

ART. III.—OUR LADY OF PELLEVOISIN.

THE last appearance of St. Mary in France is said to complete the cycle of her visits to that country, which began with La Salette. A notice of this appearance has been written by Monseigneur Bauron, Apostolic Protonotary, and Rector of a parish in Lyons, and it has received the printed approval of the Bishop of Moulins, the Bishop of Mans, the Cardinal Archbishop of Lyons, and Pius X.¹ The story which it recounts is as follows:

Estelle Faguette, having to give up her intention of being a nun owing to her health, entered the service of Madame Arthur de La Rochefoucauld, who had built in her grounds a grotto dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes. After ten years' service, she became so ill that her death was expected. On Sunday, February 13, 1870, she requested Madame de La Rochefoucauld to send in her behalf two candles—one to the Church of Notre Dame des Victoires, the other to the altar of Notre Dame de Lourdes, in the Church of the Gésu. The candles were sent and lit on Monday, February 14. That same night there appeared to Estelle the devil, making horrible grimaces at her, and threatening her so that she was greatly terrified. But immediately the Holy Virgin appeared at the foot of her bed, more beautiful than any painter has represented her, with a white veil having three folds in it, a tunic fastened by a cord to her waist, and on her breast a piece of white linen. Directly the devil saw the Holy Virgin he turned his back without daring to speak, and Mary apostrophized him: "What are you doing here? Don't you see that she is wearing my livery and that of my Son? You know," she said, turning to Estelle, "that you are my daughter." And then Estelle remembered that since she was fourteen she had been enrolled as "a child of Mary." The Queen of Heaven then told her that she would have to suffer for five days in honour of the five wounds of Christ, and that on the following Saturday she would either die or be healed. If she lived she was to publish Mary's glory. The apparition then showed to her a slab of white marble, which was an *ex voto*, and told her to erect it at Pellevoisin.

The following night—that is, Tuesday night—the devil again appeared, but he could not come so near to her as on the first night. At once the Holy Virgin appeared again, and told Estelle that she should be cured on the following Satur-

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day, after which she was to publish her glory. On Wednesday night the devil was so far off that she could only see his gestures of rage. The Holy Virgin at once appeared, and said to Estelle: "I am altogether merciful, and I am the mistress of my Son. Your good actions and fervent prayers and a letter that you wrote to me last September have touched my motherly heart. I showed your letter to my Son. Be faithful and publish my glory." On Thursday night the devil was hardly visible. The Holy Virgin again appeared, and repeated the words: "I am altogether merciful, and the mistress of my Son. I desire that you publish my glory." On Friday night there was no devil, but Mary exhibited the slab of marble, which now had an inscription on it, written by herself, declaring that Estelle had invoked Mary, and that she had obtained her cure. Again Mary desired her to "publish her glory," and disappeared at half-past twelve. The following day, Saturday, Estelle wrote a prayer of thanksgiving to St. Mary, and was altogether cured of her illness.

After Estelle's cure the apparitions ceased for eight months. Then St. Mary returned as Estelle was kneeling at ten o'clock in the evening and reading a pious book. Never had human eye seen anything so ravishing. Her robe was as white as the priest's alb; round her waist was a cord, the ends of which reached her feet; her arms were hanging by her sides, and from her hands there fell, as it were, drops of parti-coloured rain. Looking at Estelle, she said: "Patience; you will have suffering, but I am there; I will come back." The next night she appeared again at one o'clock, and this time she had a garland of roses round her, white, red, and yellow, some full-blown and some in bud, exhaling a delicious perfume. Addressing Estelle, she said: "You have already published my glory; continue to do so. My Son's heart has so much love for mine that He cannot refuse my demands. I am come particularly for the conversion of sinners." At the same time she brought a quantity of blank writing-paper which, Monseigneur Bauron explains, was for the encouragement of the "good press" in writing about the Holy Virgin. The next night, July 3, 1876, she reappeared, telling Estelle that it was for the purpose of "concluding the festival." Estelle asked what festival, for she did not know that on that day there had been a great gathering at Lourdes of thirty-six Archbishops and Bishops, and vast crowds from all parts of the world, to exalt the glory of the Immaculate Virgin, at which Cardinal Guibert placed the crown of her universal royalty upon her brow.

After three months Mary appeared again, and took the little piece of white linen which she was wearing on her

breast, and showed that it had upon it a red-coloured heart, from which bright flames were springing, and above it a cross surrounded by a crown of thorns, the heart gaping from a wound with a lance, and drops of blood and water falling from it. This Estelle recognised as the scapular of the Sacred Heart; and the Holy Virgin announced: "I love this devotion." After a pause she added: "This is the place in which I will be honoured." "Here," says Monseigneur Bauron, "was the end and object of all these apparitions—" namely, the revelation of the scapular of the Sacred Heart and the superiority of Pellevoisin to La Salette, Lourdes, and Pontmain, Pellevoisin having become "the porch of heaven."

But the apparitions did not yet cease. The next day the Holy Virgin appeared again to show how the scapular was to be worn—namely, on the breast, as she had worn it. Five days later she appeared again, and sadly exclaimed: "What have I not done for France? How often I have warned her, and yet she refuses to hear! I cannot hold back the arm of my Son any more; France shall suffer!" On the next occasion the Holy Virgin said nothing, but Estelle noticed that a statue of Nôtre Dame de Lourdes which stood on her mantelpiece disappeared during the presence of the Mother of God, just as if they were identified the one with the other, and reappeared when she went away. And this took place during each of the apparitions that followed. On the next occasion the celestial visitant assured Estelle that she had chosen her, and she covered the scapular of the Sacred Heart which was on her breast with her hands, in order to show how she loved and protected it. By the time of the next appearance Estelle had made a scapular like that which had been shown her. The Holy Virgin smiled, and desired her to make many more on the same model. At the last appearance, which took place on December 8, 1876, the Holy Virgin desired Estelle to remember her words, as she would see her no more; but she would always be near her, though invisible. Estelle was frightened by seeing on the left of the Virgin a crowd of strange shapes threatening her with gestures full of rage. Mary told her that she had nothing to fear, and offering her the scapular to kiss, desired her to go to the Bishop and show him the copy which she had made, and tell him to help her in every way in his power; for there was nothing more pleasing to her than seeing her children in this dress, and she would pour out graces on all who wore it, or who helped in propagating it. The Archbishop of Bourges at once established a *confrérie* in honour of Our Lady of Pellevoisin, under the title of the All-Merciful Mother; the members were to wear a scapular with the

Sacred Heart on one side and Our Lady of Pellevoisin on the other. The usual indulgences were attached and afterwards enlarged by Leo XIII., who raised the *confrérie* to the rank of an *archi-confrérie*, and at the same time gave a plenary indulgence to all who made a pilgrimage to Pellevoisin on September 9, on which day the scapular had been revealed to Estelle; and at a later date it was arranged that by means of the scapular fifteen plenary indulgences might be obtained, as well as an indefinite number of indulgences for seven years, and for two hundred days, and for sixty days. The number of persons wearing the scapular is now 1,200,000.

The reasons of these alleged appearances are not hard to discover. They are: (1) religious, (2) political, (3) local, and, in the present case, (4) ritual.

1. The Church of France, having lost its hold on almost the whole of the nation, is pitifully anxious to confirm the faith of those who do still call themselves "practising" Christians. The most popular objects of worship among them at the present time are St. Mary and the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It is supposed that tales of the appearance of St. Mary in different parts of the country will strengthen the people's trust in her, and serve to revive a decaying religion. After St. Mary, the next most popular object is the Sacred Heart, which does not mean the love and tenderness of Christ, but the physical organ of the body, the worship of which was introduced by a nun named Margaret Alacoque at Paray-le-Monial about 200 years ago. The alleged appearances of St. Mary, including those at Pellevoisin, are calculated to encourage both of these popular devotions.

2. Monseigneur Bauron does not conceal the political purpose of the new apparition. Estelle, in her sickness, he says, is a striking image of France, which, "with the light of the Catholic faith, has lost its freedom of worship, its members being paralyzed by unjust laws, and condemned to famine or exile; but," he continues, "the Virgin will come to recover from Satan the nation of the Franks, which is consecrated to her, and has belonged to her Son since the baptism of Clovis, and is the kingdom of Mary, of whose glory it is bound to remain the zealous apostle, and to build her temples" (p. 50).

Again: "What honour for our country! how great desire is shown on the part of the Divine Mother to snatch it out of impious hands which are ruining and degrading it! . . . The chastisements announced are multiplying under our eyes, and take all sorts of forms—loss of fortune, diminution of public credit and of national influence, disorganization of families, corruption of manners, impoverishment of blood, diminution of birth-rate, abasement of character, hatred of

classes, religious ignorance, degradation of souls, etc. France will suffer, and is suffering already, on account of her resistance to the warnings of Heaven and her obstinacy in not listening to her Queen and Protectress. We must have courage and confidence, because Mary will bring us back our better times" (p. 92).

"The apparitions of the Holy Virgin at Pellevoisin have for their object the social restoration of France in its providential mission, and also the salvation of souls. . . . Mary makes herself the Apostle of the Sacred Heart and the missionary for the conversion of France. . . . Mary declares herself all-powerful with God and merciful to sinners. To obtain her protection and favours it is enough to make appeal to her Immaculate Conception and her title of Mother. Alone she will deliver us from the serpent which embraces the world with its folds, whose head is raised in the territory of France. . . . That the devil is reigning over a part of France is a fact which strikes the eyes. Now Mary wants to recover possession of her kingdom, to convert her people, and to bring them back to God. From 1830 to 1850 France has perhaps been more impious than ever; she blasphemes, she turns religion into ridicule, she does not observe the Sunday rest nor abstinence on the appointed days, and she makes war on the Church. Who shall warn her of the peril that she runs? Who shall deliver her from the spirit of Satan, which animates her, and inspires her with the spirit of the Gospel? This is the mission which Mary deigns to take upon herself" (p. 166).

After La Salette and Lourdes France was pardoned; she became again the well-loved daughter, but she has to expiate the faults from which her Protectress has obtained her absolution. She is defeated; her territory is invaded. The Government, faithless to its mission, falls. There is disorder, pain, anguish, anarchy, degradation, revolt. How much it costs not to have followed the counsels of the Virgin of La Salette and Lourdes! At last a flag embroidered with the Heart of Jesus is bathed in the blood of the Zouaves at Patay. "Thus the anger of Jesus was turned aside, and Mary makes haste to tell us of it. . . . Thanks to the supernatural intervention of the Immaculate Virgin, France returns to God. She has lifted her eyes to her Patroness and Advocate. With the miraculous medal, she has rested her hopes in the power of her Protectress. . . . France has not altogether made answer to these appeals of the Holy Virgin. She remains under the domination of Satan and of the Masonic lodges, and cares little to please God, whose very name she repudiates. . . . Official France is not in conformity with the soul of the

nation. Amid the social struggle it is easy to distinguish the supernatural action of Mary, who is gradually crushing the infernal power of her enemy. . . . The enemy is watching at the death-bed of France, whose members and powers it has paralyzed. Mary shows herself at Pellevoisin. 'What are you doing here?' she says to Satan. The devil is driven out by the Immaculate Virgin. Grateful, like Estelle, France runs to kneel at Montmartre, at Paray, at Lourdes, at Pellevoisin, and she publishes to the universe the love of the Sacred Heart and the glory of Mary, her Protectress and Queen" (p. 175).

"This is the ineffable mystery of Pellevoisin : France, being forgiven, will be delivered, thanks to Mary, from the domination of Masons and Jews which Satan has spread over her territory. She will still have to suffer, but it depends on us to shorten the length of her trial by prayer and confidence in our Mother. After her trial France will recover her place at the head of the nations, and her rôle of Soldier of God and Knight of Mary. More brilliant and braver than ever, she will spread throughout the whole earth the devotion to the Sacred Heart, and will receive from the Immaculate Virgin an invisible assistance, which will render her victorious over the obstacles which the devil will still seek to raise against her" (p. 178).

3. The third cause for the different appearances appears to be jealousy, which one place not unnaturally feels in respect to another when it sees the spiritual importance and the material advantages secured by it ; *e.g.*, by Lourdes, as they had previously been enjoyed in a less degree by La Salette, as the result of Mary's apparition. "Safety," cries Monseigneur Bauron, "will come from Pellevoisin, and yet the eyes of France are not turned towards it!" (p. 93). "Pellevoisin is the complement of Paray-le-Monial" (p. 137). "Mary makes the tour of her kingdom in her apparitions. She showed herself in the capital, on the south-east at La Salette, in the south-west at Lourdes, on the north-west at Pontmain. Now at last she appears, as a Queen, in the centre of her kingdom, which has never been defiled by the foot of a stranger. . . . Pellevoisin closes in a magnificent way the series of the miraculous manifestations of the Immaculate Virgin. Pellevoisin realizes the Divine plan. Above all places, Mary will be honoured at Pellevoisin. Small as is the village, *there* shall be sung the hymn of triumph and of thankfulness" (p. 180).

Monseigneur Bauron does not fail to advertise the ease with which Pellevoisin may be approached by pilgrims. In 1878 Monseigneur Coullié, Bishop of Sidon, had been obliged to hire a carriage and travel for five hours over a desolate

country, and had to be healed from his fatigue by the intercession of Our Lady of Pellevoisin ; but now the railway passes close by, a magnificent hotel, called Nôtre Dame, has been erected, and "pilgrims can find there in the quiet of the country the comforts and enjoyments of a delicious residence" (p. 182).

4. Beside the three purposes which all the apparitions served, there is one peculiar to Pellevoisin, which may be designated as a ritual reason. In the other cases the method by which the devotion recommended should be carried out is not named. On the present occasion St. Mary is represented as exhibiting a scapular, offering it to Estelle to be kissed, and commanding her to make another like it. As soon as she had done this, St. Mary appeared again, and said with a sweet smile : "You have not lost time ; you have been working for me. You must make a great many more scapulars." On this Monseigneur Bauron says : "The dominant idea of this apparition is that we must make many scapulars on the model of that which Mary showed. We must keep this in mind and put it into practice. It is no loss of time to be thus occupied, for the work is done for the Holy Virgin, and for the diffusion of the devotion which she loves, the devotion of the Sacred Heart of which the scapular is an emblem" (p. 102).

And elsewhere he says : "Here is the object of all these apparitions—the revelation of the scapular of the Sacred Heart." Pope Leo XIII., when Estelle presented to him the scapular that she had made, took it into his hands and promised that it should be the one scapular of the Sacred Heart for the whole world. On one side it represents the bleeding Heart, and on the other a figure of the all-merciful Virgin within a circle of roses. Enormous indulgences are granted for wearing this scapular, and the Monseigneur tells us, not without pride, that there are already 1,200,000 people wearing it. Pius X. has added his approval in a letter written on April 7 last by Cardinal Merry Del Val.

It is a characteristic of a decaying faith to have recourse to such miracles as these, and to make use of such external means as wearing the scapular in place of inculcating spiritual religion. It is not thus that the Church of France will save herself in her present trials.

In a letter written some years ago, and now republished, Monsieur Hyacinthe Loyson denounces the whole system, recalling the words of the Ephesian artificers in the Acts of the Apostles, and declaring that the old paganism was superior to the new ; for there the people only aimed at making money, whereas here they seek also to cause a political embroilment, and they abuse things so much more sacred.

F. MEYRICK.