

Fr Ignatius's account of the fourth and final Marian apparition

(Hereford Times, 25 September 1880)

About eight o'clock on Wednesday evening, the 15th instant, after the last service of the [octave of the] Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, we all came to the porch door. With me were the brothers, Mr Rouse [*a recently admitted postulant*], and a gentleman from Oxford, (...) who had visited the monastery for the purpose of endeavouring to see the vision. The boys were kneeling in front of us. Sister Janet was kneeling in the meadow. It was a very wet night. We were singing the 'Aves'. We had sung three 'Aves' in honour of the Holy Trinity, and we had just finished a fourth to the Blessed Virgin, when, all of a sudden, when I was not expecting anything of the kind, I saw a tremendous outburst of light from the dark, heavy clouds over the farm buildings. It seemed to burst right upon the building. The light was all in bulging circles.

In the very centre of the light there appeared, coming down to us, a human form. It was a very commanding stately figure. I could only see it sideways. The face was turned towards the bush. I could only see it momentarily, as it were in the 'twinkling of an eye'. But in that moment it stood out so distinctly and startlingly that I am sure it was darker than the light. Had it been clothed in cloth of silver, or cloth of gold, it might have produced the same effect – the darkness against the light. There was an intense reality about the figure. It was momentary, as I before said, and yet it seemed that it might have been an hour's vision, so intensely real was it. In the majesty of the figure, and in its being dark against the light, it reminded me of Doré's picture 'The Triumph of Christianity over Paganism'. There were flashings of light about the figure. In a moment, as I looked, it vanished.

Before it vanished it had appeared as if it would have descended upon the church door or the church roof. I feel sure that it must have been the figure of the Blessed Virgin because, although I could not discern the dress it wore, I could see that it was fully draped; whereas in the visions which others have seen, when they have seen a male figure, it has always appeared with simply a cloth around the loins, as our Lord is represented in baptism, and at other times. I also feel sure that it was the Virgin, because the figure appeared immediately after we had sung the 'Ave' in her honour. The figure also had its face turned towards the bush, where our Ladye had first been seen. I have further confirmation in the fact that, about two or three minutes afterwards, the Blessed Virgin's figure was seen by the gentleman who was watching with us, and by one of the boys, nearer to the ground. We have seen nothing since, except a light at the hut [*the remains of the old farmhouse, just above the present stables*] on Thursday evening.

In a version published at Llanthony the following year the 'gentleman from Oxford' is said to have been an undergraduate of Keble College and designated 'Mr E'. In fact his name was John Egerton (later Marjoribanks-Egerton); after ordination he served as Rector of Odd Rode in the Diocese of Chester before being received into the Roman Catholic Church in 1894. He also contributed an account of that evening's events to the same issue of the Hereford Times, which included the following:

"The night was dark and stormy, rain falling heavily; the wind high. About 7.30 the brothers, with the Father Superior, came out to the Monastery door and, standing on the door steps with the Processional Crucifix, commenced singing 'Aves'. Shortly after they came out the rain lessened, and, standing in the doorway behind the monks, I noticed that the sky looked much lighter. Before we had been there long the Father Superior exclaimed that he saw a burst of light high up in the sky, and others of the brothers corroborated this. I was looking down the approach towards the gateway, and in the direction of the field in which the apparition had appeared, and I saw nothing then; but shortly after the Father's exclamation I thought I perceived a faint light close to the gate, immediately to the right hand side of the Scotch fir which stands by the gate.

The light was very faint, oval shaped, and slightly raised from the ground. At times it grew stronger, waning again almost directly. Once when it appeared most clear I was just going to draw the attention of the others to it, as resembling a figure in flowing drapery, with loose sleeves and outstretched arms, when one of the boys (Chalkley) [*his name was properly spelled 'Chawkley'*] suddenly turned to me, saying, 'Oh! Did you see that?' I said, 'What?' He then, in almost the identical words that were on my lips, described what he said he had seen. I said nothing further then, as some of the brothers, thinking that they saw a light move towards the field, we went down there. I saw nothing in the field. In the morning I questioned Chalkley [*sic*] carefully about the figure he had spoken of, its height, attitude, dress, &c., and found all his answers exactly agreed with the description of the figure I thought I had seen. The coincidence is at least extraordinary. I may add that we had put out all the lights in the Monastery which could possibly have deceived us, and the idea of a hoax having been played seems, considering the wild country and the state of the weather, absolutely untenable. Hitherto I have been unable to find any explanation of the circumstances."