Franz Werfel

THE SONG OF BERNADETTE

Translated by Ludwig Lewisohn

Foreword by George Weigel

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Foreword

In the fall of 2000, as I pondered the challenges of a fifteen-hour flight from Los Angeles to Sydney, Australia, I called a distinguished literary critic and asked, "What are the *big* great novels you think I haven't read?" Without missing a beat, he replied, "I bet you've never read *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*." I had to admit that I didn't even know who had written it. "Franz Werfel," came my friend's response, "one of the most underrated writers of the twentieth century".

I got through six hundred fifty pages or so of *Musa Dagh* on the flight and finished the novel in Sydney; it's a terrific read, a gripping evocation of the terrors of the Armenian genocide during World War I and a finely-etched study of character-under-pressure. I was so impressed, in fact, that I decided to try another Werfel and had a go at *The Song of Bernadette* for the first time since reading it in the seventh or eighth grade. That experience reminded me why everyone should have the opportunity to re-encounter, as an adult, books one was required to read as a teenager.

The story of how this novel of Lourdes came to be written is something of a miracle itself. Franz Werfel, an outspoken anti-Nazi, had left Vienna for Paris when Austria was incorporated into the Third Reich. As the German Army approached Paris in 1940, Werfel and his wife, Alma Mahler,

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desperately tried to get to the United States through Spain and Portugal. They had neither passports nor visas; had they been caught, they would have been immediately sent to a concentration camp or shot.

As they fled south with history's noose tightening around them, they found refuge in Lourdes. The Werfels stayed there for five weeks, and while they tried to arrange an illegal border crossing into Spain, Franz Werfel became fascinated by the story of Bernadette Soubirous, the apparitions of Our Lady at Lourdes, and the miraculous cures at the spring there. Werfel was a worldly man, not accustomed to displays of piety. Yet he found himself at the spring of Lourdes, drinking the water and praying for a miracle of liberation.

Let Franz Werfel himself continue the tale: "One day in my great distress I made a vow. I vowed that if I escaped from this desperate situation and reached the saving shores of America, I would put off all other tasks and sing, as best I could, the song of Bernadette." Helped by an American Quaker named Vivian Fry, who came to France on a daring mission to save European artists from Hitler's clutches, the Werfels did escape, crossing the Pyrenees on foot and eventually making their way from Nazi-occupied Europe to California. There, in Los Angeles, Werfel finished *The Song of Bernadette*, which became a bestseller and an Academy Award-winning film.

On re-reading the *Song*, what struck me most about Werfel's craft was how deeply this Jewish writer, who had long been interested in Catholicism but who had never converted, had entered into Catholicism's sacramental imagination about the world. For all its unsparing depiction of the poverty of the French Pyrenees, the pettiness of local officialdom, the skepticism and institutional-mindedness of local churchmen, *The Song of Bernadette* is shot through with

a sense of the extraordinary that lies on the far side of the ordinary, revealing itself through the simplest things.

Here is Werfel on what Bernadette brought to the people of Lourdes:

"By the favor of incomprehensible powers, Bernadette Soubirous had performed a greater miracle than the discovery of a spring. Without her knowledge or desire, Bernadette communicated to the downtrodden something of that compassionate consolation which flooded her being whenever she saw the lady again. Inexplicably, she transferred to masses of men a portion in the heaven of her love. Through Bernadette's mediation they began to feel that, behind the forms and words and rites used by the clergy, there lay, not a vague possibility but an almost tangible reality. No more were mortal need and sorrow mere granite loads to be dragged from meaningless birth to equally meaningless death. The granite had grown porous and strangely light."

Pious sentimentality? Or the truth of the world? Franz Werfel thought it was the latter. He was right. At a moment when cynical and mendacious rubbish like *The DaVinci Code* can dominate the bestseller lists, it is good to be reminded of that.

George Weigel
May 2006

A Personal Preface

In the last days of June 1940, in flight from our mortal enemies after the collapse of France, we reached the city of Lourdes. The two of us, my wife and I, had hoped to be able to elude them in time to cross the Spanish frontier to Portugal. But since the consuls unanimously refused the requisite visas, we had no alternative but to flee back with great difficulty to the interior of France on the very night on which the National Socialist troops occupied the border town of Hendaye. The Pyrenean *départements* had turned into a phantasmagoria—a very camp of chaos. The millions of this strange migration of peoples wandered about on the roads and obstructed the towns and villages: Frenchmen, Belgians, Dutchmen, Poles, Czechs, Austrians, exiled Germans, and, mingled with these, soldiers of the defeated armies. There was barely food enough to still the extreme pangs of hunger. There was no shelter to be had at all. Anyone who had obtained possession of an upholstered chair for his night's rest was an object of envy. In endless lines stood the cars of the fugitives, piled mountain-high with household gear, with mattresses and beds; there was no gasoline to be had. In Pau a family settled there told us that Lourdes was the one place where, if luck were kind, one might still find a roof. Since the famous city was but thirty kilometers distant, we were advised to make the attempt and knock at its gates. We followed this advice and were sheltered at last.

It was in this manner that Providence brought me to Lourdes, of the miraculous history of which I had hitherto had but

the most superficial knowledge. We hid for several weeks in the Pyrenean city. It was a time of great dread. The British radio announced that I had been murdered by the National Socialists. Nor did I doubt that such would be my fate were I to fall into the hands of the enemy. An article of the Armistice provided that France turn over certain civilians to the National Socialists. Who could these civilians be but those who had fought the modern pestilence in the days of its modest beginnings? In my friends' eyes I read the same conviction, although their words sought to calm me. A few of the initiated pretended to know the number of those who were to be turned over and the very order of their documented names. At such moments the boundary between rumor and fact is obliterated. The most stubborn reports predicted again and again the conqueror's occupation of the Pyrenees on the following day. Each morning when I woke up it was in ignorance as to whether I was still a free man or a prisoner condemned to death.

It was, I repeat, a time of great dread. But it was also a time of great significance for me, for I became acquainted with the wondrous history of the girl Bernadette Soubirous and also with the wondrous facts concerning the healings of Lourdes. One day in my great distress I made a vow. I vowed that if I escaped from this desperate situation and reached the saving shores of America, I would put off all other tasks and sing, as best I could, the song of Bernadette.

This book is the fulfilment of my vow. In our epoch an epic poem can take no form but that of a novel. *The Song of Bernadette* is a novel but not a fictive work. In face of the events here delineated, the sceptical reader will ask with better right than in the case of most historical epic narratives: "What is true? What is invented?" My answer is: All the memorable happenings that constitute the substance of this book took place in the world of reality. Since their

beginning dates back no longer than eighty years,[1] there beats upon them the bright light of modern history and their truth has been confirmed by friend and foe and by cool observers through faithful testimonies. My story makes no changes in this body of truth.

I exercised my right of creative freedom only where the work, as a work of art, demanded certain chronological condensations or where there was need of striking the spark of life from the hardened substance.

I have dared to sing the song of Bernadette, although I am not a Catholic but a Jew; and I drew courage for this undertaking from a far older and far more unconscious vow of mine. Even in the days when I wrote my first verses I vowed that I would evermore and everywhere in all I wrote magnify the divine mystery and the holiness of man—careless of a period that has turned away with scorn and rage and indifference from these ultimate values of our mortal lot.

FRANZ WERFEL
Los Angeles, May 1941

[1] Now 145 years.—ED.

Chapter Seven

The Lady

BERNADETTE TURNS her eyes to the nearest poplar to discover whether at some height there be not, after all, some wind that got caught in the thorn bush of Massabielle. But the usually quivering foliage of the poplar is still to breathlessness. She turns again to the cavern, which is no more than ten paces from where she is sitting. But now the wild rose, too, clings unmoving to the rock. It was an illusion of hers that it had stirred.

But there is no delusion possible now, for Bernadette rubs her eyes, closes them, opens them again, and repeats this process ten times. Nevertheless, what she sees remains. The daylight is as leaden as ever. Only in the pointed niche of the rock in the cavern there dwells a deep radiance as though the old gold of powerful sunbeams had been left behind. And in this remnant of billowing light stands someone who has come from the very depths of the world and issued here into the day after a long but painless and comfortable wayfaring. And this someone is not at all an unprecise and ghostly or a transparent and airy image, no changeful dream vision, but a very young lady, delicate and dainty, visibly of flesh and blood, short rather than tall, for she stands calmly and without touching side or arch in the narrow oval of the niche. The very

young lady's garb is not at all common, but is in no wise old-fashioned. To be sure, she is not tightly corseted nor does she wear a Parisian hoop skirt. Yet her easy, snow-white raiment is so cut as to indicate her delicate waistline. Bernadette had had a chance recently to witness the church wedding of the youngest daughter of the Lafites, and the raiment of the lady was best comparable to that of a distinguished bride. For there is first the loose and precious cloak of veiling that reaches from the head to the ankles. Yet, charmingly enough, the small bridal lady seems not to wear the fashionable high coiffure, curled with irons and held by tortoise-shell combs, that would suit her rank. Wavy ringlets of her light brown hair escape from under the veil. A quite broad blue girdle, lightly knotted under the breast, falls down over the knee. But what a blue! Lovely to the point of pain. Not even Mademoiselle Peyret, dressmaker of all the rich people in Lourdes, would be able to decide of what manner of fabric the white gown was made. Sometimes it gleams like satin or silk; sometimes it is duller, like some unknown, very delicate, ineffably snowy velvet; again it seems like a transparently thin batiste that transmits to its folds every stirring of the limbs.

Bernadette observes the most striking thing last of all: the young lady's feet are bare. And the tiny narrow feet give the effect of ivory, almost of alabaster. Their pallor shows no trace of rose or pink. These feet have never stepped or trodden. They form an extraordinary contrast to the normal corporeal aliveness of the dainty girl. The strangest thing, however, is this: two golden roses are placed above the beginnings of the slender toes of each foot—impossible to tell by what means, nor can one tell of what substance the two roses are, whether of delicate jewelled craftsmanship or of painting in high relief.

First Bernadette feels a brief quivering pang of terror, next a steady fear. But this is no familiar fear, no fear that impels one to jump up and run away. It is as though someone softly clasped forehead and breast in an embrace and one desired this embrace to last and last. Later this fear melts into still another feeling of which this child Bernadette has no idea and can find no name. One might call it comforting or consolation. But until this instant Bernadette never knew that she was in need of being comforted. For she is really not at all aware of the hardness of her life: that she suffers hunger, that she is housed with five other people in the dark hole of the Cachot, that she passes long nights struggling for breath. This has always been so and will probably always be so. This is naked reality accepted as a matter of course. But moment by moment now she is more deeply swathed in this consolation which has no name, which is a hot flood of compassion. Is it a compassion that Bernadette feels for herself? That, too. But the self of this child is now so cleft asunder, so open to the universe and so at one therewith, that the utter sweetness of this compassion penetrates her shivering body to the very points of her young breasts.

But while the waves of this love-thrilled consoledness roll over Bernadette's heart, her independent eyes remain freely fixed upon the countenance of the young lady. The latter, for her part, is intent upon offering her countenance to the girl as if it were a gift. Although it remains calmly yonder in the niche, that countenance seems to come nearer as Bernadette's eyes are absorbedly upon it. She can count the lifting and lowering of those eyelashes which, at long intervals, shadow the noble whiteness and blueness of those eyes. Despite its perfection the hue of the skin is so vivid that it bears the marks of the sharp wintry day upon the slight flush of the cheeks. The lips are not solemnly closed. They

are a little open, unconsciously so, and reveal the gleam of the youthful loveliness of the teeth. Bernadette, however, does not observe these separate elements of beauty. The vision is a whole to her.

The idea does not strike her in the least that she is dealing with a heavenly thing. Bernadette does not kneel as in the dim nave of a church. She is seated on a fragment of rock near the confluence of the Savy brook and the River Gave, in this cool, clear world of February, and she holds her stocking in her limp hand. She is conscious of nothing but the undreamed-of beauty of this lady's image, with which she is intoxicated, insatiably so. The beauty of the lady is the first and last thing that has unlimited power upon this child and will not let her go.

In the paralysis of her rapture it suddenly occurs to Bernadette that her behavior is improper. She is sitting the while the lady stands. It embarrasses her, too, that her right foot is bare while the other has a stocking on. What shall she do? Guiltily she rises. The lady smiles contentedly. This smile is but a deeper radiation of her graciousness. Bernadette thereupon uses the awkward gesture common to the schoolgirls of Lourdes when they meet a teaching sister or Father Pomian or His Reverence Peyramale on the street. The lady hastens to return the greeting, by far not so condescendingly as the persons in authority here named but with an air of free comradeliness. She nods repeatedly and her smile grows still brighter. This greeting creates a new situation. The web of the relationship between the two is being woven. Between these two, the blessed and the blessing one, arises and flows back and forth a stream of happiest sympathy, of immemorial unitedness, indeed the awareness of a very special solidarity that stirs the heart's core. Jesus and Mary, Bernadette thinks; she stands and I stand. In order to mark a reverential difference between her

posture and that of the lady, she kneels on the rubble, her face turned fully toward the niche.

As though to prove that she has understood the girl's intention the lady's alabaster feet on which the golden roses glow take one small step forward from the portal toward the extreme edge of the rock. She either can or will not come farther. Then she opens her hands a little, thus indicating a gesture of embracing or of raising another up. The hands resemble the feet in slenderness and pallor. There is no red or pink on the palms.

Now for a long time nothing happens. The young lady seems either obliged or, better still, willing to leave the entire initiative to Bernadette. But nothing occurs to the girl to do for a space and so she kneels and gazes, gazes and kneels. Thus there arises between the two a gentle embarrassment and the girl is a little oppressed thereby, for aware of a serviceable unworthiness within her she would do all in her power to ease the encounter.

At the same time there bloom and burst little awakenings in the rapt spirit of Bernadette; keen points pierce her consciousness to the extent of pondering: Whence has the lady come? Out of the inside of the earth? And can any good come thence? Does not the good and heavenly come from above? It uses clouds and sunbeams as the vehicles of its earth faring, as the pictures in the churches illustrate. But whoever the young lady may be and whencesoever she may have come on her naked feet, whether by ways that are natural or not, one thing remains incomprehensible: Why did she choose Massabielle, of all places, the filthy rock cavern, the place where the high water washes up the bones of beasts, the place of rubble, swine, and snakes, the spot detested by all the world?

Bernadette's suspiciousness seems not very serious even to itself. Her whole being is jubilant over the beauty of the

lady. Now, there is no beauty that is wholly of the body. From every human countenance that we call beautiful there streams a radiance that, though bound to bodily forms, is of the spirit. But the beauty of this lady seems less of the body than any other beauty. It is that very spiritual radiance alone which we call beauty. Overwhelmed by this radiance and also a little to ascertain the true being of the lady, Bernadette is about to make the sign of the cross.

Crossing herself has been to Bernadette a well-proved remedy for the thousand terrors of the soul that have pursued her since early childhood. Not only for the monstrous dreams of the night; even in the bright light of day her eyes have ever had the gift of creating images within the frames of all visible things. The walls of the Cachot, for instance, are studded with great splotches of moisture. When one crouches in a corner or, sleepless in the early mornings, stares at the walls, these splotches assume a swift succession of incredible shapes. The shapes usually belong to the demoniac realm of things contorted or senselessly conjoined. Orphide, the big, bearded he-god of the Laguès farm in Bartrès, plays a frequently repeated role among these visions. Once the malicious brute with lowered horns had chased the little shepherdess across a meadow. Oh, why did she who so adores all that is sweet, charming, lovely, graceful, have to be so often the prey of abominable phantoms?

Her eyes upon the lady's bloodless feet, Bernadette is about to cross herself. She cannot. Her arm hangs down heavily and lame like an alien burden. She cannot stir a finger. This lameness is not unfamiliar. She has experienced it in nightmares when voice and muscles fail and one cannot summon the Savior's aid against the powers of evil. But here and now her powerlessness to raise her arm seems to have a special reason. Perhaps the lady has read her pondering

guesses and is punishing her therefor. Or perhaps Bernadette's attempt to cross herself has been an unforgivable breach of good manners and a shocking piece of awkwardness. For doubtless in any matter that concerns the cross, the lady there would have a precedent right.

And in fact the lady in the niche does now raise her right hand with its fragile fingers slowly, almost instructively, and over her entire countenance makes a great, almost gleaming sign of the cross, such as Bernadette had never seen a human being make. And that sign seems to remain floating in air. At the same time the lady's face grows very serious, and this seriousness is another wave sent out by that loveliness which leaves the beholder breathless. Always hitherto Bernadette, like everybody else, merely tapped forehead and chest carelessly when making the sign of the cross. Now she feels a mild power grasping her hand. As one takes the hand of a child and guides it when one teaches a child how to write, even so that mild power guides the girl's icy hand to make that great and inexpressibly noble sign of the cross upon her forehead. And now the lady nods and smiles again, as though a thing both important and very precious has been accomplished.

Thereafter a pause ensues once more, fulfilled by rapturous seeing and loving. Bernadette would like to speak, to burst out in words or even in inarticulate sounds, stammering, reverential, tender. But dare she speak before the lady has spoken? She takes her rosary out of her pocket. What better thing can she do? . . .

All the women and girls of Lourdes constantly carry a rosary upon their person. It is the authentic tool of their piety. The hands of poor hard-working women have not the habit of stillness. A prayer with empty hands would be no proper observance for them. But the prayer of the rosary is to them a sort of heavenly manual toil, an invisible

needlework, a knitting or embroidering busily wrought of the fifty Hail Marys and the other invocations of their string of beads. He who tells a sufficient number of beads in the course of the years will have woven a goodly web with which some day the divine compassion can cover a portion of his guilt. The lips, one may say, murmur but automatically the words of the angel to the Virgin, yet the soul traverses the pastures of holiness. Though the thoughts often stray from the proper forms and lament the unreasonable price of eggs, and though one even drowses now and then over an Ave, it is no great misfortune. The deep feeling of being at home and protected remains. Louise Soubirous uses her rosary as do all the other women of Lourdes. But Bernadette, who is still so young and anything rather than pietistic—she whom Sister Marie Thérèse Vauzous considers an ignorant heathen and who in fact has only the faintest inkling of the mysteries of the faith—Bernadette carries her rosary proudly as a sign that she has come to the estate of womanhood.

Now she raises her poor, simple little string of black beads encouragingly up toward the lady. The latter seems long to have expected that. Again she smiles and nods and seems deeply delighted by the girl's praiseworthy idea. In her slightly raised right hand a rosary becomes visible now too—not the meager string of a day-laborer's child, but a long chain of large gleaming pearls reaching almost to the ground, such as has not yet been seen even in a queen's possession. At the end of the string a golden crucifix is radiant in the sea of light.

Bernadette is happy to hear her own voice, though it sounds quite unfamiliar to her: "Hail Mary, full of grace . . ." she begins the first decade of Aves. She watches keenly whether the lady is praying with her. But those lips do not move. It seems not to be her business to utter the angel's

greeting. But with a gentle devotion she seems to supervise, as it were, the child's murmuring. At the end of each Ave she lets a pearl glide between her index finger and her thumb. But she always waits and lets Bernadette drop her little black bead first. Only when the decade is finished and followed by the invocation "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit", does a strong breathing pass through the lady's form and does her mouth silently repeat the words.

Never has Bernadette told her beads so slowly. But the rosary is doubtless a powerful means of keeping the lady with her. And that is all that matters to her. She is so afraid that that supremely lovely one, to the vision of whom her whole soul clings, will grow utterly weary and sick of staying in that inhospitable hole in the rock on the edge of a precipitous cliff (from which one could so easily plunge down) for the sake of a poor girl like herself. Probably, too, she does not at all relish being stared at uninterruptedly, and in such weather. Oh, soon she would go away and leave Bernadette alone. . . .

After the thirtieth Ave these accompanying thoughts of dread and shadows upon her soul vanish too. Though her eyes are not weary, Bernadette is but one act of seeing now. The life of all her other senses recedes. She does not feel the stones that her knees press. She does not feel the icy cold that is roundabout her. A warm and blessed drowsiness enfolds her.

How well it is with her, how well . . . how well. . . .

Chapter Twenty

Sheet Lightning

BERNADETTE'S BEHAVIOR after this catastrophe was once more incomprehensible and amazing. The lady's failure to appear on Monday had made her want to die of despair, though it had in no wise alienated from her the hearts of the faithful. On this other day of incomparable shame, when she had been forced to vomit in the presence of the largest public of her career, she was calm, equable, even—it must be admitted—hopeful and serene.

None understood Bernadette because all, high or low, were accustomed to estimate life by the sole measure of success. Now it had happened that by virtue of the rather mad integration of a living legend with the long-repressed yearning of the humble, this child named Soubirous had become the center of interest in town and country and the subject of daily talk and controversy in every house. She had become a star, as every ruler, conqueror, hero, discoverer, artist must needs become a star when once the brilliancy of success sets him in relief. Success forces him automatically to play himself, to assume his own life role, wherefore the term "star" is a very apt one. Who does not lose the spontaneity of nature once he knows that a hundred thousand eyes are fixed on him?

Bernadette did not lose it. Her innocence in this matter of success was, to be sure, so great and so astonishing that

her preservation of her spontaneity was no merit in her. People did not understand her, but neither did she understand them. What did it profit these thousands to lie in wait and watch her dealings with the lady? It would have been far better had no one ever come. Neither the dean nor the prosecutor nor the chief of police would then have troubled her. Followers had brought her nothing but vexation and anguish. Love was the important thing, that and the loveliest of beings and nothing else at all. In the very depths of her being Bernadette had not the faintest need of convincing anyone that the lady was real and no figment. It was brute force alone that had made her engage in controversy on this point. What could she do when clerical and lay authorities cross-examined her? Tell the simple truth, that was all. Could she have denied the lady for the sake of peace? Again and again people talked about the Blessed Virgin. Whoever the lady might be, to Bernadette she was above all *the* lady, and this simple word had more substance and meaning to her than the holiest name would have had. Bernadette knew very well that at the bottom of all the confusions that had come about were the lady's additional plans, messages, and commands. Had the most gracious one's interest been concentrated on her alone, how simple everything would have been. But Bernadette, who in her hours of rapture had experienced such overflowings of bliss, was not immodest enough to grumble at these plans of the lady, despite the unhappy confusion in the matter of the spring. Her path lay straight ahead. Whatever people might say, the lady's commands had to be exactly carried out.

The Cachot had been overcrowded all day. The heavy handle of the prison door had not been idle a moment. People sat on beds, on the table, even on the floor, which Louise Soubirous scrubbed daily. But not as hitherto did there obtain a mood of felicitation to veil the Soubirous as

with incense. "How happy you must be to have a child like that!" "Who would have dreamed of such an angel coming out of the Cachot?" Today the visitors' eyes were sad and reproachful, as though a scandalous changeling had issued forth from here, of whose appearance the Soubirous family was far from guiltless. It was an evil sign that Aunt Bernarde and the serviceable Lucille had taken leave so soon! Aunt Sajou shook her head. "That oughtn't to have happened. . . . Nothing like that!"

Aunt Piguno cornered the Soubirous. "You know, good people, what Madame Lacrampe said? And she has more experience than anybody else, because her feeble-minded daughter is in the asylum! She said everything might go on this way a few months longer; then the eye-twitching will set in, and next paralysis, and then the power of speech fails. That's the way and it's a great misfortune, but you oughtn't to wait to reserve a place in the asylum at Tarbes. And you mustn't lose your composure, though I know how you must be feeling."

"*Praoubo de jou!*" Louise's choked voice cried ever and again.

Meanwhile Peyret had turned up and, in front of the assembled company, had let loose at Bernadette: "Oh, poor Madame Millet has the worst sick headache she's had in months. Two doctors had to be called in, Peyrus and Dozous. . . . But how could you have behaved like that—eating grass, eating mud, and then vomiting!"

Simply and unaffectedly Bernadette stood before her and replied: "But the lady told me to go to the spring and drink and wash. She pointed to that far corner. But there was no spring. So I had to dig, and I did find a little water. But I couldn't swallow that without swallowing the sand too."

The dressmaker gave a start as though a viper had bitten her. "You're trying to tell us that the Blessed Virgin wanted

you to act like a beast of the field! Listen, everybody! This stubborn brat is trying to make us believe that the Mother of God behaved like a demon and told her to devour grass and mud. That goes beyond everything. The dean ought to be informed of such blasphemy."

"The things you're saying are not true, Mademoiselle", Bernadette declared with the utmost calm and then added, repeating this statement for the hundredth time: "I do not know who the lady is."

"All I know is that you're a sly piece!" said Peyret, with a side glance.

Piguno cast a sorrowful look at Madame Soubirous. "Sly? Dear God, that poor, poor creature . . ."

Soberly Bernadette concluded the defense of her lady: "And the lady didn't tell me to eat earth but to drink of the spring."

Uncle Sajou lighted his pipe, a thing he had not done here for some days out of respect. Clearing his throat, he asserted in his creaking voice: "Spring? Since there is no spring, the lady lied."

"That's a fact—she lied", others opined.

Bernadette's eyes flashed. "The lady does not lie."

The cobbler Barringue, so stirred by the scandal that his head had joined his hands in shaking, said: "In the hills the springs always come from above not from below, as every child knows. Below, you find nothing but stagnant water."

Nevertheless, Bernadette's answers succeeded in making her dismay of the morning seem less inexplicable. As always, she was convincing through the sober simplicity with which she represented the lady as a being of human character whose wishes and commands, however eccentric and even troublesome, must be fulfilled to the letter. Her logic, based upon the power of love to command conviction, was more than a match for the critical abilities of these small minds.

Without their knowledge she forced them anew to admit the truth of her premise, namely, that the most beautiful of beings was an overwhelmingly real one, wholly guided by sound reason and incapable of harboring a treacherous or delusive plan. She seemed not in the least concerned over the spring that could not be found. Her face had a healthier glow than for the past two weeks. A rosy flush was spread over the cheeks that the thorns had scratched. The tear-worn eyes of Louise Soubirous clung fearfully to her child. Piguno's evil prophecy can't, just can't be true, that Bernadette will be paralyzed and bereft of speech within a few weeks. Piguno was a beastly witch, that was all; and it was, strangely enough, in this hour of great disappointment that the mother began to believe that it was truly the Blessed Virgin who had appeared to her child in the guise of this lovely and self-willed lady.

There was one who on this forenoon had yet spoken no word. It was Soubirous, the father of the family. Now he rose to the occasion in a manner that none would have expected of his irresolute character and his subjection to the judgments of the world. He showed the whole company the door. He did it, of course, in his own dignified manner, bowing to all sides, his hand upon his heart. "I am a poor man, and as though that were not enough God has sent me this trial. I can't get on the inside of my child's mind. I can't tell whether Bernadette is touched in the head or not. All I know is this: she is not pretending. But what am I to do? We've got to go on living. And we can't live like this. There isn't very much air in this room, dear neighbors and kinsmen, and my family numbers six. I therefore beg of you not to take it in ill part if I ask you to go now and not to come back."

These words were so clearly wrung from the depth of a suffering spirit that the unbidden guests vanished and took no umbrage. Peyret and Piguno, to be sure, hastened to

spread their poisonous gossip from door to door. The last to go was Louis Bouriette, the one-eyed, also a helper at the post office. Him Soubirous requested to report himself as ill to Cazenave. Thereupon for the first time in many days he went to bed while a faint wintry sunshine glimmered through the two little windows of the Cachot.

Marie, wanting to console Bernadette, sat down close beside her at the table and opened the catechism. The girls studied as though nothing had happened. Jean Marie and Justin, however, whom all these events had liberated from the usual restraints, sneaked out on some voyage of discovery of their own.

It is not rare for great ideas to appear in the world through the mediation of quite small minds.

Bouriette, the former stonemason, was not quite blind in his right eye. Had it been quite blind it would, in the sense of the Gospel, have "offended" him less. As it was, it offended him constantly by itching and burning and being inflamed. Also the dark gray shadow that never left the right eye seemed to impair the clearness of the left. Bouriette had made of this infirmity the very center of his life. It brought him the pity of others; it enabled him to pity himself and to cultivate an agreeable self-satisfaction. "What can you expect of a blind man?" may be recalled as this invalid's favorite phrase. Thus Bouriette did indeed demand little of himself. In his best years he had given up his difficult craft to get along, as best he could, on odd jobs. It was more comfortable thus, and his excuse in the face of both his family and the world was a good one.

Although the mending of his infirmity could bring him no practical advantage, nevertheless an uncommon thought came to him on the way from Soubirous to Cazenave. Like all who are afflicted by a steady discomfort he considered any medicament that was harmless to be of some use. He

therefore returned to the Rue des Petites Fossées where he lived. At his door he met his little six-year-old daughter.

"Listen, baby. You know the grotto of Massabielle where Bernadette Soubirous always has her visions?"

The child was a little hurt, like one whose frequentations were not duly esteemed. "Why, Papa, I've been there three whole times!"

"Then listen, darling. Go to your mother and tell her to give you a big piece of sackcloth. Wrap up in it a lump of the moist earth dug up in the right corner at the very back of the grotto. Don't forget! All the way back in the right corner. Then bring it to me at the post office. Understand?"

Half an hour later, equipped with the wrapped lump of earth that by now had the consistency of porridge, Bouriette hid in the darkest corner of Cazenave's stables. There he sat down on the straw of an empty stall with his back against the bricks of the wall. He pressed the cloth with the moist earth firmly over his right eye. Water began to trickle down his face. Believing that the effect would take some time to show, he stayed in his dark hiding place until the clock of Saint Pierre's struck two.

When at last he stepped out into the day he staggered back, overcome by excess of light. Convulsively he closed his good eye. The steady dark gray of the other's vision had turned into a tumultuous milk-white brightness. The grim fog had yielded to a transparent cloudlike veil, shot through by fiery sheets of lightning. Through this bright feathery veil Bouriette could see the outlines of things with precision. An immense excitement seized upon him, less on account of his eye than on account of his discovery. He raced across the Place Marcadale to see Dr. Dozous.

It was during the physician's office hours and the waiting room was crowded. Unabashed and without knocking, Bouriette insisted on bursting into the doctor's sanctum.

"That's no way to act, Bouriette", the doctor reprimanded him. "Go back and wait your turn."

"I can't wait!" The man was beside himself. "I've got back the sight of my right eye. I treated it with mud from the grotto, and now I can see. It's a miracle!"

"You're all in such a hurry with your miracles", the doctor growled. Then he darkened the room and lighted a lamp with a powerful reflector and examined Bouriette's eye.

"Four serious scars on the cornea. Retina partly detached. Still you can see a little, can't you? Sometimes more, sometimes less."

"That's right," Bouriette echoed, "sometimes more, sometimes less." Like all patients with eye trouble, he could easily be made uncertain concerning the degree of vision.

"And today it's better, eh?"

"Oh, much better, Doctor. It's like sheet lightning and I can see everything by it."

"That's not properly seeing. You pressed against the eyeball for hours and irritated the optic nerve."

Dozous turned the lamp and threw sharp light upon the chart against the wall.

"Can you read those letters with the right eye, Bouriette?"

"No, Doctor, I can't."

"How about the left eye?"

"No, I can't, Doctor."

"The devil you say! Well, how about both eyes?"

"No good, Doctor. You see, I don't know how to read."

Dozous pulled up the curtains. "Come back tomorrow when you're calmer, Bouriette."

Withdrawing, the invalid murmured stubbornly: "It's a miracle just the same."

Dr. Dozous did not know whether this case came under ophthalmology or psychiatry.

Chapter Twenty-Four

The Bouhouhorts Child

In addition to Louis Bouriette there dwelt another man in Lourdes who could not tear his thoughts from the spring in the grotto. This was none other than Lacadé, the mayor. Unlike the officials of the State involved in the matter, Lacadé possessed the nonpartisan farsightedness of a truly businesslike imagination. Not quite consciously the mayor found himself suddenly no longer unhappy over the repeated defeats of the higher authorities, even though these meant victories for the lady and so of a power no less disastrous to the city than to the State. But he had a hunch that the weakening of the higher authorities might at the right moment serve to fortify his own position. Lacadé was really taking a long view. He suffered from a combination of voracity with a feeble digestion that often condemned him to insomnia. In the course of long nights he proposed to himself the following question: Why does Tivrier, ever since the Emperor has been taking the Vichy cure, earn millions by exporting the mineral waters of the Vichy springs? Wherever springs of this kind arose, they probably amounted to the same thing. Who is going to tell the difference between Vichy, Gavarnie, and Cauterets? Pay the professors well enough, and they will furnish their expert certificates. Lacadé's acute eyes had surveyed the world for sixty years. He knew what was what.

He knew, too, that, when need was, this much-vaunted science did not at all mind becoming the mistress of some profit-producing and enterprising spirit. Why should not the same thing that was possible in Vichy be possible in Lourdes? Professors would be found to produce expert opinions according to which the chemicals found in the waters of Lourdes would be pronounced efficacious in the cure of hyperacidity, rheumatism, gout, liver disorders, gallstones, and heart conditions. What a Tivrier could do, shall not a Lacadé accomplish? The keenly speculative spirit of the mayor rose to even greater heights. Properly presented, the matter of Bernadette might prove not at all useless to himself. Many of the oldest and most famous watering places of Europe trace their renown to a legend. Lacadé began to dream of a prospectus to be distributed by the hundreds of thousands of copies. In it a facile pen, like that of Hyacinthe de Lafite, might write the touching tale of a simple maiden, possessor of a magic rod, who, guided thereto by inner voices and visions, struck the illustrious spring of Massabielle from the living rock. Next, science must give its blessing to the discovery. And thus what began as a simple dreamy superstition of the humble would end under the brightest blaze of enlightened progress. Neither Vichy nor Cauterets nor Gavarnie had anything so charmingly worth committing to print.

Like every good businessman Lacadé kept his plans strictly to himself. Least of all must the State have an inkling, since it had a legal influence upon the exploitation of curative waters. Luckily the mountain of caverns as well as the adjoining areas on both sides of the road to Tarbes was municipal property. The estates of old Lafite, no bad businessman himself, ended at the Chalet Isle, while the State lands did not begin till far beyond the Gave River. Lacadé could not think of any third competitor. The thing to do was to go slowly, to let the enthusiasm produced by the miracle recede with

smiling tolerance, and, quite unlike Dutour and Jacomet, not take a single false step. Then in about a year one might, in conjunction with Cazenave and a few other straw men, incorporate a company of the watering place of Lourdes and issue shares.

Lacadé dispatched his two assistants, Courrèges and Capdeville, on a secret mission to the grotto to fill a few bottles with the newly discovered water. He was disappointed in its taste: no trace of the tingling carbonic acid content that might serve to make it a table water. The professors would have to interpret this lack as a virtue. Lacadé decided at once that charged waters were deleterious, giving rise to regurgitation and flatulence. The report obtained with equal secrecy from the head of the municipal waterworks was correspondingly heartening. The spring gave 122,000 liters a day. One could grow as rich here as Tivrier had grown in Vichy.

Now there flourished at this time on the faculty of the University of Toulouse a very great balneologist indeed. This was Professor Filhol. But Lacadé was not so simple as to employ a weapon of such caliber at this rather premature date. Before a Filhol is asked for his irrefutable pronouncement, the soundness of the business idea must be given a thorough test. The test could not, however, be made by the local apothecary Labayle. The latter happened to be a member of the municipal council and a man of considerable means who might come to harbor plans similar to the mayor's. But in the little town of Trie, near Tarbes, Lacadé had a good friend, also an apothecary, by the name of Latour. What is a friend for except to render favors? An expert opinion given as a friendly favor is cheap and not binding. Hence Monsieur Latour received a bottleful of the water of Massabielle with the request for an analysis in respect of its chemical composition and medicinal value.

While the prosecutor and the chief of police had angrily withdrawn from public sight since the breaking of their windows, the mayor could be seen on repeated daily promenades along the streets of Lourdes. He was more solemn and more condescending than ever. His soft hat, sole relic of his revolutionary past, described melodious circles in the air when he returned the salutations of his fellows. He had visions of a radiant future as father of his family and of his townsmen. He never dreamed, with all his long views, that his dangerous competitor would be neither the State nor Lafite nor Labayle but the lady.

According to ancient use and wont the neighbor women gathered in the room of the Bouhouhorts to sew the child's shroud against its need. And the need seemed immediate. It was destined that Louise Soubirous should be away from home on this day when the poor creature had the severest attack of convulsions it had ever suffered. Its mother had firm faith in the remedies and manipulations of Louise Soubirous and was bitterly angry at her friend on account of her absence in this hour of desperate need. For what did it avail her to use all Madame Soubirous' devices, the hot packs and the constant shaking of the convulsed and fevered little body? Though the child's mother, she lacked the happy touch. All was in vain. There the child lay, breathing in quick, small gurgles, only the whites of its eyes showing. In spite of the fever the little face had turned a brownish yellow.

Beside the desperate woman stood her husband. Bouhouhorts was one of the slate miners who work away from home and come in but once a week. His heart was gratefully happy that this misery was about to end and that he could look forward to coming home from his hard work unburdened at last by this heavy, hopeless care. Bouhouhorts was no monster and it was his own man-child that

was dying; but a two-year-old child is no more than that. He was only twenty-eight and could beget as many sons and daughters as he wanted, if once his woman were rid of this nightmare. But women are like that. With the strength of lionesses they will cling to mere nightmares. They are so taken by these that they repulse their own husbands. Tenderly Bouhouhorts patted the back of his Croisine. She moaned once more: "Go to Dozous again or to Peyrus. Maybe one of them will come."

"What's the use?" He shrugged his shoulders. "Peyrus is out in the country and Dozous has office hours. Anyhow, look, it's too late. That's the death rattle. It's what's called being *in extremis*. . . ."

Françoinette Gozos, one of the neighbors, the butcher's daughter, raised her voice in conventional consolation: "Dear Croisine, don't lament so. You should be happy. You don't want your child to drag himself through life as a hopeless cripple, do you? He's baptized and without sin. You'll have an angel waiting for you up above."

The mother pressed her head against the child's bed. It is easy for these women to seek to console her. In this hour she had no prayer more ardent than that her child be permitted to drag himself through life as a cripple. If only he would live! She had not the slightest desire for an angel to wait for her above. Wild fancies beset her mind. One image haunted her: Bernadette dipping her head into the basin of the spring. Suddenly the lightning of cognition pierced the heart of Croisine Bouhouhorts. This dipping and laving was no vague and vain ceremony but a very purposeful mode of action that the lady, through Bernadette, was constantly urging upon others.

She leaped to her feet with a wild cry. Her mind was made up. She snatched the child from the big basket that served him as cradle, wrapped him in an apron, and rushed

forth from the house. The lightning of intuitive perception had been so powerful that she had not even stopped to wrap the child in a warm covering. Jean Bouhouhorts and the women, convinced that grief had robbed Croisine of her understanding, followed her with loud cries. Leaping actually like a madwoman, she raced with her burden through the streets and soon brought the whole town to its feet. In her race with death she continued to gain; not even her husband could keep up with her. But a great crowd followed her in the direction of the grotto.

Bathed in sweat, she broke down at the rim of the spring's basin with just strength enough left to immerse the child in the water up to its neck. "Accept him or give him back to me, O Virgin", she stammered in her utter confusion. She paid no attention to the women who were saying to her: "You're killing the baby. . . . The water is ice-cold."

"If I can't save him, I'll kill him; what's the difference?" Croisine panted again and again. They tried to snatch the child from her. She bared her teeth and hissed. It was not safe to approach her. So they let her be, and a stillness as of death ensued. Naught was heard save the agonized rattle in the child's throat. Then that died too.

Suddenly one of the women beside the basin said: "Blessed Virgin, the child is crying out. . . ."

It was true. The thin squeak of a newborn infant's voice could be heard for several seconds. The people looked at one another and were pale. Croisine, having bathed her child for exactly fifteen minutes, wrapped it again in the apron, pressed it to her bosom, and raced off. When at last the heavily moving mass of men arrived at the Bouhouhorts dwelling next to the Cachot they saw Croisine with widespread arms of warning at the door. She whispered: "Quiet! He is sleeping . . . my child is sleeping. . . ."

The child continued to sleep all that day and the night following. Next morning it drank with unknown eagerness two glasses of milk. Thereupon Bouhouhorts went to work. A few minutes later Croisine went to Babou's well to fetch water. When she came back she saw the child sitting up in its basket for the first time in its life. She wanted to cry out but could not. The child laughed a laugh as of victory. Brief hoarse cries issued from the woman's breast, wails of bliss. The first healing, the first miracle, had happened. In Lourdes.

An hour later people by the hundreds streamed up and down the narrow Rue des Petites Fossées. At the bedside of the child stood two physicians. Dr. Dozous had asked Dr. Lacrampe to be with him, for they had not been able to reach Dr. Peyrus, who had at times treated the child. The Lacrampes belonged to the first families of Lourdes and the physician of that name, himself very wealthy, practiced only sporadically. Dr. Dozous had brought with him his book of case histories. After both physicians had given the child a thorough examination the municipal physician opened his book and read: "'Justin Marie Adolar Duconte Bouhouhorts, born February eighteen fifty-six. Pronounced case of rickets. Severe catarrh of the colon, March eighteen fifty-six. August twenty-fifth, high temperature, violent convulsions, reflexes noticeable. Next day: reflexes absent, temperature normal. Tubercular meningitis? Progressive paralysis of lower extremities. Death a matter of hours.' (No entries for an extended period.) 'Diagnosis hesitates between meningitis and poliomyelitis. Complete paralysis of the legs. . . .' "

Dozous let the heavy book sink. "You see, Doctor, how complete my records are. That's because I report all interesting cases to our colleagues in Paris."

In the room of the Bouhouhorts about fifteen wide-eyed neighbors reverentially surrounded the two physicians. The latter paid no attention to the mere laity but in the consecrated Greek and Latin of their guild celebrated the services of science, which the laity for its part heard with the same shudder of awe that it felt in the presence of the offices of the Church.

"I examined this child for the last time three days ago", Dozous declared. "There was no change in the total paralysis of the thighs. You yourself observed the atrophies and contractions, my dear colleague. Meanwhile, however, a new innervation has doubtless set in. Palpation leaves little doubt of the fresh muscular substance. Satisfy yourself once more."

"If your diagnosis was correct," Lacrampe said, "these findings are inadmissible. Were the nerves of the motor system really destroyed? Couldn't we assume a mere atrophy due to rickets?"

"Sorry, colleague. I am bound to stick to my diagnosis."

Lacrampe shrugged his shoulders. "Then we're face to face with a medical mystery. A cold bath produces nerve substance out of the void. Have you so much faith in hydrotherapy, my dear Dozous?"

A weary irony appeared on the face of the municipal physician. "I prescribe cold baths to fat people who don't feel well as an ascetic practice to correct gluttony and lassitude."

"Then would you assume a traumatic process here—healing through the shock of fright?"

"Ask me something easier, my dear colleague."

"Then what remains but to assume that in the water of Massabielle there is present an unknown and powerful therapeutic substance? . . ."

Dozous picked up his hat and gloves. "At all events, I'll report on this case immediately to both Charcot and Voisin."

Lacrampe was frightened. "Don't do that, my dear colleague. The gods of science would rock with Homeric laughter over the state of medicine in Lourdes. That wouldn't be an agreeable thing for us."

"It is *not* an agreeable thing for us", Dozous affirmed dryly. "I, too, am not accustomed to believe things I cannot see."

Chapter Thirty-Two

Psychiatry Takes a Hand

THERE WERE TWO men in France who truly and sincerely suffered under their defeat at the hands of the lady of Massabielle. One was Vital Dutour, the bald-headed prosecutor of Lourdes; the other was Baron Massy, the very conventional prefect of the department of the Hautes-Pyrénées.

The deepest motive of most people seems to be one of arrogance or, more accurately, the burning desire for a constant feeling of superiority. Social conventions demand that this passion be more shamefacedly concealed than even the passion of sex. Hence it ravages their souls all the more devastatingly. Now, every class has its specific kind and degree of arrogance. It may be fairly argued that the arrogance of bureaucrats, when provoked, surpasses that of all other classes of society. For in his own eyes the bureaucrat is not simply a chance functionary of the power of the State. At his desk he has the feeling that he himself is that power. Even though he is only stamping letters, he deems himself of another and higher order than the public, as, let us say, any angel is of another and higher order than mortal man. In his capacity of judge, chief of police, collector of imposts or taxes, he has a far more visible control over the fates of men than Providence itself. All surround him with the obsequiousness born of fear, for the law is as putty in his hands. From

the crown of the Emperor, of which he is in his own conceit the co-bearer, he derives his magic power. He knows very well that in actual fact he is less and knows less than any scholar, physician, engineer, or even than any smith or locksmith who has learned his trade. Rob him of the magic that power radiates, and there is left a rickety and declassed scrivener. Human arrogance tends to defend itself with a bitterness in proportion to its vulnerability. If a bureaucrat is made ridiculous, so is the divine principle of power itself. That cannot be endured.

It is not to be endured that things should go on as they are doing, Baron Massy reflected. The case of the lady of Massabielle cannot end with a jeer at the divine principle of power. The great dailies had calmed down a little since the grotto had been boarded up. Perhaps grass would soon be growing over the grave of this business of phantoms and miracles, which was a slap in the face to the spirit of the age. But the baron's arrogance prevented him from exercising a wise and farsighted resignation. He had had to suffer ministers of state to find fault with him. Twice he had had to wait in the episcopal antechamber and then accept an ironic repulse. Every step he had taken for the suppression of this irritating nuisance had ended in bitter futility or open recoil upon himself.

Baron Massy was not the man to leave unfinished a sentence either spoken or written by himself. His predicates followed his subjects, and sand or blotter succeeded the final stop. It would have made him ill to yield, that is, to abstain from further persecution. His dislike of Bernadette Soubirous was acute, although he had never seen her. He was convinced that in her and in her alone was to be sought the origin of these endless and mischievous annoyances. Until Bernadette had been obliterated from the consciousness of all France, there would be no tranquillity in or around

Lourdes. All attempts to convict the girl of fraud or at least of the selfish exploitation of the credulity of her fellow men had been brought to naught either by her own astuteness or by the awkward silliness of Jacomet. But Massy still had a weapon in reserve.

It was one of the dog days. The summer sun flooded the huge office of His Excellency. The prefect had on his black morning coat, as always, the high stiff collar that scraped his very chin, and stiff cuffs, while all the other officials in the building worked in their shirt sleeves. In spite of that they sweated. It was against the baron's principles to sweat. He was studying a document that had been sent him many weeks ago. It contained the findings of a committee of physicians who had examined Bernadette Soubirous toward the end of March. The committee had consisted of Drs. Balencie and Lacrampe, both in practice at Lourdes, and one humble country doctor of the vicinity. Vital Dutour had stubbornly insisted at the time that Dr. Dozous, though actually attached to the municipality, be not a member of that committee. He had had his fill of the reports that this unreliable customer had let loose in the Café Français. Frowning, the prefect read and reread the final report:

"Except for the asthmatic condition with which she was born Bernadette Soubirous is in entirely normal health. She never suffers from headaches or any other kind of nervous disturbances. Her appetite and sleep are excellent. There is no evidence of any pathological tendency whatsoever. Her nature is doubtless a very impressionable one. We are dealing with a hypersensitive temperament that can easily become the prey of its own imaginings, and these may become as intense as hallucinations. It is quite possible that a ray of light in the niche in the rock deludes her into seeing form and outline. These hypersensitive natures often tend to exaggerate such experiences and in severe cases this tendency

may end in a pseudologia phantastica. But there is no ground for assuming any such condition in the case before us. The undersigned are of opinion that so-called ecstatic conditions may obtain here. These conditions constitute a psychical affliction, comparable to somnambulism, of which very little is known but which are of no danger to the patient."

"'May', 'could', 'possibly', 'perhaps'", Baron Massy growled and pushed this cautious report from him in disgust. Then, just at the right moment, the visit of the psychiatrist was announced. This was a man who was at the head of a sanatorium near Pau and whom the baron had very specially invited. Now and then the State needs to employ a neurologist to get rid of some crude and stubborn fool. Especially in matters concerning the misuse of great fortunes, crazily eccentric wills, the infatuation of graybeards and fathers for frivolous beauties, do State and entrenched families call upon psychiatrists for help. Why, then, should not the State invoke the psychiatrist's help against the supernatural in an age that can just manage to get along successfully with the natural?

The psychiatrist had both charm and a red beard. His pompadour was arranged to be flamelike. One might have called him handsome had not a muscular paralysis drawn the left corner of his mouth slightly upward. His mouse-gray eyes moved impishly to and fro, for the physician who treats the insane never wholly escapes the contamination of their maladies.

The prefect gave an accounting of the matter in hand and made clear the governmental point of view. To the baron's satisfaction the redbeard proved himself a delicately attentive listener. Himself completely indifferent to all philosophical speculations, he resented bitterly anything that seemed to produce a suprasensual rift in his fixed and wholly

explicable universe. Thus Bernadette offered his mind no alternative but that of fraud or madness. And since madness was his specialty, he was a natural special pleader on its side. Nor could he see why in these hard times the heavenly powers, without having passed the requisite and severe medical examinations, should offer unfair competition like any quack. The prefect pointed out the law of June 30, 1838, according to which the prosecutor's office was empowered to put under restraint any citizen suspected of mental derangement whenever medical diagnosis justified such action and the patient might become a public menace. The psychiatrist smiled.

"We need to employ no hard and fast rule, Your Excellency. There is a proper and legal middle way between entire liberty and complete internment that I often use in difficult cases. I place the patient under observation. After all, a psychiatrist is no orthopedic surgeon who can set a broken foot on the spot."

"Excellent, my dear professor", the baron happily agreed. "I fear that this patient will of necessity have to be placed under observation."

On the very next morning the psychiatrist made his appearance in the hospital of Lourdes. He was accompanied by an orderly as able-bodied as if Goliath himself were to be taken into custody. Bernadette was presented to him forthwith. Her eyes were cool, thoughtful, and very guarded, as always in times of conflict. The redbeard put on an avuncular act to gain her confidence. He laughed delightedly, pursed his crooked lips, patted and petted her. Angrily Bernadette avoided the man's touch. The psychiatrist involved her in a long discussion that in its own way aimed at the same end as that of Jacomet once upon a time. Bernadette was to be lured into all kinds of traps in order to display her feebleness of wit. She refused to afford the man that

satisfaction. As always her replies were curt and telling. She knew how many hours there are in a day and days in a week and when the sun rises in July and who was the ruler of France. She could multiply seven by five. She could not multiply seventeen by eighteen, but quite seriously threw out the remark: "You had to do that sum first yourself, Monsieur."

Questioned concerning the events of the last few days, she was able to give a neat account in chronological order. Two of the younger nuns who were present at the examination began to giggle. Bernadette had not lost her old art of making a fool of anyone who tried to make a fool of her.

The psychiatrist asked permission to be alone with his patient in a dark chamber. The mother superior, though granting this request, had the wisdom to send messages to Bernadette's parents and to the dean. Bernadette sat attentively on a bed while the redbeard moved about like a shadow in the summery twilight. Like a tailor he drew out a tape measure; like a tailor's, too, were the many pins stuck under the lapel of his coat. Skull and brain anatomy happened just then to be in triumphant vogue. The brain centers of thought, emotion, and motor impulse had been localized and neatly delimited. Man, so to speak, was suspended by these centers like a supple mechanical jumping jack. They were the sum total of what old-fashioned people called "soul". The psychiatrist took Bernadette's skull measurements and entered them in a little notebook, again just like a tailor. Then he pricked her with his pins in various parts of her body.

"Ouch!" Bernadette cried.

"You're very sensitive to that!" the psychiatrist rejoiced. Impossible to tell whether his meaning boded good or ill for the patient.

"So would anybody be", Bernadette answered in accordance with the facts.

The redbeard now examined her muscular reflexes and, above all, the reactions of the pupils of her eyes. He bade her walk backward and forward with eyes open and closed. "Why do you walk so unsteadily?" he asked.

"Because I'm worn out, Monsieur."

He told her next to sit down and chat with him. He was very avuncular again. "So you see the Blessed Virgin in the grotto?"

"I've never said that, Monsieur."

"What, then, do you say?"

"I used to see the lady in the grotto", Bernadette replied with emphasis on the past character of the event.

"But the lady must be someone", the redhead insisted.

"The lady is the lady."

"Whoever sees ladies that do not exist is ill, my child, and not normal."

Bernadette let a little while pass. Then she explained with precision: "I used to see the lady. I will never see her again, for she has gone away. Consequently, Monsieur, you can no longer make me out to be sick."

For a moment the man was taken aback by this unanswerable logic. "Listen, my dear child", he said thereupon. "There are symptoms to prove that you're not quite as you should be. But I'll give you my word of honor that your cure will be very rapid. Wouldn't you like to be really well and be rid of these conditions that are so harmful to you? For a short time you'll live in a beautiful house with a large garden. You'll fare like a little princess. Are you fond of hot chocolate with whipped cream?"

"I've never had any."

"Well, you'll have it, if you like, with breakfast in the morning. You'll never be better off anywhere than with

me. Your parents needn't pay a sou. You'll be taken care of, and your whole future will be better."

"I don't care particularly for chocolate and whipped cream", said Bernadette. "I'll soon be fifteen and it's better that I stay here."

With a smile the redbeard shook his head. "My dear girl," he said, "it would be better if you went with me of your own volition. Your parents, to whom we'll talk, won't be the losers, either. I have noticed that you're a clever girl. It won't take beyond three or four weeks. Then these morbid conditions will be over once and for all. You'll see no ladies in grottoes any more, but you will be a splendid human being well equipped for the struggle of life."

"I'm not a bit afraid of that struggle, Monsieur", Bernadette said, looking at those small hands of hers, which had already done a great deal of work in their day. And with this, before the psychiatrist suspected anything, she leaped up and ran from the room and without hindrance from the house.

Two hours later the psychiatrist and the imperial prosecutor together entered the Cachot. The gentlemen were not a little startled when near the door there met them no lesser man than Marie Dominique Peyramale. Implacably that huge form barred the way so that the ensuing conversation was carried on in the low doorway while the Soubirous family sought refuge in the farthest corner around the fireplace.

The redbeard bowed in some embarrassment. "Have I the honor of addressing the dean of Lourdes?"

"You have that honor, Monsieur. How can I serve you?"

Vital Dutour cleared his throat. "Wouldn't it be better to go elsewhere?"

"It is you gentlemen who have chosen this place of action, not I", said the dean, not yielding a foot of ground. "The

presence of the Soubirous family as witnesses is very welcome to me. I know Monsieur, the prosecutor. The other gentleman I do not know. He is probably the neurologist of Pau whom the prefect was pleased to send us."

"I am professor extraordinary of psychiatry and neurology", the redbeard admitted with crooked mouth and an aplomb that failed to come off.

"I'm afraid you won't find Lourdes a very fertile field for your studies", the dean observed regretfully.

"Mr. Dean, I am here on behalf of the medical department of the provincial administration. We have the findings of a medical committee under the date of March twenty-sixth that establish the presence of definite anomalies in the youthful patient in question. It is the desire of the prefect to check these findings and to place the girl under my observation for a period. Such is my mission here. . . ."

Peyramale seemed to grow more and more massive. "I know that entirely empty document of March", said he. "Now you have subjected the girl to an examination, Monsieur le Professeur. Tell us what anomalies *you* were able to establish."

The redbeard was hesitant. "There are anomalies that are not exactly spectacular."

The veiled thunder of Peyramale's voice began to swell and fill the room. "Let me recall to your memory, my good professor, that Hippocratic oath which you swore when you became a healer of men. I ask you: Is Bernadette Soubirous mentally deranged or inclined to mania or a menace to her fellowmen?"

"Good Lord, Monsieur le Curé, who ever mentioned such things as mania or public menace?" The fellow fairly writhed.

"Then what right has the prefect to desire to rob the girl of her liberty?"

"A right that is given him in the written law of France", Vital Dutour said with infuriating equanimity.

It took a few deep breaths for Peyramale to preserve a show of calm. "The law of France is too lofty to be used toward the perverting of justice."

The redbeard tried the role of pacifier. "But, my dear dean, if we invoke the law of eighteen thirty-eight it is purely to serve our little patient, who at the direction of the prefect is to be placed under observation for a period and treated according to all the methods of modern science."

The end of Peyramale's self-control had come. The organ of his temperament rolled forth its music: "That is the most shameless piece of hypocrisy I have ever encountered! I give you my word, gentlemen, that I will unmask that hypocrisy and raise an alarm in all the land of France that will echo a thousandfold in the ears of the prefect of Tarbes.... Come here, Bernadette Soubirous!"

Quite instinctively Bernadette had already drawn close to the dean. The bogyman of her childhood took her and pressed her close to him in token of the protecting power of his arms of steel.

"I know this child!" he cried. "So does the imperial prosecutor. We have both had intimate conferences with her. Anyone who asserts that Bernadette Soubirous is deranged is himself either deranged or a scoundrel. The law of eighteen thirty-eight is directed against dangerous maniacs. Are you gentlemen still minded to apply it? Well and good! But be assured that I will not stir from this child's side. And now you may call the gendarmes!"

"And when the gendarmes come, what then, Dean?" Vital Dutour asked, his angry challenge sheathed in carelessness.

Peyramale laughed aloud. "When the gendarmes come, gentlemen, ah, yes, when they do come, I'll say to them: Load your guns well, my men, for your path lies over my dead body."

Checkmated, the prosecutor and the psychiatrist withdrew from the room, into which, thanks to the dean, they had penetrated but a few paces. Vital Dutour knew that Peyramale was capable of making good any threat. And he had not foreseen this sudden shift of attitude in the dean of Lourdes. Bernadette was a veritable witch as in the good old days. He would have to wire to Tarbes and Pau for new directions.

A little after one o'clock a closed special stagecoach stopped at the corner of the Rue des Petites Fossées and the Place Marcadale. At this hour the streets were always somnolent and empty. Louise and Bernadette Soubirous entered the coach. Dean Peyramale was already seated inside. The quiet journey took the direction of the high mountains, to the watering place of Cauterets. Thither Peyramale was taking the persecuted girl and her mother to be sheltered in a little house that was parish property. Protection and care were assured by the parish priest of Cauterets. Thus Bernadette vanished and remained so. Not even the prefect's special police were able to discover her hiding place.

Chapter Thirty-Five

The Lady Overcomes the Emperor

THE WINDOWS of the Emperor looked out on the Atlantic. The thunder of the surf could be heard in the rooms, for the summer villa at Biarritz had been built high on the cliffs. Despite the mild September night the windows were not open. Cigarette fumes were dense in the room and gathered in clouds about the chandeliers and the pretentious petroleum lamps on the two desks. The Emperor immensely valued this solitary hour right after midnight. Like so many devotees of tobacco he found it hard to fall asleep until late, and his mental clearness and productivity heightened after midnight. This was an hour of dreamy planning for the most powerful monarch of his contemporary world. He was fifty. The face, whose cheeks usually gleamed oddly as though polished, was yellowish now and relaxed and furrowed. The long moustachios waxed to stand out straight all day long now drooped as they would. The black-dyed hair, usually combed over the forehead from left to right, was in disorder. The monarch wore a pleasant silken dressing gown and soft bedroom slippers. To plan prophetically the future of a continent in this state of contemplation and bodily ease evoked in him the conscious thrill of power.

Napoléon III walked up and down between the two desks as though invisible demonic secretaries sat at them to whom

by night he was dictating the battle orders of the century. On the larger of the desks lay a map of northern Italy dotted with mysterious marks in red and blue and green ink. This map had been appended to the sealed fivefold campaign plan of the General Staff that the minister of war had brought to Biarritz in person yesterday. The world had no suspicion of the ripeness of the Italian plan. Even Count Cavour, the great man of Savoy, was still being hammered into pliancy on the anvil of uncertainty. The papers, however, wrote about the Emperor's modernity of outlook and his passion for nature that impelled him to take a long daily dip in the sea.

On the smaller desk, under mountains of official acts and petitions, there also lay maps of Algeria, Equatorial Africa, and Central America. The Emperor's dreams were polyphonic. His uncle Bonaparte had dealt with a smallish world. His vision had always been bounded by Europe and the Mediterranean; he had not even conquered the narrow channel to punish Britain. In spite of the cult devoted to the founder of the dynasty, the third Napoléon felt superior to the first. His achievement consisted not in battles that were lost even while being won. It consisted in the network of railways that in seven brief years had been made to cover the whole of France. He did not aim at conquests to boast of. He desired the harmonious organization of a world, civilized by the French spirit, that should extend as far as the Congo, eastern Asia, perhaps as far as Mexico itself.

The Emperor kept poring over the General Staff's map of northern Italy. The war with Austria was unavoidable. Cavour, quick-minded as lightning though he was, was convinced that he was pulling the strings of all marionettes and did not dream that he himself was but a puppet in the hands of a greater than he. Cavour's plan was a united Italy under the house of Savoy. That was not at all to the Emperor's

mind. He would not dream of placing a Vittorio Emmanuele at the head of another great power. Once upon a time in his adventurous youth he had, to be sure, solemnly sworn to the Carbonari and the Giovane Italia that he would lead to victory the movement of an arising and united Italy. But these had been the republican fancies of a youthful and indigent tourist who had then been the mere hopeless pretender to a throne. Louis Napoléon had certainly never vowed to raise the house of Savoy beyond its merits and thus set a bad example to the house of Hohenzollern. His plan was far more original as well as more expedient. Italy was to be united, not under a single monarch but under four, who could, if need were, be played off against one another. There would be formed a tight alliance of states and dynasties with very limited freedom of movement. The presidency of this federation he, Napoléon, intended to assign to none other than the Sovereign Pontiff and ruler of the Papal States. Thus could the circle of Italian politics be squared. It would be, moreover, an immense benefit conferred on the clerical parties of all nations and yet would tend to function as a control over all Catholic factions everywhere. The liberals would rage, of course; the Emperor was fully aware of that. They would cry murder and treason. The clericals and the liberals were the two poles of the balance on the scale of the imperial rule. His whole art consisted in holding this balance level. The gigantic gift intended for Rome proceeded from no religious feeling on the Emperor's part. He himself was intellectually and emotionally a liberal, like everybody else. But the preeminence of a French world empire demanded that neither Italians nor Germans be permitted to attain a unitary national state. That could not of course be mentioned without enraging all the sentimentalists and foolish shouters of all Europe, including France itself. Everything had, on the contrary, to be done to keep the liberals

from the right scent lest they grieve in disillusion over that masterstroke. Was it mere accident that, despite a rigorous censorship, the radical sheets became more openly rebellious day by day?

Consequently this affair of Lourdes was not the mere bagatelle that all those incapable fellows—Fould, Roulland, Delangle—were trying to make it out to be. Clearly not, else why had they gotten nowhere at all in eight full months in this business of miracles? The Emperor felt as though a sixth sense of his were functioning. Unbelievable how during those eight months this depressing town of Lourdes had been the very showpiece of the international press. From all sides pressure was being brought to bear on the Emperor for a decision. His well-tested art of seeing nothing and hearing nothing, of feigning, so to speak, a tactical death, was daily being tried to the utmost. Only yesterday Monsieur de Ressegnier, a former deputy from the Hautes-Pyrénées, had called and today even Monseigneur Salinis, archbishop of Auch, had paid a visit in which he had passionately protested against the interference of the civil authorities in Lourdes. Strange enough was this visit of the prince of the Church in view of the cautious silence and watchful attitude of the French episcopate. The Emperor had given both the deputy and the prelate evasive answers. Ressegnier must have left a petition behind him. Where can it be? Where did I put it? If only these damned lackeys and secretaries weren't so intent on putting my desks in order. There's more order in my disorder than in a well-kept depository of archives. At last the Emperor found Ressegnier's petition. He read it but superficially.

"Your Majesty is requested graciously to leave out of consideration the question of the visions, although hundreds and even thousands of witnesses are of the opinion that a revelation of higher powers did in fact take place. What is

a fact, however, and one now irrefutably demonstrated is this, that the water of the spring originating in so wondrous a fashion and now barred by the police could not possibly work harm to any. The analysis made by Professor Filhol of Toulouse leaves no possible doubt in respect of this fact. A further fact, and one proven to the very hilt, is this, that a not inconsiderable number of the afflicted have regained their health after drinking the water of the spring. In the name of freedom of conscience, therefore, grant access, Sire, to the spring of Massabielle. Grant healing to the sick in the name of humanity and grant opportunity for scientific investigation in the name of freedom of research."

The Emperor could not help laughing aloud as he flung the petition into the wastebasket. Aha, gentlemen of the reactionary parties suddenly take the side of freedom of conscience, humanity, and untrammelled research, exactly as gentlemen of the progressive parties are much concerned over Heaven when it happens to fit in with some little scheme of theirs! How hollow and unveracious are the things of this world. What each desires is to hunt down for himself and his party the bit of might that a full belly and a little superiority give him a chance to pursue. Science and Heaven are to each but the purposeful extension of this fragment of power into the realm of the abstract. The gentleman of the clerical party, Monsieur de Ressegnier, cares no more about the spring, the Virgin, or the health of his fellow men than about some handful of dust by the roadside. He wants success, that is all. He wants to be revenged on his opponents, having been beaten by a liberal in the last elections. . . . A high thing to be Emperor and have no need to go lying or seeking after power, since one has it. In some ways the Emperor is better off than God Himself, for here on earth *le bon Dieu* leans on the clericals, but my prop consists of opposites, of clericals

and liberals. Well, gentlemen of the clerical parties, a succulent mouthful is in store for you. Hence I will shower my undisguised favor on the liberals during the months to come.

The Emperor looked at the clock. Half-past twelve. He had been restless all this time. He had wanted to ask how Loulou was feeling before retiring. For Loulou, his only son, had not been too well the past two days. Nothing special—slight temperature. But with a two-year-old child dangerous surprises are always possible. Louis Napoléon had not spent his youth in palaces but in quite middle-class dwellings. His nerves were well tested. He was frightened but not so excessively as Eugénie. Yet upon Loulou's health depended the future of the imperial house of Corsica.

He rang and asked for his coat and shoes. He was not young enough or sure enough of himself to appear too familiarly before Eugénie Montijo. Since her origin was not high, she was insistent on formalities. Louis Napoléon was informed that the doctor had been awakened half an hour ago. Disquieted, he entered the nursery. He found his wife with streaming tears at the baby's bedside. Loulou seemed unconcerned, though his cheeks and eyes gleamed too brightly. Only when Madame Bruat or the nurse changed the compress on his forehead did he whine a little. The physician smiled reassuringly at the Emperor. "Nothing of consequence, Sire. A light fever, as we know. . . ."

"It's diphtheria; it's croup at least", Eugénie groaned.

"There's not the slightest reason to assume that, Madame", the physician contradicted her. "The prince's throat is very slightly inflamed, but that's all. We've gone through the same thing often before."

"Is there any danger of a children's disease, such as scarlet fever or measles?" the Emperor asked.

"That's always a possibility to be reckoned with, Sire. At present, however, there is no room for anxiety at all. May I suggest that Her Majesty go quietly to bed?"

"I just know it's croup", Eugénie said in a toneless voice.

Very pale, the Emperor approached her. "You should really go to bed, dearest", he said tenderly and placed his hand on the child's chest. "Loulou is going to be brave and let Mamma go to bed, aren't you, Loulou?"

Loulou did not agree with this at all. He sobbed now: "No, Mamma mustn't go to bed; Mamma must stay with me!"

Eugénie looked up at the Emperor with impassioned, tear-stained eyes.

"Oh, Louis, there's one wish you must grant me!" she cried. "Bruat has brought a bottleful of the spring water of Lourdes. We'll give Loulou a glass of it."

"Is that necessary, my dear?" the Emperor asked, somewhat rasped.

"It is necessary, Louis. This water has cured many people. A two-year-old child just like Loulou was cured and on the instant."

"But that's an unverified rumor, my dear."

"Anyone who has even a trace of faith knows it to be true, Louis."

The Emperor found it hard to conceal his unhappy perplexity. "Other people can afford to make themselves ridiculous, my child. *We* shouldn't; *we* mustn't. . . ."

"I don't mind making myself ridiculous to save my child's life, Louis."

The old doctor gave the Emperor a meaningful glance. "The water is quite harmless. If Madame is so set upon it, there's nothing against letting the prince drink of it."

Before this proposal of a skilled physician the Emperor had to retreat. "All I ask", he said slowly, "is that the fact doesn't become public knowledge."

But Eugénie flared up at that. "How ignoble that would be! What vulgar ingratitude that would show, Louis! How is the spring to help if one denies it in advance? On the contrary, I swear here and now in the presence of God and man that if my child be saved I shall publicly acknowledge my faith in the spring and in the Blessed Virgin of Lourdes."

Madame Bruat arrived with the glass. Shrugging his shoulders, the Emperor left the room.

On the morning after the next, the Empress made her appearance in the Emperor's bedroom in order to announce that Loulou's temperature had returned to normal. "The spring of Massabielle did help him, Louis."

"That's a very frivolous observation, darling. Loulou has had a number of attacks like this and has always got well quickly, by God's help. You're doing a great injustice to the doctor's prescriptions."

"You're an atheist, Louis."

The Emperor smiled. "That's about the most stupid thing a sovereign could be."

"Then you're worse than an atheist, Louis. You haven't the humility to thank God for the grace He has accorded us. And yet all day yesterday you shook with terror that it might be scarlet fever or croup. . . ."

The Emperor, who, in the five years of their marriage, had not received five such early visits from his wife, was exceedingly embarrassed. He had been caught with his hair-net and his moustache-tie on. "You do me wrong, my dear", he said wearily. "I know that we owe Loulou's life wholly to God's grace. But that's no reason at all for abandoning all sense and reason and believing that a glass of ordinary water brought from the Pyrenees has saved Loulou from scarlet fever."

Eugénie Montijo's classic countenance grew hard and sharp. "You deny the slightest possibility of its having been

the water of Massabielle that reduced Loulou's temperature to normal within twenty-four hours!"

"That again is unjust." The Emperor half closed his eyes with an expression of suffering. "In addition to the many natural explanations I don't regard a supernatural one as wholly impossible. But I have no ground for assuming miraculous interference so long as the explanations offered by nature and medical science are amply sufficient. Let's leave that sort of thing among old wives' tales, where it belongs. Our child is well. That God helped, I know. That science and nature helped, I also know. That Lourdes helped is conceivable, but I do *not* know it."

"But I know it, Louis." The Empress was militant. "No one shall prevent me from showing my gratitude, not even you!"

"Why should I prevent you, my dear?" the Emperor asked conciliatorily.

"Then I may take it, Louis," she broke in upon him, "that you are ready to grant my wish? I vowed for us both that if the water of Lourdes helps our child, you will command the grotto to be opened to the public. . . ."

Now Louis Napoléon found it hard to restrain his irritation. "One vows vows for oneself, not for others, my dear. Lourdes, moreover, has come to be a delicate political fact. Very weighty reasons demand that I do not offend the liberal parties at this moment. . . ."

"My motives as wife and mother are much weightier than any political tactics of a given day." Eugénie turned pale, and the stubbornness, ambition, and rude power of her countenance displeased her husband intensely.

After an interval he spoke and his voice was hoarse. "From the beginning my government has taken a negative attitude to this business. And not only my government, but also the French episcopate. And not even you will accuse the

bishops of open atheism. We are all dependent on public opinion, and the public opinion of our time is definitely hostile to the stuffy mysticism of an undeveloped peasantry. And this is so because we are engaged in fighting for a new spirit, a spirit that works in my favor. If I seek to halt the advance of that spirit, it will destroy me. Note well: if I open that grotto I make my own government ridiculous and also myself. Is that what you want me to do? You want me, in a word, in opposition to all political good sense, violently to affront the spirit of the times and, without any need, publicly to retract a well-considered policy."

Eugénie went close up to her husband and took both his hands. Her voice was deep and dark: "Louis, an emperor is dependent on far greater powers than that of public opinion. You are very sensible of that. Else why would you consult Madame Frossart, the fortuneteller and *clairvoyante*? In your position you can't draw an indifferent breath nor seek refuge in opportunism. Your very dreams make history. A sovereign, I have heard you say, can't outwit Heaven. And yet you would do so on this occasion? Now, at the outset of the greatest year of your reign. Consider! In France there flows a spring of grace that has accomplished cure after cure. Your own son being in danger, you gave him of the water of the spring. . . ."

"Let's stick to the truth, Madame," Napoléon said and his teeth grated. "It was not I, by God. . . ."

"No matter", Eugénie Montijo, the Spaniard, said. "Loulou is well. That power which by means of an innocent and highly graced maiden brought forth within an hour that potent spring, that power has shown you its grace. And you would venture to withhold its meed from this power? Do you really think it safer to affront God and the Blessed Virgin than this so-called spirit of the times? And you would do that after you had vowed a vow of gratitude? . . ."

"You vowed, not I", the Emperor insisted, though without hope.

"No matter! The vow is vowed. It must be kept. Less for me than for you. For your empire is at stake, Louis. . . ."

The Emperor conducted Eugénie back to her chambers without uttering another word.

The day was a most uncomfortable one for him. This beautiful woman had an irresistible power to upset him. She would grow cold and colder and finally so icy that flight to Paris would seem desirable. Moreover, on such occasions she had a chance to make implications of which his conscience was far from guiltless. Bathing was not enjoyable. Work was stagnant. The happy midnight hour of creative solitude was spoiled. Worst of all was the sting that the woman's words had left in the man's heart. She was right. She dared not break her vow. Nor dared he, though he had not vowed it. Whatever power it was that stood behind the visions and the cures of Lourdes, it might be the same power that stood behind the scenes of history and therefore, too, behind his Italian undertaking.

It was easy for insignificant nobodies to be freethinkers. What did they risk? Could the greatest of earth's monarchs, however, venture, merely in order to conciliate the freethinkers, to challenge that vastly more susceptible power which determines the victory or decline of nations? Even these cold considerations seemed dangerous to the Emperor. He walked up and down between his desks. Who knows whether that power which demands a boundless submission was unaware of these subtle calculations? A man who scribbles legal papers or sells merchandise has no trouble being witty at the expense of what he calls superstition. He who rules the world knows as a matter of daily experience that all things hold a transcendent element of the unknown, that the concatenation of events depends not on him, that he is

the playball of mysterious forces and counterforces that demand adoration and propitiation and must be ever either lured or conciliated. Whether or not the bullet of an assassin reaches its mark is determined not by the science of ballistics but by those same inscrutable powers, be they a triune God or the will of the constellations. None but a ruler knows how wholly outside of the common laws of nature he stands. His sphere is the miraculous. Hence from of old the faith of princes and men of might has partaken of the nature of superstition. . . .

On the third night of his silent battle with the woman the man admitted defeat. Nothing remained but to find a form in which to clothe his capitulation. After long inner arguments the Emperor decided on a very unconventional step. He would avoid regular bureaucratic channels. He was ashamed before his ministers and determined simply to avoid them. Fould, Roulland, Delangle were all left in ignorance. The Emperor scribbled a telegram to the prefect of Tarbes:

"Access to the grotto west of Lourdes is to be immediately granted to the public. Napoléon."

That was all. The telegram was sent. With a copy in his hand the Emperor sought out the Empress. She blushed with joy. "I always knew, Louis, that you have a great heart and one that can conquer even itself. . . ."

"The fact is, Madame," he replied icily to her declamatory outburst, "that the lady of Lourdes found a most effective ally in yourself."