

"Have you a mother in the country?"

"Oh, yes! and she is a good woman."

"And since you know only your drum, what do you do when you want to inform her how you are, when you want to send her a nice little letter?"

"Oh! you know very well, Monsieur le Curé, we have a comrade, and —"

"And they make him strike it off neatly —"

"Just so, Monsieur le Curé, I see you know how things are done by us. You too have served. Perhaps you were a drummer?"

"Not just that, my good friend, but allow me to finish. Well, the Mass is a letter which most of the Faithful do not know how to write to the great country to which we are all going, and where there are already barracks of friends and relatives. To write to them, there is a public writer, a comrade who has studied the language used on high. He has a table, that is the altar. He has ink, that is the mysterious Blood of the Saviour. And when the letter is finished, he announces it to those in waiting by saying to them: 'Go in peace. The letter has been sent: *Ite missa est.*' To write with blood? What is more soldierly? Call to mind the bravest of the brave at Wagram, who fell mortally wounded, but who in falling received the Cross of Honor. 'Oh!' said the noble dying one, 'I must write to my mother, but how?—I have one cartridge left. The ball will do for a pencil, and the paper will do for the note.' The good son tried, but the ball was unsteady, and would not mark. Then he took a priming-wire and the last drop of his blood. To work he went, and here is what he wrote, the testament of love and honor: 'To you, my mother, my last drop of blood, my last sigh! I die content. I have the Cross. *Vive la France.*' See how a soldier knew how to offer a Mass to his mother. The priest writes still better. The Blood of God never becomes tainted! Well, drummer, you will not laugh again?"

"I do not know, Monsieur le Curé. I do not know."

"Well, to know better, come to the Charité to hear us, and you will see."

"We'll see about that, Monsieur le Curé. If it does no good, it will do no harm. We'll see!"