

PILGRIMAGE TO LOURDES

The great National Pilgrimage of France to Lourdes takes place every year a few days after the Assumption. This year it was larger and more imposing than ever, with the exception perhaps of the national pilgrimage of the jubilee year, 1897. No less than forty thousand pilgrims and eight hundred sick came from every corner of France, and met under the direction of Monsiegnor Proterat.

At dawn on the morning of August 21 the "white train" coming from Paris and bringing all those who are most sick, those for whom science and human skill can do nothing, arrives at Lourdes. Some are already in an apparent agony, some cannot move from their bed of sickness, and it seems as if it were impossible for them to have arrived at their journey's end—thirty hours in the train and thirty-two more for a stop at Poitiers to visit the shrine of St. Radegondo.

Oh! the suffering, the misery, the hopes, the anticipations, the "white train" brings with its pilgrims.

I do not think I have ever seen such Faith, such Hope, and such Charity. The service of charity is all admirably organized. The men and women who have offered themselves to care for the sick and there.

The men, the "Brancardiers," all have their straps on, ready with their stretchers and invalid chairs to convey the sick to the hospitals. These men are volunteers of all ages, recruited mostly from the aristocracy, with the Marquis of Laurens Cas-telet at their head. They carry the sick to the hospital, to the grotto, to the piscines, their devotion to the sick, and their self-sacrifice during those hot August days, were wonderfully edifying.

The nuns and the women volunteers, or hospitaliers, held the Brancardiers to get their charges down from the train. All those who can, walk. Others are wheeled away in their chairs. Then comes the turn of the very sick. All is done with care and precaution, but the cries of pain mingle here and there with the noise and bustle of the station.

A reporter next me asks a young girl of nineteen, who is in the last stage of consumption:

"You hope that our Lady of Lourdes will cure you?"

"Oh, yes! monsieur," she exclaims, with her hands joined. "It is so beautiful at my age to contemplate the blue sky, to smell the perfume of the flowers! Though," she added, with a smile, "if the Blessed Virgin wants to take my life for that of my poor companion, who is suffering more than I am"—designating an old woman with a cancer, evidently unable to keep from moaning with pain—then she hesitated a minute—"I accept!"

"But I don't wish it," said the old woman. "It is not for youth like yours to depart first."

Nearly everywhere the same resignation, the same hope of a possibility of a cure.

During the entire day the pilgrim trains continue to arrive from Paris, Orleans, Lyons, Arras, Toulouse. They are called the white, the blue, the violet, the green, the orange trains.

Up to midday, Masses are said at the sixty altars of the three churches built one under the other; the Basilica, the Crypt, and the Rosary Chapel.

At the Grotto the sick assemble each morning for early Mass and Communion. The space comprised between the Grotto and the river Gave-de-Pau—a mere torrent with its perpetual murmur blending with the prayers—is thronged with people from five o'clock on.

Lourdes never seems to sleep during pilgrimage time. Even in the dead of night—midnight—a Mass is sung in the Rosary Chapel that attracts great numbers.

A lonely sight was the Grotto in the early morning of the 15th of August, only a few days before the arrival of the National. The Bishop of Tarbes said six o'clock Mass there. It was raining, but the crowd was just as large and the umbrellas seemed to cover the space from the Grotto to the water's edge. Inside the rails twenty little choir boys, all in light blue, sang the Mass, and two little Portuguese boys made their First Communion.

During the National everything is particularly given over to the sick, and the priest comes down amongst them to distribute Holy Communion to those who cannot move from their bed or invalid chair.

If it is three o'clock. Already the

great place in front of the Rosary Chapel is black with people. In an hour the most imposing ceremony of all is to take place—the procession of the Blessed Sacrament.

The sick are brought from the piscines, and form a double line in front of the people, on their stretchers and in their chairs. The Ave, Ave, Ave Maria rises from thousands of mouths—perhaps I should say souls, for the whole soul goes into that one refrain that your hear morning, noon, and night. It is the favorite hymn of the people. There are many verses to it, but the procession, starting from the Grotto and going up around the status of Our Lady at the far end of the place, then on and up nearly to the bridge across the river and back again, gradually falls into different groups—some singing the refrain, some the verses. The consequence is that the refrain dominates like a great cascade of Aves from many thousand voices.

The Bishop of Tarbes and Cardinal Netto of Lisbon (at Lourdes with the Portuguese pilgrimage) are present on the first day. It is the Cardinal who carries the Blessed Sacrament, and stops in front of each of the very sick in turn and blesses them before returning to the steps of the Rosary Chapel and giving general Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

During the procession and blessing the people repeat the prayers and ejaculations of the priest in charge, joining in with the sick in their supplications: "Lord, make me walk! . . . Lord, make me see! . . . Lord, hear us! . . . Lord, grant our prayers! . . . Lord, save us; we are perishing! . . . Lord, he whom you love is sick! . . . Lord, if you wish you can cure me! . . . Hosanna! O Son of David!"

I never expect to see a more beautiful sight than the faces of those poor sick men and women and children, waiting for their turn to be blessed; hands joined, or arms out in a cross, each and every one in an attitude of profound devotion—faith, expectation, hope, resignation.

It is during the procession of the miracles take place. I shall never forget the first one I saw. It seems nearly incredible that in this day of unbelief such things are really to be witnessed.

It occurred after the procession. Suddenly a small crowd gathered. It grew larger and larger. A voice cried aloud that a miracle had taken place. We were pressed in, fairly carried on with the others. There before years—unable, in fact to put her foot to the ground without great pain. And now she walked with ease, and was cured!

The people pressed around her, kissed her hands, deluged her with questions. (It seemed a second miracle for her not to be smothered!)

Finally her husband, who wheeled her chair, made a passage through the crowd, and arising from her chair, she walked up the steps of the Rosary Chapel, while the crowd clapped loudly and followed her, running over the benches in the chapel, filling up the sanctuary, going everywhere to have a glimpse of la miraculee.

She recited a decade of the rosary aloud, and the crowd answered. Then the Brancardiers made room for her, formed a cordon of their straps, and she walked over to the Bureau des Constataions, followed by masses of people.

It is there the doctors verify the miracles.

This woman was Madame Petit-pierre, wife of a doctor from Givors. She had been operated upon unsuccessfully twice in 1895 for an internal malady. Peritonitis followed, and finally paralysis. She remained paralyzed for eight successive years, and was given up as incurable by the different doctors and surgeons to whom she had had recourse. She came to Lourdes on the 25th of June of this year, and already at the end of the novena on July 2, could take a few steps. The cure was completed on the 15th of August and verified at the Bureau des Constataions as being a miracle.

And hope are still deeply rooted in the hearts of the children of France. So rooted, indeed, that the present persecutions will but make its growth the stronger and its blossoming the more glorious when the days of suffering are over.—L. R. Lynch, in the Catholic World.

A NOBLE LIFE TO COME

In the course of a sermon in the Cathedral, Baltimore, on the occasion of the celebration of the Feast of All Saints, Cardinal Gibbons said: We celebrate to-day the festival of All Saints and we honor that "great multitude" described by St. John "whom no man could number of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues standing before the throne and in the light of the Lamb, clothed in white robes and palms in their hands, crying with a loud voice 'Salvation to our God Who sitteth on the throne and to the Lamb.'"

Of this bright company of gloried spirits some are, I trust, bound to us by the ties of kindred and friendship and all of them are bound to us by the ties of a common humanity. They were all subject to the same passions, frailties and infirmities under which we labor. But they fought the good fight, they finished their course and kept the faith and now they possess the crown of glory, in the reward of their victory. This cloud of witnesses look down on us to-day and say sursum corda—lift up your hearts and share our thrones. Let our example and victory stimulate you to follow the narrow path marked out for you by our common Saviour.

There are three important and consoling truths underlying the festival of to-day. There is but one Being that is absolutely immortal, and alone that is everlasting, that had no beginning, that will have no end, and that Being is God.

Go back in spirit to the twilight of time, contemplate the early dawn of creation before this earth assumed its present form when all was chaos. Even then God was in the fullness of life "and the spirit of God moved over the waters." Look forward through the vista of ages to come when the heavens and earth shall have passed away. Even then God shall live. He will survive the universal wreck of matter. Let us now look at man. What a strange contrast is presented by his physical and spiritual natures. What a mysterious compound of corruption and incorruption, of ignominy and glory of weakness and strength, of matter and mind. He has a body that must be nourished twice or thrice a day lest it grow weak and languid. It is subject to infirmities and sickness and disease and it must finally yield to the inevitable law of death. What is each one of us but a vapor that rises and melts away, a shadow that suddenly vanishes. A hundred years ago we had no existence and one hundred years hence we shall probably be forgotten.

Let us now contemplate man's spiritual nature. In a mortal body he carries an immortal soul. In this perishable body there resides an imperishable soul. Within this frail tottering temple shines a light that will always burn, that will never be extinguished. As to the past we are creatures of yesterday, as to the future we are everlasting. When this house of clay shall have crumbled to dust, when this earth shall have passed away and when the sun and moon and stars shall grow dim with years, even then our souls will live and think. For God has breathed into us a living spirit and that spirit like Himself is clothed with immortality.

All nations, moreover, both ancient and modern, whether professing a true or a false religion, have believed in the immortality of the soul. Howsoever they have differed as to the nature of future rewards and punishments or the modes of future existence, such was the faith of the people of ancient Greece and Rome, as we have from the writings of Homer, Virgil and Ovid, who picture the blessed in the next world as dwelling in the Elysian fields and consign the wicked to Tartarus and Hades. This belief in a future life was not confined to the uncultivated masses. It was taught by the most eminent writers and philosophers of those polished nations, Socrates, Plato, Cicero, Aristotle, Plutarch and Seneca and other sages of pagan antiquity guided only by the light of reason proclaimed this belief in the soul's immortality.

"Nor do I agree," said Cicero, "with those who have lately begun to advance that the soul dies together with the body and that all things are annihilated with death. The authority of these ancients has more weight with me; either that of our own ancestors who paid such sacred honors to the dead, which

surely they would not have done if they thought these honors in no way affected them; or that of those who once lived in this country and enlightened by their institutions and instructors Magna Cracla which is now indeed destroyed, but then was flourishing; or of him who was pronounced by the oracle of Delphi to be the wisest of men, who did not express first one opinion and then another on most questions, but always maintained the same, namely, that the souls of men are divine, and that when they have departed a return to heaven is open to them, the more speedy in proportion as each has been virtuous and just."

These eloquent words convey the sentiments of not only Cicero himself but also of the great sages of Greece and Rome. Let us take up one by one the various sources of human enjoyment. Can earthly goods adequately satisfy the cravings of the human heart, fill up the measures of its desires? Experience proves the contrary. Can honors fully gratify the aspirations of the soul? No. For though the highest dignities were lavished upon a man still like a man, the minister of King Ahasuerus he would be disappointed so long as there was in the republic one that refused to bend the knee to him. I have seen and observed two of the greatest rulers on the face of the earth—the ruler of 65,000,000, and the other the spiritual ruler of 250,000,000. I have conversed with the President and with the Pope in their private apartments and I am convinced that their exalted positions were far from satisfying their souls and did but fill them with a profound sense of their grave responsibilities. Can earthly pleasures make one so happy as to leave nothing to be desired? Assuredly not. They that indulge in sensual gratification are forced to acknowledge that the deeper they plunge the more they are enslaved, and the less they are satisfied by them. The keen edge of delight soon becomes blunted.

It is only an unclouded faith in a nobler life to come that can give man an adequate sense of his dignity and moral responsibility. It is this belief alone that satisfies the loftiest inspiration of the human soul and that gratifies the legitimate cravings of the heart. It is the thought "there is a life to come" that fills him with hope and the disappointments of life, that cheers him in adversity and that gives him an unalterable patience in trials. It is this thought that makes life worth living. Let us therefore glory in our tribulations, "knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience trials, and trials hope, and hope comfort."

Let us not be disheartened by labors, remembering that the sufferings of this life are not to be compared with the glory to come and which shall be revealed to us.

THE GIFT OF FAITH.

Faith is one of the greatest of God's gifts, and no sacrifice is too great to obtain it. Such were the words uttered by a stately, white-haired priest from the pulpit in the grand old cathedral in N—, which so deeply impressed themselves upon many of the congregation. It was last Mass, "the fashionable Mass," somebody had named it, due to the fact that so many of the aristocracy of the large city were represented at it, and as this well-dressed crowd passed slowly down the aisle one could easily see by the thoughtful look on many of their faces that these last words of the preacher had called forth more than a passing thought from them. Noticeable among these was a very handsome gentleman, who supported a lady on his arm, whose perfect, although serious features attracted a great deal of attention. Mr. Matthews was not a Catholic, and although having the example of a good, pious wife before him for twenty years he could never be persuaded to look into the doctrines of the Catholic Church, even for his own gratification, and only accompanied his wife, to church occasionally "for the look of the thing," as he himself said.

To-day the solemnity of the scene, the venerable priest, the marble altar decked with flowers, the red-robed acolytes, the whole sanctuary lit up by the beautiful stained glass windows all around, impressed him as it had never done before, and he was still pondering over the closing words of the prelate on the way down the avenue.

"Do you believe what you have just heard, Annette?" he suddenly asked.

"Yes, Herbert, and to prove what I say, I would willingly sacrifice Bert for your conversion, dear."

"Sacrifice our only child! Do you mean that, Annette?"

"I do," was the simple answer.

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"Do let me go, mother; I'm sixteen and fully able to take care of myself, and anyhow Jack will look after me. Just think what fun it'll be. Three weeks of camp life on that dandy little lake! Just to think of it makes me feel like hollering."

"I know it would be fun, Bert, but there are many dangers which you, never having been camping, know nothing about. The lakes although beautiful are very treacherous and you don't know what night you might be visited by some strange animal."

"That's just like mothers, imagining all sorts of dangers. Ten boys together ought to be able to take care of each other. I'll promise I won't go on the lake alone, won't stay out after dark, will write to you every day, tell you what kind of messes we fellows have been able to concoct, and—oh! everything, if you'll only let me go, mother darling."

"Well, we'll see what Dad says about it."

"You dear old motherkins," cried the boy, hugging her frantically. For he knew well that the fight was won when it was left for "Dad."

The above conversation took place about two months after the foregoing emphatic words of the preacher, and resulted in Bert's joining his friends for their outing in the Adirondacks.

Just two weeks from the day he left, the only child of these idolizing parents was brought home very ill with typhoid fever, contracted by drinking water from a mountain brook which did not run very freely. God only knows the grief of that stricken mother during all those weeks while her darling lay so sick upstairs. But she was a true Christian, and suffered the cross sent her with true Christian fortitude. The first night the boy was home her husband asked:

"Do you remember what you said coming home from church a few months ago?"

"Yes, dear," was the reply, and there the conversation dropped.

The disease was a treacherous one, and had to run its course, the doctor said. It was during one of these weeks of waiting that Father D—, an old friend of the family, was surprised one day to have Mr. Matthews visit him and request to be instructed in the religion of his wife and son "not that I promise to become a Catholic but just that something prompted me to come to you to-day and ask you that question."

That his request was willingly

compelled with in needless to say. Regularly after this on certain days of the week, you could find Mr. Matthews in deep discussion with his instructor over the mysteries of our holy religion.

One day during one of these visits Mr. Matthews received a message from his office summoning him home immediately, as his son was worse. He left at once, boarded a train, told the conductor at what station to let him off, and then became oblivious to all his surroundings—deep in thought. When he arrived home his wife met him in their sumptuously furnished library. The crisis in the disease was reached. Would Bert live or die was now the grave question, and she thought he should be notified at once.

"Annette, do you remember the words of the preacher, 'Faith is the greatest of God's gifts, and no sacrifice is too great to obtain it,' and what you promised on the way down the avenue?"

"Yes, dear, very distinctly."

"And do you still promise it?"

"I most certainly do."

"God has evidently been pleased with your sacrifice, Annette, for I believe most firmly."

"Oh, my God, I thank Thee! No one will ever know how glad I am, Herbert dear!"

"Come, then, and let us pray together that since God has tried you and you have not been found wanting, He may still see best to spare us our Bert."

After six hours of weary watching and praying, a change came—for the best. Their boy was saved.—L. A. D., in the Rosary Magazine.

Our Guardian Angels.

If it be true, as the Church teaches us, that there is no moment of our lives spent without the unceasing presence of our guardian angel, then surely we must, in St. Bernard's words, have reverence for the angelic presence, devotion for the angelic goodness, confidence in the angelic protection. First of all, there must be a profound respect. For who is our God-given companion? Nothing less than a prince of heaven, a courtier of the Eternal King. No stain of sin has ever sullied his spiritual purity; he has stood from the morning of creation in the presence of the All-Holy whom he obeys in his ministry on our behalf. The practical test of this outward reverence is thus eloquently expressed by St. Bernard: "Do not hear in his (thy guardian angel's) unseen but most real company, what seeing me present thou wouldst not hear; nor do alone what thou wouldst not dare to do if thou couldst see the angel guardian who is watching thee."

Next, there must be real devotion—the devotion that has its root in heartfelt affection. Our guardian angel's care is untiring, his loving watchfulness lifelong. In life he never leaves us for a moment; in death his tender arms embrace us as we enter the chill waters. Though he acts in obedience to God, yet he serves us with a true personal unwearied love. We should indeed be heartless ingrates if we did not show him a corresponding devotion day by day.

Lastly, we must have confidence in our angelic protectors. They are strong in the pure virtue of unsullied spiritual strength, strong in the power that they have from God whom they serve with inflexible will and whole-hearted love. "Wherefore," exclaims St. Bernard, "should we fear on our pilgrimage and weary journeying with such guards as these to protect us? They can neither be conquered nor deceived, much less can they deceive us, who are to keep us in all our ways. They are powerful. Why should we fear?"—W. R. Carson, in The Dolphin.

DEATH OF MONTANA'S BISHOP

Less than three weeks ago Bishop Brondel preached a sermon at the religious festival at Victoria, B.C. An account of that event, in honor of Archbishop Orth, was printed in this paper at the time. The next we heard of Bishop Brondel, he appeared at the funeral of his old friend, John Caplice, at Butte. He was seen no more in public.

There is something pathetic surrounding this last incident in the life of the Montana Bishop. John Caplice and Bishop Brondel had much in common. Both aided materially in the making of the commonwealth; both were powers for good in the state; both led lives that were examples and models for the younger generation. It was fitting that two such souls should be united in eternity. John Caplice died Oct. 17. Bishop Brondel died Tuesday morning, Nov. 8.—Intermountain Catholic.

Father Lemoile looked courageous; his kindly but usual brightness—would you have? He priest and found End town to handle. His had small influence in —which was overwhelmed—and worse than the fold with energetic one another. The effort sion had been too his last spark of ent dead within him, as eral remained; so he n great bundle of trouble and flung it despite Bishop's feet.

The genial prelate d sympathize. He had bundles—many of them shadow of perturbation his own placidity.

"Yes, my son," he m answering the last wo Lemoile's catalogue. "the poor! I know them stand! They come sur less waves at our feet and they do wear on o make us feel helpless human ourselves; our save for the Christ help failure."

"Yet we must try," Lemoile, "and keep o cannot go by on the ot the Levite in our Lord's good Samaritan."

"Yet the unlucky man ong thieves did get h said the Bishop, with o smiles. "The parable is ter all. The aid came, a most unexpected quarter of God had been at w moulding the heart of t maritan, we may revere for many long years, pe wrought in him that growth of Christian cha has breathed its sweet the parable for ages sinc 'be working now, silently somewhere in your though you know it not. "It may be—God gran mured the young clergy help that is done upon ea it Himself."

Father Lemoile was br little. The Bishop had mon faculty for cheering hearted. His genial s strength and help in over A silence ensued, durin clouds before the young imperceptibly growing could feel the sun-glow b trying to struggle throug Then the Bishop put a tion:

"In that parish of yours are you at work with bo Stephen Lemoile was pu could his superior mean?"

"I will explain," pursued op, cordially answering "You are struggling with of the poor and they over But you are not swimmin' sheep? How about your whom you could use in th to your own great relief avation of their own souls? the rich and cultured peo other hand? Try making u all that may be possible. back and see me again."

The Bishop rose, and Fa moile saw the interview He had it on the tip of hi to say that his little paris sion element to lay hold o remembered the Asquiths a good professor. How could get all they had done? Had saved Arthur Osborne from fall of despair? What a nice Lenten work that had been spring. And now in his tur himself was up and doing. I two or three people—the old discouragement was now h head anew—what were they to himself, among so many? No, counting closely, there not more than half a dozen do people on whom he could depend. The Healeys, to be the O'Callaghans, with J Donovan, who had a tidy su bank, and Peter McCabe. F Bishop had said "people of c Poor Peter and Bridgett. Th miles away from answering s considerate demand. His t drew to Miss Dormer, who w enough to make the wicked love her wherever she went. was away now doing charit in New York—he did wish she come back. Well, perhaps she some day. Meanwhile there w Vandervere.

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