

A California Lourdes

In the Garden of the San Rafael Convent There Now Stands a Wonderful Reproduction of the World Famous Grotto in the South of France



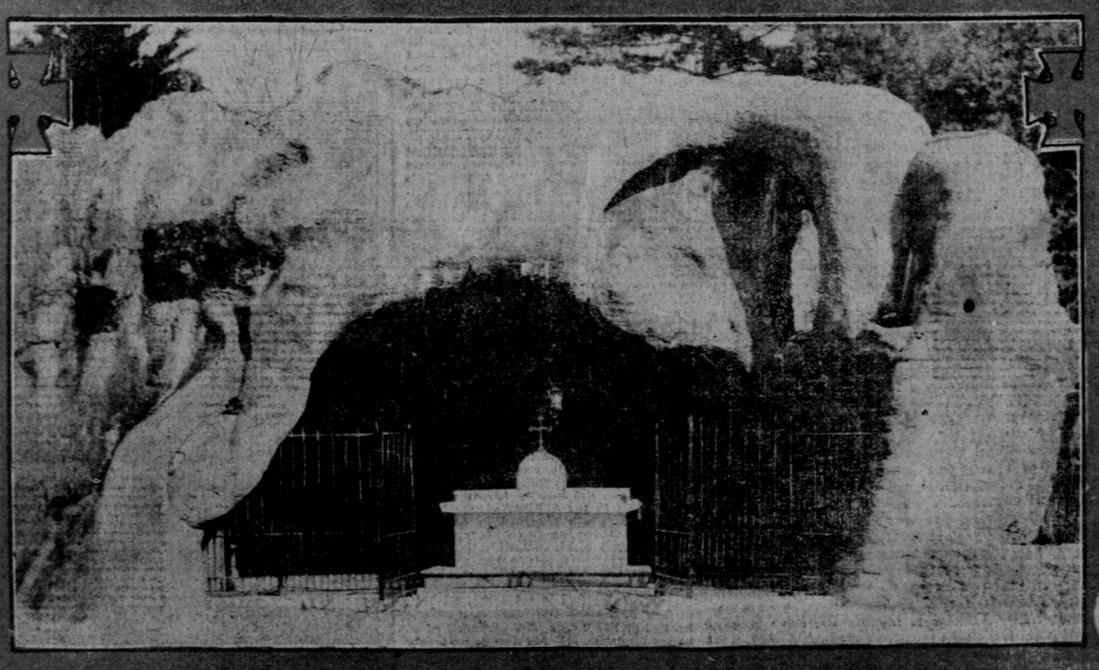
STATUE OF "OUR LADY OF LOURDES"

By Woodbury S. Brintnall

THE Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes, Mistral, it is but just to say, was directed its building, is approaching us. He has just finished supervising the removal of the scaffolding.

I was standing by the side of Sister Theresa in the grounds of the Dominican Convent at San Rafael. It was at sunset and in the high walled garden many little girls were playing in the gathering shadows. Occasionally a sweet faced sister robed in creamy white moved across the open court, to be besieged by childish voices, answered with a smiling nod and a few low spoken words. In the distance the green hills of Marin caught the answering echo of a bugle call, the day was almost done. It was all peaceful—all quiet, and as the good sister told me the story of "Our Lady of Lourdes," the high gray walls of the convent building merged into a wonderful church edifice, the scent of the outdoor blossoms was the scent from swaying censers in the hands of red robed acolytes. I saw only the wonderful Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes and the glint of golden light playing upon the head of an image set high in a niche of the rock above, which made the encircling words, "I am the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception," a halo of glorious light.

We walked on through the arbor to the grotto of cement formed by the skillful direction of Callart into an exact reproduction of the world famed grotto of Lourdes. There was a group of happy faced, laughing schoolgirls seated on one of the benches near; their conversation in French and their sim-



THE GROTTTO OF LOURDES AT SAN RAFAEL



People came to wonder about the little girl and her constant visits to the grotto, and some of those who wondered the most accompanied her, but they, not having her simple childlike faith, were unable to see anything unusual, yet they did not scoff at her.

At last one day the Virgin, for it was none other than Our Lady of Lourdes who had chosen this little girl as her embassy, said, "Bernadette, in the world to come I will make thee eternally happy. Drink of the water at my feet and lave thy hands." The child hesitated a moment, for the floor of the grotto was dry, but she obeyed and made passes with her hands as though she were really drinking, and laved her hands, when lo, out of the very heart of the rock sprang a tiny stream of cold water, and while she stood there amazed, the Virgin said, "I wish that many pilgrims and people of all lands may come to drink and bathe in these waters." Then the vision disappeared leaving the grotto as before, only for the water that flowed from the rock.

Bernadette went home and told of the happening and she was laughed at because at home they attributed her story to childish imagination, but she was so persistent that some of the people who had previously gone to the grotto again accompanied the child there, and seeing the flowing water, fell on their knees to give thanks. They brought the sick, many of whom were instantly cured of their ailments upon drinking the water, and Bernadette's name was uttered by every lip. Finally word of the wonderful miracle which had been performed reached the ears of the prefect, and for some reason...

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