

A soldier from Calais writes to the same Brother Director :

"DEAR BROTHER DIRECTOR :

"March 23d, 1871.

"My wishes are accomplished ! I am again in the midst of my family ; I am reunited to all I love most. My heart is transported with joy ; and yet, since I received your letter, I feel that there is no perfect happiness here below. I am far away from you, and I feel the separation very sensibly.

"I was just going to write to you and to our dear Victor, when your letter surprised me with the sad news of his death, the last in the ambulance. He was so worthy of the friendship and esteem of all who knew him ! The death of one so young and strong gives rise to serious reflections ; my turn may come at any moment, and God grant that I may not have to appear with empty hands before my Judge.

"Adieu, dear Brother ; present my respects to the Reverend Chaplain, the kind Brothers and Sisters, and all who took care of me. I am quite cured now ; my relatives all request me to thank you for them.

"Please to accept, etc.

"ERNEST DENUGE.

"J. M. J."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BROTHERS UNDER THE COMMUNE.

Before and during the war of 1870-71, forerunning signs of the insurrection of March 18th were not wanting. From the ravages of invasion, afflicted France passed to the horrors of civil war. The new masters of Paris profaned all, destroyed all, with their foul, unhallowed hands. Religion, liberty, laws, guarantees, honor—all were violated by the men of the Commune ; by that infamous race capable of conspiring against their country in the very day of her woe and humiliation. In their demoniac hatred against God, they fell on His ministers, His religious, on crucifixes, holy pictures, and, in fine, on everything relating to religion and its soul-uplifting ceremonies.

The Christian Brothers, who had done and suffered so much for their country, and who in their heroic devotedness had shown the beneficent power of religion, were now to receive, as their earthly reward, the basest ingratitude, the most cruel persecution. The Communist leaders forbade them to take their pupils to church, to teach them the catechism, or prepare them for their first Communion ; and they appealed to other teachers, who, imbued with their principles, were willing to follow their programme. The schools of the Christian Brothers were doomed, and the warrant for their destruction was soon to be put into execution.

On the 2d of April, Paris was aroused by the sound of

cannon; blood was being shed by French hands. An engagement had taken place in the neighborhood of Mont Valerien, between the troops of France and the Federals of the Commune. The Brothers presented themselves to take up the wounded. The officer at the Maillot gate refused to let them go out.

The dictators of Paris would rather the wounded national guards should remain without assistance, than see them cared for by religious. Some Brothers, nevertheless, managed to get out by the gate of La Muette, and returned about midnight to the Longchamps pavilions, bringing a number of dead, and several wounded.

On the following day, the generals of the Commune tried an attack on Versailles, on two sides; on the north, at Courbevoie, Nanterre, Rueil, and Bougival; on the south, between Meudon, the redoubt of Chatillon, and Petit-Bicêtre. Mont Valerien opened fire on the masses bearing down on Nanterre and Rueil, and put them to flight. At Meudon the gendarmes repulsed the insurgents. The enemy was everywhere routed, except on the Chatillon side, where he could not hold out long. The Brothers took away the wounded and dead from the battle fields of Rueil, Sèvres and Chatillon.

On the 4th of April, the Federals were driven from the table-land of Chatillon by the troops of the National Assembly. The Brothers devoted themselves as on the previous day. At the Maillot gate objections were made to letting them in.

Those who had gone to Chatillon could not get back. Archbishop Ségur, aged and blind, Abbé Deguerry, pastor of the Madeleine, the Jesuit Fathers of the Rue Lhomond, and a great number of other ecclesiastics, were taken to

prison. The Dominican Fathers were kept under supervision in their convent in the Rue Jean-de-Beauvais.

April 5th, the Commune legalized the system of hostages; the inhabitants of Paris lived under the reign of terror. An engagement took place on the bridge of Neuilly. The constitutional troops bravely did their duty. The Commune refused to accept the Brothers as stretcher-bearers; its men fell without hope and without benediction. The Brothers continued their care of the sick and wounded in the Longchamps pavilions.

April 11th, the streets of Paris were a scene of mourning; the churches were deserted; three fourths of them were closed; several had been pillaged and desecrated. Sadness everywhere prevailed; the cannon thundered as in the worst days of the siege.

The Mother-house of the Brothers, Oudinot street, received the visit of a delegate of the Commune, and a central commissary of police, accompanied by some fifty national guards. "We want to see if there are any arms or ammunition here," they said. Placing sentries everywhere, they began to search the parlors. Now, it was not arms they wanted, but money. They opened the cash-box, and stole the 2190 francs it contained. They then went into the chapel with their hats on, and their guns on their arm. The tabernacles had to be opened; the Chaplain took away the consecrated hosts, and gave them two ciboriums. Thence they went into the sacristy and took two chalices, and an ostensorium. The wretches touched the sacred vessels with their profane hands, forgetful of Balthazar and the punishment of his sacrilege.

They had orders to seize Brother Philippe, but as he had left Paris to visit houses in the interior of France, they arrest-

ed his venerable First Assistant, Brother Calixtus. His parting with his brethren was most affecting. It was like a father being torn from his children. Brought to the police office, they could not, with all their malice, make out a cause against him, and were obliged to release him. His return to the Mother-house was hailed with the liveliest joy, the most heartfelt affection.

April 17th, Asnieres was the principal scene of the struggle; at noon, the village was completely evacuated by the Federals. During the afternoon, disbanded national guards returned to Paris, complaining that they were betrayed.

It was reported that the Brothers were to be arrested in a mass. Those of Menilmontant were surrounded in their house. The pupils were sent away. The brigands of the Commune put seals on everything, broke crucifixes and statues, and proceeded to take an inventory. The Brothers were taken as prisoners to the mayor's office. This arrest struck many of the communities with fear; those of St. Laurent, La Villette, and Batignolles, dispersed of themselves. The Brothers of Belleville were expelled and replaced by lay teachers. Those of Montrouge and St. Nicholas-des-Champs had already suffered persecution. April 18th, desolation reigned everywhere: in the churches, the schools, the houses. The Federals were objects of hatred and malediction. The Brothers of the Longchamps ambulance were replaced by a staff of military nurses. At the Mother-house, Oudinot street, the Superiors were officially notified that it was in contemplation to incorporate the Brothers in the ranks of the National Guard. The Commune put soldiers in their place near the sick, and, with a satanic refinement of cruelty, wanted to send them to the ramparts, to de-

fend the odious cause of the persecutors of religion. A search was made in the house of the Brothers of St. Marguerite. The Director and two other members of the community were arrested and conducted to the Conciergerie.

Belleville, the centre and last focus of insurrection, made it a point not to be outdone by any other district of the city in its persecution of priests and Christian Brothers. Towards the end of March, a warrant was issued for the arrest of the Brother Director, and fifteen men were sent for that infamous purpose. In their hatred and contempt for religion, the arrest was made, not in the house, but in the church. The Brother Director, remonstrating against such a sacrilegious act, was accused of propagandism by the delegate before whom he was brought in the mayor's office! Many other charges, of equal gravity, were brought against him. Through the intervention of a man whose children had attended the Brothers' school, and who knew the absurdity of these charges, the worthy religious was allowed to return home.

But on the evening of April 12th, after ten o'clock, when every one was in bed, Citizen Prudhomme, one of the most fiery members of the Commune, at the head of a company of national guards, surrounded the house and commanded the gates to be opened. He had orders to arrest all the Brothers.

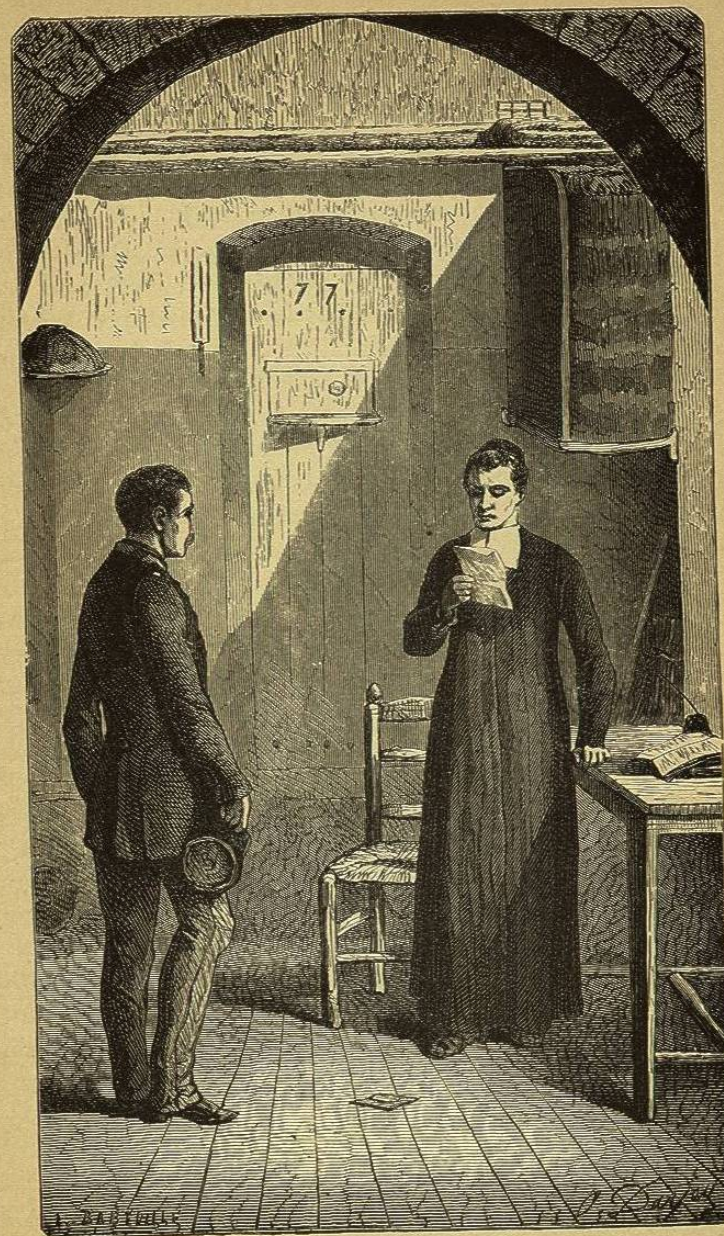
Happily, one of the Brothers had made part of his studies with him in the Seminary of Mans; recognizing each other, even the hard heart of the Communist leader was softened by the memories of his childhood thus suddenly recalled, and he agreed to let the Brothers pass the night in their own house instead of in the police station. Sentries were placed at every door, a guard was posted in the gatekeeper's lodge, and Prudhomme retired, the Brothers having promised

to leave the house next day, and take nothing it contained away with them. . . . Prudhomme, afterwards repenting of having allowed the Brothers to escape, offered a reward to whomever would bring in any of them, with double the amount for him who should deliver up the Brother Director. His efforts were useless. The Brothers had been taken in and concealed by a worthy family; there they stayed for nearly a month, when their hosts were apprised that they were suspected of harboring *Calotins* of the worst kind.*

It then became necessary for the Brothers to leave their retreat, not only on their own account, but on that of their kind host. The Brother Director judged it best, if possible, to leave Paris. Disguising themselves, they set out one by one, and, God helping them, arrived safe at the house of M. Fleury, in Pre-Saint-Gervaise, where they had appointed to meet. Thence, after receiving the orders of their superiors, the Brothers repaired to Noyau, where they arrived on the 16th of May, and remained till the 2d of June, when they went back to resume their classes.

One of them, Brother Germier, who had not accompanied them in their flight, courageously remained in the neighborhood of the school, watching over the interests of all, and protecting them as far as he was able. On the morning of April 10th, the Brother in charge of SS. John and Francis' school was going to his class-room, when he saw a Federal sentry pacing before the parish church. His heart sank within him: had the house of God been pillaged? The faithful were not allowed to enter. If the Brother had consulted prudence only, he would have turned back at once; but a sense of duty impelled him to go on. With a firm step he

* *Calotins*, a term of contempt then applied to the Brothers, in allusion to the skull-cap they wear indoors.



THE BROTHER DIRECTOR RECEIVES NOTICE OF EXPULSION.

advanced to the presbytery, amid the jeers and taunts of a group of national guards standing near. He glanced at the church and saw that the doors were all closed and guarded. Going into the class-room, he was met by a dozen or so of the children, all eager to tell of the doings around the church, and of the soldiers entering the sacristy, and taking away everything of value they could find there.

There was a private door leading from the school into the church—what had become of the Sacred Species? had there been time to take them away? had they fallen into the hands of the desecrators? The cruel anxiety of the religious may be easily imagined. There before him was the little door with its fastenings. It was probably closed and guarded on the inside. If he tried to open it, he would be sure to attract the attention of the terrible insurgents to his school, and perhaps expose his scholars to their ill-usage, and himself to be torn from them. Still, he felt himself drawn by some secret impulse towards the private door. Scarce knowing what he did, he took hold of the handle. The door slightly opened; it was neither locked nor guarded; the church seemed deserted. He ventured a little farther. No sooner had his black gown become visible within the church, than a voice from the other end, in the hideous language of the Communists, asked what he wanted there, and threatened to shoot him if he advanced any farther. Terrified on hearing such language in the dwelling of the Most High, the Brother hastily retreated, carefully closing the door.

Short as was the time he had been in the church, by a quick glance he saw that the Tabernacle had not been forced open. If, as there was much reason to fear, the Blessed Sacrament had not been removed before the invasion of the Communists, at least it had not yet been profaned. Leaving the children

in the class-room, the Brother went direct to the community to consult with the Brother Director; they agreed that no means must be left untried to prevent the Holy Sacrament from falling into sacrilegious hands.

As going to the mayor's office with a letter from the Brother Director, and much parleying with the ignorant and insolent officials of the reigning powers effected nothing, the Brother placed himself and his attempt in the special care of St. Joseph. Once more he ventured to open the private door, which was still unlocked. This time a very different sentry was on guard in the church, a good, simple-hearted neighbor of the Brothers, who was only in the service of the Commune by compulsion; he readily agreed, though it cost him his life, to let the Brother remove the Blessed Sacrament, which happily he effected, and brought it in safety to the community chapel. The Brother had hardly left the church with his precious burden when the sentry was changed, and very soon after the church was pillaged, so that even a moment's delay would have prevented him accomplishing his pious design!—St. Joseph had heard the prayer.*

April 22.—The searches and arbitrary arrests continued. The wretched mob, known as the Provisional Government, made Paris a place of torment and horror. Their spies were everywhere: tears and groans were watched and denounced; for denunciation was the order of the day.

In the last days of April, the Christian schools were successively closed. The man who presented himself to replace the Brothers in the school in the Rue Saint Jacques was hooted by the pupils: so great was the tumult, that the teacher was obliged to call on the National Guards to restore a little order in the class-rooms.

* See "Souvenirs of the Commune," pp. 119-138.

The St. Clotilde free school was closed like the district schools, notwithstanding the earnest remonstrance of the director. Tyranny and falsehood, assisted by brute force, replaced the right. May 5th, the house of the Brothers in the Rue de Fleurus was surrounded about six o'clock in the morning. A commissary of the Commune signified to the Brothers that those between twenty and forty were to be incorporated in marching battalions. The Christian schools of the parish were given to lay teachers. These intruders wanted to replace prayer and catechism by the singing of the *Marseillaise*. The pupils in great numbers shook off the yoke of these would-be teachers. They indignantly left the class-rooms, crying out in the streets: "Away with the *sans-culottes*! Down with the Commune!"

May 7th, the Brothers of the Rue Jean-Bart were all day under guard, a sentry pacing before their house. About eight o'clock in the evening, they succeeded in getting out through a window, and making their escape from Paris.

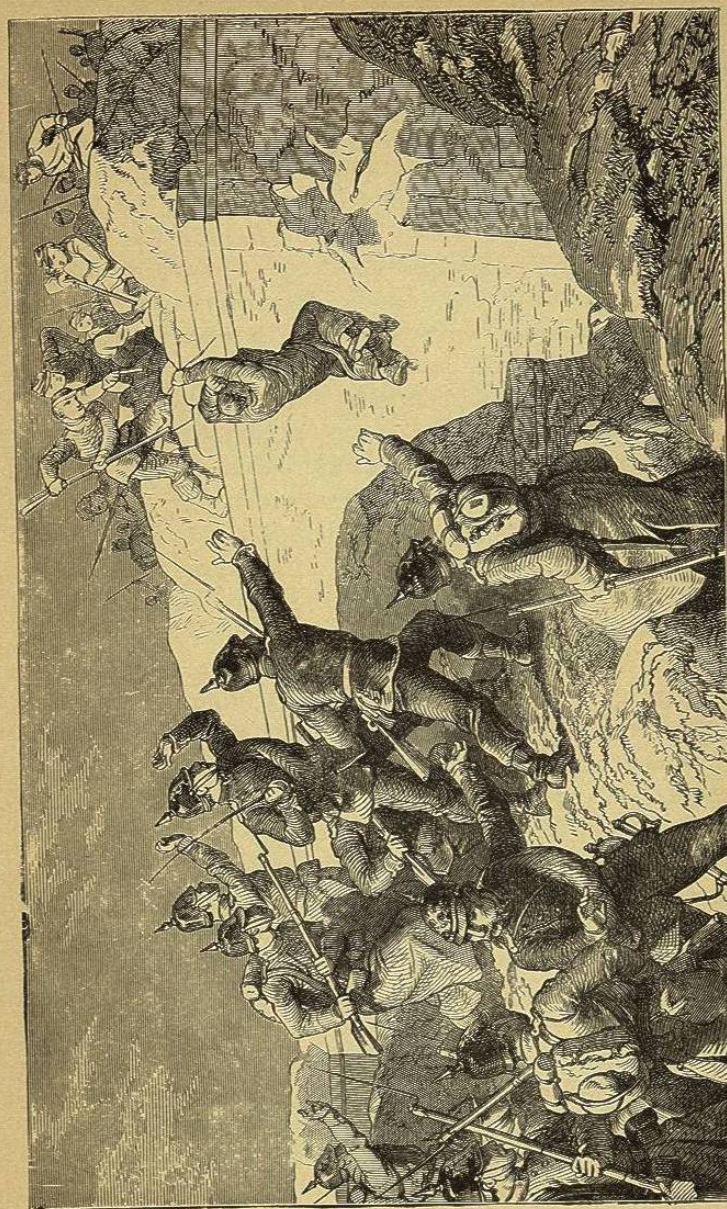
The Brothers of the Issy school left the village, which had become uninhabitable in consequence of the bombardment. The castle of Issy, which the Versailles troops had to abandon on account of the fire kindled by the shells from the fort, was again taken by the Federals. The southern forts were in a desperate condition. The ramparts were ploughed by projectiles, and nearly all the casemates fallen in. The iconoclasts of the Commune, after having imprisoned citizens, plundered the public coffers and the treasures of the Church, next proceeded to destroy monuments. Not content with getting rid of men, they wreaked their fury on stone and metal, guilty of the crime of commemorating historical events. The Brothers of Issy were among the communities which suffered the most from the malice of these enemies of order.

Situated outside the walls, this important establishment, which in ordinary times counted a thousand pupils, was obliged to send away the children as soon as the German invasion took place ; the Brothers, left free by the breaking up of the school, were employed in removing the wounded from the battle-field, and nursing them in the ambulances.

To this community of Issy belonged Brother Berrier, who, before he had reached his twentieth year, fell a victim to his zeal and perseverance in nursing the fever patients in the Irish ambulance.*

During the first week in May, more than sixty shells fell upon the St. Nicholas house at Issy, which did not prevent the Brothers from giving hospitality to three battalions of the National Guard, while taking care, at the same time, of 150 wounded. There were in the house, besides six Brothers whose services were not needed, twenty-one working people, gardeners, apprentices, etc. ; most of them were youths whose lives were seriously imperilled. The Brother Director first thought of taking them to the country house of the St. Nicholas establishment. By the aid of an influential friend, he succeeded in getting passports for all. Four Brothers of mature age, and nine of the oldest workingmen, were left in the house at Issy to take care of the wounded ; the lives of all these were in continual danger, not only from the shells, but from the National Guards. Notwithstanding the danger, the chaplain of the school insisted on remaining, in order to administer the sacraments to the wounded and dying. A freemason, going to the house a day or two after, was very angry to find the chaplain still there ; to escape being shot on the spot, he was obliged to take refuge at once with some friends in Paris.

* See "Souvenirs of the Commune," pp. 84, 85.



PERILOUS POSITION OF A YOUNG BROTHER ON THE RAMPARTS.

While the Brothers, and those with them, were on their way to the country, accompanied by a guard, they were subject to continual insult, and loaded with abuse by the crowds through whom they passed. The persecuted religious were consoled by the kind salutations of the children, who would eagerly have shaken hands with them if the brutal guards had not pushed them back. As they advanced into the interior of Paris they saw more sympathetic faces; many of the women raised their handkerchiefs to their faces as the poor prisoners passed along.

"Near the railings of the Luxembourg," writes the Brother Director, "stood one of our Paris Directors, dressed as a secular; he had mingled with the crowd to see what was going on; having recognized me, he saluted me with tearful eyes; I returned his salute, which our guards perceiving, they rushed forward, arrested him, and forced him to go with us to the police station. . . . As to the treatment we underwent there, it would have been more than we could bear, were it not for the recollection of what our dear Lord suffered for us. Everything we had in our pockets was taken from us. The miserable wretches were not ashamed to take from one of our gardener's little apprentices a franc piece. . . I was several times taunted with having laid aside my religious habit. To one of the scoffers I replied: 'Citizen, I respect my habit too much to expose it to the insults it would, in these times, be sure to receive.' It is impossible to describe all that we were made to suffer that night: the blasphemous and obscene language heard all around, the scoffs and insults of which we were the objects, and the bodily misery we endured in those filthy dungeons. About three o'clock in the morning we were taken to the railroad dépôt, where we met several other Brothers, and