glory, deprived her of the sight of those unheard-of *fêtes*, where she would have heard her own name re-echoed with acclamation by thousands of voices, and celebrated from the Christian pulpit by the ardent words of those who preached on the occasion. Too poor to receive proper attention at home, where neither she nor any of her family had ever wished to receive any pecuniary aid, Bernadette had been carried to the hospital, where she lay on the humble pallet of public char-

ity, in the midst of poor creatures, whom this transitory world terms wretched, but whom Jesus Christ has blessed, by declaring them the inheritors of His eternal kingdom.

IV.

ELEVEN years have now elapsed since the Apparitions of the Blessed Virgin. The vast temple is nearly finished. It only requires to be roofed, and for a long time the Holy Sacrifice has been celebrated at all the altars of the subterranean crypt. Diocesan Missionaries from the house of Garaison have been installed by the bishop at a few paces from the Grotto and the church, in order to distribute to the pilgrims the apostolic word, the sacraments and the body of our Lord.

The pilgrimages have become developed in proportions perhaps unexampled in the universe, for never, until our own time, had these vast movements of popular faith the omnipotent means of transport invented by modern science at their disposal. The railroad of the Pyrenees—for which a line more direct and less costly had been marked beforehand between Tarbes and Pau—has made a detour in order to have a station at Lourdes, where it sets down incessantly innumerable travelers, who come from every point of the horizon to invoke the Virgin who appeared at the Grotto, and to seek the cure of their maladies. They throng there not only from the different provinces of France, but even from England, Belgium, Spain, Russia and Germany. From the interior of distant America—both north and south—pious Chris-

tians have started and traversed oceans in order to repair to the Grotto of Lourdes and kneel before those celebrated Rocks, which the Mother of God has sanctified by touching them. Often those who cannot come themselves, write to the Missionaries requesting them to forward a little of this miraculous water to their homes. It is sent to every part of the world.

Although Lourdes is but a small town, there is on the road leading to the Grotto, a perpetual transit to and fro, a prodigious movement of men, women, priests, and carriages, as in the streets of a thickly populous city.

As soon as the fine weather returns and the sun, having put winter to flight, opens in the midst of flowers, the azure and golden gates of spring, the Christians of those districts commence to move in order to make their pilgrimage to Massabielle, no longer, as during the winter, singly, but in immense caravans. From a circumference of ten, twelve or fifteen leagues, the hardy people of the Mountain arrive on foot in troops of a thousand or two thousand. They start the day before in the evening, and march through the night by starlight, like the shepherds of Judæa going to the crib of Bethlehem to adore the birth of the Infant God. They descend from the lofty mountain-peaks, toil up the deep valleys, and defile along the banks of streams and rivers, singing hymns to God. And as they pass, the sleeping herds of cattle awake, and the melancholy sound of their sonorous bells re-echoes through the lonely wastes. At day-break, the pilgrims arrive at Lourdes. They form themselves into a procession, and unfurl their ban-

ners and oriflammes to proceed to the Grotto. The men in blue caps, with coarse nailed shoes covered with the dust of their midnight march, support themselves on their knotted staves, bearing for the most part on their shoulders the provisions necessary for their journey. The women wear the white or red *capulet*. Some of them are laden with the sweet burden of their infants. All this multitude advances slowly in a state of recollection chanting the litanies of the Blessed Virgin.

At Massabielle, they listen to the Mass, kneel at the holy table and drink at the miraculous Fountain. Afterwards they disperse in groups, of their own family or of their friends, on the lawns which surround the Grotto, and, spreading on the grass the provisions they have brought with them, seat themselves on the verdant carpet of the meadows. Thus, on the banks of the Gave, beneath the shade of those blessed rocks, they realize, in their frugal repast, those fraternal love-feasts of which the Christians of primitive times have left us the tradition. Then, after having received the benediction afresh, and having kneeled down for the last time, they resume, with happy hearts, the road homewards.

Thus do the people of the Pyrenees come to the Grotto. But it is not from that quarter that the greatest multitudes arrive. From a distance of sixty to eighty leagues there arrive every day immense processions, transported on the swift wings of steam. We have seen them come from Bayonne, Peyrehorade, La Teste, Arcachon and Bordeaux. They will come from Paris. At the request of the Faithful, the railroad of the South organizes special trains, devoted exclusively to this vast and pious

movement of Catholic Faith. On the arrival of these trains, the bells of Lourdes are pealed. And from these black cars there issue and arrange themselves in procession, in the court of the railway-station, young girls dressed in white, wives, widows, children, men of mature age, as well as those bent with years, and the Clergy clothed in their sacred robes. Banners and standards float in the air. There is seen passing by the Cross of Christ, the statue of the Virgin, the image of the Saints. Chaunts to the honor of Mary burst from the lips of all. The endless procession traverses the town, which, on those days, presents the appearance of a holy city, like Rome or Jerusalem. The heart swells at the sight; it mounts towards God, and feels carried, of its own accord, to those sublime heights where tears come to the eye and where the soul is deliciously oppressed by the sensible presence of the Lord Jesus. For a moment one believes he has had a Vision of Paradise.

V.

GOD has done His work.

God has said to the flake of snow, motionless and lost on the solitary peaks, "Thou art about to come from Myself to Myself. Thou art about to go from the inaccessible heights of the Mountain to the unfathomable depths of the Sea." And he has sent his servant the Sun, with his pencil of rays, to collect and to urge, with its broom of diamonds, this glittering dust, which changes itself immediately into limpid pearls. Drops of water trickle from the edge of the snow; they roll over the brow of the

mountains ; they bound across the rocks ; they are broken among the pebbles ; they unite together ; they form one volume of water, and then they pursue their course together, sometimes calmly, sometimes rapidly towards the vast ocean—striking image of eternal movement in eternal repose ; and, at length, they reach the valleys inhabited by the race of Adam.

“ We will arrest this Drop of water,” say men, as proud as they were at Babel.

And they attempt to stem this feeble and tranquil current which descends calmly among the meadows. But the current laughs at wooden dykes, masses of earth and heaps of stones.

“ We will arrest this Drop of water,” repeat the fools in their madness.

And what do they ? They join together immense rocks, cementing them together invincibly. And yet, despite their efforts, the water filters through and passes through a thousand fissures. But these men are numerous ; they outnumber the army of Darius ; they are possessed of immense force. They stop up the thousand fissures ; they replace the fallen stones, and the time comes when the Gave cannot pass further. The Gave has before it a bar higher than the Pyramids, thicker than the celebrated ramparts of Babylon. On this side of that gigantic wall the pebbles of its gigantic bed glitter in the sun.

Human pride exults with huzzahs and cries of triumph.

The wave continues, notwithstanding, to descend from the eternal heights where the voice of God has made itself heard ; thousands of drops of

water, arriving one by one, halt before the obstacle and rise silently before this wall of granite which men have built.

"Contemplate," say these, "the omnipotence of our race. Look at this Titanic wall. Cast your eyes on its formation; admire its incalculable height. We have conquered for ever the torrent which is descending from the heights of the mountain."

At this very moment a slight gush of water passes this cyclopean bar. Every one rushes to effect a stoppage. The gush of water has increased. It becomes a stream, which flows with fury, carrying before it the highest rocks of wall intended to stop its progress.

"What is that?" they exclaim, from every part of the doomed city.

"It is the Drop of water which resumes its march and passes on its way—the Drop of water to which God has spoken."

To what purpose was your wall of Babel? What have your Titanic efforts effected? You have but changed a peaceful stream into a formidable cataract. You wished to arrest the progress of the Drop of water; it resumes its course with the impetuosity of Niagara.

How humble was this Drop of water, this infantine word to which God had said, "Follow thy course!" How little was this Drop of water, this shepherd-girl burning a taper at the Grotto, this poor woman praying and offering a bouquet to the Virgin, this old peasant humbly kneeling! How strong was this wall, how impregnable and invincible it appeared, after having occupied the attention and absorbed the labor of a great State, from the com-

mon workman up to the overseer, from the agent of the police up to the Prefect and the Minister.

The child, the good woman, the aged peasant have resumed their task. Only it is no longer a taper or a poor bouquet which bears witness to the popular faith; it is a magnificent edifice built by the faithful; it is proved by the millions contributed towards the foundations of a temple already illustrious in Christendom. It had been attempted to arrest a few isolated believers; now they come in crowds, in vast processions, with banners flying, and singing hymns. It is unheard of pilgrimages—whole populations which arrive, transported on iron roads by chariots of fire and steam. It is no longer a small country which believes, it is Europe: it is the christian world which hastens to the spot. The Drop of water which they would have chained has become a mighty Niagara.

God has done his work. And now, as on the seventh day, when He entered on His rest, He has left to man the care of profiting by his work, and the fearful faculty of developing or compromising it. He has given them a germ of fruitful graces, as he has given them a germ of everything, charging them with its cultivation and development. They can increase it a hundred-fold if they march humbly and piously in the order of the divine scheme; they can render it sterile if they refuse to enter into it. Every good thing coming from on high is entrusted to human free will, as it was at the origin of the earthly Paradise, which contained everything good, on the condition of knowing how to work it out and keep it, *ut operaretur et custodiret illum*. Let us pray to God that mankind may never lose what

His Providence has done for them, and that, by earthly ideas or anti-evangelic actions, they may not break, in their culpable or clumsy hands, the vessel of divine graces, the sacred vessel which has been deposited with them.

VI.

THE greater number of persons mentioned in the course of this long history are still living.

Only a few of them have departed from this lower world. The Prefect, Baron Massy, the Judge, M. Duprat, the Mayor, M. Lacadé, and the Minister, M. Fould, are dead.

Many have advanced in their career. M. Rouland has left the Ministry of Public Worship—which, it appears, did not altogether suit him—to administer the golden ledgers of the Bank of France. M. Dutour, *Procureur Impérial*, has reached a higher position in the Court of Judicature. M. Jacomet is Chief Commissary of Police in one of the most important cities of the Empire.

Bourriette, Croisine Beauhohorts and her son, Mme. Rizan, Henry Busquet, Mlle. Moreau de Sazenay, Mme. Crozat and Jules Lacassagne—in fact, all those whose cures we have narrated—are still in high health and bear witness, by their recovery and the disappearance of their maladies, to the omnipotent mercy of the Apparition of the Grotto.

Doctor Dozons continues to be the most eminent physician of Lourdes. Doctor Vergez superintends the baths at Beréges, and can attest to the visitors of that celebrated resort the miracles authenticated

by him long ago. M. Estrades, an impartial observer, whose impressions we have more than once referred to, is *Receveur des Contributions Indirectes* at Bordeaux. He resides in the Rue Ducan, No. 14.

Monseigneur Laurence is still Bishop of Tarbes. The faculties of the Prelate have suffered no diminution from age. He remains precisely as we have depicted him in this book. He possesses near the Grotto a house to which he at times retires to meditate—in those places so loved by the Virgin—on the grave duties and grave responsibilities of a christian bishop, whose diocese has been the scene of such a marvelous instance of grace.

The Abbé Peyramale has recovered from the serious illness to which we referred above. He is still the venerated pastor of the christian town of Lourdes, where he is personally known as ever being the first to come forward when any good is to be done. Long, long after his time, when he lies under the turf in the midst of the generation trained by him to the service of God, and the successors of his successors dwell in his Presbytery and mount his chair in the Church, the memory of him will live in the mind of all, and when they repeat the words, “the Curé of Lourdes,” it is to him that their thoughts will recur.

Louise Soubirous, the mother of Bernadette, died 8th of December, 1866, the very day of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. In choosing this day for removing the mother from the misery of this world, she who had said to her child, “I am the Immaculate Conception,” seems to have wished to temper, in the minds of the survivors, the bitter-

ness of such a death, and to show them—as a certain pledge of hope and of a happy resurrection—the *souvenir* of her radiant Apparition.

While millions of francs are appropriated to the completion of the august temple, Soubirous, the father of Bernadette, has remained a poor miller, earning a precarious existence by the labor of his hands. Marie, the one of his daughters who was with the youthful seer at the time of the first Apparition, is married to an honest peasant, who has learned the trade of miller, and works with his father-in-law, Bernadette's other companion on that occasion is now in service at Bordeaux.

VII.

BERNADETTE is no longer at Lourdes. We have seen how on several occasions she rejected the offers of enthusiasm and refused to open to fortune when it knocked at the humble door of her dwelling. She dreamt of riches of a very different kind. "We shall know some day"—the unbelievers had said originally—"how she will be recompensed." Truly, Bernadette has chosen her recompense and laid her hand on her treasure. She has become a Sister of Charity. She has devoted herself to the care of the poor and the sick received by public charity in the hospitals.

After having seen the resplendent countenance of the Mother of the thrice holy God, how could she do otherwise than become the tender servant of those of whom the Son of the Virgin has said, "What ye shall do to the least of these little ones, ye shall do it unto me."

It is with the Sisters of Charity and Christian Instruction at Nevers that the youthful Seer has taken the veil. Her name in Religion is Marie-Bernard. We saw her some time ago in her religious dress at the Mother-house of the Congregation. Although she is now twenty-five years of age, her countenance still preserves the character and grace of childhood. She possesses an incomparable charm—a charm which is not of here below and which raises the soul towards the regions of heaven. In her presence the heart feels stirred up with the best emotions, by I know not what sentiment of religion, and when you leave her you feel embalmed with the perfume of her calm innocence. You can easily understand the love of the Virgin for her. In other respects there is nothing extraordinary about her, nothing to point her out or make you divine the most important part she has played between heaven and earth. Her simplicity has not in the least suffered from the unheard-of agitation which arose around her. The concourse of multitudes and the enthusiasm of whole populations have no more troubled her soul, than would the water of a torrent tarnish the imperishable purity of a diamond, whether it were subjected an hour or a century to its waters.

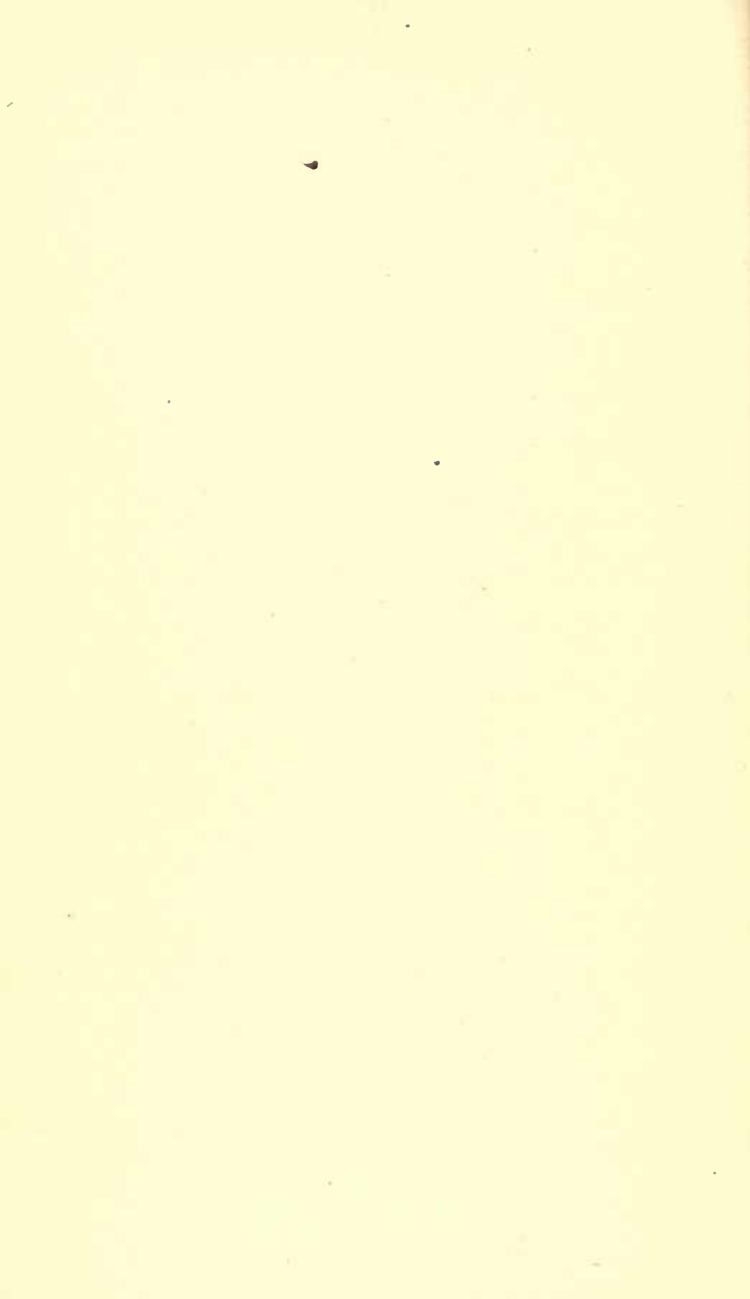
God still visits her, no longer with radiant apparitions, but with the sanctified trials of suffering. She is often ill and her tortures are cruel. She supports them with a sweet and almost cheerful patience. Often she has been supposed to be dying. “I shall not die yet,” she says, smiling. .

Never does she speak of the divine favor she has received, unless directly questioned on the subject.

She was the witness of the Blessed Virgin. Now that she has fulfilled her message, she has retired into the shade of a religious life, full of humility and seeking to lose herself in the crowd of her companions.

It is a cause of grief to her when any one from the world comes to find her out in the bosom of her retreat, and any circumstance obliges her once more to come prominently forward. She rejects whatever might recall to her the celebrity of her name in the christian world. Buried in her cell, or absorbed in the care of the sick, she shuts her ears to all the tumults of earth; she turns away from them her thoughts and her heart to recollect herself in the peace of her solitude, and in the joys of charity. She lives in the humility of the Lord, and is dead to the vanities of this lower world. This book, which we have just written, and which speaks so much of Bernadette, will never be read by Sister Marie-Bernard.





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