

THE LOURDES MIRACLES

In the surgical amphitheatre of the American Hospital, Boulogne, on January 22, Father Francis Woodlock, S.J., C.F., delivered an address to the doctors of the Boulogne base hospitals on "The Medical Aspect of the Lourdes Shrine," says the *London Tablet*. Between 60 and 70 doctors were present, a gathering that testified to the increased interest taken by the profession in the famous shrine. After a short introduction, in which the lecturer established the points that a genuine freethinker should be ready to examine the evidence for miracles, and that everyone who believed in the existence of God must recognise the possibility of their occurrence, he quoted various medical authorities, defining limits to the power of hypnotism, auto-suggestion, and any psycho-therapeutic treatment. Father Woodlock then turned to the special cases of cure which he had selected as conclusive evidence of the supernatural, quoting, as his authority for the cases, recently published books by doctors who had been convinced of the supernatural character of the cures they were dealing with. He especially commended to the attention of his audience Dr Boissaire's *Lourdes—Les Guerisons*, published in 1911, the last work of the distinguished president of that medical bureau at Lourdes which examines reported cures, and year by year keeps in touch with the miracles who return on pilgrimages of thanksgiving after their cures. *vingt Guerisons a Lourdes*, by Granmaison de Bruno, M.D., published in 1912; *Le Cas de Pierre de Rudder*, by A. Deschamps, M.D., D.Sc., published in 1913; and *Preuves Medicales du Miracle: Etude Clinique*, by the senior surgeon of a Paris hospital, D. le Bec, M.D., published in 1917. This last-named book he recommended as the most scientific, and as absolutely convincing.

The cases taken successively by the lecturer were those of admittedly organic diseases of extreme gravity, and the medical evidence in each case proved an instantaneous or practically instantaneous cure resulting without any medical or surgical cause. As the lecturer continually insisted, prayer was the only common antecedent to the various cures, every other circumstance varying so that no common antecedent could be pointed to as a possible cause of the marvellous effects. Two cases of cancer, two of advanced tuberculosis, two of lupus, one of compound fracture, and one of multiple pyostercoral fistulae, were severally dealt with, and the evidence on which the facts of the existence of the diseases and their instantaneous cures rested was laid before the audience.

The lecture lasted an hour and a-quarter, and it was listened to with deep interest. A public discussion followed, and it was evident that most of the members present were prepared to accept the medical evidence of their confreres for the extraordinary facts related in their books. "Suggestion" did not appear sufficient to explain cures such as had been presented to the meeting. One speaker spoke of the possibility of future discoveries of science revealing the hidden mystery of these cures—quoting "wireless telegraphy" as a modern practice which would have been regarded as clearly miraculous some centuries ago.

In reply to this objection, Father Woodlock pointed out that the "wireless" discovery did not invalidate the certain laws of mechanics or destroy the law of gravitation. It was an extension of our knowledge, not a correction of previously proved facts of science. Healing is essentially a process, and essentially it needs time for its natural accomplishment. This is a fundamental biological law, and it is unscientific to appeal in the name of science to an unknown force which would upset the very foundations of assured knowledge. That growth and healing are processes is a universally observed fact, not a working hypothesis, like the undulatory theory of light or the existence of imponderable ether. Another speaker objected to the action of a God who, having the power to heal all, only exercised that power on behalf of some chosen individuals, and declared his inability to believe in such a

God's existence. In replying to him, the lecturer dealt shortly with the mystery of pain, the problem of human merit and eternal reward, and claimed that God would in time "make good" in the eyes of all mankind as infinitely kind and merciful, though He permitted sorrow and suffering to exist on earth.

ARCHDIOCESE OF WELLINGTON

(From our own correspondent.)

May 10.

The Mission now being conducted by Fathers Ainsworth and McCarthy, Marist Missioners, at St. Joseph's Church, Buckle Street, is proving a great success. Last Sunday evening Father McCarthy preached an eloquent sermon on "Faith," in the presence of a crowded congregation, hundreds being unable to gain admission to the big church. During the week very large congregations attended both morning and evening exercises. On Thursday morning nearly 1000 approached the Holy Table. Special appeals were made by the Missioners to the congregations to join the various Catholic Sodalties and Societies. They paid a tribute to the work of the Hibernian Society, and commended it to all Catholics. The Mission concludes on Sunday.

The bazaar and sale of work organised by the Thorndon parishioners under the able direction of Father Smyth, S.M., Adm., concluded on Thursday last, and proved a great success. The tug-of-war contest each evening, and the final pull on Thursday, caused keen excitement, and tended to greatly augment the attendances each evening. The financial results will materially assist Father Smyth in liquidating the debts on the suburban portions of his parish.

A very successful picture entertainment and social was held at St. Anne's Hall, Newtown, on Wednesday. The proceeds will be devoted to the Convent School funds of that parish.

The Catholic Girls' Hostel residents held a successful social last Wednesday, in aid of the hostel purchase and extension fund.

The financial result of the jumble sale conducted by the ladies of the Catholic Hostel Board amounted to nearly £40.

FOR IRELAND.

There have been several pronouncements by the English Catholic Bishops recently on affairs in Ireland. The Bishop of Southwark, Dr. Amigo, in giving out the Papal Encyclical regarding prayers for the Peace Conference and its results, spoke of Ireland in the following terms:—"Our rulers have committed blunders in the past in regard to Ireland; and that country has suffered from grievances which should now be removed. I trust, now that universal peace proposals are to be considered, the aspirations of the peoples of Ireland will be favorably considered also, and that in future she may be justly ruled. Having attained justice for other countries, we cannot refuse it to Ireland."

Oh, when shall we learn the sweet trust in God that our little children teach us every day by their confiding faith in us—we, who are so futable, so faulty, so irritable, so unjust, and He, who is so watchful, so pitiful, so loving, so forgiving?

St. Senan's Bell (*Clog an Oir*, "the golden bell") was to be sold at Christie's, London, early in March. It was then the property of Mr. Marcus Keane, of Ennis, Co. Clare, who held it because of his descent from Robert Keane (O'Cahan), of Ballyvoe, who died in 1730. The bell was preserved for 600 years by the *comharba* (successors) of St. Senan, the last of these being a member of the O'Cahan family, Calvagh O'Cahan, who died in 1591.

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