

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

prepared to surrender it, it is surely a duty to study the investigations of those who give reasons for believing that the critical theories are false.

The heading of my paper in July should, by the way, have been "Genesis XLVIII.-L.," not "Genesis XLVIII.—I."

J. J. LIAS.



ART. IV.—LOURDES AND ITS LESSON.

"**L**E *Journal de la Grotte!* Demandez les derniers miracles et les derniers miraculés de la journée! Un sou le *Journal de la Grotte!*"

I am sitting on the balcony outside my little room in the Hôtel de Londres et du Sacré Cœur at Lourdes, and the cries of the newsvendors offering the afternoon's miracles for a halfpenny make no more impression on me now than did the "Great Boer Victory!" and the "Capture of Lord Kitchener!" which the *camelots* were crying on the Paris boulevards a short time ago.

I have been in Lourdes for three whole days, and feel as though I had lived there for years. Miracles have become an ordinary topic over the morning coffee; things spiritual and mystic have become quite commonplace. A dying man or woman carried on a stretcher through the streets is less unusual here than a costermonger with his barrow in the Edgware Road; and even the hotel signs, Hôtel de Richelieu et de l'Apparition, Hôtel de Saint Joseph et de Madrid, Hôtel de l'Électricité et du Saint Esprit, no longer seem the incongruous mixture of this world and the next they seemed when I arrived here.

A pilgrimage to Lourdes is like nothing so much in its effect upon the mind as the second part of a great conjurer's entertainment. When a Prince of Prestidigitation commences his séance, the audience, even though he be an expert such as Hoffmann, Dr. Lynn, or Bertram, is sceptically curious, and tries to see how every trick is done. By the time the second part begins, however, the conjurer has almost mesmerized his audience. He has taken them with such rapidity from one marvel to another that his wonders cease to appear wonderful, and it is only when the audience leaves the hall that it begins to think of how it all was done.

To some extent Lourdes is very much like that. Without wishing in any way to speak irreverently of things done in a

really devout spirit, I wish to lay emphatic stress upon the atmosphere of suggestion—a suggestion almost hypnotic in its effect upon the mind—with which the pilgrim to Lourdes is surrounded from the moment he leaves Paris. To convey a clear notion of the all-pervading character of this hypnotic atmosphere, I can, perhaps, not do better than describe in detail my own pilgrimage to Lourdes, made under the ordinary conditions of the pilgrim, in the Great White Train carrying a thousand sick, which leaves from Paris in the month of August.

The sun blazed down upon the station-yard as I arrived there with a friend who came to see me off. The station itself was one gigantic hospital. From all corners of the city rubber-tired ambulances with loud-sounding bells, and the white flag with its red Geneva cross floating from the whipstand, arrived in quick succession. All round us, in the outer yard, in the waiting-rooms, on the platforms, everywhere, the sick folk lay upon their stretchers waiting to be carried to the train.

The train itself was formed of the very oldest carriages in the possession of the company. With few exceptions they were all third-class compartments, for the Fathers of the Assumption, who direct the pilgrimage to Lourdes, wish the pilgrimage to be considered as a penance, and each added discomfort is thought to aid its efficacy.

Every sick person who was to travel by the White Train wore a large card, fastened with a broad white ribbon. On the card were written the name, the sickness, and the number of the carriage of the patient, but there were many of the sick who did not need a card to tell an onlooker what was the matter with them. There were men, women, and children with that rose flush and constant perspiration which marks down the consumptive. Every now and then a fearful cough would rack one or other of them, and the handkerchief was stained with red when taken from their lips. There were cripples of both sexes, so terribly twisted that it was difficult to get them through the carriage door. There were lepers, and worse than all, perhaps, women, men, and one small boy with lupus, that fearful scourge which makes the human face one awful gaping wound.

The kindness of the priests, the Sisters of Mercy, and the lay-helpers to the pilgrims was really wonderful. For years past now it has become fashionable in France for people belonging to society to travel down to Lourdes as lay-helpers. The ladies (and I may mention that among those who travelled down with me were women whose names have been epoch-making names in the history of France) nurse the sick and help the Sisters in menial offices both on the journey and at Lourdes itself; the men act as *brancardiers*, or stretcher-

bearers, run here and there with water and provisions, and make themselves generally useful.

There were no doctors on the train, no medical appliances, and no medicine. This was borne in upon me with some emphasis while we were waiting for the train to start. A woman poorly dressed, and evidently belonging to the shabby-genteel class, came up to the luggage-van, outside which I was standing, and asked for Sœur Etienne. The van had been transformed into a travelling kitchen, with soup, bread, water, milk, and other such small necessaries. Sister Etienne asked the woman what she wanted.

"My husband," she replied, "will, I fear, hardly live through to Lourdes. He is suffering cruelly from neuralgia now; the strain has been too much for him. Can you give me a capsule of antipyrine?"

Sœur Etienne looked at the suppliant in surprise. "Tell him to pray," she said; "and do you pray with him if you can. We have no medicines for our sick; we have but faith, and that is quite sufficient."

The woman knelt in the dust and her lips moved. Then, stifling a sob in her pocket-handkerchief, she went back to her husband with the Sister's message.

The last few moments in the Paris station were ones of noiseless bustle. The sick were all got into their places, the mattresses with which the hard seats of the third-class compartments were provided made as comfortable as possible, and with no preliminary whistle, no starting signal of any kind, the Great White Train moved slowly from the station on its long pilgrimage to Lourdes, the pilgrims and the people on the platform singing the *Ave Maria Stella* as it left.

It is three o'clock in the afternoon. We are to make our first stoppage at Brétigny at about five o'clock, and, as we rattle across the summer landscape, one of the nuns in my compartment tells the story of Bernadette, the little peasant girl of Lourdes, to whom the vision of the Virgin appeared, she says, no less than eighteen times.

Bernadette Soubirous was one of a large family, and the Soubirous were very, very poor. One Thursday morning, February 11, 1858, Bernadette's mother sent the child, with her sister and a friend, to gather some dry twigs for fuel near the Grotto of Massabielle.

The children had to cross Le Gave ("the torrent," the name means), a little stream which trickles from Bordeaux across the mountains and down into Lourdes. Le Gave was angry that cold winter's morning, and the two other girls had waded over it before Bernadette, a weaker and less courageous child than her companions, could find nerve to do so.

While she hesitated, Bernadette heard the rustling sound of a great wind behind her. She looked round and noticed, to her surprise, that the leaves of the poplar-tree on the stream's bank were motionless. Again she heard the rushing of the wind, and sank upon her knees in fear, raising her eyes and hands to heaven. In the air above her appeared the radiant apparition of a lady dressed all in shining white and girdled with a sash of blue. The apparition made the sign of the cross and disappeared.

On the following Sunday Bernadette went to the Grotto of Massabielle again with several of her friends, and saw the white-robed lady as before. She went again on the next Thursday, and this time the apparition spoke to her.

"Come here to me each day for fifteen days," it said, "and I will make you happy. Your happiness will not be in this world, but in the next;" and Bernadette, in an ecstasy of superstitious exaltation, gave the promise.

The story of the appearances of the Holy Virgin spread like wildfire over the countryside, and hundreds of people accompanied little Bernadette upon her journeys to the grotto.

On February 23 the child went to the Abbé Peyramale, the village priest of Lourdes, and carried him a message from the vision.

"Tell the priests to build a chapel to me upon this spot," the lady had said to Bernadette.

On February 25, two days after the message, the apparition bade Bernadette bathe her face in the stream and drink some of the water.

The vision had pointed to a spot covered with tree-roots and dry earth, but Bernadette, whose faith was boundless, scratched at the earth with her bare hands, and water came. She drank of it and washed, and a few weeks later water was gushing in a torrent from the soil.

Bernadette retired to a convent at Nevers about a year after she first saw the apparition of the Virgin, took the conventual vows when she was seventeen, and died before she reached the age of thirty-six. Such is the story of the genesis of Lourdes.

The Sister stopped speaking, and the pilgrims in the carriage bowed their heads in prayer.

There was a stoppage of ten minutes at Brétigny, and those of the pilgrims who were strong enough to do so got out to ease their limbs.

I wandered up and down the line a little, chatting with them, and the faith of the poor creatures filled me with admiration. Three hours ago it would have filled me with surprise, but the hypnotic spell of my environment was full upon me, and their

ardent belief in a miraculous recovery no longer surprised me as it would have done that morning.

At Les Aubrais we stopped for half an hour for supper, and strange though it must sound, we were a merry party.

Ever since we had left Paris, at three o'clock, prayer in the train had been unceasing. It recommenced now as we left Les Aubrais, and an hour afterwards, after the *Angelus*, the Sisters ordered silence for the night. They dared not call it sleep.

I shall never forget that first night in the Great White Train. The low-roofed waggons, divided by breast-high barriers into three portions, were never silent for a moment. All night long low-toned prayers and moans of pain came from the narrow benches on which the pilgrims lay. A man gasped out a plea for water. A woman tried to comfort her little son, who was in an agony of suffering from some spinal trouble which never let him rest for a single moment, and next to me a little consumptive girl, who would not lie down because she could not breathe when she did so, coughed and sobbed by turns.

It was five on a glorious summer Sunday morning when we steamed into Poitiers station. We were to stay there until the Monday mid-day, and it was at Poitiers that I got my first real insight into the effect of the Lourdes pilgrimage upon the mentality of the pilgrims.

At Poitiers is the tomb of Saint Rhadegund, a Christian Queen of early Gaul, who is said to have converted her pagan husband Clovis to Christian tenets. Not one of the pilgrims but asked to be carried straightway to the crypt in which Saint Rhadegund lies buried. Ill as they were, they had no thought of rest or hospital, and the appeals of those whom the Sisters did not consider strong enough to go to the church immediately were very pitiful to hear.

I walked out of Poitiers station beside the stretcher of a pilgrim who was obviously dying. The Sisters with him were two sweet-faced Englishwomen from the Assumptionist Home at Bow, but the man himself was French. He had received the holy oils before he left, they told me, and ("unless a miracle occurs," they added) "we fear his case is quite a hopeless one." Their own French was faulty, and they asked me to try and persuade the dying man to remain in hospital at Poitiers, and not attempt the rest of the journey until he felt a little better. He looked up at me with white eyes staring from a leaden face (one of his legs had been amputated at the thigh, and the other was in a fearful state of putrefaction), and I could hear the faltering in my own voice as I attempted to dissuade him from mingling in the crowd which was on its way to Saint Rhadegund's tomb.

"Would you not like to rest a little, first, or even to stay a

day or two in Poitiers, and come on to Lourdes when you feel better?"

"Oh, no, no, no!" he croaked, with a sound of abject terror in his voice; "I must go on to Lourdes. I will die there or go home well."

Neither wish was granted, for the poor fellow died within the hour, as he was being carried to Saint Rhadegund's tomb.

And now, if I can do so, I should like to set before you a picture of the scene in Poitiers Church around the tomb of Saint Rhadegund.

Imagine a vault dimly lighted with wax candles, underneath the altar; and round the tomb which stands in the centre of this vault a narrow pathway for the devotees to pass. A dado round the marble tomb is absolutely black from the hands of the many thousand pilgrims who have touched it. Above us, in the church, High Mass is being said, and around it outside are numbers of small booths and clusters of hawkers with basket-loads of provisions, candles, medals, saints of plaster and of metal, pictures of the tomb and souvenirs of all kinds of the pilgrimage. It is a curiously characteristic sidelight on the Lourdes pilgrimages, this traffic in holy things, for the pilgrims believe in the sanctity of the rosaries, the pictures, and the images, and yet they bargain for them as excitedly and with as much determination as thrifty housekeepers display when purchasing provisions at the Halles in Paris.

The broad marble steps leading down from the church to the saint's tomb are thickly thronged with people. The atmosphere is indescribable. It is like the atmosphere on Lord Mayor's Day would be in London if the crowd in St. Paul's Churchyard were packed into one of the smaller crypts within the church, and were composed of sick folk instead of sightseers. A hand was laid upon my shoulder. "Will monsieur help me down to the tomb with a crippled pilgrim?" whispered a voice in my ear. I followed the speaker into the church above, and between us we picked up a chair on which was placed a tiny little man of thirty-nine, whose head was sunk between his shoulder-blades, and who had not, poor little creature, one straight limb. His white-haired mother followed us, and the crowd on the steps made room for us to pass.

The atmosphere was horrible, and as we reached the bottom step a wave of exaltation swept up.

"Sainte Radegonde, guérissez-le !
Sainte Radegonde, guérissez-le !
Sainte Radegonde, priez pour lui !"

cried a priest in a stentorian monotone, and the old mother

behind us, in a voice broken with sobs, shrieked broken sentences to the saint, begging her, in the ordinary language of every day, and with a violence for which I have no adequate description, to cure her crippled son.

The little man whom we were carrying was dripping with perspiration. I felt him struggling feebly in my arms, and I could feel that he was speaking, although his voice was lost in the tumult of supplication from the other pilgrims round the tomb.

"What do you want?" I asked.

"Let me touch the tomb," he whispered; and I held the twisted arm and hand which he could not move himself against the dirty marble.

"Hold me up to her," he said, in his poor little scratchy voice, and for three long, long minutes we held him right up against the statue of the saint, and watched him kiss the marble feet, the hands, the eyes and lips, while all round us surged the sea of angry prayer:

" Sainte Radegonde, guérissez-le !
 Sainte Radegonde, guérissez-le !
 Vous le pouvez, vous le pouvez !
 Sainte Radegonde, vous le pouvez !
 Guérissez-le donc !"

There was a look of joy and hopefulness upon the man's wizened little face as we took him out of that stifling crypt into the upper portion of the church, and, as I made him more comfortable upon his chair, he kissed me.

I began to understand now what the faith cure might mean. This little cripple had been ten times to Lourdes in the last twenty years, and his hope for mercy and a miracle was as strong as ever. I saw him two days afterwards at Lourdes, sitting near the Grotto waiting for his turn to bathe, and we parted, when the pilgrimage was over, like old friends. He was not cured this time, but next year he will go to Lourdes again.

It was not quite five o'clock when, in the crimson of the dawning sunlight, we arrived at Lourdes on Tuesday morning. The excitement in the train had been so intense all night that few, if any, of us had had a moment's sleep, but as we arrived all thought of fatigue was quite forgotten, and the sick pilgrims clamoured to be taken straightway to the Grotto.

The scene was an extraordinary one. The Lourdes station is little more than a mere barn, with rank grass growing between the lines of the rails, and the whole place, which for ten months of the twelve has a population of some 1,500, but

which during the pilgrimages manages to accommodate, *tant bien que mal*, at least 30,000 people, is the most extraordinary mixture of primitive discomfort, glorious scenery, and the luxury of modern civilization that I have ever seen. Every preparation had been made to lose no time in taking the pilgrims direct to the Grotto from the station. There were automobiles, hand-carts, carriages, bullock-waggon and pantehnicon vans in readiness, and in a wonderfully short space of time the pilgrims from the White Train were on their way through the narrow streets down to the Grotto of Massabielle, where Bernadette first saw the apparition of the Virgin over forty years before. Train-loads of pilgrims had been arriving all through the night, and the space around the Grotto and in front of the three churches superposed one upon the other, and veritable marvels of architectural art, was black with people. In a high pulpit near the Grotto stood a priest in white vestments gleaming with blue and silver decorations. Around him, on their stretchers, in bath-chairs, or on benches, when they were well enough to sit, were the pilgrims, and other pilgrims who could stand crowded in serried ranks behind them.

“Notre Dame de Lourdes, guérissez nous !
 Notre Dame de Lourdes, guérissez nos malades !
 Notre Dame de Lourdes, priez pour nous !
 Notre Dame de Lourdes, guérissez nos enfants !”

shouted the priest; and “Vous le pouvez ! Vous le pouvez ! Vous le pouvez !” shouted the crowd in response, in voices of all kinds—cultivated, coarse, and gentle voices, voices appealing, voices expostulatory, and even here and there an angry voice—angry with the Deity who would not hear.

“Notre Dame de Lourdes, intercédez pour nous !
 Guérissez-le, guérissez-le, guérissez-le !
 Notre Dame de Lourdes, donnez lui la foi !
 Donnez lui la foi !
 Guérissez-le !

In a long single line the pilgrims, either on foot or carried on their stretchers, stream past the rock from which the water trickles. Each pilgrim as he passes dips a goblet in the water and drinks. Above their heads flame thousands of candles, which are placed there either in supplication or in thankfulness, and up above the candles are thousands of crutches fastened in a sort of trophy to the rock. They are the crutches of the pilgrims who have been miraculously cured.

Presently there is an “Ah !” of delighted anticipation from the whole huge crowd. The baths have been opened. Eager though the crowd was—fearfully, pitifully eager, reminding me in their eagerness of some of Doré’s terrible life-struggle

pictures—there was nothing in the nature of a hustling, bustling crowd about them, and they were as unlike the ordinary French crowd as people could be. Nobody jostled, nobody trod upon his neighbour's toes (on purpose, that is), and everybody was polite, self-sacrificing, almost servile to his neighbour.

It seemed as though it must be mid-day at least, but, as a matter of fact, it was not six o'clock yet, and the beautiful southern air was still tinted with that opaline variety of colours which in the shadow of the Pyrenees shows that the sun has not completely risen.

I went to the bathing-house with some of the first pilgrims, and later in the day I returned there again. There are three baths for male pilgrims and six for the women. The water is brought into the baths by a leaden pipe from the Grotto, and is changed twice a day only. The bathing ceremony is simple. From the moment that the doors open until they close at dusk the procession of bathers never ceases. Two or three of them are brought in at a time, undressed, and plunged into the filthy, ice-cold water. Prayer never ceases for an instant during the bathing of the sick. Consumptives, scrofulous patients, patients with lupus, lepers, blind men or deaf, all are plunged into this dirty water in the self-same manner, and the only antiseptic used is prayer.

As soon as he has been plunged once, twice, or three times, as the case may be, the man is dressed (dressed dripping wet, of course, for not for the world's wealth would he have a drop of the precious water wiped away from him) and taken out again.

While I was in the bathing-house one old man, whose blind son had just been bathed, taking his turn in the water between a man with eczema and one with lupus, and who (I mean the father) had no real right in the bath establishment as there was nothing wrong with him, asked and obtained leave to drink some of the water. It was gray, loathsome, unspeakably disgusting both to the sight and smell, but the old man drank a large cupful of it on his knees devoutly.

The feeling of religious excitement is artificially maintained in Lourdes by every possible means. In the mornings, in the space around the Grotto, the priests unceasingly exhale their monotonous cry: "Notre Dame de Lourdes, guérissez nos malades!" and as one priest's voice drops another takes it up.

You must realize that for three whole days and three whole nights the cry of appeal and supplication to the statue of the Virgin is not allowed to be silent for one single instant; it never, never ceases, and early in the morning, or in the after-

noon at four—during the busiest portions of the Grotto day, that is—you can hear the cry for help fully a mile away.

At four o'clock each afternoon the Host, preceded and followed by priests and Church officials in the most gorgeous of Church vestments, is carried round the oval in front of the three churches. The crowd masses itself around the egg-shaped space, the very sick lying upon their stretchers or their beds and forming an inner ring. The crowd forms up each day fully three hours before it need do so, and the sick people lie there in the broiling sun, sheltered from its rays as far as is possible by those who stand around them, for everyone is everybody's friend at Lourdes.

On the steps of the second of the churches are a group of priests. "Brothers and sisters, let us pray for help!" cries one of them in a voice of thunder, and men, women, and children in that enormous crowd drop on to their knees or lie flat on their faces in the dust, their arms stretched out to imitate the position of Christ upon the Cross. "Hosannah! Hosannah! Hosannah!" roars the black-bearded priest upon the steps.

"Notre Dame de Lourdes, guérissez-nous!" responds the crowd; and the priest continues his cry of "Hosannah!" with increasing fervour for an hour, when his voice gives out and another priest relieves him.

Promptly at four o'clock the procession of the Host enters the oval, and the golden vessel is carried round the inner line of sick and up the steps of the cathedral.

I have never in my life seen a sight so pathetic as that of those sick people's eagerness to touch the Host, the robes of the priest who carries it, or even the vestments of some subaltern in the procession. It is at this moment, while the Host is being carried round, that the greater number of the cures of which so much is heard occur in Lourdes. I saw one of these myself.

A man lying upon a stretcher within two yards of me suddenly uttered an inarticulate cry, and with hands which looked like claws pushed himself into a sitting posture.

"Help me up!" he gasped, and two great tears rolled down into his beard. "I can walk; I am cured!"

There was a rush at him, and, like a living picture of Lazarus risen from the dead, he stood there on the gravel, hatless and trouserless, with nothing on him but a white linen nightshirt and a dressing-gown of pink flannel, with the words "Hôpital d'Angoulême" marked upon it. Someone tore the pink dressing-gown from him, and threw it on the ground for him to walk upon. He took five tottering steps along it and fell exhausted into the outstretched arms around him.

Next day that man could walk and talk quite clearly, and on the day the White Train left he seemed, though weak, as well as I was. His name was Gabriel Gargan. He was a letter-sorter in the French postal service, and had been hurt so badly in an accident near Angoulême that he had remained in the hospital there for twenty months paralyzed from the waist downwards, taking food only by injection, speechless, and almost motionless, and had been brought to Lourdes quite as a last resource, for the doctors had said that his case was all but hopeless.

As a proof of the genuineness of this man's illness, I was shown documents proving that the railway company which had been responsible for his accident had paid him a sum of £2,400, and were paying a further annuity of £240 after a lawsuit which Gargan had won against the company.

Imagine, if you can, a sudden cure of this kind in a hospital. It would form the one topic of conversation for months. Perhaps the greatest miracle of all about the cure of Gabriel Gargan was that nobody seemed to think particularly much of it.

"B'en oui, c'est un miracle, et un beau miracle," said one old Norman peasant to me; "mais on est là pour ça. Il y en a tous les jours, des miracles à Lourdes."

At night, as soon as dusk has fallen, the torchlight procession starts. As if by magic the whole front of the three churches is lit with electricity, and from somewhere in the older part of the town, near the station, the chant *Ave, Ave, Ave Maria!* is raised by a few voices. It is the pilgrims' evening gathering signal. Carrying lighted candles, each candle armed with a blue-paper sheath on which is printed a picture of the Apparition and the letters N.D.L., the pilgrims throng out of the houses and hotels and march down to the Grotto. Their numbers increase and multiply as they go, and in less than half an hour every man and woman in Lourdes who can walk, and several hundreds who can only hobble, are carrying their candles in this evening procession.

Nobody knows who leads the torchlit march. It seems to have no head and no tail, but, like a gigantic luminous scaled serpent, it winds in and out, round Lourdes, across it, up the mountain-side and down again, singing, as it goes, the cadenced chant, *Ave, Ave, Ave Maria!*

There are no other words and barely any tune, but the effect is wonderful, and as the procession finishes, making a long rosary with a pendant cross which seems to be suspended from the mountains into the egg-shaped space before the churches, huge Calvaries electrically lighted blaze out from dark places in the mountain-side, and three clocks strike midnight simultaneously.

At the first stroke the cry, "Notre Dame de Lourdes, guérissez nos malades!" is raised with one voice by this huge human rosary, and then there is silence and deep darkness, for every candle is extinguished as the last stroke of midnight sounds. No words of mine can paint the actual effect of this midnight procession and its climax. It must be seen to be completely realized.

Strange as it must seem, the train-load of returning pilgrims as we left for Paris on the afternoon of the third day was very cheerful.

"God and the Virgin's holy will be done," was the reply to any question as to disappointment. There were children, of course, who cried out their young hearts in bitterness because they were not cured, but cheerfulness was the rule and sadness the exception in the returning train.

Of all the thousands who had come, ten in all perhaps were returning cured, but the others hoped and believed that their own turn would come next year.

And now what is the lesson of the annual pilgrimage to Lourdes? What are these cures? There are doctors in Lourdes itself who tell us, and believe, that the Lourdes water resets bones, cures lupus, leprosy, and blindness. There are other doctors, equally sincere, who declare that its cures are purely nervous ones. The case of Gargan, which I have cited, is a case in point. His illness, say the scientists, resulted from a nervous shock, and it was a great nervous shock which healed him. The reasoning of the scientists seems plausible and good, but the question as to whether the cures are miracles or no seems to me to be entirely beside the point.

That cures do occur at Lourdes is certain. Roughly speaking, we may say that they occur in the proportion of one to every 3,000 of the pilgrims, and this is rather above than below the average.

Now, is it right, in order to effect a cure in these proportions, to submit a throng of 30,000 people every year to the great fatigue, and often intense suffering, of a long and arduous journey, and to an expense which for fully half the pilgrims means a year's privations? Is it right, in order to effect a cure of one sufferer in 3,000, to work up a throng of 30,000 people to the pitch of superstitious mania which prevails at Lourdes during the pilgrimage? Is it right to do this evil that such small good may come of it? My answer to these questions is emphatically No.

JOHN N. RAPHAEL.