

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE BROTHERS UNDER THE COMMUNE.—*Continued.*

The last days of April, the Communists paid the first official visit to the community-house of the St. Sulpice Brothers.

Druet du Mousset, the delegate sent for this purpose, was accompanied by two National Guards. They were, on this occasion, very civil, and assured the Brothers the Commune owed them no ill-will. Notwithstanding these specious professions, several Brothers thought it prudent, with the permission of their superiors, to leave Paris. For some days the schools outside went on as usual. Only one, the 3d class of St. Thomas d'Aquinas' parish, was closed, through the sickness of the teacher.

On Friday, May the 5th, a detachment of National Guards arrived with a notification that all the Brothers were prisoners. These men were to take possession of the house and to forbid all egress from it. At the time of the arrest, there should have been twenty-one Brothers in the house, but, happily, two young Brothers had gone to the church of St. Sulpice; on their return, they were apprised from a window of what had taken place, and did not try to enter the house, and, in the course of the day, succeeded in getting out of Paris in secular dress.

Meanwhile, the Brothers imprisoned in the community-house were told that a member of the Commune would visit



them in the evening, and they began to hope for some change in their favor. They were deceived in their expectations. When the delegate arrived, it was to renew the prohibition to leave the house, and, worse still, to ask the names of all the Brothers between the ages of nineteen and fifty-five, that they might be enrolled in the National Guard. The list was promised, and returned accordingly by noon of that day. Lay teachers, at the same time, were sent to replace the Brothers in the schools of the Rue d'Assas and Rue St. Benoit. . . . The Guards being kind enough to allow the pupils of the schools to visit their imprisoned teachers, great numbers, accompanied in many instances by their parents, availed themselves of the permission. No visit, however, consoled the prisoners so much as that of Brother Exupérien, Director of Novices.

"Sunday morning comes," writes the Brother Sub-Director; "it passes, anxious and monotonous; what a contrast it presents to our usual Sundays! no more offices, no more instructions, no more children to conduct to church. Poor children! we could not go to them, but they came to us; for, on that day, their visits were more numerous than on the previous days. It did us good to see them. Ah! in the world, how little people know of the tender affection which God has planted in the heart of Christian teachers! That love which the father and mother feel for their family according to nature, the Christian Brother bestows no less generously on those who are his little brethren in Jesus Christ, his children in God. . . . Alas! after another visit from two Communist delegates, this great consolation was denied us; we were no longer allowed to see our pupils or their parents!"

Those who by their age were liable to be enrolled in the

National Guards, were, as may well be imagined, very much troubled; a plan was devised by some of them by which to escape so great a misfortune. Their project was, in a general way, made known to the Brother Director, and met his approbation. Nevertheless, that he might not be compromised, he was left in ignorance of the details, nor was his special permission asked. . . . After supper, the eleven Brothers who would have had to serve in the Commune went up stairs, and, seeing their guards walking in the yard on the other side of the house, each took off his religious habit, and, having a secular one under, they were ready for their departure. They assembled in a small room overlooking the Rue Jean-de-Bart. A rope was fastened to the bedstead to facilitate their descent. The parts were distributed; some went through the house, making all the noise they could, while others engaged the guards in conversation. Another was set to watch what was passing outside, and when the coast was clear he gave the signal. Under the protection of Mary, the Divine Help of Christians, the bold attempt was made, and admirably succeeded, amid the silent applause of friendly neighbors anxiously looking on. . . . Next day, when the escape of the Brothers was discovered, and the Director was called to account for their disappearance, it was not difficult for him to exonerate himself, seeing that he had not been informed of the hour of their departure. Moreover, the Communists had stationed guards in the house, whose duty it was to see that no one escaped: when the fugitives had eluded their vigilance, how could the Brother Director be held responsible? Having vented their wrath in dire threats of future vengeance, the Communist delegates decided to turn out the four citizen Brothers who still remained in the house, which was accordingly done, and so the matter rested for that time.



To the Brothers who had succeeded in making their escape the night seemed long and dreary; it was no easy matter to find a lodging, and it was past midnight when one of the fugitives was still wandering in the streets. In those evil days, so many honest people had left Paris, the Brothers often found enemies where they expected friends. When, a day or two after, they succeeded in getting out of Paris, it was in the strangest disguises, as millers, marketmen, etc.

Amongst the first called to the care of the ambulance, and the last who remained in the service of the victims of foreign war, were the Brothers of the Rue des Martyrs. They had also, in the first days of the struggle, to gather in the wounded and dead, no longer struck down on the field of battle to the cry of "*Vive la France!*" but shot in the streets of Paris by French bullets and to the cry of "Hatred and death to Society!" It was in front of their house, and before their eyes, that the civil war entered upon its era of shame and carnage: it was theirs to witness the heartrending sight of the triumph of anarchy over order, desertion over discipline!... The sound of the volley that took the lives of two brave French generals shook their house, and they were at one time afraid their gardens were to be made the scene of such executions. Their house was full of the wounded; the dead were piled in their enclosure, and even the hard-hearted Federals fled in disgust from a scene so revolting. Under the very windows of the Brothers' house two barricades were erected. Guns were next planted there, and it was not till the 24th of May that the government troops succeeded in taking these positions. The poor Brothers of Montmartre were obliged to cross four barricades to go to their post, and on Easter Tuesday the Brother Director in Rue des Martyrs had to keep them there. They

opened classes for such of the Montmartre pupils as came to them.

Meanwhile, after having posted a notice on the church-door that "priests being robbers, every good citizen was called on to arrest them," the Federals paid a visit to the Rue des Martyrs, when they informed the Brothers that the warrant condemning the priests also extended to them, and all the other "black gowns" in the ward. But this threat did not frighten the pious instructors of youth. They had not faced death so often on the battle field and during the siege, in the service of the wounded, without feeling convinced that human life is in the hand of Divine Providence, on whom all are alike dependent. They therefore went quietly on with their usual avocations, and, strange to say, were for some time not molested. . . But they could not hope to be left long in peace. They were in continual danger of arrest, and not only themselves, but their friends. After several interviews with the delegate and mayor, in which he showed how brave and fearless a religious can be in defending the right, the Brother Director saw it was necessary for his friends' and his own safety to devise means to escape from Paris. In this he succeeded, and by the following Sunday the last two of the five Brothers remaining in the Rue des Martyrs arrived safely at Aubervilliers disguised, one as a laborer, the other as an inspector on the railroad. A few days after, the Brother Director succeeded in joining them there. They were all kindly welcomed by the Brothers in Aubervilliers.

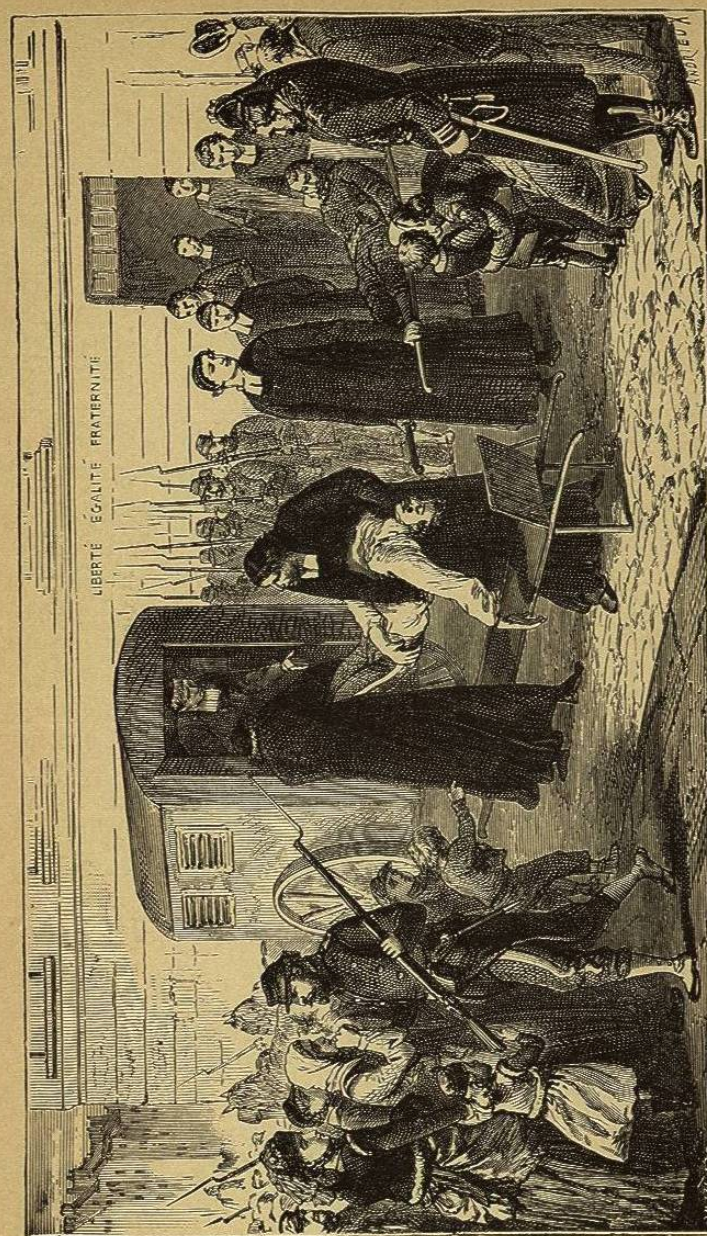
On the 15th of April, a delegate of the Commune made his appearance at the community-house in the Faubourg St. Martin. He came to ask the number of the classes and how many children attended the school, at the same time inti-



mating to the Brothers that they were to be replaced by lay teachers. Nothing more occurred till the evening of the 18th inst., when Brother Director was privately informed by letter that, in the course of forty-eight hours, he and the other Brothers were to be arrested and enrolled in the marching battalions of the National Guard. No time was to be lost; it became necessary to vacate the premises that very night. Secular clothes and a little money were at once given to each of the Brothers, and, by God's assistance, they all succeeded in escaping from Paris, some going to friends, some to relatives, in various parts of the country. One Brother, however, remained in the city: being charged with the direction of the choir-boys of St. Joseph's parish, he kept his post all through the worst days of the Commune, and regularly taught the children entrusted to his care, in a room belonging to the church. . . . It was not without indignation that the people of that vicinity heard of the forced departure of the Brothers. A great number of parents went to the school-house to express their regret; and others, knowing that Brother Director had taken refuge in Beauvilliers, wrote to him the most touching letters.\*

Events were culminating. Every day the Communists were losing ground. The hour of deliverance was at hand, but the struggle waxed only the more desperate, and the number of victims was increased. On the 10th of May, the Brothers of Clichy were called on to take charge of the ambulance of the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul. They all declared themselves willing to go, and it was agreed upon that they should relieve one another night and day in that eminently Christian task. God alone knows what trials they had to endure, what sights of horror they saw in that Com-

\* See "Episodes of the Time of the Commune," pp. 6-67.



BROTHERS OF MARTYRS' ST REMOVING THE DEAD.



munist ambulance, where, nevertheless, they faithfully did their duty till the arrival of the regular troops.

On the 11th of May, the red flag was hoisted over the door of the Mother-house, Oudinot street. Three delegates from the Central Committee, under pretence of visiting the ambulance, insisted on being taken all over the establishment; the chapels, the cellars, etc., were examined in turn, and the visitors went away much dissatisfied, having found nothing. On the following day the Federals evacuated the village of Issy; they marched out in sullen silence.

The bombardment now reached the boarding-school of Passy; the staff of Brothers remaining there were forced to abandon the building, and with their pupils arrived, about seven o'clock in the morning, at the Mother-house.

May 15th, the artillerymen of the Commune were disabled. The savage destruction of M. Thiers's house began. The sanctuary of home once violated, every citizen had reason to fear, not only for his person, but for his house. Nearly two hundred persons, from nineteen to forty, were arrested and imprisoned in the church of Notre Dame de Lorette. The fort of Vanves was evacuated. The Federals escaped through subterraneous passages, the fort being blockaded. Each citizen had thenceforth to produce a certificate of identity from the commissioner of the City Hall. Emissaries from the Commune made another search in the house in Oudinot street, but found nothing to compromise the Brothers.

Riddled with shells by the batteries of Meudon, Clamart and Issy, the Montrouge fort was in ruins. At Auteuil, a breach was made in the fortifications. The tricolor waved over Clichy. The projectiles of the besieging army reached even to Longchamps. The sick and wounded, with whom the pavilions were crowded, had to be removed farther into



the city. An order came from the Committee of Public Safety to put up four hundred beds in the Mother-house.

The Vendome column fell by order of the Commune; this was another page added to the accursed book of the Revolution of March 18th.

May 17th, the Mother-house received some twenty wounded, removed from Longchamps. It was agreed upon with the administration of the Press that the ambulance service should be entrusted to the Brothers, under the direction of a Brother Assistant-General.

At a quarter to six o'clock, a terrific shock was felt all over Paris; it was the blowing up of the arsenal on Avenue Rapp. The Champ de Mars was covered with blackened beams, and, sad to say, a vast number of balls and flattened bullets struck many persons. The number of victims was great—about two hundred dead, and four hundred wounded. The Mother-house received sick and wounded from Gros-Caillou Hospital, to which many of the victims of the explosion had been brought. The Committee of Public Safety, in a placard posted on the walls, accused the Versailles government of having caused the disaster; this absurd accusation needs no comment. The Communists were alone responsible for such blunders, follies, and crimes.

May 18th, feast of the Ascension, most of the churches were closed or desecrated. In those days of terror, evil alone was free. It was only in the privacy of their own houses that Christians could watch and pray.

May 19th, all the Brothers remaining in the Mother-house assumed secular clothing. The Dominicans of Arcueil were arrested and conducted to the fort of Bicêtre.

May 20th, the Brothers not employed in Oudinot street ambulance were enabled, by the kindness of some friends,

to gain the open country. Those that remained were ordered by the Committee of Public Safety to quit the house, under pain of arrest and imprisonment. Then the Brother Assistants, and other elders of the Order, who had hitherto remained at the post of danger, found themselves obliged to leave their house, no longer, alas! the Mother-house, but rather the widowed house, and, for five or six days, the house of sorrow and death. The parting between the sick and the Brothers who had been taking care of them was most affecting. Many tears were shed; but God graciously vouchsafed to give the Brothers a great tranquillity of mind in the midst of their trials, an entire trust in Him, and a filial abandonment of themselves into his Divine hands.

The Longchamps ambulance was installed in the house under the direction of the Press, the administrators of which had all along taken the greatest interest in the Institute; and it was to them the Brothers were indebted for the preservation of their establishment, which would otherwise have been occupied by the Federals, and probably burned.

May 21st, the persecution of the Brothers had reached its height: it was also nearing its end. The same day, about five o'clock in the afternoon, the besieging army forced the Saint Cloud gate, then those of Passy, Auteuil and Sèvres. The Grand-Armée avenue, the Arch of Triumph, Passy, Auteuil, the Trocadéro, Batignolles, and Les Ternes, were successively occupied by the brave Versailles soldiers. On the morning of the 22d, the army advanced in good order along both sides of the Seine, and delivered the inhabitants of the streets adjoining,—Les Invalides, and a great part of the Faubourg St. Germain,—from the reign of terror. The fine boarding-school of the Brothers at Passy had been fixed upon by the Federal staff as a centre of resistance; this was



dooming it to destruction, as the soldiers of the regular army would have directed all their batteries against it, and the insurgents, seeing themselves forced to evacuate it, would have set it on fire; but Providence watched over that model establishment, as it had watched over the Mother-house. Scarcely had the insurgents taken possession, when they were surrounded and made prisoners by the Versailles troops.

The whole week was but one bloody battle. The Committee of Public Safety, with a despairing cry, called the citizens to arms; everywhere drums were beating and bells ringing; barricades were raised at the corners of streets and squares; the base of operations was the City Hall, where the various delegations, driven forward by the progress of the government troops, had taken refuge; the principal monuments of Paris were committed to the flames. The Mother-house was filled with over six hundred wounded, and over eighty dead bodies lying in a sort of amphitheatre prepared for the purpose.

Meanwhile, on Wednesday, the 24th, the military authorities decided that the ambulance was to be again transferred to Longchamps, and that the Brothers should immediately take possession of their Mother-house, and of all their other establishments. Thence dated a new order of things for them, and the return to Paris of the Brothers who had been obliged to leave it. But they could not all return. Some were prisoners at Mazas, and probably themselves knew not that they were in imminent danger.

His Grace the Archbishop, the pastor of the Madeleine, the Abbé Allard, and the Fathers Ducoudray and Clerc, of the Company of Jesus, had been shot at La Roquette, through hatred of religion; and a number of prominent citizens, prisoners of war, had shared the same fate. The mur-

derers proposed to shoot all the hostages, and thus renew the massacres of 1792 and '93.

The liberating army carried the barricades with irresistible bravery, and the firing soon approached Mazas. Then the guards arrested and locked up the Brother Director of that district, threw open all the doors, brought down to the yard all the hostages, to the number of four or five hundred, and sent them out, three by three, about ten o'clock in the morning.

The Brothers went out, but found themselves in the midst of the Federals, and most of them were compelled to work on the barricades till such time as, under cover of the night, or in a moment of panic, they could hide in some adjoining house while waiting the hour of deliverance.

God had chosen from amongst them a new victim for Himself. Brother Néomède-Justin was struck by the splinter of a shell at the Pont d'Austerlitz barricade, and instantly killed. The following are some particulars of the life and death of this Christian martyr, whose memory shines out on Catholic France as a gentle star amid the thick darkness of the sorrowful year of 1871:—

Philippe Saguet—in religion Brother Néomède-Justin—was born on the 8th of May, 1836, at Hermaux (Lozère), of a God-fearing and eminently Catholic family. On the 28th of August, 1856, in the bloom of his promising youth, he bade the world farewell, and entered the novitiate of the Christian Brothers, at Puy (Haute-Loire). After his probationary term, the fervent religious was sent by his superiors to Paris. In that metropolis,—which was subsequently, in its wild frenzy, to slay its prophets and burn its monuments,—Brother Néomède devoted himself, for fifteen years, to the gratuitous instruction of the children of the poor.