

say the Prussians are at our gates. The military inspector and the sub-prefect retreated to Soissons by the last railroad trains. At eight o'clock the canal bridge, and that of Vesle (Soissons railroad), are blown up. The inhabitants are indescribably stupefied. There is a regular stampede amongst our sick. Even those that are but slightly recovered don their uniform, hoist their knapsack, and try to escape, unwilling to fall into the hands of the Prussians. By noon, we have only twenty-nine wounded, who cannot stir from their bed. We are in a state of suspense. At three o'clock (sad and memorable hour!) 80,000 Prussians pour into Rheims by three different roads. They are four long hours marching in, to the sound of martial music. Before night, the city hall (Hotel de Ville), the residence of the sub-prefect, the jail, the post-office, the telegraph-office,—every place, and every street, were occupied by the enemy. About eight o'clock, the first wounded Prussian is brought to our ambulance.

"Tuesday, 6th.—King William arrives in Rheims with Count Bismarck. He installs himself at the Archbishop's, where he establishes his headquarters. An order of the commanding general, Tumpling, is posted on every wall; the penalty of death occurs on every line. The Prince Royal arrives in his turn. All the Prussian Ministers are at Rheims; it is really a capital, but a very sad one.

"Thursday, 8th.—We learn the fall of the Empire, and the proclamation of the Republic in Paris. This news reaches us through Berlin, for we are Prussians and must submit.

"Wednesday, 14th.—King William leaves Rheims to establish himself at Meaux: His Majesty is accompanied by Count Bismarck and all his ministers.

"Thursday, 15th.—Arrival of the Duke of Mechlinburg

as Governor of Champagne. He replaces the King at the Archbishop's house.

"Friday, 16th.—Am very anxious about the fate of our Brothers of Laon. The citadel has been blown up, and they are not far from it. I get a passport from the Prussian authorities and go to them. I am happy to find the Brothers well; their house has been much injured by the shock. Not one partition has been left standing. A quarter of Laon is in ruins. More than 200 Prussians and 400 mobiles were killed by the explosion. I visited the hospitals, which are crowded with wounded.

"Tuesday, 20th.—I was also uneasy about our Brothers in the Ardennes; had not heard from them since the disaster of Sedan. Accompanied by the Brother Directors of Laon, Jard and Martrise, and our chaplain, got a carriage and went to see them.

"Wednesday, 21st.—We reached Sedan at noon. Find, thank God, our Brothers at Sedan, Donchéry, and Pourru-Saint-Rémy in good health.

"Thursday, 22d.—We are slow in visiting that immense battle-field—now a vast cemetery. We begin with Bazeilles. Great God! what a heartrending sight! that town of 2,500 inhabitants, which I lately saw so handsome and rich, is now entirely destroyed; the only house that remains is riddled with balls and bullets. The others form but a heap of calcined stones. The still smoking ruins of the conflagration were yet to be seen. With saddened hearts and tearful eyes, we continued our way over the field of battle. It is impossible to describe what we felt on beholding that still bloody ground, those remains of all sorts scattered around—broken wagons, rifled knapsacks strewn in thousands over ground beaten like a highway, ploughed up here and there



by shells and bombs. It was with heavy hearts we quitted this sad and desolate scene."

With the divine compassion and active sympathy which religion inspires, the Brothers, in the beginning of the war, eagerly lent their aid in the organization of ambulances. In the second half of the month of August, they were already taking care of soldiers in the towns of Sarreguemines, Mézières, Estain, Rheims, Réthel, Châlons-sur-Marne, Dijon, Charleville, Metz, Rouen, Châlon-sur-Saône, and Saint Malo.

It was the same, some days later, with the communities of Stenay, Donchéry, Gisors, Bayeux, Cambrai, etc., so that before the investment of Paris, the children of the Venerable De La Salle were tending the sick in from thirty to forty ambulances scattered over every part of the country. Their ambulance at Rheims was kept in operation from the 18th of August till the 5th of November. There were entered fifteen hundred soldiers—three hundred French and twelve hundred Germans. The entire number of days of the sick was fifteen thousand three hundred. Twenty-eight Brothers were employed in the different departments of service; six fell ill from fatigue, one very seriously, but, thank God, none died.

April 8th, 1871, the mayor of Rheims wrote to the Brother Director:

"MONSIEUR LE DIRECTEUR:

"The city of Rheims begs to thank you for the zeal with which you came to our aid in the management of the ambulances.

"I am happy to join in the public gratitude, requesting you to accept, in my name and in the name of my fellow citizens,

the expression of our gratitude for the services rendered by you to that precious and charitable institution.

(Signed) "ROME."

At Châlons-sur-Marne, the Prussians were loud in praise of the Brothers' charity to their sick: they gave them, on the 20th of September, a pass to go wherever they pleased through the town and its vicinity. This document bears the signature of Count Schmettin.

Some time after, the staff presented the Director of the Christian Schools a testimonial of gratitude, of which the following is a translation:

"The staff officers of Châlons testify, that the Brothers charged with taking care of the sick acquitted themselves of that duty, during the months of September, October, November, and December of the past year, with indefatigable zeal, and with boundless devotion, giving themselves wholly to the care of the poor sick or wounded soldiers, without regard to nation or religion.

"The staff cannot help testifying to them, in the name of all the wounded, their liveliest gratitude.

"BOETTEICHER,

*Commandant of the place.*

"CHÂLONS-SUR-MARNE, 18th June, 1871."

On the 15th of October, during the Prussian occupation, the Community of Châlons-sur-Marne had the misfortune to lose their former Director, the revered Brother Hermogène. Thirty-seven years of his life had been consecrated to the service of youth.

Notwithstanding the public afflictions caused by the pres-



ence of the enemy's troops, the whole town appeared to take part in the Brothers' mourning. During the two days the dead remained exposed, every one wished to see him, to touch his garments with pious objects. At the obsequies, the mayor, deputies, and inspector of the Academy were the pall-bearers. The Vicar-General, clergy of the town, primary inspector, the principal of the college, a good number of the counsellors, many former pupils of the Christian Schools, and a vast concourse of the townspeople, accompanied the remains to the place of interment.

From the 26th of August, the day of the invasion of Châlons, the bells had been mute. But now the Prussians, masters of the city, allowed them to toll for the funeral, to make known to the city that they could refuse nothing to religious who had so charitably taken care of their sick.

At Réthel they were most tender nurses. They gave to all words of comfort and encouragement; those in danger of death they prepared for the last sacraments. Severe trials were the crown of such admirable zeal, such touching self-sacrifice. Nine of the Brothers fell sick. One of them, Brother Bénonien, died a victim to his charity. On the 15th of October, the eve of his death, he said:

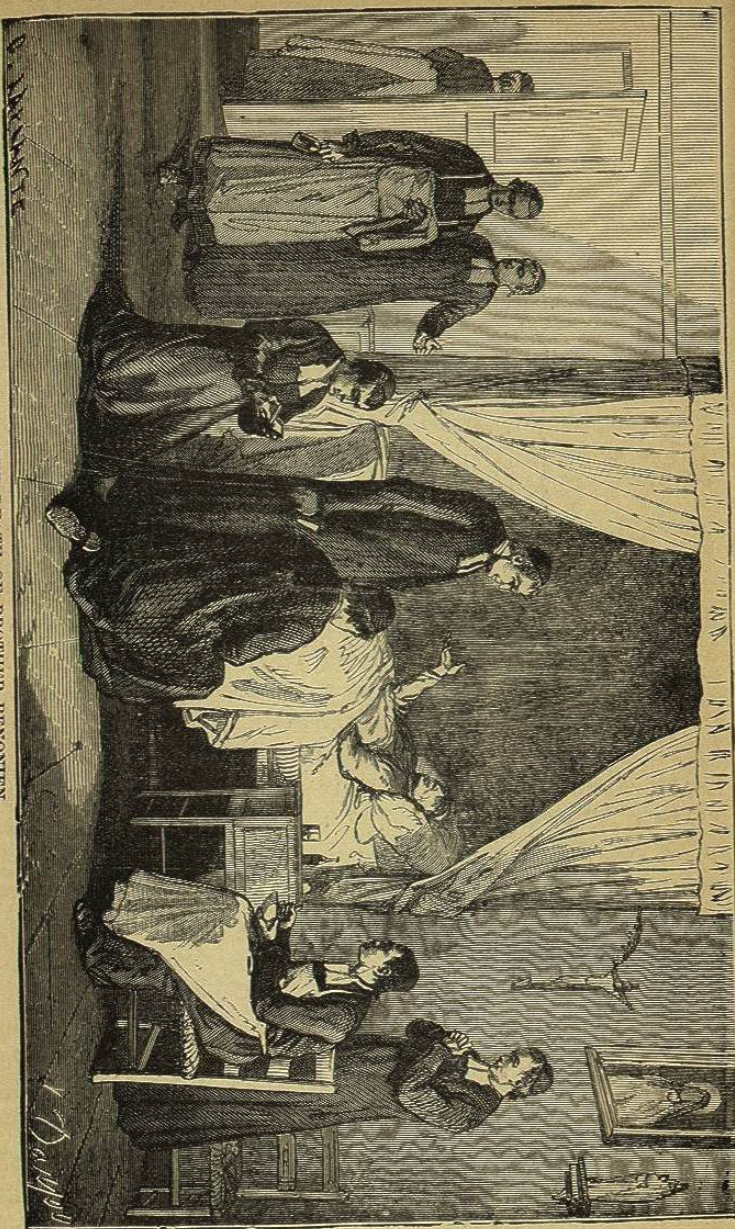
"It was whilst attending the soldiers I got sick; had I to begin again, I would willingly do the same."

All through his sickness his words showed his entire union with the will of God. When he had lost the power of speech he frequently saluted with his hand the image of our Lord with gestures that seemed to say: "My God! I accept the death which thou sendest me! My God! I offer thee this life which thou gavest me!"

He had labored for God and his country; heaven was open to him; his reward awaited him. His last hour was



THE DEATH OF BROTHER BÉNONIEN.



full of sweetness, faith, and resignation. His brethren finished for him the sacred canticle: "In thee, O Lord, have I hoped; my hope shall not be vain. *In te Domine, speravi; non confundar in æternum.*"

Brother Bénonien had taught youth for nearly twenty-seven years. His talents, urbanity, and goodness of heart won him the esteem and confidence of all.

He had taught twenty-two years in Metz. When his death was known in the city, a great number of his former pupils, most of them indebted to him for honorable positions, hastened to express to Brother Director their sorrow for the death of one they loved so much, and to request that a *requiem* Mass be offered for his soul. The number of young men who assisted thereat did honor to the departed, whose name shall remain in benediction not only in Rétel, but especially in the city where his gentle and heroic devotedness wrought so much good, and left such pleasing memories.

The ambulance of the boarding-school of Dijon received forty wounded, August 26th. Wounded soldiers were something new to the town, and, seeing them arrive in a pitiable condition, the people wondered what the Brothers would do under such circumstances. But when they saw them running to meet them, taking them in their arms, and carrying them to handsome and spacious dormitories, furnished with clean, comfortable beds; when medicine and nourishment were found for them as if by magic, they looked on in amazement, and began to understand what intelligent devotedness can do, when guided by Christian charity. The first favorable impression, far from diminishing, became still greater when it was seen that the same care, the same sanitary measures, the same affectionate attention, were unrelaxing from the 26th of August till the 15th of March. It



was unhesitatingly declared in Dijon that, of all the great ambulances of the city, the Brothers' boarding-school was the best kept, the best aired, the one in which the sick were the most content and the soonest cured.

It was also remarkable that the most of the Turcos came to the Brothers. These poor Mussulmans were not a little surprised to find themselves amongst all those Christian *marabouts* (Mahometan priests), as they called them. But a few hours' intercourse was sufficient to make these children of Africa as much at their ease as if they were on a bivouac, and their relations with the Brothers became free, and even friendly. They were visibly affected by the exceeding kindness they received, and showed themselves grateful in return. They reluctantly quitted an ambulance in which they had been so well cared for; many shedding tears when saying "Good-bye." It was a touching and beautiful sight to see those sons of the Prophet affectionately embracing the children of Christ. According to the Scripture, a loving remembrance is like a precious ointment ever carried about us. May not those Mussulmans one day say to themselves: "Truth surely reigns where charity so prevails"? Several frequently went to the chapel during divine service, and their demeanor was marked by great gravity and decorum. Unasked, of their own accord, they went, drawn by some mysterious power they would not resist.

After the battle of Borny (August 14th) the Brothers of Metz offered to act as correspondents for the sick. The Governor gratefully accepted, and the Brothers were installed in the several ambulances and began the task of love. Many would otherwise have found it impossible to communicate with their families. Those who, in pain and weakness, have longed to send some message to loving ones at home,

and others who have waited till heartsore, expecting a line from the absent, will fully realize the thoughtful kindness and blessed charity of the Brothers in this generous work.

But the total investment of Metz soon claimed their services for more urgent needs. At the battle of Gravelotte, more than 8,000 wounded French remained on the ground. There was no lack of arms to bear them away; but place to receive them was soon wanting; and there were no longer nurses enough to dress their wounds.

At once the Brothers' parochial school became an ambulance. On the following day, several soldiers were already under their care. The Sisters from Sainte-Chrétienne, the military authorities, and the Relief Society, furnished them with mattresses and what linen they required. A portion of the community was employed in attending the wounded in the barracks till the staff of nurses was organized.

Three companies of custom-house officers, and a company of foresters, recalled to Metz, found themselves without shelter, encamped in the open air, and with very poor nourishment. These men, to the number of 250, were all fathers of families, and began to feel their many privations, to which a number had already succumbed, when the Brother Director hastened to ask permission of the managers of the free schools to care for the remainder. Part of them were lodged at St. Augustine's, the rest at St. Vincent's.

Some days after the declaration of war, the Brothers of Rouen offered themselves to the authorities for ambulance service. On the 26th of August, about ten o'clock in the evening, the first train of wounded reached Rouen. It was eleven when the wounded, to the number of fifty-three, were conveyed to the Brothers' Normal School ambulance. They had been twenty-four hours on the way. Many were suffer-



ing intensely. All were overcome with fatigue ; but no one complained ; they seemed glad to find themselves with the Brothers.

" The Brothers took care of us at Rheims," they said ; " we find them again at Rouen : we shall be at home with them."

Some charitable young men and a physician, who had been at the station on their arrival, accompanied them to the Normal School ; they helped the Brothers to dress their wounds, and to wait upon the soldiers at a meal quickly prepared. By one A. M. all had been provided with comfortable beds, and were kindly watched over by their faithful nurses.

On the 12th of September, the Brothers of Beauvoisine street received twenty sick and wounded, whom they lodged in their school.

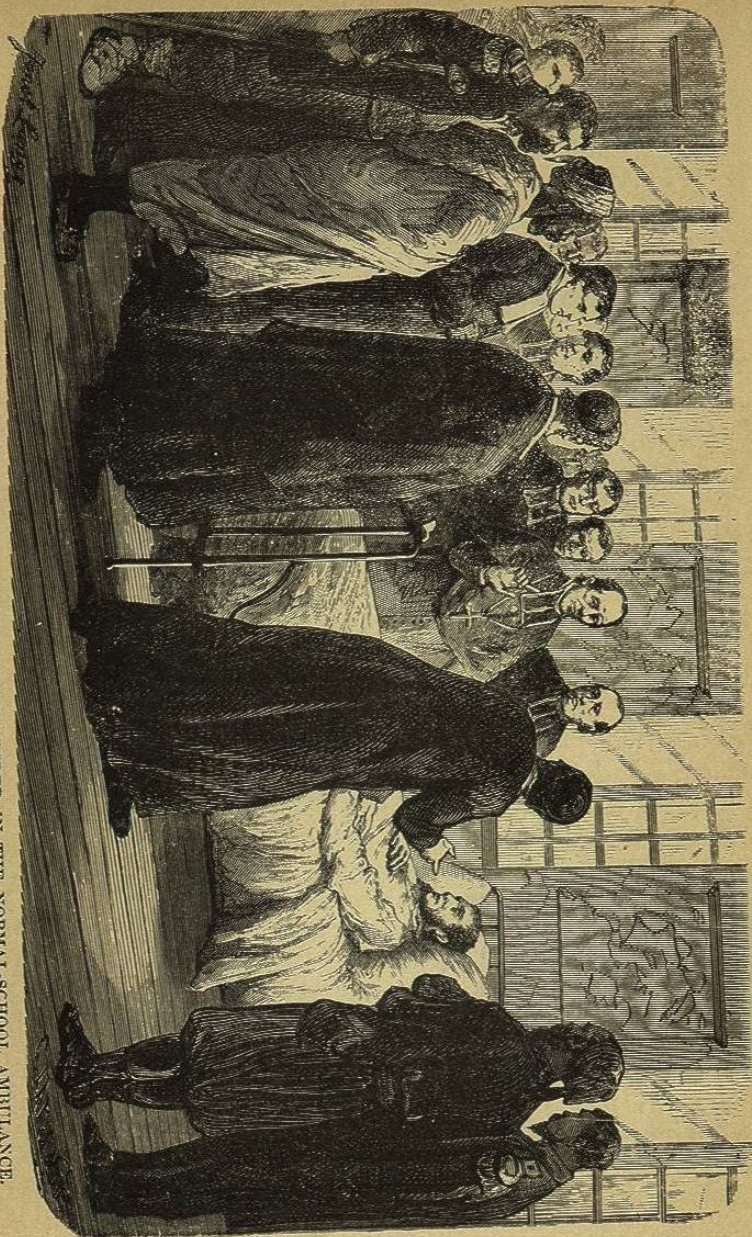
On the 27th of August, Baron Ernest Leroy, prefect of the Lower Seine, inspected the Normal School ambulance. On the following day, His Eminence Cardinal de Bonnechose was there, and spoke affectionately to every soldier. All expressed their gratitude for the kindness with which they were treated ; they did the same to the general and the surgeon-major : " We should have been cured long ago," they said, " had we been cared for as we now are."

Drs. Gressent and Manoury attended the Normal School ambulance ; Dr. Levasseur, the community in Beauvoisine Street ; in both places the Brothers alone dressed the wounds, and gave the thousand little cares required by the sick, besides cleaning the wards, and supplying food and medicine at their own expense.

The Countess of Châtre established an ambulance at Grand-Quevilly ; by her earnest entreaties, three Brothers were sent to direct it. This worthy and generous benefac-



CARDINAL BONNECHOSE, ARCHBISHOP OF ROUEN, VISITING THE WOUNDED IN THE NORMAL-SCHOOL AMBULANCE.



and in the Hospital.

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tress only appeared content and satisfied when she saw the sick soldiers in the hands of the children of the Venerable De La Salle.

On the 11th and 13th of September, numbers of wounded soldiers were added to those already in the Normal School ambulance.

The *Nouvelliste de Rouen* remarked on this occasion that, "of the soldiers who arrived from the Eastern ambulances, the worst cases were conveyed to the Normal School." Some indeed were very ill; some of their wounds mortified; nevertheless, all were cured.

"Were it not for the unceasing care of the Brothers, we should be dead!" said many grateful soldiers. "After God, it is to the Brothers that we owe our cure."

From the 9th of September till the 7th of October, the Brothers of Gisors watched over the sick and wounded. The enemy then advancing, those sufficiently recovered were sent to their homes, while those unable to be moved became prisoners of war. They were, however, fortunate in still being left to the Brothers' care.

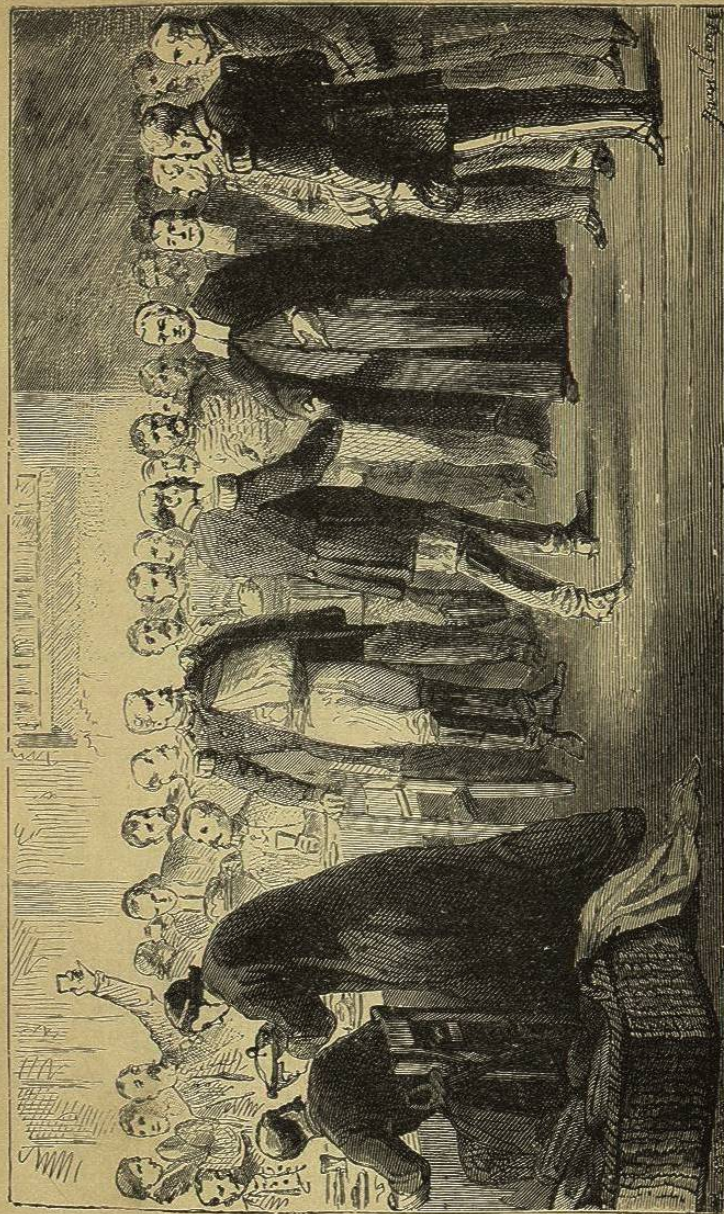
The ambulance of Bayeux, organized in the first week of August, entered upon its duties first from the 15th of September till the 20th of October; then, from the 4th of December till the 18th of March. It received 206 wounded, making a total of 7109 days.

Dr. George Dumagny, in his report, gives the highest praise to the Brother Director, who had charge of the general superintendence, and to four Sisters of Providence, who were, in their way, angels of charity. He concludes by saying: "In their spirit of abnegation, these devoted co-operators in our work aspired to other rewards than those of earth; but in the discharge of our duty, we feel bound



to testify here that they are deserving of our warmest gratitude."

After the disaster of Sedan, there were 360 wounded in the ambulance of the little Seminary of Cambrai. Eight Brothers were incessantly employed there for a whole month. All who visited them spoke with emotion of the care given the poor soldiers. The doctors were delighted to have them for auxiliaries. The peace and serenity of their soul, reflected on their countenance, indicated sympathy and begot confidence. The sick accepted their services with gratitude; they loved to call them *dear Brothers*. The example of Jesus, poor and mortified, whose bread was to do His Father's will, and whose law was reduced to the love of God and of our neighbor, was reproduced daily and hourly in the words and actions of the children of De La Salle, who had become saviors of their brethren.



A COLONEL THANKS THE BROTHERS OF CARLSBOURG FOR THEIR KIND RECEPTION OF THE FRENCH AFTER THE DEFEAT AT SEDAN.