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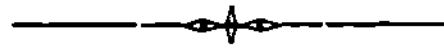
But if hazardous, the attempt was, in the best sense, successful; true it did not win him "full-handed plaudits" from pit or gallery, but it secured him the whole-hearted approval of men like Froude, Gladstone, Browning, and Professor Jebb. And, indeed, the plays are astonishingly virile, and full of movement and colour. And that is what one notices in so much of Tennyson's later work—the increase of masculinity. Perhaps he lost a little of the old voluptuous ease and mellow smoothness of phrase which are noticeable features in the products of his early magic; but what he may have lost he made up for by increment of forceful diction, and power of dramatic intensity. Be that as it may, my object in drawing attention to "Queen Mary" and the subsequent plays is by way of emphasizing the dramatic tendency in much of Tennyson's later work—work dramatic in principle if not always dramatic in form. Undoubtedly he was influenced by the massive genius of Robert Browning; and his volume of "Ballads" published in 1880 is a clear case in point. Influenced, not quite consciously; but then this unconscious assimilation of pregnant ideas was habitual with Tennyson (as has been already stated); but how fruitful in their final issue!

E. H. Blakeney.

(*To be continued.*)



Art. V.—RELIGION IN THE TIME OF CHAUCER.

THE great poet and acute observer Geoffrey Chaucer, with whose religious opinions we are concerned in this paper, lived at one of the most momentous periods of English history. It is thought that he was born about the year 1340, in the reign of Edward III., and he died in 1400, in the first year of the reign of Henry IV., the son of his old patron and brother-in-law, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster. Thus, his life covers rather more than the interval between the most glorious epoch of Edward III.'s reign—the Battle of Creçy being fought when Chaucer was a boy of six—and the downfall, in 1399, of his unfortunate grandson and successor, Richard II. It was, in fact, the first half of the Hundred Years' War between England and France, which had such momentous consequences, both European and national. To England, says the historian Green,[1] it brought a social, a religious, and in the

[1] The following pages are a résumé from Green's "History of the English People."

end a political, revolution. The Peasants' Revolt, Wycliffism or Lollardry, and the New Monarchy, were direct issues of the war. With it began the military renown of England; with it opened her struggle for the mastery of the seas. The pride begotten by great victories, and a sudden revelation of warlike prowess, roused the country, not only to a new ambition, a new resolve to assert itself as a European power, but to a repudiation of the (secular) claims of the papacy, and an assertion of the ecclesiastical independence both of Church and Crown (in temporal matters), which paved the way for, and gave its ultimate form to, the English Reformation. The peculiar shape which English warfare assumed, the triumph of the yeoman and archer over noble and knight, gave new force to the political advance of the Commons. On the other hand, the misery of the war produced the first great open feud between labour and capital. The glory of Creçy or Poitiers was dearly bought by the upgrowth of English pauperism. The warlike temper nursed on foreign fields begot at home a new turbulence and scorn of law, woke a new feudal spirit in the baronage, and sowed in the revolution which placed a new house on the throne the seeds of that fatal strife over the succession which troubled England to the days of Elizabeth.

Another fact which had a strong influence on the England of the days of Chaucer was the growing exactions of the Popes to keep up the splendours of their vast palace at Avignon. Gold could only be got by the Popes "by pressing harder and harder on the National Churches the worst claims of the Papal Court, by demands of firstfruits and annates from Rectory and Bishopric, by pretensions to the right of bestowing all benefices that were in ecclesiastical patronage, and by the sale of those presentations: by the direct taxation of the clergy; by the intrusion of foreign priests into English benefices; by opening a market for the disposal of pardons, dispensations and indulgences, and by encouraging appeals from every ecclesiastical jurisdiction to the Papal Court. No grievance was more bitterly felt than this grievance of appeals. Cases of the most trifling importance were called for decision out of the realm to a tribunal whose delays were proverbial and whose fees were enormous. The envoy of an Oxford college, which sought only a formal license to turn a vicarage into a rectory, had not only to bear the expense and toil of a journey, which then occupied some eighteen days, but was kept dangling at Avignon some three-and-twenty weeks. Humiliating and vexatious, however, as these appeals were, they were but one amongst the means of extortion which the Papal Court multiplied as its needs grew greater. The protest

of a later Parliament, exaggerated as its statements no doubt are, shows the extent of the national irritation. It asserted that the taxes levied by the Pope amounted to five times the total of those levied by the King; that by reservations during the life of actual holders the Pope disposed of the same bishopric four or five times over, receiving each time the firstfruits. 'The brokers of the sinful city of Rome,' said the Parliament, 'promote for money unlearned and unworthy caitiffs to benefices of the value of 1,000 marks, while the poor and learned hardly obtain one of twenty. So decays sound learning. They present aliens who neither see nor care to see their parishioners, despise God's services, convey away the treasures of the realm, and are worse than Jews or Saracens. The Pope's revenue from England alone is larger than that of any prince in Christendom. God gave His sheep to be pastured, not to be shaven and shorn.' At the close of the reign of Edward III., indeed, the Archdeaconry of Canterbury, which was reputed the wealthiest English benefice, and the Deaneries of Lichfield, Salisbury and York, together with a host of prebends and preferments, were held by Italian cardinals and priests, while the Pope's collector from his office in London sent 20,000 marks a year to the Papal treasury."

The latter half of Edward III.'s reign was overcast by misfortunes and losses, which roused the temper of the people, but seem to have had little effect on the gay, frivolous, dissolute character of the upper classes. No less than four great pestilences during Chaucer's life swept over the land, and at least one-half of its population, including two-thirds of the inhabitants of the capital, as well as Henry, Duke of Lancaster, and an Archbishop, had been carried off by the ravages of the obstinate epidemic—"the foul death of England," as it was called in a formula of execration in use among the people.

The life of King Edward III. and his Court was corrupt and wanton. "When once Philippa was dead, he threw aside all shame. He paraded a mistress as Queen of Beauty through the streets of London, and set her in pomp over tournaments as the Lady of the Sun. The nobles were quick to follow their lord's example. 'In those days,' writes a chronicler of the times, 'arose a rumour and clangour among the people that wherever there was a tournament there came a great concourse of ladies, of the most costly and beautiful, but not of the best, in the kingdom, sometimes forty or fifty in number, as if they were a part of the tournament, ladies clad in diverse and wonderful male apparel, in parti-coloured tunics, with short caps and bands wound cordwise round their heads, and girdles bound with gold and silver, and daggers in pouches across their body. And thus they rode on choice coursers

to the place of tourney; and so spent and wasted their goods, and vexed their bodies with scurrilous wantonness, that the murmurs of the people sounded everywhere. But they neither feared God, nor blushed at the chaste voice of the people.' "

In the meantime the clergy were rent by their own dissensions. The higher prelates were busy with the cares of political office, and severed from the lower priesthood by the scandalous inequality between the enormous revenues of the wealthier ecclesiastics and the "poor parson" of the country. A bitter hatred divided the parochial clergy from the monks, who existed in prodigious numbers. The same strife went fiercely on in the Universities. The Chancellor of Oxford attributed to the Franciscan friars the decline which was already being felt in the number of academical students, and the University had to check by statute their practice of admitting mere children into their Order. The clergy, too, at large shared in the discredit and unpopularity of the Papacy. Though they suffered more than any other class from the exactions of Avignon, they were bound more and more to the Papal cause. The very statutes newly enacted by Parliament which would have protected them were set aside by the treacherous diplomacy of the Crown. At home and abroad the Roman See was too useful for the King to come to any actual break with it. . . . A compromise was arranged between the Pope and the Crown, in which both united in the spoliation and enslavement of the Church. The voice of chapters, of monks, of ecclesiastical patrons, went henceforth for nothing in the election of Bishops or abbots, or the nomination to benefices in the gift of Churchmen. The Crown recommended those whom it chose to the Pope, and the Pope nominated them to see or cure of souls. The treasuries of both King and Pope profited by the arrangement, but we can hardly wonder that after such a betrayal as this the clergy placed little trust in statutes or royal protection, and bowed humbly before the claims of Rome. They clung to the Pope with persistent fidelity, till their grasp was torn away by Henry VIII., and Edward VI. and Elizabeth, under the impulse of the Reformers.

But alas! what weakened the clergy most in this period was their severance from the general sympathies of the nation, their selfishness, and the worldliness of their temper. Immense as their wealth was, they bore as little as they could of the common burdens of the realm. They were still resolute to assert their exemption from the common justice of the land, while the mild punishments of the Bishops' Courts carried as little dismay as ever into the mass of disorderly clerks. At the same time, privileged as they thus

held themselves against all interference from the lay world without them, they carried on a ceaseless interference with the affairs of this lay world through their control over wills, contracts, divorces (and immorality). No figure was better known or more hated than the Summoner who enforced their jurisdiction, and levied the dues of their courts. And by their directly religious offices they penetrated into the very heart of the social life about them. But, powerful as they were, their moral authority was fast passing away. The wealthier Churchmen, with their curled hair and hanging sleeves, aped the extravagant costume of the knightly society from which they were drawn, and to which they still really belonged. We see the general impressions of their worldliness in Chaucer's pictures of the hunting monk and the courtly prioress, with her love-motto on her brooch. The older religious orders, in fact, had sunk into mere landowners, while the enthusiasm of the friars had in great part died away and left a crowd of impudent mendicants behind it. Wycliff could soon with general applause denounce the friars as "sturdy beggars," and declare that "the man who gives alms to a begging friar is by that very fact excommunicate." No language is strong enough to describe the contempt with which the friars are treated in the writings of Chaucer.

The struggle against the secular encroachments of the Papacy brought forward a man, to treat of whom properly would require a separate paper — Wycliff, the greatest schoolman of his day, a man who was destined to give a far wider scope and significance to this spirit of resistance to Rome than any as yet dreamed of. He was Master of Balliol College, and the ornament of the University of Oxford. He was gradually led on to deny Transubstantiation, the alleged miracle of the Mass, the supremacy of the Pope, the validity of excommunication unless it correspond with the reality of the relation between the soul and God, and to assert the written Word of God, the words of Christ and His Apostles and Prophets, as the ultimate Rule of Faith. "It was only the struggle that lay before him which revealed in the dry and subtle schoolman the founder of our later English prose, a master of popular invective, of irony, of persuasion, a dexterous politician, an audacious partisan, the organizer of a religious order, the unsparing assailant of abuses, the boldest and most indefatigable of controversialists, the first Reformer who dared, when deserted and alone, to question and deny the creed of the Christendom around him, to break through the tradition of the past, and with his last breath to assert the freedom of religious thought against the dogmas of the Papacy." On this very spot,[1] before the Con-

[1] This lecture was given in St. Paul's Cathedral.

vocation of Canterbury held in old St. Paul's, he was protected from the anger of the Bishops, on account of his attacks on the wealth and worldliness of the Church, by the appearance of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, and Lord Percy, at his side. Once freed from the trammels of ecclesiastical belief, Wycliff's mind worked fast in its career of inquiry. Pardons, indulgences, absolutions, pilgrimages to the shrines of saints, worship of their images, worship of the saints themselves, were successively denied. A formal appeal to the Bible as the one ground of faith, coupled with an assertion of the right of every instructed man to examine the Bible for himself, threatened the very groundwork of medieval dogmatism with ruin. Nor were these daring denials confined to the small circle of scholars who clung to him in spite of persecution. The "simple priests" whom he trained and organized were active in the diffusion of their master's doctrines; and how rapid their progress must have been we may see from the panic-struck exaggeration of their opponents. A few years later they complained that the followers of Wycliff abounded everywhere and in all classes—among the baronage, in the cities, among the peasantry of the countryside, even in the monastic cell itself.

The growing discontent of the people, the statutes interfering with the labour market, the poll-tax, the exactions, the teaching of the Wycliffite preachers on the subject of property, which was highly dangerous and inflammable for the ignorant masses, at last kindled the universal outbreak throughout the kingdom known as the Peasants' Revolt. Had it not been for the courage of the boy-king, Richard II., then only sixteen years old, the throne would have been overturned. The Tower was taken, and a large part of London was sacked, including the Savoy, the Palace of John of Gaunt. The country was appalled to learn that the Primate Sudbury, Archbishop of Canterbury, had been beheaded by the rebels, together with the Treasurer and the Chief Commissioner of the Poll-tax, and other Ministers. The revolt was finally quelled, but it was quelled with a thoroughness of reaction which postponed reform in Church and State for a long time to come.

Through all these mighty movements, Chaucer, the soldier and courtier, paced daintily and gently, a keen observer, but a thorough man of the world. To all these great influences and events he makes but slight allusion. His theory of art is to exhibit every variety of human character as it exists in the manner that will charm and please the most.

He was born, as we saw, about 1340, the son of a London vintner who lived in Thames Street; and it was in London that most of his life was spent. His family, though not

noble, was of some importance, for from the opening of his career we find Chaucer in close connection with the Court. At sixteen he was made page to the wife of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, one of the sons of Edward III.; at nineteen he first bore arms in the campaign of 1359. He was luckless enough to be made prisoner; and, from the time of his release after the Treaty of Brétigny, he took no further share in the military enterprises of his time. He seems again to have returned to service about the Court, and it was now, about his twenty-eighth year, that his first poems made their appearance—the "Compleynte to Pity" in 1368, and in 1369 the "Death of Blanch the Duchess," the wife of John of Gaunt, who from this time may be looked upon as his patron. It may have been to Duke John's influence that he owed his employment in seven diplomatic missions, which were probably connected with the financial straits of the Crown. Three of these carried him to Italy. He visited Genoa and the brilliant Court of the Visconti at Milan; at Florence, where the memory of Dante, the "great master" whom he commemorates so reverently in his verse, was still living, he may have met Boccaccio; at Padua, like his own "Clerk of Oxenford," he possibly caught his story of "Griseldis" from the life of Petrarch.

The poetic literature of the time best known in England was that of the long French romances, light, frivolous, fanciful, self-indulgent. After his visits to Italy Chaucer rose to grander conceptions. France contributed to the vivacity, Italy to the dignity, of his poetry. But finally he became thoroughly, heartily, genuinely English.

He was a busy practical worker—Controller of the Customs in 1374, of the Petty Customs in 1382, Member of Parliament in 1386. The fall of John of Gaunt may have deprived him of employment for a time, but from 1389 to 1391 he was Clerk of the Royal Works, busy with repairs and building at Westminster, Windsor, and the Tower.

His air was that of a courtly student. A portrait has preserved for us his forked beard, his dark-coloured dress, the knife and pen-case at his girdle, his gray hair. He himself describes his face as somewhat sly and elvish, his walk quick, his height very small, his figure plump, his waist portly. Men jested about his silence, his abstraction, his love of study. "Thou lookest as thou wouldest find a hare," laughs the host in the "Canterbury Tales," "and ever on the ground I see thee stare." He heard little of his neighbours' talk when office work in Thames Street was over. "Thou goest home to thy own house anon, and also dumb as any stone thou sittest at another book, till fully dazed is thy look, and

livest thus as an eremite, although thy abstinence is lite." Of this seeming abstraction from the world there is not a trace in Chaucer's verse. We see there how keen his observation was, how vivid and intense his sympathy with Nature and the men and women among whom he moved.

Chaucer's main subject is that of Love, and in many cases his treatment corresponds with the morals of a corrupt age. His women, for the most part, are easily overcome, and he evidently has a contemptuous feeling for their virtue. He frequently describes sins against chastity with the voluptuous relish of a man of the world. The "Wife of Bath," one of the most amusing characters in the most popular of his works, the "Canterbury Tales," is a selfish, sensual, utterly fleshly woman. When remonstrances were brought against him on this point, he replied easily that he was merely painting as an artist things as they are. But it cannot be denied that as an artist he shows keen sympathy with what is earthly and even bestial. His works have to be largely expurgated before they can be put into the hands of young people. As to marriage, Chaucer may be said generally to treat it in that style of laughing with a wry mouth which has from time immemorial been affected both in comic writing and on the comic stage. It is of course true that Chaucer was describing the manners of the profligate age of Edward III., when the universal decadence of morals was calling out the stern Puritanism of Wycliff and his followers, and paving the way for the Reformation. But Chaucer's own sympathetic translation of Boethius on "Consolation," and his insertion of a portentously long sermon as the Parson's contribution to the "Canterbury Tales," as well as numerous touches throughout his poems, show that he was all the while capable of high and truly Christian ideals. That, thank God, is the genius of the Christian religion; even in the darkest times the essential truths of Christianity can captivate the heart, and enable it to rise above the surrounding baseness.

Thus, he ends one of his longest and most important poems —"Troilus and Cressida"—in which he deals with the weakness and perfidy of women, with two beautiful stanzas:

O young and freshé folkés, he or she!
In which that Love up-groweth with your age,
Repair ye home from worldly vanity,
And of your hearts up-cast ye the visage
To that great God that after His imáge
You made, and think ye all is but a fair,
This world, that passeth soon, as flowers rare.

And love ye Him, the which that right for love,
Upon a Cross, our soulés for to buy
First died, and rose, and sits in heaven above;

For He'll betray no wight, that dare I say,
That will his heart all wholly on Him lay!
And since He best to love is, and most meke,
What needeth feynèd lovès for to seek?

Thus also, in order to show that he knew what good women were, and that he believed in them, he projected a long poem —the "Legend of Good Women"—in which he planned to write a protracted series of examples from classical authors. Nine of these he completed, and then found his theme too monotonous; but these, and his lament for Blanch the Duchess, prove that he knew the beauty and the value of exalted womanly virtue.

The principles on which his personal faith rested are well expressed in the prologue to this treatise on "Good Women":

A thousand timës I have heard men tell,
That there is joy in heaven, and pain in hell;
And I accordë well that it is so.
But nathëless, yet wot I well alsó,
That there is none doth in this country dwell
That either hath in heaven been or hell,
Or any other way could of it know,
But that he heard, or found it written so,
For by assay may no man proof receive.
But God forbid that men should not believe
More things than they have ever seen with eye!
Men shall not fancy everything a lie
Unless themselves it see, or else it do;
For, God wot, not the less a thing is true,
Though every wight may not it chance to see.

In another poem, talking of the impiety of Alchemy, he expresses his profound reverence for the truth of the revelation of God:

Whoso maketh God his adversary
As for to work anything in contrary
Unto His will, certès ne'er shall he thrive
Though that he coin gold through all his life.

In the "Wife of Bathe's Tale" he has a very fine passage on the true gentleman, founded on the Christian doctrine of equality, and the paramount importance of virtue:

Look, who that is most virtuous alway
Privy and open, and most intendeth aye
To do the gentle deedës that he can,
Takè him for the greatest gentleman.
Christ wills we claim of Him our gentleness,
Not of our elders for their old richés.
For though they give us all their heritáge
Through which we claim to be of high paráge,
Yet may they not bequeathë for no thing—
To none of us—their virtuous living
That made them gentlemen y-callèd be,
And bade us follow them in such degree.

Well can the wisë poet of Florénce,
That Dante hightë, speak of this senténce;
Lo, in such manner of rhyme is Dante's tale:
"Seldom upriseth by its branches small
Prowess of man; for God of His prowéss
Wills that we claim of Him our gentleness;
For of our ancestors we no thing claim
But temporal thing, that men may hurt and maim."

And in the "Franklin's Tale" there is a no less beautiful passage on long-suffering, which shows how truly Chaucer understood some of the leading characteristics of the Christian spirit:

For one thing, sirës, safely dare I say,
That friends the one the other must obey,
If they will longë holdë company.
Love will not be constrain'd by mastery.
When mastery comes, the god of love anon
Beateth his wings—and, farewell! he is gone.
Love is a thing as any spirit free.
Women desire, by nature, liberty,
And not to be constrainèd as a thrall,
And so do men, if I the truth say shall.
Look, who that is most patiént in love,
He is at his advantage all above.
A virtue high is patiénce, certain,
Because it vanquisheth, as clerks explain,
Things to which rigour never could attain.
For every word men should not chide and plain;
Learn ye to suffer, or else, so may I go,
Ye shall it learn, whether ye will or no.
For in this world certain no wight there is
Who neither doth nor saith some time amiss.
Sickness or ire, or constellatión,
Wine, woe, or changing of complexión,
Causeth full oft to do amiss or speak.
For every wrong men may not vengeance wreak:
After a time there must be temperance
With every wight that knows self-governance.

And in spite of his mockery of the lordly hunting monk, the sly nun's priest, the impudent pardoner, the unprincipled summoner, and the worldly prioress, he has drawn the most perfect picture of the humble parish priest, serving God and His people with all his heart, drawn partly no doubt from his knowledge of Wycliff and the best of his disciples:

A good man was there of religión,
And was a poorë Parson of a town.
But rich he was of holy thought and work.
He was also a learnèd man, a clerk
That Christës Gospel truly wouldë preach;
And his parishioners devoutly teach.
Benign he was, and wondrous diligent,
And in adversity full patiént.
And such he was y-provèd oftë sithes.

Full loth he was to curse men for his tithes ;
But rather would he givë, without doubt,
Unto his poor parishioners about
Of his off'ríng and eke of his substánce.
He could in little wealth have súffisance.
Wide was his parish, houses far asunder,
Yet failed he not for either rain or thunder
In sickness nor mischance to visit all
The furthest in his parish, great and small,
Upon his feet, and in his hand a staff.
This noble ensample to his sheep he gave,
That first he wrought, and afterwards he taught ;
Out of the Gospel he those wordës caught,
And this figúre he added eke thereto,
That "if gold rustë, what shall iron do ?"
For if a priest be foul, on whom we trust,
No wonder is it if a layman rust ;
And shame it is, if that a priest take keep,
A foul shepherd to see and a clean sheep ;
Well ought a priest ensample for to give
By his cleannéss, how that his sheep should live.
He put not out his benefice on hire,
And left his sheep encumbered in the mire,
And ran to London unto Saintë Paul's,
To seek himself a chantery for souls,
Or maintenance with a brotherhood to hold ;
But dwelt at home, and keptë well his fold,
So that the wolf ne'er made it to miscarry ;
He was a shepherd and no mercenáry.
And though he holy were, and virtuous,
He was to sinful man not déspitous,
And of his speech nor difficult nor digne,
But in his teaching díscreet and benign.
For to draw folk to heaven by fairnéss,
By good ensample, this was his business :
But were there any person obstinate,
What so he were, of high or low estate,
Him would he sharply snub at once. Than this
A better priest, I trow, there nowhere is.
He waited for no pomp and reverence,
Nor made himself a spicèd conscience ;
But Christès love and His Apostles twelve
He taught, but first he followed it himself.

Lastly, I would quote the famous stanzas justly entitled, "The Good Counsel of Chaucer":

Flee from the press, and dwell with soothfastness ;
Sufficë thee thy good, though it be small ;
For hoard hath hate, and climbing tickleness :
Press hath envý, and wealth is blinded all.
Savour no more than thee behovë shall ;
Do well thyself that other folk canst rede ;
And truth thee shall deliver, it is no dread.

Painë thee not each crooked to redress
In trust of her that turneth as a ball.
Greatë rest stands in little business.

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