

FRESH FISH, HALIBUT, TONGUES, Etc.

Just now many varieties of fresh and smoked fish are daily arriving on the market. This season of the year fish is a good nutritious food. Try some.

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C. P. EAGAN,

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Duckworth Street & Queen's Road

The City of Miracles!**First-Hand and Unprejudiced Account of the Mysteries of Lourdes.**

(Continued.)
I admit frankly that after I have investigated, theorized and argued with Lourdes with ecclesiastics, scientists and psychologists, I am still utterly puzzled. Either the miracles of Lourdes are what Catholics claim they are, or there is some occult law, or series of laws, in operation, of which we have little or no knowledge.

The proposition resolves itself into one of two alternatives. If your theory admits of the possibility of miracles you must believe in them. If you are a sceptic you are faced with the necessity of recognizing these cures with a "natural" explanation. And to reconstruct all of this an acceptable and unassailable explanation is more difficult than to believe in miracles!

Whatever be the explanation, the pilgrims pour into Lourdes in thousands daily during the summer. From almost any disembark from the station at the long, low-roofed station at the moment you leave the city, you find in the midst of such a cacophony of sounds and languages as have been heard only at Babel. There are, in reality, two cities in Lourdes. There is the old quarter where the inhabitants still speak the Gascon dialect, a quarter dominated by the door castle on the hill. There is the new part, where curio shops and religious relics and emblems are bunched close together, over the hill rises the tall, majestic Church of the Rosary, built on the Rock of Massabieille.

Men and nondescript traders have moved the two towns, and thrust their wares upon visitors, inviting all the study to enter their stores and the flower women are ranged along the boulevard of the gaudy stores and bouquets ready for those pilgrims who care to lay a wreath on the Grotto railings. Candles are for everywhere—large candles which burn for hours and more, and candles which you may purchase for a franc. Every pilgrim buys a candle, either for giving to the statue at the Grotto, where they are used for Our Lady of Lourdes, or for lighting the candle procession which takes place every night.

The mixture of religious enthusiasm and commerce is harsh and grating at times. Every shop by the boulevard facing the enclosed grounds of the Grotto has something of the vulgarity of the village fair about it.

It is at the Grotto, however, that one escapes the roar of commerce, and where one touches the very heart of Lourdes.

There are two ways to the place. The more imposing is by way of the Boulevard. To go by this way is to see the glory that is Lourdes in all its wonder and majesty. At the very gates of the enclosed ground which the church has obtained for its purpose is the Statue of St. Michael. Twenty yards farther on is a great calvary, given by the Bretons. Farther down, surrounded by an iron railing, is a massive figure of the Virgin, crowned. At almost any hour of the day pilgrims are to be seen kneeling in adoration and prayer beside the great white marble statue.

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Apply daily after the bath.

When one reaches the Crowned Virgin one is impressed with the impressive pile of the famous three churches built to do honor to Our Lady and to provide a place of worship and penance for the pilgrims. The Church of the Rosary is the lowest of the three. Its beautiful front, with a magnificent Romanesque doorway, faces the wide esplanade. Just behind its dome, which rises from the terrace above, is the entrance to the crypt, cut out of the rock of Massabieille. Above the crypt, and most impressive of all, is the Basilica. Its foundations are also in the rock immediately above the Grotto, which faces the River Gave. You reach the Grotto from the esplanade. I have said that the Grotto is where you touch the heart of Lourdes. The truth is that the Grotto of Massabieille is Lourdes.

This is the cave where little Bernadette claimed she saw the Virgin, and in the niche which Bernadette indicated there has been created a large white statue of Carrara marble. Round her head, in the form of a nimbus, is the declaration made to the wondering girl—"Je suis l'Immaculée Conception."

To the right is a pulpit of Lourdes marble from which leaders of pilgrimages exhort their followers during services in front of the Grotto. The Grotto itself is not very large—about fifteen feet square with a bulging roof. It is fenced off by railings, and pilgrims pass through all day long, kissing the stone on which the feet of the Virgin are said to have rested during the apparitions. At the entrance an attendant stands to receive the candles which are given him to be burned in the huge iron stand when places can be found for them. Always there is a large stock of candles waiting to be placed in the stand, although they burn day and night. The roof of the Grotto has become black and sooty owing to the ceaseless burning, and the inside of the Grotto is warm, but very quiet. A large altar is erected inside, and behind the altar are other candles stuck on spikes.

All day, and until far into the night the constant stream of pilgrims passes through the Grotto, kissing the rock, sighing as they pray for the sick or for themselves. "Lady of Lourdes," they murmur. "Pray for us! Immaculate Maid, Mother of God, heal our sick that sinners may be converted!"

"They move gently through the Grotto, and emerge again in the sunlight near the twelve taps which have been fixed in a wall so that pilgrims may drink or fill their bottles and jars with the water which has been blessed. And all day long, from six o'clock in the morning until late afternoon, there sit in front of this sacred Grotto to the sick who have come for health. Mostly they are in bath chairs but many of them are on stretchers, and some are able to hobble to the benches which have been supplied for those who cannot stand.

Utter silence reigns, save for the shuffling of the feet of those who come and go. Priests and laymen kneel down and kiss the dust. Penance! Penance! That is the central note of Lourdes. Penance for sins, and prayers for mankind!

On the left, from the roof and walls of the Grotto, are hung the crutches and appliances of the cured, eloquent evidence of miracles.

It is impossible to be present and not be moved by the solemnity of it all. At certain hours a priest in charge of a pilgrimage, who has been given permission to hold a service there, mounts the pulpit and exhorts his flock. It may be that the majority of those in the space are ignorant of his tongue, but there is a common tongue in Lourdes, and presently it bursts forth in the hymns which other pilgrims are singing up in front of the baths where the sick are being taken behind the white curtains to be dipped.

But, in spite of this faith, in spite of the call for penance and prayer, the sadness of the scene in front of the Grotto and at the baths are indescribable. The sick, the palsied, the blind, the broken fragments of humanity who seek cures, are brought into the enclosed space in front of the

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baths while priests lead the crowds in prayer and call to the heavens for the aid which man cannot give.

Men, women, and even children are there, nervous and excited some of them, others taking the affair coolly because they have been there before. As the chairs and stretchers are wheeled up the priest's voice rises in mournful cadence:

"Lord, heal our sick! Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us!"

The curtains are opened and attendants motion to the brandcarriers—voluntary helpers who give up their time to transportation of the invalids who cannot walk—and as the next stretcher or chair is wheeled in, the curtains fall behind the little group, and another helpless invalid has gone to try whether he or she is to be favored with a cure in the waters.

So the process goes on until the hours when the baths are closed and the greatest event of the day takes place in front of the Rosary Church—the Procession of the Blessed Sacrament. Five o'clock is the hour for this solemn event. For an hour previously the brandcarriers and helpers are busy bringing down the sick and forming their chairs and stretchers in a vast oblong in front of the Rosary Church. Behind the chairs and stretchers these helpers stand during the procession. The wide ascents on either side of the esplanade sweeping up to the terrace above the doors of the church are crammed with pilgrims and sightseers. These ascents, borne upward on arches, are like two gigantic embracing arms encircling the church.

Alone in the centre of the empty place, the multitude on three sides of him, stands a priest, who calls aloud the prayers while the procession is on its way from the Grotto.

In the distance is heard the sound of singing. It comes from the procession headed by a small company of girls, dressed as Bernadettes, dressed when she saw the visions sixty-five years ago. Above the heads of the crowd banners can be seen. The procession is on its way from the Grotto. It moves slowly round the paths right up to the gates where St. Michael conquers Satan.

Round the corner it comes, slowly, solemnly—a long line of moving figures. Behind the girls come pilgrims, each with a candle in his hand. Then come priests, then, last of all, the acolytes with censers and lighted candles, and a wide cream-and-gold canopy under which walks the archbishop, bearing in his hidden hands the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, the Sacred Host, in a glittering monstrance.

Through an opening in the oblong the canopy comes, and from under it steps the archbishop, still holding the Host on high. On either side of him are priests in vestments, hands together in an attitude of prayer and supplication.

Opposite every one of the sick persons the Host is held for a moment. The sign of the Cross is made while the crowd goes down on its knees. Slowly, sadly, with infinite compassion on the helpless ones, the Sacred Host moves down the long line. And from the middle of the place the priest's voice rolls out in appeal, and is repeated by the multitude.

"Seigneur, si vous voulez vous pouvez me guerir!"

"Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst heal me!" cries the worshipping multitude.

"Maitre, sauvez nous, nous perissons!"

"Master, save us, we perish!"

Over the Sacred Host is a gilded umbrella, held high by an attendant. It moves gradually down the long line, crosses over to the other side, and so up again until every one of the stricken, wretched ones has been visited. Then the procession moves to the steps of the church, and from the edge of the wide topmast step the crowd is blessed again. The doors of the church gild open, the gilded procession moves slowly into the gloom of the interior—and the crowd breaks over the place while the sick are being taken back to the hospital, still with their sickness clinging to them, still with their aches and pains and wretchedness, perhaps, but with hope still burning bright for what the next day may bring.

Many of the miracles take place during this procession. Sometimes a sufferer will leap from his couch and proclaim his cure. Again, it may be at the Grotto that the cure takes place. It may be in the hospital, it may be anywhere; there have been many known to get their miracle after they had left Lourdes and returned home, or were on the way.

What is the percentage of the cures? I do not know, nor does any man. When I asked the question of Dr. Cox, the Englishman who has been assisting for twenty-eight years in the examinations at the medical bureau where all cases are scrutinized, he smiled a little sadly and shook his head.

"There are no percentages here," he said. "When you come to Lourdes you have to throw away all your methods of thought which served in the outside world. I came here in 1895 with a relative who was sick. Dr. Boissarie, who was Zola's host when the French

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During the last few weeks there have been several cures which will in time, perhaps, become widely known.

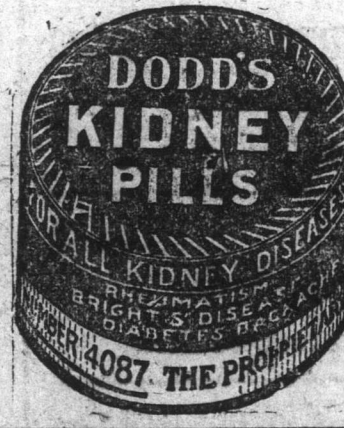
There was Mlle. Blanche Pontier, aged twenty-three, of Puyricard, who arrived at Lourdes on September 12th last suffering from Pott's disease. She was cured during the procession.

Mlle. Brun was cured, on September 8th last of tuberculosis. Another girl, Mlle. Chevreil, of Rennes, was also cured in an instant of an internal disease.

In the hotel next to the one in which I stayed was a girl whose remarkable cure took place during the second week in September. She was blind, and had an additional disease. During the operation of going through the baths she recovered her sight and her other disease left her.

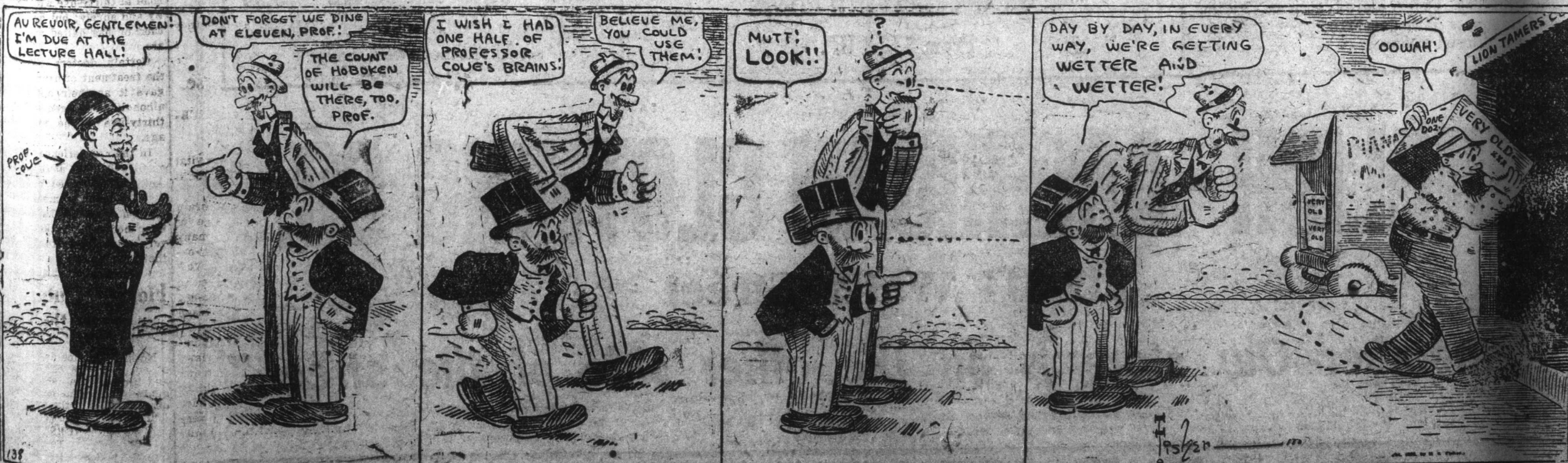
One could go on quoting, but while one could quote many miracles one must also warn persons daring to

—By Bud Fisher

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