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THE STORY OF LOURDES



By REV. J. LEO BOYLE



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THE PAULIST PRESS
401 WEST 59TH STREET
NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

FOREWORD

NINETY years have passed since the memorable days of February, 1858. It was on the bleak and cold Thursday of February 11, 1858, that Our Blessed Lady first appeared at Lourdes to a little peasant girl, Bernadette Soubirous. From that day on Lourdes became a place of prayer and special devotion to Our Lady and her Divine Son.

To understand the devotion to this prayerful spot, the visitor must have faith. An old French Bishop once said: "For those who believe in God, Lourdes needs no explanation. For those who do not believe in God, Lourdes has no explanation."

The story of Lourdes before and after the apparitions has been compiled briefly in the following chapters.

Nihil Obstat: JOHN M. A. FEARNES, S.T.D.,

Censor Librorum.

Imprimatur: ✠ FRANCIS CARDINAL SPELLMAN,

Archbishop of New York.

New York, November 26, 1949.

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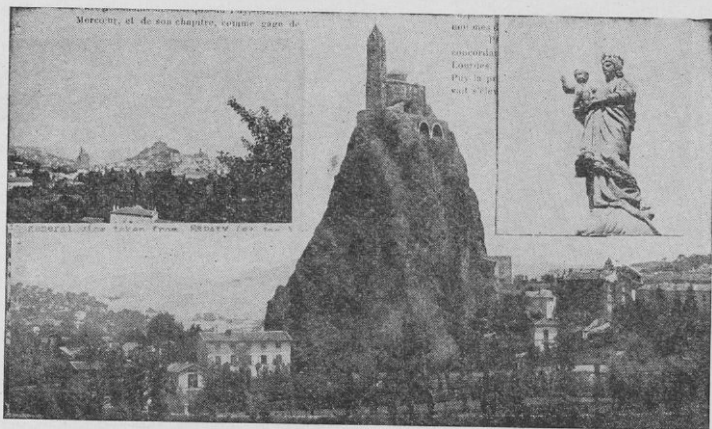
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PRINTED AND PUBLISHED IN THE U. S. A. BY THE PAULIST PRESS, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

CHAPTER I

THE NAME "LOURDES"

HIDDEN in the high Southern Pyrennes Mountains, near the Spanish Border, lies the picturesque and renowned town of Lourdes. It is 12 hours' journey by train from Paris; 27 hours' journey from London. Its early history is



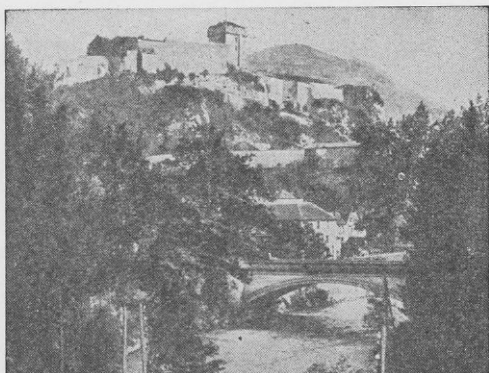
Le Puy

shrouded in legend. Some historians trace its origin to the days of Moses. Legend tells us that Tarbis, a beautiful young Ethiopian Princess, fell in love with Moses. Tarbis was disappointed because Moses refused her hand and her throne.

With nearly half of her kingdom, she and her sister

wandered far from her homeland to the Valley of the Pau in Southern France and settled there. She founded the town of "Tarbes." Her sister went a few miles farther south and established a town which was called "Lapidum" because of the rocky surface of the country.

Buried in the oblivion of years, history tells us little or nothing of "Lapidum" until the town was given the name it bears today—"Lourdes." Since it is situated at the



The Castle-Fort

entrance to the sevenfold Valley of the Pau, Lourdes was always the objective of invading armies. Even Caesar's army besieged and captured the old Castle-Fort at Lourdes.

The Castle-Fort was built long before Charlemagne's march to the sea. For centuries it was the stronghold of the Saracens. In 778, when Charlemagne made his march to Spain, he was stopped before the ancient Castle-Fort. For three days he laid siege to the Castle, but the Saracen

Chief, Mirat, refused to surrender. By a miracle of grace, Mirat finally surrendered in the name of the most beautiful of ladies, Our Lady of La Puy.¹ Mirat became a Christian, and when he was baptized he took the name "Lordum." The town then became known as "Lourdes."



Bernadette as a Child

¹ Our Lady appeared in the town of La Puy some years before the siege of the Castle at Lourdes. Mirat knew of this apparition. (It was at La Puy that the Order of the Sisters of St. Joseph was founded in 1665, by Bishop de Maupas and Father John Peter Medaille, S.J.)



CHAPTER II

THE SOUBIROUS FAMILY

ABOUT the middle of the nineteenth century Lourdes had four thousand inhabitants. The majority of them were faithful farmers or hard-working quarrymen. Among them, however, was an itinerant miller, Francois Soubirous.



The Soubirous

In the course of his stay at Lourdes, Francois was married to Louise Casterot, the youngest daughter of her widowed mother. Through his marriage he became the owner and operator of the Mill of Boly.



God blessed their union with six children. The first child was a girl, born on January 7, 1844. At baptism she was given the name "Marie-Bernard," but because she was small, she was always called "Bernadette."

Until that time the history of Lourdes had been centered in and around the old Castle-Fort, but from then on it



The Cachot

can be told in the life and times of a humble peasant girl—"Bernadette Soubirous." Without Bernadette, Lourdes would have become another forgotten town in the Hautes Pyrenees.

Six months after the birth of Bernadette her mother was burned severely by hot rosin. Bernadette was sent to be nursed by Marie Lagues, a kindly neighbor in the Village of Bartres, nearly three miles from Lourdes. In the years that followed she occasionally visited her parents. When she was 14 years old she returned to Lourdes to make her First Holy Communion and remained there.

Small of stature, with large dark brown eyes and jet black hair, Bernadette's well-rounded face had the features of a French peasant of the Southern Pyrenees. From infancy she was a delicate child, afflicted with asthma. It was with difficulty that she learned the simple lessons of the catechism. Bernadette had no special gift for education, but she had a keen sense of humor.

An agreement had been made with her foster parents at Bartres concerning her early education. But the agreement was not kept too faithfully, for very often she was sent to the hillside to tend the sheep. During the long hours of her vigil she was accustomed to say the rosary. It was here that her love for Our Blessed Lady grew with child-like simplicity.

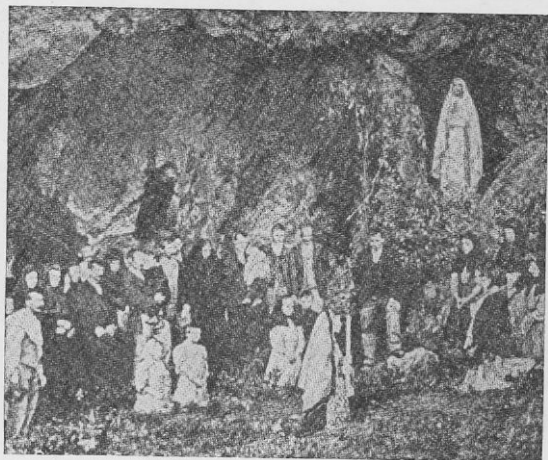
When she returned to Lourdes she found her family in dire poverty. So sad were their circumstances that on one occasion her brother, Pierre, was discovered eating the wax that had fallen from the candles after a Funeral Mass in the parish church.

Bernadette's father was inclined to be carefree and indolent, while her mother was generous and improvident. Through neglect and mismanagement they lost the mill at Boly. Because of this misfortune they were forced to accept for their home the Cachot, formerly the prison at Lourdes. It was to this home that Bernadette returned in the middle of the winter of 1858.

CHAPTER III

THE APPARITIONS

BERNADETTE readily adjusted herself to the poverty-stricken surroundings of her home at Lourdes. Despite frequent attacks of asthma, she willingly shared the family



The Ninth Apparition

burdens with her brothers and sisters. On Thursday, February 11, 1858, she asked her mother for permission to accompany her sister, Marie Toinette, and a companion, Jeanne Abadie, to gather firewood. She was allowed to go but was told to be careful of the dampness.

The three children ran along the river bank, and in

front of the Old Rock, not far from the town, Bernadette stopped to remove her shoes and stockings. Suddenly she heard a gust of wind coming from within the cave. She saw nothing move, not even the stray leaves from the trees, but when she raised her head she saw in a niche in the Rock, high above the ground, "A Beautiful Lady dressed in white, girdled with a blue sash." The Lady had a pearl white rosary on her right arm, and over each bare foot rested a golden rose. Frightened at the Vision, Bernadette knelt on the ground, took her rosary from her pocket and began to pray. The Beautiful Lady joined her each time she said the Doxology. When the rosary was finished the Vision vanished.

When her companions returned they found Bernadette still kneeling and, in wonderment, they laughed at her. She told them of the Vision, but begged them not to tell anyone. However, that night, during the family rosary, Bernadette began to cry and finally told her mother the strange happenings at the foot of the hill called "Massabielle."

Her mother forbade her to return, but the child's pleadings won out. Three days later she went back to the Rock and saw the Vision once more. On her third visit the Lady asked Bernadette to return to that spot each day for a fortnight.

Because of the recent publicity given to Lourdes, the story of Bernadette and the Lady of her Visions is now known in many parts of the world.² To recount all the events would be needless repetition.³ Some of the con-

² *The Song of Bernadette*, written by Franz Werfel, has been read by thousands of people. The motion picture of the same name has been seen by millions.

³ *Our Lady of Lourdes*, by Henri Lasserre, St. Paul Catechetical Guild, contains detailed account of all the events.

versation between the Lady and Bernadette we already know; some we will never know.

We know definitely that the Lady requested that a Chapel be built and processions be made to that spot. In another apparition Bernadette was asked to leave a lighted candle at the place where she knelt.

To the surprise of the bystanders, during one of the



The Miracle of the Spring

apparitions Bernadette dug in the ground at the request of the Lady and immediately water sprang forth, which later became the famous Spring of Lourdes. It was not until the end of the apparitions that the Lady revealed her name, when she said, "I am the Immaculate Conception."

There were eighteen apparitions from February 11th to July 16th, 1858. A remarkable feature of the apparitions

was the fact that Bernadette could not understand why the other people present did not hear her and the Lady when they spoke to each other.

At first both the civil and the religious authorities refused to accept the events at the Grotto as authentic. But the people came to Lourdes in hundreds and thousands then, as they do now. On January 18, 1862, four years after the apparitions, Bishop Laurence declared that "the apparitions revealed all the characteristics of truth, and that the Faithful are authorized to believe in them as certain."

CHAPTER IV

AFTER THE APPARITIONS

FROM the time of the apparitions Bernadette's life was not her own. For many months after the last apparition she was questioned by civil and religious authorities, and



Sister Marie Bernard

during the remainder of her life visitors from far and near called on her.

At first Abbe Peyramale, the parish priest of Lourdes, was incredulous of Bernadette's story, but later he became the champion of her cause. Through his help and encouragement Bernadette's family moved from the Cachot to a mill house in the Lapaca quarter of Lourdes.

Hundreds of curious visitors came to Lourdes to see the favored Visionary. In order to avoid the strain of meeting them, Abbe Peyramale suggested that Bernadette live at the Hospice of the Sisters in Lourdes, and she remained there for the next eight years. The progress of her education was anything but encouraging, but it was during this time that God gave her the desire to become a Nun.

One day, when Bishop Forcade of Nevers was on his annual visitation, he asked Bernadette about her future. Her first desire was to become a Carmelite Sister, but her health would not permit so strenuous a life. Finally she considered becoming a Sister of Charity of Nevers.

In making her decision she was perplexed by two problems—her dowry and her health. The Bishop told her not to worry about either of them but to think the matter over. Two years later she made application for the Novitiate at Nevers and was accepted, but her entrance had to be delayed for two more years because of ill health.

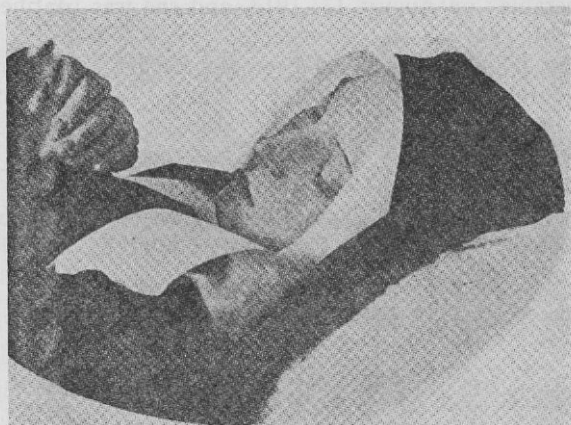
On July 7, 1866, Bernadette bade farewell to Lourdes and her loved ones. It was a day mixed with the joy of expectation and the sadness of farewell. Her last visit to the Grotto was never to be forgotten. How often in later years she longed to visit that hallowed spot will never be known. Shortly after she left Lourdes her mother and father died.

When Bernadette arrived at the Motherhouse she was lonely and homesick. Again she became ill, but three weeks later she was permitted to put on the habit of the Sisters of Charity of Nevers and was given the name "Sister Marie Bernard." However, her Superiors and the Sisters continued to call her Bernadette.

In general the Sisters were considerate of her fame.

Shortly after her arrival at Nevers the wise Mother Superior had her tell the story of the apparitions, and then instructed the Sisters never to mention them again.

Bernadette's life as a Nun was not marked by any extraordinary events. The condition of her health did not warrant laborious duties. Some of her biographers claim



The Body of St. Bernadette

that her Superiors often tested her humility and sincerity. After many trials she was finally assigned to the infirmary as an infirmarian and made an assistant sacristan.

On September 22, 1878 Bernadette made her perpetual and final vows. The following year she was stricken with a tuberculous abscess on her right knee and a recurrence of asthma. On two occasions she had been anointed for death, but on Wednesday of Holy Week, April 16, 1879,

she was called by God to take her place in the everlasting home of her Heavenly Visitant.

Bernadette was buried in the Chapel of St. Joseph within the convent gardens at Nevers. On September 22, 1909, her body was exhumed and found to be in a perfect state of preservation. In 1910 the cause for her canonization was introduced at Rome. Pope Pius X declared her "Venerable" on August 13, 1913, and she was beatified on June 14, 1925.

Her body was removed from the Chapel on August 3, 1925, and placed in a crystal casket.⁴ Today it can be seen by visitors to the convent where it rests before the side altar.⁵

On December 8, 1933, the Feast of Our Lady's Immaculate Conception, Pope Pius XI bestowed the honor and title of Sainthood on Bernadette Soubirous, the humble little peasant girl of Lourdes.

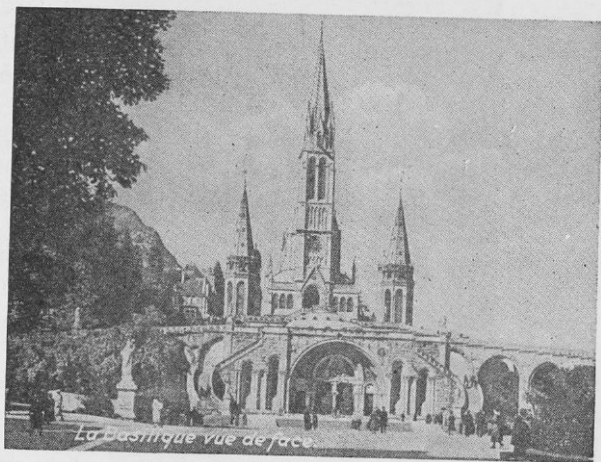
⁴ The Chapel of St. Joseph was destroyed by Allied bombardment of the German-occupied Nevers on July 16, 1944. The convent escaped damage.

⁵ The heart of Father Price, the co-founder of Maryknoll, is enclosed in a marble slab to the right of the altar. Father Price was a devoted client of St. Bernadette.

CHAPTER V

THE MESSAGE OF OUR LADY

THE Beautiful Lady gave Bernadette a definite commission in the 14th apparition on March 2, 1858, when she said: "Go tell the priests to have a chapel built here and to come here in procession." It was not easy for the child



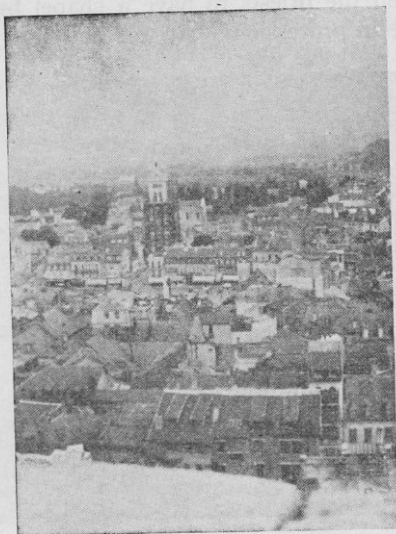
The Basilica and Rosary Square

to convey the message to stern and unrelenting Abbe Peyramale, who at that time did not believe the events at the Grotto to be true.

A wild rose bush grew beneath the Rock of the Visions. When the Abbe heard the Lady's request, he asked Bernadette to have her prove her identity by making the roses

bloom. Apparently the Lady did not wish to prove her identity in that way. Since it was the month of March the roses did not bloom.

The passing months brought many changes in the minds and hearts of both the religious and civil authorities. The



Parish Church and Town

simplicity and sincerity of Bernadette's answers in trying examinations won the respect and faith of many who distrusted her. Among these the good Abbe was the first to acknowledge the truthfulness of her story.

The Crypt of the Church that now stands on Massabielle

was dedicated eight years later, on May 21, 1866. Three hundred clergy and approximately 50,000 pilgrims came to Lourdes that day. Bernadette was also there, but she was forgotten in the great crowd, just as she wished to be.

Each year brought new developments to the environments of Massabielle. The precincts of the famous Grotto now embrace over 140 acres, which are enclosed by a wrought-iron fence.

The pilgrim may enter the Lourdes Sanctuaries by two gates. The gate of St. Michael is at the east entrance, and the gate of Monsignor Laurence is at the north entrance.

The gate of St. Michael opens to the full view of the Esplanade and the beautiful Basilica of Our Lady of Lourdes. Two impressive statues, one of St. Michael and the other of St. Raphael, the Archangels, adorn the pillars of the gateway. Directly inside the gate stands the bronze statue of St. Michael trampling the dragon underfoot. Next in order is a statuary group depicting the Crucifixion, known as "The Breton Calvary."

The Esplanade is an oval-shaped garden of grass, surrounded by a wide roadway that leads from the gate of St. Michael to Rosary Square. Within it stand the statues of the Sacred Heart appearing to St. Margaret Mary, the Cure of Ars, and the crowned statue of Our Lady.⁶

To the left of the Esplanade is the Victory Monument dedicated to the memory of the French and Allied soldiers of World War I. Back of the monument is the museum which contains many interesting relics of Bernadette.

⁶ The rosary that hangs from the right arm of this statue consists of six decades. It is the custom of many places of Southern France to recite the sixth decade of the rosary for the Souls in Purgatory.

Pilgrims' Shelter is at the end of the roadway facing Rosary Square. To the right of the Esplanade, near the square, is the Hospital of the Lourdes Sanctuaries, known as "The Aisle of Our Lady of Lourdes."

The Rosary Square is encircled by wide ramps and a portico which leads to the entrance of the Crypt and the Basilica. The Square opens directly on the entrance of the Rosary Chapel.

Leaving the hospital, along the right bank of the Gave River are the Piscines, or the Baths. Beyond the Baths are the twelve water taps where water from the Grotto Spring can be obtained.

A wide portico opens the pilgrim's view of the Grotto and the hallowed spot where Our Blessed Lady appeared to the little Saint of Lourdes.

CHAPTER VI

OUR LADY'S REQUEST FULFILLED

OUR Lady's request to have a Chapel built at the place of the apparitions has been fulfilled indeed. Today there stand on the height of Massabielle a Basilica and a Crypt, while at the base of the Old Rock there is another church known as the Rosary Chapel.

The Basilica was opened for Divine Services on August 15, 1871. It is nearly 200 feet long and almost 100 feet wide. Filled to capacity it can accommodate 2,000 people. Contrary to custom, it was built from east to west so that the foundation of the sanctuary would be directly over the Grotto.

In 1875 the French Government benevolently granted the sum of 25,000 francs to complete the ornamental balustrade encasing the ramps which encircle the Rosary Square.

The graceful spire of the Basilica's central tower is surmounted by a cross beneath which is a crown of gilded flowers, a symbol of Our Lady's diadem.

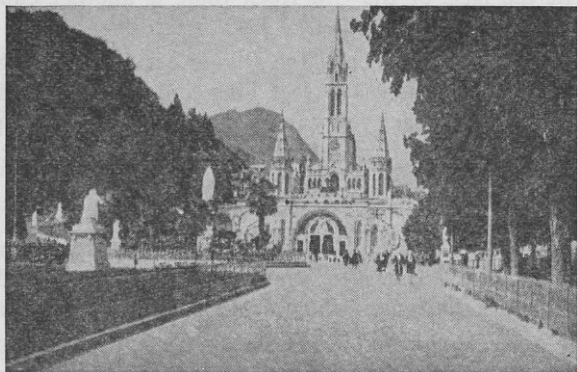
In rich tones the bells from the clock in the tower ring out every quarter hour the melody of the "Inviolata." On the hour the chimes peal forth the hymn of Lourdes, "Ave, Ave, Ave, Maria."

A statue of Our Lady of Lourdes stands above the Gothic doorway leading into the Basilica. The beauty of the Basilica, with its Gothic arches draped with the flags of all nations, enchants the eye of the visitor.

The main altar is adorned with five bas-reliefs depicting events in the life of Our Lady. The Bishop's throne is

made of Canadian oak. Nineteen stained-glass windows depict the history of the Basilica.⁷

It took three months of hard labor to blast the solid rock for the entrance to the Crypt. The Crypt has five chapels and a number of confessionals. A Chaplain is on duty for confessions throughout the day.



The Basilica and Square of The Rosary

The golden crown and cross of the dome of the Rosary Church rises from the center of the portico in front of the Crypt. This was a gift of the National Pilgrimage from Ireland in 1913.

⁷ In 1892 Pope Leo XIII authorized a special Office and Feast of the Apparition. In 1907 Pius X extended this Feast to the Universal Church. This was the first time in eight hundred years that such a privilege was accorded to a feast commemorating an apparition.

Rosary Square lies between the ramps. During large pilgrimages it has been filled with more than 100,000 pilgrims. Beneath the Square is a reservoir containing the overflow waters from the Spring in the Grotto.

The Rosary Chapel was built at the base of Massabielle at the cost of over 3,000,000 francs. The Chapel was completed for services on October 6, 1901, and has a capacity of 6,000 people. It is outlined in the form of a Greek Cross. The architecture is Romanesque, but the decorations are Byzantine. It is surmounted by a central dome and receives ventilation and natural light from the dome and the main doorway.

High above the main altar stands the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes. Back of the statue hangs the Pope's lamp, given in 1894 to commemorate the Episcopal Jubilee of Pope Leo XIII. In the arch of the dome is an immense mosaic of Our Lady, gilded with the inscription, "Ad Jesum per Mariam," to Jesus through Mary. There are fifteen chapels in the alcoves of the arches. Each chapel represents in mosaic one of the mysteries of the rosary. Marble votive tablets are being added constantly to the walls of the chapel.

CHAPTER VII

ADORNMENTS OF THE GROTTO PRECINCTS

ON the hillside north of the Basilica stands the statue of the Summoning Angel of Calvary. With his right hand he points to the Way of the Cross. With his left hand he

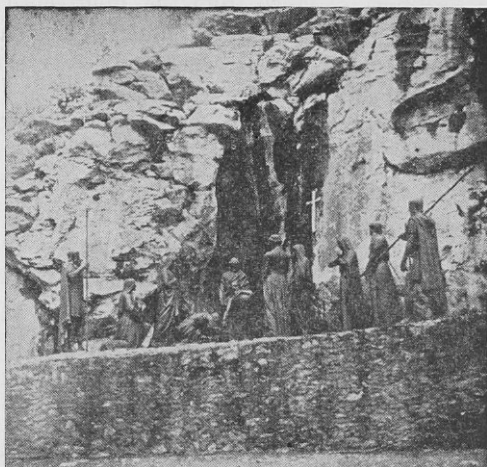


The Angel of Calvary

supports a lofty cross on which is written the inscription, "In Cruce Salus"—In the Cross Is Salvation.

The Way of the Cross depicts the well-known scenes of the suffering and death of Our Divine Lord in life-size figures of bronze. The work of placing the Stations on the hillside was begun on September 14, 1912.

The steep and rocky ascent leads to the Scala-Sancta—a white marble staircase with twenty-eight steps to the First Station.⁸ Pilgrims mount each step on their knees to commemorate the suffering of Our Divine Saviour as He



The Fourteenth Station

twice trod the steps leading to the Praetorium of Pilate. A she-wolf, the symbol of Roman power, dominates the scene.

The Twelfth Station is at the top of the hill overlooking the Valley of the Pau. During the Pilgrimages Mass is celebrated at noon and sometimes at midnight at the

⁸ This was the traditional number of steps that lead to the Praetorium of Pilate.

altar beneath the Cross of the Crucifixion. Six thousand people can attend Mass on the hillside. The Stations were the gift of the German Pilgrimage in 1912.

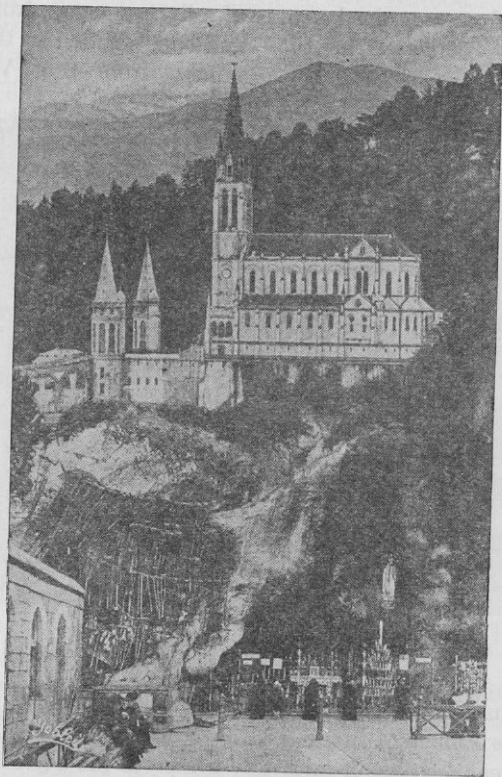
The Fourteenth Station is the scene of Christ's burial. A natural crevice in the rock gives the background for the sepulcher. A short distance from the Fourteenth Station are the Grottos of the Espeluges. These Grottos have been transformed into two chapels where Mass is sometimes said during inclement weather.⁹

Between the Grottos there is a beautiful Cross towering above the statues of the Blessed Mother and St. John. On August 22, 1890, one hundred men from all classes of society walked barefoot, carrying this glorious symbol of our Redemption to the Grottos of the Espeluges. Many pilgrims still make the Stations of the Cross in their bare feet.

At the foot of the western hill stands the Celtic Cross. It is a gift of the Irish National Pilgrimage and was unveiled by Cardinal Logue on September 14, 1913. The image of Christ and the scenes from the mysteries of the rosary are carved on the beams of the Cross, while on the arms are resplendent figures of St. Patrick and St. Bridget.

At the base of the Cross is the inscription "Juxta Crucem Tecum Stare"—By the Cross We Stand With Thee. It recalls that in days of distress and sorrow Ireland, like Our Blessed Lady, found strength and consolation at the foot of the Cross.

⁹ It is highly probable that Lourdes was inhabited in prehistoric times. The bones of humans and animals were discovered in some of the many caverns during the explorations at the end of the 19th century.



The Basilica and The Grotto

CHAPTER VIII

THE PILGRIMAGES

THE first organized group of pilgrims came from the Village of Loubajac in 1846 and was made in thanksgiving for the healing of a woman from that Village.



A Pilgrimage Entering Lourdes

Since that time the first pilgrimage of the season comes from the Village of Loubajac. It is one of the most colorful of the year, because it faithfully preserves the ancient charm of village piety and the rustic grace of its pilgrims.¹⁰

¹⁰ The pilgrimage season begins on Easter Monday and continues until the middle of October.

In the summer of 1867 train service to Lourdes was opened. The first pilgrim train came from Bayonne, a few hours' journey from Lourdes. Since that time thousands of pilgrim trains have come from all over Europe.

The first organized pilgrimage of 25,000 people from all parts of France came to Lourdes in the fall of 1872. This movement gave a great impetus to pilgrimages of future years. It is now known as the French National Pilgrimage and is under the direction of the Assumptionist Fathers.

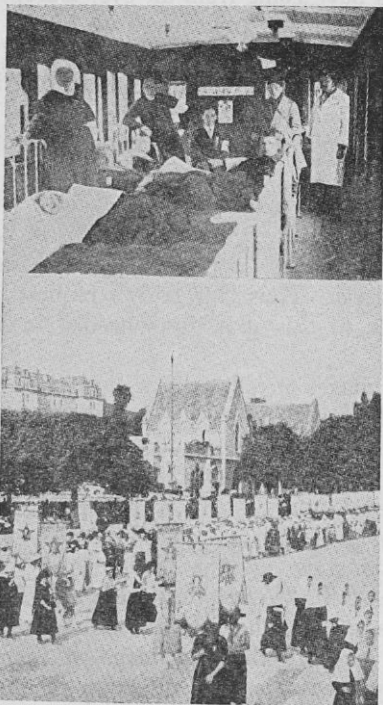
These wonderful manifestations of faith were somewhat curtailed during the First and Second World Wars. During those years pilgrimages were of a personal rather than an organized nature. Thus Our Lady's request "to have processions made to this spot" was heeded in spite of great difficulties.

The pilgrimages of today are well planned and prepared. They provide for the comfort of hundreds of sick and invalid patients who have made long and arduous journeys. Greater facilities of transportation by train and bus have rendered Lourdes easily accessible.

Each pilgrimage has its own corps of volunteer workers, called "Handmaids of the Sick" and "Brancardiers" (stretcher-bearers). Very often these men and women are doctors, nurses, and other professional people. They help to plan and prepare the pilgrimage at home. While at Lourdes they are under the direction of the Hospitalite. Their work is an encouragement to the sick and a revelation to the casual visitor at Lourdes.

According to the "Annales de la Grotte," 4,937 organized pilgrimages came to Lourdes between 1867 and 1907, bringing 1,837 Bishops and over 4,500,000 French pilgrims

to the Grotto. There seems to be no record of the number of foreign pilgrims. In 1946, the first year after the close of World War II, 1,000,000 pilgrims visited Lourdes.



The White Car and a Procession

Before arriving at Lourdes the pilgrims are assigned to one of the many hotels. The invalids are placed in the

hospitals, where they receive expert medical attention free of charge. The pilgrim train is met by members of the Society of "Notre Dame de Salut"—Our Lady of Good Help. This Society was founded in 1881 to aid the invalids of the French National Pilgrimage.

From this Society there was formed another and larger association to assist and minister to the invalids of all pilgrimages. It was organized for men in 1885 and for women in 1886. The association is called "The Hospitalite of Our Lady of Lourdes." In 1928 it was established as an Archconfraternity. Since then this Society has drawn members from all parts of the world. They serve for a definite period of time each year. At the end of the third year's service they are accredited as permanent members. The men are known as "hospitaliers," the women as "hospitalieres." The hospitaliers are in charge of forming and directing processions at the Grotto.

Perhaps the most spectacular is the military pilgrimage, known today as "The Allied Veterans' Pilgrimage." The earliest military pilgrimages came to Lourdes on August 19 and September 15, 1914, at the beginning of World War I. The Veterans' Pilgrimage is the last great pilgrimage of the season.¹¹ It is held every year in October and numbers over 100,000. During World War I, on August 20, 1916, 1,000 children came to the Grotto to implore Our Lady's intercession for peace and deliverance. They brought with them a written supplication to Our Lady, signed by 700,000 children of France.

¹¹ On September 8, 1946 the War Prisoners of France brought 120,000 pilgrims to honor Our Lady.

CHAPTER IX

THE HOSPITALS AND THE BATHS

THERE are three hospitals at Lourdes. The oldest was founded in 1872 through the generosity of Mlle. Saint Frai of Tarbes. It is known as the Hospital of Our Lady of



One of the Baths

the Seven Dolors. Mlle. Saint Frai also founded the Daughters of Our Lady of the Seven Dolors, an order of nuns who work in the hospital. Today the hospital can accom-

modate nearly 600 patients. It is used as a district institution for the town and its environs.

The Municipal Hospital is under the supervision of the Sisters of Charity of Nevers. It was Bernadette's home for a time after the apparitions. Because of its distance from the Grotto, pilgrim patients are rarely kept there.

The Asile Notre Dame de Lourdes is within the Grotto precinct on the south side of the Esplanade. It was founded in 1880 and enlarged in subsequent years. Besides nearly 300 beds for the patients, it contains two dormitories for the members of the hospitalite. The Sisters of Charity of Nevers supervise the work. Doctors and nurses volunteer their services during their stay in Lourdes.

The building providing the three baths was begun by popular subscription in 1881. There is a department for men, one for women and one for children. The baths are lined in tile and sunk beneath the floor in old Roman style. The water comes directly from the spring in the Grotto.

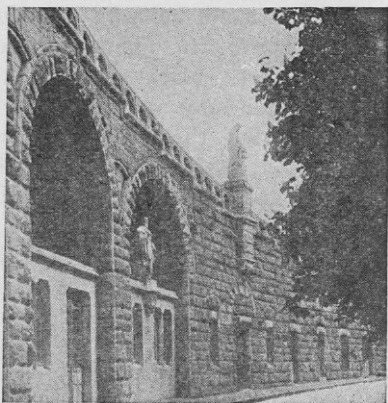
The bathing hours are from 9 to 11 A. M. and from 2 to 4 P. M. Invalid patients are placed in wicker baskets and dipped in the water. Many miraculous cures have occurred during the bathing. There has never been any case of infection from the water, which is renewed twice daily.

During the bathing hours the pilgrims gather around the courtyard of the baths to plead for help in hymns and prayers. The strains of their hymn of supplication, "Parce nobis Domino"—Spare us, O Lord—rings forever in the memory of the pilgrim to Lourdes.

CHAPTER X

THE MEDICAL BUREAU

THE gate of Monsignor Laurence on the north side of the Grotto leads directly to the Square of the Rosary. To the left of the Square beneath the ramps is the Medical Bureau; to the right is the Bureau of the Hospitalite.



The Medical Bureau

Above the entrance to the Medical Bureau is the statue of St. Luke, the patron saint of physicians. As early as July 28, 1858, Bishop Laurence of Lourdes appointed a clerical committee to register the cures obtained through the intercession of Our Lady at Lourdes. The present Medical Bureau was founded in 1884 by a noted Belgian doctor.

Any doctor visiting Lourdes is free to examine the

Bureau records. There is no restriction placed on him because of his religious or scientific views. More than a thousand doctors from all parts of the world come to Lourdes every year. They may become active members of the Bureau by examining patients and recording cases. The list of cases reported cured is published year by year.

In well organized pilgrimages the patients bring medical certificates with X-rays and histories of their cases from family physicians. When they arrive at Lourdes they are registered and examined by the doctors. If a patient is cured during his stay at Lourdes, the cure is not immediately proclaimed as an authentic miracle. When the patient returns in a year or two to be re-examined, his cure may or may not be declared authentic. At the request of Pope Pius X a Canonical Board of Investigation for these cases was established in 1904.

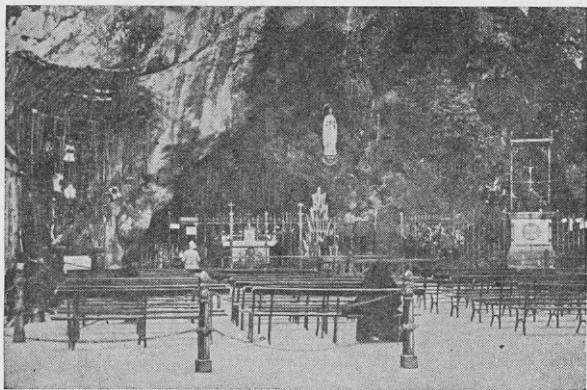
Not all of those who come to Lourdes in hope of a cure return home with the hope fulfilled. Not all the miracles are physical wonders. Only the Recording Angel's scroll will reveal the myriad number of world-weary souls who have found peace and comfort beneath the mantle of Our Lady of Lourdes.¹²

¹² One day a soldier victim of World War I was wheeling himself down the pathway to the Grotto when a young girl, standing nearby, whispered to a friend: "Poor fellow, does he think Our Lady will give him back his lost legs?" The soldier overheard her remark, and turning his chair quickly he said: "No madam, but at least I shall get the courage to do without them." If Our Lady does not obtain our requests, at least she will grant us the grace to do without them.

CHAPTER XI

THE CAVE OF MASSABIELLE

THE life of Lourdes is centered around the Grotto. The rock in which the Grotto is situated is called "Massabielle," which in Pyrenean patois means "Old Rock." There are three unequal openings to the Grotto. The highest is about



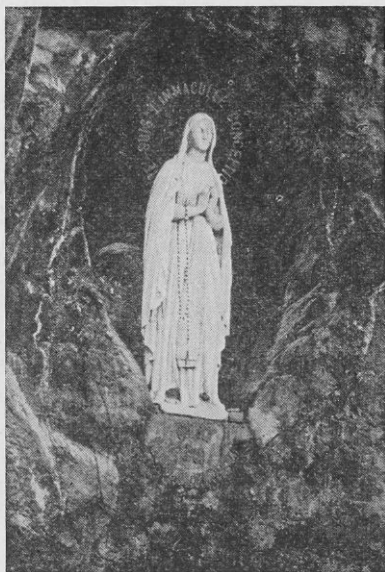
The Grotto

39 feet with a depth of 23 feet. The niche of the apparitions is six feet high. The statue in the niche was placed there on April 4, 1864.

The rambling rose vine which grew in the niche at the time of the apparitions was uprooted by souvenir seekers.¹³

¹³ A small statue of Our Lady was carved from the root of the stolen vine and returned to Lourdes. It is kept in the sanctuary of the Basilica.

A new vine was planted in 1912. A small amount of earth was taken from the original site of the home of the Holy Family at Nazareth and placed around the root of the vine.



The Statue in the Niche

In 1916 the inscription "Que Soy Era Immaculado Concepcion"—I Am the Immaculate Conception—was inscribed beneath the niche. The base of the rock itself has been worn smooth by the veneration of pilgrims.

Hundreds of petitions are placed in a receptacle at the

rear of the Grotto. Ever since the day Our Lady asked Bernadette to leave in the ground the lighted candle she held in her hand during the apparitions, hundreds and thousands of votive candles have been burning at the Grotto.

The original wooden altar in the Grotto was replaced by a Carrara marble in 1908.

The spring is at the left side of the Grotto sanctuary just back of the altar. A wrought-iron fence encloses the sanctuary. At regular intervals during the day pilgrims are permitted to enter the sanctuary to venerate the rock of the apparitions. In order not to interfere with the other ceremonies of the day, Masses are celebrated continuously in the Grotto from the break of dawn until 9 A. M.

The Brancardiers (stretcher-bearers) and Handmaids (nurses and aides) attend the needs of the patients who receive Holy Communion at the Grotto Altar. Holy Communion is distributed continually during Mass.

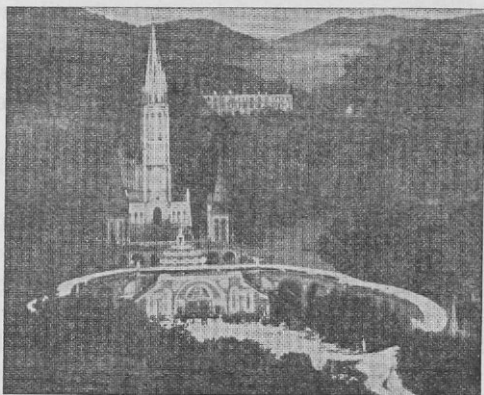
In the quiet moments, as well as in the crowded hours, humble clients kneel at the Grotto with outstretched arms, reciting the rosary. The favorite place for many pilgrims is at the east end of the sanctuary near the sacristy where Bernadette knelt during the apparitions.

CHAPTER XII

THE PROCESSIONS

PERHAPS nowhere in the world can one see so unique and impressive a sight as the processions at Lourdes. There are two processions each day, one in the afternoon and one in the evening.

The procession of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in the afternoon. Long before the appointed hour the Brancardiers and Handmaids wheel the patients to their places before the Grotto. There is a short sermon, and the rosary



A Torchlight Procession

is recited before each procession begins. The Blessed Sacrament is brought from the Rosary Chapel and the procession moves promptly at 4:30 P. M.

The Children of Mary, in white veils and pale blue capes, lead the line of marchers. Various banners and flags designate the different dioceses and groups of pilgrims in the line of march. Everyone in the procession carries a lighted candle. The hymns in honor of the Blessed Sacrament are broadcast throughout the precincts of the Grotto.

The Blessed Sacrament is usually carried by a prelate. The members of the Hospitalite are privileged to be guards of honor carrying the canopy.

While the procession wends its way along the pathway from the Grotto and down the Esplanade, the rosary is recited by the patients in the Square.

When the procession arrives in the Square, the Bishop, accompanied by the guard of honor, begins the round of blessings of the pilgrim patients, lifting the Ostensorium in the form of a cross above every two stretchers. After he has completed the blessing of the patients, he carries the Blessed Sacrament to the door of the Rosary Chapel, where a general benediction is given to all of the pilgrims. It is one of the most impressive sights at Lourdes.

The Torchlight Procession takes place at 8:30 P. M. The towers and dome of the three churches are beautifully illuminated with myriad miniature lights. The pilgrims assembled before the Grotto recite the rosary, and immediately afterward the procession begins to move. There is a constant stream of lighted candles along the pathways, up the ramps and through the Esplanade to the Square of the Rosary, where the procession ends. Throughout the long march the pilgrims sing the famous hymn of Lourdes, "Ave, Ave, Ave, Maria." When the procession arrives in the Square, the Pater Noster and the Credo are sung. The day's ceremony ends with a blessing by the presiding prelate.

CHAPTER XIII

LOURDES VISITORS AND PERSONAGES

WITH the immortal names of Father Peyramale and of Bishop Laurence, the Bishop of Tarbes and Lourdes, there will also be remembered the name of one of his successors, Bishop Schoepfer. During his administration the Grotto and its domain were greatly improved and beautified.



Moving the Invalids

Lourdes has no preference for persons. The rich and the poor, the believer and the unbeliever, the sinner and the saint, stand side by side before the Grotto. Among the visitors of distinction were King Ferdinand of Portugal, King Edward VII of England, Queen Isabella of Spain, and the Emperor and Empress of Brazil. Pope Benedict

XV, Pope Pius XI and Pope Pius XII, presently reigning, visited Lourdes before their elevation to the Papacy. Pope Pius XII, as Cardinal Pacelli, was sent to Lourdes as a Legate for the closing ceremonies of the Holy Year



Cardinal Logue Blessing the Celtic Cross

of the Redemption in 1933. In response to an address of welcome he said: "Lourdes becomes on this day The Holy City which is exalted above Nazareth, Bethlehem, Bethsaida, above the Cenacle and Damascus, for it becomes the Holy Golgotha of the Catholic World." In his remarks,

spoken with profound emotion, he expressed his joy in seeing Lourdes chosen as the place of universal supplication for peace. "No place else is more worthy."

After the death of Bishop Shoepfer, Monsignor Marie Gerlier was appointed to succeed him. Lawyer, priest, scholar and soldier, he continued the work of his saintly predecessor. In the summer of 1937 Bishop Gerlier was appointed Cardinal-Archbishop of Lyons, and Bishop Choquet was appointed to succeed him at Tarbes and Lourdes.

During the years of World War II, Lourdes became a haven of refuge for the victims of hatred and tyranny. The charity of Bishop Choquet and the people of Lourdes will be forever remembered by the grateful people of war-torn countries in Europe.

The good Bishop was called to his eternal reward in 1945. The charity and traditions of Lourdes are now being faithfully fulfilled by his successor, Bishop Theas.

CHAPTER XIV

THE ENVIRONS OF LOURDES

SINCE January 27, 1920, the old Castle-Fort has been used as a museum. Its weather-beaten walls contain many evidences of primitive methods of warfare. From the court-



The Victory Monument

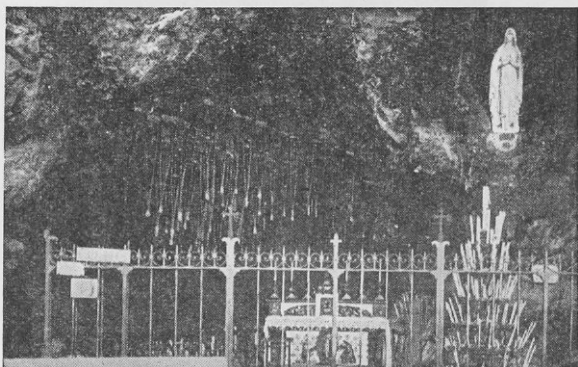
yard of the Castle there is a magnificent view of Lourdes and the Valley of The Pau.

Lourdes has a normal population of ten thousand. Dur-

ing the pilgrimage season the population is sometimes increased to more than one hundred thousand.

The parish church of the Sacred Heart was built by Father Peyramale in 1875. His body now lies in the crypt.

There are many convents scattered throughout the town, especially on the right bank of the Gave River. The Cyclorama Building is near the north entrance to the Grotto Sanctuaries and contains a painting of the 18th apparition.



The Sanctuary and The Grotto

The low clouds sometimes break against the high Pyrenees Mountains and cause frequent showers. The Grotto and its Sanctuaries were destroyed by the devastating floods of 1875 and were threatened again in the spring of 1937. The damage was not beyond repair, and today the Grotto and its domain remain a delight to the pilgrim who is privileged to visit the Sacred Shrine of Our Lady.

CHAPTER XV

"TILL WE MEET AGAIN"

THE final ceremony of a pilgrimage is the formal farewell to Our Lady. The pilgrim finds it much easier to say "Au Revoir"—Till We Meet Again—than "Les Adieux"—Goodbye. His heart is sad but hopeful that if the next



The Altar of St. Bernadette

meeting cannot be at Lourdes, it will be before Her Eternal Shrine in heaven.

The day of her last visit to the Grotto was one of the saddest days in the life of Bernadette. When the Sisters brought her back to the hospice, they said to her, "Why were you so distressed? Do you not know that you can pray to the Virgin everywhere and that everywhere and always she will be your Mother?" "Yes, I know that," she replied, "but at Lourdes, dear Sisters, the Grotto was my heaven."

If we were to take a pencil and trace the various places where Our Lady appeared throughout France, Lourdes stands out like the diamond in the diadem of all her apparitions. The message she gave to St. Bernadette is one of faith that men may believe in the truths taught by her Divine Son, of hope that they may trust in His promises, of charity that they may love Him.

It was on December 8, 1854 that Pope Pius IX declared to the world that Our Blessed Lady was to be honored henceforth under the title of "The Immaculate Conception." Four years later, when Our Lady gave her name to Saint Bernadette, she said "I am the Immaculate Conception."

The lame and the blind, the sick and the invalid, the sinner and the saint, come to Lourdes to plead their cause before Our Lady's Shrine. Some prayers are answered in their fullness, others are not; but all return home to love God's Mother more fervently and to serve her Son more faithfully.

Mary's love is indigenous to every soil and to every soul. An "Ave" in distress, said in any language, will reach her heart. To many who may never see the hallowed spot in the Grotto at Lourdes may these chapters bring the message of faith, of hope, and of charity in its fullest measure here on earth and eternally in heaven.

LATEST STATISTICS ON LOURDES

Modern transportation has facilitated the arrival of the sick at Lourdes. Those who wish to travel by air are brought to the Airport of Ossun, ten kilometers away from Lourdes. The ambulances of the Grotto are used to bring only the sick from the airport. Departing at noon from England, Ireland, Belgium and Holland, the planes arrive at four o'clock, and the sick are in the hospitals twenty minutes later. During 1948 airplanes brought 1,332 pilgrims and 120 sick from England, Holland and Morocco. There were also some air pilgrimages from the United States.

The first American pilgrimage since the apparitions was organized in 1948. It consisted of 550 pilgrims from Boston under the leadership of their Archbishop and three other Bishops.

The number of pilgrims who arrived in Lourdes during 1948 by train and bus totaled 1,500,000.

Number of those who served in 1948:

Stretcher-bearers (brancardiers)	7,500
Hostel Attendants (hospitalieres and auxiliaries).....	916
Nurses in the Shelter (Asile).....	203
Nurses in the Hospital.....	120

From the Bureau of Records for 1948:

Number of physicians who served.....	908
Number of sick examined.....	1,017
Number of processes for examination of those reputedly cured in 1947.....	35
Number of files of those reputedly cured in 1948.....	83



