

NON-CATHOLIC'S IMPRESSIONS OF LOURDES.

Are the waters really endowed with the miraculous power of healing the sick? (writes Mr. G. H. Jessop in *Munsey's Magazine*). No true Catholic doubts it, and for myself I keep an open mind, for during my short stay at Lourdes I was brought face to face with a prodigy.

One night—it was the fourth or fifth after my arrival—I was awakened about midnight by a tempest of wind and rain, which lashed and rattled the windows and effectually banished sleep. As I lay, I heard from the street below a rich, deep baritone voice intoning the Lourdes hymn. The chant was taken up by a chorus of voices, which mingled with the outcry of the storm and dominated it.

'Ave, ave, ave Maria!' The pæan of praise asserted itself melodiously against pelting rain and driving wind, and through it all I heard the great clock in the Basilica chime the first hour after midnight.

I listened, wondering. Presently the singing ceased, the wind abated, and I fell asleep.

In the morning I learned the occasion of this midnight serenade. The town was in an ecstasy of religious enthusiasm. Strangers who met in the streets stopped and asked one another:

'Have you heard of the miracle?'

I was accosted a dozen times between the hotel and the Basilica, and had the story from as many lips, without variation in any detail. And a marvellous story it was.

The girl I had seen at the railway station, the tuberculous patient, had been healed in the night. The chorus I had heard after midnight was in thanksgiving for her cure. It happened in this wise:

She announced that she had been vouchsafed a vision, and that she had been told to go to the grotto between the hours of twelve and one that night. Through the pelting rain and driving storm they bore her—the frail atom whose shrunken frame had been anointed for death in the train hours before Lourdes was reached, who had received the last rites of her church, and of whom the doctor travelling with the pilgrimage had said:

'She cannot live an hour.'

At midnight she was carried on her poor pallet to the grotto. At twenty minutes past twelve she threw off the coverings, and, rising from her bed, took the first step she had taken for two years.

To the onlookers, and they were many, it must have been an uncanny sight. She raced—I use the words of one of my informants—to the grotto, and flung herself against the railings with such force that she bruised herself, and would have fallen, had not one of those present caught her as she staggered back. Then she walked to the hospital whence she had come, leaving her stretcher behind her.

To the onlookers the incident must have been as startling as was that scene by the grave of Lazarus, when he that had been dead obeyed the Voice of Power and 'came forth.'

Hysteria? Perhaps. Auto-suggestion? Very likely. I can only tell the facts as they were told to me by a dozen unimpeachable witnesses. I saw the girl, whom I had seen a few days before stricken and helpless, walking about among her fellows and praising God for His great mercy.

One point I have omitted. This young woman, who had worn no garment but her night-robe for two years, had insisted that her clothes, hat, and shoes should be brought with her. She *knew* she would be cured. This may seem to point to hysteria; but at least two medical men, presumably competent, had diagnosed her disease as tuberculosis of the spine.

Let the reader make what he will of it. I simply tell the story of the case, setting down honestly what I saw and heard. I presume to offer no explanation.

I returned from Lourdes profoundly impressed by much I had seen, but not wholly convinced. The atmosphere of the place, where thousands assemble, thinking the same thoughts, chanting the same hymn, kneeling day and night at the same shrine, is hypnotic. One's

judgment, whirled away and strangled in the torrent of faith which beats against it on every hand, is helpless.

But clear of the glamour of Lourdes—in the bustle of Bordeaux, amid the gaiety of Paris, with the workaday world closing round me on every side—I remember, I reverence, but—I wonder!

ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CLUB, HOKITIKA

(From the club correspondent.)

April 10.

At St. Mary's Clubrooms on Tuesday evening, March 25, a representative gathering met to bid farewell to Mr. T. Green, who was about to leave for Auckland. Mr. Warren (president) was in the chair, with Mr. J. Hanrahan in the vice-chair.

The chairman, after referring at length to the many good qualities of the guest of the evening, called upon Mr. J. Cahill to make a presentation of a photo. of the competitors of St. Mary's Club at the recent Competitions, and a gentleman's shaving outfit.

Mr. Cahill, in a feeling speech, referred to the good work done by Mr. Green in connection with St. Mary's Club.

Mr. Green responded in a felicitous speech, expressing his deep thanks for the gifts, and he hoped that ere long he would return to Hokitika.

Messrs. S. Wornington, L. Dwan, J. Hanrahan, and W. Warren also spoke of the loss St. Mary's Club was sustaining in the departure of one of the most willing workers of the club.

The following toast list was honored during the evening:—'The Pope and King,' 'Our guest,' 'The spiritual director,' 'The ladies,' 'Departed members,' 'Kindred clubs,' 'The committee,' 'The press,' and 'The chairman.' Mr. C. Duncan presided at the piano and his services were much appreciated. The singing of 'Auld lang syne' brought to a close a most enjoyable evening.

Waihi

April 11.

Very Rev. Father Roche, C.S.S.R., and Rev. Father Creagh, C.S.S.R., commence a fortnight's mission at St. Joseph's Church on Sunday next.

At the last meeting of the Catholic Men's Club the Rev. Father Wright delivered a lecture on 'Astronomy.' It was an open night, and there was a large attendance of ladies and gentlemen, who listened to the rev. lecturer with great interest. At the conclusion a hearty vote of thanks was carried by acclamation. A pianoforte solo was given by Miss Hatton, and songs by Misses Porter and Mannix.

The Right Rev. John Joseph Hogan, of Kansas City, Mo., the oldest prelate both in years and service, in the United States, passed away on February 21, aged 84 years. Bishop Hogan was born at Cahir-Guillamore, in the parish of Bruff, County Limerick, on May 12, 1829. At the age of eighteen he went to the United States and entered a theological seminary in St. Louis where he was ordained a priest five years later. When, in 1868, the diocese of St. Joseph was created Father Hogan was made Bishop of that See which position he held fourteen years. In 1882 he went to the diocese of western Missouri with headquarters in Kansas City. April 10, 1912, marked the sixtieth year of Bishop Hogan's priesthood.

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