

These miracles were not confined to the Catholic world. A Protestant free-thinker, Herr Max M—, was the director of a variety theatre. He had a boil on his right hand which no doctor could remove, and which threatened to render it impossible for him to handle his violin bow. His wife wanted him to drink a glass of this healing water. At first he only ridiculed the idea, but finally was prevailed upon to try it. After the first glass he exclaimed, pale and excited: "God, I am cured!" And so he was.

In the year 1867 a dying lady was recalled to life in the little town of Mauguens.

Jews have also been benefited by the water, showing that the business of Lourdes is no fanatical party concern.

"And is all this true?" the reader exclaims. Well, Catholic authors tell us of these and many other cases and offer 15,000 francs as a reward to anyone who can prove that there is one single falsehood in any of the statements made. After having done this they feel justified in exclaiming *Dignus Dei est hic* (here is the finger of God).

The spring of Lourdes is still there. A magnificent church has been built over the spot. Thousands of pilgrims come every year to worship Mary and to be healed by the water, which is likewise sent in bottles to all parts of the world. In Africa the negroes are being converted through it. In Asia wonders are performed thereby, as also in North and South America and Australia. Through this water the beneficent influence of heaven has been brought to bear upon all parts of the world.

What follows from all this? Let us hear what the priests say: "The wonders in Lourdes are a glorious testimony of the truth and the divinity of the Catholic Church." "By them God has solemnly sanctioned the worship of Mary." "Justified us, through our dear Lady of Lourdes, the Catholic priesthood. To these, not to a Methodist preacher, not to a Calvinist preacher, not to a Lutheran superintendent, not to the priesthood of the Catholic Church, the word was given: 'Go and tell the priests.' All the other priests have consequently no authority." "Together with the priesthood, the Primacy is also justified." And so is the dogma of his infallibility."

Thus our Catholic authors go on proving every one of their doctrines by revelation from heaven and miracles. What can the other churches say? They can deny everything; but that would be to adopt very poor tactics, and the consequences would be miserable. The Catholic Church, although fallen from the pinnacle of political power, is yet in its theology, in its organization and spiritual influence strong and mighty beyond conception, mighty in those who know not God nor the depths of Satan.

To an honest inquirer who cares nothing for the Pope nor for his Protestant antagonist, but only for truth, there is an oddity about the

story of Lourdes that is very apparent. The Pope in Rome needed something to turn up in order to prove the new dogma; and this he gets in the shape of a revelation of the Virgin herself. But the Virgin found none except a little child through which to communicate. This is odd, and awkward, too, to the church. Not the Pope, not the cardinals, not the priests, not any of the numerous monks in the whole Catholic Church were worthy of a visitation of Mary. The Pope is, according to his own assertion, the viceroys of Christ, but the mother of Christ, when visiting this earth, ignored the fact altogether and lodged in a cave instead of in the Vatican, communicates with a child instead of with the head of the church. The Catholic authors wisely keep silent upon this point. There must be something wrong somewhere.

Suppose that the Pope wanted to send to the king of Congo, say, a load of rum or some other article such as the Christians use for missionary purposes. Let us also suppose that a papal nuncio already stays with the king, and that the one who comes with the message altogether ignores the first nuncio, and finds a nigger boy to introduce him to his dark majesty. What conclusion would be drawn from this transaction? Either that the first nuncio was a traitor, whom the Pope no longer trusted, or that the second was a humbug. So in the case under consideration. The Pope claims to be the ambassador of heaven; but a heavenly being, "God's mother," knows him not or does not take any notice of him. Poor Pope! He must have lost his standing in heaven. The appearance of the Virgin in an obscure cave in France, if to be credited at all, seems to prove that his Holiness is a great humbug, and known as such in the heavenly courts. If the Virgin had appeared to the alleged head of the church, that would have been a proof of the divinity of that church; but the appearance of the Virgin to a child, not even to a priest, cannot be a proof in favor of the church or the priesthood.

Added to this is the remarkable fact that the "appearance" in the cave seems to have been no person, but only a personified idea. Bernadette asks her her name. She smiles. Bernadette repeats the question. Still no other answer than a smile. Again the question repeated, and being hard pressed, the "appearance" finally says: "I am the immaculate conception." She was not, as the priests say, the Virgin Mary, but, on her own words, nothing but an abstract idea. There is something mysterious in this. It looks as if it was a gotten up scheme, or else the blessed virgin acts as if she had forgotten her own name, and upon being pressed to give it suddenly remembers the then much-used words, "Immaculate conception" and employs them as a substitute for her real name. At this little innocent joke, however, she suddenly vanished as if not content

with herself. An action so silly our Catholic authors ascribe to the blessed mother of our Savior! Although I am no Catholic I could not force myself to believe that Mary would leave her present place in order to have a little game of this kind in a cave anywhere in the whole earth.

But then the miraculous water and the miracles? Well, I am always a little cautious in accepting stories of miracles. When in Bethlehem I was shown a limestone which through contact with Mary has received miraculous qualities, "giving milk," and I was told that thousands had been benefited thereby. Now I am informed that thousands are being benefited by this water. I do not know; I am in no position to judge about that.

It is true that we have testimonies in favor of these miracles; but to my mind it is no fortunate circumstance that the principal witnesses are priests, doctors and lawyers. In matters of this kind it is safer to form a judgment without the aid of the representatives of these professions—particularly the priests.

Still, it is possible that a spring has miraculously appeared in the cave, and that thousands have been benefited by it. There is no absolute need of denying this. On the contrary, the word of God explicitly states that the "son of perdition," or antichrist should perform all kinds of wonders. "He doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from Heaven on the earth in the sight of men and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles, which he had power to do in the sight of the beast." Rev. 13: 13, 14.

Miracles, therefore, are dangerous arguments. They may prove the divinity of a message, as in the case of Moses, of Christ, of the Church; or they may prove the presence of the power of antichrist. The true distinction between the two classes of miracles the world is apt to overlook. The miracles which come from God are never performed for the sake of show, never "in the sight of men." They always aim at the glory of God and the salvation of souls. The miracles of antichrist are also real miracles, but they are performed "in the sight of the beast and in the sight of men." Their aim is show and the establishment of the power of the beast.

All the miracles of the Catholic Church, when carefully examined, will be discovered to belong to this latter class; for the word of God must be found to be true in every particular. J. M. S.

LETTERS FROM "JUNIUS."

The Omaha bridge of the Union Pacific comprises eleven spans of 250 feet each, making it 2750 feet long. The St. Louis bridge has only three spans, two of 502 feet each and one of 520 feet, making it 1524 feet in length. Its cost is said to have been over \$9,000,000. The Omaha bridge cost \$2,650,000.