

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

Brother Director sent immediately for a physician. He declared those soldiers were not able to continue their march, and must be sent at once to the hospital. But the Hotel Dieu was already overcrowded; the Brother Director, moved with compassion, hastened to transform his house into an ambulance. One soldier had small-pox. Fearing lest it should attack the others, Brother Director gave up his own room and bed to him.

Provisions were supplied by the community, with the exception of the meat and bread, which were furnished by the town, some days after the opening of the ambulance. Hundreds of mobiles in turn experienced the affectionate care and cordial kindness of the Christian Brothers of Chinon. The doctors were surprised at their skill in dressing wounds and attending the sick. When the soldiers left, it was touching to see the parting between them and the Brothers.

Letters of grateful acknowledgment and high appreciation were addressed to the Brother Director by the two physicians who attended to the ambulance, by the sub-prefect of the Department, and by the mayor of Chinon. The sub-prefect's letter is very interesting and we therefore insert it here:—

“CHINON, *March 21st, 1871.*

“DEAR BROTHER DIRECTOR:

“I do but express the feeling of the whole town of Chinon, in bearing testimony to the devotedness, patriotism, and courage, shown by you and your Brothers amid the sad afflictions which have come upon France.

“From the beginning of September till quite recently your house has been open to the soldiers of the republic;

you have cared for and encouraged those who were going to fight for their country; you have bestowed upon the sick and wounded the most touching, the most intelligent care, depriving yourselves of everything, in order to give some relief to their sufferings, and even giving up your own beds and sleeping-rooms to those whose state might endanger the health of their companions by contagion. You have often deprived yourselves of the necessities of life, to give comfort to our wounded.

“Receive, etc.

C. V. CHAPPELLE, *Sub-Prefect.*”

III.—*Lure.*

The engagements of Etobon-Chénebier occurred on the 15th, 16th, and 17th of January. After these battles, more than 1000 sick and wounded were brought here. The city ambulances were insufficient; new ones had to be improvised.

The Brothers' school received fifty-seven soldiers, most of them with frostbitten feet. It was no easy matter for the Brothers to provide accommodation for these poor fellows, and they only did so by making up mattresses of soft straw: the linen for these they obtained by tearing up and washing some army shelter-tents. The ambulance lasted till the 9th of March.

IV.—*Morteaux, Questembert, etc.*

At Morteaux the Brothers opened an ambulance in their class-rooms on the 29th of January, into which forty-seven soldiers from Bourbaki's army were admitted. These patients were kept for five days at the sole expense of the Brothers.

On the 2d of February they were removed to Lyons; the same evening the Prussians entered the town in pursuit of the retreating French army.

On February the 4th, the Brother Director caused his house to be again made an ambulance, so as to shelter and take care of some twenty French soldiers who still remained in the place. The four Brothers composing the community discharged all the duties of this ambulance. Their labors were so arduous, that by the time the patients left, all four were sick.

At Questembert (Morbihan) eight wounded soldiers were taken in, boarded and attended by the Brothers at their own expense. These soldiers were moved even to tears by the kind attention they received. "True devotedness," said they, "is only to be met with in religious communities; we shall never forget how our lives have been saved here by the charitable care of the good Brothers."

The community of Valognes boarded and took care of from 200 to 250 soldiers, at their own expense, from December till February. They did all they could to comfort and encourage them. In Beaume-les-Dames, the Brother Director during the winter received some patients in one of his class-rooms. He took the greatest care of them, and provided for all their wants at the expense of the house.

After the defeat of Orléans, the hospital of Chateauneuf (Cher) being no longer able to accommodate all the wounded who were coming in, the managers sent thirty of them on an average for a month at a time to the Christian school. The Brothers blessed the Lord, who permitted them to take care of His suffering members, and to lay some sacrifices on the altar of their country.

In the beginning of the war, the Brothers of Montpellier placed themselves at the disposal of the authorities, and offered the building of the *Ceuvre de la Jeunesse*, belonging to the Institute, for an ambulance.

Meanwhile, they performed the night-duty in an ambulance at some distance from the community-house. Towards the end of January, they at length received twenty-four patients, whom they attended with the most unceasing care. By the enlightened zeal and untiring efforts of Abbé Paillet, and the Brothers' instruction, they had the happiness of seeing thirty of their dear sick approach the holy Table.

Small-Pox Ambulances.

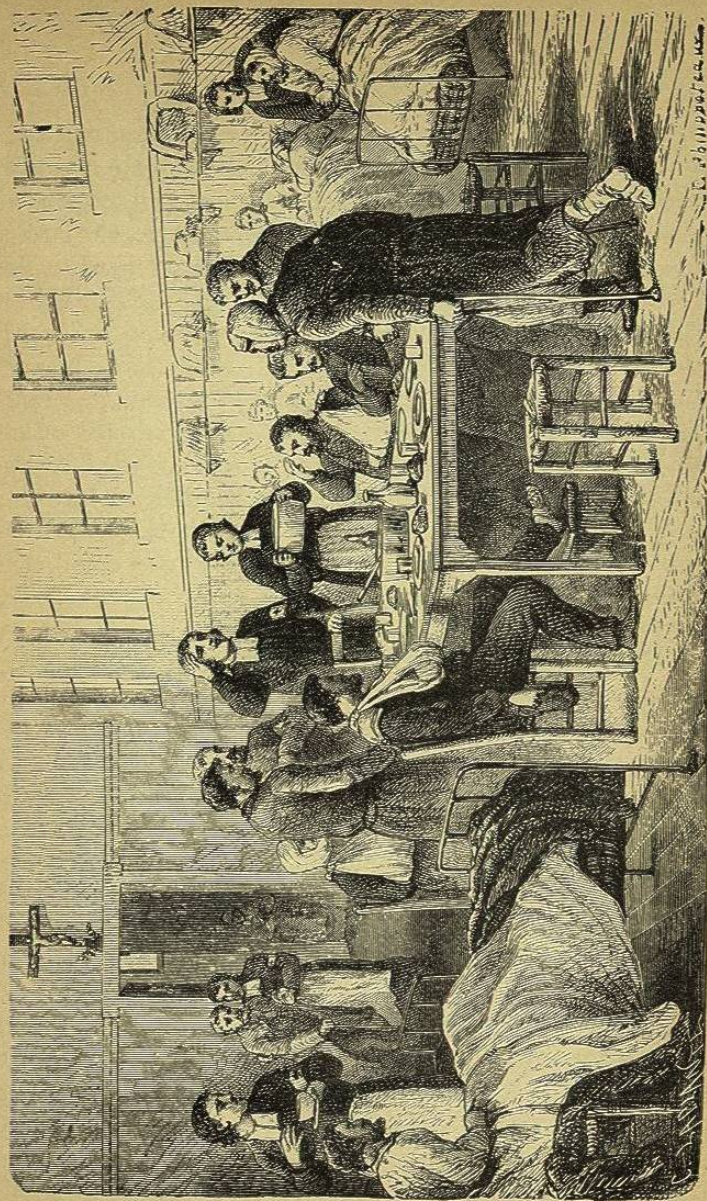
I.—Besançon.

General Cambriels, in his retreat from the Vosges, turned aside to Besançon to re-organize and complete his army, and established his headquarters in the St. Claude Novitiate, about the 12th of October. After Cambriels came Crouzat, who likewise occupied the establishment. The enemy had followed close upon Cambriels, and, by the 20th of October, he was at the gates of Besançon. The situation was becoming critical, and it would have been imprudent to expose the deaf and dumb pupils, and the young novices, to the dangers of a siege; these were sent either to their families, or to some other communities.

This step enabled the ambulance to be opened in such parts of the house as the headquarters left free. On the 25th of October, the first wounded came; others followed on the 27th, 30th, and 31st of the same month. By the 9th of November, all the beds were occupied, to the number of thirty-seven. This figure varied till the end of December, when Bourbaki marched on Belfort. The troops, exhausted with fatigue, deprived of even the commonest necessities of life, exposed to a cold of fifteen to twenty degrees below zero, crowded all the ambulances. St. Claude's was quite full; the number

of its patients soon rose from forty to one hundred and twenty; the dormitories of the novitiate, the class-room and refectory of the deaf and dumb, the Brother Director's sleeping-room, and all the available Brothers' cells, were occupied; the beds were doubled. And yet many were glad to sleep on straw ticks improvised for the occasion. Such a gathering of sick people could not fail to engender contagious diseases. The small-pox broke out in November, and began at once to make fearful havoc; typhus came next. The ravages of both were frightful: every day some were carried off, and in the course of a few weeks the number of deaths reached ninety-five. Everywhere were seen either dead or dying, the ambulance becoming one vast charnel-house; and yet, every day, a crowd of exhausted soldiers presented themselves for admission. About the 25th of January, they came in hundreds at a time; but, sad to relate, there was not a corner to give them, not a bed, not a vacant spot! It was then that Dr. Delacroix conceived the idea of fitting up a deserted house in the neighborhood as an ambulance, where some fifty were received and taken care of. To this branch house were thenceforth removed such patients as were beginning to recover, while the worst cases were always received and treated at St. Claude's. In this way there was a daily exchange going on between the two establishments.

Things continued thus till the 15th of February, when the departure of Bourbaki's army relieved Besancon. The number of patients in the ambulance, though not so great, was still considerable. About the 10th of March, the Military Inspector warmly thanked the staff of the St. Claude ambulance for the care they had lavished on the sick, and informed the Brother Director that, on the 15th of the same month, all the patients would be removed to St. Ferréol. The evac-



GRACE BEFORE MEALS AT THE AMBULANCE OF ST. CLAUDE-LES-BESANCON.

uation took place on the day specified ; and the sixty patients then remaining in the ambulance were conveyed in carriages or in litters to their new destination. The doctor, chaplain, and all the Brothers, accompanied the patients, to see them comfortably settled at St. Ferréol. When the parting came at last, it was truly affecting. The poor patients vied with one another as to who should have the last shake-hands, the last kind word, from the devoted friends who had so long watched over them.

The ambulance had existed from the 25th of October, 1870, till the 15th of March, 1871, and had received five hundred and eighty patients. The service of this great ambulance was necessarily very trying to the St. Claude community. Each one paid his own tribute of sickness and suffering ; night and day they were found by the bedside of their patients. Death and disease struck down some of their number. The much loved Brother Auguste died of the black small-pox ; three others were confined to their beds by small-pox or typhus.

Amid all their sufferings, it was consoling to see how eagerly the soldiers returned to the God from whom they might have wandered away in the reckless life of the camp. Confessions and communions were frequent ; very few of them went from the ambulance, or died there, without receiving the sacraments of penance and the eucharist. None of the sick, when in danger of death, refused the helps of religion ; many asked for them of their own accord. In the midst of the most violent pain, they were often heard praying, half aloud, offering their sufferings to God, and in the most touching manner imploring the assistance of heaven and the protection of Mary.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONTINUATION OF THE SMALL-POX AMBULANCES. THE GERMAN CONTINGENT.

I.—*Clemancy.*

For two months and a half, the Brothers of the free school of Clemancy conducted the ambulance for small-pox patients. They were up all night in a pestilential atmosphere, performing the most trying offices. None but those who have seen the devoted Brothers thus engaged, can form an idea of what they had to suffer. Patients whom even the doctors feared to approach, were raised up and attended by the Brothers with the tenderest care. Never had charity more perfect servants; Brothers Judes, Huras, Nicière and Gildard proved themselves heroes of abnegation and devotedness. The officers were lost in admiration on seeing the tender and anxious solicitude of which their men were the object. An Inspector-General of military hospitals, after a visit to the ambulance, called the Brothers the most virtuous of men; he publicly thanked them for the sublime deeds which they had performed with as much courage as modesty; adding that the entire Institute had deserved well of humanity and of France.

II.—*Pauillac (Gironde).*

On the 10th of December, thirty sick soldiers from the army of the Loire arrived at the Brothers' ambulance in

Pauillac. The kind teachers had everything ready for them; every comfort they could procure—medicines, old wine, and, above all, clean, white beds, warm and dry, in well-heated rooms.

From that date till the 15th of March, the beds were always occupied. Most of the soldiers approached the sacraments and were invested with the holy scapular. Only two died, and they as brave soldiers and true Christians. The breaking out of the small-pox in the ambulance and in the town was a great trial for the Brothers. Two of them were attacked by the disease, but God willed that they should recover, and the ambulance went on as usual.

III.—*Forges-les-Eaux, Guéret, etc.*

The ambulance established in the Christian School of Forges-les-Eaux lasted from the 10th of October till the 7th of April following. From the 10th of October till December 3d it received only mobiles from the Oise. The first day, the whole twenty beds were occupied; ten small-pox patients were among the number. Two died. In all, seven deaths occurred, five being Prussians.

At Guéret, the Brothers' house was converted into a barrack. The crowding of so many men resulted in small-pox, dysentery, fevers, etc. The Brothers did what they could for all. "We endeavored," said the Brother Director of Guéret, "to soothe the last moments of those who fell victims to disease. They would press our hands, with tears in their eyes, begging us to let their families know what had become of them. We enjoyed the consolation of seeing them die good Christians."

The small town of La Haye-du-Puits lodged altogether about one thousand soldiers. The small-pox broke out, and

carried off one hundred and sixty in a population of fifteen hundred. The Brothers attended some mobiles who were attacked by the disease.

Two Brothers from Corval went to the small-pox ambulance at Clemancy, to assist their Brothers, who were sinking under their fearful task.

At Gray, a Brother took care, night and day, of the small-pox patients in the ambulance; he was often assisted by his superior.

At Vendome, a small-pox ambulance was opened on the 18th of January, in the Brothers' house. It had fifteen beds and continued a month.

Five Brothers of Dun-le-Roi (Cher) did night-duty in the hospital for three months and a half. Some of the patients had small-pox.

At Fresnay, some small-pox patients from the general hospital were given in charge to the Brothers, who attended them with zeal and devotedness.

German Ambulances.

Nine Brothers from Pothiviers took care, in one of the ambulances, of about six hundred sick or wounded of both nations. Prince Albert of Prussia came with his whole staff, in the name of King William, to thank the Brother charged with the direction of the ambulance. The first patients came in September; the last went out in February.

The day following the battle of Loigny, the Brothers of Chartres took care of the Germans who were conveyed to St. Ferdinand's School. They prepared food for them in a class-room converted into a kitchen. One hundred and seventy Bavarians were immediately under treatment in this ambulance. There were two other ambulances in the Broth-

ers' school-houses; but the religious, being engaged elsewhere, could only attend to them for a few days.

Of all the establishments of Etampes, that of the Brothers was the most severely taxed by the care of the Prussian wounded. From the 1st of November till December 13th, the Brothers were enabled to continue their classes without interruption. But on that day the whole town was crowded with sick and wounded; and the Prussians, taking possession of the Brothers' house, sent them ninety-three wounded, both German and French, to nurse. For fifty-five days after that, the house was but one continued dépôt for the wounded. The number of sick and wounded under the care of the Brothers of Etampes amounted to one thousand one hundred.

In September, the district commissioner of Brie-Comte-Robert (Seine-et-Marne) selected the spacious class-rooms of the Christian Schools for an ambulance. The first patients arrived on the 18th of September, and were cared for at the expense of the town till the 3d of October. They were all Germans. Through the winter, the Brothers had either whole or partial charge of one or more ambulances, and it was not till the 5th of March that they found themselves freed from a duty which the rough, abrupt manner of the German soldiers rendered doubly irksome to French religious. Yet they found the patients most grateful for their care and attention; and the German nurses who were sent to assist in serving the ambulances, being good Catholics, gave both edification and consolation to the Brothers by their excellent conduct,—their regularity in assisting at the offices of the Church, and the remarkable skill and recollection with which they joined in the sacred music of the choir.

At Noyon an ambulance was established by the municipal authorities in the class-rooms of the Brothers' school and in a neighboring house. From the 25th of November till January 7th, it received 203 wounded Germans. At Fontainebleau, two Brothers did night-duty in a Prussian ambulance for three months and a half. The ambulance of Albert (Somme), opened on the 24th of December, received sixty-nine Frenchmen and one hundred and three Germans. After the battle of Pont-Noyelles, the Brothers of Albert had to provide, to prepare, and to distribute food to one hundred and seventy-two wounded soldiers who filled their house; it was a very difficult undertaking to procure provisions for so many, when the very necessities of life were scarcely to be had in the vicinity. The patients, German as well as French, warmly thanked the dear Brothers who toiled and cared for them.

At Arbois (Jura), the Brothers undertook the care of four ambulances, but especially of the Prussian section, consisting of seventy beds.

At St. Dizier, the Brothers were employed in their own house in the service of the Prussian wounded. The ambulance continued eighty days and received sixty-eight patients.

We can now contemplate the charity and brotherly love exercised by the Brothers in the services of the ambulances. We are amazed at the vast amount of labor they accomplished; we wonder that human nature could endure so much. It was Heaven, and Heaven alone, that sustained them through it. Like the miracle of the loaves, their strength was increased till it reached all the needs of the sick and wounded around them.

Let us hope that the benefits of Catholic charity will no longer be ignored or calumniated. In the evil times on which we have fallen, all noble hearts need to combine, and associate the living strength of their devotedness for the relief of humanity.

