



THE GROTTO OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES AT CARFIN.

of the first rush was the effect of a visit to the Grotto upon an old woman, aged 76, who belonged to Coathridge. Mrs. Holmes had for ten years, according to medical testimony, been a martyr to that painful malady, rheumatoid arthritis of the hip-joint. She returned home unchanged, but during the night the pain disappeared and the joint became flexible, while the sufferer regained an agility altogether unwonted in one so advanced in years. To-day, after the space of twelve months, her activity, despite the shortened limb, is quite extraordinary.

The news of what had happened spread like wildfire. Pilgrims and sightseers flocked in their thousands, then in their tens of thousands, and it was computed that in August over 200,000 visited the Grotto. Of the various cures ascribed to the shrine and its well—cures which have still to undergo ecclesiastical investigation—two may be mentioned here. One was the extremely rapid disappearance of septic eczema in the head of a child, the other an immediate cure of hernia splendidly attested.

It would not be possible, nor would it be desirable, to set down here all the alleged cures, or the much more numerous partial ones of 1923. Those of 1924 will require to stand the test of time. Such cures, however, even if proved miraculous by a canonical enquiry, are merely incidental to the work of the Grotto, since man must bear the cross and must pass through the gates of death. Its primary work is the payment of homage to God and the honoring of her whom the King of Kings delighteth to honor. Its secondary purpose is the rescue and enrichment of souls. As for the healing of bodies, this is a bait thrown out by Mary Immaculate to catch what is immortal. The number of hearts drawn closer to God and the number of souls brought back to Him are the joyous secrets of the Madonna and her Child.

The bait was indeed successful. Again and again it took the pilgrims between four and five hours to make their way from the Institute to the Well close by. The secular press took the Grotto into their favor in

quite an extraordinary fashion, and the numbers multiplied. From the first the spell cast by the Grotto on those outside of the Fold was a remarkable proof of the influence at work. Not only from Scotland, but from Ireland as well, the pilgrims came. The first torchlight procession was held on Our Lady's birthday, September 8, 1923. The daily services were withdrawn only in the month of November. His Grace Archbishop Mackintosh has already paid a brief visit to the shrine, and he returned on the Epiphany, 1924, when he approved of the extension of the Grotto and the purchase of some of the adjacent territory. Later he approved of a larger hall for the accommodation of the pilgrims, of new reception rooms in the presbytery, and chiefly of the plan of a proposed Church, a beautiful and noble design. If realised, the building would contain over six thousand pilgrims, while in the magnificent outer and cloistered court there would be room for some twenty-five thousand more.

It may be that Chapelknowe is the key to Our Lady's puzzling choice of Carfin. For under the turf which thinly covers that rocky eminence on the borderland between St. Mary's, Cleland, and its daughter parish of Carfin, there lie buried the ruins of a chapel built by loving hands some seven hundred years ago. The God's Acre close by has left no vestige, but the well is there, and its authentic name of Ladywell would seem to give the clue to the dedication of the House of God on the Knowe. All around, the land is studded with old churches and holy wells. Motherwell, only two miles distant, had its Ladywell, an ancient shrine no doubt, inasmuch as the Romans built their camp at the Clyde not many furlongs away. Alas, for the desecration of the spot to-day! It had also three other wells dedicated respectively to St. Patrick, St. Margaret, and St. Catherine. The first two are in the private demesne of Lord Hamilton of Dalziel, and have in consequence been magnificently preserved. St. Patrick's chapel and cemetery have also been treated with becoming respect. The very place names in the vicinity of Carfin,

such as Chapelknowe, Chapelhall, Temple Plantation, Monkland, and others, are re-dolent of Catholic memories, so that Mary, the Virgin Mother, for centuries had public homage paid to her in these parts. Must she not welcome the open loyalty shown her in these degenerate days by her loving children.

Her ancient wells of Chapelknowe and Motherwell are empty drained by the underground workings of the coal mines. The sacred symbolism of their water has gone. What more fitting than that the Immaculate should make use of her devoted miners to renew the old symbol? May she not use as her instrument the toiler of the mine, as she made use of the shepherdess of the Pyrences? The Lord, who by His favors set the seal of His approval on the sevenfold bath of Naaman in the Jordan, on the use of the source of Massabielle, on the use of the artificial fountain of Oostacker: who to please His Mother wrought His first miracle upon the water pots in Cana of Galilee, who through water makes us enter the Kingdom of Heaven, who did not condemn the pool of Bethesda,—which of us shall gainsay His power, or His Mother's influence, or the magnetism of His holy ones in a spot saturated with the rosary prayers? Besides, this northern land took the Blessed Thérèse to its heart before England, or Ireland, or even her own beloved France. May not the graces at her prospective shrine be in part her gracious thanks? And after the crusade of the love of Jesus, what dearer to this Flower of Carmel than devotion to Mary and the salvation of souls,—the twofold purpose of the Grotto?

These lines are penned between two events that are historical days in the infant life of the Grotto:—the banning of the public Corpus Christi procession on Sunday, June 22, and the visit, July 20, of Cardinal Bourne to Carfin. The first result of the ban was to compel the Divine Master to take possession of Maryknowe and its Grotto before the appointed time. Over 30,000 pilgrims were reckoned to have been present that day of glorious sunshine when Benediction was given both on the knoll and from above the niche. The second result may be the extinction of the last remnants of the obsolete penal laws.

By the visit of a Prince of Holy Church, after the double pilgrimage of the Archbishop of Glasgow, the seal of scarlet has been added to the seal of purple. For a while the little chapel must do duty for the majestic church which the Immaculate seems to desire, and meantime she will continue her olden mission of drawing souls to her beloved and Divine Son. It is the mysterious law of pardon, grace, and life eternal—*per Mariam ad Jesum*: through Mary to Jesus.

Miss Leila Campbell L.T.C.L.

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