

## A MEDICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE CURES BY THE LOURDES WATER.

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### CHAPTER XV.—(Continued.)

#### EYE CASES—INCLUDING INFLAMMATIONS, CATARACT, BLINDNESS FROM VARIOUS CAUSES, AND EXOPHTHALMIC GOITRE.

No. 125. DEFECTIVE SIGHT (Vol. iv., p. 159).—Mlle. Julienne Lamarque, of Oboix, diocese of Tarbes, aged 80 years. In 1868 she had been suffering for two years from the eyes; vision was very much impaired, so that she could not guide herself. Remedies produced no effect, and she had abandoned them.

She washed herself in the Grotto, and found herself cured in a moment. Since then she can see perfectly, and does not feel the slightest pain (dated September 15, 1871).

No. 126. NEURALGIA OF EYES, FOLLOWING OPERATION FOR CATARACT (Vol. iv., p. 138).—Angelique Segay, of Bordeaux, had been blind since birth; was operated on in 1867 for cataract. There followed very violent neuralgia in the eyes, which caused severe pain for 18 months. Medical treatment afforded no relief.

On the 4th February, 1869, the first lotion of Lourdes water suddenly took away the pains, which have never since returned (8th September, 1871).

Remarks.—This case is narrated very briefly by the patient herself. It is a wonderful and quite exceptional narrative by a woman, of a cure of herself, told without an unnecessary word. *O, si sic omnes!* Although it may be alleged that a neuralgia of 18 months' duration might be suddenly cured by any powerful mental emotion—and I do not claim the cure as supernatural, yet it is inserted as a unique specimen.

No. 127. BLINDNESS OF ONE EYE (Vol. iv., p. 104).—Jean Pierre Fanqué and his wife, of Montaignan-Barcuignan, diocese of Auch, relate that in May, 1870, their daughter, Catherine, aged 9 years, was brought to the Grotto by her mother and aunt. The child had almost entirely lost an eye. The doctors had employed all remedies in vain. The eye, shrinking more and more, was visibly dwindling away.

The child, having washed herself in the fountain, cried, "Step, mamma! I am cured, I am cured! I see!" The eye had recovered suddenly both sight and its natural form. The cure had been permanent 14 months afterwards.

No. 128. INTERMITTENT CONGESTION OF RETINA (Vol. iii., p. 185).—Françoise Majesté, of Tarbes (1 Rue des Jardins), aged 50 (at the time of the narrative).

About three years before the apparitions at Lourdes, she was subject to momentary lapses of sight. She had suffered much from other illness, but this affection would come upon her quite suddenly, and without any warning. A thick fog [*brouillard*] enveloped her eyes, and rapidly grew darker, and then the light disappeared altogether. The patient, plunged, as it were, into midnight darkness, was obliged to stop immediately; she used to rub her eyes and wait. Very soon the light would re-appear. There was no pain and no sensible alteration in the eyes. She consulted a physician, but after various experiments, as she pressed him to tell her the truth, the doctor said, "I must tell you that I fear I can do nothing." "But," she replied, "do you think that I shall become blind." He answered, "I do not know."

When she heard of the miraculous cures at the Grotto, she would not at first go, though urged to do so by her neighbours. She said, "I do not yet feel confidence; if God sends it to me, I will go."

At length—it was the beginning of May, 1858—she prepared to go.

She washed her eyes with the water, with great faith in its supernatural powers, and felt that she was cured.

From that time—May, 1858—until 1870, not for a single time, not for a single second, had she suffered from the attacks of temporary blindness.

Remarks.—In the absence of all ophthalmoscopic details, we can only guess that this was a case of intermittent congestion of the retina. Its sudden disappearance may not be considered supernatural, but taken with the many other cases of eye disease cured by the water, it seems worth recording.

No. 129. OPHTHALMIA (Vol. iii., p. 160).—Child of Madame Capelle. This is a very badly described case of chronic ophthalmia in a young child, who seems to have been suffering for several months and to have lost the sight of one eye almost entirely. It was only with great difficulty, and after many efforts, that he could distinguish objects, and then very imperfectly. Slight ameliorations occurred from time to time, but they lasted only a short time. After a third novena in honour of Our Lady of Lourdes, during which we ceased the use of every other remedy, in order to employ only the miraculous water, the child recovered sight perfectly, and since then (August 15), the Feast of the Assumption, and the last day of the novena, no alarming symptom has appeared. "The cure is so perfect that we seem to be dreaming while looking at these two poor, dear, little eyes, formerly so suffering, so swollen, so destitute of eyelashes, and now so bright and so perfectly cured."

Remarks.—This case is so imperfectly narrated that it would not have been published but for the concluding lines, quoted from the mother's account, and which, coupled with the fervid expression of anxiety, and of thanks and gratitude, show that a real miracle had, in the mother's opinion, been performed.

In this, as in all the other cases of chronic inflammation of the eyes narrated, it must be borne in mind that there is no such cure

known in medicine, as a cure of *chronic* ophthalmia in a few days. When such cases are cured, it is always by weeks or months of treatment, and then rarely without change of air, or mode of life. Therefore when a case is cured after bathing the eyes with cold water for nine days, we may safely say that there was some supernatural virtue in the water.

No. 130. STRABISMUS, OR SQUINT (Vol. iii, p. 41).—Henri de St. Remy, of Bordeaux, had been from the age of four, a sufferer from strabismus; besides this, the affected eye having become gradually weaker, and insensible to light, the child was compelled to take most amazing precautions in pursuing his studies. He obtained from the Rev. Father, the Rector of the College, the permission to make a novena to Our Lady of Lourdes.

His confidence was so great that he had no doubts: "You will see," said he "that I shall be cured." Arrived at the Grotto a deep discouragement took possession of him; he did not dare to hope; suddenly at the moment of Holy Communion, he experienced an inward assurance of cure. . . . Being able at length to approach the fountain, he washed in it, felt three prickings in the bad eye, and looked around him. "You do not squint any more," cried one of his young companions to him. And this was quite true. Dr. Sous, an oculist of Bordeaux, who had treated the disease himself without success, has ascertained the reality of the cure. The strabismus no longer exists, and the sight of the eye, still feeble, improves every day.

No. 131. RETINAL APOPLEXY (Vol. ii., p. 156).—Madame Marguerite Lazennac (nun), of Rennes (in religion St. Marie de St. Charles). In April, 1868, experienced great pain on the left side of the head and forehead; found at the same time that the sight of the left eye was weakening; was soon hardly able to see with that eye; the doctor (Regnault) said that the sight was almost lost.

He treated her for a month, but without any benefit, and in June following the eye became insensible to light, with the pupil widely dilated; she had pains in the forehead and head on the left side, with a feeling of constriction which at night prevented sleep. The doctor said to the Mother Superior that there was no remedy, that the eye had "large clots of blood, that it had been attacked by an apoplexy."

From that time the right eye became very weak. On the 25th November, 1869, she felt a dull pain in the whole forehead, and perceived that the sight of the right eye was much worse. "For a year this eye, which was very weak, had been unable to bear a bright light, but as it was sensibly weaker we sent for Dr. Regnault on the 1st December, who looked at it attentively, but could see nothing on the exterior of the eye. The next day he examined it with instruments [ophthalmoscopic], the Sister could only distinguish them as shadows. On the 5th and 7th she put a drop of collyrium in the eye; for the whole day afterwards she saw less, and suffered much; on the 7th and 8th she ceased to be able to read or write; she saw nothing but shadows, and had nothing but a glimmer of light to guide herself by; the least ray of white light caused her a sharp pain in the right eye; the left remained insensible to everything."

To go back, it should be mentioned that on the second of December a novena had been commenced to Our Lady of Lourdes, and every day the eyes were bathed with Lourdes water. On the 8th of December (the feast of the Immaculate Conception), there was Exposition and Benediction of the Most Holy Sacrament.\* When the candles were lit, their light caused her severe suffering; she put her hands before her face, and bent down her head profoundly during the moment of the Benediction, then raising her head she looked towards the image of the Saviour which was placed over the altar. To her astonishment she could see every feature in the face of the figure. She was at 16 metres (more than 17 yards) from the image, which is placed at an elevation of 7 metres. Thinking that she was deceiving herself she shut her eyes, and again opened them. She could then see everything on the altar, and all the lights, which she could have counted without the least inconvenience. She told the Superioress, and that she could see better with the left eye which had been entirely blind for 20 months, than with the right. The next day the sight of the right eye was stronger, and on the last day of the novena it was as good as that of the left. The evening of her cure the Sister read aloud, in the refectory, by the light of a wax candle, and she had, up to the date of the certificate (18th December), done so every day, in books of small type, for half an hour to the lay Sisters. The Superioress adds, "It may be said that she has received sight as perfect as that of her first youth."

Dated at Rennes, 18th December, 1869.

(Signed) MARGUERITE LAZENNAC.

(In religion, St. Marie de St. Charles), the Superioress and several other Sisters.

I certify that the present narrative is conformable to the truth, having myself been witness to the facts.

Rennes, Dec. 23, 1869. BESAIGNE, Vicar-General.

No. 132. ULCERATION OF CORNEA; BLINDNESS (Vol. ii., p. 145).—The following account is communicated by a priest of Toulouse, who vouches for it:—

In the convent of the Sisters of St. Joseph, at Toulouse, there was a young pupil who for nearly a year had been threatened with the loss of sight, and from January, 1869, was obliged to interrupt her studies. Treated successively by two clever surgeon oculists of Toulouse, she had obtained no improvement in her sight, and they declared that no cure was to be expected. The first assured her that she would be blind; the second explained that the ulcers having produced a sort of burning [*brûture*], which had destroyed an essential part of the eye, it was not possible to repair the injury which had been done.

On the 20th of November a novena for her cure was commenced to Our Lady of Lourdes. On Sunday, the 28th, the day when the novena terminated, she was found weeping after Mass, and declared

\* It may be mentioned, for the sake of non-Catholic readers, that on these occasions the Blessed Sacrament is placed in a monstrance on the high altar, which is brilliantly illuminated with numerous candles—never less than eighteen, and generally double that number, or more.