

Bx305B

.3

B7

Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1884, by

JOHN P. MURPHY,

In the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.



ACERVO GENERAL

128195

ELECTROTYPED AND PRINTED AT

THE NEW YORK CATHOLIC PROTECTORY,

WEST CHESTER, N. Y.

CHAPTER I.

THE BROTHERS.

Their Devotedness.

France, so prosperous in peace, so triumphant in war, forgot to whom she owed her greatness.

Contemplating her exalted position among the nations, she exclaimed: "Is not this the great Babylon which I have built to be the seat of the Kingdom, by the strength of my power, and in the glory of my excellence?"* Her pride and ingratitude excited the anger of the Lord against her, and like Nabuchodonosor she was made to know her own nothingness. The brightness of her intellect was obscured, an unwarranted sense of security possessed her.

Prussia was about to attack her; let Prussia come; she did not fear; she was ready to fight; her arsenals were full, her soldiers armed to the teeth, only anxious to be led to battle. Nothing was lacking.

Strange delusion! Never was a nation less prepared. Arms, ammunition, and provisions were wanting; officers, soldiers, muskets, cannon, horses, carriages, ambulances—all were lacking.

Prussia had carefully prepared for the conflict. Her soldiers were numerous, well armed and disciplined; her artillery and cavalry unequalled. France was to be punished; Prussia was God's instrument.

All credit must be given to the French soldiers. Though

* Dan. iv. 27.

called upon to confront fearful odds, three and even four to one, they fought with a heroism never surpassed. Their deep love of country urged them to put forth every effort; but vain their intrepidity! futile their life-blood so freely poured out. Defeat followed defeat; the battle-fields were covered with the dead and the dying. France, that had lately been so confident, was now appalled; destruction threatened her on all sides. Her dead lay unburied, her wounded unattended. Desolation and mourning filled the land; a cry of agony went up.

France was not lost. She had pure, holy souls whose lives were devoted to God. Among these were the sons of the Venerable De La Salle, known as Brothers of the Christian Schools. In their country's need they hastened to proffer their assistance. Their charity and patriotism knew no bounds. Their boarding and their parish schools were generously placed at the disposal of the authorities, to be converted into hospitals, while they offered their services to act as nurses. The following letter, dated August 15th, 1870, from the very revered Brother Philippe, Superior-General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, to the Minister of War, shows how thoroughly in earnest they were:

"MONSIEUR LE MINISTRE:

"Notwithstanding the labors of the scholastic year, increased by the heat of the summer months, our Brothers wish to avail of the time of vacation to pay a new tribute of devotedness to their country.

"Consequently, *Monsieur le Ministre*, I now place at your disposal all our Boarding Schools and Academies; such as those in Passy, Saint Omer, Thionville, Dijon, Beauvais, Dreux, Lille, Rheims, Lyons, Chambéry, Le Puy, Béziers, Toulouse, Marseilles, Clermont, Rodez, Nantes, Quimper,

Tours, Orléans, Moulins, Avignon, our Mother House, Oudinot street, Paris, etc.; and, as far as we are concerned, the houses and parish schools directed by us throughout the whole Empire, to be used as hospitals.

"All the Brothers who conduct those establishments offer to take care of the sick and wounded.

"The soldiers love our Brothers, and our Brothers love them; a great number of them, having been brought up in our schools, will be happy to receive care and attention inspired by the zeal and devotedness of their former teachers.

"The members of my Council, our Brother Visitors, and myself, forgetting our fatigue, and the many years we have consecrated to the education of the working classes, will make it our duty to superintend this service, and to encourage our Brothers in this act of charity and devotedness.

"I have the honor to be," etc.

Brother Philippe's generous offer was but an expression of the feelings of the whole Order. Its acceptance would entail painful sacrifices and heavy expenses; but what of that? They were called: that will suffice. They could tend the sick, soothe and comfort the parting soul, and help to bury the dead. The Brother Directors of Dijon, Thionville, Rouen, Chalon-sur-Saône, Gisors, Sarreguemines, Avignon, Bayeux, etc., wrote similar letters to the authorities. In each establishment ambulances and every preparation were made to receive the sick. Several of the houses were disappointed because neither sick nor wounded came, and said this was a subject of deep regret. Amongst those thus disappointed was the flourishing establishment of Beauregard-Thionville,

whose Brother Director wrote to the Superior-General: "As soon as war had been declared, we asked ourselves what we

could do to relieve our sick and wounded. Thinking that the eastern provinces would be the theatre of the great scenes of the terrible drama, dear Brother Visitor and myself thought the best we could do was to offer the Government our several houses to serve as hospitals, and ourselves to assist as infirmarians or nurses. Hence we went to the civil authorities on the 20th of July to make known our intentions. That there should be no mistake as to the object of this proceeding, the following note was sent some days later, at one and the same time to the Sub-Prefect, General de Ladmiraault, commanding the Army Corps, and to the sub-inspector,—

“The Superior of the Christian Schools of Beauregard again offers, with the greatest pleasure, the several class-rooms of his establishment to serve as a hospital.

“BROTHER EUTHYME,

“*Superior.*”

“Three days after we received the following letter in reply:—

“HEADQUARTERS, THIONVILLE, *July 20th, 1870.*

“MONSIEUR LE SUPERIEUR :

“I desire to thank you for the charitable eagerness with which you have offered the army the class-rooms of your establishment to serve as a hospital for the wounded. They are not as yet required ; but when the time comes, your kind offer will not be forgotten, and we will thankfully avail ourselves of the generous devotedness of the Superior of the Christian Brothers in Beauregard.

“Accept, etc.

“DE LADMIRAULT,

“*General Commanding 4th Corps.*”

“Physicians sent by the minister of war,” continues the

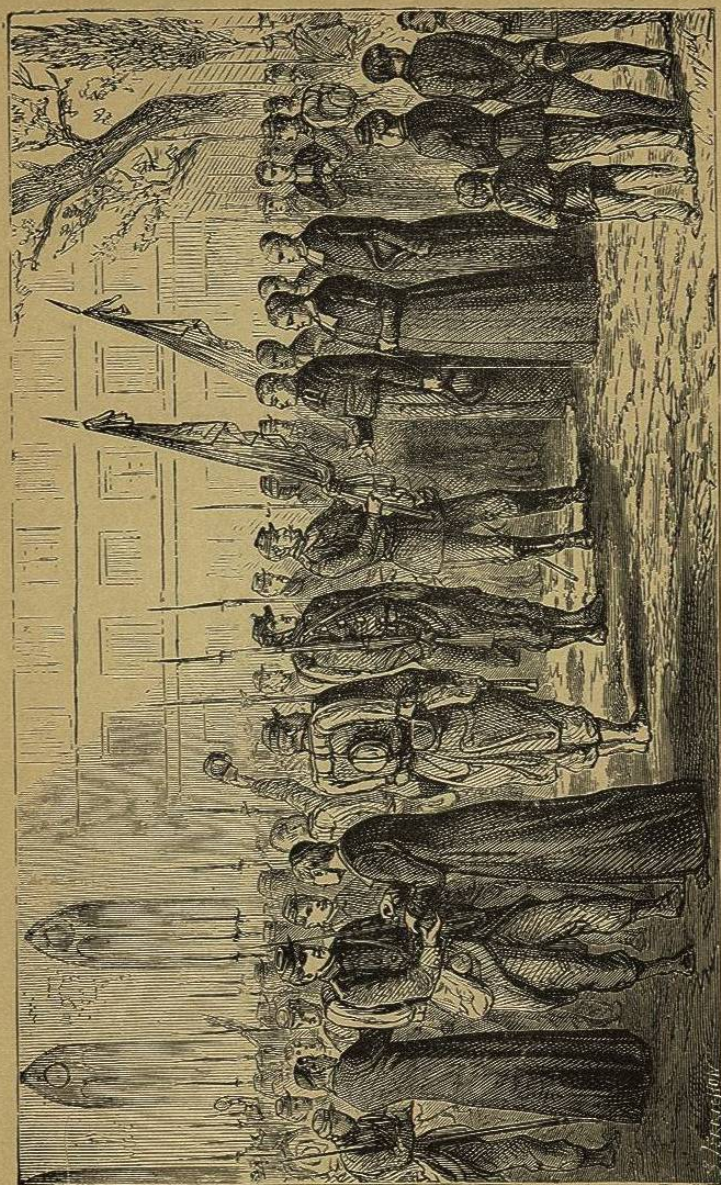
Brother Director, “visited the house and declared it offered every advantage for such purposes, and we soon received from the War Department the requisite material for a military hospital to accommodate five hundred patients.

“Nevertheless, the reverses of France soon convinced the authorities of the danger of having hospitals in an undefended place, liable to be surrounded at any time. Orders were accordingly given to remove the materials belonging to the State. Hence we have only been able to show our good will, and have been prevented by circumstances from rendering any service for the present. After the battles of the 14th, the 16th and 18th of August, fought around Metz, several trains of wounded were sent to Ardennes and the north, by way of Thionville. We went to the railway station with eatables, thinking, perhaps, some of the victims of war might not have received the nourishment they required. Alas, our apprehensions were but too well founded, and we saw at once it was necessary to organize a regular service for the express purpose of supplying the wounded with proper nourishment. A private committee was formed, and established in our house a dépôt for bread, meat and other provisions ; and having prepared this food, we went to the station and distributed soup, meat, bread and wine to the five hundred wounded brought by every train, and numbering, in all, nearly four thousand.”

Actuated by the purest spirit of benevolence, we see the Brothers did not allow the disappointment they experienced in some of their houses not being accepted as ambulances, or hospitals, to deaden their charity. They quickly devised other means of giving relief. How the poor, fainting soldiers must have blessed them ! How many valuable lives, through their thoughtful kindness, were saved to their coun-

try! Still not satisfied, several of the Brothers begged to be permitted to make part of the ambulances of the Rhine; others opened subscriptions among their pupils, to raise means to send to the relief of the wounded. Furthermore, they became collectors. At Laurac, for instance, they went about the country collecting half-worn linen, which they converted into bandages and lint. They also obtained sheets, shirts, and medicines, that they might assist the nearest ambulances, and provide for each soldier sent from that district a certain number of bandages and some indispensable medicine.

They everywhere sought out the several occasions in which they could be of use, making themselves all to all, as St. Paul says.



THE BRETON MOBILES PRESENTING THEIR COLORS TO THE BROTHERS AT NANTES, AS A TOKEN OF GRATITUDE.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIREMEN OF THE CÔTES-DU-NORD IN PARIS. THE BROTHERS' ESTABLISHMENTS USED AS LODGING-HOUSES FOR THEM.

On the 17th of August, the companies from the Côtes-du-Nord arrived at the Saint Lazare Station. The Legendary, M. Janvier de la Motte, charged by the Government with the installation and interests of this civic army, was there, to point out to each company the quarter assigned to it.

The Dinan men, and a squad from Saint Brieuc, were conducted to the Mother House of the Brothers, in Oudinot street. They were received by a venerable man with a smiling aspect, a mild yet penetrating look: this man, one of the most popular in Paris, was Brother Philippe, the same who had placed his schools and his Brothers at the country's service. He wished to welcome in person these worthy sons of faithful Brittany. Some of them might have been his pupils forty or fifty years before; most of them had attended the Brothers' Schools; to him they were all sons and friends. "Make yourselves at home here," he said, "and consider this house as your own; the Brothers are all the servants of their country's servants."

"But," returned one, "perhaps we are too numerous, and will incommode you by our presence. We are two hundred."

"No, no," he generously replied; "we can find beds for you all."

"But yourselves, Brothers?" he persisted.

"We think not of ourselves," Brother Philippe responded; "our country's defenders claim our hospitality, which we are only too happy to extend to them. We Brothers will get along somehow: the important matter is to make you comfortable."

He then conducted them to a large dormitory, where two hundred beds were speedily prepared. Through the considerate kindness of the Brothers a number of tables had been brought in, on which were pens, ink, and paper, that each fireman might write to his family. This was indeed most thoughtful. The letters then and there written, lifted heavy burdens from many a weary heart and brought comfort to many a lonely home.

The officers were lodged in little rooms, plainly furnished, but exquisitely neat and clean. Provisions were the next thing thought of. As the men were strangers in the city, Brother Philippe took charge of the matter with the most disinterested kindness. At the officers' request he presided at their table. With pleasure they listened to his gentle voice as he made plain the inalienable rights of justice, which not only consecrate generous actions and laudable devotedness, but which, sooner or later, try and chastise prevaricating nations who are unmindful of their destiny. Thus, during the time the firemen from the Côtes-du-Nord passed in the Brothers' house, Oudinot street, they were treated with the utmost attention.

When they took leave, tears of gratitude were seen in many an eye. Brother Philippe gave to each a medal of the Blessed Virgin, hanging from a little tricolor badge. They thankfully accepted it as a precious memento of their stay with the Brothers. A multitude of other small religious objects were given them to distribute among their relatives

and friends when they reached home. Who can compute the good the Brother's charity did in this respect, the lessons of holiness these pious objects taught, the hearts they lifted up, the blessings they brought down?

The Breton journals and others spoke in flattering terms of the Brothers' action. These are memories that pass not away, but are fondly, conscientiously cherished.

The following letter, which was addressed, on the 22d of August, to the *Armorique* of St. Brieuc, is proof of this:

"M. EDITOR OF THE ARMORIQUE:

"We beg you to permit us, through your columns, in the name of the Saint Brieuc Company of Firemen, to express publicly our thanks to the Institute of the Christian Brothers, for the kindly welcome they gave to a portion of our company during our stay in Paris.

"Each of us can bear witness to the great attention he uniformly received from the Brothers with whom we were brought in contact; and, above all, do we cherish grateful remembrance of their venerable and most gifted Superior-General, Brother Philippe, who, from our arrival to our departure, ceased not to load us with the most delicate and thoughtful attention.

"With our thanks, M. Editor, you will please also to accept our respectful consideration.

"A. GUEPIN, *Captain St. Brieuc Firemen.*

"LEUDUGER FORTMOREL, *Surgeon.*"

Mgr. David, Bishop of St. Brieuc, wrote to Brother Philippe:

"DEAR SUPERIOR-GENERAL:

"You have been so kind to our Breton Firemen that they

requested me, on their return, to thank you for them with all my heart.

"I do so with pleasure, uniting my thanks with theirs. Accept, dear Superior-General, this joint expression of our gratitude.

"DAVID AUGUSTINE,
"Bishop of St. Briec.

"ST. BRIEUC, August 22d, 1870."

Brother Philippe, in the spirit of humility, replied to Mgr. David that in the kindness shown to the firemen he had but simply done his duty, only regretting that they had not been longer at the Brothers' house.

On the 27th of August a fireman wrote to Brother Calixtus:—

"I wish to thank you most kindly for the many gifts you bestowed upon me during my stay in your establishment. These have made many of my dear ones very happy. My wife and children unite with me in thanking God for my safe return. We beg of Him to pour down upon you, and upon all the Brothers of your Institute, His most abundant graces and blessings, in gratitude for all your benefits, which I shall never forget.

"May every blessing be yours, dear Brother; pray for me and my family, as we pray to our Divine Lord for you all. Believe us ever most grateful, and accept the assurance of our profound respect and devotion.

"PIERRE BRENDILY.

"EVRAU, COTES-DU-NORD."

This was the first step of the Brothers in a work of charity which is soon to appear before us in increased dimensions

and with wonderful lustre. Men who were by certain free-thinkers despised, are about to appear before foreign invaders and home barbarians as angels of mercy. They are about to show how religious love and serve their country.

Their first disasters showed the French government their presumption in commencing a war they were unable to sustain. The Chambers hastily assembled, and called on the youth of the country to rise and defend it. With a promptness distinctively French, the levy was made. Young soldiers and members of the *Garde Mobile* were met everywhere. It was the ebb and flow of a tide that covered the land from north to south, from east to west. Again were the intelligent zeal and generous devotion of the Brothers manifested. The friends of childhood could not but show themselves the friends of youth, especially when, at the cost of rest and blood, they tried to stem the torrent of invasion and to redeem the honor of France.

The young soldiers drilled or lodged mostly in the Brothers' establishments. In houses of four, three, or even two class-rooms, there were from one hundred to two hundred mobiles, or recruits.

Aix-les-Bains.

"The 29th of August," the Brother Director of Aix-les-Bains writes, "we had to dismiss our pupils in a hurry, to prepare the class-rooms for the mobiles of the district, who arrived unexpectedly, to the number of one hundred and eighty. We made haste to remove the tables, put the rooms in order, and prepare mattresses, sheets, and coverlets. After three weeks they were replaced by other mobiles to the number of ninety, who remained a fortnight, and for whom we were able to procure every comfort."

Early in August the mayor of Quimper asked the Brother

Director of St. Mary's boarding-school if he could lodge some soldiers. The Brother Director answered by placing all the dormitories of the pupils at his disposal. The mayor was in no way surprised at this generous offer, for he had long known his zeal and charity, and warmly thanked the Brother. On the 13th of the same month, 232 were lodged in the establishment. Three weeks later, they were replaced by 220 others, who in turn were succeeded by recruits.

These changes took place seven different times; and, altogether, the boarding-school became the temporary barracks of over 1900 soldiers.

The kitchen and large refectory were devoted to their service. Every day a Brother arose at half-past three o'clock, to prepare the coffee which they took before going to drill, and the Brother Infirmarian took all possible care of the ailing.

"We feel in duty bound to say of these brave soldiers," writes a Brother of this community, "that they showed themselves most grateful; but we strove not to confine our care merely to the material aid of men about to offer their lives on their country's altar. It was the salvation of their souls that engaged our especial attention.

"On Sundays our chaplain said Mass at the most convenient hour. We also provided for those who only knew the Breton language, the means of going to confession. Thanks to the Jesuit Fathers and our own chaplain, more than five sixths had the happiness of being reconciled with God, and of receiving Holy Communion before their departure. How much this rejoices us! since they afterwards took part in the most bloody encounters, in which the greater number fell."

The devotedness of the Brothers of Quimper was highly appreciated, and elicited the thanks of all the authorities.

Rhodes.

The Brother Director of the boarding-school of Rhodes lodged 300 mobiles. Here, as in Quimper and elsewhere, their spiritual and temporal welfare were carefully attended to.

After the morning and evening prayers some consoling and encouraging words were addressed to them. They were grateful for being enabled to hear Mass, go to confession, and receive Holy Communion.

Avignon.

At Avignon the Brothers distributed soup morning and evening to 700 enlisted volunteers and to 1,000 zouaves who were lodged in their parochial schools. In their boarding-school they lodged 360 mobiles. These, with the zouaves that slept in their community-house, and the recruits in the novitiate, made a total of more than 2,000 served by the Brothers. The community of Chateaubriant kept 130 mobiles for three months. Officers and soldiers, on leaving, expressed the warmest gratitude for the kindness shown them by the Brothers.

Nantes.

At Nantes, as soon as the first disaster was known, the Brother Director hastened to offer the mayor one hundred and fifty beds in their boarding-school, engaging to furnish, besides bedding, the necessary medicine, and Brother Infirmarians to serve in the ambulances.

"It was some time," writes the Brother Visitor, "before the wounded that had been announced and expected, arrived. The sanitary authorities then asked the use of our buildings and yards for the lodging and training of the mobiles while

they were waiting to be called to the field. A first company of 150 men were at once sent to us. The following article appeared in the *Gazette de l'Ouest* of Nantes in its issue of Sept. 10th, 1870:—

“‘The 150 mobiles, lodged in the Brothers’ boarding-school in Bel-Air street, left that establishment this morning at six o’clock. At the request of the officers, a Mass had been said at half-past five o’clock by Father Bourguine, first chaplain of the house; at the close of which Father Chiché, second chaplain, delivered a short, soul-stirring address to those brave soldiers. On its conclusion seventy of the guardsmen piously received the scapular. These, and all the others, received each a blessed medal, which they fervently kissed and promised never to give up, and which would ever be a protection to them.

“‘Finally a good, though plain, breakfast was given, after which the officers proceeded to their equipment. May the cordial welcome they received, and which their good conduct and orderly bearing well deserved, remind them, amid the dangers they are going to brave, of the friendly wishes and prayers that accompany them on their way.’

“This first contingent was soon replaced by another of the same number, whose sojourn gave us no less satisfaction. Every morning a number of these brave fellows rose at five o’clock and went to the chapel to pray. Twice they assisted in a body at the holy Mass, and a third time in full uniform, on the day of their departure, when they listened with deep emotion to the encouraging words addressed to them by Father Bourguine. Many of them devoutly approached the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist; all received the scapular, the medal, or the beads.

“At the end of this religious ceremony, the company,

drawn up in the yard, presented to the house by the hand of the captain, as a mark of their gratitude and respect, the flags of the two parishes to which the young men belonged. At their going, while passing under the garden-wall, and returning the farewell salute of the Brothers, they waved a parting salute: ‘Long live the Brothers!’”

The Brothers’ boarding-schools at Niort, Saint-Jean-de-Bournais, Aubusson, Dieppe and Péronne were also converted into lodging-houses and barracks for the soldiers. The military exercises occupied only a small portion of the day; the remaining hours became dangerous to the young, who, if idle, are apt to plunge into vice, or fritter away time without use or benefit. The Brothers, animated by an ardent charity for their welfare, opened schools for these young men.

“From the 18th of August,” says the Director of the Brothers at Péronne, “300 mobiles came three times a week to our establishment, from six till eight P. M. These meetings were so attractive to them that they hurried their supper and hastened to our residence, fearful, they said, of losing their place in our classes.”

In some localities where the same soldiers remained a certain number of days, the Brothers established courses which many of the young men followed with much interest, and great advantage to themselves.