

THE MIRACLES AT LOURDES.

On Sunday night, Oct. 26th, Father Ring, O.M.I., preached in the Church of the English Martyrs, Prescott street, Tower Hill, to a crowded congregation. Father Ring formerly held the position of missionary rector of the Tower Hill mission, a post whose duties are now so worthily fulfilled by the venerable Father Cooke. During the cholera years his noble efforts to save the stricken people won him the admiration of all, even those most bitterly opposed to the faith of which he is a minister. He has just returned from Lourdes, and, naturally enough, his visit to the world-famed shrine formed the subject of his discourse. Having traced the story of the miraculous spot, a story now familiar to the Catholic world, he continued: "Who is she who appeared to the little child, and said, 'I am the Immaculate Conception?'" Her miracles make answer. What is her power with God? Her miracles make answer. What is her holiness—what its height, and depth, and breadth? Her miracles make answer. What is the measure of her love and compassion and charity towards God's Creatures? Her miracles make answer. What are her relations with us? Her miracles make answer. How should we honour her, how should we love her? Her miracles make answer. God has spoken; to all those questions an answer is given us by the miracles which God has been pleased to work in the holy sanctuary at Lourdes. Should he try to recount the number of miracles that have there been wrought since the time the vision appeared to the little girl? It were an endless task. He could not tell the story of ten thousand miracles. Other sanctuaries have been rendered famous by one great miracle that led to the erection of some great temple, some stately church; but at Lourdes the miracles began twenty years ago; day after day, month after month, and year after year, the stream of miraculous cures has flowed on without interruption, and still continues so to flow. Other sanctuaries have been remarkable for a certain class of miracles. At Lourdes the miracles have been wrought in regard to every kind of suffering, to every class of malady. After his arrival at Lourdes he saw a procession passing towards the grotto. And in that procession, and in a conspicuous position, he saw a little girl of some eleven or twelve years. That morning the little girl had been carried helpless and powerless to the holy waters where the sick are bathed, and the little child, who for two years had been unable to move, left the bath perfectly cured. The Blessed Virgin had prayed for her young client; the little child left her crutches in the grotto, and took her place in the procession. On the following day he went towards the grotto, and, as he took his place beside the kneeling pilgrims, he saw a young man of powerful frame borne past him from the arms of his wife and mother. They bore him towards the grotto that they might offer up prayers before the statue that now marks the spot where the Blessed Virgin appeared. His limbs hung powerless, and almost lifeless as they carried him along. He watched him. The others saw him pass by, and many were they who offered up prayers in his behalf. Then their thoughts were carried away to something else, and he was for the moment forgotten. He saw him return in a little while, accompanied by his wife and his mother, all three hastening to give thanks to God for the restoration to health of one who had been unable to walk in unaided. During his stay a young girl came, who a year before had lost the sight of one eye. She had undergone a surgical operation. Skillfully had that operation been performed, and for a while the affected organ had been cured. After a few weeks had passed by a change took place, and she lost the sight of that eye. She returned to the surgeon, but he said he could do nothing more for her, the pupil being destroyed. "Now," said the young patient, "I will go to our Lady of Lourdes and ask her to exercise her power on my behalf." She went; she entered the bath. For a moment she suffered an agony so terrible that she, in describing it, said, "I felt as if my eye was torn through my head." That agony over, she came forth thanking God and blessing His Holy Mother. Another day, being near the grotto, he saw a number of persons gathered round a young girl. They were congratulating her, and with their congratulations were mingled words of earnest thanksgiving to God. He spoke to a priest who knew the girl well, and this is the tale he told. "Ten years ago," he said—and ten years is a long time—"I saw her struck down—paralysed. During the past five years she has been altogether deprived of the use of her limbs. I used to visit her in her poor home and to bring her Holy Communion, for she was unable to come to church, unable to leave her home. It was arranged that she should come to Lourdes. She came here but once to the bath, from which she came forth just as you now see her." He had had seen her walk away upright, as strong, as firm, as if she had not known what sickness meant. He should never forget the appearance of one woman who had been restored to health during his stay. Her cry of joy attracted his attention towards the bath. And as he looked he saw a woman, joy lighting up her face, joy illumining every feature, holding aloft her two crutches. She had been that morning helped to the bath by a friend. Her crutches were laid there in order that she might use them on leaving the bath. When she came forth, he saw her holding them aloft and heard her returning thanks to God for the miracle He had been pleased to work in her behalf. And miracles such as these were witnessed every day; ten thousand miracles, not less wonderful than these which had been worked under his own eyes and in his own presence, so to say, attested the power of God's Immaculate Mother, and demonstrated the truth of the tale told by the humble shepherdess. By these miracles God honours the Blessed Virgin; by these miracles God enkindles devotion to the Blessed Virgin; by these miracles God proves that those who pray to the Blessed Virgin do something which is pleasing to His Divine Majesty and for which He Himself is willing to reward them. There are other wonders to be seen in this holy place of a different kind from these miracles, but not less strange and striking, five-and-twenty years ago the little town of Lourdes was unknown and unnoticed. It had a parish church—a poor, a miserable, he might almost say a wretched structure, and now it possesses a church which is one of the most beautiful on the face of God's earth, and on which there were expended, not a few, but one hundred and fifty thousand pounds. A few years ago Lourdes was unknown—now

pilgrims flock thither from all parts of France, Spain, Italy, and all portions of the globe, so that the trains that approach from the North, South, and West are so many pilgrimage processions to its famous sanctuary. The fountain at Lourdes may now be regarded as the mainspring of a mighty stream that spreads throughout the whole Catholic world, for wherever Catholics are that water has been carried, and wondrous have been the miracles wrought through it. These miracles prove that Catholic devotion to the Blessed Virgin is pleasing to the great and good God. And what are the fruits of these miracles? What was the fruit of Our Lord's miracles—what was the result of the first great miracle He wrought? By that miracle our Divine Saviour manifested His glory to His disciples, and they believed in Him. It confirmed their faith, strengthened their hope, and increased the love of God in their hearts. So at Lourdes faith and hope and charity are strengthened in the Christian heart.

After the sermon there was a procession in honour of the Blessed Virgin, in which all the religious confraternities connected with the church took part. The hymn to Our Lady of Lourdes was sweetly rendered as it wound its way round the sacred edifice. Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament followed.—*Universe.*

PILGRIMS AT ST. EDWARD'S SHRINE IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

THE chapel of St. Edward the Confessor, in Westminster Abbey, presented on the feast day of the saint, an aspect of no little significance, and one calculated to bring gratification to the Catholic heart. From the time the section of the abbey where the saint's shrine stands was opened to the public until its close the visitors were numerous; and that the motive of a large proportion of them was purely to intercede with England's great king-saint and honour his remains, was demonstrated in the clearest way, for gathered about the shrine during the whole day were knots of kneeling people absorbed in silent prayer. It was interesting to watch the methods of the pilgrims. At first there was little to distinguish them from ordinary sight-seeing visitors. The only mark by which you might know them was that they tarried as though they were content with as much of the charm of the grand old abbey as is to be beheld in and from the saint's chapel. Upon a closer regard of their movements and bearing, however, it was evident their thoughts were not bent upon architectural charm. The eyes fixed on the shrine and occasionally-moving lips served to remove all doubt as to the character and mission of the by-standers. This was early in the day. So far they had not screwed their courage up to the kneeling point. As time wore on, and when about half-a-dozen people were paying their devotions upstanding, there entered a hale greybeard, with an air of "this place belongs to me as much as to any man," and at once dropped down on his knees beside the tomb, on the side opposite where the verges stood. The effect of good example was immediate. The pioneer promptly had at his side a neat little retinue of brother regulation-breakers, and the verges, to do him justice, sedulously applied himself to his duties on the other side of the chapel. The ice having been broken, progress was easy, and as the day grew and it became apparent there was no intention to interfere with those who came to pray, the shrine was almost continually a centre round which gathered many kneeling figures.

Everywhere, but especially in England, Catholics will rejoice to learn that such incomprehensible narrowness as would bar people from praying in a house devoted to God's service no longer dominates the custodians of Westminster Abbey. As the petitioners at the shrine were not interfered with in any way—not even by Protestant visitors, who, though evidently surprised showed consideration, and abstained from all vulgarity—it may be assumed that concession has been made to a very reasonable demand of Catholics, and that henceforth who wants to venerate the relics of St. Edward the Confessor at Westminster may bend his knees if he will. Nevertheless it is one which the faithful will highly prize. It is pleasant to reflect that a charitable spirit and common-sense are dissipating the clouds of prejudice; and whilst we who built it would much rather be ourselves the conservatives of the grand old fabric, we must feel pleased that, pending the time when Westminster Abbey shall once again return to Catholic hands, the dean and chapter mean to let us pray to St. Edward there without let or hindrance.—*Universe.*

The funeral of Mgr. de la Tour d'Auvergne, Archbishop of Bourges, took place the 25th Sept., with much pomp and ceremony. The cathedral was draped in black; all the troops in the garrison were under arms; and many persons of distinction, both civil and military, were present. Prince Godefroy de la Tour d'Auvergne was chief mourner. Cardinal Guibert, Archbishop of Paris, presided over the ceremony, surrounded by a number of bishops.

There are coal mines in Germany in which the phenomenon of subterranean waters having a regular ebb and flow has been observed. The scientific academies of Vienna and Berlin are studying it, and look for valuable additions to our knowledge of the earth's interior.

A long letter has appeared in the Paris *Ordre*, to prove that Don Carlos is the legal heir of the Comte de Chambord's hereditary rights. "Entre nous," he remarks. "I do not think that Don Carlos has much chance of enjoying this splendid heritage; but I have wished to treat a point of History which is not sufficiently known."

Bad news about dynamite is to be found in the *Daily Telegraph*, 26th Sept.—"Experiments have been made with dynamite by the War Department chemists in order to ascertain its suitability to military purposes for which its supposed liability to accidental explosion was held to be an objection. The trials seem to have established the fact that dynamite, in a frozen state, may occasionally withstand a heavy concussion; failing to detonate when dropped from a considerable height, and even when fired at with a bullet; but the effect was uncertain especially when large quantities of dynamite were used, and the results so far are not conclusive nor complete.