

But no longer was the priest there. He was crawling away slowly and painfully, and little by little he disappeared in the high weeds.

"Oh, the coward ! The mean impostor !"

And immediately upon his departure, which he had just now desired, his solitude grew more lonely.

Strewing the ground all about him were blood-stained remains, axes and reddened sabres and dying coals from which arose a disagreeable smoke and a fetid odor of burning flesh. Nearby, in a pool of blood were two feet cut off at the ankles. Whose were they ? The sergeant closed his eyes so as shut out this terrible sight.

Suddenly he felt something cool and fresh at his parched lips. Water ! Yes, it was water he drank so eagerly, and, muddy as it was, to him it seemed delicious and pure as crystal. Opening his heavy eyelids, he beheld the missionary bending over him.

"Drink, comrade," said he. "I guessed your agony ; I would have relieved you sooner, but I myself am not whole."

The sergeant looked at him more closely. It was a young man, scarcely twenty-five years of age, just out from that nursery of martyrs, the Foreign Missions. His livid face told of intense pain. Where his ears should have been were two open wounds and by a movement which lifted his cassock, Gloanec noticed that his two feet had been cut off. And the old soldier who had never shed tears in his life, felt two scalding drops gather beneath his bushy brows. He felt ashamed for having inwardly condemned this priest, who, all maimed as he was, had displayed more than human courage in painfully dragging himself to the muddy river in order to fetch him a little water. Though he might have a heart of flint, the heart of a Turk, such heroism softened him and he viewed the priest with a more human look. The latter, with a deft hand which recalled his mother's, dressed the frightful wounds of the veteran, who felt weak as a child before this beardless recruit.

"You must suffer cruelly !" said the priest. "But in truth I myself am not much better off," and he smiled.

"Indeed," thought the ruffian of the barracks, "this priest is worthy to wear the colored pantaloons"

"After all," continued the missionary, "we should not complain too much, since our crucified Saviour suffered greatly. Like