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PLEASE NOTE ADDRESS.

OUR LADY OF LOURDES.

(From an Exchange.)

It was the morning of the Feast of the Assumption at Lourdes. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass had been celebrated without interruption since early dawn by the priests gathered from all parts of France, who had come to take part in the feast's solemnity in that blessed spot where the Immaculate Virgin has shown a glimpse of her glory.

The last Masses were being concluded. The pilgrim's prayers were arising with redoubled confidence toward the throne of heaven's gracious treasury.

The sick and the infirm were very numerous—the one brought hither in quickly prepared litters, the other in light carriages, which could be managed by relatives or friends.

Everyone knows that the pilgrims enter into the true spirit of a pilgrimage; they forget themselves and become mindful of others. Lourdes is the place where charity flourishes under the most touching forms.

After a fervent Communion the sick assembled together, anxiously awaiting Mary's hour. They hoped to hear a voice which would say to them in the depth of their hearts: "Go, thy faith hath saved thee." But no cure had been obtained, and the crowd did not leave the sanctuary; they prayed yet, prayed always without ceasing. It seems to those souls sustained by the holy courage of faith that the feast of the crowning of the Immaculate Virgin could not end without some gifts from their holy Sovereign.

In the corner of the church a young woman was half lying down in her little carriage. Her pale countenance, her sad smile made one imagine the troubles of mind which aggravated the sufferings of this poor, immovable body. Her loving gaze rested on her three children grouped around her, and the oldest, Martha, was scarcely ten years. Her bright eyes, glistening with tears, were fixed on the tabernacle with an expression of suppliant sorrow. They appeared to say to God, always present on the altar to hear us and console us: "It is for these, O my God, that I ask our Lady to plead in my behalf."

Martha drew near and delicately wiped the tear-stained face. She has for her mother a tender devotion, admirable in a child of nine years. Gentle and attentive, she guesses her needs and seldom quits her side. The children of the poor paralytic are not lively and noisy as are happy children. The suffering of their parent put their childhood into mourning.

Martha knew and wept for her father, a modest Christian officer—filled with sorrow and grief when death claimed him for her own. Germaine, a beautiful little girl of seven years, simply remembered the day when the house was crowded with mourning friends, and the black dress that her aunt put on her, and the gloomy road to the cemetery. Little Joseph came into the world the same time his father left it, and since his sad birth unhappiness had not left the cheerless hearth of the family.

Medicine had little effect on this incurable sickness which condemned a poor living creature to drag along inanimate limbs. In spite of their numerous attempts and praiseworthy zeal, those men of science could not procure for Madam L— any relief, and there now remained for her only the consolation of God. That was a great deal—it was everything.

During those long hours of sleepless nights, she thought of her brother, a brave cavalry officer, who had well proved his valour, failing in nothing except the loss of Christian faith. She knew that he tenderly loved the children, and that the poor little ones would be happier with him than near a mother who could only love them.

Martha had heard the Sisters read of so many remarkable cures that she dreamed of a pilgrimage to Lourdes for her mother. She took her teacher, Sister Agnes, into her confidence, and the good religious persuaded the sick woman to try a miraculous cure.

First, the question of boarding the two young children came up. Martha declared she was of a contrary opinion. "O, mamma," implored she, "take us? When our Lady will see us around you she will be touched and will cure you."

The mother smiled and consented to everything they wished, only putting in one condition that her brother accompany her to Lourdes.

Sister Agnes was to write to the captain immediately. There was no time to lose, he should come the same evening that the invitation was sent. She wrote a beautiful letter, which was, without doubt, a formal order, for him to be found at the station of Angoulême at ten o'clock that evening.

When the baggage-master brought this charitable errand to the captain's residence, he was out. He came in, however, very soon, but in a state of irritation, which argued badly for Sister Agnes' summons. He took the letter, cast it on the bureau without even looking at it; opened and closed his drawers; heaped up in the chimney some papers to which he set fire, and then sealed a large packet of enclosed writings looking as solemn as a testament. Then only did he care to notice the little missive on the dressing case. He decided to open it. After the first line he flung it from him and paced the room excitedly, exhausting his anger in blows of the fist upon the furniture. Some hackneyed phrases hissed between his teeth: "Ah! in what a miserable situation you place me! And this devotee, with her scrawling, comes then to entangle me, saying that I am to go to Lourdes, to start out to-day even! Surely that is the height of frankness."

In spite of his anger, he again picked up the letter, read it attentively and reflected.

"I cannot," thought he, "refuse this unfortunate service to my dear sufferer. Poor sister, what a disagreeable idea! I have my permission in my pocket. I am going to have a fight with an officer of my corps who has offended me. To-morrow the affair will be over, and I will be free to go to Lourdes to recite some *Pater Nosters* if it seems well to me; but my sister wishes me positively to start this evening—what to do?"

What especially preoccupied the captain was the effect it would produce on his enemy, this kind of desertion. Not knowing what conclusion to come to, he went out. It was Providence, no doubt, that put in his way his best friend, Captain R—, a practical Christian, respected by every one, calm and wise in his judgment.

To the confidence of the impulsive officer, he replied by a wise counsel: "One companion, I warrant, has been with me sole witness of thy lamentable dispute. I charge myself to explain thy journey to thy opponent. I will say to him that on your return from this unforeseen pilgrimage you put yourself at his disposal. Go then; to-day you owe this duty to your sister."

"You will then remonstrate with Solomon, himself; thanks; behold me relieved and a pilgrim in spite of myself."

The captain did not know the ancient village of Lourdes and its surroundings. He had visited the entrenched camp that they name, in *patois*, *Castera, de Julos* and saw the spears of Cæsar; the strong chateau that the English took for the central point when they came to occupy the country of B— in 1360 in virtue of the treaty of Brittany. He again read with a more lively interest the recital of the heroic attempt of the Duke of Anjou, of the Constable Duguesclin, of Peter Arand of Barn, in 1374, to cast off the English yoke, which ended in the Pyrenees, after a half century of struggle only by the capitulation of this chateau.

The captain declared that those souvenirs cast a glorious light over the majestic beauty of this country, and that he was not weary at Lourdes. His days were well filled up. In the morning he conducted his sister to Mass; before dinner he took a walk with the children who were being strengthened with the exhilarating air of the mountains; at the setting of the sun he conducted his infirm sister to the grotto, and after the Angels then again returned to the hotel.

(To be concluded.)

MR. J. S. ATKINSON
Surgeon Dentist,

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