

CHAPTER XI.

OUTSIDE AMBULANCES.

I.—*Nîmes.*

December, 1870, Mgr. Plantier and the Mayor of Nîmes organized an ambulance in the barracks, and placed it in charge of the Christian Brothers. Two hundred and sixty-five soldiers were here cared for. Seventeen sank under their sufferings, but they previously had the happiness of receiving the last sacraments.

A high government official, after dwelling at length on all the Brothers of Nîmes had done for the sick and wounded, thus concludes his letter:—

“That the blessing of their Divine Master seconded their efforts, was clearly manifested in the consoling results, and their faith, which had been mainly instrumental in the foundation of the barracks ambulance, may be said to have obtained in this respect, as in all others, the desired success.

“The co-operation of the Christian Brothers has been of incalculable benefit to this ambulance. To it we are mainly indebted for the general sympathy manifested in behalf of the work. The board of managers, having seen this exemplified from day to day, are happy to bear testimony to the fact, and publicly to express their gratitude to the revered Brothers. Its members will ever cherish the remembrance of the solid and modest virtues of which they have been

witnesses, and the writer of this letter will ever esteem it an honor to have had even a small share in their great work of charity.”

Dear Brother Pereal Gabriel died of small-pox contracted whilst attending the sick in the ambulances. The city of Nîmes claimed the honor of defraying the expenses of the funeral, which was conducted with much pomp and solemnity.

At a meeting of the city commissioners, Dr. Perrier, who presided, paid a high compliment to the Brothers attached to his medical staff.

“Never,” said he, “were the sick in our hospitals better cared for. On the battle-field, and in our ambulances, the worthy sons of the Venerable De La Salle are ever ready at the post of charity and of sacrifice.”

II.—*Chartres.*

On the 6th of December, after the battle of Loigny, the ambulances of the city of Chartres set out for Loigny, with a great number of carts laden with bread and provisions for the wounded, who were huddled together in such dwellings as were left standing. About 1000 patients were brought into Chartres. Of these, eighty Frenchmen were lodged in the Theatre ambulance, which was served by the Brothers from the 10th of December till the 27th of February. Nowhere else did the Brothers endure more hardships than in this ambulance, where fourteen of their number were employed. The weather was so severe that the place could not be properly aired; the consequence was, that, although none of them were actually stricken down with illness, these ever faithful friends of the sick and wounded were themselves reduced to a sad state of debility and emaciation. Em-

ployed in all kinds of work about the ambulance, their clothes, too, bore evident marks of the hard usage these poor, patient toilers in the service of God and their country endured.

III.—*Cherbourg.*

January 7th, the Brothers were officially called to replace the military nurses in the casino of the sea-baths. Most of the patients in the ambulance being ill of small-pox, the attendance there was extremely dangerous. But this did not deter the Brothers. They were on their feet night and day. In eight or ten days, the town-mayor decided to transfer them to the military hospital within the Arsenal enclosure. His reason for doing so was, there being fewer patients in the casino (one hundred and four), the zeal of the Brothers would be more usefully exerted in the great Arsenal ambulance, numbering over 600 patients. The director of the casino made efforts to retain his nurses, but the authorities persisted in their design, and he was forced to submit. The patients were grieved when they heard the intelligence and could hardly be consoled at their loss.

On the 18th of January, the Brothers arrived at the Arsenal ambulance. They were at once introduced to the medical committee, composed of nine physicians and four apothecaries. The government manager decreed to them at the same time the title of "Ward-Majors," adding: "These gentlemen have too much modesty and humility to accept epaulets; but remember, they are entitled to wear them."

The soldiers showed the greatest joy on seeing the Brothers, whom they already knew.

During the seven weeks the Brothers remained in the Arsenal ambulance, each one paid the forfeit of his devotion.

Four fell sick from excessive fatigue; two others contracted scarlatina, then prevalent in the ambulance; the youngest, Brother Augebert Francis, died after seventeen days' suffering; the other happily recovered. He was hardly convalescent, when the municipal authorities demanded their teachers back to resume their classes. To the credit of the military and medical authorities be it said, nothing was left undone to preserve or restore the health of the Brothers. The director of the ambulance cordially thanked them for the care they had taken of the soldiers, and at the casino the poor patients mourned and grieved at the departure of the friends who had taught them so many holy lessons.

IV.—*Besançon.*

St. John's community, not having a place suitable for the establishment of an ambulance, took part in the service of those already in the city. The re-opening of the classes, about the middle of September, deprived the patients of their continuous attendance. They nevertheless devoted all their spare hours to the sick and wounded, by night as well as by day. Two of them sank under this double labor: Brother Rosmond, on the 24th of January, and Brother Andéolian, on the 7th of February. The survivors still endeavored to supply every want, and succeeded admirably, thanks to the thoughtful care, unceasing activity, and boundless devotedness of Brother Johannes, Director of the community.

Towards the end of January, the sick and wounded increasing rapidly in numbers, the Cardinal Archbishop offered a portion of his house for the establishment of an ambulance: Brother Johannes was requested to take charge of it. Bedding and other necessary articles had become extremely

scarce, but in less than a week, however, Brother Johannes had taken in thirty-five patients, upon whom he bestowed the most unceasing care until the end of April.

V.—*St. Quentin.*

For more than two months, five Brothers went, every day, to dress the wounds and take care of the sick and wounded soldiers in the hospital. They nursed about 300, of whom a large fraction were Germans.

The administrative commission of the hospitals, in its sitting of November 25th, 1870, passed a vote of thanks to the Brothers. This was conveyed to them in an official letter.

VI.—*Nuits.*

From the beginning of September till the 20th of March, the Brothers of Nuits, without interrupting their classes, attended the numerous wounded of the International ambulance established in that place. The first soldiers received in the ambulance were from Wissemburg and Freschwiller. After the battle of Nuits (December 18th), nearly eight thousand men, some German and others French, were found more or less injured. From all sides the wounded were arriving at the ambulance; most of them belonged to the 1st Legion of the Rhine, some to the Garonne battalion, commanded by the Marquis de Carayon Latour. The Brothers multiplied their efforts to minister to all.

VII.—*Montluçon.*

During the month of December Montluçon saw six ambulances organized, almost all of them attended by religious, and containing nearly two thousand sick and wounded. The pastor of St. Paul's established one in his parish. The

Sisters of Charity sufficed for the day service; for two months the Brothers sat up there, two by two, every night. This additional labor did not disturb the good order of the school-classes, attended by 700 pupils.

About the middle of January, the director of the ambulance established in the collège having fallen ill, the mayor thought of the Brothers to replace him. However, he shrank from making the proposal, fearing to overtax the strength and self-devotedness of his teachers. The Brothers, made aware of this by the pastor of Notre Dame, did not hesitate a moment; they offered at once to take charge of the college ambulance, however laborious it might be. They remained day and night among the patients, breathing the unwholesome air of two dormitories where there were seventy-five soldiers, some attacked by small-pox, others by virulent fevers, and the greater number suffering from pulmonary diseases. In two months, in both ambulances, the Brothers cared for two hundred and fifty-five sick and wounded soldiers, without apprehension, and with a devotedness that could only be inspired by supernatural motives. And the good God blessed them, for none were injuriously affected by their arduous labors. Brother Octavian, the Director, was a perfect model of self-denial and Christian charity.

VIII.—*Baupaume (Pas-de-Calais).*

After the battles of January 2d and 3d, the Brothers offered their services to the *Servantes de Marie*, who had established an ambulance for the French and Prussian wounded in the old barracks.

The wounded were livid with the cold when taken from the wagons. It was pitiful to hear them cry out for their

turn. The help of the soldiers was required in removing them to the wards prepared for them. The Brothers prepared the ambulance soup in their own kitchen; they furnished linen, mattresses, provisions, and many other necessary articles, and they were consoled by seeing the salutary effects of Divine mercy. In their ambulance, which lasted seven weeks and received five hundred soldiers, not one Catholic died without having received the last sacraments.

IX.—*Marlioz (Savoy).*

On the 10th of February, an ambulance was opened by the Relief Society in the thermal establishment at Marlioz. Brothers from Aix and St. Julien had charge of it. The dressings, the provisions, in short, the whole responsibility, devolved on the Brothers, who discharged their arduous duties in such a manner that all the journals of the country spoke warmly in their praise.

Ninety-eight soldiers were treated in this ambulance, which was open till the 20th of May. The physician in charge, Dr. Guillaud, wrote a long and cordial letter of thanks to Brother Philippe, for the service rendered by the Brothers; in this he stated that he only expressed the opinions and shared the gratitude of the president and other officers of the Relief Committee of Marlioz.

X.—*Chambéry, Evian, etc.*

At Chambéry, an ambulance-dépôt was established near the railroad station for the sick and wounded, when the French soldiers were in crowds taking refuge in Switzerland. Thence, after some days' care, they were conveyed to the ambulances or hospitals. In this ambulance the Brothers

did only night duty, from six o'clock in the evening till seven in the morning.

The ambulance of Evian (Upper Savoy) was crowded about the middle of February with sick and wounded from the army of the East. The mayor, Baron Blonay, wrote to the Brother Director of Chambéry for two Brother-infirmarians to take care of the soldiers. "The Brothers of the Christian Schools," said he, "have been everywhere admirable for the wounded, and I hope you will kindly grant my request." Two religious were immediately sent, one from Thonon, the other from Chambéry.

The Brothers of Mâcon attended by night in two of the city ambulances. Their attendance continued from the 5th of January till the 7th of March. The double labor of teaching and nursing told on some of the Brothers. Their health failed, and it was some time before they recovered.

At Nogent-le-Rotrou, the Brothers did night duty in two ambulances. A vote of thanks to them was passed by the Relief Society, and conveyed by letter of the president to the Brother Director of Nogent.

While continuing his class, the Brother Director of Sables, assisted by the Brother Steward, took charge of the night service in an ambulance established in the castle of the Duchess de Chevreuse. This service was continued during the Prussian occupation. Many a time the Brothers were under the necessity of scaling the walls to cross the enemy's post, in order to visit the French wounded. But no accident befel them, for they whom God guards are well guarded. "I cannot sufficiently thank the Brothers for the service they rendered to my ambulance," writes the Duchess de Chevreuse; "I know it was for the honor and glory of God they thus devoted themselves, but I am none the less grateful to them."

At Pesme (Haute-Saône) the Brothers attended forty wounded for two months, in the ambulance of the Sisters of Charity. Three Brothers were attacked by small-pox; two fell victims to that frightful disease; another succumbed from fatigue, and was sent home for a while to recruit his health.

At Beaune, Saumur, Hennebon (Morbihan), Meaux, Séz, and St. Amand, they did all they possibly could for the poor sick and wounded soldiers. They watched with them, wrote letters to their families for them, and comforted them as only they could.

We have abridged our account of the work of the Brothers in order to avoid tiresome repetition. How many touching acts, how much concealed suffering, have found no place in these cold statistics! All their merits are known only to God. He alone knows all the names and all the virtues which were voluntarily concealed from the eyes of men. Blessed be the holy religious who poured out so exhaustless a stream of charity on their suffering brethren! Blessed be they on earth and in heaven!

CHAPTER XII.

IMPROVISED AMBULANCES. THE SMALL-POX PATIENTS.

I.—*Sully (Saône-et-Loire).*

The Brothers of this little town had not a regular ambulance, but an infirmary for such passing soldiers as fell sick among the inhabitants. It was open in the most inclement season of the year, and lasted till the 20th of January. Two Brothers were continually employed in it; those engaged in the schools assisted when they could. In this new species of ambulance, the Brothers had to provide everything. The village being crowded with soldiers, the inhabitants could give no assistance, each family having a certain number of soldiers to lodge. It was mid-winter; provisions of all kinds were extremely scarce, and little or nothing was done by the authorities, whether civil or military, to provide for the wants of the sick and wounded. All was left to the Brother Director, and two of the Brothers went a considerable distance, notwithstanding the inclemency of the weather, to obtain the necessary food and medicine for the infirmary.

II.—*Chinon.*

On the 28th of December, the Christian School of Chinon lodged over 200 soldiers of the army of the Loire. Next day fourteen of them were unable to follow their corps. The