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Beware also to spurn against a nail.
Strive not as doth a pitcher with a wall.
Deemë thyself that deemest others' deed ;
And truth thee shall deliver, it is no dread.

That thee is sent receive in buxomness ;
The wrestling of this world asketh a fall.
Here is no home, here is but wilderness.
Forth, pilgrimë ! forth, beast, out of thy stall !
Look up on high, and thankë God of all.
Waivë thy lust, and let thy ghost thee lead,
And truth shall thee deliver, it is no dread.

I have not been estimating Chaucer as a poet, nor the inextinguishable debt which is owed him by English literature. My object has been to show what his attitude was towards the religion and the principles taught by our Lord Jesus Christ. And there are only two lessons which I would draw from his writings in conclusion. The one is, that the best of Christian systems may under untoward circumstances become corrupt; the second is, that such is the Divine vitality and permanent truth of Christianity itself, that even in the most unpromising surroundings the true force and genius of God's revelation will always make itself felt, and will in the end prevail.

WILLIAM SINCLAIR.

ART. VI.—LOURDES.

THERE are really two Lourdes. One is old and shabby and a little depressed by the nearness of her prosperous rival, who flaunts gaily in the sun, vigorous and well attired. Lourdes the elder is huddled beneath the great gray rock crowned on the top with the château and the tricolour, a town with a long past behind her, brooding over memories of Vandals, Franks, Saracens, Basques, the Black Prince, Simon de Montfort, and the Béarnais. The streets are narrow, the houses high, with squalid courts lurking behind them; the Gave runs sullenly past the rock, and the barren Pyrenees fill in the distance. It is like many a town of that wild district, where the Moors came pouring over the hills, where Roland cleft the rocks at Gavarnie, and the Templars built their round churches. Centuries of simple faith and docile piety reared the stock from which was born gentle Bernadette Soubirous, the poor frail lamb with her clean soul shining through its diaphanous cover. Born in 1852, of parents of the poorest class, her home is shown in one of the low dark courts of the Rue des Petits-Fossés. From the sordid street above you descend by a narrow staircase into the flagged yard

from which rises up the huge gray wall of a towering house, and there, in a cellar-like damp room, with low beams and uneven flooring, was her birthplace. It is falling into decay, the plaster is cracking; evidently the old Lourdes can do nothing to preserve the memory of her saintly child. She is but one of the many dreams of the past, amiable and gentle, passing away with but a faint fragrance left behind.

But almost imperceptibly the old passes off into the new, and out in the sunlight, on a little plain just fringed in by rocks and verdure, lies the new Lourdes, with its comfortable hotels, shops of relics, and hospitals; and glittering in the midst, on a lawn of green, the superb Basilica and Church of the Rosary. Here the Gave runs cheerily, everything is well kept and orderly, people hawk flowers and candles, and the whole place swarms with pilgrims, hale or maimed. Just to the right of the Basilica, through a large columnar gateway, and at the end of a terrace built on the bank of a stream, is the famous Grotto, the very centre of the whole wonderful apparatus of commerce and piety. It is a little low cave, with a railing in front, which is illuminated continuously by huge clusters of candles, whose lights flicker and sway day and night. Within on the ceiling, and outside over the brow of the cave, hang rows upon rows of crutches, artificial limbs, and appliances which the grateful cured have left as a testimony of their miraculous restoration. To the left are the piscinas and drinking fountains; to the right, in a cleft of the rock, is the white statue of the Virgin Mary wearing a blue sash, which is repeated and sold in thousands and thousands of pictures and plaster-casts. Beneath the statue is a pulpit.

Hundreds of pilgrims wander about or pray in front of the grotto. As a bishop passes in violet cassock they kneel, while he extends his hand for them to kiss the episcopal ring. A priest thunders from the pulpit. Within, the church is packed with devoted worshippers. In the evening a procession will be formed, and wend its way, holding lighted candles and singing hymns to the Virgin, up the long winding steps that lead to the Basilica. And all this is the work of the little maid of fourteen years old, so delicate and dreamy.

Events succeed one another so rapidly, and are so quickly forgotten nowadays, that it may not be amiss if we once more briefly relate the story of Bernadette. She was the poorest of the poor, always very frail and sickly, and unable to read. The usual stories are related about the piety of her childhood, and, indeed, we do not doubt that in England she would have donned the poke-bonnet and tapped the tambourine with the best of them. On February 11, 1858, her mother sent her with two other little girls to pick up sticks on the bank of the

Gave (all streams are called *gave* in the Pyrenees) by the rocks of the Massabieille. This is a rampart of gray rocks rising up from the bed of the stream, where is the Grotto, and the Basilica above. Of course, art has now altered the former configuration of the place, and the river is confined by a huge embankment reaching up to a terrace parallel with the floor of the Grotto. According to the account given by the authorized "Manual of Devotion," the child heard a sound as of a rushing wind when she was opposite this cave, and, raising her eyes, she fell upon her knees, for she saw a beautiful woman of incomparable splendour. Her long white dress fell to her feet, on each of which shone a rose. She wore a blue sash and a white veil; in her hands she clasped a chaplet, the chain of which was golden and the beads white as drops of milk. The rosary ended in a golden cross. She smiled fondly upon Bernadette, and the little one humbly began to tell her beads. The beauteous lady made the sign of the cross and vanished.

This was the first appearance of Mary of Nazareth to the little maid of Lourdes, whose pure and mystical mind must often have dreamed of her, and no doubt clothed her in the very garments and the same attitude before that time when the vision seemed to become clearer. There were in all eighteen apparitions, at most of which other persons accompanied Bernadette, but in no case was there any vision or sound manifested to them, only to the girl. We cannot describe all of them, but three important sayings of the beautiful lady should be noted. On one occasion the apparition said: "Ma fille, allez dire aux prêtres qu'il doit s'élever ici un sanctuaire et qu'on y doit venir en procession." Again, subsequently, the child was told to dig with her fingers a hole in the bottom of the cave. From it issued a stream, small at first, now large, which is the miraculous spring, the glory of Lourdes. But the most wonderful saying is that which was vouchsafed towards the end of the manifestations on March 25, the Feast of the Assumption. Bernadette had been pressed to get her visitor to reveal her identity, and finally the woman, "removing her gaze from Bernadette and fixing it on the heavens, said to her, 'I am the Immaculate Conception,' and immediately disappeared."

Such is this most remarkable story. On it has been reared a colossal structure of mercantile miracles, a glittering edifice, partly political, partly commercial, but partly devout and sincere. But one cannot help contrasting the creator with her—Frankenstein, might we term it? The fragile child of the rock and the valley, the pale wistful maiden—must it not have been a strange, weird terror to her to find her pure

dreams exploited and advertised? Her little cave, haunted by the gracious vision, turned into a tawdry chapel; the peaceful dale, where the holy voice spoke so low that none heard it but herself, now packed by thousands of pilgrims, with raucous voices bidding them sing more together or more loudly; the lawn, where her sheep fed, covered by gigantic hotels of the Sacré Cœur, of the Grotto, of the Holy Virgin—what wonder that the gentle Bernadette shrank abashed into the cloister, from which she never emerged?

In discussing the vexed question of Lourdes, there are certain questions invariably asked, such as, "Do miracles really happen at the Grotto?" It all depends on the terms used. There is no possible room for doubt that cures occur, and in large numbers. Optimists like Henri Lasserre, and pessimists like Emile Zola, to cite only two names, freely admit it. But even amongst Roman Catholics opinion is hesitating. Faith in Lourdes in not a matter of dogma. The Pope permits people to believe or not to believe. Many fervent Romanists, even priests, absolutely decline to grant a miraculous character to the facts, surprising and wonderful though they are, which occur. The *Figaro* in 1897 sent a special commissioner to Lourdes at the time of the largest of all the pilgrimages, called the "national" pilgrimage, which takes place in August and numbers from 15,000 to 20,000. The conclusion to which he, at all events, came is this: "J'ai la conviction absolue que tout malade ayant la foi *peut* guérir à Lourdes." This is putting it pretty strongly, but with certain reservations—*e.g.*, that the malady must be of a nervous nature—one might admit it. But then we are face to face with two hypotheses. One consists of the supernatural intervention of the Blessed Virgin, the other is found in personal volition, superexalted by religious emotion. If you grant the first, then miracles do happen; if you are content with the second, you must call them cures.

It seems that as a rule "hopeless" cases go to Lourdes. The cures are of those illnesses which are of a neurotic nature. It must be borne in mind that that species of malady is rapidly being enlarged by doctors to include many diseases which before were not classed within it. Now, the method of treatment is generally the same. A graphic and very fair description is given by Zola in his "Lourdes."[1] The patient is bathed in the sacred water. In company with many others he engages in devotional exercises in front of the Grotto or within the Basilica. Vast quantities of people pray the same prayers or repeat the same formulas. Every possible care is

[1] "Lourdes," English edition, p. 147, etc.

taken to impress and stimulate the faith of the patient by music, preaching and procession. In other words, the patient himself and others for him act upon his "subconscious self." Under these particular circumstances the mind is in a sort of hypnotic state.[1] This mood is in itself sufficient, in many cases, to remove the greater part of the symptoms. If a person who has considered himself incurable hopefully approaches a novel treatment in a state of subconscious expectation, much has been done even so far. But, more than this, these hopeful feelings are still further fostered by collective suggestion.[2] We all know that when one person tells us anything in a loud voice we are, at the first blush, as human beings, apt to be impressed by it. Take thousands of people all repeating the same formula and hoping the same result, and their minds are bound to powerfully react upon each other. The Salvation Army with us points the same moral as the processions at Lourdes. All these causes develop the automatic and unconscious action of the mind into a conscious display of its own powers; there is an intensely powerful action of the volition, and the cure of the nervous ailment is effected. Put into the form of an equation, the process might be expressed thus:

(A suitable disease + a developed subconscious self) × collective suggestion = a cure.

This hypothesis is, we fancy, the one that all non-Roman Catholics and many Roman Catholics would adopt; but after all it can neither be proved nor denied that these phenomena are miracles. Cures do happen, and that is all that can be asserted without contradiction.

Leaving alone the vexed and insoluble question of miraculous interposition, there are many thoughts which occur on even a cursory inspection of the place and its problems. Lourdes is so pretty, and yet in earnest, the ceaseless trampling of the pilgrims' feet forms a deep dominant note above which rise lighter and more varying strains. Seen from a spot near by, it is like a picture flooded with peace and palpitating with life. There is a bizarre combination of the Middle Ages and the *fin de siècle* of Loretto and Vichy. The two watchwords of Lourdes are "Je suis l'Immaculée Conception" and "Veillez sur vos portemonnaie," and you see them on all sides. It can readily be imagined that there is much, very much, that grates on a truly devotional instinct. The names of the hotels, the exploiting of the means of grace, the shame-

[1] See "The Subconscious Self," Waldstein, p. 163.
[2] See "Religions of Primitive Peoples," Brinton, p. 55.

less and competitive traffic in bouquets for the Virgin and candles for the Grotto, these are perhaps inevitable, but none the less distasteful. And without being uncharitable, and without drawing unkind inferences, two facts are at least certain, that the French Church makes money out of Lourdes, and that she makes political capital also. The priests are a little too much *chefs d'orchestre,* and run things too openly. They are policemen in cassocks. True, the pilgrims seem to prefer to have it thus, but then, they see nothing but with the eye of faith. Nor can it be thought seemly to see written over a shop, "Objets de piété et de fantaisie," or "Dépôt de pastilles à l'eau de Lourdes." Is it not almost painful to see the little bottles of miraculous water on sale, affecting the form of the Virgin Mary? It must be conceded that, even omitting all more serious and deeper considerations, there is much on the surface that is ridiculous, even repellent.

But, on the other hand, nothing can be more impressive than a procession of the pilgrims. The Basilica is lit up from top to bottom by electric lamps. Two unending lines of pilgrims waver slowly up the steps leading to the platform in front of the church; two luminous serpents they appear, enlacing and entwining, for there are many bends in the mount, and each pilgrim carries a wax candle. From the whole comes one chant, an invocation to the Virgin, which seems to embody both a hymn of gratitude and a plaintive note of appeal. The harmony floats across the lawn with indescribable sweetness. And if from a closer standpoint the faces of the pilgrims are observed, what simple piety and undoubting faith! The shop-girl with her neatly-fitting dress, the workman in his blouse, the old *paysanne* with her face seamed by innumerable wrinkles, the tradesman sleek and comfortable, yet all burning with ardent faith, pouring forth their soul for themselves or their friends. At all events, there is nothing base or hypocritical or commercial in that scene. One is face to face with the most sublime piety; shops, trinkets, holy water, all these are forgotten, and one sees the childlike, wistful faith of the little maid Bernadette repeated in these disciples of hers, the children of the soil. Whatever one may say or think, such a sight is not without a certain evidential value in the France of to-day, where anarchists spit into the "holy water," where the dominion of the senses is all but supreme, and where materialism holds thought in fetters.

W. A. PURTON.