

pilgrims. Lepers often came under their care, and there were miraculous healings; but most of all was St. Odile concerned with those who were blind, and various legends exist of miracles whereby she was able to cure blindness.

The story of the passing of Odile is one that appears and reappears in chronicle and legend. As the saint drew near to her end, in the church she had built, the Sisters gathered round her and she admonished them and said farewell. In chronicles we are told that her soul loosened itself from her body and spread itself throughout the church so that a sweet smell permeated the whole building. But the Sisters were troubled, for the Mother had passed without receiving the Sacrament, and they prayed that her soul might return to her body again. This it did and the saint reproved them for bringing her back, told them that she had been with the Holy Lucia and then took the Cup or Kelch, as it was called, in her hands. On thus receiving the Sacrament the soul left the body again; the latter was buried on the right side of the altar, and we are told that the pleasant fragrance in the church remained many days. The 13th of December is the death-day of St. Odile.

The Physical Reflection of the Spiritual.

Although St. Odile is to be regarded as belonging to the category of "nursing saints," that is not the most important aspect of the legends regarding her and to exclude other aspects would really destroy the attraction and value of legend, chronicle and tradition dear to the people of Alsace; moreover, it would inevitably mean giving an inadequate picture of the saint and all that the legends surrounding her meant to Central Europe for centuries. The theologians might use words to seek to bring themselves and others to an understanding of Christianity, but St. Odile was an embodiment of the *living Word*, and words could be discarded for the most part in the treasure of her teaching as it lies hidden in the legends handed down for the most part orally; this latter system was adopted with intent rather than let her story be falsified by misunderstandings and inadequacies that arise from writing and, alas, in later days, much more from printing. To keep their mysteries pure the early chroniclers had a curious way of mixing up physical and spiritual happenings, one very suitable indeed to their times when clairvoyance was more rife, imaginative and consciousness far greater and people less educated, but perhaps with a greater sharpness of vision from this very fact; every new development in evolution brings its sacri-

fices. It was quite in accordance with the practice, even the scholarship of the time, to commence with the physical part of a story as in that of "The Good Merchant John," who went to the East to buy merchandise; quite suddenly, but without a break, the tale passes into the imaginative realm, the good merchant rescues a princess and after many adventures restores her to a King of what is now our own islands. There are secret teachings contained in such legends as this. The people heard such tales and developed an attitude of mind and soul that drew teaching from them when they listened to troubadours and travelling scholars. Professor Mauer gives full credence to the legends

of St. Odile, but just as strongly does he apparently believe that they are physical reflections or embodiments of spiritual truths and in a sense we find support for this view in the words of a great writer (Goethe), near to our time, when he says. "All things transient but as symbols are spread."

From this point of view let us just refer shortly to a few of the events in the life of St. Odile, and here we might note that her story would, in places, appear to bear some relation to the Grail Legend in its teaching, but we cannot refer to these now. In the very fact that she was physically blind and on baptism regained her sight, lies very deep esoteric teaching as it existed in the early Church with regard to a process of initiation. (Incidentally the seers of old, as in the case of Homer, were said to be blind. They saw the physical as illusion and only the super-sensible was real to them.) All the early pictures seek to emphasise the results of the baptism of St. Odile and what was its full significance. Professor Mauer points out that, in early mediæval times, the human consciousness differed very much from that of the present, and in many legends we have references to how, in baptism, people could achieve a direct initiation

into the spiritual world when mighty and powerful pictures came before them as the spirit loosened itself from the physical body. The nearest that can be experienced of this to-day, and it is very far removed from the original experiences of baptism, is when a person, at a certain stage towards death by drowning or overcome with fear on a precipice perhaps, experiences the events of his earthly life in panorama. Thus the story of the Baptism of St. Odile and the restoration of her sight by St. John the Baptist (as she believed) has a double meaning—an earthly and a spiritual one. The physical and the super-physical as it were melt one into the other in the legend—physical



STATUE OF SAINT ODILE AT THE CONVENT, SAINTE ODILE.

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